

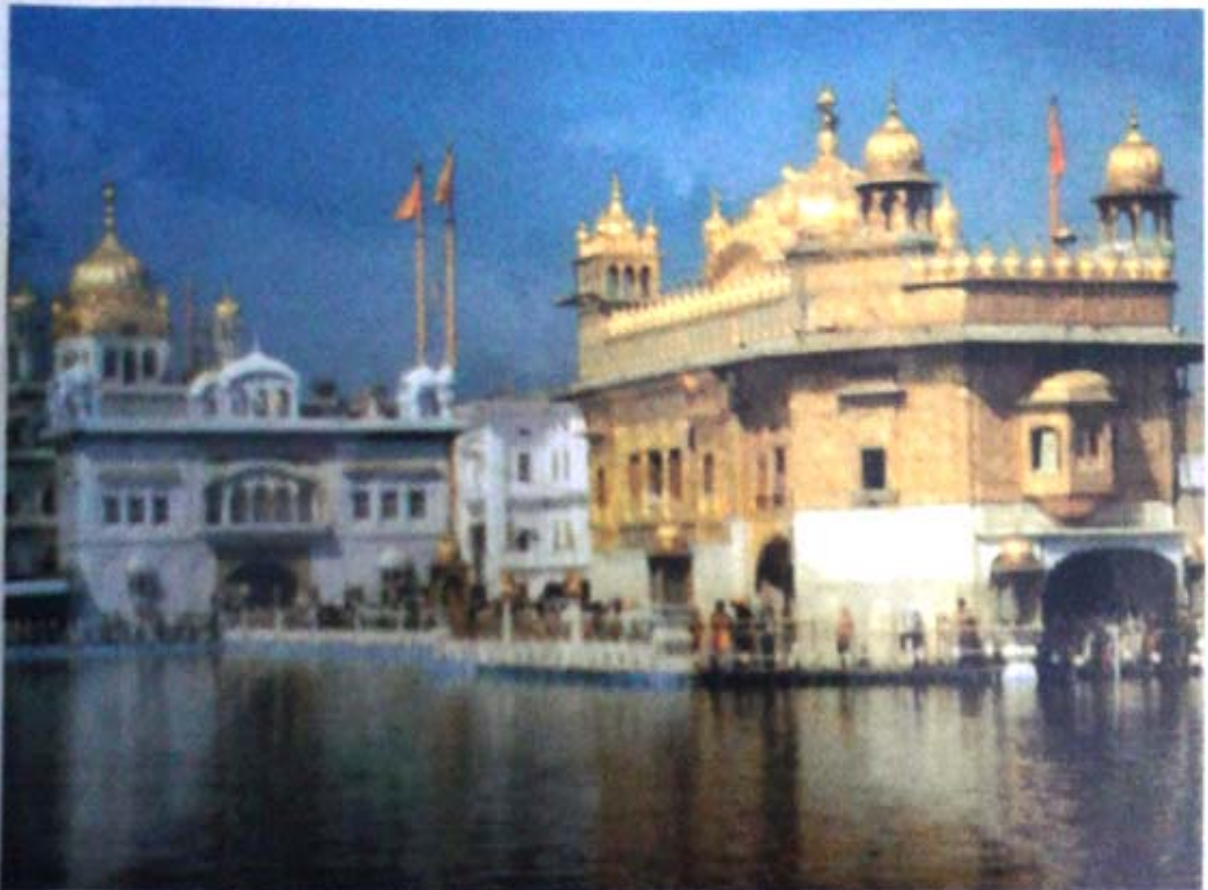
ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ

THE SIKH REVIEW

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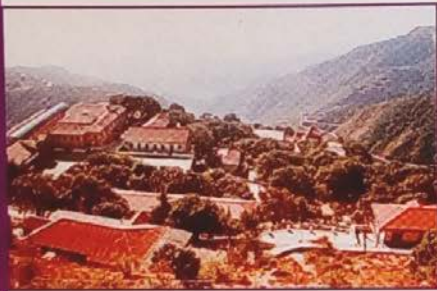


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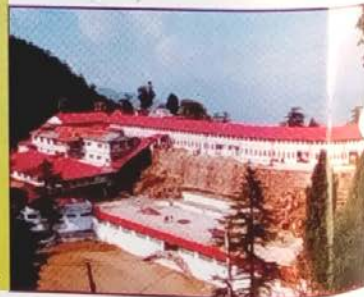
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Love and Cherish God
with every breath

ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥

ਗੁਜਰੀ ਮਹਲਾ ੫ ॥

ਤੂੰ ਦਾਤਾ ਜੀਆ ਸਭਨਾ ਕਾ ਬਸਹੁ ਮੇਰੇ ਮਨ ਮਾਹੀ ॥

ਚਰਣ ਕਮਲ ਰਿਦ ਮਾਹਿ ਸਮਾਏ ਤਹ ਭਰਮੁ ਅੰਧੇਰਾ ਨਾਹੀ ॥੧॥

ਠਾਕੁਰ ਜਾ ਸਿਮਰਾ ਤੂੰ ਤਾਹੀ ॥

ਕਰਿ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਸਰਬ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਾਲਕ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕਉ ਸਦਾ ਸਲਾਹੀ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

ਸਾਸਿ ਸਾਸਿ ਤੇਰਾ ਨਾਮੁ ਸਮਾਰਉ ਤੁਮ ਹੀ ਕਉ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਆਹੀ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਟੇਕ ਭਈ ਕਰਤੇ ਕੀ ਹੋਰ ਆਸ ਬਿਡਾਣੀ ਲਾਹੀ ॥੨॥੧੦॥੧੯॥

[SGGS: 499]

Translation

Thou who art Bestower of boons to all creation,
In my heart pray ever abide;
As Thy lotus feet in my heart are lodged,
Gone is darkness of illusion. (1)
Lord! wherever Thee I contemplate, there art Thou,
Cherisher of all! grant in Thy grace that the Lord I ever laud.
With each breath your Name may I contemplate;
Thee alone may I cherish.
As the Creator has propped Nanak.
All alien desire has he shed off. (2)

* Based on translation by Prof. Gurbachan Singh Talib.

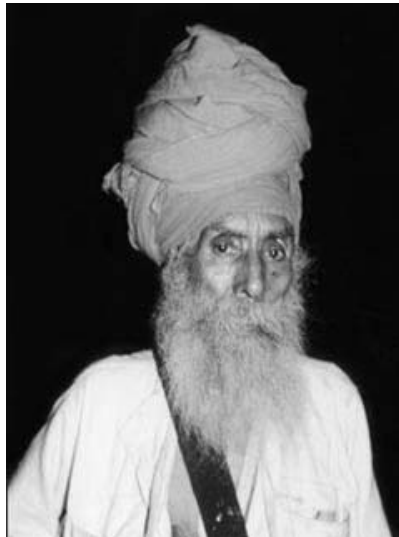
Born to Serve Remembering Bhagat Puran Singh Ji

PINGALWARA (lit. 'home for the disabled') is now part of the Punjab folklore. Its current President, the soft-spoken Dr Inderjit Kaur was in Calcutta on Vaisakhi last April. She had earlier visited Ranchi and Jamshedpur addressing congregation and reminding the people of the doctrine of "Daswand", in support of the cause dearest to the legendary Bhagat Puran Singh. She also had a session with Sister Nirmala, successor to the "Saint of Calcutta" Mother Teresa. One can speculate cheerfully about what they said to each other.

Even as powerful nations in pursuit of Machiavellian statecraft spend billion of dollars in deadly armaments, including the dreaded nuclear weapons, a small number of individuals everywhere remain dedicated to human welfare at the grassroots level. One is reminded of Guru Nanak's agonized plea for peace and social justice, while he identified himself with the lowly and the downtrodden. Through all ages an imbalance has characterized our world. Starving emaciated children of Darfur and the African sub-Sahara co-

exist with fashion parades and beauty pageants in Asia and Europe.

The 'adopted' daughter of Bhagat Puran Singh does not despair. The last time I met her, she was on her familiar mission in Barcelona, Spain, in summer of 2004. The occasion was the Parliament of World's Religion. The Sikhs from United Kingdom, under guidance of Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh Ji, stole the lime-light by holding daily Kirtan and prayers, and feeding over a thousand delegates of all faiths at the Guru-ka-Langar throughout the weeklong session of the Parliament. The Sikh celebration epitomized the validity of



Scriptural maxim: ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰ ਉਮਾਹਾ the God-conscious ever find joy in doing good to others. The precept had been a personal commitment for Bhagat Puran Singh long before he established the Pingalwara in 1948.

Inderjit Kaur speaks of the deep commitment that Bhagat Puran Singh demonstrated to the concept of dedicated Sewa. In United India of 1946's he was a

familiar figure at Dehra Sahib in Lahore, the shrine that commemorates the excruciating martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev in the torrid summer of 1606. It is ironical that when the Sikhs observe Quatercentenary of that glorious – if grim – event, they require permission of the Government of Pakistan to pay homage to the Great Martyr.

For Bhagatji, it is the Guruvani that opened the gateway to knowledge and enlightenment - a gift he inherited from his mother. He needed no university degree to grasp the power of compassion, or to develop the single-minded determination to espouse the cause of the disabled. Early years were the toughest for him, but there was no place for despair in his scheme of things. Pingalwara had become a reality even as the sick, the spastic, and the blind, the paraplegic and the polio-stricken, trickled in - as long term inmates – from near and far, irrespective of creed, colour or age. Bhagat Puran Singh was in his early 40's when he had to say good-bye to his beloved Dehra Sahib – to cross over the border into Amritsar – 'home to the virtuous' (ਸਿਫਤੀ ਦਾ ਘਰ). One can have a glimpse of the vast universe of Bhagat Puran Singh from the illustrated Centennial volume compiled by (retired Group Captain) Rajinder Pal Singh at Inderjit Kaur's initiative.

Incredible as it may appear, Bhagat Ji has written lucid and graphic accounts of some of the most challenged and disabled of Pingalwara inmates. The story of Asha

Devi – a Kashmiri Brahmin from Poonch and her four children, two of them paraplegics, is heart rending. Bhagat Ji picked her up from roadside one sunlit day in 1948, and brought her, in a tonga, to Guru Tegh Bahadur hospital, for the saintly Dr Manmohan Singh to take the X-rays of her lungs. Too late for any treatment, she died three weeks later, entrusting her children to the Sage of Pingalwara.

The distinguished long time editor of the *Tribune*, VN Narayanan became a devotee and admirer of Bhagat Ji. He recalls Bhagat Ji's touch of Divinity – even as the Sage was admitted in coma to PGI Chandigarh in 1992. The frail man had become a phenomenon and a Movement. Narayanan quotes Guru Arjun's axiomatic utterance: "ਗਰੀਬੀ ਗਦਾ ਹਮਾਰੀ ॥ ਖੋਨਾ ਸਗਲ ਕੇਨੁ ਛਾਰੀ ॥" i.e. Humility is my mace, The dust on the feet of humans I touch is my shield. I am protected by those two weapons, So none can subdue me.

An overseas visitor to Pingalwara wrote: "I think that there is joy, a hope and a sense of optimism here that eclipses that tragedy behind the patients. Puran Singh, in my view, was a man of infinite compassion and wisdom." No truer words were ever spoken!

This brings us to the bunch of publications that celebrate the work and writings of Saint of Pingalwara. The more striking among hard covers is Harish Dhillon's "The living Saint: Bhagat Puran Singh," published (2005) by Unistar

Books, SCO-26-27, Sector 34A, Chandigarh – 160022. Highly readable and informal, aimed at the younger generation, it captures the Spirit of Man, at the working level amid day-to-day realities, permeated with pathos and awash with milk of human kindness.

Then there is a bouquet of three books, in Punjabi by the Sage: derived from the Guruvani, which he had imbibed and exemplified throughout his life of four-score and eight: “ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੇ ਸਿਮਰਨਿ ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਸੁਝੈ ॥” is a collection of essays, studded with autobiographical details, which link the reader with gems of Guruvani. He talks of his love of nature (quoting John Ruskin and Wordsworth), his psychoanalysis of human nature and an amazing insight into the wisdom of Ramakrishna Paramhansa and Lala Hardayal, with a wealth of Guruvani quotations. An interesting footnote mentions that (after his departure) the daily expenditure of Pingalwara increased threefold, from Rs 70,000/- in 1996 to Rs two lacs in 2005, all accounted for by voluntary donations from across the globe. The essays pick up random themes, but their inspiration is rooted in (a) Guru Granth Sahib (b) Moral traditions of various faiths, and (c) Personal flights of fancy.

The twin volume “ਕਹਾਣੀਆਂ” stories are an anecdotal collection of personal expe-

rience, episode and real-life occurrences. Starting with account of his Mother, the memories of Lahore in 1940, the grim tragedy of partition, the death and devastation, which followed, and the key role of the Guru Tegh Bahadur Hospital. There are pen-pictures of Prof. Puran Singh, Master Tara Singh, Principal Bhai Jodh Singh, and - some of the more striking inmates of Pingalwara, Evidently, there has been extensive editing, which enhances the books’ appeal without taking away their authenticity. Among other Pingalwara publications is a volume: ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਦਾ ਸ਼ੁਧ ਉਚਾਰਣ by Sr. Dhanna Singh, running into 450 pages, as if to reinforce the axiomatic truth : ਸਰਬ ਰੋਗ ਕਾ ਅਉਖਟੁ ਨਾਮੁ ॥ - God’s Name is the panacea for all sickness.

Much as one admires the gesture whereby all these publication are distributed free of cost, it would be more realistic that a price is put on each of these ‘priceless books’.

Bhagat Ji’s concern for environment finds expression in several of his writings. His love of nature is next only to his passion for ministering to sick. One of his stories indeed presages the danger to the human race spelt by HIV Aids, long before public health authorities in India showed any awareness.



Truth is high, higher still is truthful living.

- Guru Nanak

***Naam* in Sikhism and ‘Mahapurushiaism’**

DR. RATUL CHANDRA BORAH*

MAHAPURUSHA SRIMANTA Sankaradeva (1449-1568 AD) and *Sat Guru* Nanak Deva (1469- 1539 AD) are two universal spiritual *Gurus* who reformed the society on the basis of new religious cultures according to their individual thesis. The religion established by *Guru* Srimanta Sankaradeva is known as *Eka Sarana Hari Nama Dharma* (in short, *Nama Dharma*) which is also known as *Mahapurusha Dharma* (Mahapurushiaism). The religion founded by *Guru* Nanaka is known as Sikhism. “In fact Sikhism has often been called the *Naam Marga* or the way of *Naam*”. (Daljeet Singh, 1998).

Ajoni: Both the religions are monotheistic in nature and *Nirguna Brahma* is the ultimate object of realization. In Mahapurushiaism, *Nirguna Brahma* is realized through *Saguna Brahma*. However, in Sikhism incarnation of God is not accepted. According to the *Guru Granth Sahib*, (religious scripture of the Sikhs on which Sikhism is based), God does not incarnate, He does not come into the human form and is not born. In the *Mul Mantra* of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, God has been mentioned as one who never takes birth or form. The Sikh *Gurus* have repeat-

edly emphasized, as also stated in the very opening verse of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, that God is one, *Ek Onkar* and no second entity. The same God is *Sarguna* and *Nirguna*, *Nirankar* and self absorbed. “But it would be highly inappropriate to confuse the *Gurus’* concept of *Saguna* and *Nirguna* (i.e. Translucent cum Immanent God) with the Advaitic connotation of these terms as also of *Ishvara*. The *Gurus* never accepted the Advaitic concepts of *Saguna* and *Nirguna*”. (Daljeet Singh, 1998).

Sangat: However, in Mahapurushiaism, the basis of which are the *Gita* and the *Bhagavata Purana*, accepts the incarnation of God in different forms, the most important among them is Krishna who is both *Saguna Brahma* as well as *Nirguna Brahma* at the same time. In fact Krishna is the perfect incarnation of God, manifesting as *Saguna Brahma* whose name attributes are innumerable. Through the *Kirtana* (chanting) and *Shravana* (listening) of the *Naam* (name) as well as attributes of *Saguna Brahma* (Krishna), one (the devotee) attains the *Nirguna Brahma* (Krishna). In fact the *Naam Dharma* of Srimanta Sankaradeva is based on the four principles, i.e. *Guru* (Srimanta Sankaradeva),

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Deva (Krishna), *Naam* (attributes of Krishna) and *Bhakata* (Devotee of Krishna). The four principles lead to realization of the *Nirguna Brahma* (Krishna) in the *Satsanga* or the company of pious people or devotees of Krishna. However, hearing and chanting of *Naam* is the main principle of *Sadhana* for attainment of *Nirguna Brahma* through devotion to one and only one God i.e. Krishna. So, *Naam* and attributes of Krishna and Krishna (*Hari*) is synonymous.

In Mahapurushiaism, the modes of worship are *Shravana* (listening which is meditative) and *Kirtana* (chanting) of the name and attributes of Krishna in the *Satsanga* or in the company of the devotees of Krishna. Therefore *Naam* is central to the *Nama Dharma*.

Shadba-Guru: There are similarities in many aspects between Sikhism and Mahapurushiaism. In both the religions, it is the scripture which is placed on the altar (*Thapana* or *Guru Asana* in Mahapurushiaism) of worship. In Sikhism the *Gurdwara* is the place of community worship where *Guru Granth Sahib* is placed for worship as the living Guru. The 10th *Guru* of Sikhism, *Guru Gobind Singh* died in 1708 AD. But before his death, he passed on the Guruship to *Guru Granth Sahib*. (Surinder Singh Kohli, 1996). *Guru Granth Sahib* is regarded as the "Living jurisprudence" (accepted by the Supreme Court of India) and accepted as the living *Guru* of the Sikhs in the form of "*Gurus' word*" (*Shabad Guru*). In the *Nama*

Dharma of Srimanta Sankaradeva, it is the *Naamghar* where community worships, prayers are performed in addition to various cultural and social activities at the village level. In the *Naamghar* or *Gurugriha* the *Bhagavata* (the main scripture of Mahapurushiaism) is placed on the *Guru Asana* or *Thapana* (altar) inside the *Manikut* (sanctum sanctorum). An abridged version (a gist of the *Bhagavata*) called *Gunamala* is placed instead of the complete book of *Bhagavata* in the *Guru Asana* or *Thapana*. The Mahapurushias consider the *Guru Asana* as the symbol of living God and *Guru* (Srimanta Sankaradeva). God (Krishna) and *Guru* are synonymous, since the Mahapurushias accept Srimanta Sankaradeva as the partial incarnation of lord Krishna. Here Srimanta Sankaradeva is regarded as the sole *Guru* who is Supreme *Guru* (*Parma Guru*) and there is none other than Him any second *Guru* (*Naam Ghosa*, verse No. 375, Mahapurusha Madhavadeva). No other image or idol is worshipped by the Mahapurushias. No gods other than One Supreme Absolute God is worshipped in Mahapurushiaism.

In Sikhism, *Naam Simran* is the main mode of worship which is synonymous with *Naam Kirtana*. Like Mahapurushiaism, there is no caste or ascetic austerity in Sikhism. It believes in one God, *Ek Onkar*. Singing His praise is the best way of devotion.

The glory of *Naam* has been explained

and exemplified throughout the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Similarly, in all the writings of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva as well as of Madhavadeva, *Naam* occupies the central position.

Place of *Naam* in Sikhism:

In Sikhism, the principle of *Naam* (*Shabad*) includes meditation, contemplation and reflection and the principles of *Shabda* (Hymns) includes praising and glorifying God earnestly with focused and attentive mind. *Naam* is God's name and *Simran* means remembering. There can be many names of God and He is to be remembered constantly through word, thought and deed. Although the word, 'Waheguru' is the most appropriate word according to *Gurubani*, the purpose behind this is to select a word comfortable to mind for perpetual remembrance of God. "*Naam-Simran* is at the center of *Guru Nanak's* teachings. The whole message of *Guru Nanak* as contained in the *Guru Granth Sahib* revolves around *Naam*. The first chapter in the holy *Granth* is devoted to differentiation between the meaning of *Naam Simran* and *Bhakti*. *Simran* is beginning, *Bhakti* is the end. *Simran* is the seed, *Bhakti* is the fruit. (Kulwant Singh, 2002). This seed, when sown in the soil of mind, sprouts in the form of the live of God, to fructify. "In *Kaliyug*, vice predominates, and as a result the human mind has lost much of its luster. Since *Naam* is the only detergent that can cleanse the mind, it alone has the capability to change the *Yug*. It func-

tions at all levels, from micro to macro. There are two ways to live a human life – by treading the path of *Bhakti* (devotion to God) and by following the path of *Maya* (worldly attachments). The path of *Bhakti* leads to rewarding life, peace, happiness, bliss and union with God. The path of *Maya* ends in pain and suffering. (Sri Gurbax Singh, 1999). "Thus *Naam – Simran* is an inseparable part of a Sikh's life. In fact, Sikhi is synonymous with *Naam Simran*." (Kulwant Singh, 2002). *Simran* is a meditative prayer within; God's name is respected lovingly in short phrases. "*Wahe Guru, Wahe Guru, Wahe Guru Ji/Sat Naam, Sat Naam, Sat Naam Ji*" is prelude to *Naam-Simran*, the recitation of God's name. In *Simran*, God is revered. God's name is God's praise. God's name is a portal, a vessel, its repetition an act of humility.

The recitation of the *Guru Granth Sahib* is an essential part of daily prayer in any *Gurdwara*. *Guru Granth Sahib* is a compilation of the messages of the Sikh *Gurus*. It accommodates even Hindu *Gurus* who are basically preachers of *Bhakti* culture. There are messages from *Sufi* poets and the message of Kabir – the great preacher of *Bhakti* philosophy in medieval India. There are a total of 31 *Raagas* in the *Guru Granth Sahib*. (Surinder Singh Kohli, 1996). It needs training to recite of this holy scripture, for which persons are trained from a very young age.

The *Guru Granth Sahib* highlights the

glory of *Naam* and its utility in human life. The dictum “*Sarab rog ka aukhad Naam*” heralds a great truth. It is a great truth, which when fully grasped has the power to overcome all physical and mental illness. It can be induced to harness the earthly resources for the benefit of mankind. *Guru Granth Sahib* rejects all ritualism, formalism and symbolism. All the Braministic intermediaries and cadres of priesthood exploiting the masses in the name of religion, have been castigated as self serving and hypocritical. *Guru Granth Sahib* advocates the equality of all human beings, irrespective of birth and gender. The woman is, in no way, inferior to man. The *Guru Granth Sahib* presents a balanced combination of action (*Karma*), devotion (*Bhakti*) and knowledge (*Jnan*). It is essentially a religion of devotion whereas the body has to work for the well-being of the family and society, the mind has to remain in tune with the Lord. Service is, thus, the motto of an adherent of *Guru Granth Sahib*. The best service towards the *Guru* and the Lord is the remembrance of the *Naam*. (Harkirat Singh, 2003).

