

ISSN: 2230 – 7729

ABSTRACTS OF SIKH STUDIES

(Vol XXVIII, Issue 4)

Oct-Dec. 2026 / 558 NS

EDITORIAL

FROM THE EDITOR : Prof Harpal Singh 1

ARTICLES

THE SIKH POLITICS: SELF-LEGITIMATING AND
DEEPLY DELUSIONAL : Jaspal Singh Sidhu 3

LOOKING AT WOMEN'S LIVES, RELATIONSHIPS
& SOCIETY IN THE COLONIAL PUNJAB : Dr Parneet K. Dhillon 10

TRANSLATION OF RELIGIOUS TEXTS AND
EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN THE BRITISH PANJAB: Prof Harpal Singh 24

SIKHS & HINDU NANAKPANTHIS IN QUETTA,
BALOCHISTAN : Inderjeet Singh 30

SIKHI AND THE CASTE QUESTION : Prof S.S. Jodhka 38

THE MISUSE OF AUTHORITY OF THE JATHEDAR
SRI AKAL TAKHT SAHIB : Dr Madanjit Kaur 43

UNRAVELLING THE PHENOMENON OF
DERAS IN PUNJAB : Prof Ronki Ram 64

SIKH SOLDIERING:
THE LEGACY MUST NOT FADE AWAY : Lt Gen R.S. Sujlana 82

WHO WAS AFRAID OF MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH? Zubair Ahmed Ali 88

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SRI GURU GRANTH
SAHIB IN THE QUEST FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE : Dr Parneet Kaur 91

CENTENARY TRIBUTE TO DR N. S. KAPANY : Col J.S. Multani 102

ON THE ISC FRONT : Kanwal Pal Singh 104

REVIEWS

ETERNAL WISDOM, EMERGING WORLDS : Prof H.S. Virk 108

KATHIHU AKATH KAHANI : Dr Tarundeep Singh 114

NEWS & VIEWS

: 117

ABSTRACTS OF SIKH STUDIES

Oct-Dec 2026 / 558 NS

(Vol XXVIII, Issue 4)

RNI Regd No : 69639 / 98

Founder Editors

Sardar Daljeet Singh & Dr Kharak Singh

Editor

Prof Harpal Singh

Editorial Advisory Board

Bhai Ashok Singh

Prof Kulwant Singh

Lt Gen Rajinder Singh

S Jaspal Singh Sidhu

Principal Navjot Kaur

NOTE

The Editor of the *Abstracts of Sikh Studies* solicits the precious advice and help of the esteemed members of the IOSS and readers in respect of contributing articles and identifying new subscribers. The response of the readers and subscribers remains our invaluable treasure in improving upon the contents of the Journal. – Editor

Views expressed in the articles published herein do not
necessarily reflect the opinion or policy of the
Institute of Sikh Studies

Price: 20/- (postage extra)

Published by

Institute of Sikh Studies

Gurdwara Singh Sabha, Kanthala, Indl Area Phase II

Chandigarh -160 002 (India).

Printed at

Saptrishi Publication, Plot No. 25/6, Near, Tribune Chowk, Industrial Area Phase II,
Chandigarh, 160002

EDITORIAL

FROM THE EDITOR

Recently the moral issue in the public life of Sikh leaders and the Sikh religious institutions occupied the centre stage of wider discussions as had never happened before. The politics of the Panjab is so mingled in the murky affairs of its religious and political leaders of different hues that it has become a burning point of discussion and concern on various forums. It has prompted the educated class among the Sikhs to write and initiate debates on this religious rot spread across the social and moral fabric of the state.

Besides, the articles included in this number cover wide-ranging issues which extend from the history of the colonial Panjab to several other vital concerns which give us a panoramic view of the rich religious and cultural legacy handed down from the ancestors to the present generation for preserving it in its pristine glory.

A brief analytical introduction about a book written by a writer of West Panjab has been specially included in the current issue. It is meant to draw the attention of the readers of Sikh Studies to an aspect of the history of Panjab which has hitherto been ignored and forgotten. The said book on the history is written in the Panjabi language, and therefore meant to be read and understood by Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs who lived in harmony and togetherness during the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Its author Aamir Riaz also stresses the point that any history of the Panjab without featuring the life and activities of all communities will never be complete and realistic. The recognition of the significance of the Sarkar Khalsa headed by Maharaja Ranjit Singh by the Muslim writers is a welcome happening.

The other view held by the author is that the British colonial Panjab is responsible on both sides of the border for this divided perception on the history of the Panjab, and that, the colonial interests were well served by putting the three principal communities and caste

identities against each other. This colonial conspiracy in the past also resulted into western bias towards the rule of Ranjit Singh. The different accounts of the Lahore Durbar, as the author prefers to call it, by European writers suffer from the colonial bias against the settled, harmonious and prosperous rule of the Sikh Maharaja.

This view of Aamir Riaz is also endorsed by a class of our own historians. The noted writer Khushwant Singh also finds fault with the inherent bias in the writings of the colonialists. He writes in his biography of the Maharaja, that, "Ranjit Singh has been poorly served by his biographers. Hindu and Sikh admirers deified him as a virtuous man and a selfless patriot. ...Muslim historians were unduly harsh in describing him as an avaricious freebooter. English writers, who took their material largely from Muslim sources, portrayed him as a cunning man (the cliché often used is 'wily oriental'), devoid of moral considerations". Clear references to the visible partiality of the European chroniclers are also noted by celebrated historians like Gulshan Lall Chopra, N.K. Sinha and Hari Ram Gupta.

Zubair Ahmed Ali of a Literary Forum 'Adabi Sangat' based in West Panjab (Pakistan) has introduced this history-book of Aamir Riaz titled "*Punjab di Vel*". He is among the few Muslim scholars from West Panjab (Pakistan) who have made observations on the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. His book on the history of the Panjab, as the author points out, is aimed at addressing the distortions which have been the bane of history-writing on both sides of the Partitioned Panjab.

The relentless and unyielding struggle of the Sikhs against mounted odds has evolved in the finest legacy of a Sikh soldier. Lt Gen R.S. Sujana as a military historian keeps up his promise to record stories from the promising tradition of the Panjab as a land of warriors. The renowned sociologist Dr Surinder Singh Jodhka has addressed a perennial and painful issue in his scholarly article 'Sikhi and the Caste Question'. The question of persistent decay in the Sikh institutions is dealt in ascerbic details by Prof. Madanjit Kaur, formerly of the Guru Nanak Studies department of Guru Nanak Dev University.

I am thankful to the inspirational support that I always receive from the Institute of Sikh Studies to enable me to fulfill my editorial obligations. Any feedback on the contents of the Journal will be highly appreciated.

THE SIKH POLITICS: SELF-LEGITIMATING AND DEEPLY DELUSIONAL

JASPAL SINGH SIDHU*

The noted columnist and formerly of the UNI Jaspal Singh Sidhu has given a graphic account of the muddle created by the decades-old control of Parkash Singh Badal family over the political and religious institutions of the Panjab. Its was tantamount to undoing the spirit and ethical values established by the Ten Gurus , and also of the blood-dripping struggle of the Sikhs against the Mughals and Afghans and the subsequent establishment of Sarkar Khalsa under the leadership of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. – Editor

At this juncture, Sikh politics — once controlled and run by the Akali Dal — is in the doldrums. Whether operating as a united party or divided into factions, the Akali Dal has become the fiefdom of a few Sikh families, allowing only a rare influx of fresh, young blood from the outside.

These dynastic Akali leaders are businessmen first and foremost, seeking political power primarily to promote their family enterprises. They have virtually ceased to act as champions of the interests and rights of the Sikhs and Punjab. They seem oblivious to the fact that they were once revered as formidable regional political players and that their political outfit is the second-oldest in the country. Today, they feel no compunction about bartering Sikh sentiments, institutions, and regional interests in exchange for power.

Furthermore, the Akalis have proven to be staunch loyalists to their New Delhi masters, who helped bring them to power. Out of gratitude, the Akalis carry out all the biddings of the central authority,

* Email: <jaspal.sdb@gmail.com>

even when those actions directly contravene Sikh rights, sentiments, and the interests of Punjab. Consequently, the Akalis have lost their credibility with the very Sikhs they claim to represent.

The Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal), the main faction, lost its legitimacy to represent Sikhs in the aftermath of the Bargari sacrilege cases in 2015. Thereafter, it lost two successive Punjab Assembly elections as well as the Lok Sabha polls in 2024, with its vote share plummeting to 13.5 percent — lower than the BJP's 18.6 percent.

To redeem its sharp decline, SAD leaders, including party president Sukhbir Singh Badal, appeared before the Akal Takht to seek an apology for their party's role in the 2015 beadbi (sacrilege) episode. However, the SAD tendered a half-hearted apology that addressed only Sikh religious affairs while shirking away from the Akal Takht's political dictates. These dictates found serious fault with the SAD's tenure in power, accusing it of implementing a Rashtrawadi (Hindu ultra-nationalist) political agenda and repressing Sikh youth.

The December 2, 2024 Hukamnama (edict) from the Akal Takht regarding the SAD echoed an 18th-century perception of Sikhs as an independent entity fighting militarily against Mughals and Afghans. In doing so, the Akal Takht ignored the fact that around four decades ago, the SAD forged an unconditional political alliance with an ultra-Hindu nationalist party, the BJP, to regain and maintain power. Under these dynamics, it was nearly impossible for the SAD, a small regional outfit, to avoid implementing the agenda of its national "big brother."

How did the Akalis sink to such a low point? This is a pertinent question troubling a large section of the Sikhs who do not comprehend how those ideals espoused and practiced at the cost of their lives by their elder generations became dissipated and degenerated. Seemingly living in the past, they rarely realize that drastic economic and political changes took place over the past two centuries. In fact, the colonial era steamrolled and transformed Punjab, like other parts of the world, beyond recognition, and the chivalry of the feudal era can only be romanticized now.

The Sikh militancy of the 1980s and 90s could not live up to those Sikh ideals and practices of yore, even as the youth made thousands of sacrifices and families endured unprecedented suffering and humiliation. Hence, we must strive to understand this decline in ideals and practices from a historical perspective.

As far as the Sikh faith is concerned, there is no doubt that it is distinct and unique in the sense that it was revolutionary in its origin—rejecting earlier variegated mythological illusions and religious scriptures that sanctified the dehumanization of a large part of society through the caste system. It strived to remodel society on the principles of "social justice and social equality," where human beings are neither afraid of the mighty nor of death, while remaining ready to sacrifice their lives fighting against injustice and tyranny of every sort. The Sikhs achieved such idealistic religious and ideological dimensions in practice until the end of the Banda Singh Bahadur period in 1715.

Later, historical developments took a different turn. As the ruling Mughals in Delhi were losing administrative control over the vast Punjab region, accompanied by the weakening of Kabul—a power center at the other end of South Asia—a power vacuum emerged in Punjab, where a tiny number of Sikhs were waging an existential fight. The Sikh warriors forged an alliance of equals that met at the Sikh sacred shrine, Harmandir Sahib (Darbar Sahib) in Amritsar, to draw up a joint military strategy to fight against Afghan invaders and the residual power of the Mughals.

During those decades of military expeditions in the middle of the 18th century, the leaders of Sikh jathas (groups) carved out their areas of influence and control called misls (confederacies) in Punjab. Before the beginning of the 19th century, Sikh misls had virtually replaced the Muslim aristocracy that had ruled the region for four to five hundred years prior. An astute Ranjit Singh, the third heir of the Sukerchakia misl, managed to subdue and merge these Sikh confederacies into his empire at the dawn of the 19th century, which lasted for nearly half a century.

Ranjit Singh was a monarch — though a much-reformed one because of his Sikh background — compared to contemporary rulers. Basically, he was the first-ever Punjabi emperor whose empire spread up to Kabul and Kashmir, bordering Ladakh. However, his empire was not a "Khalsa Raj" in the true sense, even as Sikhs occupied dominant positions in his army and administration.

There are still contentious questions among historians: why did the Ranjit Singh regime fail to produce a successor of his stature or a commonwealth of Sikh chieftains capable of matching the colonizing

onslaught of the British Empire during its ascendancy in the 1840s and 1850s? How did the imperial rulers succeed so quickly in turning the defeated Sikh soldiery into loyalists who played a key role in helping the British consolidate their rule in the Indian subcontinent and fight in the First and Second World Wars?

Ironically, an attempt to answer these two queries can help us understand the extent to which the Sikhs slid from their lofty ideals and practices to the low state they have fallen into today. Practically speaking, the current Sikh elite and leadership are no different from any other Indian leaders. We must re-evaluate our history, unlearning what we were previously taught to believe.

First of all, the entire 18th century of Sikh military resistance—which cost thousands of Sikh lives while other Punjabis remained a compliant and compromised populace—proved to be a stepping stone for the establishment of the confederacies (misls) and, ultimately, the sovereign regime of Ranjit Singh. However, as the Sikh rulers of the misls or chieftainships became hereditary, the core Sikh ideals of "social equality and social justice" were heavily damaged. These chieftains were more interested in expanding their rule and sphere of influence than upholding Sikh values. Internecine fights even broke out among certain Sikh chieftains over the acquisition of wealth and territory. In the process, Sikh principles and social practices were relegated to the background, and Sikh shrines came under the control of a Brahmanised and priestly class of mahants.

With Ranjit Singh becoming a monarch, the tradition of holding Gurmata—a consensual Sikh political strategy and decision-making process—was abolished. Ranjit Singh elevated himself to the status of "Singh Sahib." The priestly class controlling the Gurdwaras and interpreting Sikh theology and practice also became a hereditary institution. Hindu religiosity, the sanctified caste system, and social hierarchies that Sikhism had rejected at its origin were re-established. Thus, over time, the Sikh spirit and ethical ascendancy were sullied.

The nearly decade-long rule of the Lahore Durbar after the death of Ranjit Singh in 1839 saw power change hands six times in as many years before the First Anglo-Sikh War (1845-46). It was a clear manifestation of the callousness, anarchic terror, and greed of the Khalsa Fauj (Sikh army), as well as a direct violation of pledges made in the presence of the Sikh scriptures. As a result, the empire collapsed

like a house of cards, and very few stood to resist its ignoble takeover by the British. That decade-long recklessness by the ruling infrastructure proved that the Sikhs in power had lost the ideals, spirit, and principles that once made them distinct.

Upon taking over Punjab and the Lahore Durbar, the British aptly judged the moral weaknesses of the Sikh sardars (chieftains) and their feudal-style lawlessness in administrative affairs. They also recognized the military capability of the Sikhs as demonstrated during the Anglo-Sikh Wars. The British disbanded the Khalsa Fauj but classified Sikhs as a "martial race" and recruited them into the British Indian Army. British officials like the Lawrence brothers worked hard to install a judicious and honest administrative network and enforce law and order, replacing the earlier whimsical feudal governance of the Khalsa Raj. In this way, the new British rulers won over a large section of the Punjabi populace and brought peace to the region. The British rulers thus succeeded in turning aggressive Sikhs into loyalists.

Furthermore, the new masters engaged Jat Sikhs—who formed the bulk of the soldiery—in establishing nine canal colonies for their cultivation and settlement. Similarly, the British initially controlled Harmandir Sahib (Darbar Sahib) and other historical Gurdwaras through their proxies, the mahants. Later, after the mahants were ousted during Sikh uprisings, the astute rulers recognized the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) as a constitutional and legal entity under British governance. Even after a century, the SGPC continues to function as a proxy for the rulers in New Delhi under the outdated Gurdwara Act of 1925.

During the independence struggle, Sikhs made sacrifices far out of proportion to their population percentage. A majority of participants in the Ghadar Movement and other militant actions against the British were Sikhs who were either sent to the gallows or to the Cellular Jail in the Andamans. However, the mainstream Sikh leadership controlling Sikh institutions remained loyal to the British. Prior to 1947, this mainstream Sikh leadership remained confused while dealing with both the outgoing British and the Congress Party, with whom the Akalis chose to ally. They failed to visualize what future awaited a tiny Sikh minority when governance in a free India would be determined by headcount alone.

The Sikh leadership neither secured anything worthwhile from

the outgoing British nor extracted any concrete constitutional safeguards from the future rulers, the Congress Party. On the other hand, Sikh leadership was at the forefront of toeing the RSS/Hindu Mahasabha agenda during Partition communal clashes, resulting in violence against Muslims and their ethnic cleansing from East Punjab, which was set to become part of India. Consequently, Partition left the Sikhs worst hit—losing a large chunk of their fertile, cultivated land in Pakistan. Moreover, they carry a moral stigma to this day: why Sikh jathas were at the forefront of killing innocents when Sikhism strictly forbids killing anyone on account of their faith.

Soon after Independence, the Sikh leadership realized that upon occupying the seat of power, Congress leaders had changed their tune. Akali leaders, including Master Tara Singh, realized they had blundered in believing the verbal promises given to them by Congress leaders during the freedom struggle. It was too late; the Akalis had missed the bus. They subsequently raised the demand for carving out a separate Suba (province) on the basis of the Punjabi language from the Hindu-majority larger Punjab. The central authority in New Delhi denied the Akalis, with Jawaharlal Nehru clearly branding them as separatists. The Akalis only managed to get Punjabi Suba demarcated after the death of Nehru in 1966 — and even then, it was a crippled territory that lost its capital, Chandigarh, along with Punjabi-speaking areas and control over river water headworks and hydropower projects.

Even then, the Akalis failed to form and sustain their exclusive governance in Punjabi Suba — a territory they had struggled for years to create, even with a slight Sikh population edge — leaving ample scope for national parties to manipulate Punjabi Hindus and other demographics in their favor. In addition, by exploiting clauses surreptitiously inserted by New Delhi into the Punjab Reorganisation Act of 1966, the central authority adjudicated the division of natural resources between Punjab and Haryana in favor of the latter. Because Haryana surrounds the national capital on three sides, successive Congress and BJP governments in New Delhi have consistently ensured party rule in Haryana, choosing to placate its voters. The deliberate enmity generated by national parties between Punjab and Haryana over resource division was leveraged to win over Haryanvis at the expense of Punjab.

To address real and perceived discriminations of various types

meted out to Punjab by New Delhi, the Akali Dal launched the "Dharam Yudh Morcha" in August 1982. This nearly two-year-long Akali morcha (agitation) mobilized the entire Sikh community within India and abroad. New Delhi, however, succeeded in portraying the morcha as a secessionist movement aimed at dismembering India. The ruling Congress convinced the opposition and launched a full-throttle military action on the Golden Temple, the epicenter of the agitation.

That action was followed by large-scale bloodshed in Amritsar and other parts of Punjab. The armed Sikh youth response initiated a violent, protracted battle between Sikhs and security forces, which saw the genocide of Sikhs in Delhi and over 40 other cities, alongside the deaths of thousands of Sikh youths in a decade-long bloodbath.

Thereafter, the beleaguered Akalis lost their earlier fervor, base, and capacity to struggle against New Delhi. They openly accepted New Delhi's terms, consigning core demands—such as the implementation of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution for greater state autonomy, a judicious division of natural resources, and the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab — to the dustbin.

After experimenting with the installation of the Surjit Singh Barnala-led Akali government in Punjab, the central authority tackled and isolated Sikh militancy using vigilante groups and statecraft tactics, including a "stick and carrot" approach.

Meanwhile, New Delhi rulers crushed Sikh militancy and extended covert support to the Badal faction of the Akali Dal, allowing it to alternate in power in Punjab with the Congress for four decades. The Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal) also maintained control over powerful Sikh institutions, namely the SGPC and the Akal Takht. The SAD's alliance with the BJP subsequently opened space for RSS influence in Sikh religious and cultural affairs.

Today, core Sikh ideals and principles have been thoroughly compromised due to the SAD's single-minded pursuit of power at any cost. Rulers in New Delhi have assisted the SAD in maintaining control over the SGPC and provided an umbrella of protection to Akali leaders against ED and CBI raids, despite widespread public awareness of corruption during Akali rule. By carrying out the central government's agenda, the Akali Dal has been stripped of its stature as a true regional party that safeguards the rights and interests of Sikhs and Punjab.

LOOKING AT WOMEN'S LIVES, RELATIONSHIPS AND SOCIETY IN THE COLONIAL PUNJAB THROUGH "ISTRI SUDHAR" OF *THE KHALSA SAMACHAR*

DR. PARNEET KAUR DHILLON*

Bhai Vir Singh, a prolific writer and Singh Sabha protagonist started the publication of a Punjabi weekly newspaper *The Khalsa Samachar* from Amritsar on 17 November, 1899. 'The beginning of 20th century saw the proliferation of literature on 'istri sudhar'. The *Khalsa Samachar* was probably the first on to show serious concern for improving the position of the women in society'.¹ The *Khalsa Samachar* led a crusade for the emancipation of women from the existing social evils through its columns. From the issue, a resolve of the newspaper to write about women issues and concerns in every issue was mentioned as, "ਸਾਡਾ ਸੰਕਲਪ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਵਿਸ਼ਿਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਕੁਝ ਕੁਝ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਕਰੀਏ, ਤਾਕਿ ਸਾਡੀਆਂ ਘਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਬੈਠੀਆਂ ਮਾਈਆਂ ਬੀਬੀਆਂ ਧੀਆਂ ਭੈਣਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਬੀ ਕੁਝ ਸੁਝ ਪਵੇ ਅਰ ਕੌਮੀ ਦੌੜ ਵਿਚ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਹੋਵੇ।"² With that resolve, the newspaper from its very first issue had a unique and special column which exclusively focussed on women reforms namely "Istri Sudhar". Bhai Vir Singh's novel *Satwant Kaur* was also printed in a form of series in the newspaper and a defined place was assigned to that novel; in every issue write ups on "Istri Sudhar" and series of '*Satwant Kaur*' in continuation were noticeably published one after the other. Almost every issue of the newspaper had the column "Istri Sudhar" with exception of few issues when the column was missing due to unknown reasons. Perhaps if some essay or an article was too long then the column of "Istri Sudhar" was not given any space. The present essay

* Assistant Professor, Department of History and Punjab Historical Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala. Email- hparneet@yahoo.com

will give a glance of the society of the British Punjab through the column "Istri Sudhar" published from 1899 to 1900.