Spiritual meaning of *Naam*:

“According to *Gurbani* “*Ek Onkar*” denotes both *Sagun* (manifested) (it is written as *Sargun* in *Guru Granth Sahib*) and *Nirgun* (un-manifested) stages of ‘*Akal Purakh*’ *Waheguru*. In its pure form it is a musical sound – word, arising out of ‘*Sunn*’ (soundless state). It is pure knowledge giving rise to the energy and worldly

order. The ‘Word’ is pervasive every where and is creator, protector and destroyer of all physical forms of life and lifeless. ‘He’ has countless attributes but all are ‘His’ manifested qualities. The real one is beyond comprehension, languages and words. One can get tuned to the ‘Word’ in the heart through the mind with ‘His’ grace through the words of a true ‘*Guru*’ and can actually listen and see its manifestation. For that he has to surrender to the *Guru* with full faith, carry out his commands in toto and recite ‘*Guru mantra*’ repeatedly all the time. ‘*Guru mantra*’ is one of the manifested names of ‘*Ek Onkar*’ which has the capacity to link the disciple (Sikh) with ‘Word’. (Dilbagh Singh, 2004).

“It is stated in the *Guru Granth Sahib* that as we start understanding the depths of the *Guru*’s word and chant ‘*Guru mantra*’ we start getting a kind of bliss after due course of time according to the purity/impurity/hardness/mellowness of our mind and heart, brought about by our deeds (*Karma*). This irrigates our mind and body (perhaps through the nervous system) cleaning them of our ego, five vices and illusionary ‘*Maya*’. Side by side, Godly virtues get cultivated in our heart. It is a life long process and while doing so one does not eye the fruit but awaits grace. It is ‘His’ grace, which finally tunes in the *Gursikh* to ‘*Ek Onkar*’ where he actually sees and listens to the ‘Word’ *i.e.* *Nirgun* stage through a different eye. Here the Sikh, *Guru* and *Waheguru* are and the same. This stage may be attained while living or after leaving the body. This is the

stage where *Guru Nanak Ji* and all other *Gurus* and Saints described 'Ek Onkar' through *Gurbani*." (Dilbagh Singh, 2004).

After the 10th *Guru Gobind Singh* there is no loving *Guru* in Sikhism and *Guru Gobind Singh* asked the Sikhs to follow *Guru Granth Sahib* as the sole *Guru* and to follow its preaching as guide (*Guru Granth Ji maneo, pargat gurah kee deh, jo prabh ko millvo chahai, khoj shabad mein leh,*" - meaning – *Guru Granth Sahib* is one *Guru* and it represents philosophy (body) of all the *Gurus*, only *Shabad* will connect us with *akaal purkh* (Dasam Granth, p. 248). In Sikhism, the Khalsa panth was established by *Guru Gobind Singh*, the 10th and the last *Guru* before three hundred years ago. Khalsa – the family of pure ones, to which a Sikh may belong through receiving baptism or initiation (*Amrit/Khande di pahul*). Therefore, every Khalsa is a Sikh, but every Sikh is not a Khalsa, unless he/she receives baptism.

The basic definition of *Naam* is contained in the *Sukhmani* and some quotations from the *Guru Granth Sahib* are cited hereunder. (Daljeet Singh, 1998).

- i) *Naam* sustains all religions and universes, all thought, knowledge and consciousness, all skies and stars, all forces and substances, all continents and spheres. *Naam* emancipates those who accept it in their heart.
- ii) *Naam* is the creator of everything. To be divorced from *Naam* is death. All is created by *Naam*. *Naam* gives form

to everything and through *Naam* comes all wisdom or light.

- iii) *Naam* extends to all creation.
- iv) *Naam*, is the 'Nine Treasures' and nectar (*Amrita*). It permeates the body.
- v) *Naam*, the immaculate, is unfathomable. How can it be known? *Naam*, is within us, how to get it? The perfect *Guru* awakens your heart to the vision of *Naam*. It is by the grace of God that one meets such an enlightener.

There are numerous verses in the *Guru Granth* where *Naam* and God have been described synonymously. Therefore, *Naam* is dynamic immanence of God, which is making and readily sustaining the manifest world of force and form.

Guru Nanak on Naam:

"According to *Guru Nanak* everything in the universe is created by the power of Divine Name (*Naam*) and without the Divine Name there is no way (*The Japji*). He explains that all the visible forms are held by the Divine Name, everything takes its rise from the Divine Name and is again absorbed in it The Divine Name is synonymous with the Divine Word or *Shabad*." (R. M. Chopra, 2000).

Guru Nanak said,

Harkening to the Name bestows Truth, divine wisdom, contentment, To bathe in the joy of the Name is to bathe in the holy places.

(*The Japji, Pauri, 10*)

It is held by *Guru Nanak* that God is *anaam* (nameless), yet He is possessed of infinite names. "Numberless, Thy Names and numberless Thy places" (*The Japji, Pauri*, 19). "In fact, *Guru Nanaka* took many prevailing attributive names of God for One Absolute Reality such as Vishnu, Brahma, Govinda, Gopal, Hari, Keshava, Krishna, Narayana, Parameswara, Ram, etc. from Hindu pantheons and Muhammadan names like Allah, Haq, Rahim, Khaliq, Khuda, Rahim, Rabb, etc. from Muslim Holy books. All these Names stand for the same God. To these names more names have been added by the Sikh Gurus such as, *Piara, Pritam, Mittar, Sajjan, Satguru, Waheguru*, etc." (R.M. Chopra, 2000).

"Japu ta Eko Naam":

Contemplate thou only the *Naam*. This expression is found in *Guru Granth Sahib*, Rag, Suhi Mahala I. The meaning of the technical terms '*Japu*' and *Naam*, expressed in the *Guru Granth Sahib* is as follows:

"*Japu* means prayer, meditation,

Naam means the Spirit within, figuratively the *Naam* also means *Amrita* or nectar of immortality."

Sikhism, like Mahapurushiaism, prescribes *Naam Simran* in the company of *Satsang* or devotees (*Bhakta*). Literally *Satsang* means the *Sang* (Company) of *Sat* (*Naam, Guru* and God). Thus, Sikhism and Mahapurushiaism have the basic similarity of *Guru, Deva* (God), *Naam*, and *Satsang* (*Bhaktas*). The entire conception of the Ultimate Being is regarded as *Naam* or the 'Holy Name'. God is considered as *Nama-Rupa* in Mahapurushiaism.

In all the writings of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva, *Naam* occupies the Supreme place along with *Deva*. The *Naam* of Hari (Krishna) is synonymous with *Deva*.

Thus, both Mahapurushiaism and Sikhism glorify the *Naam* in their respective religions and *Naam* finds the supreme place of attaining devotion that is *Nirguna* Brahma.



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***Munn* or Mind as in Guru Granth Sahib®**

RAVINDER KAUR*

IN GURU GRANTH SAHIB, NUMEROUS verses deal with the subject of mind. Evidently the contributors of Guru Granth Sahib were well equipped with the subject. They have dealt with the various aspects of mind for example its nature, power, the way to subdue it and so on. Sikh philosophy does not make any difference between mind and soul; rather treats it as one entity¹. The terms mind, *atma* and *jio* have been used interchangeably². In reality mind is the inner abode of the soul that sprouts, grows and develops with the passage of time³. The entity of mind is tenuous - it is neither gross like body nor subtle like soul. Sher Singh rightly illustrates the relation between body, mind and soul with a strip of paper that is black at one extremity and white at the other. In between gradation of color leads to grey symbolizing mind⁴.

The mind abides in the dormant state, before the formation of the body⁵. In the body it has no concrete abode. It is a name given to series of feeling and conscious activities such as desire, aversion, pleasure, pain, intelligence, knowledge, thought, etc. Mind is an ever-active instrument of human body. Mind acts like an instrument, the activities of which are an

indication of the existence of soul⁶.

Mind is capable of reflecting the nature of self. It is a subtle entity which is neither visible nor tangible, nor spacious but in close proximity with the soul. Some people have enlightened minds while others have maya-oriented minds. The intelligence of mind is due to the reflection of self's Divine light in it. It is likened to moon, which is able to catch the sun's light. Mind can reflect the self's Divine light⁷. Breath is a vital force, which regulates bodily as well as mental functions.

Enlightened Mind

Enlightened mind is the one, which helps a person to recognize the real source of his origin. This aspect of mind is always conscious of the presence of Almighty Lord. It is through this aspect of mind one looks for the truth of origin; is able to identify the Truthful Lord and truth of life and death. Through the Guru's Grace man realizes the presence of God. The enlightened aspect of mind annihilates the duality of mind and understands the secret of birth and death. The enlightened mind helps to wean human beings away, which results into the realization of peace resulting into Divine exultation and

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consequent acceptance into the presence of Almighty⁸.

Guru Nanak says enlightened mind is enriched with unlimited spiritual wealth⁹. Guru Amardas guides that in the enlightened mind, there are God's wondrous valuables. Man does not need to search for them outside; they are within us.¹⁰

Precious enlightened mind can ferry across life-ocean by contemplating on the Divine name. The ignorant mind remains immersed in worldly entanglements and if it contemplates on God's name by following Guru's teachings, it can transcend the mundane attractions and entanglements. Guru Arjun says, only a few realize with the Guru's grace that the Lord lives within enlightened mind. This positive state of mind in Gurbani is referred as *Sehaj*. Those who have access to this ambrosial state can relish it¹¹. Guru Arjun illustrates it by using a metaphor of palace. The enlightened mind is like a palace, which is surrounded by body fence. In the palace are God's unrivalled commodities of wealth; the virtues of God are present. God, the owner of the valuables resides within the palace. He does business deals with only those merchants who can cross the boundaries of maya and enter the boundaries of enlightened mind. Thus achieving an infinite state of peace, which has no parallel¹².

Maya-oriented Mind

The other aspect of mind is smeared with love of *maya* and filled to the brim

with sense of ego. The *maya-oriented* mind goes on taking birth in different life forms and at last repents for having wasted the period of human existence. The third Guru addressing such a mind says, "O, pride laden mind, absorbed in ego and oppressed with the weight of ego; lured by *maya* wanders from birth to birth. Ignorant mind clings to ego and regrets in the end. Afflicted by ailments of ego and desire, wastes one's birth away"¹³.

Maya-oriented mind is so powerful that it leaves no door for our escape. It makes all endeavors to lead man astray. It does not give up its deceitful nature. It keeps man attached to duality and leaves him to grieve in woe¹⁴.

The *maya-oriented* mind is fickle. The egocentric mind wanders in all directions, it is strayed by doubt, fired by false hopes and craves more and more giving birth to never ending expectations¹⁵. Due to wandering nature, it changes color easily. It does not remain still and wanders like a deserter. Such a mind wanders in all directions, gets entangled in the grip of sensual desires, lust and wrath afflict the man with pain. Under these circumstances, one cannot sing Lord's praises with devotion¹⁶.

Mind due to its wavering nature flitting from one state to another¹⁷. At times it rises to heavens and at times it sinks to the hades¹⁸. Guru Ramdas has beautifully explained this aspect of mind using as metaphor of child on a visit to tinsel town¹⁹. He says, in the township of body lives

mind, which is like a child. Like an anxious and curious child, mind does not rest even for a moment. Try as much as one may, it wavers and wobbles incessantly.

The *maya-oriented* mind is like an elephant, wild and intoxicated with its own power. It wanders about in woods of illusion, lured by attachments. With death always hovering over its head, it goes from here and there²⁰. Guru Nanak has compared the fickle natured mind with blowing wind. He says if one's mind rests in peace even for a moment, one abides in bliss²¹. Guru Arjun has compared the mind with oilman's bull. Mind runs after the objects of desire in all directions. He forgets the Lord's name; blinkered by *maya* he forgets his destination as well as path to destination and goes on moving in never ending circles. Similarly, man is not contented with what is his but eyes on what belongs to others. With myriads of falsehoods he pleases his mind. Gets intoxicated with *maya*, he keeps the company of five demons which lead him by nose and goes round and round in worldliness just as an oil-man's bull round the oil press²².

Maya-oriented mind is obstinate. It goes its own way and does not refrain from evil²³. It lures away the world through deceit and thus fills its belly. It is as stubborn as dog's crooked tail and does not listen to the counsel of enlightened guide²⁴.

Obviously, man's mind is asleep being dumb struck by the glamour of *maya*.

Thus *maya* can be related to both spiritual as well as to the physical world. Spiritual evolution leads to merger in the supreme soul and physical leads to material world and is therefore doer of all our actions. It has dual type of nature; on one end it has potential to enjoy worldly revelries and sometimes to practice penance. It has to be trained so as to develop its brighter, sagacious aspect under the guidance of Divine Mentor.

Mind is under the control of evil passions. It is very strong, without reorienting there cannot be any spiritual progress²⁶. Guru Nanak says, if the mind is not subdued, the task remains unfulfilled but when the mind accepts the Guru's way it becomes the whole²⁷.

Mind has Divine potential to transcend the worldliness, only if a spiritual guide comes to his rescue²⁸. Man needs guidance and control over his activities in every walk of his life from birth till death. Guru Amardas states that mind elephant without Guru's goad stray from the path, for the mind follows what the Guru instructs²⁹. Guru Nanak instructs after great thought, "Without perfect Guru, one is not emancipated³⁰."

Communion and separation are two ways. Communion is a way of love and devotion for the Almighty while separation is away for worldliness. Ordinary man is engrossed in mundane pursuits. Separation from Him, as illusioned by *Maya*, is most powerful and hard to overcome. He wanders in the desert of his own deeds if

he is not able to grapple with worldliness and adopt Divine devotion using intellect. The intellect can guide in matters of ethics and spirituality. Guru Nanak says:

“It is through the intellect that we remember Lord

It is through the intellect that we realize the truth”³¹

The intellect should be used for judging worth- while ness of charity. So the intellect controls the mind and can put it to right use through self-discipline.

On minute examination, it is evident that only orienting the mind properly is the panacea. Mind is the cause of all sorrow and pain. The *maya*-oriented mind bondages man. The enlightened mind grapples with the *maya*-oriented mind. If it grapples with something other than mind he wastes his life. Through the Guru’s guidance one can still one’s mind and test it on the touchstone of the world. The endeavor to fix the mind and this fixing is the final stage of meditation and consists of unflapped concentration. Guru Granth Sahib stresses that if the mind is impure, body also becomes impure and it will make the speech impure too. Also through evil action, man’s mind becomes evil and the blind mind makes the body blind³².

Guru Nanak affirms that, one who’s mind is imbrued with truth, he utters His true name with love, gets the passport to the truth and meets with no obstruction

on the way.

Various methods such as keeping company of holy men, participating in congregation’s truthful conduct, becoming Guru-oriented men who seek refuge in God and constantly remember His name. The purpose of all this exercise is sub dual of mind which is erroneously interpreted as killing the mind. Obviously if the mind is killed, then the whole activity including the thought process comes to an abrupt end which is not ideal Sikh way of life. Like the nucleus of atom, mind is a source of enormous energy. The problem of human life is as how to make use of the latent energy of mind for the achievement of goal of human existence. Bhagat Kabir hints at the mystery in one of his hymns.

“The habit of mind is that it pursues itself. If therefore, one kills one’s mind how will he become an adept? Who pray is the seer who slays his mind? For, if he slays his mind, what is it that he is out to emancipate?”

It is through the mind that life forces speaks though without destroying (the evil of) one’s mind, one cannot worship one’s Lord, says Kabir, “ He, who can resolve this mystery of mind-that evil of mind is to be destroyed and yet the mind is to be kept whole and not destroyed through self torture or penances”³³. He finds the mind as the God of three worlds³⁴.



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ਨਿਤ ਆਸਾ ਮਨਿ ਚਿਤਵੈ ਮਨ ਤ੍ਰਿਸਨਾ ਭੁਖ ਲਗਾਇਆ ॥
ਅਨਤਾ ਧਨੁ ਧਰਿ ਦਬਿਆ ਫਿਰਿ ਬਿਖੁ ਭਾਲਣ ਗਇਆ ॥ (ਸੂਹੀ ਮ. ਪ , ਗੁ.ਗੁ.ਸਾ.ਪੰ. ੭੭੬)
16. ਮਨੁਆ ਦਹ ਦਿਸ ਧਾਵਦਾ ਓਹੁ ਕੈਸੇ ਹਰਿ ਗੁਣ ਗਾਵੈ ॥
ਇੰਦ੍ਰੀ ਵਿਆਪਿ ਰਹੀ ਅਧਿਕਾਈ ਕਾਮੁ ਕ੍ਰੋਧੁ ਨਿਤ ਸੰਤਾਵੈ ॥ (ਵਡਹੰਸ ਮ.੩, ਗੁ.ਗੁ.ਸਾ.ਪੰ. ੫੬੫)
17. ਇਹੁ ਮਨੁਆ ਖਿਨੁ ਉਭੁ ਪਇਆਲੀ ਭਰਮਦਾ ਇਕਤੁ ਘਰਿ ਆਣੈ ਰਾਮ ॥ (ਆਸਾ ਮ. ੪, ਗੁ.ਗੁ.ਸਾ.ਪੰ. ੪੪੩)
18. ਕਬਹੂ ਜੀਅੜਾ ਉਭਿ ਚੜਤੁ ਹੈ ਕਬਹੂ ਜਾਇ ਪਇਆਲੇ ॥ (ਰਾਮਕਲੀ ਮ. ੧, ਗੁ.ਗੁ.ਸਾ.ਪੰ. ੮੭੬)
19. ਕਾਂਇਆ ਨਗਰਿ ਇਕੁ ਬਾਲਕੁ ਵਸਿਆ ਖਿਨੁ ਪਲੁ ਬਿਰੁ ਨ ਰਹਾਈ ॥
ਅਨਿਕ ਉਪਾਵ ਜਤਨ ਕਰਿ ਥਾਕੇ ਬਾਰੰ ਬਾਰ ਭਰਮਾਈ ॥ (ਬਸੰਤ ਹਿੰਡੋਲ ਮ. ੪, ਗੁ.ਗੁ.ਸਾ.ਪੰ. ੧੧੯੧)
20. ਮਨੁ ਮੈਗਲੁ ਸਾਕਤੁ ਦੇਵਾਨਾ ॥ ਬਨ ਖੰਡਿ ਮਾਇਆ ਮੋਹਿ ਹੈਰਾਨਾ ॥
ਇਤ ਉਤ ਜਾਹਿ ਕਾਲ ਕੇ ਚਾਪੇ ॥ (ਆਸਾ ਮ. ੧ , ਗੁ.ਗੁ.ਸਾ.ਪੰ. ੪੧੫)
21. ਮਨੁਆ ਪਉਣੁ ਬਿੰਦੁ ਸੁਖਵਾਸੀ ਨਾਮਿ ਵਸੈ ਸੁਖ ਭਾਈ ॥ (ਸੋਰਠਿ ਮ. ੧ , ਗੁ.ਗੁ.ਸਾ.ਪੰ. ੬੩੪)
22. ਧਾਇਓ ਰੇ ਮਨ ਦਹ ਦਿਸ ਧਾਇਓ ॥.....
ਮਾਇਆ ਮਗਨ ਸੁਆਦਿ ਲੋਭਿ ਮੋਹਿਓ ਤਿਨਿ ਪ੍ਰਭਿ ਆਪਿ ਭੁਲਾਇਓ ॥.....

- ਧਾਵਤ ਕਉ ਧਾਵਹਿ ਬਹੁ ਭਾਤੀ ਜਿਉ ਤੇਲੀ ਬਲਦੁ ਭ੍ਰਮਾਇਓ ॥ (ਟੋਡੀ ਮ. ੫ , ਗੁ.ਗੁ.ਸਾ.ਪੰ. ੭੧੨)
23. ਯਹ ਮਨੁ ਨੈਕ ਨ ਕਹਿਓ ਕਰੈ ॥ ਸੀਖ ਸਿਖਾਇ ਰਹਿਓ ਅਪਨੀ ਸੀ ਦੁਰਮਤਿ ਤੇ ਨ ਟਰੈ ॥ (ਦੇਵਗੰਧਾਰੀ ਮ. ੧, ਗੁ.ਗੁ.ਸਾ.ਪੰ. ੫੩੬)
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30. ਬਿਨੁ ਗੁਰ ਪੂਰੇ ਨਾਹੀ ਉਧਾਰੁ ॥ ਬਾਬਾ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਆਖੈ ਏਹੁ ਬੀਚਾਰੁ ॥੨॥੧੧॥ { ਰਾਮਕਲੀ ਮ.੫ , ਗੁ.ਗੁ.ਸਾ.ਪੰ. ੮੮੬}
31. ਅਕਲੀ ਪੜ੍ਹ ਕੈ ਬੁਝੀਐ ਅਕਲੀ ਕੀਚੈ ਦਾਨੁ ॥ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਆਖੈ ਰਾਹੁ ਏਹੁ ਹੋਰਿ ਗਲਾਂ ਸੈਤਾਨੁ ॥੧॥ (ਸਲੋਕ ਮ.੧ , ਗੁ.ਗੁ.ਸਾ.ਪੰ. ੧੨੪੫)
32. ਮਨਿ ਜੂਠੈ ਤਨਿ ਜੂਠਿ ਹੈ ਜਿਹਵਾ ਜੂਠੀ ਹੋਇ ॥(ਸਿਰੀ ਰਾਗ ਮ.੧, ਗੁ.ਗੁ.ਸਾ.ਪੰ. ੫੫-੫੬)
33. ਕਾਮੁ ਕ੍ਰੋਧੁ ਦੁਇ ਕਰਹੁ ਬਸੋਲੇ ਗੋਡਹੁ ਧਰਤੀ ਭਾਈ ॥
ਜਿਉ ਗੋਡਹੁ ਤਿਉ ਤੁਮੁ ਸੁਖ ਪਾਵਹੁ ਕਿਰਤੁ ਨ ਮੋਟਿਆ ਜਾਈ ॥੩॥(ਬਸੰਤ ਮ.੧. ਗੁ.ਗੁ.ਸਾ.ਪੰ. ੧੧੭੧)
34. ਮਨ ਕਾ ਸੁਭਾਉ ਮਨਹਿ ਬਿਆਪੀ ॥ ਮਨਹਿ ਮਾਰਿ, ਕਵਨ ਸਿਧਿ ਬਾਪੀ ॥੧॥
ਕਵਨੁ ਸੁ ਮੁਨਿ, ਜੋ ਮਨੁ ਮਾਰੈ ॥ ਮਨ ਕਉ ਮਾਰਿ, ਕਹਹੁ ਕਿਸੁ ਤਾਰੈ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥
ਮਨ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਬੋਲੈ ਸਭੁ ਕੋਈ ॥ ਮਨ ਮਾਰੇ ਬਿਨੁ, ਭਗਤਿ ਨ ਹੋਈ ॥੨॥ (ਗਉੜੀ ਕਬੀਰ ਜੀ , ਗੁ.ਗੁ.ਸਾ.ਪੰ. ੩੨੮-੨੯)

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- Publisher

Creation of the Universe

As Expounded in Guru Nanak's Bani

*DR. D. P. SINGH, MSc., Ph.D.**

PART I

GURU NANAK, IN HIS HYMNS of *Jap(u) Ji, Asa di Var, Siddh Goshth* and *Maru Sohile* has shown incredible understanding of the mystery of creation. It is fascinating to note that some of the concepts/theories expressed in these *Banis* were not known to modern science until eighteenth century. In this way one can safely observe that Guru Nanak's ideas were the forerunner of the modern scientific tradition. Let us now analyse the ideas about the physical world as mentioned in Guru Nanak's hymns.