The first few lines of the column on "Istri Sudhar" on 17 November, 1899 "referring to the Almighty, the column "Istri Sudhar" emphasised that the *Akalpurakh* has created the union of a man and woman as both the genders complete each other and all the worldly happiness is possible only through that union. Furthermore, showing faith in the institution of marriage since ages, the wife was described as an *ardhangi* (another half part of the body). A paralytic person has to go through sufferings in life as his half body does not work, similarly a man could be happy and content, if his *ardhangi* is of his match. The column further was astonished to see many advocates of Singh Sabha, who propagated the ideals of Singh Sabha in public but at their respective homes, they did not bother to make efforts to take out their wives from ignorance and superstition. Males of from other prevalent castes and financial backgrounds were no exception to that scenario."

³ Hence, it can be seen that the newspaper from the first issue spoke openly about the real position of women in the society and did not even spare the fellow Singh Sabhaites who were criticised for their attitude towards their women at home. They were least concerned for the education of their women.

In the second issue of the newspaper, the writeup in the column began by explaining reasons as how women's position got deteriorated as compared to the earlier period. The foreign invasions on India, led the women to adopt various means to save their honour like *purdah*, child marriage and not sending the girls for education, and many more. Later the women themselves became their own enemies who continued with the social evils which crept into the society. Ultimately the column concluded that from that time onwards the women lost their status as *ardhangi* and gradually came to be treated as *shudras*.⁴ Here, the column did not refer to *shudras* as any caste rather as a class based on occupation which worked for other classes of the society. Thus, the women got stuck in their household chores and they got away from the religious path of the life. Hence, the column mentioned numerous prevalent social evils - *purdah*, child marriage, female infanticide and others during that period.

Continuing with the reasons of deterioration in women's position in different periods, the column compared women with the *shudras* again. It was mentioned that the priestly classes convinced the *shudras* by narrating numerous stories and tales about their sole role to serve the upper castes only. Similarly, the priests and brahmins of that time made women believe to lead lives steeped in superstition and ignorance, and they just gave importance to the blind love for their children and for jewellery. Due to their ignorance they got accustomed to their present position, and they got used to the atrocities of the male and their other family members which made them to accept that the position was their own fate without realizing that they were under any kind of oppression.⁵ The column clearly threw light on the love of women for jewellery (a path away from spiritualuality) as a prevalent social behaviour of that time. The Singh Sabha ideology to propagate against the Brahmanical rituals and practices is clearly visible in the column.

Later in the issue of the column published on 25 December, 1899, it was cited that a person many a times unaware of his situation, accepts various vices present in the society. An example of kingdom where father and son as prisoners was given. After the death of father in the jail, the son spent most of his life in the jail. On sympathetic grounds after many years the king released him from the jail. The son, who by then had turned into an old man, after his release was not able to adjust to the environment outside. He requested the king to send him back to the jail. The king was shocked on his behavior and after inquiring from his courtiers he came to know that the old man was so used to the environs of jail that he could not understand the difference between imprisonment in jail and freedom outside it. Similarly, the column concluded, that similarly, the women did not feel that they were ill-treated, discriminated and oppressed as they got accustomed to their demeaning status. Instead of condemning child-marriage, the rich and upper castes felt pride in marrying their young daughters. In fact, the women themselves arranged such kind of child marriages willingly.⁶ Hence, continuing by throwing light as how women's position got deteriorated, the column described that unintentionally the women got stuck into that situation and on top of it, they did not know that they were under some oppression.

“Istri Sudhar” column in the seventh issue of the newspaper on 1 January, 1900 started with story of a family in which a child marriage was solemnized. This was a regular practice of the colonial Punjab. Her marriage was termed as GVms (turmoil). The column began with the concern of a mother, who under the societal pressure, wished marriage of her young daughter as early as possible. For that she persistently tells her husband to look for an appropriate match for her. The father went to the local *pandit* (here an astrologer) who being a greedy person tried to convince him for early marriage of his daughter. He said that if his daughter would be married at the age of 7 or 9 then the girl would be regarded as a *devi* (goddess), if she was married at the age of 11 then she would be connoted as a *kanya* and the marriage after the age of 12 would make her father as a sinner. Under the influence of the *pandit*, the father gets ready to marry his young daughter- the practice too was common in the society. While the parents paid no heed to the laws of the British government in India which had declared marrying a girl below the age of 12 as a punishable offence. Instead, they preferred to marry their girls below the age of 9. On the other hand, young girl being ignorant about the ill-effects of child – marriage, dreamt of getting new clothes and jewellery and was unaware about the complexity of marital life where she had to face various responsibilities.⁷ The article blamed the societal pressure on the parents for marrying their young daughters and the efforts of the British Government in form of Age of Consent Act 1891 could not do much in checking the child marriages. The concept of *paap* (sin) for a father by marrying older daughters was widely accepted in the society. *Pandits* further seconded the cause for marrying young girls. The mindset of young girls too was portrayed as they thought of materialist gains in form of jewellery and new clothes and did not know the exact meaning of the institution of marriage.

The next serialized column of “Istri Sudhar” in the eighth issue of the newspaper dated 8 January, 1900 focused another form of mismatched marriages visible in the colonial Punjab. “The base problem of these marriages was less education of the partners, in which many a times illiterate girls were married to literate boys and vice versa. The story moves further as after four- five years of marriage the girl gave birth to a child, which in turn affected her health. Her position

was compared to girls of her age who belonged to other countries outside India. They went to schools, participated in sports and made their nations proud. Whereas, the girls in India were married at a very young age and often invariably caught in the vicious circle of a tumultuous married life. They received a warm welcome initially at the in-laws place after marriage, however, with passage of time the relationship between the mother-in-law (*sus*) and daughter-in-law (*nooh*) started to get bitter which made her life further miserable.⁸ The column emphasized the prevalent marriages in the society and described the position of women of the country by comparing with the women of western world. Then the column began with the inter-generational relationships within the families.

Digging deep into the inter-generational relationships, the column portrayed the plight of the daughter-in-law (*nooh*) as her mother-in-law (*sus*) failed to comprehend her condition. The mother-in-law (*sus*) often forgot that she had a daughter-in-law (*nooh*) who was merely of 10-11 years of age and had not got ample time to learn household chores properly. Rather it was a time for her to play with her age mates in the streets of her village. The mother-in-law (*sus*) failed to remember her difficult times when she was married at her age; instead of understanding the situation of the daughter-in-law, high expectations were made from her to become an ideal homemaker by the mother-in-law (*sus*).⁹ The column showed sensitivity to the social relationships and made the readers realize that one tends to forget his or her position, hardships and circumstances when he passes the earlier phase of his life. Similarly, at present mother-in-law failed to think that she too was daughter-in-law at one time and she expected a lot from her young daughter-in-law. Societal pressure to have an ideal daughter-in-law, blocked her mind to deal with the same gender with sensitivity.

“Istri Sudhar” column, though was a serialized column, but sometimes the story was interrupted by the view point of the writer of the column on the contemporary times. So, in the next issue of the newspaper dated 5 February, 1900 raised the question about books published on women emancipation and their readership. It was highlighted that the books on the subject were mostly read by men and the women who were the main stakeholders were unable to read due to illiteracy and paucity of time since they were busy in household

chores. It was ironical that the men wanted ideal wives as mentioned in those books but they never made efforts to educate their women; instead, they blamed destiny for having an illiterate wife.¹⁰

“Istri Sudhar” in the next two issues of 12 and 19 February, 1900 continued to discuss the story of daughter-in-law and her pitiable position at in-laws’ place. Due to her naivety and family pressures, the young girl instead of mastering new things at her in-laws’ place, learnt four bad habits— first, she told lies to cover up her misgivings; secondly, the young innocent married girl shared all her secrets with her husband’s sister (*nanand*)¹¹ who deceived her by confiding in her mother; thirdly, being let down by her *nanand* she confided in girls of her neighborhood; and lastly, when she found nobody whom she could trust, she started to tell everything to her parents.¹² Now, the column brought a new character in the story – *nanand*. The focus was now shifted to same generation relationships. Ideally the women of same generation were supposed to be confidants of each other, but in the story, due to their family relationship to each other, the *nanand* too failed to understand the position and mindset of her sister-in-law. The column regarded the communication of the daughter-in-law to others as a bad habit, by which family secrets were being shared with others.

“Istri Sudhar” in the later issue of the newspaper described repercussions of her behavior as ‘she could face outrage of the mother-in-law (in form of taunts) or husband (in form of physical beating) as she shared her pitiable situation with someone in neighborhood or with her parents. And if she returned to her parental house then that could provide an opportunity to the husband to re-marry’.¹³ The column laid stress on the mental and physical abuse which a young daughter-in-law could face due to her actions at her in-laws’ place.

Subsequently, she falls sick and “Istri Sudhar” column of the newspaper on 6 March, 1900 informed about the condition of a sick daughter-in-law and nobody took care of her then ultimately her parents took her back to their place. There *bakeems* and *vaids* (traditional medical practitioners) were called for her proper treatment. The in-laws were informed, but they hardly came to see her. They were not concerned for her health rather they were just concerned for their false prestige as an ideal in-laws in the society.¹⁴ In case the daughter-in-law (*nooh*)

died due to health complications then the mother-in-law cried bitterly and even performed *siyapa* (traditional mourning) but in actual she was not much affected and was ready to remarry her son as soon as possible. Her double-faced behavior was highlighted in the column of “Istri Sudhar” of the newspaper on 12 March, 1900 which is mentioned as below:-

ਇਕ ਗਈ ਇਕ ਆਈ ।
ਮੇਰੇ ਛਬ ਨਿਤ ਦੁਣ ਸਵਾਈ ॥¹⁵

To satisfy her false ego and to prove that she could marry her widower son within no time she arranged his remarriage in haste citing her son's loneliness as the main reason.¹⁶ So, the column depicted traditional death ceremonies like *siyapa* which was performed by the women in the society and even showed how women were objectified by the in-laws' family especially the mother-in-law. As soon as one daughter-in-law died, widower son was remarried. Egoistic mother-in-law believed that if one daughter-in-law died and it was not difficult to bring the new one. Thus, it showed the psyche and actions of women were different when they were in different social roles.

The story moved ahead in the 21st serial number of “Istri Sudhar”. The second wife of the son came to the house where she was given a warm welcome by the mother-in-law (*sus*). The new bride was decked up with ornaments from top to toe and resembled Sita of *Ramleela*. Women from neighborhood came to see her, blessings were showered on her, and it was commented that the second bride was more beautiful than the first one.¹⁷ The column compared the new bride to the character – “Sita” of the *Ramleela*¹⁸. The comparison of the new bride was made on the basis of the physical appearance to the character of Sita and to the first dead wife of the son. Thus, comparisons started to be made on the first day of the wedding itself. That comparison made the new bride unhappy. On top of it, for whole first year of marriage, the mother-in-law (*sus*) made the new daughter-in-law (*noob*) wear same clothes of the first daughter-in-law (*noob*) much to her dislike. Comparisons were also made between the working styles and efficiency in household chores of the two daughters-in-law. The new daughter-in-law (*noob*) then complained to her husband who initially did not get affected but with the passage of time he gave a patient hearing to his wife as he did not want to lose her.¹⁹ Hence, the column describes due

to actions of the mother-in-law, bitterness comes in the relationship of the new daughter-in-law and mother-in-law. That situation sandwiches the husband between both the wife and mother.

Illiteracy of the mother-in law was cited as the major reason for the continuous quarrels between them in the house and further distress in the house. 'ਜਾਸ ਸਦਨ ਮੈ ਤੀਆ ਕੀ ਬਾਨੀ ਉਠਤ ਬੁਲੰਦ। ਤਾਸ ਸਦਨ ਮੈ ਖੁਸੀ ਕੇ ਤਖਤੇ ਹੋਵਤ ਬੰਦ।', meaning thereby, that in a house where women's voice got louder, that is, who had quarrels, that house lacked happiness and prosperity. The illiteracy of the mother-in-law (*sus*) and lack of company of literate people never made her realize that she should tackle her young daughter-in-law (*nooh*) in a compassionate manner. Instead, she got into competition with her and everyday quarrels led to a constrained and disturbed environment in the house.²⁰ The column advocated the importance and need of female education for happy social relationships and appropriate social behavior of the women.

The basic trait of the literary genres of Bhai Vir Singh that they were inspired from nature and everything was explained by citing examples from nature could be witnessed in the column. 'The growth of plants and trees in gardens and orchids was more pleasant and beautiful as compared to plants and trees in the forests. The orchids were well maintained and taken care of which made them distinct from the growth of plants and trees in the forests. If one stopped taking care of the orchids then soon the beauty of those orchids would wither away. Similarly, the relationship between daughter-in-law (*nooh*) and mother-in-law (*sus*) needed to be taken care of whereas the mother and daughter relationship was just like natural growth in the forests.²¹ The column consciously, focused on the ways for women to have cordial relationships at the in-laws' place.

After delivering lesson on the cordial family relationships, the column of "Istri Sudhar" of 14 May, 1900 further came to the story and described the persistent issues between the daughter-in-law (*nooh*) and mother-in-law (*sus*). Now the husband gets into a piquant situation as he had to pacify both, thus putting him under mental pressure. He had to listen to the backbiting and gossips of his mother first and then his wife when he reached home after work.²² Under that mental pressure, the son told his mother to get separated from him and his wife, his

mother pleaded with him not to do so as she was scared to stay alone and moreover, she would find it difficult to face people in her neighborhood. She asked her son in desperation *myry bUhy mrd dI juqI nw ilhw krygI*²³ meaning that she believed in patriarchy and felt safe when a male member was around. The column described that 'Patriarchy' was in vogue in then society and women themselves were carriers of the patriarchy.

The next part of the column elaborated the helpless situation of the mother who was told to stay separate at the ground floor portion of the house along with Rupees 5-6 as her monthly expenditure. The column further connoted the son as illiterate, who could not solve the family problems amicably.^{24 25} Again the column laid emphasis on the importance of education as the paramount means to manage the family relationships.

Taking instance from nature, the column again tried to teach lessons to the people to behave ideally in the relationships. It was advised to the people to take lessons from the banyan tree which had aerial prop roots that supported the primary trunk. Similarly, when the parents grew old, the sons were advised to take care and support them, especially, their mothers.²⁶ Further proving the point, the column cited an example of an anonymous saint who gave the sermon that if one forgets the deeds of one's mother then even God would not accept that person. So thus, one should never hurt the sentiments of one's mother.²⁷ Hence, the importance of taking care of one's parents amidst all odds was highlighted in the column.

The "Istri Sudhar" section of the newspaper on 23 July, 1900 stated that the real picture of the society was portrayed in its columns. In continuation of its earlier narrative, it was stated that the mother was confined to the ground floor of the house whereas the daughter-in-law enjoyed singing and dancing with her neighborhood female friends on the upper floor. The mother busied herself in reading the *Suraj Prakash* of Bhai Santokh Singh. She learnt to ignore the behavior of her daughter-in-law (*noolh*).²⁸ At this stage, when the mother-in-law was put on back seat, then she tried to find solace and adapt to the present situation by reading about Sikh Gurus and their deeds. The column focused at another way in front of the readers to get rid out of

their family and social problems.

“Istri Sudhar” column in the 38th issue focused on ‘vwh klXug dy sMqlvwh cyly cylIAW’ As the quarrel between the mother-in-law (*sus*) and daughter-in-law (*noolh*) continued, the son stopped giving money to his mother for her daily expenses. So, the lady was left on her own which led her to work in the neighbor’s house for food and sometimes she even got clothes in return of the errands done by her. Continuing the narrative, it was stated that once a sadhu came to their house. Numerous dishes were prepared for the sadhu and his followers. The sadhu was also given expensive robes and some money by the son and his wife when he left their house. It was also pointed out that it was ironical that the son made donations and offered delicious food to the hypocrite sadhu and his followers while his old hungry mother lay downstairs, lonely and forlorn.²⁹ The column discussed the present scenario of the society as people were attracted to the Brahminical rituals and ceremonies as providing food and donating expensive things to the sadhus and on the contrary, the people were away from the actual deeds like taking care of old parents.

Later when the daughter-in-law conceived and till the time she gave birth to a son, the whole family started staying together at the ground floor. Peace and harmony remained in the house for about a year. But once when the baby boy got hurt, the daughter-in-law (*noolh*) ridiculed, scolded and blamed her mother-in-law (*sus*) for not taking care of her grandson properly.³⁰ It can be seen that the column portrayed a general view point of the society that the birth of son was welcomed and that even could remove bitterness in the family relationships.

Going for pilgrimage was another norm of the society of that time. So, the “Istri Sudhar” column published on 27 August, 1900, stated that both the son and the daughter-in-law (*noolh*) left for a pilgrimage and the old mother was left home alone.³¹ The writeup in the column rebuked the son and his wife who had gone for a holy visit to Mathura to pay offerings to their religious Guru. They were not concerned for their old mother but wanted to get rid of their sins by giving charity to the saints.³² “Istri Sudhar” column of 10 September, 1900 further elucidated that the couple then went to Gaya for *pind daan* (a ritual to offer homage to the departed soul by the relatives of

the person especially the son) of his dead father who had sacrificed his life to save a boy aged 10 years, sleeping in room of a *dharamshala* which was set on fire at one night. The *pandits* (here, who performed rituals) performed *pind daan* of his father and even asked if the son wanted to perform the same for his mother. But the son replied that his mother was alive. The *pandits* convinced him that he could perform the same ceremony of his alive mother too that could save his time and botheration to visit Gaya again. Hence, under the influence of those *pandits*, the son performed the *pind daan* of his alive mother and dead father which costed him Rupees 5 for each of them. It was further stated that though he performed the ritual worth Rupees 5 but he was not concerned to provide basic food to his alive mother.³³ Thus, the column showed the double standards of the son and his wife and their blind faith on imposter *pandits* and futile rituals. The column presented the society in which the people due to their ignorance, were blindly following irrelevant rituals and ceremonies. Impact of Brahmanical practices in the society is clearly visible through the column.

People were frequently following those practices, but the column explained that the real consolation one could achieve, was in Sikhism. “Istri Sudhar” column in the 44th issue on 17 September, 1900 demonstrated that the son and his wife after reaching Hazur Sahib, Patna were given *tankhaiya* (punishment of religious misconduct given by the Supreme body of religion) because he had performed *pind daan*. The ceremony was not in accordance with Sikhism. Later when they reached home, they were surprised to see his mother still alive. They had left her to die of her sickness but by God’s grace she had been provided food by a Sikh gentleman. Though the son and his wife rebuked and even scolded the mother as she got them insulted in society but thereafter, she was provided food by her son and daughter-in-law for some time.³⁴ Importance of Sikhism is explained and it is even mentioned that good deeds too are performed by the Sikh people as it was mentioned specially that the old mother was given food by a Sikh gentleman. A separate Sikh identity was being constructed through the column and superiority of Sikh people was tried to portray in the column.

“Istri Sudhar” column then on 1 October, 1900 issue showed sympathy towards the pitiable condition of the old mother. She was

alone in her old age, her son got busy with his wife, his son and son's in-laws. Nobody was bothered about her, who, when she was young, was the most important family member of the house but gradually she had been reduced to the most neglected member of the family.³⁵ Here, the transition in role of people in the family and society were described as with passage of time and according to situation, the importance and need of people varied.

"Istri Sudhar" column published on 15 October, 1900 highlighted the importance of daughters as well. It was mentioned that generally people irrespective of class, caste, religion and creed did not like the birth of the girl child. Female infanticide was quite prevalent in the society. And the reason given was that they did not have to bow down in front of anyone. However, the tenth Guru of the Sikhs had eradicated this evil from Sikhism and women were given equal status as men. But in the present scenario, the importance of daughters was seen in terms of taking care of family relationships better than sons especially parents in the old age and sickness, whereas at that time some sons and daughters-in-law (*noolh*) did not show that much concern. So, the story narrated in the column proved that having no daughter made the condition of the mother (referred above) more helpless. There was no one who could feel her pain in old age.³⁶ The column openly talked about social evils especially female infanticide and sometimes love for the male child was not fruitful in their old age. Need of daughters for the parents was also described in the column.

The writeup in the column on 22 October, 1900 described the condition of the mother who was on her death bed. *Vaids* and other medical practitioners were called by the son for the treatment of his mother. Some astrologer was too consulted for enquiring about her stars and a sack of rice was donated in her name, fruits of her weight were donated to the brahmans of the area, a cow whose calf died few days back was also donated to the *Nihangs*. Hence, every means and methods were adopted by the son to become an ideal son, that is, *Sarvan Puttar* in the eyes of people to save his mother.³⁷ The son under the societal pressure tried to make all the efforts for her dying mother, on the contrary, when alive she was the most neglected family member.

Thus, the column of "Istri Sudhar" of *The Khalsa Samachar*, with

precision depicted the picture of society of the colonial Punjab. Beginning from the past historical events which occurred in Punjab and how they led an impact on the society especially women, the column critically analysed the diverse social problems pertaining to women, namely, female illiteracy; girl child marriage; lure for ornaments; stigma of a widower; societal pressures resulting in double standards; blind faith on customs, rites and rituals; tussle between adoption of Sikh ideals and Hindu rites and ceremonies and the like. By citing various incidents, the expectations of parents for having ideal sons and daughter-in-laws were regularly reported in the column. What was written and promulgated through the column of the '*Istri Sudhar*' was claimed by *The Khalsa Samachar* as not imaginary or fictional but inspired from true events. So, an appeal regularly was made to the readers of the newspaper to learn from the mistakes of the characters mentioned in the column in order to avoid committing such aberrations themselves.

~ ~ ~

REFERENCES

1. Joginder Singh, *Punjabi Journalism: Issues and Concerns*, Publication Bureau, Patiala, 2012, p.9.
2. *The Khalsa Samachar*, Amritsar, 17 November, 1899. p .7.
3. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 17 November, 1899. p.7.
4. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 27 November, 1899. p. 6.
5. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 4 December, 1899. p . 6.
6. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 25 December, 1899. p 6.
7. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 1 January, 1900. pp. 6-7.
8. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 8 January, 1900. p. 6.
9. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 29 January, 1900. pp.5-6.
10. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 5 February, 1900. pp. 4-5.
11. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 12 February, 1900. p.5.
12. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 19 February, 1900. p.5.
13. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 26 February, 1900. p. 5-6.

14. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 5 March, 1900. p. 6.
15. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 12 March, 1900. pp. 4-5.
16. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 19 March, 1900. p.5.
17. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 9 April, 1900. pp.4-5.
18. literal meaning "Rama's play" – the performance of then Ramayana epic in a series of scenes that include song, narration, recital and dialogue. It is performed across northern India during the festival of Dussehra.
19. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 16 April, 1900. p.5.
20. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 23 April, 1900. P.5-6.
21. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 7 May, 1900. p.5.
22. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 14 May, 1900. p.5.
23. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 21 May, 1900. p.5-6.
24. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 28 May, 1900. p.5-6.
25. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 11 June, 1900. p. 5.
26. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 18 June , 1900. p. 5.
27. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 25 June, 1900. pp. 4- 5.
28. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 23 July, 1900. p .5
29. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 6 August, 1900. p. 5
30. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 20 August, 1900. p. 5.
31. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 27 August, 1900. p. 6.
32. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 3 September, 1900. p. 4.
33. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 10 September, 1900. p. 4-5.
34. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 17 September, 1900. p. 4.
35. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 1 October, 1900. p. 4- 5.
36. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 15 October, 1900. p. 5.
37. *The Khalsa Samachar*, 22 October, 1900. p. 5.

TRANSLATION OF RELIGIOUS TEXTS AND EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN THE BRITISH PANJAB AFTER THE ANNEXATION

HARPAL SINGH*

The translation of Indian religious texts, undertaken by the British suffer from various infirmities in view of the colonial motives behind this initiative. In the case of Panjab, it was the study and understanding of Guru Granth which was viewed by them of immense significance. The English considered the Adi Granth (as Guru Granth was referred by them) as the fountainhead of the latent power of the people of the Panjab, especially the Sikhs. Their earnest effort to understand the mystique surrounding the Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh led them to have an indepth study of the Sikh scripture. It was more so, as Lepel Griffin observed that,

“Maharaja Ranjit Singh was so completely a product of theocracy, and so embodied the spirit of the Khalsa, that no account of his character and career would be complete without a description of the religious system which had so powerful an effect upon... the Panjab in the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century” (NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, 39)

The colonial desire to commission an expert also emanated from their belief that the founder of Sikh religion Guru Nanak engaged the entire population of the Panjab and not the Sikhs alone.¹ The way the Hindus and Sikhs, joined by Muslims, rose to create a powerful rival power of the British was not lost on them. It was another reason that the colonial eye saw Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh no

* Editor, Abstracts of Sikh Studies

¹ Even much before the rule of Ranjit Singh, the Hindus were much attached to Gurbani. (Sita Ram Kohli, Ranjit Singh, 156-57)

different from each other. Their considered view was, that,

“Adi Granth derives its chief authority from Baba Nanak... Guru Govind Singh did not however change the esoteric doctrine of Nanak in any essential particulars.” (Lepel Griffin, 41)

The British had a fairly good understanding of the functioning of the empire of Ranjit Singh through the numerous writers who were in their employment. But these European writers especially of British origin did not take very kindly to the emergence of the Panjab as a sovereign State. Among these writers were the top civil servants, army officers and travelers. The last category of writers excepted, the national pride for a vast majority among them did not allow them to admit that the Sarkar Khalsa, backed by the three principal communities, was in any way superior to their armed might and human resources. Khushwant Singh in his biography of Maharaja Ranjit Singh points to this tendency of British writers of Sikh history, saying, that,

“Ranjit Singh has been poorly served by his biographers... Muslim historians were unduly harsh in describing him as an avaricious freebooter. English writers who took their material largely from Muslim sources, portrayed him as a cunning man, devoid of moral considerations.”

It was against this backdrop that the colonial lookout for a suitable and competent scholar began. Their search finally ended with the German scholar Ernest Trumpp who had already established himself as a scholar of oriental languages. He was the first European who studied the Sikh scripture Guru Granth and attempted its translation. Himself a highly skilled linguist and a polyglot, he was sponsored by the Ecclesiastical Missionary Society (EMS). His work was meant to be used by Christian Missionaries. It was ultimately the ethos of the people who stood in defiance against them for nearly past one century.

It may be recalled that the EMS functioned directly under the guidelines of the India Office of the British Government. Lepel Griffin notes, that,

“I happened to be Chief Secretary to Government of Lahore when Dr Trumpp was engaged on his duty, of which the extreme difficulty was only equaled by his zeal, industry and learning.” (Ranjit Singh, 39)

“His task was onerous as the helpful resources at his disposal were negligible... And at last the learned Professor... after seven years of labour produced a translation which is still a monument of industry and learning.”(40)

Though the work of Dr Trumpp completed around 1876, failed to grasp the essential message of Guru Granth; it compensated by providing a useful study of its language and grammar, and offered us a reservoir of numerous dialects of the north-west India.

The introduction and interpretation of Adi Granth by Trumpp was too literal and devoid of moral and spiritual fervor, that it was taken as mortal offence by a section of the enlightened Sikhs. The Amritsar Singh Sabha founded in 1873 was in the midst of its activities when the work of Dr Trumpp appeared. Meanwhile the Christian missionaries and Arya Samaj campaign were another challenge to be met by the Sikhs. The perceived anti-Sikh activities gave rise to active resistance by Sikh preachers. The atmosphere worked as a catalyst for the birth of Lahore Singh Sabha three years later in 1879. The British efforts at proselytization were vehemently responded by the two Singh Sabhas working in their own separate spheres.

Meanwhile, Max Arthur Macauliffe, a senior civil servant in the service of the British Govt, was gennively offended by the insensitive treatment of Adi Granth by Trumpp. He belonged to a generation of Englishmen, who viewed the Sikhs and their religion. His work attempted to undo the wrongs of Trumpp ended up raising a feeling of revival and separateness among the Sikhs. Kahn Singh Nabha was a prominent influence and inspiration for Macauliffe and advocated strongly for the separate Sikh identity. His book ‘Hum Hindu Nahi’ went on to create a wedge between Hindus and Sikhs. Macauliffe’s views were also shaped along the same lines when he equated Hinduism to ‘boa-constrictor of the Indian forests’ and warned that it will one day extinguish the separate Sikh identity by close association with it.

Interestingly, the colonial cause of dividing the communities was best served by these writers, working, otherwise in different directions. The book by Kahn Singh Nabha emphasizing separate Sikh identity ended up providing fodder to Arya Samaj and Singh Sabha for fighting a bitter wordy duel between themselves.

The British had long reached the conclusion that the Gurmukhi Script and Punjabi language was the vehicle for learning and understanding of Guru Granth. The colonial rulers were aware that this script was the source of moral and spiritual nourishment for the Sikhs and its being sanctified by the Sikh Gurus ensured its continuation and growth among them. The fact that Guru Angad took great pride in writing primers for children and wrote a number of mottos and maxims which accompany the letters of the alphabet. Besides, Gurmukhi functioned as a unifier for the natives of the Panjab and not alone for the Sikhs. GW Leitner, the founder principal of Govt College Lahore, observed, that,

“I wish to draw attention to the extensive literature which exists in Gurmukhi... For it should be remembered that the Sikh sacred writings were intended for the general apprehension of Hindus throughout India... as this language flowed from the mouth of Guru Nanak.” (Indigenous Education, p. 29)

As a result, the Indigenous education, which served the principal communities by generating an atmosphere of togetherness became the necessary target of colonial masters sensing that mothers and Indigenous centres of education were the earlier providers of the Gurmukhi script, the British education policy worked overtime to devise measures to discourage and shut avenues which ensured rudimentary literacy at the roots. The active measures were rolled out to extinguish the burning candle of learning.²

Salient Features of Indigenous Education in the Panjab before the British were startling even for the English. All communities ran their respective centres which received liberal donations and revenue grants of the Sarkar Khalsa of Ranjit Singh.

Even the village commonland was supervised by the school teachers or the chowkidar. ਪਿੰਡ ਦੇ ਲੋਕ ਇਸ ਸਾਂਝੀ ਜ਼ਮੀਨ ਨੂੰ ‘ਸਕੂਲ ਮਾਸਟਰ ਦੇ ਖੇਤ’ ਅਤੇ ‘ਚੌਕੀਦਾਰ ਦੇ ਖੇਤ’ ਆਖਦੇ ਸਨ। (18-19)

The grand edifice of indigenous education ensured the nurturing of virtuous morals and other ethical values which had no place in the

2 Between 1866 and 1870, a grant of Rs 10000/- per annum from Imperial Funds for female education was withdrawn.” (Indian Education, p. 6)

new British system. Its discontinuance had disastrous effects which were taken note of by a top British official Mr Howell, who observed that the fanaticism among the youth and the general unrest resulted from the neglect of indigenous education. (27)

A candid confession of a secretary of British Govt about the superior system of Indigenous learning during the rule of Ranjit Singh, who admitted that, "well, then, we had better leave the country, it seems we do not give the natives a better education than they already have." (145)

ਅਰਥਾਤ: ਬਿਹਤਰ ਹੈ ਅਸੀਂ ਮੁਲਕ ਹੀ ਛੱਡ ਜਾਈਏ, ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਜਾਪਦਾ ਹੈ ਅਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਦੇਸ਼ ਦੇ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਕੋਈ ਹੋਰ ਵਧੀਆ ਸਿੱਖਿਆ - ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧ ਨਹੀਂ ਦੇ ਰਹੇ; ਇਸ ਦੇ ਮੁਕਾਬਲੇ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਵਾਲਾ ਕਿਤੇ ਵਧੇਰੇ ਚੰਗਾ ਸੀ।.... (ਹੋਰ ਅੱਗੇ ਲਿਖਦੇ ਹਨ)

ਇਉਂ ਲਗਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ ਰਾਜ ਦੇ ਸਿੱਖਿਆ ਵਿਭਾਗ ਦੇ ਉਚ ਅਧਿਕਾਰੀ ਅਜਿਹੀ ਹਾਲਤ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਰਕਾਰੀ ਤਨਖਾਹ ਦੇ ਵੀ ਹੱਕਦਾਰ ਨਹੀਂ।

"I certainly think that our advent has not been an unmixed blessing to the Panjab, at least in education; and that we do not deserve to derive our income from its taxation."

ਸਾਡੇ ਆਉਣ ਨਾਲ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਕੋਈ ਬਹੁਤਾ ਫਾਇਦਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੋਇਆ; ਖਾਸ ਕਰ ਵਿਦਿਆ ਦੇ ਖੇਤਰ ਵਿੱਚ। ਸਰਕਾਰੀ ਖਜਾਨੇ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਤਨਖਾਹਾਂ ਲੈਣ ਦੇ ਅਸੀਂ ਉੱਕਾ ਹੀ ਹੱਕਦਾਰ ਨਹੀਂ।

161 There were special schools for the trading class which taught maths, accounting and book-keeping to the young aspirants.

"The village accountants display a skill not surpassed, and often not equaled, in Hindustan". (161) Ind. Edu.

ਪੰਜਾਬ ਦੇ ਪਿੰਡਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਰਹਿੰਦੇ 'ਮਹਾਜਨਾਂ' ਦੀ ਲੇਖਾ-ਪੜੀ ਦਾ ਕੁਲ ਹਿੰਦੁਸਤਾਨ ਵਿੱਚ ਕੋਈ ਸਾਨੀ ਨਹੀਂ।

"If a boy learns arithmetic in our schools, he is of little use for the shop... The meanest Bania can cast up the intricacies of the grain-trade accounts by a mental process for more rapidly than if he had taken honours in Mathematics at the Calcutta University."

ਸਾਡੇ ਅੰਗ੍ਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਸਿਸਟਮ ਦੇ ਸਕੂਲ ਵਿੱਚ ਪੜ੍ਹਿਆ ਦੁਕਾਨ ਦਾ ਕਾਰੋਬਾਰ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਕਿਸੇ ਕੰਮ ਦਾ ਨਹੀਂ। ਇਸ ਦੇ ਮੁਕਾਬਲੇ ਪੁਰਾਣੇ ਸਕੂਲ ਵਿੱਚ ਪੜ੍ਹਿਆ ਮਾਮੂਲੀ ਬਾਣੀਏ ਦਾ ਮੁੰਡਾ ਵੀ ਅਨਾਜ ਦੀ ਖਰੀਦ-ਫਰੋਖਤ ਦਾ ਉਲਝਵਾਂ ਹਿਸਾਬ-ਕਿਤਾਬ ਮੂੰਹ ਜੁਬਾਨੀ ਹੀ ਏਨੀ ਫੁਰਤੀ ਨਾਲ ਕਰ ਲੈਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਾਡੀ ਕਲਕੱਤਾ ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀ ਵਿੱਚ

ਹਿਸਾਬ ਦੀ ਔਨਰਜ਼ ਪੜ੍ਹਿਆ ਬੰਦਾ ਦੇਖਦਾ ਹੀ ਰਹਿ ਜਾਵੇ”) Indi Edu, Part IV, p. 12) Free Pbi Translation)

CONCLUSION

A whole stream of knowledge was made to dry up by the colonial system of education. The native system rooted in culture and religion measured up to the best needs of the society. It was caused to starve and phase out. The colonial system continues to run its course into the present times sapping the moral and ethical content from the lives of the people. Let us take a conscious note of the wrongs done to us by the fault-lines of the past.



SIKHS & HINDU NANAKPANTHIS IN QUETTA, BALOCHISTAN: THEIR HISTORY AND PRESENT STATUS

INDERJEET SINGH*

BACKGROUND

The Hindus of Balochistan, like their co-religionists in Pakistan, revere Guru Nanak and Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh scripture. They profess and identify as Hindus and continue to worship Hindu deities and sometimes living saints or hereditary spiritual heads. Interestingly, becoming a Khalsa is seen as a conversion and is met with resistance. Some youngsters who became *Keshdhari* have shared their experiences with the writer. Hence, it is appropriate to refer to them as Hindu *Nanakpanthis* rather than *Sahajdhari* Sikhs. As per the 2023 Pakistan Census, there are 59,107 Hindus in Balochistan, making up about 0.41% of the province's total population.

MODERN HISTORY

The first detailed account of Balochistan in modern times is that of Henry Pottinger, who undertook an expedition through Balochistan in 1810 to map and research the region for the East India Company amid fears of a French or Russian invasion of India.

On Hindus in Balochistan, Pottinger writes, 'Hindus are to be found at the ports of Sonmiani and Gwadar, on the Las and Makran coast, but rarely, except at Kalat, in the towns of the interior'. He notes that they were the mercantile community of Multan and Shikarpur (Sindh).

Pottinger adds that Mahabat Khan (r. 1734-49), ruler of the Khanate of Kalat, close confidante and contemporary of Nadir Shah,

* The writer is the member of IOSS and author of the book, *Afghan Hindus & Sikhs: History of a Thousand Years*. He has a keen interest in Sikhs and Nanakpanthis in Pakistan and has written several articles on them.

ruler of Persia who is notorious for his loot and destruction of North India in 1739, was a tyrant and held Hindus in 'such utter detestation that he did everything possible to prevent their remaining in his dominions'.

However, his brother and successor Nasir Khan (r. 1749-94) encouraged Hindus to come back and trade and remitted many of the taxes imposed on merchandise by his brother. He fixed them at a moderate rate. Nasir Khan even revived the old grant made by one of his predecessors which allowed Hindus to impose a levy of 25 percent on every camel-load of goods entering the bazaar for the maintenance of the Goddess Kali temple and its priests at Kalat¹.

There were Hindus in important positions as well. Charles Masson (1842) refers to the Hindu agent, Diwan Bacha of Khan of Kalat, who looked after finances and represented the Khan in his dealings with the British².

GURU NANAK'S VISIT TO BALOCHISTAN

In 1969, to coincide with the 500-year birth centenary celebration of Guru Nanak, Dr Kirpal Singh produced a monumental work, *Janamsakhi Parampara* (Tradition), which contains a wealth of knowledge on the life and times of Guru Nanak. The work quotes *Miharban Janamsakhi*, which contains a *Sakhi* titled *Guru Ji Hinglaj Vich* (Guru Ji at Hinglaj). The Hinglaj Devi Temple is situated in Hingol National Park, Lasbela district of Balochistan. Guru Nanak visited this place on his journey to Mecca.

The temple is an important destination for Hindus living in Sindh and even receives devotees from India. The local Muslims call the shrine 'Nani Mandir'. Nani in sub-continental languages means maternal grandmother. Charles Masson (1842) has given an interesting explanation that Hinglajis also revered by the Muslims as the shrine of Bibi Nani (the Lady Nani). He further adds that it is possible people have preserved the ancient name Nanalaj, goddess of the ancient Persian and Bactrian people. Inanna was a Goddess in the ancient Sumerian civilisation, and Nanna was a goddess in Notre culture.

When Guru Nanak reached the Valley of the Hingol River, some sadhus came to meet him. They saw him attired like a Haji and were surprised at this. They could not make out if he was an ascetic or a

Bairagi, Vaishnava, Hindu or Muslim, Khatri or Brahmin, Vaishya or Sudra. They asked him, 'O Beloved of God! What is your dress and what do you eat? Also, please let us know about yourself so that we can make out as to what should be your diet and could serve you appropriately'. In reply to it, the Guru uttered the following hymn (*shabad*):

They, who make truth their fasting, contentment their pilgrim-station, cognition and meditation their ablution,

Compassion their deity and forgiveness their rosary; the most sublime are those persons.

They who make the right way their lion-cloth, consciousness their sacred enclosure, good deeds their frontal-mark, and the Lord's love their food; few, very few are such men, O Nanak.

(Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1245)

When the sadhus listened to these words of the Guru, they fell at his feet. The footsteps of Guru Nanak have been preserved on the hill at Hinglaj, and the place is known as *Guru Nanak Kharao*.

Hari Ram Gupta writes that during Maharaja Ranjit Singh's time (1799–1839), the Baluchi tribes were a force to reckon with in the Derajat area in South Punjab. Dr. Gupta has given details of the Maharaja's several expeditions and subjugation of these tribes, including the Mazaris through battles and diplomacy. At that time, Sindh was ruled by Baluchi chiefs of the Talapur tribe. The Mir brothers who ruled Sindh kept on sending gifts to the Maharaja but avoided giving annual tribute⁴.

INDIGENOUS HINDUS& SIKHS

Between the years 1911 and 1931, the Balochistan Census recorded the Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs as both indigenous and alien. The latter were the immigrants who lived in districts, mainly in the Quetta region. The former lived mainly in princely states. The immigrants from Punjab, Sindh and other Indian provinces were classified as alien.

Sikhs

Year	Indigenous	Alien	Indigenous %
1911	2799	5591	33%
1921	841	6900	11%
1931	48	8377	0.6%

Hindus

Year	Indigenous	Alien	Indigenous %
1911	14985	22617	40%
1921	17479	33869	34%
1931	16905	36778	32%

The Census of Balochistan in 1931 notes that in relation to people who previously had maintained that they were *Sahajdhari* (Sikhs) had now (in 1931) declared themselves as Hindus, 'The only link between these persons and the Sikh religion was the Sikh scripture. They knew little of their own. They read the Sikh scripture but performed other rites in the manner of their brethren in Sind. A hint from their religious teachers, whose visits have become more frequent of late, had the desired effect and they almost bodily went back to the religion which they in reality professed.'

The Hindus were categorised in the following castes namely Arora, Gurkha, Khatri, Rajput, Brahman, Arya (Samaji), Depressed classes (scavengers, cobblers, sweepers) and others. The Gurkhas were definitely 'alien'; they were part of the Gurkha regiment posted in the province. The report suggests that most of the depressed classes were also 'alien'⁵.

In 1941, there were 49,227 (53,681 in 1931) Hindus and 12,044 Sikhs (8,425 in 1931 Census) in Balochistan constituting 6.34 percent and 1.4 percent of the total population of the province.⁶ In terms of Sikhs, the Census notes, '(Sikhs) have made sustained and systematic efforts to bring the member of their community under strict religious control. The appreciable increase in the number of the *Keshdharis* though only at the cost of the *Sahajdharis* shows plainly enough that their efforts have not been fruitless'.

Year	Keshdhari	Sahajdhari	Others
1911	4613	3777	...
1921	6603	1138	...
1931	7489	735	201

Both Hindu and Sikh leaders made some efforts to bring people into their fold. In the former case, a lot of people started to put themselves as Hindus in the census but did not stop reading *Gurbani*.