Before Creation

Using advanced scientific techniques scientists have been able to know numerous secrets of the universe during the present century. By the analysis of the light coming from distant galaxies, nebulae, pulsars and newly found stars, the scientists have calculated that our universe was born about 12 billion years ago.

How was the universe created? When and Why was it created? Scientists are unable to pinpoint the answers to these questions. Many theories are in vogue concerning the evolution of the universe.

It is generally assumed that our universe started out as a super dense ball called the 'cosmic egg' or the 'primal atom'. On explosion of the 'cosmic egg' all the fundamental particles of matter came into existence in a very very short span of time. With passage of time, galaxies, nebulae, pulsars, suns, stars, planets, moons and earth... took birth from this cosmic dust. This process is still in progress in several galaxies and nebulae.

In the expanse of the universe, millions of stars are taking birth, getting evolved and are dying on completion of their life span even now. Ultimately all these are being converted into a highly dense matter of 'cosmic egg'. The existence of 'black holes' confirms this fact. This process of creation and destruction is going on and on in the universe.

Another prevalent theory is that our universe was created about 12 billion years ago. Since its birth, it is expanding and will continue as such for the next 29 billion years. Then under the force of gravitation its contraction will start which will continue for next 41 billion years, till, it again takes the shape of the 'cosmic egg'.

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Even this is not the end. This whole process of creation and destruction will start again with the explosion of the newly formed 'cosmic egg'. This cycle of creation and destruction will continue forever.

In Guru Nanak's hymns many interesting facts about the creation and evolution of the universe are present, which appear in consonance with the modern scientific concepts. Scientists agree that there was nothing like the moon, the sun, the earth, the galaxies and the day or night before the creation of the universe. Guru Nanak had expressed such a view about 500 years ago in one of his hymns of '*Maru Sohilee*':

ਅਰਬਦ ਨਰਬਦ ਧੁੰਧੁਕਾਰਾ ॥

arubud nurubud dhundhookara

For endless eons, there was only utter darkness.

ਧਰਣਿ ਨ ਗਗਨਾ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਅਪਾਰਾ ॥

dhuran n gugunaa hukum apaaraa

There was no earth or sky; there was only the infinite Command of His Hukam.

ਨਾ ਦਿਨੁ ਰੈਨਿ ਨ ਚੰਦੁ ਨ ਸੂਰਜੁ ਸੁੰਨ ਸਮਾਧਿ
ਲਗਾਇਦਾ ॥ 1 ॥

naa dhin rain n chundh n sooruj sunn
sumaadh lugaaeidhaa

There was no day or night, no moon or sun; God sat in primal, profound Samaadhi. ||1||

(SGGS, Maru M. 1, Page 1035)

ਝਿਲਮਿਲਿ ਝਿਲਕੈ ਚੰਦੁ ਨ ਤਾਰਾ ॥

jhilamil jhilukai chundh n thaaraa

The dazzling light glitters, although neither the moon nor the stars are shining;

ਸੂਰਜ ਕਿਰਣਿ ਨ ਬਿਜੁਲਿ ਗੈਣਾਰਾ ॥

sooruj kiran n bijul gainaaraa

neither the sun's rays nor the lightning flashes across the sky.

ਅਕਥੀ ਕਥਉ ਚਿਹਨੁ ਨਹੀ ਕੋਈ ਪੂਰਿ ਰਹਿਆ
ਮਨਿ ਭਾਇਦਾ ॥ 8 ॥

akuthee kutho chihun nehee koe
poor rehaa man bhaaeidhaa

I describe the indescribable state, which has no sign, where the all-pervading Lord is still pleasing to the mind. ||8||

(SGGS, Maru M. 1, Page 1035)

Birth of the Universe

In 1930, a Belgium astronomer Georges Lemaitre expounded the 'big bang' theory, which describes the way in which the universe began. He suggested that about 10,000 million years ago all the matter of the universe was contained in a primal atom- which he described as a super dense 'cosmic egg'. This he said exploded and its many fragments became galaxies – one of which contains our solar system. All these galaxies are moving apart at incredible speed. Thus in the great explosion an unlimited number of material particles flew across space, which gave birth to planets, stars, galax-

ies, etc.

Another popular belief – The Steady State Theory – was advanced in 1948 by British cosmologists Hermann Bondi, Thomas Gold and Fred Hoyle, who suggested that the universe was eternal and that it has always existed. They said that matter is continuously created, apparently from nothing, at the rate of 62 atoms of hydrogen per cubic inch of space every 1000 million years. This is sufficient to form new galaxies to fill in the gaps caused by the expansion of the universe.

In 1965, an American astronomer Professor Allan Sandage adapted the 'Big Bang Theory' and developed it into his 'Pulsating Universe Theory'. He suggested that the universe is created, destroyed and then re-created in 82,000 million – year cycles. At the moment, he said, the universe is only 12,000 million years along the expansion stage, and it will continue to expand for another 29,000 million years before the galaxies overcome the force of the 'Big Bang' and begin to contract. Eventually, he maintained, moving at millions of miles an hour, they will converge and fuse again into their primal atoms which will then explode once more to re-start the whole cycle. A universe is, in other words, not without end but with an infinite number of endings ... and beginnings. Thus, scientists have different views about the universe's birth. They are unable to say something definite about it with strict confidence.

Guru Nanak Dev, the first Sikh Guru, says:

ਜਾ ਕਰਤਾ ਕਉ ਸਾਜੇ ਆਪੈ ਜਾਣੈ ਸੋਇ ॥

Ja karta sirthhi ko saaje, Aa-pe jaa-nai soee. (Jap(u), Stanza 21)

i.e. that only the creator knows that when and how the universe was created.

The Process of Creation:

In '*Jap(u) Ji*' Guru Nanak points out the process of creation of the universe in the following verse:

ਕੀਤਾ ਪਸਾਉ ਏਕੋ ਕਵਾਉ ॥

keethaa pusaaoo eaeko kuvaaoo

You created the vast expanse of the Universe with One Word!

ਤਿਸ ਤੇ ਹੋਏ ਲਖ ਦਰੀਆਉ ॥

tis tae hoeae lukh dhureeaaoo

Hundreds of thousands of rivers began to flow. (SGGS, Jap(u) Ji, Page 3)

i.e. The Creator created the whole universe with one word. Then lakhs of streams of life began to flow. Doesn't this '*eko kavao*' (i.e. cosmic sound) appear as the sound of the explosion of the 'cosmic egg' (from which the universe is thought to be created by the scientists.)?

Concept of Time:

There are several different ideas in vogue about the time of creation of the

universe. According to Christians, the universe was created in 4004 BC. Until the 18th century, scientists were convinced that our earth was only a few thousand years old. Using geological data and analyzing the fossils, Kelvin, a famous scientist, suggested by the second half of the 19th century that the earth is about 20 million years old. During the 20th Century, using 'Radioactive Dating Technique' it became known that our earth was created about a few billion years ago. Our solar system is found to be 4.6 billion years old. Our Milky-Way galaxy is said to be about 10-15 billion years old.

The founder of the Big Bang Theory, Georges Lemaitre had suggested that the explosion of the super dense 'cosmic egg' took place, about 10 billion years ago, which led to the creation of the universe. There is no precise date of creation. British cosmologists Hermann Bondi, Thomas Gold and Fred Hoyle, who had proposed 'The Steady State Theory', suggest that the universe is eternal and that it has always existed. The founder of the 'Pulsating Universe Theory' Allan Sandage is of the view that about 12 billion years ago, a great explosion had occurred resulting in the birth of the universe. But he is unable to tell us about the precise date of its birth. Thus it is obvious that even the great astronomers and cosmologists of the twentieth century had been unable to pin point the exact date or time of the creation of the universe.

Just like the above trend ... it seems

almost definite that even in the present century the scientists will not be able to find out the exact time when the universe began either. Now let us have a look at what Guru Nanak had said on this issue in his hymns. In '*Jap(u)*' written in the first half of sixteenth century, he had raised a pertinent question:

ਕਵਣੁ ਸੁ ਵੇਲਾ ਵਖਤੁ ਕਵਣੁ ਕਵਣ ਥਿਤਿ ਕਵਣੁ ਵਾਰੁ ॥

kuvun s vaelaa vukhuth kuvun kuvun thith kuvun vaar

What was that time, and what was that moment? What was that day, and what was that date?

ਕਵਣਿ ਸਿ ਰੁਤੀ ਮਾਹੁ ਕਵਣੁ ਜਿਤੁ ਹੋਆ ਆਕਾਰੁ ॥

kuvan s ruthee maahu kuvun jith hoaa aakaar

What was that season, and what was that month, when the Universe was created?

ਵੇਲ ਨ ਪਾਈਆ ਪੰਡਤੀ ਜਿ ਹੋਵੇ ਲੇਖੁ ਪੁਰਾਣੁ ॥

Vel na paa-ee-a pandati, je hovai lekh puran.

Pundits did not knew the time otherwise they would have written it in Puranas.

ਵਖਤੁ ਨ ਪਾਇਓ ਕਾਦੀਆ ਜਿ ਲਿਖਨਿ ਲੇਖੁ ਕੁਰਾਣੁ ॥

Vakhat na paa-eo kaadee-a, je likhan lekh Kuran.

The Kadies (Quazies) also knew not

otherwise they would have recorded it in the Quran.

ਥਿਤਿ ਵਾਰੁ ਨਾ ਜੋਗੀ ਜਾਣੈ ਰੁਤਿ ਮਾਹੁ ਨਾ ਕੋਇ ॥

Thit var na jogi jaan-ai, rut maaho na koee.

Yogis do not know the lunar date or the weekday, nor does anyone know the season or the month.

ਜਾ ਕਰਤਾ ਸਿਰਠੀ ਕਉ ਸਾਜੇ ਆਪੈ ਜਾਣੈ ਸੋਇ ॥

Ja karta sirthhi ko saaje, Aa-pe jaanai soee.

Only the creator of the universe knows all that. (Jap(u) Ji, Stanza 21)

Let's take a deeper look into these verses...Guru Nanak raises the questions in his above cited hymns as: What was the time, lunar date or the day, which was that weekday, season or month when the material world came into being? Then he himself has replied: The *Pundits* (Hindu Scholars) did not know the answer other-

wise they would have recorded it in *Puranas* (Hindu Holy Books). The *Kadies* (Quazies) also knew not otherwise they would have written it in the Quran (Muslim's Holy Book). Yogis do not know the lunar date or the weekday, nor does anyone know the season or the month. Only the Creator of the universe knows all that.

Thus Guru Nanak has pointed out very clearly that it is not possible to know the exact time of the creation by any means. Even with the use of very advanced scientific techniques available in twenty-first century, it has not been possible to arrive at the truth of the subject. Obviously, Guru Nanak's ideas about the creation of the material world (Universe) propounded about 500 years ago are in consonance with modern scientific thoughts.

**[End of PartI]
(To be concluded)**

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The Many Splendoured Guru Granth Sahib

NANDINI JOSHI*

THE GURU GRANTH SAHIB was first compiled by the Fifth Sikh Guru, Arjun Dev, in 1604 in the city of Amritsar. Its second and last version was the handiwork of Guru Gobind Singh, and it was finalized at Damdama Sahib in the year 1705. He added the hymns of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, the Ninth Master, and a couplet of his own to the volume wrote a century earlier. Since then, the authorized version has been transcribed and printed a number of times, and it abides. Its adoration or veneration is an article of faith with the Sikhs. Religious literature is sometimes sectarian and monolithic, if not partisan and polemical. It may admit of few variations and shades. No word but its own may be allowed sanctity and sovereignty. One of the greatest glories of the Guru Granth Sahib is its catholic character. Hardly any other scripture of that stature is completely free from bias, animus and controversy. Indeed, the uniqueness of the Granth in this respect is all the more astonishing when we think of the obscurantism, factionalism and fanaticism of the period in which it was composed. Perhaps it is the only scripture of its kind which contains within its sacred covers the songs, hymns and utterances of a wide variety of saints, sages and bards. For, it is instructive to note that a

fairly substantial part of the volume carries the compositions of Hindu *bhaktas*, Muslim divines, Sufi poets and other God-intoxicated souls. Of course, their hymns and couplets rendered in their own idiom find a ready correspondence in the songs of the Sikh Gurus. **Obviously, the idea of Guru Arjun Dev was to affirm the fundamental unity of all religions, and the unitary character of all mystic experience. It was, so to speak, an integral congress of minds and spirits operating on the same spiritual beam.**

The Revolutionary Gospel: To have thus elevated the songs of the bhaktas and the Bhats to the condition of the logos was to salute the power of the word whatever form it might take to reveal the glory of God. For, it may be observed that Guru Granth Sahib comprehends the compositions and utterances of the high-born Brahmins, of the proud Kashatriyas as also of the so-called lowly shudras and the pious if unlettered Jats. This was done at a time when the caste system in India had paralysed the conscience of man. The revolutionary egalitarianism which such a step symbolized was, therefore, to become the creed of the Sikhs. Above all, a poetic and mystic collage bespeaks the essential humility of the Sikh mind, for humility has been given pride of place in

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the table of virtues drawn up by the Gurus. The Guru Granth Sahib, then, is a sui generis scripture in the world.

Social & Secular: It is indeed, a magnificent compendium of the religious, mystic and metaphysical poetry written or uttered between the 12th Century and the 17th in different parts of India. It is, also, at the same time, a mirror of the sociological, economic and political conditions of those days. The satire on the reactionary and tyrannical rulers, on the obscurantist clergy and sects, on the fake fakirs and their like, is open, uncompromising and telling. In showing the path to spiritual salvation, the Guru Granth does not ignore the secular and creative side of man. The poetry of the Guru Granth is in itself a subject worthy of the highest consideration. The language principally employed is the language of the saints evolved during the medieval period – a language which, allowing for variations, still enjoyed wide currency in Northern India. Its appeal lay in its dialects, it was with expressions from Sanskrit, Prakrit, Persian and Arabic.

Prosody & Rhythm: Another outstanding feature of the Guru Granth Sahib is the precision of its prosody. While a great deal of it, cast in traditional verse forms (*salokas* and *pauris*), could best be understood in the context of the well-known classical *ragas*, its hymns and songs make use of popular folk meters such as *alahanis*, *ghoris*, *chhands*, etc. The integral relationship between music

and verse has been maintained with scholarly rectitude and concern. This complete musicalisation of thought in a scientific and studied manner makes for the unusually rigorous, yet supple, discipline of the Granth's metrics and notations. The entire *Bani* whose printed version in its current format comes to 1430 pages is divided into 33 sections. While the first section comprises the soulful and inspiring song of the Japji composed by Guru Nanak as also a few selected pauris or couplets, the final section is the collection of assorted verses including the *shalokas* and the *swayyas* of the bhattas. The remaining 31 sections are named after the well-known classical *ragas* such as sri, magh, gauri, gujri, devghandhari, dhanassari, bilawal, kedara, malhar, kalyan, etc. The division, thus, is strictly based on Indian musicology. Furthermore, each psalm or song is preceded by a number (mohalla) which denotes the name of the composer-Guru from Guru Nanak onwards. It may be noted that the apostolic succession extends from the First to the Fifth and the Ninth Guru, and that the Gurus are often referred to reverentially by their place in the order. What is more, each Guru speaks in the name of the Founder Guru whose spirit permeates his successors. The House of Nanak is indeed a spiritual decagon based upon a complete, inviolate geometry of vision. The major hymns – Japji (Guru Nanak), Anand (Guru Amar Das), Sukhmani (Guru Arjun Dev), Rehras (Guru Nanak, Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjun Dev) are

widely recited solo and in congregation by the faithful as morning and evening prayers. Their soothing and ambrosial airs have brought solace and cheer to countless people all over the world.

Philosophy: The Sikh philosophy as embodied in the Guru Granth Sahib is chiefly a philosophy of action, deed and consequence. Though in its essentials, it is completely in tune with the ancient Indian thought regarding the genesis of the world and the ultimate nature of reality, it moves away from quietism, passivity and abstractions. The emphasis on shared communal experience, and on purposive and idealistic involvement. The extinction of the ego or self is the cornerstone of Sikhism. The path of renunciation, abdication, aloofness, flagellation, etc., so typical of Hindu thought, is abjured. It's enjoined on a Sikh to be an insider, viewing with distrust all forms of alienation. Of course, the ideal Sikh is supposed to cultivate the qualities of contemplation, stillness and inwardness in the midst of labor, business and engagement. He too regards the world as ultimately Maya or illusion, and the life of man as a tableau of light and shade, but the Nirvana may not be achieved except through an acceptance of the reality of this unreality, and a proper disposition of the allotted role in the phantasmagoria of life. So long as man has a role to play, the artifact of the stage or the theater has to be taken for granted, For, it has thus pleased the Creator to bring about the world and people, in it with multiples of His self. And the whole creation moved

according to a predestined plan. Many a time has the grand show on earth been mounted and dismantled. It is not given to creature called man to fully comprehend the essence of reality.

Logos: As for the concept of the Godhead in the Guru Granth Sahib, it sets upon the trinity of *sat chit* and *anand*. God is omnipotent and omniscient. He is the Initiator and the End. He is Self-Creator and Self-Propeller. The soul too in its essence symbolizes this trinity or the God within, though quite often it loses the state of bliss as a result of the ego and the I'ness. Caught in the meshes of power and pelf, it loses its true moorings, and its tossed about by the whirligig of time. A soul thus abandoned by the Lord, or alienated from Him, keeps spinning through aeons of suffering. The road to heaven is paved with pity and piety. The idea of the soul as the Lord's consort is repeated in the Guru Granth Sahib with amazing variations. The mystique of the marriage is invoked time and again to emphasize the indissoluble and ineluctable nature of the union. Man is ordained as wife, and commanded to live in the Will of the Lord. Any infidelity or transgression is inconceivable. The nuptial and spousal imagery of the hymns is sensuously rich, apposite and striking. Guru Granth Sahib presents a comprehensive *Weltanschauung* - or world-view. It offers a perfect set of values and a practical code of conduct. It is, indeed, the complete spiritual teacher.



From Sangat to Sovereignty

DR. SUKHDIAL SINGH*

THE EARLIEST FORM OF organization in the Sikh faith was the establishment of the *Sangats*. These *sangats* were the groups of those persons who were created by the doctrine of Guru Nanak (1469-1540). These persons lived their lives according to the teachings of the Guru and were called the *Gurmukh*. Thus, the *Gurmukh* was the God inspired and the theocentric man of Sikhism. He was the perfect man, free from ignorance and dubiety. The *sangats*, constituted by these God oriented men, had a great importance in the field of spirituality as well as in the social set up. According to the doctrine of Sikhism, the Guru resided in these *sangats*. Therefore the *sangat* played an important role in the evolution of the Sikh community. The institution of the *sangat* united the Sikhs in a particular locality or region into a broad brotherhood or fraternity. People belonging to different strata of society could not in those days ordinarily meet on the same plane. Social inequality in Indian society had existed for ages and had become an integral part of it. The Sikh *sangats* aimed at leveling these invidious distinctions and establishing the equality and brotherhood of mankind. So, the institution was a melting pot for the high and low. In this way, during the very time of Guru Nanak,

a new brotherhood began to emerge as the participants' response of discipleship to the Guru. These *sangats* were the precursor to the Khalsa, manifested by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. The Khalsa achieved the sovereignty in 1709-10 under the leadership of Banda Singh Bahadur. So, it can be stated confidently that the Sikhism, started with the organization of the *sangats* during the time of Guru Nanak, established in the form of the Khalsa commonwealth by Guru Gobind Singh and assumed the sovereignty under the leadership of Banda Singh Bahadur.

This was a long span of 247 years. The ten generations of the Gurus contributed in the formation of this new establishment. Every generation achieved a major step. Guru Nanak established a *taksal* (a mint of words) at Kartarpur Sahib. In this *taksal*, the *bani* was recited and written, the Kirtan was performed, the new words of the language and the new letters of the script were invented. The Gurus adopted the language of the masses. It was Punjabi. The Punjabi language was crushed by the Aryans. The Aryans destroyed the language and culture of the land of the five rivers. They used the Sanskrit language for their medium of literature. Though the local lan-

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guages were adopted by the Aryans but these were written in the Sanskrit script. The Punjabi was also written in the Sanskrit script. Thus, with the combination of the local dialect (Punjabi) and the Sanskrit script, a new language developed automatically. This was Hindi Language in Dev Nagari Script. That is why the Punjabi and Hindi languages are very close to each other.

The Sikh Gurus, for the first time, after the arrival of the Aryans, tried successfully to raise the language of the masses in its own script. Its new script was invented in the *taksal* established at Kartarpur. Guru Angad Dev (1540-1552) was in charge of this *taksal*. He invented the Gurmukhi script, prepared the primary booklets in this script and began to impart the education of Punjabi in Gurmukhi letters. Thus, the Punjabis were freed from the clutches of Sanskrit, the linguistic citadel of the Brahman priestly class. The compositions of Guru Nanak were compiled and the life history was written in the form of *Bhai Bale Wali Janamsakhi*. Seeds of martial spirit were sown by organizing competitions in wrestling and other physical skills among the youth. All these activities were going to determine the future direction of the evolution of the Sikh community and the Sikh faith.

Guru Amar Das, (1552-1574) knit these Sikh *sangats* into the organization named 'Manji System'. He divided the Sikh *sangats* into 22 *Manjis* (districts) each comprising a number of *sangats* and

each Manji was given under the charge of a devoted Sikh whose duty was to preach the mission of Sikhism and to keep the local body in touch with the Guru. These measures went a long way in strengthening the foundation of the Sikh society and in carrying on the work in different parts of the country. He also introduced many other innovations which tended to break the close affiliations of the Sikhs with the Brahmanical society.

Guru Ram Das (1574-1581) had a tank dug at Amritsar and started building a township around it. The town which was destined to become the religious capital of the Sikhs, came to be known as Amritsar. He invited the tradesmen of all kinds to set up their respective businesses in the town. Thus, a new shopping centre came into existence at Amritsar which was later known as *Guru Ka Bazar*. This was the centre where, they could occasionally meet and maintain relationship with their brothers in faith.

During the twenty five years (1581-1606) of Guru Arjun's Guruship, the seed sown by Guru Nanak blossomed into its fullness. He was a saint and a scholar of rare piety and marvelous literary acumen. He was the compiler of *Adi Sri Guru Granth Sahib* which embodies in addition to his own writings, the compositions of his predecessors, a number of other Indian saints, some of them from the low and untouchable classes. It is the first Granth which was written and compiled in the Punjabi language and in the

Gurmukhi script. It is the first Granth which represents the sentiments of the masses and gives the message to establish a society without the consideration of caste, colour and creed. Since the Granth was in Punjabi and in Gurmukhi, it gained enormous popularity among the masses, who did not understand either the Sanskrit texts of the Brahmans or the Arabic of the Muslims. It gave the Sikhs a distinct philosophy of their own.

As a result of the Guru's activities, Sikhism spread in every nook and corner of the country. Mohsin Fani, a contemporary of Guru Hargobind writes that at every place the Sikhs increased. In the time of Guru Arjun Mal their number became very large. In most of the towns in the country a few Sikhs were definitely found. Guru Arjun replaced the Manji System with the Masands. The Masands were the Guru's representatives and they were highly conversant with the Sikh doctrine. They propagated the Guru's message among the masses. The solidarity of the Sikh community was ensured by this system. The Sikhs at their respective places were associated with the local *sangats* and were also to shoulder their responsibility as a part of the corporate body of the Sikh community. The result of these efforts was that the Sikhs had become conscious of the fact that they were now neither Hindus nor Muslims but formed an independent community of their own. Mohsin Fani tells us that the disciples of Nanak do not read the mantras of Hindus. They do not venerate their temples

of idols, nor do they esteem their Avatars. They have no regard for the Sanskrit Language, which according to the Hindus is the speech of Gods.

Thus, under Guru Arjun, Sikhism made great head way but much under the dislike of the ruling Muslim orthodoxy, which was then spearheaded by Shaikh Ahmed Sarhindi. The accession of Jahangir in 1605, gave the opportunity to this rigid orthodoxy to deal a blow to emergent Sikhism. He tried to please his orthodox friends. As a result he maneuvered the arrest of Guru Arjun on trumpeted – up charges, leading Jahangir to order his execution in 1606. Following the martyrdom of Guru Arjun, there was a major change in the polity of the Sikh faith. The successor Guru Hargobind (1606-1644) directed the Sikhs to come to him fully armed. Thus, a distinctly martial character was imparted to the community in the very beginning of his Guruship. This change of emphasis from a peaceful propagation of the faith to the forthright declaration of the right to defend the faith by force of arms proved to be extremely successful. The Sikhs were naturally an assertive and virile race who only needed a leader to rouse them to action. Guru Hargobind infused in them the confidence that they could challenge the might of the Mughal Empire.

Guru Hargobind established Akal Takht at Amritsar as the highest authority seat of the Sikhs. The Guru sat at the *Takht* and administered Justice to His

Sikhs. The Sikhs called the Guru *Sacha* Patshah (the true king) as compared to the Mughal Emperor, Jahangir. The Guru's decision was considered final. It was challenged neither in the courts of the empire nor by any ruler. With the Akal Takht as their central place, the Sikhs assumed the rights for self-determination.

Guru Har Rai's (1644-1661) seventeen years of Guruship were the years of peaceful propagation. Although he had inherited a militant tradition with a small contingent of 2200 horsemen, yet he kept the community at the equal distance both from the Hindus and the Muslims. He preached the Sikh doctrine in the Malwa area of the Punjab and enrolled the Jat tribes into Sikhism. His successor Guru Harkrishan (1661-1664), a five year old child at the time of his succession, died at the tender age of nine.

Guru Tegh Bahadur (1664-1675) succeeded Guru Harkrishan. During his extensive travels in the Indian sub-continent, the Guru preached the context of social and political reconstruction covering social responsibility, validity of moral values, social equality transcending narrow considerations of creed, caste, clime, sex and colour and rejection of hereditary principles as the basis of social order or ethics. The central theme of the Guru's teaching was the distinction between the absolute truth and the relative truth. Absolute truth is God Almighty. The relative truth is ephemeral. All the creatures in the universe are the creation of the Absolute

Truth and these creations are perishable. Therefore, these are like a dream, a wall of sand, or like the shadow of a cloud. The whole life of a man has an air of unreality about it. The wealth one accumulates, the buildings one constructs, one's whole complex of social relations, such as one's wife, children, parents, relatives, friends, acquaintances, professional colleagues are all of ephemeral character. The one who is engrossed in them is in fact engrossed in the pursuit of unreality. The Guru preached that while chasing them, their real character should never be lost sight of. These relations or relatives are not bad in themselves but these things are bad only when a person gets so inextricably entangled in them that he forgets all about the absolute truth and begins to think of these very things as the final goal.

The Guru preached that one should attain such a stage of life where joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, praise and dispraise, respect and disrespect have no effect. This kind of a stage is a stage of perfect emancipation from the bonds of life. The best way to achieve the goal was to lead a life of full dedication to the Supreme reality. So one is well advised not to develop any unhealthy prejudice against normal family and social life which is a cardinal doctrine of Sikhism.

The result was that the Sikh movement grew rapidly in both numbers and resources. The growing popularity of the movement alarmed both the Muslim rulers and orthodox Muslims. The Mughal

Government prompted by the Muslim orthodox sections, began to view the Sikh movement with deep suspicion.

Particularly, a staunch and orthodox ruler like Auangzeb could not tolerate this state of affairs. The emperor with this frame of mind could ill brook the growing influence of the Sikh religion, under the inspiring leadership of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Resultantly, the Guru was martyred on 11th of November, 1675 at Delhi.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom marks the highest water mark of resolution to suffer for one's lofty ideals. It exposed the barbarous character of the Mughal Empire headed by a foolish emperor. The Guru's sacrifice rudely shook and inflamed all right-thinking people.

At the time of Guru's martyrdom, the Sikh society was well-organised and awakened. It had established its branches almost all over the Indian sub-continent and even beyond its boundaries, in Afghanistan, Arab-countries, Sri Lanka, and Tibet. It was Aurangzeb's biggest blunder to execute Guru Tegh Bahadur at such a time when he had already been entangled in crushing the revolts in the South. Now the Sikh community, as a whole, stood against him. The successor of Guru Tegh Bahadur, though of nine years, was determined to face all kinds of challenges. The whole of secular Indian society stood behind him. Thus, in the coming years, Aurangzeb was destined to face the biggest challenge he had seen ever before,

and he himself was responsible for it. Sikhism became the symbol of resistance. With the Guru's sacrifice it acquired a new consciousness of its strength and self-reliance. It was a staggering catastrophe in the annals of Sikhs and a turning point in the fortunes of Mughal rule.

The tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh made the growing community into a dynamic movement to fight oppression and injustice. The causes of this action lay in the historical events. Aurangzeb's tyranny had reached its limits. The Guru resolved to make a historical effort to uplift the oppressed people against the ruthlessness of Aurangzeb. On the memorable day of *Baisakhi* of 1699 A.D. (1756 BK.) he organized a sizeable number of of the Sikh society into the Khalsa. By the creation of the Khalsa, the Guru emerged the Guruship into his followers. It was a revolutionary and a democratic step. It proved that the Guru was the first world leader who established democratic principles and made his Khalsa regard each other as brothers and act by the *Gurmata*. It introduced a spiritual socialism in the domain of religion. He informed the Sikhs that His presence is among the Khalsa and thus, the Khalsa represents the Guru. This brings out in clear terms how earnestly the Guru wished his Khalsa to lead a corporate life. The Khalsa commonwealth represents the concept of this corporate society. It did not belong to any individual, it belonged to those who constitute it. Thus, a new concept of democracy and a brotherhood of man took birth

in the land of the five rivers.

The Khalsa Commonwealth combined in itself the entire body of the Sikhs and it was represented by the institution of Sarbat Khalsa. In this way, the Sarbat Khalsa was a legislative body of the Khalsa commonwealth. It was invested with a supreme authority amongst the Sikhs in all matters. No leader, however great, could challenge the authority of the Sarbat Khalsa. No one could dare go against the *Gurmata* passed by this body. So, the guidance of the community lay with the collective wisdom and decisions. Indeed it was the institution of the Sarbat Khalsa and the *Gurmata* that led the community through its trials and ordeals and finally establish the sovereignty. This institution was the *magnum opus* of the Guru and it was a fully democratic compact armed to the teeth, struggling to maintain, fighting incessantly, tyranny and injustice in all their forms. Thus, during the Guruship of Guru Gobind Singh and in the form of the Khalsa commonwealth, the Sikhism finds its total fulfillment and the Guru stands as a model of a great philosopher to follow in the course of future history.

After Guru Gobind Singh's passing away, the new born Commonwealth was involved in a life and death struggle and this struggle was heading to achieve the sovereignty. This was led by Banda Singh Bahadur. He adopted the slogan that without having control over the State it is not possible to live according to the *Dharma*

and the State is acquired only through the might of arms.

Though the State established by the Khalsa was short lived yet it gave the Khalsa a foretaste of sovereignty. The short-lived but astonishing victories of the Khalsa under the leadership of Banda Singh Bahadur had earned for the Khalsa commonwealth a prestige and a ruling reputation which had never before been associated with its name. The Khalsa even in the wake of the defeat, had become a household name for daring and sacrifice.

This was a political as well as a social revolution in the Punjab which has been well summed up by William Irvine saying that in all the parganas occupied by the Sikhs the reversal of the previous customs was striking and complete. A low scavenger or leather dresser, the lowest of the low in Indian estimation had only to leave home and join Banda Singh when in a short span he would return to his birth place as its ruler with his order of appointment in his hand. As soon as he set foot within the boundaries, the well-born and wealthy went out to greet him and escort him home where they stood before him with joined palms, awaiting his orders. Not a soul dared to disobey his order. The men who had often risked themselves in battlefields became so cowed down that they were afraid even to remonstrate. Perhaps, this statement of William Irvine is the best compliment to the achievements of the Khalsa Commonwealth. With this achieve-

ment a revolution occurred in the minds of the people, of which historians often fail to take note. A will was created in the Khalsa Commonwealth to resist tyranny and to live and die for sovereign status. The example set by Banda Singh Bahadur in this field was a beacon light in the days to come. The idea of sovereignty, long dead among the Indians, once again became a living aspiration. Though suppressed for the time being by relentless persecution, it went on working underground like a smouldering fire and came out forty years later with a fuller effulgence, never to be suppressed again.

This is the history of origin, evolution and a State of the Khalsa Commonwealth. This was a long span of 247 years from the birth of Guru Nanak in 1469 to the

martyrdom of Banda Singh Bahadur in 1716. In this way, we see that Sikhism set out its path from the very beginning with a mission. It achieved its goal step by step. Though its earlier organizational systems had to be replaced by one and the other yet these systems improved its social and religious structure. Throughout the period, the Sikh Gurus kept their right of self-determination intact. Though many ups and downs came in the way of Sikhism yet it came out stronger from every holocaust. Ultimately, the Sikhs established their sovereignty in the land of the five rivers. It is a brief description of its long struggle which commenced with the establishment of the *sangats* and completed with assuming of the sovereignty.



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Sikhism has no place for Divisive Tribalism

*BRIG. TARLOCHAN SINGH (RETD.)**

IT CAN BE NOTICED BY a discerning mind, that there are various shades of differences between the interpretation of Sikh religion by the Western theologians and of that by our scholars. The Western writers have the benefit of their upbringing in a comparatively dispassionate social environments, amply exposed to education with a more scientific outlook. In consequence they perceive the Sikh doctrines with a more open and uncluttered mind. Eminent authorities on religious matters, like Arnold Toynbee, H.L. Bradshaw, J.D. Cunningham, MA Macauliffe, have held "Sikhism as a new revolutionary faith of the new age. It has the potential to add more dignity and purity to the modern civilization. Its scripture, the Adi Granth have something of a special value to the rest of the world. It is a universal world faith, a message for all men."

Regarding the Sikh race, Western writers saw in them a new hope for the mankind. "A new faith has been declared where all must become as one, the lowest equal with the highest. Caste must be forgotten and four classes must eat as one out of the same vessel. Guru Gobind Singh saw what was vital and he relit it with Promethean fire. A living spirit possess the whole Sikh people. The impress

of Gobind has not only altered the constitution of their mind, but has operated materially to give amplitude to their physical frame. The features and external forms of Sikhs were modified. They were distinguishable by their free and manly bearings but also by their lofty thoughtfulness of looks, which marks the fervour of their souls and their persuasion of the near presence of Divinity." Such is a typical opinion of Western scholars about Sikhism and Sikhs.

On the other hand a majority of indigenous scholars have been brought up in a caste-ridden and ethnically divided society. Some could not free their mind totally from the be-clouded social practices of the surrounding environments. They could not perceive the Sikh doctrine at the free, enlightened and progressive level of the vision of the Gurus. Their perception remained mostly confined to the external changes, rituals and customs. They could not apprehend fully the revolutionary changes brought about by the Gurus in the chemistry of the minds, souls and spirits of persons. However a few writers, like Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, did a remarkable job in this respect. They rejected the Hindu formularies and explained the Guru's ethical system and standards which were opposed to the theological

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beliefs of traditional culture and society. But their number, being small, had only a marginal success.

After the era of Ten Gurus, Sikhs kept to their high standards and strict discipline for some time. By following the instructions of Gurus they became great, *swalakhis*. They rose ahead of their fellow citizens and by their noble deeds left a good mark on the history. All Sikhs narrate their actions with pride. However after a passage of time, the all providing and all surrounding Hinduism started making its inroads in the Sikh society slowly and invisibly. It was facilitated by the laxity of discipline which crept in the Sikh leadership and preachers. Some fallings of Brahminical culture affected the Sikh doctrine. One of them was the caste system and its wicked brother tribalism.

Tribalism was current in Sikh society when Maharaja Ranjit came on the scene of Sikh history. Maharaja saw the danger of tribalism to himself as well as to the state. He initiated some vital steps to control it. Persons with tribal tendencies were not allowed to man any powerful position in his government even if they belonged to his relations. The persons who held the power were outsiders i.e. Muslims, Hindus and Dogras. Some persons from Jammu and Saharanpur; were made amritdharis to counter tribalism and man senior jobs. With the check of tribalism, Maharaja was able to accomplish incredible tasks. Afghanistan was conquered. A Sikh empire was established where so-

cial justice reached to everyone irrespect of religion, caste or creed. These good days lasted only as long as Maharaja was alive. Soon after his death tribal forces came back in Punjab with a vengeance. A internecine killing was started. Three generations of top Sikh royalty and aristocracy were wiped out. The glorious Sikh empire was shattered. Its requiem was performed by the ill advised Anglo- Sikh War.

The defeat in the Anglo-Sikh war was a great tragedy for the Sikhs and the Punjab. It is surprising that no Sikh scholar, leader or intellectual has lamented this event with the passion and intensity it deserves. This indicates that Sikh sensibilities have lost the edge. On the other hand a Muslim poet from rural Punjab realized the gravity of the tragedy that had befallen Punjab and the Sikhs. It was Shah Mohammad who wrote with genuine pathos about the Anglo-Sikh war. He described the evil machinations of some Sikh chiefs and the internecine killings by Sikh tribalist forces. He admired the courage of the Sikh soldier whose bravery almost won the war. He lamented the absence of proper leadership. "*Shah Mohammada Ek Sarkar Bajon, Faujan Jit Ke Anant Noon Harian Ne.*" Shah Mohammad blamed the inter-tribal rivalries, treachery and the incompetent leadership as the main causes of defeat. The Sikhs, instead of learning lessons from his writings, treated it as a ballad to be sung by the minstrels. All the failings, which he mentioned, are still present in

the Sikh society.

The sub-standard Sikh leadership was also mentioned in his book on the subject by the then British Commander-in-Chief General Gough, who stated that he was surprised to notice that “the staunchest foes of British Empire so readily became the obedient subjects of Queen Empress soon after the war.” This shows that tribal tendencies prevailed over the Sikh ethos in this crisis. As the tribalism has continued to be part of Sikh society, this actions was repeated by them in the eightys’ when they soon became obedient servants of the same forces which heaped savage brutalities and humiliations o them.

Today the tribal ethos have become a part of our social and political set-ups. The core Sikh values are becoming mere empty slogans e.g. “*Manas Kee Jat Sabhe Eke Pecharbo*” and “*Tere Bhane Sarbat Da Bhalla*” have lost their relevance. As Sikh values are being diluted, our political and religious leaders look the other way because tribalism can widen vote banks for them. After partition, Sikh leaders for their selfish ends, have pushed Sikh religion, culture and language towards Brahmanvad. The divergence between the interpretation of Sikh religion, Sikh culture and Punjabi language of pre-partition days and those of present ones is now noticeable.

The present Sikh society is divided into castes and creed. The dominant castes

are self satisfied with their empty bravado to keep their hedgemony over lower castes and lower castes have become complacent to their maimed life of shudras. Though following Sikh religion, they have lost their will to improve their social conditions. Such a situation has led to a lower culture.

It is also obvious that at times of crisis, Sikh decisions on Panthic matters are often based upon at randomness and tribal emotions. Gurbani has indicated the method of finding solutions at the time of crisis.

“ਹੋਇ ਇਕਤੁ ਮਿਲਹੁ ਮੇਰੇ ਭਾਈ ਦੁਬਿਧਾ ਦੁਰਿ ਕਰਹੁ
ਲਿਵ ਲਾਇ ॥” ‘The matter should be discussed jointly among themselves and solution should be found by the application of deep reflection and informed mind’. Decision taken in accordance with the instructions of this Guruvak will never falter or fail.

An important requirement is to understand the Sikh religion more deeply with a free and pure mind. “*Jaka Hirda Shud Hai, Khoj Shabad Mein Le.*” Guru expects that every Sikh should work diligently to become *Swalaxhi* (Superman) and try to elevate his mind, soul and spirit to the level of vision indicated in Gurbani. He should perform noble tasks which “add more dignity and purity to the civilization.” Sikhism is a religion with enlightened beliefs. It has no place for tribalism.

□

Remnants of *Sikhi* in Myanmar (Burma)

*PROF. H.S. VIRK**

IT WAS A PLEASANT SURPRISE when I received a letter from Educational Consultants of India Ltd. (EDCIL), Noida that my name has been recommended by Ministry of External Affairs, Govt. of India for a four week visit to University of Yangon. India and Myanmar has signed an MOU for exchange of scientific and technical manpower to help Myanmar in scientific research. India will get crude oil under this agreement. Mr. Subash Bakshi of EDCIL gave me only two weeks time for making preparations for this visit. He promised to provide Visa, Air Tickets and other information regarding Myanmar. I was going to Yangon University as Visiting Professor to guide some research students and deliver seminar lectures in my field of specialization. I always considered Myanmar as a part of British India and having cultural affinity with Indian people. But to my surprise, Burmese people have no common heritage with India. Rather they have strong links with the Indo-Chinese races.

I reached Yangon International Airport on 23rd February night by Myanmar Airways flight from Delhi. It took us only five minutes to cross all the barriers of customs and immigration, etc. My hosts, Professor Ko Ko Kyay So and his research group took charge of my bags and drove

me to the International Guest House on the Yangon University Campus. It has air conditioned apartments for foreign visitors, fully equipped with modern gadgets. On 24th February, Professor Sein Htoon, Head of Physics Department received me in his office and introduced to all group leaders of research. Yangon (Rangoon) University was among the top ten Indian Universities before the British divided India and declared Burma as an independent country. It has a sprawling campus in the heart of the city. Inya Lake adds glamour to the beautiful campus of Yangon University. Myanmar is being ruled by a military dictatorship and I was a little curious to know the fate of the young lady, Aung Sung Ky, fighting for the liberation of Burmese people. Military rule has disciplined the country and Burmese people have acquired traits of honesty, national character and deep commitment to their country. They are also the most religious and hospitable people on earth.

Professor Htoon had his education in a Christian Missionary school set up by the British government. He told me about the Sikh Gurdwara, he used to visit as a child, in front of this school building on the Thin Pyan road. I became interested to visit this Gurudwara to trace the history of Sikh people living in Myanmar. On

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Sunday 27th February, my visit to Sikh Gurdwara was arranged. The marble slab on the front wall narrates the history of this Gurdwara. A group of Sikh soldiers in the British Army took up cudgels to start this gurdwara. They approached the British Governor of Burma in 1893 and got his sanction on 31st May 1897. Captain H.H. Parking laid the foundation stone of the Gurdwara on 23rd October 1897 in the presence of Rai Bahadur Jhanda Singh, Sarmukh Singh and Kishan Singh of 7th Burma battalion. It was maintained by Sikh Officers of British Military Police for many years. Rangoon city was developed by the British as a port and a business center in the early twentieth century and many Sikh families moved to Burma in search of greener pastures. The British offered jobs to the Sikh youths in both army and police. Rather, the Sikhs dominated the police forces in whole of Indo – China, starting from Burma right upto Shanghai and Hongkong in China. After Partition, many Sikh soldiers settled in Burma and the control of Gurdwara passed to Sikh Religious Council of Burma.

On Sundays, I made regular visits of Sikh Gurdwara to trace the remnants of Sikh faith in Burma. I learnt that Sikhs had a hey day in Burma during the British rule. They owned business, banks and farms and commanded lot of respect. Military dictatorship nationalized the banks and trade owned by the foreigners and most of the Sikh families moved out to India and other foreign countries. The exodus still continues to Thailand and Australia.

There are four Sikh Gurdwaras in Rangoon but due to depleted strength of Sikh population, only Central Sikh Gurdwara holds regular services on Sundays. I was happy to observe that a Sikh lady, Ms. Balvir Kaur is acting as Granthi in this Gurdwara. Due to absence of Raagis, Kirtan is conducted by the Sikh Sangat. The tradition of free kitchen (*Langar*) is maintained by the Sikh sangat. Another milestone in Rangoon was Khalsa AV School whose foundation stone was laid by Dr. Randhir Singh, a Sikh philanthropist, on 24 February, 1934. Military dictatorship nationalized this school but its stoneslab is still intact.