In the latter case, many *Sahajdhari* Sikhs took *Khande di Pabul* and became Khalsa Sikhs. In the 1931 Census, there is some information on the clan/tribe amongst Sikhs. 2612 Sikhs were recorded as Jatt, 134 as Chuhra, 2070 Sikhs and other caste (no details provided) were 3561.⁵

Prominent Sikhs during the British era

The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism mentions that the city of Quetta hosted a number of prominent Sikhs who lived there for many years before partition. Among them were Babu Labh Singh (d. 1947), freedom fighter and Akali leader; former Akal Takht Jathedar Sadhu Singh Bhaura (d. 1984); and Dr Jaswant Singh Neki (d. 2015). Gadarite Hira Singh (d. 1929) came to Balochistan and Sindh to incite revolt among the local people.

Administration Report of the Balochistan Agency for 1936-37 notes that Madan Gopal Singh, MA, was appointed Educational Adviser to the Balochistan Administration and Sardar Shiv Chran Singh, M.B.B.S., House Surgeon, Quetta, received the title of Sardar Sahib.

Sardar Gurdit Singh, Extra Assistant Commissioner (Retired), Balochistan, was conferred the title of Sardar Bahadur on 3rd June 1929.⁷ He was previously Under Secretary and Agent to the Governor-General and Chief Commissioner of Balochistan. He was one of the founding fathers of the Khalsa High School at Gurdit Singh Road, Quetta, which was established in 1904. Post-partition, the school was designated as Government Special High Secondary School. Considering his administrative and philanthropic contributions, a road in Quetta was named after him.

Karam Singh, Historian di Ithasik Khoj (1960), edited by Heera Singh Dard, notes that the historian was made aware that the Khan of Kalat had an old manuscript which had valuable information on Sikhs. Karam Singh went to Rai Bahadur Sardar Sadhu Singh at Sibi (Balochistan) in February 1906. By next month, the copy of the manuscript was delivered to them at Quetta. Sardar Karam Singh later translated the Persian manuscript *Jangnama* by Qazi Nur Mohd in Punjabi.

Balochistan District Gazetteer Series. Volume V. Quetta-Pishin District 1907 states that a Punjabi Sikh established the Curzon Press in September 1902. It was one of the 3 printing presses in Quetta at the time. The other two were the Victoria Press, opened in March 1888,

and the Albert Press, opened in December 1891, both opened by Parsis.

The same *Gazetteer* states that one of the channels from the Lora River was built in 1887 by one Gurdit Singh of Peshawar at a considerable cost for irrigating the lands. He later acquired half of the land. The town *Tirkha* Gurdit Singh still exists by the same name in Quetta district. *Tirkha* means locality or residential settlement in the local language.

Natha Singh Street is a historical street located off Jinnah Road (formerly Bruce Road) in Quetta. It is named after Sardar Natha Singh, an eminent and wealthy Sikh citizen who lived in Quetta during the British era.

PRESENT SITUATION

Quetta, the capital of Balochistan, is the main city of the province. Almost one-third of the state's population lives in the Quetta division. Jasbir Singh, Chairman, Balochistan Sikh Council, Quetta, is a prominent Sikh leader and has been running the charity, Khalsa Parbandak Sewa Kaar Society, Balochistan, for the past 30 years. His brother Arshad Jeet Singh is a well-known *Kirtaniyain* Pakistan. Due to their efforts, there are now about 500 *Keshdhari* Sikh families in Quetta. Prior to their efforts, there were hardly any turban-wearing Sikhs in Balochistan. Following the partition of British India, more than 90% of Sikhs left Balochistan. The few Sikhs who did not leave had to remove their turbans and cut their long hair to escape from the intense hostility of local Muslims. Although not a single Sikh in Balochistan and Sindh killed anyone, they had to bear the brunt of the hatred due to Muslim – Hindu/Sikh riots in Punjab.

Jasbir Singh speaks fluent Punjabi in the Central Punjab dialect and informs that his family belongs to the Shergill clan of Jatts from Amritsar district that came to Quetta almost 200 years ago. His family established the first Gurdwara Sahib in Quetta (and perhaps in Balochistan). In the beginning, it was Thara Sahib; then a small room was added, followed by a hall. The Gurdwara survived the 1935 earthquake and the partition. It remained with the Sikhs throughout this period. The congregation mainly includes Punjabi Sikhs, *Nanakpanthis* and Christians. During the first three decades of Pakistan's independence, some Hindus and Sikhs converted to Christianity to escape discrimination and to avail the education facilities. These people continue to have a soft corner for the Sikh

religion and continue to visit the Gurdwara.

Jasbir Singh filed a petition with the Balochistan High Court in 2015 regarding the 13 pre-partition Gurdwaras in Quetta district. Hence, in 2019, the Siri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara at Masjid Road, Quetta was handed over to the *Sangat* after winning the case in Session, High and then the Supreme Court. The building was repaired and renovated, and on 1st March 2020, the Gurdwara was reopened for *Sangat*, for the first time after 1947.

DEMOLITION OF GURDWARA BUILDING

The Saint Gabriel's Primary School on Archer Road in Quetta, Pakistan, was quietly demolished in the last week of June 2026. The site was Siri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara, which was built almost 100 years ago by Sardar Bahadur Sardar Gurdit Singh. A Gurmukhi School was also run on this site. After 1947, most Sikhs left Pakistan, including Balochistan. The building was given to the Christian community, and a primary school has been running since 1953 in the same Gurdwara building. A commercial builder started building a Shopping Plaza on the site. For the next two months, neither the Sikh diaspora nor the Sikh leadership in East Punjab took any notice. On 26th August, Sardar Tarlochan Singh, ex-MP and former Chairman, National Commission on Minorities, wrote a polite letter to the Pakistan High Commissioner in New Delhi. This had a ripple effect, and in the next few days the matter was reported in newspapers in Punjab and North India. Subsequently, this was raised by the President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee and eventually by the acting Jathedar of Akal Takht. The local Consumer Forum, which was entirely of Muslims, came out in support of the Sikhs. Finally, after much effort, on 16th September the Office of the Commissioner, Quetta Division, Quetta stopped the construction of a commercial plaza at the site where Saint Gabriel Primary School, formerly Gurdwara Siri Guru Singh Sabha, existed. The Commissioner also instructed ETPB (Evacuee Trust Property Board) to convene a meeting with Sikhs community of Quetta to produce a viable solution to the land issue and submit it to the Commissioner's Office.

As of 20th September 2026, Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (PSGPC) and its 10 members, including their President

Ramesh Singh Arora, who is also the Minister for Minorities Affairs for the Government of Punjab, Pakistan, have kept quiet on this issue. Similarly, the Sikh diaspora in the USA, Canada and U.K. turned a blind eye to the matter. Their silence on this matter is deafening.

CONCLUSION

Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora, President of PSGPC and a provisional minister, is seen by Sikhs all over the world as the leader of Sikhs in Pakistan. He needs to rise to the occasion, as there will be matters in the future that will need his intervention. He and members of PSGPC need to learn the art of having difficult conversation and public speaking. The Sikh diaspora needs to shed their unconscious bias against non-Punjabi Sikhs. Jasbir Singh made it clear in the beginning that the demolition of the Gurdwara building was not an anti- Sikh action but a typical case of grabbing a posh location by the land mafia. There is a general perception in Pakistan that their government is friendly with diaspora Sikhs and vice versa. The local Muslims who were sympathetic to the Sikh cause kept advising him to contact Sikhs in the Western Hemisphere, but they decided to sweep it under the rug. The Sikhs in Balochistan and Sindh are poor and need our help. It is high time that we have the first Sikh school in Pakistan. Alternatively, we should start sponsoring further and higher education for Sikh students in Balochistan and Sindh.

~ ~ ~

REFERENCES

1. Henry Pottinger. (1816). *Travels in Beloochistan and Sinde*. London: Longman.
2. Charles Masson. (1842). *Narrative of Various Journeys in Balochistan, Afghanistan and the Panjab*. London.
3. Kirpal Singh. (1969). *Janamsakhi Parampara*. Patiala: Punjabi University. p. 122
4. Hari Ram Gupta. (1991). *The History of the Sikhs, Vol. 5: Maharaja Ranjit Singh*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers. p198-200
5. Gul Muhammad Khan. (1934). *Census of India 1931, Vol IV: Balochistan Part 1 and 2*. Lahore. p152
6. E.H. Gastrell. (1942). *Census of India 1941, Vol IV: Balochistan Part 1 and 2*. Lahore. p14
7. The Quarterly List of the Foreign & Political Department No. 117, New Delhi 1936. p.149.

□

SIKHI AND THE CASTE QUESTION

PROF SURINDER S. JODHKA*

Invocation of caste almost always refers to the ancient Hindu text, the *Manu Smriti*, presumably authored by a Hindu seer named Manu sometime in or around the first century of the common era. As is well known, Manu argued for a four-fold division of society, the varGas, with Brahmins at the top, followed by Kshatriyas, Vaiśyas, and Ūdras. He did not identify the ‘untouchables’ as a separate category, but they have come to be popularly imagined as occupying the fifth rank, below everyone else in the Hindu social hierarchy. While the idea of varna and the four- or five-fold classification presumably served as an ideological prescription, the lived reality of caste was far more diverse and has been structured around jatis (endogamous groups) and their sub-units. The notion of varna functioned as a reference category for determining the status of the different jatis in the hierarchical order of caste.

Furthermore, this widely held textbook view of caste also underscores its immutability. Nothing could change caste or an individual’s position within the caste-based social order, regardless of merit or achievement. Even conversions from Hinduism to Islam or Christianity made little difference to the hierarchical order. The “indigenous” religious movements, such as Sikhism, that critiqued the hierarchical system and offered alternative ways of connecting with God likewise failed to erase the hierarchical order.

While this view remains dominant, it has many flaws. Historians have pointed out that European orientalist and British colonial rulers popularised this framing of caste. Indian nationalists also subscribed

* Professor of Sociology (formerly), JNU, New Delhi

to this Brahmin-centric view of caste, as it helped them think of India as a culture marked by underlying unity, despite its apparent diversities. Caste came to be seen as evidence of the subcontinent's overarching Hindu-ness and a singularity of its civilizational culture across regions and religions.

Though the idea of caste implies hierarchy and inequality, it is also shaped by local histories and material processes. In practice, caste is structured through its interaction with other social, economic, and political institutions and processes, such as kinship, power regimes, ecological possibilities, and systems of production, in a given context and time. The varna model does not work everywhere, and frameworks of inter-caste relations have also changed over time. Hierarchical structures vary significantly across regions. While Brahmins may have a monopoly over ritual practices, they do not necessarily occupy the highest social status even within Hindu society.

Caste and Sikhi: How do we talk about caste among the Sikhs? If caste is about the varna hierarchy, sanctified by Hindu religious doctrine and institutionalised through a Brahmin-centric order of ritual practice and untouchability, then it is a narrative of another world. Unlike Hindu temples, Gurudwaras are open to all, and no one is barred from joining the congregation. Sikhs include rich and poor, yet no ritual hierarchy exists. Sikhs do not have a priestly class like the Brahmins in Hinduism.

The Gurus also rejected Sanskrit, the classical language of Brahmanical Hinduism, and chose to convey their message in a language popular among laypeople. The Sikh Gurus consciously wove an anti-caste message into their theology. The Sikh scripture includes writings of saints and poets who would be regarded as 'untouchables' in Hindu society. Their *shabads* (words/writings) included in the Guru Granth are as sacred to the Sikhs as those of the Gurus themselves. The five beloveds (*panjpiaras*), chosen by the tenth Guru at the time of the formation of Khalsa in 1699, came from diverse sections of the prevailing hierarchical social order. Many believe the rise of Sikhism was a 'political revolt' against a social order based on hierarchy and humiliation.

Sikhism also evolved practices that actively defy cultures of

prejudice against the poor and marginalised. The religiously institutionalised practices of *langar* and *pangat* ensure that everyone sits together and eats from the same kitchen, without knowing who serves or cooks the food.

Caste Persists: However, caste, the accompanying hierarchy, and prejudice continue to persist among the Sikhs. The reality of caste-based social exclusion within the community is also officially recognised by contemporary Sikh leadership. For example, Sikh representatives on the committee constituted to frame a Constitution for independent India publicly acknowledged the presence of “untouchable” caste groups among the Sikhs and insisted that they be included in the list of Scheduled Castes (SC) being prepared to assign special quotas (Reservations) in representative bodies, government jobs, and state-funded educational institutions. Even the General House of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), the elected body of the Sikhs that manages important Sikh Gurdwaras in Punjab, reserves a specified number of seats for SC Sikhs.

More importantly, caste, in some form or other, is present in the social and political life of the Sikhs nearly everywhere. From kinship practices and marriage alliances to settlement patterns and electoral politics, caste differences and divisions matter prominently in contemporary Sikh society, in Punjab and beyond. These divisions also manifest in Sikh religious life through caste-specific Gurdwaras. This is true not only in the villages and towns of Punjab but also in the cities of Europe and North America.

Moving Forward: Despite this recognition, caste remains a marginal and contentious subject within Sikh studies. Its invocation produces discomfort. The subject evokes a sense of moral guilt within the community and among its scholars, most of whom are also likely to be practising Sikhs. The obvious reason is the vehement opposition to caste practice in Sikh theological canons.

How could we move forward? The easy answer would be to recognise the need to reform Sikh social life and to work to completely eradicate all remnants of caste prejudice that still persist within the community by returning to the message of the Gurus. However, this kind of response reduces the caste question to a matter of aligning

‘practice with the theory’. Not only is such a narrative very simplistic, but it also does not allow us to raise relevant questions about the reality of caste and how it has come to be framed as a hegemonic construct. It also does not allow us to engage with the diverse realities of caste as practised on the ground and how they have changed over time.

This would require us to revisit and reject the widely held view of caste as merely a Hindu religious system. A wide range of existing and emerging scholarship clearly shows that the lived realities of caste have always been regionally diverse, embedded in local histories, power dynamics and local economic processes. Certain European scholars of the 18th and 19th centuries popularised the Brahmin-centric view of caste, with Brahmins serving as their local interlocutors.

The everyday lives of caste are shaped by a variety of processes, including religious ideology, though it is often not the most critical. Material processes specific to given social and historical contexts also shape structures of hierarchy and inequality. Though the narrative of caste has come to be associated with India and Hinduism, caste-like structures have existed and continue to exist in most, if not all, parts of the world today.

The idea is not to deny the role of Brahmanical Hindu ideology. However, the *Manu Smriti* neither describes the empirical life of caste nor meaningfully explains its origin. What it does is offer an ideational prescription that legitimises the practice of discrimination against low-ranked social groups.

In contrast, the ideological signals provided by the Gurus and the Sikh religious system are unequivocally against caste. They decry Brahminic ideas and highlight the inherent inhumanity of such a practice. However, like all ideological systems, the Sikh religious canon cannot be expected to shape human realities in every way, at all times. It is important to recognise the specific context of contemporary ideas and ideals of equality and castelessness. They have come to be visualised through the language of citizenship, emanating from the post-Enlightenment normative of constitutional democracies, institutionalised through the political communities of nation-states. Yet contemporary realities of inequality, including caste, are not entirely

dissimilar to those of the past. The challenge before us, therefore, is not to examine the value or validity of the Gurus' message but to recognise its potential as a source for politically imagining a human future free of violence, hierarchy and institutionalised humiliation.

Our engagement with the caste question in contemporary times needs to move beyond the popular Hindu-centric view of a presumed singular Indian culture. We need to approach it as a political question. Its reproduction in everyday life closely intersects with other structures of inequality, such as gender, class, and spatiality. Its future would thus depend on political intent and a vision of an alternative society willing to engage with the sticky structures of inequality and the promises and guarantees of citizenship.

(For a more elaborate discussion on the subject, see my paper 'Sikh Religion and Contentions around Caste'. *Religions* Vol. 15(10) 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15101219>).

THE MISUSE OF AUTHORITY OF THE JATHEDAR OF SRI AKAL TAKHT SAHIB AND THE PRESENT CRISIS OF THE PANTH

DR MADANJIT KAUR*

The Gurdwara Reforms movement paved the way for the foundation of Shiromani Akali Dal (the oldest regional political party in India) in 1920. Soon the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee was established to protect the political rights and religious identity of the Sikhs and to control the historical Gurdwaras of the Sikhs including the central shrine Sri Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) and the highest spiritual seat of the Sikh Panth Sri Akal Takht Sahib.

The organized central Sikh Institution of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee aimed to safeguard the Panthic values and looking after management of the places of worship of the Sikh community in Punjab. The arrangement worked smoothly and remained satisfactory. But the continuous concentration of Akali Dal's power in the hands of single family and passing of the political power of the Punjab State into the hands of Badal family over three decades has been a matter of serious concern for the whole Sikh community and the Sikh diaspora around the globe, having a strong sense of belonging to their roots in their homeland – the Punjab.

Consequently the SGPC created to protect the religious and political interests of the Sikh community and the management of the historical Sikh shrines became a hand-tool of the dominant Akali leaders, the Badals; corrupting the system for their personal political interests. The gross exploitation of the premier religious organization by the egocentric and autocratic Badals (Parkash Singh Badal and his

* C-102, Ivory Tower, Sector 71, SAS Nagar, Mohali

son Sukhbir Singh Badal), who happened to be at the helm of affairs of the Akali Dal, SGPC as well as heading the State Govt of Punjab (as Chief Minister) for the two decades (2007-2017) led to unprecedented crisis.

The decay in the Badals led Akali party can be traced to 2008 when Sukhbir Singh Badal was handed over the party reins by his father Parkash Singh Badal ignoring the senior Akali leaders like Ranjit Singh Brahmputra, Rattan Singh Ajnala, Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa and Sewa Singh Sekhwan etc. Later some of the senior Akali leaders left the party followed by resignation of a number of middle-rung and grass-root leaders. Many of them joined BJP or AAP. The exodus of the old leaders led to their replacement by new leaders of doubtful credentials. It weakened the SAD organizational structure. However, the SAD led alliance in 2012 with BJP in Punjab Assembly election gave a temporary relief to leadership crisis in SAD for a few years. Gradually, under Sukhbir Singh Badal's formula of loyalty to individual rather than the Party became the order of the day in Akali Party. Disgruntled by the autocratic functioning of Sukhbir Singh Badal senior Akali leaders distanced themselves from the Party. The legitimacy of the SAD leadership was at stake. Moreover, the crisis further deepened when Sukhbir Singh Badal inducted his wife Harsimran Kaur's brother Bikramjit Singh Majithia as leader of the young Akali Cadre of the SAD. Henceforth, SAD became one man's family show.

Further unpardonable decay set in the working of the SGPC during the Badal era when the spiritual authority of the Sikh religious institution of Sri Akal Takht became subservient to the Akali Party. The revered religious institution began to be used as an instrument to further the political prospects of the Akali Party and hold of Badals, until they gradually lost their importance as robust religious institutions that were meant to guide the Sikh Panth.

The stronghold of the Badal family over the Akali Party, SGPC and Akal Takht soon began to be resented within the party and outside, though none spoke openly about dissent till the time Parkash Singh Badal was alive, because the senior Badal avoided confrontation with opposition throughout his life. If today the Sikh Panth is rejecting Sukhbir Singh Badal's politics and that of his late father it is because

of the setting in of deep revulsion over the blatant misuse of the Sikh religious institutions.

The gravity of the situation has created deep anguish in the Sikh community. But the development of disdainful attitude and loss of trust in the Badals by the Sikh Panth has been neglected by the Akali leaders for long. Nobody from the ruling clan and supporters of Badals dare to set aside the erring Badals and remove the decay set in the Sikh affairs. Perhaps, they were afraid of losing their positions and personal financial gains at the mercy of the ruling clan.

After being captured by Sukhbir Singh Badal, the Akali Dal and its supremo shifted the focus to the personal ambitions of a patron, who was primarily concerned to promote his personal business, transport, hotel-business and laundering money only. Sukhbir Badal never bothered to consolidate the development schemes and programmes of SGPC, for the welfare of the Sikhs; preservation of the Sikh heritage, the Gurdwaras and Sikh institutions attached with it; promotion of the Sikh missionary works in India and abroad; extension of educational and health services; extension of technical and skilled, engineering training and coaching centres for training and professional competition (police, military and Public services); humanitarian services and spreading message about Sikh religion, Sikh history and contribution of the Sikhs to Indian and world history and civilization. Besides, neglecting its duties the SGPC is also guilty of damaging the status and credibility of premier Sikh institution of Sri Akal Takht Sahib and position of the Jathedar. Under Badals dominance all ethical and moral norms adherent to maryada (code of conduct) of the religious institutions were neglected even in selecting and managing the office bearers of the temporal seat of the Sikh community. The SGPC is now not only guilty of mixing Religion and politics but making religion subservient to politics and damaging the status and credibility of premier Sikh Institution of Sri Akal Takht Sahib and the position of its Jathedar. While Jathedars of Sri Akal Takht Sahib, Sri Damdama Sahib and Sri Keshgarh Sahib one after another were made pawns in the game of politics; election to SGPC was manipulated by unfair devices. Election to the office of the SGPC President and other office bearers remained a shame during the Badal's

rule. Telecast of Gurbani Kirtan and daily service from Sri Harimandir Sahib was monopolized by leadership family business. The shameless act of consolidation of personal business committed by Sukhbir Singh Badal in the domain of religion became highly offendable and unpardonable. Yet Sukhbir has no feeling of guilt or repentance to mend his ways.