Most of the Sikh families belong to Punjab. They are engaged in import/export of textiles and other consumable products. I met Mr. Hundal whose family worked as ship building contractors and owned some shares in Burma Oil Company. It had its headquarter in Thanlyin town 20 miles outside Rangoon. The Sikh Gurdwara founded in 1920 in this town, presents a deserted look. The Sikh womenfolk usually wear Burmese dress even at social gatherings. Sikh-Burmese marriages are no longer taboo among the youth. Like Japanese women, Burmese ladies are very hard working and make good wives.

Rangoon is now known as Yangon and Burma as Myanmar. Yangon is very neat and clean city and there are no slums. Traffic rules are very strictly followed and there is no honking of horns on the roads.

Government offices start functioning at 7 AM and continue till 7 PM. Literacy rate and female population is much higher than India. Burmese women dominate in almost all spheres of life. In education the women occupy 80 percent of the posts and they constitute the same percentage in higher education and research. Almost 50 percent educated ladies do not find a suitable match and prefer to remain unmarried. Dress code is strictly followed in Myanmar and the influence of western culture is just negligible. All official functions start with prayer recitals based upon Buddhist scriptures. Yangon boasts of an International Buddhist Missionary University providing free education, boarding and lodging to 200 students of 18 countries. Buddhism is the state religion but there is complete freedom for other religious minorities in Myanmar.

My search to locate some historical monuments related to Sikh religion and culture did not bear fruits. I was not allowed to visit Mandalay, a town connected with Indian National Army set up by Subash Chandra Bose with the help of Sikh army deserters. Special permission is required to travel outside Yangon city, which was granted at the fag end of my visit. However, I could visit the tomb of last Mugal ruler of India, Bahadur Shah Zafar, who was exiled to Rangoon by the British in 1858 and died in 1862. Reading some stanzas of his poetry etched on the tombstone lamenting his misfortune can easily bring tears to one's eyes:

ਕਿਤਨਾ ਹੈ ਬਦਨਸੀਬ ਜ਼ਫਰ
ਦਫਨ ਕੇ ਲੀਏ - ਦੇ ਗੱਜ਼ ਜ਼ਮੀਨ ਭੀ ਨ ਮਿਲੀ
ਕੂਏ ਯਾਰ ਮੇਂ ।
*Kitna hai bad-nasib Zafar
dafan ke liye
do gaz zamin bhi na mili, kuey yaar mein.*

Surprisingly, Bahadur Shah Zafar was declared a Chishti Saint after his death in Rangoon.

I was keen to trace some monument connected with Baba Ram Singh Kuka. This Namdhari Guru was also deported to Burma by the British after the Malerkotla episode in which 70 Kukas were blown to pieces by cannons. Baba Ram Singh was imprisoned in Mandalay jail, then shifted to Rangoon and finally to an unknown destination, as his followers from India frequented his prison cell despite strict surveillance by the British. I was told by some old Sikhs that even Namdharis and Giani Zail Singh failed to locate some monument connected to Baba Ram Singh. I could not verify the truth of their statement and my search will continue during my next visit which is quite probable. I also learnt about a British cemetery outside Yangon, where a large number of Sikh soldiers were cremated during the Second World War. The lady granthi of Sikh Gurdwara told me about Sikh farming families settled in Shan State bordering China. I was happy to find some remnants of Sikh culture in neighboring Myanmar and wish SGPC or DGPC to set up a link with the local Sikh sangat.

□

“ਗੁਰ ਤੇਗ ਬਹਾਦਰ ਸਿਮਰਿਐ ਘਰ ਨਉ ਨਿਧਿ ਆਵੈ ਧਾਇ ।

The story of the original portrait of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji

GURPREET SINGH HANSRA*

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF Natural History at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC has developed an exhibit examining Sikh culture. The museum, on the National Mall, is strategically located between the White House and the US Congress. It is visited each year by about 5 million visitors, making it the most visited natural-history museum in the world. The writer got the opportunity in the summer of 2005 to visit the museum and meet with Dr. Paul Taylor, the director of the museum's Asian cultural history program and the curator of the Sikh exhibition. He explained to me that the gallery not only contains about 100 rare Sikh artifacts, but it is also a research and conservation effort to save and protect Sikh artifacts. These artifacts are susceptible to damage with time. Some items, especially watercolor paintings, are light-sensitive and flash photography is prohibited. These artifacts are rotated every six months and go through a preservation process in the remaining six months of the year. Additionally, the old texts like “Janam-Sakhi” require conservation measures to stabilize the hand-painted miniatures. I was impressed by the efforts of the museum to preserve the Sikh

paintings and other artifacts.

The US National Anthem is based on a particular flag during the war of independence. The writer has seen the preservation efforts of the US Government on the flag. It is a four-year long project on which they are spending \$16 million to bring it back to its original glory. They have preserved a small fort called “Alamo” in San Antonio, where Americans fought a war with Mexico. The Wailing Wall of Jerusalem has been preserved for two millennia. The old Christian missions in California are being maintained in their original form.

Priceless Treasure: However, unfortunately, there are no concentrated efforts among Sikh organizations to preserve the priceless treasures of our history. There was an article published in the *Tribune* about the passion of a Sikh gentleman in Amritsar District to collect ancient historical books and pictures. He has collected and maintained a library at his house. His efforts are commendable. However, the fact remains that he doesn't have the resources to preserve those rare books. Many of those rare books and pictures have become discolored and faint. The

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history is disintegrating due to a lack of proper management of these artifacts of great significance. The Sikh organizations need to come forward to save our history. There is a need to rejuvenate the interests in Sikh history in the new generation, which has no clue about our rich cultural heritage. I would like to bring to reader's attention to another priceless treasure, the original portrait of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji.

Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji was our Ninth Guru. He attained the "Gur-gaddi" in 1664. By that time, the Sikh sangats were already established all the way from Kabul to Dhaka. The Guru traveled to far-off places to sanctify the Sangat. I would like to discuss his travels to Dhaka and the chronicles of his original picture.

Stay at Dhaka: It is an historical fact that Guru Teg Bahadur Ji went to east India, including Bihar, greater Bengal and Assam in 1660s. While Guru Ji's family stayed at Patna, Guru Ji journeyed to Dhaka (also spelled as Decca or Dacca). Guru Ji sojourned at Dhaka for more than a year at the house of one of his Sikhs, Bhai Balaki Dass. Guru Gobind Singh Ji was born at Patna, and this news reached Guru Ji at Dhaka (Some historians have written that Guru Ji got that news at Dhubri). Bhai Balaki Dass kept a cot and bed at his house and used to pray everyday that Guru Sahib should come to his house someday and sit on this cot. Guru Sahib responded to his prayers and sat on his cot when he reached his place.

Guru Sahib stayed at his place for a long time (2 years according to some history books). There used to be congregation at his house. Guru Sahib inspired the Sikhs to build Dharamsala to hold the congregation regularly. Shaiesta Khan, the Nawab of Dhaka at that time, was struck by Guru Sahib's striking personality and issued a "*pharman*" (edict) not to collect any taxes from this Dharamsala. (The copy of that *pharman* is still lying at Dhaka Gurdwara).

When Guru Sahib decided to depart from Dhaka, the old mother of Bhai Balaki Dass started crying, and said that it was a great pleasure to have his *darshan* everyday for a long time. Now what would she do? How could she have the same *darshan*? Then Guru Sahib consented to bring a painter to make a picture of him. Bhai Balaki Dass was an influential person of Dhaka and had access to Shaiesta Khan. So he brought the royal painter, named Ahsan. The painter made a picture of the body of Guru Sahib but when he reached his face (in the picture), he could not properly draw the glowing face of the Guru. On seeing this, Guru Sahib took the brush in his own hand and drew the face himself and permitted Bhai Balaki Dass's mother to have his *darshan* through the picture in his absence.

Chronicles: Many writers in historical books have penned this account. *Mehma Parkash* is one of the oldest books, which contains the biography of all the Ten Gurus. It was written in 18th

century, sometime after Guru Gobind Singh Ji. The author's name is Bhai Sarup Dass Bhalla, who was a direct descendent of Guru Amar Dass Ji. He came from a family of writers and literates. Bhai Sarup Dass's real brother, Bhai Tola Singh wrote "Guru Ratnavali". Bhai Sarup Dass's son, Bhai Kirpa Dial Singh wrote "*Fatehnama Guru Ji De Panth Da*". One descendent of Bhai Sarup Dass, Bhai Sadhu Singh, wrote "*Guru Sikhia Prabhakar*" and "*Sri Mukh-vakea Sidhant Jyoti*". But "*Mehma Parkash*" is the most popular among all these books because this was the first book in which an attempt was made to write the complete biography of all Ten Gurus. The narrative of this painting in Dhaka is acknowledged in *Mehma Parkash* thus:

"*Bada likhari leai mai* (Mai, mother, brought *bada likhari*, renowned painter)

Satguru hazur tasvir likhai (made picture in *hazur*, - front - of Satguru)

Sagal ang bastr subh likha (All body parts and clothes were painted)

Mukh kamal Prabhu nahin likh saka (but couldn't draw his face)

Dekh Dial kalam hath lina (On seeing this, Guru took brush in his own hand)

Nij hath sudhar sampuran kina (Guru completed the picture with *nij hath*, his own hand)

Tab mai ko murat Prabh dina". (Then

Guru gave his *murat*, picture to *mai*, old lady)

This anecdote has also been mentioned in another old book, *Gur Partap Surya Granth*, which was completed by Bhai Santokh Singh Ji in 1842. *Gur Partap Surya Granth* is a tremendous effort by the writer to note down the whole history of Ten Gurus. It has 6,412 pages. Bhai Santokh Singh spent 20 years of his life in collecting the ancient books of Sikh history and then writing it in his own verse. He divided his book into "*Raas*" and "*Ansu*", which can be compared to, kind of, chapters and sub-chapters of the modern books. The writer has written the narrative of this Dhaka picture in *Raas* 12, *Ansu* 5 on page 4,243 in 10th volume (re-published by Bhasha Vibhag, Punjab in 1993). The narrative of this picture is written like this:

"*Ham karne aab kaaj ghnéré, tav aais te jai agere.*

(I have many jobs to do, that's why I must embark on my next mission)

Leo likhae meri tasveer, hai aab jatha sacheer shareer (38)

(You can make my picture, exactly like how my body is)

Sun ur harkhi turat sidhai, jai chitere ko le aai (40)

(The old lady went out immediately after listening to this and brought a painter with her)

Bahu dhan de kar kehat sunai, jatha jog pikh likho banai.

(She gave money to the painter and asked him to paint the picture exactly like Guru Ji)

Chatur chitera kar chit chaoo, baith nikat bandat dhar bhao (41)

(Wise painter, who had a lot of passion, bowed before Guru Ji and sat very close to him)

Ang so basat saje hai jaise, dhare prem ko likh kar taise.

(The painter drew all the clothes, which Guru Ji was wearing on his body)

Badan parphulat kamal samana, ruchir bilochan kirpa nidhana (42)

(Guru Ji's face was like lotus, and his eyes were full of grace)

na likh sakio rahio pachhtai, tab so kalam gahi gat dai

(The painter couldn't draw his face and eyes and he repented, then Guru Ji got hold of brush in his own hand)

Aapan hath te mukh ko likhio, ur bismai jin jin pikhio (43)

(Guru Ji drew his own face with his own hand, whosever saw it got sanctified)

Nij kar te birdha ko dai, bhari anand so sunder lai."

(Guru Ji gave this picture to the old lady with his own hands, It was a stunning portrait with lot of bliss)

Since 'Gur Partap Surya Granth' was written a couple of centuries ago, its language is different from the language as we speak today. So, the great Sikh philosopher of 20th century, Bhai Veer Singh Ji studied this granth for 8 years (1926-1934) and wrote the footnotes on this book to explain the meanings. Wherever he didn't agree, he wrote disagreeing footnotes as well. However, he agreed with this account of the Guru's picture, which is very clear from his footnotes in the book.

Another Sikh scholar of early 20th century, Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, did research for 15 years to write the encyclopedia of Sikhism, called "Mahan Kosh", which he completed in 1930. He has mentioned about this portrait in "Mahan Kosh". He has also mentioned in the "Mahan Kosh", on the basis of Gurbani of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, that there are four types of "Darshan", namely 1. Sargun, 2. Nirgun, 3. Dream and, 4 Portrait (picture).

Gur moorat si-o laa-ay Dhi-aan, ee-haa oo-haa paavahi maan. ||3||.
[SGGS: 192]

Satgur moorat ko bal jaa-o.
[SGGS: 1202]

Jo chit laa-ay poojay gur moorat so man ichhay fal paavai. [SGGS: 303]

In Dhaka, currently there are two historical Gurdwaras. Gurdwara Sangat Tola is erected in Ninth Guru's memory and Gurdwara Nanakshahi is in First Guru's memory. There was another Gurdwara related to Guru Nanak Dev Ji in Dhan

Mandi, which East Pakistan authorities leveled in 1960 and built residential complexes there.

Shrines in Bangladesh: Some local people of greater Bengal became Sikhs due to the influence of the 1st and 9th Guru who visited and sanctified that area. There were about 20 Gurdwaras before 1947 in present day Bangla Desh area. But almost all of the Sikhs left for India during the Partition. Mata Kanchan Devi remained behind and took care of Gurdwara Sangat Tola but she also migrated to Calcutta during the Pakistan Army crackdown in 1971. One brave Sikh, Bhai Swaran Singh, took care of Gurdwara Nanakshahi till 1971. But Pakistani Razakars killed him three days before the Pakistan Army's surrender to Indian Army led by Gen. Jagjeet Singh Aurora. After victory, Gen. Arora immediately arranged for a Sikh delegation to visit Dhaka under the leadership of late Captain Bhag Singh, one of the co-founders of *The Sikh Review*, a monthly magazine of Calcutta. Captain Bhag Singh became the first Secretary General of Bangla Desh Gurdwara Management Committee. He brought the 9th Guru's picture to India and gave it to the Victoria Memorial Museum in Calcutta for restoration. The copies of the original picture are lying both at Gurdwara Nanakshahi and Gurdwara Sangat Tola at Dhaka. The history of these Gurdwaras (including copies of the portraits) can be read at :

<http://allaboutsikhs.com/gurdwaras/>

[bangla-nanakshdacca.htm](http://allaboutsikhs.com/gurdwaras/bangla-nanakshdacca.htm)

<http://allaboutsikhs.com/gurdwaras/bangla-sangattolla.htm>

The present building of Gurdwara Nanakshahi was renovated in 1988-89 with the efforts of S. Harbans Singh, IAS (Retd) who was Director IJO/UN at Dhaka. He wrote an article in *The Sikh Review* in January 2000, in which he not only mentioned the history of this rare picture but also its current state at the Victoria Memorial Museum in Calcutta.

Prof (Dr) Harnam Singh Shan, former chairman of Guru Nanak Chair and head of Punjabi and Sikh Studies at Punjab University, Chandigarh, visited Dhaka in 2003 to participate in the 17th conference of International Association of Historians in Asia, where he presented a paper on Cultural heritage of South Asia. He also saw the copies of the original pictures in those Gurdwaras. (Ref. *The Sikh Review*, April 2003).

Prof. Kulraj Singh also wrote an article in *The Sikh Review* in December 1996, in which he mentioned that while other portions of the picture have worn out, but the paint of the face, which had the touch of the Guru's hand, is still fresh.

This is an extremely rare picture of Guru Sahib that we have, but it is not the only one. Sri Damdama Sahib is one of the five Takhts where Guru Gobind Singh Ji stayed for more than nine months. Guru Sahib also concluded Sri Guru Granth Sahib there by adding Ninth Guru's

hymns. When Guru Sahib left for South India, he made Baba Deep Singh Ji incharge of this place. Currently, there are many sacred relics which are kept there. The prominent among those are a portrait (picture) of the Tenth Guru, Sri Sahib (Sword), a matchlock, a pothi (book) transcribed by Baba Deep Singh, and a Sword of Baba Deep Singh. The history of the Gurdwara (including the list of the sacred relics) can be read at <http://allaboutsikhs.com/gurudwaras/gd-talwandisabo.htm>

Articles have already been written about a few other pictures of the Guru Sahib, as well. An artist at Anandpur Sahib painted the Tenth Guru's picture in 1703 and it was published by Akali Kaur Singh, a known Sikh scholar, in one of his books in 19th century. Another portrait of the Tenth Guru was painted by the royal visual artist of Sidh Sen, the ruler of Mandi. When Guru Sahib visited Mandi, he preferred to stay outside the town, while his household ladies stayed in the royal palace. The royal family maintained the shrine inside the palace. Gurdwaras are now built at both places. When Maharaja Ranjit Singh subjugated Mandi, he appointed Sardar Lehna Singh Majithia as the Governor of the constituency. Sardar Lehna Singh got hold of the Guru's original portrait, which he brought to the Maharaja. It is a known fact that Sardar Lehna Singh brought the craftsmen to lay the marble slabs in the inner *parkarma* around the Harmandir Sahib (Ref: *The Golden Temple* by Patwant Singh). Some

people say that Maharaja asked Sardar Majithia to inscribe the copy of the same picture inside the Golden Temple, which is now located at the wall of the Harmandir Sahib, near a staircase leading to the floor above.

Similarly it has already been published that the old portraits of Guru Nanak Dev Ji drawn on silk and *tanka* (a painting on cloth which can be rolled up like a map) have been found in Lhasa (Tibet) and Sikkim. Guru Nanak Dev Ji went on his second Udassi to Tibet and Kamroop (Assam) area in circa 1517.

Conclusion: The western countries take pride in preserving their religious and historical artifacts. However, it is very unfortunate that Sikhs have not yet made any organized attempt in this area. The pictures mentioned above are extremely rare and are of great historical significance. Unfortunately, some of these may have already been lost. The Sikh organizations should work to preserve these pictures properly and distribute its copies widely among Sikhs so that the current generations should visualize what the Gurus looked like. It will be a great service to the history in general and Sikh religion and culture in particular.

Post Script: We have requested Curator, Victoria Memorial Museum, Calcutta, Prof. C.R. Panda, to trace the portrait of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji and restore it by the latest techniques for display and reproduction. - Ed. S.R.

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Seva by Nirmala Ashrams

TARLOCHAN SINGH, MP (RS)

NIRMALA ASHRAMS ALL over India are carrying on their mission to serve the people irrespective of caste and creed and remain aloof from any political activity. Nirmala, derived from Sanskrit meaning spotless, unsullied, pure, bright, etc., is the name of a sect of Sikhs primarily engaged in religious study and preaching. The members of the sect are called Nirmala Sikhs or simply Nirmalas. The sect arose during the time of Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708). Guru wanted his followers not only to train in soldierly arts but also to have interests in letters. He had engaged a number of scholars to translate Sanskrit classics into Punjabi, in order to bring them within easy reach of the less educated people. Guru Gobind Singh sent five of his Sikhs, namely Karam Singh, Vir Singh, Ganda Singh, Saina Singh, and Ram Singh dressed as upper-class students, to Varanasi, the center of Hindu learning. These Sikhs worked diligently for several years and returned to Anandpur as accomplished scholars of classical Indian theology and philosophy. In view of their piety and their sophisticated manner, they and their students came to be known as Nirmalas, and were later recognized as a separate sect. After the evacuation of Anandpur in 1705, the Nirmala preachers went to

different places outside the Punjab, particularly to Haridvar, Allahabad and Varanasi where they established centers of learning that exist to this day - Kankhal, near Haridvar, Pakki Sangat at Allahabad, and Chetan Math and Chhoti Sangat at Varanasi. When, during the second half of the eighteenth century, the Sikhs established their sway over the Punjab, some of the Nirmala saints came back here and founded at different places centers which were helped by Sikh chiefs.

It was customary for Nirmala scholars to attend, along with their disciples, religious fairs at prominent Hindu pilgrimage centers such as Haridvar, Allahabad and Gaya, where they, like other sadhus, took out *shahis* or processions and had philosophical debates with scholars of other religious denominations as a part of their preaching activity. During the Haridvar Kumbh in 1855, a general meeting of the Nirmalas held in their principal dera at Kankhal took the first concrete step towards setting up a central body by electing Mahitab Singh of Rishikesh, reputed scholar of the sect, as their Sri Mahant or principal priest. This tradition is continuing and the present had in Sri Mahant Nam Dev Singh.

The Nirmalas believe in the Ten Gu-

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rus and Guru Granth Sahib. They wear either all white dress or saffron. They generally practice celibacy and are devoted to scriptural and philosophical study, but by tradition they are inclined towards classical Hindu philosophy especially Vedanta. Their contribution towards the preaching of Sikh doctrine and production of philosophical literature in Sanskrit, Braj, Hindi and Punjabi is considerable. Some of the important works that contributed to Sikh learning and regeneration of Sikh principles in particular are by them.

Nirmala Ashram at Rishikesh was established in 1903 by Mahant Buddha Singh. It has main branches at Haridwar, Karnal and Mumbai. This place has served the purpose of spreading the message of Guru Nanak and producing known Sikh missionaries. Giani Sant Singh maskin was one of the illustrious students of their centre. Lachman Dass Chela Ram, world known Sikh scholar stayed here to translate the Guru Granth in Hindi.

During my recent visit to Rishikesh, I came to know about their latest humanitarian deeds. Gyan Daan Academy, has been set up with sole object of updating quality education to poor children of all castes, that too without any fee. Beautiful sprawling campus on Dehradun road has already become a boon for the entire area. Four classes are already in session with facilities like free uniforms, text books and

stationary, mid-day meal and free transport from village to school. An efficient teaching staff is working under the guidance of Principal Mrs. Amritpal Kaur, who herself takes immense interest in all activities. The school shall attain Higher Secondary status and will be affiliated to CBSE Board.

Nirmala Ashram is already running a public school with boarding facilities on Haridwar Road. Mahant Ram Singh, the head of the Ashram and Sant Baba Jodh Singh believes that Altruism is the essence of Guru Nanak's teachings. They have set up a big hospital with all modern medical facilities in Rishikesh. A most modern Eye hospital is coming up very soon which will have 100 beds and an eye bank.

Renowned educationist S. Waryam Singh is the Chairman of the schools run by the Ashram. He told me that main source of the income is the donations by the Sindhis who are all devotees of Guru Nanak. After partition of India, the Sindhis have spread out to all parts of the world. The Sikh community could not keep them as close as they were earlier but it goes to the credit of Nirmalas that Sindhis get mental solace through them. I myself saw some wealthy Sindhis doing *sewa* in these centers. Sindhis still believe in Guru Nanak and continue having all religious and family functions as per Sikh rites.

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Going Down the Memory Lane: Recalling Invasion of Kashmir: Oct. 1947

BRIG. DALIP SINGH SIDHU, AVSM, VSM (RETD.)

THE KASHMIR LANDINGS BY THE Indian Army in Dakota aircrafts commenced on 27 Oct. 1947 from Palam airport at Delhi, with the urgent task of protecting J&K State from being forcibly annexed by Pakistan with the help of thousands of raiders supported by their regular troops. The landings were spearheaded by 1 SIKH, now 4 MECH INFANTRY (SIKH), under the command of Lt. Col. Dewan Ranjit Rai. The first and second wave of Dakotas carried C Coy under Capt. Kamaljit Singh and D Coy under Maj. Harwant Singh MC, respectively. The Commanding Officer travelled in the leading aircraft. The Battalion was seen off at Palam airport, among others, by Maj. S.K. Sinha (now Lt. Gen. (Retd.) and Governor of J&K State), who also handed over operation order from Headquarters Delhi and East Punjab Command to the Commanding Officer. Airlift went off smoothly except for one Dakota carrying Battalion Signal Platoon and wireless equipment, which force-landed at Jammu and joined the Battalion in another aircraft after three days.

Every year since, 27th October is commemorated as 'INFANTRY DAY' by the

Indian Army to pay homage to its gallant martyrs and also highlight the role infantry plays in war particularly in mountainous and high altitude areas where some other arms are unable to operate or are not fully effective.

Capt. Amarinder Singh, the present Chief Minister of Punjab, who is known for his keen interest in service matters and welfare of troops, recently decided to attend Infantry Day – 27th Oct. 05 – with troops in the Kashmir Valley, and pay homage to the martyrs who gave their lives to protect Kashmir during Oct. – Nov. 1947 and subsequent operations. In addition to staff officers from his Secretariat, the Chief Minister included in his entourage Col. Harwant Singh MC (Retd.), D Coy Commander 1 SIKH during Kashmir landings, Maj. Shivjeet Singh Sher Gill (Retd.) grandson of late Lt Col Dewan Ranjit Rai, Commanding Officer 1 SIKH in Oct. 1947 and Brig. D S. Sidhu AVSM, VSM (Retd.) who had first visited 1 SIKH battle sites in the Kashmir Valley as a school boy in 1949.

Remembrance:

The Chief Minister's entourage reached Srinagar airport from Chandigarh in a special aircraft on 26 Oct (FN) 2005.

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From there Capt. Amarinder Singh, Lt. Gen. S.S. Dhillon AVSM, VSM, GOC 15 Corps and Maj. Gen. Harwant Krishan, GOC 19 Infantry Division flew to 16 SIKH forward location in 19 Infantry Division Sector in an aviation helicopter, and reached 2 SIKH Tactical Headquarters location at Lokut Bangas by noon. The remaining members of the entourage flew straight to Lokut Bangas in a private helicopter and were received by Col D Gupta, SC Commanding Officer and Sub-Maj. Joginder Singh. All available officers, JCOs' and men from the Battalion had gathered for a special Sainik Sammelan, followed by *Barakhana* for the troops and lunch for the officers in a makeshift Officers Mess under beautifully decorated shamianas. During the Sainik Sammelan the Chief Minister praised the troops for maintaining their glorious traditions of devotion to duty and self-less service. He gave several gifts to the Battalion and, also handed over to the Commanding Officer five cheques of Rs 2.5 lakhs each to be given to the families of five gallant soldiers of the Battalion who were killed in a land slide while providing relief to victims of the earthquake which struck the hilly tracts of the Valley on 08 Oct. 05. A galaxy of senior officers, which included Lt. Gen. Deepak Kapoor SM, VSM, GOC – in – C Northern Command, Lt. Gen. S. S. Dhillon AVSM, VSM, GOC 15 Corps, Maj. Gen. Harwant Krishan, GOC 19 Infantry Division, Brig. V.K. Naik, KC Commander 79 Infantry Brigade had also flown to Lokut Bangas to visit 2 SIKH and meet

the Chief Minister over lunch.

Picturesque:

Lokut Bangas is a picturesque place located at a height of about 10,000 ft. It resembles Gulmarg and has wide open meadows surrounded by thick pine forests and gentle flowing streams. The troops despite living under field conditions appeared cheerful, smart and well turned out. The presence of the Chief Minister of their home state boosted their morale. After sumptuous lunch, and before the clouds started gathering the Chief Minister and his entourage bid farewell to 2 SIKH and flew back to Srinagar. The Army Commander and other senior officers also flew back to their respective Headquarters.

Next day, 27 Oct. 05, there were wreath laying ceremonies to honour the martyrs in Baramula at Dagger Division War Memorial and 1 SIKH Memorial followed by commemoration ceremony at Maqbool Sherwani Community Hall. The wreaths were laid at the above memorials by Governor, Lt. Gen. (Retd.) S. K. Sinha, PVSM, Capt. Amarinder Singh, and other senior army officers. The SIKH Memorial at Baramula was initially a large yellow board with suitable inscription installed by 4 SIKH on 01 Dec 1950 on the hill side, where free India's first battle was fought and a small stone obelisk erected in memory of Lt. Col. Dewan Ranjit Rai where he was killed on the evening of 28th Oct. 1947. At the initiative of Chief Minister of Punjab, and with help of Headquar-

ters Northern Command, 15 Corps and 19 Infantry Division, the Memorial was redesigned and renovated a few years back. It now looks very impressive and is being well maintained by the local civil and military authorities. The War Memorial has now become an important land mark of Baramula.

War Heroes Honoured:

The Chief Guest at the commemorative ceremony in Sherwani Community Hall was the J&K Governor, Lt. Gen. (Retd) S. K. Sinha, PVSM. Other high dignitaries, present included Chief Minister of Punjab, two senior Ministers of J&K Govt., Lt. Gen. S. S. Dhillon AVSM, VSM, Maj. Gen. Harwant Krishan and senior local politicians. The large hall built by the Dagger Division in memory of Sherwani was full with a civilian and army audience. After a short cultural programme by local students, talks by two senior J&K Government ministers followed. The Ministers were highly appreciative of the role played by the Army in Oct. – Nov. 1947 in protecting the Valley against the raiders and driving them out beyond URI – 65 miles from Srinagar. After that a short film was shown on the death and destruction caused by the raiders in Oct./Nov. 1947 in Baramula and places like Uri, Mahura Power House and other places on their way. Photographs of three Army officers and a civilian who had played significant roles for the defence of Srinagar and the Valley in Oct./Nov. 1947 were projected on the screen. They included: (a) Late

Brig. Rajinder Singh, MVC, Chief of Staff J&K State Forces, who had played a key role in delaying the raiders advance by destroying an important iron bridge over Uri Nala East of Uri, and was killed while fighting a rear-guard action in Dewan Mandir in Bunyar on 24th Oct. 47. He was awarded India's first major gallantry awarded MVC posthumously, (b) Late Lt. Col. Dewan Ranjit Rai, MVC, Commanding Officer 1 SIKH, who rushed his available troops, comprising approximately 120-130 men, with a section of 3 inch Mortars to Baramula (a hill feature astride Mile 32) to hold the raiders well away from Srinagar despite orders to stay put at Srinagar airport. He was, unfortunately, killed at 1730 hrs on 28th Oct. while fighting a rear guard action in an open area astride Mile 32, East of Baramula. He was posthumously awarded the MVC for gallantry. (c) Late Mohammad Maqbul Sherwani, a social worker of Baramula, who was mercilessly killed by the raiders when he refused to cooperate with them. The Sherwani Community Hall at Baramula stands to perpetuate the memory and supreme sacrifice of this great son of Kashmir. (d) Major (later Col.) Harwant Singh MC (Retd.), who was D Coy Commander and had taken over Officiating Command of 1 SIKH after Lt. Col. Dewan Ranjit Rai was killed in action. During Night 28th/29th Oct. when the operational situation was very fluid, the youthful officer controlled the situation calmly and with courage. He was praised for his wise and tactically sound decision

to move the Battalion from Shalateng Spill Channel 4 ½ miles from Srinagar to area Mile 17 near Pattan, almost half way between Srinagar and Baramula, and thus caused the much-needed 48 hours, delay on the raiders to enable our troops build up at the airport. He had successfully commanded the Battalion at that critical juncture and fought tough battles in hilly areas of Mile 17 and 18 East of Pattan on 29th Oct. 47, inflicting heavy losses on the raiders. To the delight of the civil and army audience in the hall Col. Harwant Singh MC (Retd.) and Maj. Shivjeet Singh Sher Gill (Retd.), grandson of Late Lt. Col. Dewan Ranjit Rai, were introduced to them by Maj. Gen. Harwant Krishan.

Capt. Amarinder Singh also addressed the audience and highly lauded the role played by 1 SIKH in saving the Valley in the critical period of last week of Oct 47/ first week of Nov. 1947. He also singled out and praised the gallant performances of three above mentioned officers and Mr. Maqbool Sherwani of Baramula.

After the address of Capt. Amarinder Singh, The Governor Gen. S. K. Sinha addressed the audience and lauded the role of our troops in saving the Valley during the critical period of last week of Oct. – first week of Nov. 1947. He expressed his admiration for the gallant roles played by late Brig. Rajinder Singh MVC; late Lt.

Col. Dewan Ranjit Rai MVC; late Mr. Maqbool Sherwani of Baramula and Col Harwant Singh MC (Retd.). He recalled his personal experiences of emergency airlift of 1 SIKH on 27th Oct. 47 and other troops that followed as he was GSO 2 (Ops) at Army HQ, responsible for arranging Dakotas for the airlift. He had seen leading elements of 1 SIKH take off from Delhi Airport for Srinagar at 0500 hrs on 27th Oct. 47, had handed over Army HQ Operational Order to Lt. Col. Dewan Ranjit Rai and had found him in high spirits. He also narrated an anecdote pertaining to the airlift. Since he was responsible for ordering civil airlines Dakotas to Delhi for airlift of troops to Srinagar, the airlines, after completion of the operation, presented him a bill of several crores of rupees for payment!

Adieu:

On 28th Oct. 05, Capt. Amarinder Singh, accompanied by Mr. Farooq Abdullah, former Chief Minister of J&K State and his party flew back to Chandigarh. It was a memorable visit for all the members of the team. It was most heartening to learn that sacrifices made by our gallant service personnel to throw raiders out and protect Kashmir have not been forgotten. Their sacrifices are commemorated every year on 27 Oct. Infantry Day.



**FOR BASIC KNOWLEDGE, BOLD COMMENT
READ
THE SIKH REVIEW**

Kashmir's Sikhs on shaky ground?

KAVITA SURI

EVERY TIME THERE IS an increased movement of troops in and around the twin villages of Triboni and Sumbalpora, situated on the line of control across the famous Shamshabari ridge, the great mountain range in North Kashmir which separates Tangdhar (Karnah) in Kupwara from the rest of the Kashmir valley, Sardar Joginder Singh anticipates the worst to befall the 500 people around here. Though nobody in these Sikh-dominated villages is inclined to talk about it, an increased presence of troops hint at an increased threat perception, given the now familiar ways of terrorists.

In the past 16 years of violence in Kashmir, Sardar Joginder Singh, the septugenarian head of the Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee of Triboni, and the villagers have spent sleepless nights, often guarding the villages along with the Army. After the exodus of the minority community from Kashmir early in the 1990s, Triboni-Sumbapora are now the only twin Sikh hamlets across the Shamshabari range in North Kashmir. The villagers here have been living under a serious terrorist threat since the start of an insurgency. The threat is more pronounced to the minority community among the villagers, since they refused to side with those who picked up guns for the "freedom" of Kashmir.

After 39 Sikhs were killed in

Chittisingpora in South Kashmir in March 2001, they were obliged to live under the shadow of death. Much before the line of control divided Kashmir into two parts; their ancestors had come from different parts of the state, including the Sikh-dominated villages of Chakothei, now in Muzaffarabad, in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, and settled down in the sleepy villages of Triboni-Sumbalpora. "Our forefathers came and settled down here. We lived here from 1947 onwards; refused to budge and decided not to yield to pressures from the other side. Our houses were damaged and our elders witnessed much destruction during a 1947 tribal invasion, but we still stayed here," says Sardar Didar Singh, chief *granthi*, Gurdwara Singh Sabha, Triboni.

Most of their properties were damaged in 1947. Though they rebuilt their lives and continued living in their native village, things worsened late in the 1980s when Pakistani shells started bursing into their villages. Many lives were lost and whatever was left of their dwellings suffered further damage. To escape the shelling, bunkers were constructed by almost all householders. Many youths in Tangdhar block of Karnah tehsil in Kupwara joined militants' ranks, some of them crossing over into Pakistan for training in using arms and ammunition. **At the peak of militancy, Sikhs in these villages were**

told to join the insurgency. When they refused, their houses were thrown stones at and they were asked to move out of the area. When they courageously decided to fight them, they were threatened.

“We’re right on the line of control. Our turbans suggest *Kashmiriyat* but even that is now under a severe threat,” says Sardar Joginder Singh. “Last fortnight, when the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, was in Srinagar for a second round table conference, there was an extra deployment of soldiers in our village,” says Mr Sadhu Singh, a villager, adding that every VVIP visit to the valley adds to the people’s fears.

“Mr Bill Clinton visited India in 2001 and we witnessed Chittisingpora,” he said. In the Muslim-dominated area, even the Army tells them to get home early and not to open the door to anybody in the night.

This brave nationalist minority which has refused to dance to the tune of local terrorists, most of whom move freely across the line of control, are further hurt by the treatment meted out to them by the state government. “We don’t give them (terrorists) shelter, we don’t give them food. We have a self-imposed curfew here. And we are acting as the guards of the frontier on the line of control. Why, then, are we treated so badly?” ask the villagers. Their woes seem endless: Triboni and Sumbalpora are without road links. All other neighbouring villages are well-connected, in contrast. Promises made by the Congress chief, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, who visited the places last year after a devas-

tating earthquake, and other VIPs have not been honoured by the administration.

The earthquake added to their problems. Villages which have suffered extensive damage have yet to rebuild themselves completely. While, in other villages, construction material can be dumped right by the road, bricks, cement and sand have to be carried up to these place by ponies, hiking the prices manifold. And the relief that they got was less than minimum. Villages allege members of the majority community who managed to show four or five families living under one roof, got Rs 1 lakh for each by way of compensation. Residents of Triboni-Sumbulpora, eschewing deception, were less fortunate. And Ms Tripat Kaur is someone who has received no relief. Her house suffered damage and now she has had a hut topped by a sheet of tin made for her nine-member family. Even eight months after the earthquake, relief eludes many people. When they travel to Tangdhar, hoping to draw the attention to the state of their affairs of the sub-divisional magistracy, Mr Abdul Hameed, they are surprised to come to know that peons are ‘under orders not to let any Sikh in’. **In the absence of government help, a quake-flattened gurdwara has not been constructed in the past ten months.** The villages have many graduates most of whom are unemployed. Sikhs allege the state administration and the local majority community want them gone, “just as Kashmiri pandits were got rid of 16 years ago.” It is the Army’s support which keeps them going. [Courtesy: *The Statesman*] □

The Political Scenario in Punjab and the Coming Elections

GURDARSHAN SINGH DHILLON*

THE BUGLE FOR THE FORTHCOMING election to the Punjab Legislative Assembly has already been sounded. This time it seems to be a keen fight not only between the two rival political parties but also between the two towering political stalwarts who have dominated the political scene in Punjab from two different constituencies.

Negative Vote:

In the last elections, people's mandate in favour of the Congress was more on account of the negative vote which was against the Shiromani Akal Dal and not for any known merits or virtues of the Congress. For the first time in the post independence period, the Shiromani Akal Dal got an opportunity to complete its full term of five years. It was a period of test and trial for Parkash Singh Badal who had often asserted that a full term, with the reins of party and the government at his command, would provide him the opportunity to usher in a socio-economic revolution in the state. But he failed to rise to the occasion and prove worthy of people's mandate. The party which had tried to demonstrate its strength through bands and peaceful marches for espousing the politico-economic issues of the state stood mute, discredited and apathetic. The

Akali-BJP alliance failed to provide healing balm to people baffled and bewildered by a decade-long phase of bloodshed, violence and vengeance.

Hegemonic agenda of Chief Minister Badal, who also remained the aging party president, was aimed at pursuing policies which feathered his own nest. While nepotism and corruption became rampant in the state, the SAD-BJP alliance fared no better than the earlier Congress regimes, as far as addressing the politico-economic issues was concerned. SAD lacked conviction and commitment and could not prevail upon the BJP government at the Centre to find an amicable and enduring solution to the varied problems facing the state. The Akalis found it difficult to take off their muddy boots after signing the Rajiv-Longowal Accord which was nothing but a retrogressive step. They started their term in a muddle, with hardly any agenda and ended it in a bigger muddle, making people realize that mere promises, without action are empty and futile. This is how people were compelled to give their mandate in favour of the Congress.

The Congress, under the leadership of the Capt. Amarinder Singh, did try to shake the old dust from its feet and seemed to have learnt a few lessons from

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the past mistakes due to which the state was driven from one disaster to another. The change of outlook between the old and the new Congress leadership became noticeable. The party did ponder over the state's manifold problems, made complex and still more complex through years of procrastination, sham negotiations, unilateral Awards and deceptive Accords.

Dynamic:

Capt. Amarinder Singh embarked upon the path of opening new channels for bold and dynamic action. The Termination of River-waters Agreement Act was hailed as a landmark in the recent history of Punjab. It was a step taken with unshakable conviction and absolute confidence without mincing words. In spite of criticism from certain quarters, the C.M. grew in stature and he endeared himself to all well-wishers of Punjab. He proved that he had something specific to contribute to the trouble-torn state, where the crucial issue of water and hydel power had defied a negotiated settlement for so long. But even as the Chief Minister has proved his bonafides, he has not emerged as a leader of the masses.

Isolation:

With too much dependence on the bureaucracy and a chosen set of advisers, he remains alienated from the common people. The party also lacks grass-root workers who can consolidate party's vote bank enabling it to emerge as a genu-

inely bigger player in the game. The party cannot afford to repeat its 'historic blunders' which led to its alienation from the people, especially in the Punjab countryside. Captain also needs to decentralize his power and share it with other team mates and party workers.

Rampant Corruption:

On the eve of polls, the need for addressing the long pending regional issues is increasingly emerging as an absolute necessity. Peace-loving people of Punjab, disturbed and distressed by the ugly phase of violence have begun to see things in the right perspective. They want the economy of the state to rest on even keels. They are sick of corruption which neither the Akali-BJP alliance nor the Congress has been able to root out. As far as common people are concerned, 'whatever is best administered is the best.' Their topmost priorities are neat and clean administration and peace grounded in justice and fair play. As the two parties are poised for a tough electoral battle, leadership in Punjab must rise to the occasion in a spirit of sincerity, and clear the mess created by decades of mishandling, wrong manoeuvring and unworthy motives.

Suicides:

Of the most crucial significance are the issues of rural indebtedness, inflation, unemployment and poverty. Better healthcare and quality education are also the need of the hour. It is a pity that the

fate of peasantry, the life blood of Punjab, is still in the doldrums. Thousands of desperate farmers have committed suicide. No government, Akali or Congress, has initiated policies and programmes to ameliorate the lot of farmers. Punjab needs a definite perspective on farmer-related problems and an integrated approach to human resource development in the state. Agro-based industries can not only provide boost to agriculture but can also provide the benefits of growth, employment and development to all sections of society. There is an urgent need to rejuvenate the state's economy which has been in a shambles for such a long time. People in Punjab are clamouring for a truly representative and responsible leadership which could restore the state's status of being the most prosperous state in the country. The two stalwarts in the game

should chalk out new and progressive blue-prints for the state.

Conclusion:

Hopefully, a new pattern of politics has begun to unfold and develop, calling for the highest good of public at large. It must gather impetus to push the state on the path of peace, progress and prosperity. At a time when the Indo-Pak peace process has started gaining good momentum, Punjab has a crucial role to play in delivering and maintaining peace. People would like healthy democratic process to take firm roots in Punjab. It is hoped that in the game of competitive politics, the two players will not indulge in mud-slinging and smear campaign, as was witnessed in the last election and thereafter.



Through countless ages complete darkness prevailed; In a complete void there was no world, no firmament. The will of the Lord alone existed neither night nor day, neither sun nor moon; only God in an endless trance. Neither creation, nor destruction, neither coming nor going; There were no continents, no underworlds; No seven oceans, no rivers, no flowing waters; There were no higher, middle or lower planes; Neither was there heaven, nor hell; Neither death nor time; There was no world of tortures, nor region of bliss; Neither birth nor death; When He so willed, Then He created the world, and without any support sustained the firmament. He founded the continents, solar systems, underworld, and from the Absolute Self, he became manifest. None knows his limit, It is through the True Teacher (Guru) the secret is revealed.

- Guru Granth Sahib

Naam, Daan, Isnaan: **Inspiration from Warren Buffett's philanthropy**

BHUPINDER SINGH* (USA)

IN JUNE 2006, THE SECOND richest man in the world, Mr. Warren Buffett (USA) announced a donation of \$31 billion to the Gates Foundation and in the process, has redefined philanthropy and service to the mankind. The 75 year old self-made man who amassed a fortune of over \$ 44 billions, has definitely made every one wonder as to why the donation is not being made to a foundation set in his name. The rest of his fortune has also been earmarked for the other charities run by his family members. It is interesting to note that even after achieving a celebrity status, he still lives in the same three bedroom house that he bought for \$31,000 in 1958. In fact a chance to dine with him is auctioned on eBay for \$620,100 with the proceeds going to the charities speaks volumes of this man's simplicity and his keen desire to serve the humanity.

It appears like a fairy tale story, as it is very rare to come across someone who has made that kind of money and decided to use it for the common good and service of mankind, before his own death. Besides, just giving it away, he is not concerned about leaving a legacy in terms of an edifice or a charity with the Buffett

name on it. He is really turning a new page not only in terms of philanthropy but also in terms of living a simple life and not making the wealth heirloom. That is even more remarkable when we have seen excessive greed in the chief executives running companies in the recent past. Even if we wish to become as rich as him, and if the wish is granted still we may not be able to muster the courage to emulate his example in giving. He is definitely leaving a unique legacy that will inspire others to give and serve our less fortunate brethren. Loren Stiffy writes in The Houston Chronicle about him by saying; "Wealth isn't a measure of success; it's a product of it." Now we have unique living example of how to be successful and then use that as an endowment for the service of the poorest in the world. In addition he is clear that he will not be involved in decision making of how his endowment gets used.

Since we may never match with the sage of Omaha (as Buffett is known) in terms of earning and giving it away, is there a way that we can serve, and also become successful with our little or no wealth as asset? Guru Nanak Dev Ji has provided an answer with another unique

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way of serving. Guru Ji says:

“ਬਿਨੁ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਸੇਵੇ ਜੀਅ ਕੇ ਬੰਧਨਾ ਵਿਚਿ
ਹਉਮੈ ਕਰਮ ਕਮਾਹਿ ॥” (SGGS: 589)

Meaning: *Without serving the True Guru, the soul is in the bondage of deeds done in ego.*

Guru Ji says only that service is fruitful which pleases the True Guru, so serve the True Guru.