Sukhbir Badal never hesitated in exploiting religious sanctity of the authority of the Jathedar of the Akal Takht to promote his political ambitions. At the behest of Sukhbir Singh Badal, in response to the apology letter by the Dera Sacha Sauda, the then high priests Giani Gurbachan Singh (Akal Takht) Giani Mal Singh (Takht Keshgarh Sahib) Giani Gurmukh Singh (Takht Damadama Sahib), Giani Iqbal Singh Takht Patna Sahib, Bihar and Granthi Ram Singh (Thakt Hazoor Sahib in Nanded, Maharashtra, had pardoned Dera Chief Ram Rahim Singh on 24th September 2015. The immoral decision to pardon the Dera Sacha Sauda head, Ram Rahim Singh (now in Sunaria Jail, Rohtak, Haryana) an accused and convicts in heinous crimes of rape, murder and arranging castration of his followers in collusion with Dera doctors) for his blasphemous act for impersonating Guru Gobind Singh imparting Amrit (baptism of Khande de Pahaul on the occasion of the creation of the Khalsa at Anandpur Sahib in 1707 AD). This unholy act of atonement at the Akal Takht at the direction of Sukhbir Singh Badal sparked grave resentment in the Sikh community objecting the pardon to the guilty person who has neither expressed regret nor any apology over his alleged blasphemous act to the Sikh institutions.

At the widespread condemnation of public protest of the Sikh community as well as loss of prestige and reputation the granted pardon to the Dera Chief was managed to be withdrawn at the Akal Takht by shrewd Sukhbir Singh Badal without a sense of guilt and repentance.

Further, the failure of the Badals in taking strict action against the culprits of the sacrilege cases of the *birs* of Holy Sri Guru Granth Sahib by the followers of Dera Sacha Sauda chief, Ram Rahim Singh highly annoyed the Sikh *sangat*. Not only the State civil and police administration under the rule of Akali Dal and BJP led by father-son duo failed to arrest the culprits but also allowed the police to use force to control the protesting Sikh gathering in which two Sikhs were killed

at Behbal Kalan in Kot Kapura in October 2015 against desecration of their religious text at two Gurdwaras in Faridkot's Bargari and Burj Jawahar Singhwala villages.

In September 2023 Badals Govt conveniently passed on the investigation to the Central Bureau of Investigation to wash their hands off the tragic event and shun their responsibility. But actually, the Badals were hiding the real culprits – the followers of Dera Sacha Sauda Sirsa, Haryana and seeking Ram Rahim's support for votes in coming election rather than to safeguard the dignity of the spiritual supremacy of the Sikh scripture, Sri Guru Granth Sahib. This was the highly objectionable act of moral decay of the Akali Dal's supreme leadership; the most repulsive offence to hurt the sentiment of the Sikh community. The SIT appointed by the CBI claimed that Parkash Singh Badal and deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Singh Badal had told the police to use force to suppress the protest. The SIT had named Parkash Singh Badal and Sukhbir Singh Badal as accused in the firing case in its report (published in the Tribune, English, 3 February 2025). The Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Singh Badal and former ex-DGP Sumedh Saini have been booked under various provisions of the Indian Penal Code including 307.

The common perception in the Sikh community is that the Akali led Govt did not address the sacrilege issue properly and failed to protect the religious sentiments of the Sikhs. Afterwards, the absence of Akali legislators from the special Assembly session convened to discuss Justice Ranjit Singh's report on sacrilege cases further exposed Akali leaders weakness and guilt as they avoided to face the House Proceedings. The recent revelation claims that Sukhbir Singh Badal met the Dera Sacha Sauda Chief at Jaipur and Delhi in 2017 to mobiles electoral support. This was in defiance of a 2007 Akal Takht edict-forbidding Sikhs to have any ties with Ram Rahim Singh. This evidence of the betrayal of the *Rabat* (Moral Code) and the *hukam* (Order of the Supreme Authority of the Sikh Panth) by the central leadership of the party heading SGPC and Akali Dal highly offended the Sikh community and it resulted in serious setback to Sukhbir Singh Badal's political ambitions. The Sikh community already deeply hurt by the unholy alliance between Sukhbir Singh Badal and Dera Sacha Sauda

Chief and mis-adventurous consequences of this political deal; gradually drifted from the Akali Party and extended its support to other political outfits active in Punjab Elections, year 2022.

Consequently the Akali Dal suffered defeat in the State Assembly elections and the Parliamentary elections also. Ten of the Akali Party's Lok Sabha candidates lost their security deposits. The situation was equally bad in the 2022 Assembly election, when the Party could win only three seats.

The political vacuum due to the weakened Akali Dal saw the radicals making the pressure felt in Lok Sabha elections with "Waris Punjab De" chief Amritpal Singh (a Khalistan supporter now in Dhibrugarh Jail, Assam) and Sarabjit Singh Khalsa son of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi assassin Beant Singh winning from Khadoor Sahib and Faridkot Parliamentary segments (although both of them have no mass support among the Sikh community).

Many Akali leaders and the Sikh Sangat had openly accused Sukhbir Singh Badal of pressuring and forcing the Akal Takht Jathedar to pardon Ram Rahim Singh. Besides, under the instructions of Sukhbir Singh Badal, the SGPC reportedly spent Rs 90 Lacs on advertisements to defend the decision to pardon the Dera head. This inauspicious act of spending the *golak* (religious offerings) money on the justification of pardon granted to culprit of *Gunah* (error and mistake) of the Sikh ethos highly annoyed the Sikh Panth. The SGPC has no right to spend the golak money on the immoral support extended to Dera Sacha Chief Ram Rahim for justification of pardon.

The advertisement published then started that the decision by *Panj Singh Sahiban* (five high priests) led by Akal Takht Jathedar was taken after long discussion in the interest of the community and in the light of Gurmat (Gurus principle). The advertisement to were published till the then Akal Takht Jathedar revoked the pardon on Dera Chief on 17th October 2015. Pardoning the Dera Sacha Sauda Chief in 2015 was the last cause of the SAD's turmoil in 2017.

During their rule in the Punjab (2007-2017), the Badals had taken disastrous decisions in unbridled egoism and rashness and have done immense damage to the central organization (SGPC) and the authority

of the temporal seat of Sri Akal Takht Sahib. All this time they were busy in exploiting the State authorities and resources of the SGPC for consolidating their hold over the Akali Dal and promote their family business.

While the Badals were to consolidate their hold over the Akali Dal and SGPC by hook and crook, they ignored the problems and interests of the Punjab State and the grievances of the people. They paid no heed to solving the problem of the distribution of rivers waters between Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan; Farmer's agitation, unemployment and economic distress of the State on account of the rising amount of the loans with interest from the centre; release of the Sikh prisoners having completed their prison terms and controlling of rising menace of drug trafficking and dangerous abuse of indulgence of the youths in drug addiction as well as corruption in the State machinery. Many police personnel and politicians and businessmen got involved in the easy earning from the drug business. Even a close relative of Sukhbir, Bikram Singh Majithia (brother of Sukhbir's wife Harsimrat Kaur) had been accused of involvement in drug mafia in connivance with police officer (Jagdish Bhola, an accused and convict for drug smuggling, now in jail, had named Majithia in drug trade. During 2014 Bikram Singh Majithia was a Minister in Badal Govt.

In 2021 Majithia was booked under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act on the basis of a report of the special task force. Majithia spent over five months in Patiala Jail and walked out of prison in August 2022 after the Punjab and Haryana High Court granted him bail. The investigation has damaged the credibility and reputation of Sukhbir Singh Badal. Allegation against Majithia happened when Badals had absolute hold over the State Govt. Even now Majithia is holding an important position in Akali Dal and is a member of the working committee of the SGPC. The so-called involvement of Majithia is a sad story of unpardonable offences of the Badal clan.

The maladministration during the Akali Party rule under the Badals when it was also a shareholder in power at the centre is a utter failure of its moral duty and responsibility to the public, Sikh Panth and abeyance of all moral, ethical norms and cultural values in Public

domain of a democracy.

By controlling all major decision in the Party and SGPC Sukhbir Badal has left no room for any other leaders. The decay set in the religious domain of the Sikh Panth under Sukhbir Badal dominance, when the authority of the Central Institution of the Sikhs like SGPC and the Akal Takht became subservient to the Akali Party led to unprecedented consequences.

The interference of Sukhbir Singh Badal in the affairs of SGPC and the authority of the Akal Takht and forcing its Jathedars to issue *bukamnamas* (edicts) in cases pertaining to his political ambitions in his favour, manipulated orders and decisions had not only damaged the dignity, authenticity and integrity of the highest temporal seat of the Sikh Panth, but also caused serious resentment and anguish in the Akali leaders and the Sikh sangat. The SGPC also became subservient to the command of the SAD Supremo. These revered religious institutions that were meant to guide the Sikh Panth gradually lost their reputation and importance as robust moral guide to promote the Sikh values. Soon, the stranglehold of the Badal family over the Akali Party and religious institutions – SGPC and Akal Takht began to be resented within the Akali Party and the Sikh community in India and all over the globe. Consequently the task to restore the spiritual dominance of the Akal Takht in Sikh hemisphere became the dire necessity and urgent requirement of the Sikh community.

In March 2023, Panthic bodies and activist led by a former Sikh student Federation leader – Bhai Daljit Singh, announced a call for a World Sikh Convention to liberate the Akal Takht from the control of electorate body of SGPC and to revive the old Sikh tradition of Gurmattas. The motive has been cited as to establish Panth Pradhan (collective) leadership and Gurmatta based decision making practice at the Akal Takht to free the highest temporal seat of the Sikh community from the influence of electoral parties and shifts its governance process in line with panthic tradition and collective decision making. Suggestions for establishing a central organization for the working of the Akal Takht and appointment of the Jathedars, their tenure, duties and service rules have to be formulated by a central body representing Sikh nominees from India and abroad. The

suggestion needs a wider participation and border framework of the solidarity of the Sikh participation.

Various intellectual forms and Sikh Institution have been suggesting proposals for reorganizing the institution of Sri Akal Takht Sahib, keeping intact the heritage of Miri and Piri doctrine and the requirements of the social solidarity of the present Sikh Community, to the SGPC, Akali Dal and even Akal Takht itself. But no notice has been taken by the central organization.

The problem confronting the Sikh community poses serious question – Can the Akal Takht free itself from the overriding influence of Shiromani Akali Dal and SGPC and take decision that it be seen an impartial, upholding the Sikh *maryada* (moral values) attached with the functioning of the Akal Takht and has the approval of Sikh Panth? In the present conduct this speculation was ventured by a daring and devout Jathedar of Akal Takht Sahib- Giani Raghbir Singh who dared to declare Badal's '*Tankhaiya*' for their mistakes during their rule in 2007-2017 and ordered for their punishment. But the Jathedar had to face drastic consequences and he was removed from the Jathedari of the Akal Takht by the SGPC President Harjinder Singh Dhami under the pressure of Sukhbir Singh Badal.

Giani Raghbir Singh was appointed as Jathedar of the Akal Takht on 16th June 2023 by the Executive Committee of the SGPC relieving Giani Harpreet Singh of his additional charge. He was sent to his earlier assignment – Jathedar of Sri Takht Sri Damdama Sahib.

In the growing crisis of the Akali Party and midst of stormy affairs and fed up with the autocratic and disdainful control of the Akali Dal and SGPC under Sukhbir Singh Badal, a couple of senior Akali leaders revolted and demanded reforms to strengthen the welfare of the party and to restore the spiritual dominance of the religious institutions. Nine top rebel Akali leaders were expelled from the Akali Dal. Under the leadership of senior Akali leader Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa (Ex-MP) a programme for "Sudhar Lehar" (reform movement) in the affairs of management the Gurdwara under SGPC was launched.

In July 2024, a group of disgruntled rebel Akali leaders – Bibi Jagir Kaur, Ex-President SGPC, Sikandar Singh Maulka (Ex Minister),

Gurpratap Singh Wadala, Parminder Singh Dhindsa (Ex-Minister), Surjit Singh Rakhra and Prem Singh Chandumajra (Ex-MP) etc sent a letter to Jathedar Akal Takht, Giani Raghbir Singh listing same serious anti-Panthic mistakes and errors of Shiromani Akali Dal President Sukhbir Singh Badal and sought his order. The rebel leaders also admitted to religious and political lapses made by them while they were part of the Shiromani Akali Dal Govt between 2007-2017 and sought atonement from them.

Just a few days later in August 2024 Sukhbir Singh Badal also went to the Akal Takht and apologized in writing for the lapses during the party's 10 years rule (2007-2017). This letter of apology in which he took responsibility for his action was made public. The apex body controlling the Sikh Gurdwaras – SGPC had also submitted an apology.

The apologies centre around four major issues that have been riling the Sikh community for several years. The first is related to the 2007 blasphemy case against Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh for impersonating Guru Gobind Singh. The case was later quietly withdrawn.

The second apology pertaining to the alleged manipulation of an apology issued by the dera for impersonating the Guru. Ram Rahim was pardoned by the Akal Takht in September 2015. But as he continues to face anger and protests from the Sikh Community, the pardon was revoked less than a month later.

The third apology pertains to the misuse of Golak money (Religious offering). The SGPC controlled by SAD reportedly spent Rs 90 lakh on an advertisement to defend the decision to pardon the *dera* head. Then Akali leaders had openly accused Sukhbir Singh Badal of pressuring the then Akal Takht Jathedar to pardon Ram Rahim Singh.

The fourth apology is related to the sacrilege incidents concerning the holy scripture of the Sikhs – Sri Guru Granth Sahib occurred in 2015; the alleged perpetrator belonging to the dera sachsa sauda were not prosecuted.

On 30 August 2024, Akal Takht declared Sukhbir Singh Badal guilty of religious misconduct (*Tankhaiya*) and demanded his

resignation.

On Nov 16, 2024 Sukhbir Singh Badal submitted his resignation as the SAD President to the working Committee of the SAD. The same day Sukhbir Singh Badal stepped aside from actively leading the Akali Party, when he handed over the charge to run party affairs to the working committee under Balwinder Singh Bhunder. The working committee had not accepted the resignation of Sukhbir Singh Badal and he continued in the post as Party chose to defy the Akal Takhts order of accepting his resignation.

On December 1, 2024, the five Sikh priests (Panj Piaras) headed by Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Raghbir Singh had held ten rebel Akali leaders, who had launched “Shiromani Akali Dal Sudhar Lehar” (reform movement to strengthen and uplift the party), guilty for not opposing the controversial decisions taken during the SAD regime (2007-2017), when they were part of the Govt Party.

AKAL TAKHT HUKAMNAMA, DECEMBER 2, 2024

On Monday, December 2, 2024, Jathedar Sri Akal Takht Sahib, Giani Raghbir Singh pronounced religious punishment to Sukhbir Singh Badal and other Akali leaders and held them Tankhaiya (religious punishment for mistakes committed by the Shiromani Akali Dal and its Govt in Punjab from 2007-2017 and directing them to clean toilets of the Golden Temple for two days as part of their Tankhah (punishment). Pronouncing the edict from the ‘faseel’ (podium) of the Akal Takht, Jathedar Giani Raghbir Singh directed the SAD working committee to accept Sukhbir Singh Badal’s resignation as Party Chief. The Jathedar named a seven member committee for holding elections to the post of SAD President and office bearers within six months.

The Jathedar also announced the withdrawal of the “Panth Rattan Fakhar-e-Qaum” (Pride of the Sikh community) title bestowed upon former Chief Minister late Parkash Singh Badal during whose tenure the mistakes were committed.

Sukhbir Singh Badal who recently had got his foot fractured, sat on a wheel chair with folded hands as the Jathedar pronounced his edict (Hukamnama). He was accompanied by senior Akali leaders including Daljit Singh Cheema, Sucha Singh Langah, Hira Singh Gabria,

Gulzar Singh Ranika. Rebelled Akali leaders Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa was also present.

As per the edict” – “Sukhbir Singh Badal and other accused Akali leaders will stand as guard with a spear in hand outside the Golden Temple for one hour each for two days, starting Tuesday, December 3, 2024. They will later clean toilets and utensils for one hour each. The leaders will then recite Sukhmani Sahib path and listen to Kirtan.” In view of their health condition, the Jathedar told Sukhbir Singh Badal and Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa that they could sit on a wheel chair while performing ‘sewa’ (service) of the guard.

“All Akali leaders will perform a similar sewa at Takht Keshgarh Sahib, Takht Damdama Sahib, Darbar Sahib in Mukhtsar and Fatehgarh Sahib for two days each.” Before announcing the edict, the Akal Takht Jathedar, Giani Raghbir Singh made the Akali leaders wear plaques around their necks with a message of their admission of guilt.

The proceedings started with Sukhbir Singh Badal’s questioning over the controversial pardon granted to Sirsa based Dera Sacha Sauda Chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh in 2015, who faced the charges of blasphemy.

The Akal Takht edict termed the mistakes as *gunah* (sins) and told Sukhbir Singh Badal to admit or deny the charges by just saying Yes or No. Giani Raghbir Singh first asked Sukhbir Singh Badal about his dubious role in facilitating pardon to the *dera* chief by pressuring the then Akal Takht Jathedars. Sukhbir Singh Badal tried to explain the matter, but when the Jathedar interrupted him he was left with no choice and said “Yes”.

Sukhbir Singh also said ‘Yes’ when asked about the misutilization of Rs 91 lakh ‘golak’ money on advertisement to justify the pardon to *dera* chief Ram Rahim Singh. The Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Raghbir Singh also directed that the amount along with interest be realized from Sukhbir Singh Badal, Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa, Sucha Singh Langah, Hira Singh Gabria, Balwinder Singh Bhunder, Gulzar Singh Ranike and Daljit Singh Cheema.

Sukhbir Singh Badal also admitted to his mistake in promoting IPS officer infamous for the fake encounters of Sikh youth to the top post of the State Police.

Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa, a senior Minister in the Govt of Badal, when questioned admitted to recommending an allocation of Assembly poll ticket to the wife of another controversial police officer.

Besides, other Akali leaders Bibi Jagir Kaur, Prem Singh Chandumajra, Surjit Singh Rakhra, Bikram Singh Majithia, Maheshinder Singh, Sharanjit Singh, Charanjit Singh, Adesh Partap Singh Kairon and Janmeja Singh Sekhon were also given punishment for not opposing the party decision to grant pardon to the *dera* chief. They were directed to clean washrooms at the Golden Temple complex for one hour and clean floor and utensils at the nearest Gurdwara in the vicinity for five days as a part of their *tankah* (punishment) for their mistakes.

Considering the health issue of Sukhbir Singh Badal, who had a hairline fracture in his foot and Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa having old age ailments – the Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Raghbir Singh had exempted them from toilet cleaning service.

The Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Raghbir Singh while pronouncing the punishment said, "the leadership of the Shiromani Akali Dal has lost its moral authority to lead the Sikh Panth politically due to their actions."

The Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Raghbir Singh also formed a committee of seven members with a six month mandate to chose new leadership for the party after conducting a membership drive. The committee includes a mix of Badal family loyalists, rebel leaders, neutral leaders and a women members.

The Badal loyalist includes SGPC President Harjinder Singh Dharmi, Iqbal Singh Jhinda and former SGPC chief Kirpal Singh Badungar. The rebels include Gurpartap Singh Wadala and Santa Singh Umaidpuri.

The hardliner connection was represented by Satwant Kaur an educationist, whose father Bhai Amrik Singh, a close associate of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale was killed along with his mentor during the Operation Blue Star at Akal Takht Sahib in June 1984. A key member Manpreet Singh Ayali, Akali Dal (MLA), who has questioned the decisions of the Badals but has remained neutral in the recent loyalist versus rebel Akali conflict.

As a falls out of the pardon granted to the controversial Dera Sirsa, Haryana in 2015, the then panel of Jathedars also faced heat on December 2, 2024 pronouncement of Hukamnama by Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Raghbir Singh. Akal Takht had questioned the 2015 panel of former Jathedars of Takht Jathedars, Giani Gurbachan Singh (Akal Takht), Giani Gurmukh Singh (Takht Damdama Sahib) and Giani Iqbal Singh (Takht Patna Sahib) to explain the circumstances under which the flip-flop decision of exonerating the controversial Sirsa Sacha Sauda head, Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh for the 2007 blasphemous act was taken.

A day after surviving an attempt on his life at the Golden Temple complex, Amritsar, Sukhbir Singh Badal along with Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa, Sucha Singh Langah, Hira Singh Gabria, Balwinder Singh Bhundar, Gulzar Singh Ranike and Daljit Singh Cheema underwent the same 'Tankah' in the midst of heightened police security for two days each at other significant Sikh shrines including Takht Keshgarh Sahib, Anandpur Sahib (December 6-7), Takht Damdama Sahib at Talwandi Sabo in Bhatinda (Dec 8-9), Darbar Sahib in Mukhtsar (Dec 10-11) and Fatehgarh Sahib Gurdwara (Dec 11-12).

While pronouncing *tankah* to SAD President Sukhbir Singh Badal and other guilty Akali leaders on December 2, 2024 from Akal Takht 'faseel' Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Raghbir Singh had stated that the clarification submitted by three former Takht Jathedars were not found to be satisfactory. They were also held equally responsible for pardoning the Dera head and ordered the SGPC to withdraw their facilities and transfer one out of Amritsar.

The Akal Takht Jathedar had also ordered that till the former Akal Takht Jathedar and other Jathedar appear in person at Akal Takht and submit their apology, they could not share any religious stage. Giani Gurbachan Singh had retired from the SGPC enrollment over a decade ago, but was put on extension to serve as Jathedar of Akal Takht. Still he stepped down in October 2018 on health issue. Later, he was redeployed as co-ordinator of the Dharam Parchar Vaheer and was enjoying several facilities extended by SGPC, including two vehicles and five sewadars. Giani Gurmukh Singh, at was serving as head granthi of Akal Takht was transferred to Gurdwara Sri Mukatsar

Sahib, as a retrenchment move.