“ਸਾ ਸੇਵਾ ਕੀਤੀ ਸਫਲ ਹੈ ਜਿਤੁ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕਾ
ਮਨੁ ਮੰਨੇ ॥ ਜਾ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਮਨੁ ਮੰਨਿਆ ਤਾ
ਪਾਪ ਕਸੰਮਲ ਭੰਨੇ ॥” (SGGS: 314)

Meaning: *Fruitful and rewarding is that service, which is pleasing to the Guru's Mind. When the Mind of the True Guru is pleased, then sins and misdeeds run away.*

If we can do this type of service which pleases the master, we would have made our own life successful and also left a lasting legacy behind. Because the reward of this type of service is that all the sins are removed. We do not have to be very rich to do this type of service. All of us have the potential of doing this type of service. The benefit of this type of service has been succinctly put by Guru Ji in

these words:

“ਸੇਵਾ ਕਰਤ ਹੋਇ ਨਿਹਕਾਮੀ ॥ ਤਿਸ ਕਉ
ਹੋਤ ਪਰਾਪਤਿ ਸੁਆਮੀ ॥” (SGGS: 45)

Meaning: *One who performs selfless service, without thought of reward shall attain his Lord and Master.*

One who has attained this has also attained everything and he/she can still be giving it all away lovingly to everyone. Guru Ji has said:

“ਸੇ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਸਾ ਸੇਵਾ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਸਫਲ ਹੈ
ਜਿਸ ਤੇ ਪਾਈਐ ਪਰਮ ਨਿਧਾਨੁ ॥”
(SGGS: 734)

Meaning: *He is the True Guru - service to the True Guru is fruitful and rewarding. By this service, the greatest treasure is obtained.*

If the example of Gates and Buffett can inspire us to look at our own potential, then their service will be not just service for poor and less privileged but for the entire mankind. Because by their act they would have emboldened others to look deeply at what they can give, and in the process started thousands of new streams in giving.

□

*“I have not seen a gurdwara, a mosque
and a temple next to one another
anywhere else except in Kashmir.”*

- Mr APJ Abdul Kalam, President of India

The 'Sikh Day' Celebration in Herndon Senior Center, Washington, D.C.

*DR. SURJIT KAUR**

MAY 13, 2006 WAS A HISTORIC DAY for the Sikhs of Washington Metropolitan area when over 300 Sikhs and non-Sikhs gathered at Herndon Senior Center to celebrate the creative of the Khalsa at the invitation of the Fairfax County's Department of Community and Recreation Services. Herndon Senior Center is well known for its inclusive and welcoming approach, and the Director of the Center – Mrs. Ruth Junkin and her dedicated staff are fully committed to serving the needs of all seniors, regardless of their ethnicity or the colour of their skin. She takes pride in telling reporters and visitors that there are 22 languages spoken by the members of this center, and that diversity of cultures has greatly enriched the environment in this newly opened center. In addition to being an impressive talker, she appears to be a great listener, I observed her listening to each and every member of her Center with patience and serious concern. And that seems to attract members from all communities and they feel most comfortable incoming to this Center, even if they do not speak English fluently. I plan to visit this Center, during its normal routine of operation, when there is no celebration going on.

To get back to the celebration of the Sikh Day at this center, I arrived at 10.00 a.m. and saw about half a dozen young Sikhs helping the Director – Ruth Junkin, and others in setting up the auditorium for the event. Then came volunteers – Ranju Kohli, Susan Lydick and daughter, Elaine, Mirin Kaur and her husband, Tejbir Singh, and others.

A little after 10'clock, the Center Director – Ruth Junkin set the program in motion with her great presence and commanding voice. We all stood up to join the pledge of allegiance, read by a veteran member, a Sikh, Gurcharan Singh Randhawa. Then came the talented Sahib Kaur, who sang the National Anthem – Star Spangled Banner – Sahiba is the daughter of Bibi Amarjit Kaur who is well known among Sikh circles as one of the best Kirtanias of the Sikh community.

One of the objectives of this event was to educate our India community about the fabulous services of Fairfax County meant for all its residents – mainstream, and the immigrants, who still consider themselves as such. An information table was set up to hand over printed materials about the county services, each visitor was given a package of information material after they

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registered and received their name tags. I was most impressed when a Fairfax County Director of Systems Management – Ms. Karla Bruce stood up to talk about the county services, and said that these services can be tailored to the needs of the immigrant communities and that the county would be most receptive to the comments from among the audience. Mr. Evan Braff, the Division Supervisor II, talked about the various facilities and services available for our youth and teenaged children. There are several programs and services through Fairfax County, to keep our young children engaged in productive and constructive activities so that they do not look for diversions in gang activity or drugs.

Then it was the time to talk to the county officials about us. Dr. Rajwant Singh, a well known community leader of the Sikhs was invited to talk about Sikh Americans, and the challenges they face, because of their appearance. His speech was printed and distributed to let others know who the Sikhs are.

It was a great pleasure to see Mr. S. Mohinder – a former Music Director Bollywood Films, to sing the Sikh National Anthem, “*Deh Shiva Bar Mohe ehe*”. The response to his presence was unbelievable in the resounding “*Sat Sri Aka*”. Mr. Mohinder has been a legendary Music Director, who gave a break in the films to the most versatile singer, Asha Bhonsle. Mr. Mohinder also directed the music in

all time successful film – *Nanak Naam Jahaz Hai*.

Bibi Amarjit Kaur sang a *shabad* from Guru Gobind Singh’s writings, “*Haal muridan da kehna...*” This *shabad* was composed by Guru Gobind Singh in the most difficult moment of his life, when he woke up from a bed of thorns in a lonely forest ‘Machiwara’, only to find out that his two younger sons had been mercilessly murdered and bricked alive in a wall at the order of the ruler of the day. Bibi Amarjit Kaur sings with her soul and the audience responded to her soulful songs. She is a spiritual hymn singer and one of the best.

Then came the fun part of the program, when a group of young Indian women, called ‘Bollywood Dancers’ led by a pretty Rupa enthralled the audience with their graceful rendering of Panjabi Bhangra. This was followed by Panjabi Gidha, by Bajwa sisters. Harjit Singh Hundal, an accomplished radio artist from Panjab entertained the audience for over 15 minutes. The last and most enjoyable item was reserved for Mr. and Mrs. Seth Bhogal – called the King and Queen of Bhangra. They kept the audience dancing to their tunes till the end. The time between 2:00 pm and 4.00 pm on May 13, 2006 just flew away. The objective of forging an alliance between the Sikhs and the mainstream Americans had been accomplished in a big way! At least it is a good beginning.



Website: “SriGranth.org” The High-Tech Treasure of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Waiting to be discovered

PROF DEVINDER SINGH CHAHAL, PHD

The website: SriGranth.org was established in June, 2000 by Jasjeet Singh Thind with the help of his father Dr Kulbir Singh Thind, MD. Dr Thind is the one who first invented different fonts of Gurmukhi in 1995 and first CD on Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) in Gurmukhi with Transliteration in Roman and with English translation by Dr Sant Singh Khlasa was prepared. The new Web site, **SriGranth.org**, was completely updated on Guru Nanak *Parkash Ustav* (Birthday), in November 2005.

This is first site on SGGGS in **Unicode**, which has many advantages over other sites. Information regarding unicode can be read at: <http://www.gurbanifiles.org/unicode/> In fact, it will be very useful for any writer of Gurmukhi to know these advantages. However, it has been noticed that it is still a hidden high tech treasure for many researchers. I was using information from his old CD and other search engines but was never happy since I still have to go to other translations of the AGGS and many dictionaries to complete my research on Gurbani. It was very

troublesome and time consuming besides having a computer in my lap. The current site, **SriGranth.org**, has updated database with two English translations of AGGS, one Punjabi translation and two *Teekas* (Punjabi translations with explanations) and is based on **Unicode fonts** (the industry accepted international standard). However, the site allows anyone to do Gurmukhi searches in Gurbani Lipi as well. **SriGranth.org** allows anyone to explore the hymns of SGGGS in ways never possible before.

I stayed with Dr Thind's family from June 4 to 11, 2006. This was my head-quarter where from I went to Freemont Gurdwara to speak to the Executive and the Sangat about my new project about the discovery of a monument in the name of Guru Nanak in Istanbul, Turkey, to Barkley to have lunch with the Punjab Agricultural University alumni, and finally had a dinner with Mr Hardev Singh Grewal (host), Prof Balbir Singh and Dr Kulbir Singh Thind. All of them are the Sikh Diaspora Discussion Group members. But most of my time was spent with Dr Thind

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to explore the full potential of **SriGranth.org**.

This website not only provides advanced search ability to search SGGS in Gurmukhi, Hindi or English with transliteration, but one can also view and read either of two English translations (by Dr Sant Singh Khalsa or Bhai Manmohan Singh), along with Punjabi translation by Bhai Manmohan Singh and either of two Punjabi Teekaas (by Prof Sahib Singh or Fridkotwala Teeka), **in an interactive way**. English as well Punjabi meanings of words found in SGGS can also be viewed by simply clicking on any word. In fact, the English meanings become visible as the cursor is moved over any word. The meanings are provided from three dictionaries and also from '*Mahan Kosh*'. The word meanings can also be searched independently from the dictionaries. A list of words found in SGGS is provided for help in doing easy searches.

There is also a feature provided to view any Sabd/Sloka or Pauri in SGGS, by separating it into a separate page. It is possible to read SGGS in Gurmukhi or Hindi and its English transliteration, translations and teekas by navigating to any desired page with ease.

The site is designed in such a way that most functions are available with ease. As most users would prefer to do simple searches by typing words in Gurmukhi, Hindi, English or Transliteration, they can do it right in the home page. An image

map to help type Gurmukhi words is provided and requires simple clicks over the displayed letters. However, it is also possible to type on the keyboard as well.

Clicking on the Advanced Search button in the home page takes one to another page where it is possible to do advanced searches in Gurmukhi, Hindi, English or phonetic transliteration. The advanced searches are very sophisticated and allow one to get to desired information with ease. One can thus limit searches to the sentences that begin with certain words/letters, or that contain any of the presented words or a combination of words. The searches can be further refined selecting appropriate Raga, Author, Page-range or Poetry-type.

A brief description of Search Features:

- A. In the home page the search query can be a word, a partial word or a combination of words (in exact sequential order).
- B. In the "Advanced Gurbani Search" page there are many options:
 1. One can limit searches to any Author, Raga, Poetry-type or Page range.
 2. One can do searches in Gurmukhi without *Laga-Matra* and with full characters instead of *paireen* (letter as subscript) characters. This is very helpful when one is not fully sure of the spellings of query words.
 3. One can limit searches to the begin-

- ning letters/words of any sentence.
4. One can search for those sentences that contain certain words (the words do not have to be sequentially placed in the sentence of search). Partial words are good enough for searches.
 5. One can search for sentences that contain all of the specified words or any of listed words.

A brief description of Read/Print/Display/Copy features

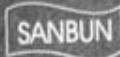
1. One can read the related pages after doing searches in Gurmukhi or Hindi and with or without different translations, *Teekas* (commentaries in Punjabi) or phonetic transliteration.
2. One can go directly to a particular page of AGGS and then navigate back and forth between pages as desired.
3. One can chose Gurmukhi text of AGGS in regular format OR with inserted punctuation marks. The later is good for easy reading and is often used in *Teekas*.
4. One can read SGGGS text in Devnagri (Hindi). This is useful to those who do not know Gurmukhi but know Hindi.
5. One can read Aad Guru Granth Sahib, as would be read in Gurmukhi but by reading in phonetic transliteration. This is useful to those who do not know Gurmukhi or Hindi but know English.
6. The SGGGS text can be simultaneously displayed in Gurmukhi, Hindi and in Phonetic transliteration, as per choice and can be combined with a choice of English translation and a choice of *Teekas*, and with Punjabi translation by Bhai Manmohan Singh.
7. Following English translations are available for selection:
 - a. By Dr Sant Singh Khalsa, MD
 - b. By Manmohan Singh.
8. Following *Teekas* (Punjabi translations with commentaries) are available for selection:
 - a. By Prof Sahib Singh.
 - b. Faridkotwala Teeka.
9. Search and View / Print / Display / Copy Sabd with Gurmukhi text, Hindi Text, phonetic transliteration and English translation by Dr Sant Singh Khalsa, MD.
10. Select any 'Amrit Kirtan' Sabd from any of the lists in Gurmukhi, Hindi, English or Phonetic transliteration.
11. Search for a Sabd by doing a search for Aad Guru Granth Sahib text (as described above under Search AGGS) and from the search results click on appropriate "view Sabd/Pauri/Sloka" button.
12. While viewing any Sabd you can go to the corresponding page of SGGGS and thus read any Sabd with all the

options for Translations and *Teekas* etc that are available for reading AGGS text.

13. Copy/Paste/Print/Display the Viewed Text with any of the above described choices.
14. Read Meanings of any Gurmukhi

Word of Aad Guru Granth Sahib and Search any Mahan-Kosh Topic. The transliteration and (when available) the English meaning of any Gurmukhi word of AGGS can be viewed by simply moving the cursor arrow over the word. Detailed meanings can be viewed by clicking on the word.






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Who are Sikhs? A Voice from Australia

*MANVIR SINGH KHALSA**

I am a Sikh!
I am born and brought up in this county.
The turban and unshorn hair are part of the Sikh uniform.

No one believes me.
They think I am part of the Taliban.
They think I am an Arab.
They think I am supporting terrorism.

I keep telling everybody:
“No! I am a Sikh!
Sikhs are not part of the Taliban.
Sikhs are not Muslims.
Sikhs are not Arabs.”

“Are you part of Islam” people ask?
“Are you an offshoot of Hinduism” others say.
“I have never heard of Sikhs” says another.

॥ ਨਾ ਹਮ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਨ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ॥ ਅਲਹ ਰਾਮ ਕੇ ਪਿੰਡੁ ਪਰਾਨ ॥੩॥

I am not a Hindu, nor am I a Muslim. My body and breath of life belong to Allah - to Raam - the God of both. ||4||” (Ang 1136)

Sikhs are a distinct people.
Sikhs are a distinct nation.
Sikhi is a distinct religion of peace, love and equality for whole humanity.

Sikhs worship the One Supreme Truth, the One Ocean of Mercy, the One Creator Lord.

Sikhs do not keep fasts, go to pilgrimages or pray to idols.
Sikhs follow three principles of constantly remembering the Lord, living and working honestly, and sharing with others.

“My turban is not a hat.
My turban is not a mere piece of cloth.
My turban is a gift which I cannot discard.”

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॥ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਰੂਪ ਹੈ ਖਾਸ ॥ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮੇ ਹੋ ਕਰੋ ਨੀਵਾਸ

The Khalsa is my distinct image. Within the Khalsa I reside.” (Guru Gobind Singh Ji) I explain,

“My turban is a crown blessed upon my head by my Father, Guru Gobind Singh Ji.”

“My turban is a crown of grace, dignity and honour.”

“My turban is a crown which protects my head, keeps my hair tidy and is the image of my Father.”

“It’s backward to keep your hair!” says one person.

“What is the point of cutting your nails and keeping your hair” says the cunning person.

“There is no significance in today’s world of unshorn hair,” says the Sikh who has been led astray.

॥ ਨਾਮੁ ਹਮਾਰੈ ਅੰਤਰਜਾਮੀ ॥ ਨਾਮੁ ਹਮਾਰੈ ਆਵੈ ਕਾਮੀ ॥

ਰੋਮਿ ਰੋਮਿ ਰਵਿਆ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ॥ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪੂਰੈ ਕੀਨੋ ਦਾਨੁ ॥੧॥

The Naam, the Power of the Lord’s Name, is the Inner-knower of my heart.

The Naam is so useful to me. The Lord’s Name permeates each and every hair of mine.

The Perfect True Guru has given me this gift. ||1||” (Ang 1144)

□

Stable Careers for Youth An insider’s View - Deepinder Singh Bedi

I absolutely agree that frequent job shifts, leave a bad impression on employers and may compel them to conclude that an applicant is fickle-minded or incompetent. At Tulip, we are quite mindful about not recruiting people, who, irrespective of their experience, jump from one organisation to another whenever a better pay package is dangled before them. Job-hopping is a prevalent trend in many industries -



especially in the IT and the telecom sector. It is, therefore, imperative that companies take a proper, closer look at résumé, especially those that bear hints of such mindless job changes.

To address the problem, companies may adopt certain best practices such as providing on-the-job training, incentive-based work environment, as well as scope for personal growth and career development.

I and i

*PAYAL WALIA**

I have existed for aeons,
not knowing that I live.
I am the shadow treading on obscure lanes,
I fear and doubt, hate and deceive
I am the radiance that illumines every path
I am love and conviction that treads on very heart.

I paint & compose verses,
And i scribble my name beneath it.
I am kind, pure and virtuous,
And i keep a trace of all these deeds.
i am lost in prattle and pretense,
I am found in profound silence.

I rejoice and smile for no reason,
i find reasons to celebrate.
I am the harbinger of merry seasons,
and i, the memory of dismal days.
I am a prayer born of complacency,
I am a blind player who loses & wins,
Not I, for I am the witness who perceives.

□



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Sex & The Sikh Ethics

We appreciate the tremendous effort by Bibi Bhoopinder Kaur in her article "Youth's sexual behaviour & the Sikh Ethics", [The Sikh Review, March 2006]

The sexual behaviour is a natural instinct to be contained within the parameters of the social groups in various part of the world. The western civilisation has nothing to do with our sexual behaviour, which too, differ from urban to rural, group to group. We must look within ourselves and rectify our weaknesses, in accordance with our social conceptions. To be honest, western influences have enriched our materially backward societies, through education, advanced knowledge in various areas. Our grey social areas have been exploited by the well placed ring leaders, for their personal benefits and these do not exclude our so called, present religious leaders and practicing priests. The reality is, that self interest motivates them to interpret religion for their own gain. Even today, the practice of destruction of female foetus is common, resulting in severe shortage of females to males and yet the old habits of demanding dowry from girls' parents, by the boys' parents, carry on. The trend ought to be reversed, as we see girls 'purchased' from say Eastern India, by the boys, are expected to perform polyandry functions, a common female for all male brothers. It will be no wonder, if the girls demand dowry from boys, before long, to polyandry sale. Islam has faced the same problem in its

area of origin, where the girls were sold as chattel and were paid the full price. The conception of 'Deen Mehaer' goes on, in that community, irrespective of gender ratio. Once practiced, it sticks for generations to come.

Media highlight such cases, which enlighten us, of the wrong doing within our society. Let it keep it up. It can be beneficial. Even our Granthis are proven guilty, like the school teachers in our patriarchal society. Do not hide them, but expose them. It will prove beneficial. Put the "fear of God", though man-made laws, into them.

One may not agree, but Bibi Bhupinder Kaur makes a noble effort to advocate certain remedies, for the benefit of the society. Some are practical, like recital of prayers, twice a day, to alter the trend of mind, from sex and restrict to safe period sex, as prescribed by nature. It may work in many cases, but not all. In our materialistic world, which is advancing at a rapid speed, daily or even frequent visits to places of worship, may not be possible. What is a Sikh diet, except for the common habits and practices of the society, in which we live. And the society is not made of Sikhs alone. We may give the lead, but no more. Even that is a great achievement and worth trying.

During my years in Europe, especially Greece, we used to see men and women dipping in sea water naked. No one thought anything wrong with it. It is no longer the physique and muscle power

that rules today. It is the brain power, that has replaced it in many parts of the world. Let us go along with the changing times, else we shall be left behind.

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* * * * *

Need for good Leadership

I have been reading *The Sikh Review* regularly for the last about 4 years and it has changed my life style. Every issue is better than previous one. The July issue is in my hand (reached today) and every word, every sentence and every page is piece of excellent material. The latest issue recalls how we have had great personalities like Gyani Kartar Singh, Justice Ranjit Singh Narula. Our past was glorious. But now we have unprincipled politicians who are not ashamed of knowing off each other's *pagree* in public. For the sake of kursi our leaders are divided and gone astray. TV of Parliament session (Lok Sabha) shows little contribution by Sikh MPs. Let us not become a mockery in the eyes of the world. Some Gurdwaras have become benevolence seeking deras and innocent people are exploited in the name of our great Gurus. Let us pray that Wahe Guru Ji gives us great leaders and save Sikhism from opportunists.

BAKSHISH SINGH ARORA

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The Hymn on *Mundavni*

This is in reference to letters of S. Suaran Singh and Brig. Hardit Singh (SR April 2006). The valuable response and critical questions of both these Gurmukhs are appreciated and recognised as a part of process of dialogue and discussion which is necessary for the understanding of essence of gurbaani in order to practice it in daily life by Gursikhs. The context of these two letters is discussed in this letter.

S. Suarn Singh refers to Mudavni of Guru Amar Das and Mundavni of Guru Arjan which are reproduced below:

ਥਾਲੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਤੈ ਵਸਤੂ ਪਈਓ ਹਰਿ ਭੋਜਨੁ ਅੰਮਿਤੁ
ਸਾਰੁ ॥ *

ਜਿਤੁ ਖਾਧੈ ਮਨੁ ਤ੍ਰਿਪਤੀਐ ਪਾਈਐ ਮੋਖ ਦੁਆਰੁ ॥

ਇਹੁ ਭੋਜਨੁ ਅਲਭੁ ਹੈ ਸੰਤਹੁ ਲਭੈ ਗੁਰ ਵੀਚਾਰਿ ॥

ਇਹੁ ਮੁਦਾਵਣੀ ਕਿਉ ਵਿਚਹੁ ਕਢੀਐ ਸਦਾ ਰਖੀਐ
ਉਰਿ ਧਾਰਿ ॥

ਏਹੁ ਮੁਦਾਵਣੀ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਪਾਈ ਗੁਰਸਿਖਾ ਲਧੀ
ਭਾਲਿ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਜਿਸੁ ਬੁਝਾਏ ਸੁ ਬੁਝਸੀ ਹਰਿ ਪਾਇਆ
ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਘਾਲਿ ॥ 1 ॥ 1

ਸੋਰਠ ਮ:੩ ਸ:ਗ:ਗ:ਸ: ਪੰਨਾ ੬੪੫

ਮੁੰਦਾਵਣੀ ਮ: ੫

ਥਾਲ ਵਿਚਿ ਤਿੰਨਿ ਵਸਤੂ ਪਈਓ ਸਤੁ ਸੰਤੋਖੁ ਵੀਚਾਰੋ
॥ *

ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਨਾਮੁ ਠਾਕੁਰ ਕਾ ਪਇਓ ਜਿਸ ਕਾ ਸਬਸੁ
ਅਧਾਰੋ ॥

ਜੇ ਕੋ ਖਾਵੈ ਜੇ ਕੋ ਭੁੰਚੈ ਤਿਸ ਕਾ ਹੋਇ ਉਧਾਰੋ ॥

ਏਹ ਵਸਤੁ ਤਜੀ ਨਹ ਜਾਈ ਨਿਤ ਨਿਤ ਰਖੁ ਉਰਿ
ਧਾਰੋ ॥

ਤਮ ਸੰਸਾਰੁ ਚਰਨ ਲਗਿ ਤਰੀਐ ਸਭੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ
ਪਸਾਰੋ ॥੧॥ ੨

(ਸਲੋਕ ਮ: ੫ ਸ:ਗ:ਗ:ਸ: ਪੰਨਾ ੧੪੨੯)

The point raised by S. Suaran Singh is correct that both these slokas are using words Mudavni and Mundavni in two different meanings and contexts. Despite the fact that both appear to be similar in conveying the message and almost similar in language. One feature is common in both these slokas that first stanza* in each is independent as far as the meanings of whole sloka is concerned. It is a sort of introduction to the latter part of slokas and stands out complete in its sense and purpose. The word vlcwr is conspicuously important in slokas 1 and 2. It is humbly submitted that the assertion of S. Hardit Singh that word vlcwr is not important in these slokas or for that matter in gurbaani of SGGS, is untenable. The presence of word ਵੀਚਾਰਿ ਜਾਂ ਬੀਚਾਰਾ in the slokas 3 and 4 respectively provides substantial and irrefutable evidence about its importance in the gurbaani of SGGS.

ਇਕਾ ਬਾਣੀ ਇਕੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਇਕੋ ਸਬਦੁ ਵੀਚਾਰਿ
॥੨॥੧੦॥ ੩

ਸੋਰਠ ਮ: ੩ ਸ:ਗ:ਗ:ਸ: ਪੰਨਾ ੬੪੬

ਹਰਿ ਕਾ ਬਿਲੋਵਨਾ ਮਨ ਕਾ ਬੀਚਾਰਾ ॥

ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਪਾਵੈ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਧਾਰਾ ॥੩॥੧॥੧੦॥੪

(ਆਸਾ ਕਬੀਰ ਸ:ਗ:ਗ:ਸ: ਪੰਨਾ ੪੭੮)

However, in the Mundavni of Guru Arjun, the first stanza containing, ਸਤੁ, ਸੰਤੋਖੁ, ਅਤੇ ਵੀਚਾਰੋ is pregnant with meanings or qualifications which are essential for meditating over the *Amrit Naam*. In other words without fulfilling this prerequisite further action will appear to be an exercise in futility or a meaningless endeavor by a Gurmukh. Thus these two stanzas are independent and at the same time related to satisfying a precondition to reach the door of *Amrit Naam*. It is hoped that this humble submission will be given due consideration by the readers of this letter.

The interpretation of every scripture depends upon the understanding of poetical form of language and structure of stanzas in the couplet. The grammatical rules for the understanding of prose are simple and are easily understood by most of us. But such rules are not always observed in the poetical form

In ancient literature, convenience of memorizing and ease for recitation favored poetical method for oral tradition which continued for a long time. According to some sources for the first time the Vedas were recorded on paper in 4th century C E. Ancient tradition of poetry lacked punctuation which led to different meanings of a scripture depending upon one's personal grasp or experience of learning it from other sources. Today, often Alvin Toffler is quoted for a fresh approach to modern learning which is fast superseding old methods which have been followed for almost in the entire past century, if not

for many centuries.

The illiterates of 21st century are not those who cannot read or write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn.

The most famous scientist of twentieth century, Einstein has been often quoted for the advice he gave to young students at Princeton University; *Be careful to learn correctly since unlearning is very difficult.*

Guru Arjun has used Mundavni in SGGS in the sense which, commonly in English, is called "The End". Recently there was a book by Giani Gurdit Singh called "Mundavni" which took him to the gates of Akal Takht to resolve the controversy amongst the Jathedars of various Takhts. This book emphatically states that Raag Maala is an insertion in Sri Guru Granth Sahib after its compilation by Guru Arjan and recension by Guru Gobind Singh. How many Sikhs have studied this book and commented on its contents? Even if some has studied it, have they accepted the evidence given by Giani Gurdit Singh? Did they change their views which they held before its publication? All this refers to the process of learning, unlearning and relearning which, unfortunately, is very slow amongst Sikhs all over the world. This, in fact, displays a measure of courage of commitment and depth of understanding of problems, being faced by younger generation of Sikhs who are growing up in an atmosphere of uncertainty and indifference in the diaspora.

My humble submission is that we should be prepared to listen and learn and use logic rather than emotions to understand and disseminate knowledge of gurbaani amongst younger generation of Sikhs. They are losing confidence in the credibility of elders, since elders are ignoring their demand for religious education in English in the Gurdwara or any other language which is their mother tongue in the diaspora. This conclusion is based on information gathered by this *Nishkaamsevak* after travelling in various countries of the world where Sikhs are living today.

SARJIT SINGH SANDHU

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* * * * *

Special Stamps

This year there are some important centenaries especially 400 years of Martyrdom of Guru Arjun Devji and of Sri Akal Takht Sahib, Amritsar.

It is regrettable that these two historic events are being ignored by India Post. Neither a stamp nor any special cover has been issued to commemorate such events of great importance. It is a pity that while lots of stamps are being issued every year, extremely important historical events are being ignored. It seems India Post has a blinkered view of history and philately. Is this promotion of philately

when stamps and covers are being issued to placate a particular region of India.’

This biased attitude of India Post is not in the interests of promotion of philately. India Post has already made a mess of “Guru Granth Sahib” stamps.

I request again, please issue stamps on Guru Arjun Dev Martyrdom and on 400 years of Sri Akal Takht Sahib. Other neighbouring countries have done it.

RANJIT SINGH

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Delhi 110088

* * * * *

Random Thoughts on Role Models

There is a typo in the editorial of the July “Sikh Review” (which credits a “Gurmukh Singh (UK)” with the authorship of “Rise of Sikhs Abroad”. In fact, the author is another Gurmukh Singh from India. I have read a review of this publication and also seen some other similar attempts like “Amongst the Sikhs rising for the stars” by Dr Surjit Kaur. (My advice to Dr Surjit Kaur was to agree on objective criteria for selection of individuals as role models.) Writing about Sikhs or Indians abroad is also a lucrative business! for some who invite payments for entries! Many such publications are shoddy, to say the least.

A publication based on first hand knowledge about the true Sikh commu-

nity builders abroad is still missing. My idea of community builders are Gursikh *sevadars* at grassroots level. For example, those of Southall (UK) mentioned in Bhai Rama Singh’s teaching autobiography (which I translated to English with the title “In Search of the True Guru” at the request of some AKJ Gursikhs). I can also recall many such community builders in Malaysia (Malaya) from my school days in places like Raub, Taiping, Penang, Kuala Lumpur and many other towns. A later - and less healthy - development has been the collectors of “Dato-ships” (Malaysia) and “OBEs” (UK) at the expense of community interests.

Outstanding exceptions in this category have been Sikhs, like Dr. Indarjit Singh, OBE (UK) who recognised the great importance of media decades ago and dedicated his life to this cause. Barrister Harjit Singh (deceased) devoted much time to human rights. Others, like Habinder Singh Rana, have chosen high profile Anglo-Sikh projects which promote Sikh identity. In the new generation, there are those in UK like Kashmir Singh (British Sikh Federation), Dabidarjit Singh OBE, Harmander Singh (Sikhs In England) and Bibis Gurdev Kaur and Balbinder Kaur Saund - all dedicated to community service in their own way and style.

Others, like S. Fauja Singh and Bhai Dya Singh of Australia fall into yet another category of their own. There are leading religious establishments, like Bhai Sahib

Mohinder Singh of Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha of Birmingham.

In the lower category (from the community service aspect) are those “reaching for the stars”. In their case, professional or political career advancement, wealth accumulation, and collection of awards and honours are the direct personal objectives. Community benefits are the by-products. However, by their very achievements they raise the community

profile. To show the Sikh flag (identity) where not seen before is a matter of personal satisfaction and community pride : Judge Mota Singh became the first Sikh judge and at about the same time I was representing a UK department at 1st Secretary (Trade) level at Geneva. Nevertheless, the true community builders and role models are not always those who are reaching for the stars!

GURMUKH SINGH (UK)



The Last Maharaja of Punjab*

The Sikh Maharaja, Duleep Singh was born on Sept. 4, 1838 in the house of legendary Maharaj Ranjit Singh when his political power was at its zenith.

Great Britain's Queen Victoria had always intended to make Duleep Singh an Englishman in all regards except name. So she sent the Duke of Argyll, the Secretary of State for India, on a special mission to offer peerages, a Marquisate for Prince Victor and an Earldom for Prince Fredrick. The wary Maharaj, however replied:

“I thank her Majesty most heartily and humbly convey my esteem, affection and admiration. Beyond this, I cannot go. I claim myself to be royal; I'm not English, and neither I nor my children will ever become so. Such titles - though kindly offered, we do not need and cannot assume. We love the English and especially their monarch, but we must remain Sikhs.”

He walked across the table in the great library at 'Elveden' and opened a drawer. “This”, he said drawing out some paper. “is the design for my coat-of-arms, drawn up the Prince Consort and initiated by the Queen. I use them out of courtesy to Her Majesty, but will not register them at the College of Arms. I'm not English.” The Duke later remarked he had never seen truer dignity or more real independence of spirit.

NB: There are four categories of Peerages: 1. Duke, 2. Marquis, 3. Earl and 4. Baron.

** The birth anniversary of Maharaja Duleep Singh falls in September.*

Sikhs in California win battle for Gurdwara

In what has been a mixed week for Sikhs in the US, the community has won a long-drawn battle to build a Gurdwara in California. But, then, in a seeming revival of hate crimes directed at the community since 9/11, a Sikh man been stabbed and, in another incident, a Sikh flag has been burnt down in an act of vandalism.

California, home to a large settlement of Sikhs, finally saw the curtains fall on a four-year battle with a US federal appeals court in San Francisco, upholding the right of the Sikhs to build a Gurdwara in Sutter county.

It had also become a test case for free expression of religious traditions in which the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, a non-profit law firm, had filed an amicus curiae on behalf of the Sikh community.

“This resounding victory for the Sikh group has nationwide implications for a wide range of cases dealing with religious land interest and it will echo especially loudly in California,” a spokesman of the law firm said. The appeals court slammed the country authorities for improperly blocking the community’s bid to raise the Gurdwara, terming it a violation of the Religious Land Use and Institutionalised Persons Act. The county’s action, it said, had imposed a substantial burden on the Sikh community’s religious right in the US.

The Guru Nanak Society of Yuba City had first sought permission to build the

shrine in a residential area, which was denied by the county planning board on the ground that neighbours had objected to the plan. The group then acquired land in a rural zone, but was again refused permission, this time the cited being disorderly development.

While Sikhs across the US have hailed the verdict, the celebratory mood has been cut short by two other developments in the West Coast. In California’s Santa Clara, a Sikh man was stabbed in the neck by a youth with a steak knife. The attacker suspected the victim, Iqbal Singh, to be a member of the Taliban in yet another case of mistaken assumption that Sikhs are followers of Osama bin Laden because of the turban and beard they sport. “We Sikhs are the most targeted for hate crimes. People don’t understand who we are. They associate us with terrorists. This hate is driven by ignorance,” said Gumeet Singh, brother-in-law of Iqbal Singh, who has been admitted to hospital with serious injuries.

A few days earlier, a Sikh shrine in neighbouring Oregon witnessed an attack, with unidentified vandals uprooting the flag post (*khanda*) and burning the religious emblem. The recurring incidents of selective attacks have prompted Sikh bodies to organise summer camps for Sikh youths to spread the message of what the religion stands for among the population at large. One such camp was organised in Maryland, on the outskirts of Washington, last month. □



ME JUDICE - A MISCELLANY

By (Late Sirdar) Kapur Singh

Edited by Baldev Singh

Published by Bhai Chattar Singh Jiwan Singh, Bazar Mai Sewan, Amritsar

Price: Rs. 300/- (Hard Cover) Pages: 488

'*Me Judice*' translates roughly as "*In my judgment*". The term is typical of the author. It is hard to evaluate the legendary Kapur Singh (1909-86). His classical ambiance is reflected in this collection of his essays and shorter writings, lovingly assembled by Sr. Baldev Singh who, evidently, cherished and preserved many of Kapur Singh's papers, mostly traced to and gleaned from - old issues of *The Sikh Review*.

It is no coincidence that the author, himself a legend, gelled with another legend, Captain Bhag Singh, MBE who edited the Journal from the start in 1953 far 1980's, even as Kapur Singh pre-deceased him in 1986. *The Sikh Review* paid a tribute to Kapur Singh by dedicating the August 1992 Issue to him – a rather modest and inadequate homage to the many splendoured scholar.

Endowed with the intellect of a genius, Kapur Singh felt embittered because he was treated harshly, not only by the rulers of his time, but also by the top brass of the Sikh leadership. Even at present few seem to heed his prophetic warnings, or care to propagate his philosophy.

Indeed, we are not sure if the universities in Punjab (now a territory shrunken beyond recognition) have prescribed Kapur Singh's writings for compulsory study at least at the post-graduate stage of philosophy or sociology.

The present Volume reflects his profound scholarship, dwelling on historical, political and theological themes, some lengthy treatises, others short essays, covering close to 500 pages. The subjects he tackles in this Miscellany range from "The Golden Temple: its theo-political status" and "Sri Guru Granth Darpan" to "Vulgarisation of Sikh doctrines", and "Vegetable Ghee in *Karah Prasad* under fire".

One of the most prolific writers on Sikhism, many, if not most – of Kapur Singh's Essays now published have been featured in *The Sikh Review*. Several of them deal with contemporary events and their impact on Sikh politics. As such they mirror the strength and weaknesses Sikh politics of 1950's and subsequent decades.

Kapur Singh was at his best in the exposition of exegetical and abtuse study

of religions – Semitic as well as Oriental. He revelled in his exceptional insight into classical lore and doctrine. This is precisely what makes his writings more chal-

lenging – fit for the connoisseur. Every *Qadar-dan of Sikhi* should benefit from this collection of his Essays.

- S.S.



THE WORLD ACCORDING TO SIKHI

By I.J.Singh

Published by The Centennial Foundation, Canada

www.centennialfoundation.org

Pages: 172 (Price not Mentioned)

This (fourth) book from Dr. I. J. Singh's pen brings together an illuminating set of 25 Essays that outline the essential philosophy, mores and sociology of the Sikhs in the context of present day world. The second half of 20th century has witnessed a vigorous emergence of Sikhism in India as well as Britain and North America. The fundamentalist upsurge of 1980s has given way to sober reflection and the desire to delve deeper in the meaning and purpose of life in all its splendour and mystery. Indeed IJ Singh traverses the transition - from despair and anguish of global Sikhs to the brilliant economist statesman Dr. Manmohan Singh assuming the office of India's Prime Minister - in his stride.

On the philosophic level, I. J. Singh has an uncanny knack of exploring the spiri-

tual and temporal aspects of life of a Sikh - 'The learner', in foreign lands and alien cultures. Basically a teacher and an anatomist – he is well equipped to explain how we can develop a sense of security and gain insight in a world that is becoming increasingly insecure. He does it with elegance and eloquence, with minimum fuss and utmost assurance. His Essay on Guru Granth Sahib, for instance, reinforces faith even as it illumines our mind: how we can discover within us a perennial source of strength by dwelling on the Holy Word. As a thinker, he enriches us with his own experience, even as he compels introspection on how we can harness *Sikhi* – The spirit of Sikhism – for a productive and happy life anywhere on earth.

Serious minded readers should find the essays stimulating, often challenging,

Email: ijs1@nyu.edu

free from both jargon and dogma. Most readers of this Journal are already familiar with I. J. Singh's writings. Indeed *The Sikh Review* has been the principal beneficiary of his prolific pen: some of the essays in his earlier books* first appeared in this Journal, which helped elevate the level of understanding of the essential doctrines of Sikh faith. His lucid prose invariably blends hope with realism.

The Essay on Guru Granth is typical: a comparative study that touches upon the Scriptural authenticity, musicology and universal appeal. It speaks of *Gurbani* revealing a 'loving God who can be experienced in one's heart and soul'; of *Hukam*, the divine Order; of *Nadar* (*nazar*) or Grace, as an affirmative beneficent power guiding our psyche; of Natural Justice: "In Guru Granth the emphasis is not on a God who micro-manages our lives, but on providing the spiritual basis for a moral and ethical framework around which purposeful lives can be fashioned."

"*The shelf life of a Book*" deplores the new generation's aversion to the printed word and its distinct preference for the "hazy glow of computer science", and recalls his own experience of how the reading habit shaped his thought. He goes on to urge the reader to study the *Gurbani* in original because translation "fails to capture the magic". He concludes on a despairing note: How few Gurdwaras have

a Library"! Remember that the U.S. and Canada have close to 250 Gurdwaras. The example of dedication and unity set by the late Singh Sahib Harbhajan Singhji Khalsa (Yogi Ji) readily comes to mind through not mentioned by I.J. Singh. The Sikh Movement has gained an unrivalled moral stature by the pure life style of thousands of Khalsa Sikhs across the Americas and some of the European countries like Netherlands. They optimize the spirit of *Sikhi* in all its magnificence.

Other Essays examine a host of key concepts: the generational gap, (The old are 'intolerant and preachy', the young often direction-less and obdurate) and need for patience and example. The issue of IDENTITY is broad-based and dealt with sympathetic logic. So also the various "shades" of the Sikh *swaroop*. The observation (in "The Numbers Racket") "it is not important to count noses. What is crucial is the quality" -should appeal to all except the demographer. "Are we (an) endangered species", he asks in this context, and then clinches the issue with": To me, the path of becoming a Sikh is a privilege"! One cannot agree more!

There is a wistful melancholy in his Essay: "*Lines drawn in the Sand*" because *Sehajdhari*s no longer frequent Gurdwaras, Sindhis juxtapose a variety of idols alongside Guru Granth Sahib and the Sikhs in diaspora have abandoned

* 1. *Sikhs & Sikhism: A View with a Bias* (1998)

2. *The Sikh Way: A Pilgrim's Progress* (2001) Reviewed in SR, Aug. Oct., Nov. & Dec. 2001.

3. *Being & Becoming a Sikh* (2003)

articles of their Faith. In the very next Essay, I. J. Singh draws solace from *Sangat* and its ambiance of purity and spiritual power, adoption of the *Sikhi* 'at one's pace' and progression in the pilgrim's journey.

Every intelligent reader would share his deep disappointment with the feuds and litigation over Gurdwaras – The 'Bermuda Triangle' of an ill qualified Granthi caught between warring cliques out to assert control over The House of Guru! Equally valid is his argument in "*Cobwebs of Mind*" that the wisdom of Guru Granth Sahib must be studied in reverence rather than treated as an idol wrapped in finery. '*Some Wars are Just*' acquires urgency in the context of the conflict raging in the Middle East. Quoting Thomas Aquinas and Guru Gobind Singh's *Zafarnamah* reinforces the argument in *Sikhi*, of being prepared for the unexpected (*tyar-bartyar*) conspicuously absent. In 1984 when

Sikhs in Delhi and elsewhere had been caught shockingly unawares.

On a different level, but same genre, I. J. Singh's Essays remind one of the economist Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen's illuminating book '*The Argumentative Indian*' (Penguin Books) which dwells on the culture, history and identity of all Indians.

The book in hand indeed adds up as the intelligent man's guide to Sikhism in the new Millennium. The publisher – a dedicated and enlightened outfit based in Toronto – would be well advised to tie-up with a reputed publishing house in India in order that libraries and readers in this country have easy access to Dr. I. J. Singh's luminous wit and wisdom.

It is books like this one which help promote the system of values bequeathed to us by the Ten Gurus and inscribed in Guru Granth Sahib.

- S.S.

CELEBRATION OF SIKH HISTORY: SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2006

Sep. 16	Jyoti Jyot Diwas Guru Amar Das Ji
Sep. 16	Jyoti Jyot Diwas Guru Ram Das Ji
Sep. 16	Gurgaddi Diwas Guru Ram Das Ji
Sep. 16	Gurgaddi Diwas Guru Arjun Dev Ji
Sep. 18	Gurgaddi Diwas Guru Angad Dev Ji
Sep. 22	Jyoti Jyot Diwas Guru Nanak Dev Ji
Oct. 02	Darbar Khalsa (Dashehra)
Oct. 21	Bandi Chhor Diwas (Diwali)
Oct. 28	Saka Panja Sahib
Oct. 28	Sthapna Diwas Chief Khalsa Diwan

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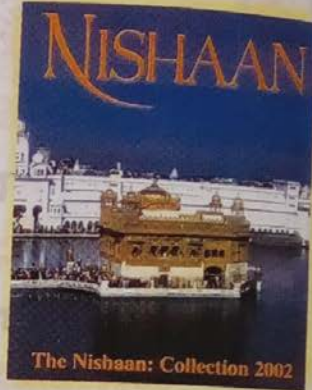
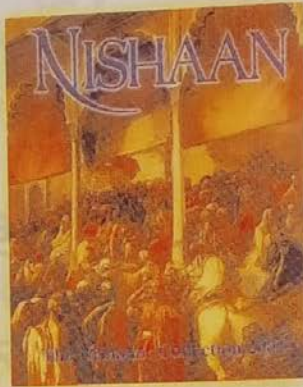
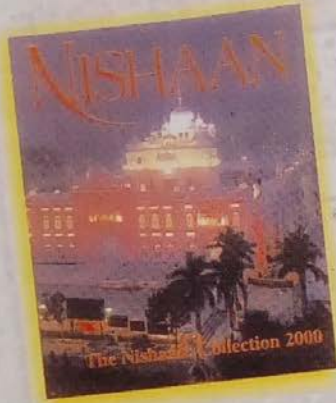
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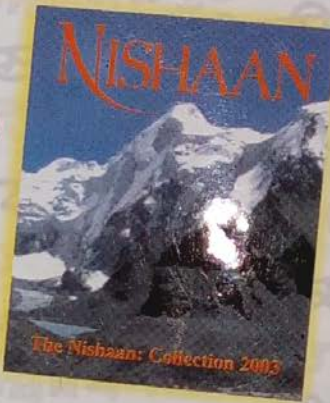
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