ASSASSINATION BID ON SUKHBIR SINGH BADAL WHILE PERFORMING SEWA TANKAH AT GOLDEN TEMPLE

The year 2024 was a eventful year in Punjab politics especially for the Shiromani Akali Dal that saw a split within the party and its Chief Sukhbir Singh Badal and his associate Akali leaders being declared ‘tankhaiya’ (guilty of violating the Sikh religious code of conduct by the Jathedar of Akal Takht. Besides the assassination bid on Sukhbir Singh Badal by Khalistani militant Narain Singh Chaura on December 4, 2024 at the entrance gate of the Golden Temple at the Ghanta Ghar side on the second day of performing the guard duty as part of ‘tankah’ given to him by the Akal Takht Jathedar for the mistakes committed by SAD leaders during 2007-2017. At about 9.30 AM on Dec 4, 2024 Chaura appeared at site, washed his feet in ‘charan ganga’ (a small pond) where devotees wash their feet before entering the shrine) and started walking towards Sukhbir Singh Badal who was sitting on a wheel chair due to his fractured foot. Chaura took out a pistol out of his pocket and tried to open fire from a close range. But he missed the target and was overpowered by Punjab Police. ASI Jasbir Singh who caught hold of his hand and the bullet missed the target. Two other ASIs – Rashpal Singh and Parminder Singh joined Jasbir Singh in overpowering Chaura. It has been learnt that ASI Jasbir Singh was associated with security of Badal family since 2002 and was on duty as part of Sukhbir Singh security.

After the incident, Sukhbir Singh Badal, a Z+ protectee, completed the remaining half an hour of his guard duty. As per police authorities, Chaura a resident of Dera Baba Nanak and former Khalistani supporter and terrorist is facing various cases under the arms and explosive Act. He remained a close aide of late Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala and jailed terrorist Jagtar Singh Hawara. He was the brain behind many incidents, including the Burail Jail break case of 2004 in which Hawara escaped from the prison. He was last granted bail in 2022, but remained under scrutiny for his involvement in terrorist criminal activities. Currently he is facing over 20 cases.

Narain Singh Chaura was taken in Police custody (on December

4, 2024) and a fresh case of attempted murder relevant section of the BNS and Arms Act was registered against him. Sukhbir Singh Badal did not record statement on murder bid to the police even months after assassination bid. The police reply was filled on April 29, 2025 after Badal approached the High Court seeking transfer of the probe to Central investigation agencies either CBI or NIA and claimed that Punjab Police enquiry had been biased and unfair.

The assassination attempt on former deputy Chief Minister and head SAD at the Golden Temple complex, when he was performing the duty of a guard as a part of his *tankah* pronounced by the Jathedar of Akal Takht on December 4, 2024 has apparently put the ruling Aam Aadmi Party in dock, while the opposition Parties i.e. Congress and BJP had engaged in exploiting the incident for the failure of maintaining law and order in the Punjab.

The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) termed the murderous attack on Sukhbir Singh Badal as an intelligence failure and demanded judicial inquiry into the incident and resignation of CM Bhagwant Singh Mann. Daljit Singh Cheema the spokesperson of SAD said, "We have no faith in the Govt, the conspiracy behind the incident has to come out". The senior Akali leader, Bikramjit Singh Majithia said that murderous attack was aimed at finishing the moderate Akali leadership of Punjab and spoiling the peace in the border state by creating a communal divides. He demanded a high court monitored probe into the incident to unmask the conspiracy behind it. BJP demanded NIA and CBI probe into the incident. While the AAP Party, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann condemned the attack and praised the Punjab Police of its prompt action to prevent the fatal incident and foiled the conspiracy to defame Punjab and Punjabis.

For a casual observer, the assassination attack even though no one was injured has huge significance and serious repercussions considering that it had happened just outside the Golden Temple. This incident is also a reminder of the days of the terrorism in Punjab, besides once again bringing into focus the shifting narrative towards hardline politics and decimation of moderate Sikh politics. Punjab has already suffered a lot during the 1980s and it cannot afford another dark era. Besides, it is a challenge to the State Govt, because such

incidents have the potential to alienate the majority of Hindu and urban Sikh voters. Thus incident is likely to have its political impact on the next general election.

A day after Akal Takht Jathedar had pronounced the ‘tankhah’ for religious misconduct to Sukhbir Singh Badal and other Akali leaders, SAD chief Sukhbir Singh Badal along with Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa performed the duty of a *senadar* (guard) at the entrance of the Golden Temple at Ghanta Ghar entrance on December 4, 2024. They wore a plaque bearing admittance of guilt around their neck, denouncing blue *chola* (attire) and holding a *barsba* (spear). Both of them seated on the wheel chair performed the guard duty. As per the *tankah* awarded to them, they also performed *sewa* (service) at the langar Hall, listened Gurbani Kirtan and recited Sukhmani Sahib Path (prayer) for one hour each. Other Akali leaders held guilty also performed their *sewa*. Former SAD Minister Bikram Singh Majithia washed utensils in the langar hall and spokesperson of the Akali Dal – Dr Daljeet Singh Cheema cleaned bathroom at the Golden Temple entrance as per directed by the edict of the Akal Takht.

REBEL AKALI LEADERS COMPLY WITH AKAL TAKHT DIRECTIONS AND DISSOLVED SUDHAR LEHAR, DEC 9, 2024

After completing their religious atonement in 10 days, the rebel Akali leaders dissolved the Shiromani Akali Dal Sudhar Lehar formed by several senior party leaders who had revolted against Sukhbir Singh Badal’s leadership. The leaders announced the decision following a meeting held at Amritsar.

The convener of the Sudhar Lehar, Gurpartap Singh Wadala announced Sudhar Lehar has been dissolved officially today. All members have given their consent in this regard. The Akal Takht has been apprised of the development. The rebel Akali leaders declared that they have decided to consolidate and strengthen the SAD as per the Dec 2, 025 Akal Takht direction.

The Akal Takht Jathedar, Giani Raghbir Singh had directed the rebel leaders to unite and work towards strengthening the SAD urging them to set aside their differences and announced the formation of seven members committee under the leadership of Shiromani Gurdwara

Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) President, Harjinder Singh Dhami. Gurpartap Singh Wadala was directed to oversee the induction of fresh members and delegates and to conduct election for new President and other office-bearers within six months. The rebel leaders had approached the Takht Jathedar with admittance of guilt and complaint against the autocratic decision taken by SAD leadership between 2007-2017.

SUKHBIR SINGH BADAL AND OTHER SAD LEADERS OFFER ARDAS AT AKAL TAKHT AFTER COMPLETING TEN DAYS TANKAH BY THE AKAL TAKHT

After successfully undergoing religious atonement for ten days, Sukhbir Singh Badal and other guilty Akali leaders paid obeisance and offered Ardas of penance at Akal Takht on December 13, 2024. Police personnel in large numbers and SGPC task force were deployed for security in and around the Golden Temple complex.

Sukhbir Singh Badal and other Akali leaders including SAD working President Balwinder Singh Bhunder, former Minister Gulzar Singh Ranike, Daljit Singh Cheema and Maheshinder Singh Grewal each offered *Bheta* of Rs 1100/- and *Karah Parshad* worth Rs 1100/-.

After the Akal Takht certified them to be absolved of all charges, they removed the plague hung around their necks. Sukhbir Singh who was sitting in a wheelchair as he had suffered a hairline fracture on his foot, was also relieved of the *tankhaya* tag awarded by the Akal Takht. Along with Sukhbir Singh Badal, 17 former Sikh Akali ministers, the core Committee members or those having Cabinet rank during the Akali Party, erstwhile decade – long span were equally indicted. They had admitted the guilt about being mute spectators. Among them were Akali rebels who also underwent *tankhab*. They had approached the Akal Takht on July 1, 2024 against Sukhbir Singh and his coteries.

GOLAK MONEY SPENT ON ADVERTISEMENT JUSTIFYING PARDON TO DERA CHIEF RETURNED

In compliance of Akal Takht directions SAD leaders including Sukhbir Singh Badal had deposited the ‘Golak Money’ that was allegedly misutilized on publishing advertisement in media to justify

the controversial exoneration grant to the Sirsa based Dera Sacha Sauda head Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh in 2015 in a blasphemy case .

On December 20, 2024 after confession by the Akali leaders, the Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Raghbir Singh had held Sukhbir Singh Badal and other Six Akali leaders responsible for influencing the SGPC to release an amount of Rs 82 lakh. The Akal Takht had directed them to pay the amount along with interest back to SGPC.

On December 13, 2024 Partap Singh, Secretary, SGPC confirmed that the amount had been received. Sukhbir Singh Badal and other Akali leaders Maheshinder Singh Grewal, Sucha Singh Langah, Hira Singh Gabaria, Balwinder Singh Bhunder, Gulzar Singh Ranike and Daljit Singh Cheema had deposited their share of Rs 15.78 Lakh each. Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa, who had not completed his Tankah on account of his ill health, paid the amount after completing his *sewa* on Dec 15, 2025 and got atonement.

Pardoning the Dera Sacha Sauda Chief in 2015 was the root cause of SAD's turmoil under the pressure of the SGPC. The Dera Chief was pardoned by the then Akal Takht Jathedar, Giani Gurbachan Singh and five priests on Sept 24, 2015. Advertisements were published till the then Akal Takht Jathedar revoked the pardon on October 17, 2015, in consideration of widespread resentment of Sikh community.

SGPC PRESIDENT APOLOGIZED TO JATHEDAR AKAL TAKHT FOR OBNOXIOUS UTTERANCE AGAINST BIBI JAGIR KAUR

On December 13, 2024 Harjinder Singh Dhami, President SGPC submitted an apology to the Akal Takht for using objectionable language against Bibi Jagir Kaur, a senior Akali leader and former President of the SGPC. In a letter to Jathedar Giani Raghubir Singh, Dhami wrote "I apologize to Bibi Jagir Kaur and the entire women fraternity. Being on a responsible Panthic post, I should have refrained from using such obnoxious language. The verdict of the Akal Takht on the issue will be acceptable to me unconditionally.

The Punjab State Women Commission Chairperson, Rajbala Gill had issued the notice to Dhami regarding his offensive comments about former SGPC President and political leader Bibi Jagir Kaur. She referred to an audio recording circulating on the social media, in which Dhami

allegedly used highly offensive and demeaning language during a telephonic conversation with a journalist, targeting Bibi Jagir Kaur, a prominent Akali Leader. The remarks were not only personally defamatory but also disrespectful to women. The Commission asked the SGPC to remove Dhami from the position of head of SGPC in view of the offensive remarks made by him.

These offensive utterances of the senior most SGPC leader had offended the Sikh community and its religious ethics which held women in highest esteem '*So Kion Manda Akhiya Jit Jame Raajan*' (Guru Granth Sahib).

Note: Giani Raghbir Singh's daring action of calling head of SAD and former Deputy CM of Punjab at Akal Takht along with other Akali leaders to accept their mistakes and pronouncement of *Tankah* reminds us about the fearless Jathedar of late eighteenth century Akali Phula Singh, who called Maharaja Ranjit Singh at Akal Takht and held him guilty of moral misconduct in personal life and accept punishment *Tankah* for violating Sikh Code of Conduct in having a Muhammadan Courtesan Moran by name as his mistress.

The Maharaja obeyed the order of Akal Takht and presented himself before the Sangat at Akal Takht. He accepted his mistake and punishment to receive lashes (Kora) on his bare back. It is said that Maharaja was tied around the Imli (Tamarind) tree in front of the Akal Takht (Burnt during the Operation Blue Star and later a sapling of the same tree has been planted there). It is also said that the sentence was only symbolic and was not executed. However, the incident had further enhanced the importance of the Akal Takht in the realm of Sikh Panth.

Phula Singh was born in village of Shihaan in 1761. He joined the order of Nihangs at the early age and became the head of the Nihangs also described as Akalis, a band of fearless fighters who formed the suicide squads of the Sikh army Dal Khalsa during the Misal period. He also became the head of the Shaheed Misal. He took his abode in the Akal Bunga in the Golden Temple complex and was appointed Jathedar of the Akal Takht by the Gurmatta (joint resolution of the Dal Khalsa). His troops of the Nihangs were stationed at the Burj Akali Phula Singh in Amritsar. In the Sikh annals he is frequently

mentioned for his dare devil attitude and freedom in speaking out his mind even to Maharaja Ranjit Singh (later Maharaja Ranjit Singh took him into his army – artillery. A general in the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, Phula Singh took leading role in many of the campaigns of the Sikh army of the Lahore Kingdom (Sarkar Khalsa). Maharaja Ranjit Singh owed many of his victories to the desperate valour of Akali Phula Singh. He was against the British entry in the Punjab. In 1809 when Col Octorloney, British Envoy Lord Metcalfe was on visit to Amritsar, some Nihangs of Phula Singh's troops attacked the Muslim escort of the British envoy outside the Golden Temple where the Akalis were on prayer. It was the occasion of the holy and Muharram and Akali Phula Singh and his troops happened to be the army commander in Amritsar. Riots broke out between Muslims and Nihangs in Amritsar. Metcalfe's reports blamed Akali Phula Singh but it is not substantiated by the British records. Maharaja Ranjit Singh immediately turned up and helped to quell the riots. He also sent his courtiers to Metcalfe to apologise for the lack of courtesy shown to his guests.

Akali Phula Singh protested against the Treaty of Lahore 1809, with the British and even asked Maharaja Ranjit Singh to tear up the treaty with the British.

The Treaty recognized Maharaja Ranjit Singh's sovereignty only over territories north of the Sutlej and all the Malwa Sikh States went under the protection of the British sovereignty. It marked the limit of Lahore Darbar's expansion only upto the Sutlej (Phillaur) and the Maharaja was left to expand his conquests on the North West frontiers.

Akali Phula Singh played a decisive role in the conquest of Multan 1815, Kashmir (battle of Shupaiyan) 1819 and Attock, 1823. Phula Singh was killed in the battle of Naushera (Attock). Akali Phula Singh knew the land and people of the region well, his name (along with the name of Hari Singh Nalwa) became a terror among the Afghan tribes across the Indus. (See Prem Singh Hoti – *Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Baba Phula Singh Akali*, E. Thompson, the Life of Charles Lord Metcalfe)

□

* Akali Phula Singh never accepted any generalship from Ranjit Singh. He was his own master and head of a powerful Akali Jatha comprising several thousands men. - Editor

UNRAVELLING THE PHENOMENON OF DERAS IN PUNJAB

PROF RONKI RAM*

CONTEXTUALISING DERAS

The phenomenon of deras is not new to the Punjab. Its lineage can be traced to the Nath Sampradaya, a conjunction of the ideas of Buddhism, Shaivites, Vedantism and yoga traditions, which is the earliest form of deras that emerged in Punjab as far back as the 10th century A.D. (Briggs 1982: 100; Burchett 2019: 169-175 Dwivedi 1996; Mallinson 2011: 1-20). Founded by yogi Matsyendranath, deras of this Sampradaya were called shrines/monasteries/*Nath-warah/Akharas* (Kalyani 1954: 11; Singh 1937: 21; Ghurye 1953: 154-155). Under the leadership of yogi Gorakhnath, the famous disciple of Matsyendranath, the Nath Sampradaya occupied centre stage in the Punjab. Eventually, it expanded into twelve Panths (branches) of yogis across the Indian sub-subcontinent (Chandra 2011: 253-254; Briggs 1982: 2-3) – all having close allegiances with yogi Gorakhnath (Briggs 1982: 2-3; Singh 1937: 7; Grewal 1999: 24). The twelve Panths in turn established a large number of Gorakhnathi deras in different parts of India (Grewal 1996: 18; Chandra 2011: 253-254). ‘Tilla Yogian,’ in the Jhelum district of undivided Punjab, was their headquarter, which was one of the oldest and most famous establishments of Nath Sampradaya (Grewal & Goswamy 1967: 41). It is commonly believed that Baba Nanak visited ‘Tilla Yogian’ during his Western *udasi* (preaching tour) and mentioned the names of Matsyendranath, Gorakhnath and Charpatnath in his *bani* (spiritual verses)

* Emeritus Prof., Institute for Development and Communication (Chandigarh);
Formerly: Shaheed Bhagat Singh Chair Prof. & Dean Arts Faculty, PU, Chandigarh

Like the present day deras, the deras of Nath Sampradaya were open to all irrespective of caste, class and creed, and all were welcomed to partake langar – free food in the community kitchen (Rose 1914 rpt. 2008: 397). They were followed by another early tradition of deras that coincided with the beginning of the Sultanate period in India in the 12th century A.D., particularly with the foundation of the *Chishtiyyah tariqa/Silsila* (order) in Ajmer city of Rajasthan of North-western India. Founded by Sufi saint Abu Ishaq Shami in Chisht-i-Sharif region of Afghanistan, the Chishti order was established and popularized in India by Sufi saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti. He visited Lahore in 1190/1192 AD, reached Delhi in 1193 AD, during the end of Ghurid reign, and finally settled in Ajmer-Rajasthan in 1206 AD (Chandra 2007 rpt. 2009: 241), where he established his *Khanqah/Jama'at Khana*/dera in 1236 AD, what is now popularly known as the Ajmer Sharif Dargah. It was the first of the four Sufi orders (Chishti, Qadiri, Suhrawardi and Naqshbandi) to be established in this part of the country. Qutab-ud-Din Bakhtyar Kaki, Fariduddin Mas'ud (popularly known as Baba Farid/Shaik Farid) and Nizamuddin Auliya were successors of the Sufi saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti respectively. They established various Sufi deras in different parts of the country. In Punjab, Chishtiyyah deras got multiplied during the period of Baba Farid (1173/1175-1266), whose bani is included in the sacred scriptures of Shri Guru Granth Sahib – sacred Sikh scriptures.

After the spread of Nath Sampradaya and Sufi deras, Sikh deras cropped up in Punjab during the early period of the historic Sikh Gurus (Mann 2017: 326). Baba Sri Chand, the eldest son of Baba Nanak, founder of the Sikh faith, established his separate and parallel seat of authority/dera at Dera Baba Nanak, immediately after the passing away of Baba Nanak in 1539. Similarly, Dattu, the eldest son of Guru Angad established his separate religious centre at Khadur, and Mohan, the eldest son of Guru Amar Das followed suit at Goindwal. The later four dissenter sects of mainstream Sikhism – *Prithias/Chhota Mel* (lesser clan)/*Minas* (scoundrels), *Dhirmallias* (followers of Dhir Mall, eldest son of Gurditta son of the sixth guru Hargobind), *Ramraiyas* (followers of Ram Rai), and *Masandias* (followers of *Masands*) – also established their deras at different places: *Prithias/Chhota Mel/Minas* at Hehar (a village near Lahore, presently in Pakistan), *Dhirmallians*

at Kartarpur, Ramraiya at present day Dehradun, and Masandias/Handalias/Niranjanias at Jandiala.

This early Sikh diversity, which exhibited itself in the form of alternate Sikh religious centers/deras, was primarily the outcome of the disgruntled and unsuccessful attempts of the 'fake' claimants to the title of Guru within the evolving mainstream Sikh faith (for details see: Chaturvedi 1951:360-69; Marenco 1976: 28-30; Bingley 1899, rpt. 1970: 85-93; Archer 1946:221-226; Grewal 1996:39-46). The sectarian tendencies during the Guru period were encouraged by the Mughal state. With the rise of the Khalsa in the eighteenth century these dissenter sects simply withered away. Only the Udasis and Nirmalas (discussed below) survived because of the Khalsa support to them in lieu of their services towards the care of historical gurdwaras at a time when Khalsa was otherwise engaged in battling the Mughals in guerrilla warfare.

Apart from these early alternate deras of the historic Sikh Gurus' period, many more deras of varied nomenclatures appeared at different intervals on the long and tortuous consolidation of the Sikh religion. Some of the most prominent among them were of: Addan Sahi, Almast, Bala Hasna, Bandei Khalsa (Bandapanthis), Bhagat Bhagwaniye, Bhaktmalliye, Bhaktpanthi, Bindrabani Nanak Sahi, Divana, Gahir Gambharia, Gangu Sahia, Gulabdasi, Handali, Hiradasia, Jitmaliye, Mihansahiye, Mahima Sahia, Namdhari/Kukas, Nanakpanthis, Nihang, Nirankari, Nirmalas Radhasoami, Ramdas Ka, Sacha Sauda, Sahajdhari, Sangat Sahibiye, Satinamia, Satkartaria, Sewapanthis, Suthrashahi, Singh Ji Mat, Udasi, and Vanjara (Chaturvedi 1951: 361-69; McLeod 1984: 121-133; Mann 2017: 333; Oberoi 1994: 24; Singh 2002: 78). Another powerful wave of Sikh deras that brought religious diversity within the Sikh community on the surface is known as Sikh sant tradition. Darshan S. Tatla, in his exploratory study of "19th -21st Century Sants" traced the origins of the Sikh sant tradition to the guru period (Tatla 2017: 368-79). Guru Amar Das, the third Guru, established 22 *manjis* (peripheral religious centers), each headed by a Sikh chosen for his piety (known as a *masand*) to propagate the faith, which also helped distant followers to congregate and to handover their offerings to make them reach the Guru. Eventually each *manji* developed into a Sikh religious place/dera headed by a *masand* to look after its allocated area. Bhai Allah Yaar, Bhai Darbari,

Bhai Gangu Shah, Bhai Handal, Bhai Mahesha were some of the *masands* of the *manjis*.

Nirmalas (spotless/unsullied/pure/bright) and the *Gianis* (knowledgeable persons in sacred scriptures) constituted yet another early Sikh sant tradition. Popularly thought to have the blessing of Guru Gobind Singh (Tatla 2017: 370), it came to acquire prominent space within the Sikh Panth for quite a long period of time. It is commonly believed that Guru Gobind Singh deputed five of his followers to Haridwar (Hindu Pilgrimage on the bank of the river Ganga in Uttar Pradesh) to gain expertise in Sanskrit language and the Hindu sacred scriptures. Eventually, it became an integral part of the Nirmala sant tradition from the 18th century onwards, to visit Haridwar for learning Sanskrit and the study of Hindu sacred texts. Headquartered in Patiala (*Nirmal Panchayati Akhara*) since 1862, the Nirmala sant tradition established its deras all over Punjab. The *Giani* Sant tradition came to acquire a prominent place within the Sikh community after the Singh Sabha-led movement dislodged *Udasi* mahants (custodian of the Gurdwaras) from all major historic gurdwaras in the early 20th century (Tatla 2017: 372). The Giani tradition has its two main education training centers of sacred scriptures – Damdami Taksal at Mehta (Amritsar district) and Bhindran (Moga district – which trained *granthis* for Darbar Sahib and other Sikh historic religious places. As compared to Udasi and Nirmala sant traditions, the Giani sant tradition is thoroughly imbibed in the teaching of the Gurus and their egalitarian social order. It has three main lineages of Sikh sants: traditional scholars, sant-martyrs and sants of Damdami Taksal (for details see: Tatla 2017: 372).

Sikh diversity is further enriched by the emergence of a number of popular rural Sikh sant lineages in the early 20th century Punjab. This rural sant lineage grew independently of the above-mentioned three main lineages of the Giani Sant Sampradaya. These popular rural sants have raised their impressive deras/gurdwaras in a large number of villages all over Punjab, thereby adding to the kaleidoscope of the Sikh diversity. Almost every village in Punjab has one or more such deras/gurdwaras built around the personal spiritual aura of their sants or in their sacred memory. Some of the frequently visited rural Sikh sant deras are built in villages of Bhindran, Bhucho Mandi, Harkhowal, Harian Belan, Kaleran, Mastuana, Nanaksar, Rarevala, Ratwara, Reru

Sahib, and Takhtupura (Tatla 2017: 337). Many of these deras have allegiance to the Nanaksar tradition formed by Baba Nand Singh and his successor Baba Ishar Singh.

Baba Nand Singh was the disciple of Baba Harnam Singh, a Nirmala Sikh of the Bhucho Mandi village of the former princely state of Patiala (Nesbitt 2017: 381). The massive popularity of these rural sant lineages motivated some of them to visit the Sikh diaspora. Sant Teja Singh, Harbans Singh Domelivale, and Sant Amar Singh Barundivale are prominent amongst those who went abroad and catalysed the building of gurdwaras at Victoria, British Columbia, Edmonton (Canada), Stockton (USA), Putney, Birmingham, and Stratford in the UK (Tatla 2017: 378). Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha (Takhar 2017: 396), and Sachkhand Nanak Dham (Robinson 2017: 397-402), and Dera Vadbhag Singh gurdwara in Greenford and Coventry (UK) are some more diaspora based alternate Sikh religious traditions that further added to the Sikh diversity. Language, culture and religious traditions of certain migrant Sikh communities to the Deccan (South, Hyderabad) and the North-East India (Shillong and Guwahati), whose forefather participated in the military expeditions of Maharaja Ranjit Singh to help the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Ahom ruler Assam in 1820, further added to the richness of the Sikh diversity. Similarly, Maharashtrian Sikhs, progeny of those Sikhs who accompanied Guru Gobind Singh in his move to Nanded, also enriched the Sikh diversity (Banerjee 2009: 155-219; Banerjee 2010: 235-273; Banerjee 2012: 87-112; Banerjee 2013: 271-300; Banerjee 2020: 3-30; Singh 2014: 163-170; Singh 2018: 117-134; Singh 2017: 162-180; Singh 2020: 1-18).

Though many of the above-mentioned alternate Sikh sant lineages reposed faith in the sacred scriptures of the historic Sikh Gurus, some of them produced their own distinct, and vast, literature that was “either neglected or sidelined, as it was considered to be false, i.e. *‘kachi bani’*, and any dealings with them were pronounced to be punishable as per the mainstream Sikh code of conduct (Ahluwalia 2017: 334; Mann 2017: 333). Almost all the Sikh literature produced by the lineages of Udasi and Nirmala sants until 1849, argues Tatla (2017: 371), was soaked in the “Hindu religious discourse with profuse allusions to the Vedas and puranas, and with parallels drawn from the

discourses of sastras and Nyaya (one of the six schools of Hindu philosophy). Until recently the names of the heads of many of these alternate Sikh religious centers were not accompanied by the suffix ‘Singh’, and in one of these deras “the text of the *Guru Granth* that was kept at the central place of worship was quietly replaced by a late 19th-century printed text entitled *Lakshmi Tulsi Sagar Granth*” in the late 1990s (Mann 2017: 331-32).

Deras of the Nanaksar sampradaya have many distinctive features that further add to the least discussed phenomenon of Sikh diversity. Nanaksari sants don a white turban, scarf, and cloak in distinction to the blue, yellow or saffron color being used by their counterparts within the mainstream Sikh community. Many of their traditions, ceremonies, and sacred practices are reminiscent of Hindu ascetics: Pictures of sants sitting in meditating on a tiger or leopard skin, calling gurdwara *takhat* (throne), absence of the *Nishan Sahib* (pennant) in the gurdwara, no provision for the preparation of *langar* (communal meal) within the premises of the gurdwaras, and replacing *katba* (religious discourse) by the term *bachan* (Nesbitt 2017: 382-83). They also follow distinctive style of *kirtan* (musical rendering of sacred hymns/devotional singing), *Ardas* (prayer) and *amrit* ceremonies (Singh 1996: 157; Nesbitt 2017: 383). White turbans in a horizontal style of tying, restriction on female followers to conduct service in the gurdwara during *akband path*, preparation of *Karah prasad* (sacred sweet-meal) to be distributed after the completion of the *akband path* by an amritdhari male, and to strictly follow vegetarian diet are some of the distinctive features followed in the religious centers of Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha (Takhar 2017: 395) that explicitly distinguished them from the identity markers of the mainstream Sikh gurdwaras.

Apart from the above-mentioned varied alternate religious centers, there are some other deras like Radha Soamis (Juergensmeyer 2017: 386-393) and Sacha Sauda (Copeman and Ikegame 2012). Claimed to be non-denominational “social” or “spiritual” (not religious) movements, they are open to everyone (Sikhs, Hindus, and members of all castes irrespective of religious affiliation) alike. Though claimed to be non-sectarian, they too have been able to establish their identities distinct from the mainstream Sikh gurdwaras. Deras of Radha Soamis and Sacha Sauda have an altogether different *Maryada* and guru lineages.

Originally, Sacha Sauda is an offshoot of the Radha Soami dera at Beas, near Amritsar that in turn has its origin in the Radha Soami Sampradaya at Dyal Bagh in Agra. Some of these deras, particularly Radha Soamis, have branches in all districts of the state and as well as in other parts of the country. They are also very popular among Punjabi diasporas and have their branches in all countries with sizable Punjabi strength. The composition of these deras is along syncretic lines, with the majority of their followers coming from lower castes: scheduled castes/dalits, backward castes, and poor Jat Sikh peasantry. Ironically, though the majority of their followers are of lower castes, they are often headed by members of the upper castes (Muktsar 2007). Nirankaris and Namdharis have their own distinct centers/deras (Takhar 2014: 350-356; Webster 2017: 351-358; Singh 2017a: 359-367). The chief of the Nirankari deras often belong to the Sikh Khatri caste, and that of the Sacha Sauda and Radha Soamis come from Jat Sikhs of the Sidhu and Dhillon sub-castes respectively. In these deras, along with the sacred scriptures of *SGGS*, *bani* sourced from other sacred texts is also recognized, and recited. Idol worship and devotion towards a human guru are not an anathema in non-Sikh deras.

Meeta and M. Rajivlochan have described the phenomenon of above-mentioned deras as an alternate guru movement in Punjab' (Meeta and Rajivlochan 2007:1910). The alternate guru movement with its 'loose syncretistic practices' throws a formidable challenge to Sikh-Khalsa identity. Modernity and apostasy are its two other main adversaries (Swami and Sethi 2007; see also Singh 2007a). Modernity is considered to be corrupting young Sikhs who become lackadaisical in their observance of the Khalsa principles purported to have been advocated by the tenth Master. Another factor often overlooked in discussing formidable challenge to the Sikh-Khalsa identity, was the interference of the state in the affairs of the Sikh Panth in the twentieth century. Bhindranwala, who at one point of time was supported by the Congress, strove to assert the Sikh-Khalsa identity, in particular by taking up cudgels with a dissident sect, the Nirankaris, and by keeping it unalloyed by the influence of Hindu ceremonial and rituals influences, after he started following his independent course of action (Bal 2019: 1-12; Nayar 2012; Singh 2007b).

Another recent instance of the intermingling of religion and state

politics is the controversial case of dera Sacha Sauda and its chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh (Mahaprashasta 2017). These deras, like Radha Soami Beas, Sacha Sauda, Ballan etc., in fact, pose perhaps the most serious challenge to mainstream Sikhism (Swami and Sethi 2007). It is in this context that confrontation between the deras and mainstream Sikhism assumes a critical importance with far-reaching implications for the relationships between dalits and Jat Sikhs in Punjab and the diaspora, especially since many dalit Sikhs visit them and have established their own separate gurdwaras/deras. In contrast, the mainstream Sikh deras both draw a large majority of their followers from the Jat Sikh community and are invariably run by Jat Sikhs – it is a rarity for the head of a Sikh dera to be a non-Jat Sikh. Even if there would be one that would never be a Ramdassia/Ravidassia/Mazhabi Sikh. The participation of dalit Sikhs in Sikh deras is mainly confined to the narration of the sacred scriptures and the performing of Kirtan (for detail see: Ram 2004a: 5-7).

SIKH FAITH, DALITS & DERAS

The unfortunate reality of the prevalence of social discriminations based on the institution of caste within the Sikh community – which runs completely against the teachings of the founding Gurus – together with the rise of dalit consciousness, led to the emergence of deras of varied nomenclature as a “counter public” (Hardtmann 2009; Narayan 2011). These discriminatory social practices, the baggage of Sikhism’s erstwhile Hindu varna system backdrop, initially led the Bhatra and Ramgarhia communities, highly mobile and entrepreneurial, to establish their separate Sikh gurdwaras both within East Punjab as well as within other states of India and abroad too. Dalits followed in the footsteps of these two socially upward mobile non-untouchable lower caste communities in establishing their own gurdwaras/deras dedicated to spiritual mentors of their respective castes – mainly Bhagwan Valmiki and Guru Ravidass (Ram 2010: 271-90, Ram 2017a: 283-289). Dalits in Punjab constitute 31.94 percent of the total population of the state, which is largest in comparison to their counterparts in all other states in the country and much higher than their overall national share (16.6 percent). The share of the dalit population in Punjab is more distinct in its rural sector – 73.33 percent against 26.67 percent of the urban dalit

population (Ram 2017b: 45). In other words, dalits live mostly in villages.

Historically, villages in Punjab have been divided into two segments: *pinds* (mainstream villages inhabited by upper/dominant castes), and dalit settlements, contemptuously called *vebras*, *thathees* and *chamarblees* by the upper castes (Ram 2016a: 33). In addition to upper/dominant castes, various artisan/backward castes including Ramgarhias and Ahluwalias also live in pinds. But dalits – irrespective of whether they were Sikh or Hindu – were forced to reside exclusively in these separate dalit neighbourhoods, which were located on the Southwestern periphery of villages. Dalit neighbourhoods were mostly built on *mauroosis/shamlats* (village common land). Under the local customary law of *razat-namas*, dalit Sikhs were denied property rights on their segregated residential plots, which were historically owned by the agricultural castes. Under the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1900, dalit Sikhs were further marginalized. They were deprived of the right to buy agricultural land, as were the other non-agricultural castes. Until the adoption of the constitution of Independent India, dalit Sikhs along with their Hindu counterparts were not allowed to build pucca (concrete) houses in their segregated neighbourhoods. The situation is entirely different now. The segregated dalit neighbourhoods are now projected as contesting site of the rising dalit consciousness (Ram 2016a: 32-39).

Moreover, even for their *kucha* (mud) houses, dalits were supposed to do *Begar* – unpaid customary labour (Puri 2008: 320). *Begar* in the form of *siris* (attached labourers/sharecroppers) under the *sepidari* or *jajmani* (patron-client) system was common until recently. Surinder Jodhka in his empirical study published in 2002 reported that in 26 villages in the Malwa region, he found 21 dalits working as *siris* (Jodhka 2002: 1816). The women of the dalit Sikh *siris* had to clean the cowsheds and make *pathians* (dung cakes) for the hearth of their *jajmans* (landlords). In return, they were given a few chapattis, buttermilk and some fodder for their cattle, in what was effectively a form of barter. Although in present-day Punjab, such work is now performed on non-*jajmani* basis, there are still many dalit Sikhs in the Malwa region who work as *siris*. An empirical study of 26 villages in the Malwa region showed that dalit Sikhs were working as *siris* in 21 of them (Jodhka 2002: 1816). It is primarily in this region also that dalits have been struggling under the banner of the Zameen Prapati Sangharsh

Committee, an informal Left-wing organisation, since 2009 for their share of 33 percent of agricultural village common land reserved for them under the Punjab Village Common Lands (Regulation) Act (Moudgil 2019; Martin 2015: 41-42). Apart from the oppressive working conditions under the *siris* system and the denial of their due share in the village common agricultural land, dalit Sikhs were/are not allowed to cremate their dead on the main cremation grounds of the villages. This is instead done in their separate cremation ground. In some villages even the *shamlat* lands meant for the dalit cremation grounds have been grabbed by the upper castes (Puri 2008: 323-24). It is this backdrop of denial of their economic rights and the malady of social exclusion that pushed a large number of dalit Sikhs towards deras of varied nomenclatures in Punjab – a clear testimony of the widening but conflictual state of caste and religious diversity within the Sikh Panth. Ironically, this was a motivation once attributed to Jats in their flocking towards Sikhism.

RAVIDASSIA DERAS

Interchangeably known as temples, gurdwaras or simply deras, Ravidassia deras began emerging in Punjab in the early twentieth century. A vernacular field study completed in 2003 puts their number as around 100 (Qadian 2003). Since then, many more such deras have come into existence in Punjab (Ram 2008:1343). Ravidassia deras devised their own separate rituals, ceremonies, slogans, symbols, auspicious dates, customs, *ardas* (prayer), *keertan*, religious festivals and some other iconography. The entire array of religious and cultural activities in Ravidass deras revolves around the teachings and life of Sant Ravidass. Many Ravidassia deras have raised state-of-the-art buildings equipped with all modern utilities as a signature of their upward social mobility. In order to look different from both the Sikh gurdwaras and Hindu temples, Ravidassia deras designed their architecture by combining both of them. Idols of Guru Ravidass are installed and worshipped in the sanctum sanctorum of these deras. Guruship is also bestowed on the head priests of the Ravidassia deras, popularly known as *gaddi nashins* (heads of deras). Calendar posters printed in the image of Guru Ravidass decorate the walls of the premises of these deras. Many Ravidassia deras have replaced the

sacred scriptures of the mainstream Sikh religion with their own recently prepared sacred scriptures reverently called *Amritbani Satguru Ravidass Maharaj* (Arsh 2012).

The phenomenon of Ravidassia deras has taken the form of a new socio-cultural dalit movement. It is popularly known as the 'Ravidassia movement' or the 'Ravidassia deras dalit movement'. Led by the sants of Dera Ballan, this new dalit socio-cultural movement 'is silently sweeping the Punjab countryside offering a new hope to the untouchables, particularly the Chamars', argues V.T. Rajshekar, editor of the *Dalit Voice* (Rajshekar 2004: 3). It has generated a sense of confidence among some sections of dalit Sikhs and provided them with an opportunity to burnish their dalit identity. The movement of Ravidassia deras, argues Rajshekar, 'reflects the fast-changing socio-cultural scene of Punjab where the once powerful and revolutionary Sikh religion is failing to meet the needs of the oppressed who discovered a remedy to cure their wounded psyche in the Ballan experiment' (Rajshekar 2004: 3).

Dera Ballan has become a paragon of the Ravidass movement in northwest India. It has also been regulating the affairs of various Ravidass Deras overseas through its international trusts. Their central concern has been to present themselves as different from the Sikh gurdwaras, and to provide an alternative religious domain where their followers need not hide their identity and meekly suffer the onslaught of social exclusion. Their distinctiveness also lies in the fact that they neither take refuge in any of the established theologies, nor present themselves as emulating the dominant socio-cultural ethos of upper-caste society. On the contrary, they proudly differentiate themselves from the mainstream religious systems and also contest the long-imposed supremacy of those systems over dalits.

Another key factor that underlines the assertion of a separate identity by the Ravidassia deras is the distinct nomenclature preferred by its priests, distinguishing them from their counterparts in Sikh gurdwaras. The titles of the last names of the sants of Ravidassia deras are "Dass" (humble). It seems that they have inherited the tradition of suffixing the title "Dass" from their Guru Ravidass, whose first name is suffixed with Dass. The Sikh title "Singh" invariably

follows the first names of male Sikhs initiated in the Khalsa. Though Sants of Ravidass deras keep unshorn hair, a flowing beard and don a turban, like that of the Khalsa Sikhs, they still do consider themselves different from Sikhs. Some of the heads of Ravidassia deras were also clean-shaven. *Har* (Supreme Being), the insignia of Ravidass deras, known as *koumi nishan* (community symbol) of the Ravidassia Samaj, is yet another distinct identity marker that endows them with a separate identity.

The religious symbol of the Sikh gurdwaras is *khanda* (a two-edged sword over a quoit with two crossed *sabres* below the quoit). The insignia *har* is composed of a sun-like circle with an image of forty rays on its circular edge. The forty rays round the circle of the insignia signify the forty hymns of Guru Ravidass included in SGGS. Within the circle, there is another smaller circle within which *har* is inscribed in Gurmukhi script with the sign of a flame on the top of it. The flame represents the *nam* (word) that illuminates the entire world. The sign of the flame crosses over into the bigger circle. In between the larger and smaller circles is written a couplet: *Nam tere ki joti lagayi, bhaio ujiaro bhavan saglare* (Your name is the flame I light; it has illuminated the entire world). This inner circle couplet is taken from one of the forty hymns of Guru Ravidass. The insignia *har* represents the very being of Guru Ravidass and his teachings. The insignia *har* is chosen after the name of their Guru (*Ravi* [Sun] + *Dass* [Servant] = Servant of the Sun). The dalits, especially the Chamars of Punjab, proudly hoist flags with the image of *har* over their religious centers, atop vehicles during processions on the occasions of Guru Ravidass's birth anniversaries and other festivities, and raise slogans such as *Guru Ravidass Shakti Amar Rabe* – long live the grace of Guru Ravidass (Ram 2017c: 66-70).

The insignia *har* has become a distinct marker of a separate dalit identity. It is also being circulated in the form of souvenirs, stickers and wall calendars printed in the image of Guru Ravidass. The format of the *ardas* (a formal prayer recited at most Sikh rituals) performed in the Ravidass deras also differentiates them from the Sikhs gurdwaras. It is comprised of a *shloka* (couplet) and one of the forty hymns of Guru Ravidass. The *ardas* closes with the utterance *Bole So Nirbhay, Sri Guru Ravidass Maharaj Ki Jai* (Fearless is the one who utters: Victory to Shri Guru Ravidass), whereas in the Sikh religion the *ardas* concludes

with *Bole So Nihal, Sat Sri Akaal* (Blessed is the one who utters: True is the Immortal One). The reference to *nirbhay* (fearless) in the conclusion of the *ardas* of the Ravidassia deras has become a central motif of dalit consciousness within Punjab and diasporas as well (Takhar 2005: 112-113). The inclusion of this word, *nirbhay*, in the *ardas* of Ravidassia Deras is thus not only symptomatic of the historical oppression of the Dalits at the hands of the upper castes, but is also indicative of their determined willingness to confront it head-on.

The salutations in the Ravidassia deras have also been formulated selectively in order to project their separate identity. *Sat Sri Akaal* (True is the Immortal One) is the greeting of the Sikhs. Ravidass Deras adopted the greeting *Jai Gurudev* (victory to the divine Guru) or *Jai Guru Ravidass* (victory to Guru Ravidass) to which they reply *Dhan Guru Dev* (blessed the divine Guru). The forms of *ardas*, insignia and salutations adopted by the sants of Ravidassia deras have thus become distinct markers of their separate identity which not only differentiate them from the mainstream religious communities in Punjab but also proclaim them to be prominent dalit social and religious sites. Ravidassia deras, in fact, have become a testing ground for the cultivation of a separate dalit identity in the form of a 'separate religion based on the *bani* (sacred scriptures) of Guru Ravidass Ji' (Lum 2010). In other words, Ravidassia deras, as mentioned above, have evolved into a nursery of distinct symbols, icons, signifiers and narratives of a separate dalit identity that have helped greatly in shaping the contours of a separate Ravidassia Dharm, which was formally declared on January 30, 2010 (for details see: Ram 2016: 371-383).

The distinctiveness of Ravidassia deras lies in the fact that they proudly distinguish themselves from the mainstream religious systems and also contest the supremacy of the dominant castes over dalits. Such differences have increased polarization between the Sikh and dalit Sikhs within the state as well as those in diasporas itself. This has led to bitterness, provocations, confrontation and even violent clashes between Dalits and dominant castes (for details: Ram 2004b: 895-912; Ram 2009: 1-34; Ram 2016: 371-383). The emergence of dalit consciousness in Punjab and its manifestation in the form of separate dera-based religious identity have immense importance from the perspective of the interests of marginalized sections of Punjabi society

on the one hand, and the politicization of the sacred sphere in the state, on the other. It is in this specific context that the distinct identity of lowest castes assumes critical importance.

CLARIFICATIONS

Caste census category names are used for academic analysis. Any offence caused by such an exercise is deeply regretted. This article is a part of an on-going larger study, some parts of which were carried in the *Journal of Sikh and Punjab Studies* (GISS, New York), Vol. 31(1&2):97-167, Spring-Fall 2024; Vol. 30(1): 147-213, Spring 2023, and *Religions* (Basel, Switzerland), 15: 1188, 2024.

~~~

### REFERENCES

- Ahluwalia, Joginder Singh, “Chota Mel (Minas),” in: Knut A. Jacobsen, *et al* (eds.), *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Sikhism, Vol. I: History, Literature, Society, Beyond Punjab, Vol. I: History, Literature, Society, Beyond Punjab*, Leiden . Boston: Brill, 2017, pp. 334-340.
- Archer, John Clark, *The Sikh*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946.
- Arsh, S.R., (English transl), *Amritbani Satguru Ravidass Maharaj*, Seer Goverdhanpur, Varanasi (UP): Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Public Charitable Trust, 2012.
- Bal, Hartosh Sdigh, “How the Congress Propped up Bhindranwale,” *The Caravan*, June, 8, 2019 (<https://caravanmagazine.in/conflict/how-the-congress-propped-up-bhindranwale>, accessed: August 29, 2020).
- Banerjee, Himadri, “Sikh Dalits from North-East India: Experiences from Shillong and Guwahati,” *Sikh Formations*, Vol. 6. No. 1, June 2020, pp. 3-30.
- Banerjee, Himadri, “The Other Sikhs: Punjabi-Sikhs of Kolkata,” *Studies in History*, Vol. 28, Issue, 2013, pp. 271-300.
- Banerjee, Himadri, “The Other Sikhs: Sikhs of Manipur in Twentieth Century,” *Sikh Formations*, Vol. 8, No. 1, April 2012, pp. 87-112
- Banerjee, Himadri, “The Other Sikhs: Asomiya-Sikhs of Brahmaputra Valley,” *Indian Historical Review*, Vol. 37, No. 2, 2010, pp. 235-273.
- Banerjee, Himadri, “Home away from home: Punjabi-Sikhs in Eastern India,” in: Chetan Singh (ed.), *Twentieth Century Social Transformation in North-Western India*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2009, pp. 155-219.
- Bingley , A. H., *Sikhs*, Punjab: Department of Languages, 1899, rpt. 1970.

- Briggs, George Weston, *Gorakhnath and the Kanphata Yogis*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982.
- Burchett, Patton E., *A Genealogy of Devotion: Bhakti, Tantra, Yoga, and Sufism of North India*, New York: Columbia University, 2019.
- Chandra, Satish, *History of Medieval India*, New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2007 rpt. 2009.
- Chandra, Satish, *Medieval Indian: From Sultanat to the Mughals (Delhi Sultanat 1206-1526, Part—I)*, New Delhi: Har-Anand, 2011.
- Chaturvedi, Parashuram, *Uttari Bharat Ki Sant-parampara* (Sant Tradition of Northern India), Prayag: Leader Press, 1951.
- Copeman, Jacob, and Aya Ikegame (eds.), *The Guru in South Asia: New Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, London: Routledge, 2012.
- Dwivedi, Hazari Prasad, *Nath Sampradaya (Hindi)*, Allahabad: Hindustani Academy, 1996.
- Ghurye, G.S., *Indian Sadhus*, Bombay: The Popular Book Depot, 1953.
- Dwivedi, Hazari Prasad, *Nath Sampradaya (Hindi)*, Allahabad: Hindustani Academy, 1996.
- Grewal, J.S., *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Grewal, J. S., *Sikh Ideology, Polity and Social Order*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1996.
- Grewal, J.S. and B. N. Goswamy (1967), *The Mughals and the Jogis of Jakhbar: Some Madad-i-Ma'ash and Other Documents*, Shimla: Indian Institute of Advance Study, 1967.
- Hardtmann, Eva-Maria, *The Dalit Movement in India: Local Practices, Global Connections*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009
- Jodhka, Surinder S., "Caste and Untouchability in Rural Punjab," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 37, No. 19, 2002, pp. 1813-1823.
- Juergensmeyer, Mark, "Radhasoami" in: Knut A. Jacobsen, *et al* (eds.), *Brill's Encyclopedia of Sikhism, Vol. I: History, Literature, Society, Beyond Punjab*, Leiden . Boston: Brill, 2017, pp. 386-393.
- Kalyani, Mallik, *Siddha Siddhanta Paddhati and Other Works of the Natha Yogis*, Poona: Oriental, 1954.
- Lum, K. "The Ravidassia Community and Identity(ies) in Catalonia, Spain," *Sikh Formation: Religion, Culture, Theory*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2010, pp. 31-49.
- Mahaprashasta, Ajoy Ashirwad, "Mix of Religion, Welfare and Politics that is Ram Rahim Singh's Dera," *Business Standard*, August 31, 2017 ([https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/mix-of-religion-welfare-and-politics-that-is-ram-rahim-singh-s-dera-117083100144\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/mix-of-religion-welfare-and-politics-that-is-ram-rahim-singh-s-dera-117083100144_1.html), accessed: August 29, 2020).

- Mallinson, James, “Nath Sampradaya,” in: Knut A. Jacobsen, *et. al* (eds.), *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Hinduism, Vol. III: Society, Religious Specialists, Religious Traditions, Philosophy*, Leiden: Brill, 2011, pp. 1-20.
- Mann, Gurinder Singh, “Early Diversity,” in: Knut A. Jacobsen, *et al* (eds.), *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Sikhism, Vol. I: History, Literature, Society, Beyond Punjab*, Leiden . Boston: Brill, 2017, pp. 325-333.
- Marengo, Ethne K., *The Transformation of Sikh Society*, New Delhi: Heritage Publishers, 1976.
- Martin, Nicolas, “Rural Elites and the Limits of Scheduled Caste Assertiveness in Rural Malwa, Punjab,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol/ L, No. 52, December 26, 2015, pp. 37-44.
- McLeod, W.H., (trns & ed.), *Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984.
- Meeta and Rajivlochan, “Caste and Religion in Punjab: Case of the Bhanjarawala Phenomenon,” *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. XLII, No.21, May 26-June 1, 2007, pp. 1909-1913.
- Moliner, Christine, “Beyond Punjab: France,” in: Knut A. Jacobsen, *et al* (eds.), *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Sikhism, Vol. I: History, Literature, Society, Beyond Punjab*, Leiden . Boston: Brill, 2017, pp. 489-92.
- Moudgil, Manu, “A Dalit Movement for Land Rights is Sweeping Across Southern Punjab,” *Scroll.in*, August 11, 2019 (<https://scroll.in/article/933212/a-dalit-movement-for-land-rights-is-sweeping-across-southern-punjab>, accessed: August 29, 2020).
- Muktsar, Gurnam Singh, “Sikh Dharm Banam Dera Sacha Sauda aur Dalit Peshra Logg,” (Sikh Religion vs Dera Sacha Sauda and Marginalised Dalit People), *Himayati* (Delhi), June 2007, p. 1.
- Narayan, B. *The Making of the Dalit Public in India: Uttar Pradesh, 1950-Present*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Nayar, Kuldip, “Operation Blue Stasr: How Congress Invented a Saint,” *India Today*, July 8, 2012 (<https://www.indiatoday.in/india/north/story/jarnail-singh-bhindranwale-congress-sanjay-gandhi-zail-singh-108455-2012-07-08>, accessed: August 29, 2020).
- Nesbitt, Eleanor, “Nanaksar,” in: Knut A. Jacobsen, *et al* (eds.), *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Sikhism, Vol. I: History, Literature, Society, Beyond Punjab*, Leiden . Boston: Brill, 2017, pp. 380-385.
- Oberoi, H., *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Puri, Harish K. “Understanding Change in the Lives of Dalits of Punjab After 1947,” in: K. L. Tuteja and Sunita Pathania, eds., *Historical Diversities: Society, Politics and Culture* (Essays for Professor V.N. Datta), New Delhi: Manohar, 2008, pp. 315-338,

- Qadian, S.N.B., “Jagat Guru Ravidass Sampradaya Sant Te Sadhna Sthal” (Sants and Deras of World Guru Ravidass Panth), Jalandhar: Dera Sant Sarwan ass Ji Sachkhand Ballan, 2003.
- Rajshekar, V.T., “A Silent Socio-Cultural Revolution Sweeps Punjab: Ravidass Saints Gain Millions of Followers,” *Dalit Voice* (Banglore), No. 23, 2004, pp. 3-5.
- Ram, Ronki, “The Dalit Sikhs”, *Dalit International Newsletter*, Vol. 9, No. 3, October 2004a, 5-7.
- Ram, Ronki, “Untouchability in India with a Difference: Ad Dharm, Dalit Assertion, and Caste Conflicts in Punjab,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. XLIV, No. 6, November/December 2004b, pp. 895-912.
- Ram, Ronki, “Ravidass Deras and Social Protest: Making Sense of Dalit Consciousness in Punjab (India),” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 67, No. 4, 2008, pp. 1341-64.
- Ram, Ronki, “Ravidass, Dera Sachkhand Ballan and the Question of Dalit Identity in Punjab,” *Journal of Punjab Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2009, pp. 1-34.
- Ram, Ronki, “Burden of Tradition and Vision of Equality: Political Sociology of Jutt-Dalit Conflicts in Punjab,” in Birinder Pal Singh, ed., *Punjab Peasantry in Turmoil*, New Delhi: Manohar 2010, pp. 265-95.
- Ram, Ronki, “Religion, identity and empowerment: the making of Ravidassia Dharm (Dalit religion) in contemporary Punjab,” in: Knut A. Jacobsen (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary India*, London and New York: Routledge, 2016, pp. 371-83.
- Ram, Ronki, “Sacralising Dalit Peripheries: Ravidass Deas and Dalit Assertion in Punjab,” *Economic and Political weekly*, Vol. LI, No. 1, January 2, 2016a, pp.32-39.
- Ram, Ronki, “Dalits,” in: Knut A. Jacobsen, *et al* (eds.), *Brill's Encyclopedia of Sikhism, Vol. I: History, Literature, Society, Beyond Punjab*, Leiden . Boston: Brill, 2017a, pp. 283-289.
- Ram, Ronki, “Castes within Caste: Dilemmas of a Cohesive Dalit Movement in Contemporary East Punjab,” *Punjab University Research Journal (Arts)*, Vol. XLIV, No. 2, July-December 2017b, pp. 45-62.
- Ram, Ronki, “The Genealogy of a Dalit Faith: The Ravidassia Dharm and Caste Conflicts in Contemporary Punjab,” *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, Vol. 51, No. 1, February 2017c, pp. 52-78.
- Robinson, Catherine, “Sachkhand Nanak Dham,” in: Knut A. Jacobsen, *et al* (eds.), *Brill's Encyclopedia of Sikhism, Vol. I: History, Literature, Society, Beyond Punjab*, Leiden . Boston: Brill, 2017, pp. 397-402.
- Rose, H. A., *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province, Vol. 1*, Delhi: Low Price, 1914 rpt. 2008.
- Simon, Charlene, “Dera Sant Sarwan Dass of Ballan: Invention of

- New Form of Community Assertion Experienced and Perceived as an Individual Guest,” *Sikh Formations*, Vol. 6, No. 1, June 2010, pp. 51-62.
- Singh, Birinder Pal, “Sikhs of the Hyderabad Deccan,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLIX, No. 30, July 26, 2014, pp. 163-170.
  - Singh, Birinder Pal, “Mazhabi Skhs of Shillong and Guwahati (India),” *Sikh Formations: Religion, Culture, Theory*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 2017, pp. 162-180.
  - Singh, Birinder Pal, “Sikhs of Nagaon in Assam (India): Dilemmas of Language and Religion,” *Sikh Formations*, Vol. 14, Issue 2, 2018, pp. 117-134.
  - Singh, Birinder Pal, “Axomiya Sikhs of Nagaon (India): Issues of Identity,” *Asian Ethnicity*, 2020, pp. 1-18 (<https://doi.org/10.1080/14631369.2020.1725422>).
  - Singh, Joginder, :Namdhari,” in: Knut A. Jacobsen, *et al* (eds.), *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Sikhism, Vol. I: History, Literature, Society, Beyond Punjab*, Leiden . Boston: Brill, 2017a, pp. 359-367.
  - Singh, Khushwant, “Punjab May Go the Bihar Way,” *The Tribune* (Chandigarh), Saturday Extra, 2 June 2007b.
  - Singh, Mohan, *Gorakhnath and Medieval Hindu Mysticism*, Lahore: Mercantile, 1937.
  - Singh, Narinderpal, “Shiromani Committee and Caste,” *Desb Sewak*, (Chandigarh Punjabi Daily), Sunday Magazine, July 1, 2007a.
  - Singh, R. N., *Encyclopedia of Sikh Heritage—Vol. 1*, New Delhi: Commonwealth, 2002.
  - Swami, Praveen and Aman Sethi, “Politics, Religion, and Resistance: Unravelling the Clerical Crusade against Heresy, and the Politics of the Sacha Sauda Controversy,” *The Hindu* (Delhi), 4 June 2007.
  - Takhar, Opinderjit Kaur, *Sikh Identity: An Exploration of Groups Among Sikhs*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005.
  - Takhar, Opinderjit Kaur, “Sikh Sects,” in: Pashaura Singh and Louis E. Fenech (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Sikh Studies*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 350-356.
  - Takhar, Opinderjit Kaur, “Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha,” in: Knut A. Jacobsen, *et al* (eds.), *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Sikhism, Vol. I: History, Literature, Society, Beyond Punjab*, Leiden. Boston: Brill, 2017, pp. 394-396.
  - Tatla, Darshan Singh, “19<sup>th</sup> -21<sup>st</sup> Century Sants,” in Knut A. Jacobsen, *et al* (eds.), *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Sikhism, Vol. I: History, Literature, Society, Beyond Punjab*, Leiden . Boston: Brill, 2017, pp. 368-379.
  - Webster, John C.B., “Nirankari,” ,” in: Knut A. Jacobsen, *et al* (eds.), *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Sikhism, Vol. I: History, Literature, Society, Beyond Punjab*, Leiden . Boston: Brill, 2017, pp. 351-358.

## SIKH SOLDIERING: THE LEGACY MUST NOT FADE AWAY

LT GEN R.S. SUJLANA\*

---

### THE MAKING OF THE SIKH SOLDIER

The legacy of the Sikh Soldier has fructified over Five Centuries of sacrifices and resilience, today it is synonymous with warfare and gallantry. Ironically, a religion which advocated peaceful co-existence, was forced to metamorphose to safe guard their religion and protect the weak against cruelty and forced religious conversions with the sword. Guru Arjan, the Fifth Guru, advocated *Halemi Raj* and emphasised peace, 'the gracious Lord's ordinance promulgated; none to another shall cause hurt. All mankind now in peace shall abide – gentle shall the governance be.'<sup>1</sup> Such was the impact of the teachings of the Gurus, that large segments of the population came forward to adopt the new religion. This trend, however was unacceptable to other religious heads; they spread falsehoods against the Guru. Jahangir, the Mughal emperor needed no convincing, he sent for Guru Arjan and tried to impose his authority with much cruelty, but Guru Sahib stood his ground; his firm resolve, fearlessness, a never say die spirit, led to his uncalled-for martyrdom. Utter disdain spread among the Sikhs for the cruelty inflicted upon their Guru, a flame was ignited, the quietest Sikh religion started on the path of militarism, 'in the greater garden some ploughshares were beaten into swords and pruning hooks becoming spears. A fellowship of reconciliation was assuming martial form.'<sup>2</sup>

The visionary Guru Arjan had foreseen growing enmity and intend of the Mughals and had taken the first step to recruit, train and arm 500 volunteers purely for the defence of Harmandir Sahib. Post his

---

\* Ex-President, Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh; Email: <sujlanaraj51@gmail.com>

martyrdom, the environment changed rapidly, towards adversity with the Mughals targeting the Sikhs. Gur Har Gobind, the Sixth Guru had decided not to wear the *Seli* and instead sit on the throne with two swords, he adopted the concept of *Miri-Piri* and symbolically he put, 'arms into the hand of a community which his predecessors had already transformed from an embryonic church into an embryonic state.'<sup>3</sup> This led the Sikhs on a new path, defence of their religion would be of prime importance, if necessary, by the sword. Pragmatic changes came about; the Akal Takht developed into a well-appointed armory to house arms and horses. It graduated to become a training hub for the Sikh soldier, here 'martial activities went along with spiritual instruction, the Guru oversaw wrestling matches, duels, combat shooting with arms and matchlocks,'<sup>4</sup> on a daily basis. The Sikhs learnt their first lesson of the sword under the astute leadership of Guru Har Gobind, the battles fought, though on a small-scale, laid the foundation and set a pattern of warfare for the Sikhs for the heady times ahead, the Sword was unsheathed!

### THE SECOND MARTYRDOM

The situation may have reverted to peaceful living but Aurangzeb did not relent, forced conversions to the Muslim faith increased manifold, temples and Gurudwaras were demolished. Guru Tegh Bahadur was wrongly confined and severe cruelty inflicted, but Guru Sahib stood tall and firm, 'I will never abandon my faith... the threat of death possesses no terror for me, one day assuredly I will leave this perishable body. For death I am prepared, and I cheerfully accept it.'<sup>5</sup> This led to the beheading of Guru Tegh Bahadur, a unique event in the annals of mankind and of great politico-religious importance, 'No one has ever done such a deed like the self-sacrifice of Guru Tegh Bahadur.'<sup>6</sup> The display of cruelty was unheard of, the second martyrdom of a true sage saw the Sikhs rise with indignation, each one was willing to sacrifice for the faith. The violent death of Guru Tegh Bahadur etched an indelible impression on the young Gobind Rai, who vowed to change matters and cast the Sikhs in a different mold. The stage was set for the birth of the Khalsa Panth and building of a Sikh Military Theocracy; pre and post Khalsa battles followed. The Sikh soldier steeled by Guru Gobind Singh, true to *Sawa Lakh se Ek Laraun* proved his motivation in all the battles, in the defence of Anandgarh, and later in the battles of Chamkaur and Mukhtsar.

### FROM THE DEFENSIVE TO THE OFFENSIVE WARFARE

With the arrival of Banda Bahadur on the scene, the Sikh soldiery was further revolutionised, from the mode of mostly defensive actions, they were led onto the path of offensive operations. They repeatedly crushed the large professional army of the Mughals; the myth of Mughal invincibility was shattered. Through the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, they developed their own brand of guerilla tactics, the Misls followed, the famed irregular Sikh cavalry (*Ghorchurras*) came to the fore, finally defeating Ahmed Shah Abdali. In the first four decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century led by Maharaja Ranjit Singh the Sikhs blossomed into versatile soldiers as part of a modern Khalsa Army. Of great significance was the realisation of the Maharaja that in addition to the cavalry, Infantry and Artillery would be extremely important in future warfare. Accordingly, special attention was given to their growth; they went on to prove their worth.

### THE WORTHY SIKH SOLDIER

The conduct of the Sikh soldier during the Anglo-Sikh Wars, despite being poorly led and a treacherous leadership sold out to the British, was proof enough of the versatility of the Sikh soldier; his gallantry, resoluteness, perseverance, inbuilt resilience to stand up to heavy odds, willing sacrifice and such like qualities was at display, 'the splendid bravery and fervid patriotism displayed by the Sikhs throughout the Punjab Wars will always be remembered by the British with admiration and respect.'<sup>7</sup> The British acknowledged that they met the most martial and best organised army in India, they credited Sikh Infantry, artillery and cavalry and their valorous men, when compared to every other opposition they had faced in India. Of the Sikh infantry spirit, a young British officer wrote, 'such a mass of men I have never set eyes on, and as plucky as lions; they ran right on the bayonets of the 24th (regiment), and struck their assailants where they were transfixed,'<sup>8</sup> another observation stated, 'Seikhs caught hold of the bayonets of their assailants with their left hands and dealt furious blows with the right... the circumstances alone will suffice to demonstrate the rare species of courage possessed by these men.'<sup>9</sup> The Sikh gunners (artillery) worshipped their guns, their tour of duty got over only in death. When their ammunition was over, they defended the guns with the Talwar till their last breath, 'refusing to abandon their guns, the gunners fell in heaps around them as did their infantry

support.<sup>10</sup> The regular and the irregular (*Ghorchurras*) cavalry charge was always as if this was the last gallop... they were known to pass through the enemy like a knife through butter, strike the enemy guns, spike some and drag off a couple; one such charge is described thus, '...holding high their great yellow banners ... the red breasted Sikhs, black-bearded and turbaned, strode through the British gap before wheeling to the right and left for a massed flank attack.'<sup>11</sup>

The Sikh soldier battled for truth and righteousness; they never forgot their religious inheritance which inspired their martial tradition, even in adversity they adhered to the teachings of their Gurus. No prisoner was ever maltreated rather they were cared for, 'two lancers who were taken prisoner...were sent back with Sher Singh's compliments. They seemed sorry to come back as they were treated like princes... they were sent away with Rs Ten each in his pocket.'<sup>12</sup> This despite the open cruelty by the British who showed, 'little quarter, I am ashamed to say was given, and even those we managed to save from the vengeance of our men, were, I fear killed afterwards.'<sup>13</sup> Through their battling years, they fought their hearts out, tooth and nail and made sacrifices unhesitatingly, remained in true '*Chardhi Kala*', their morale was unshakeable their heroism inbuilt. The concept of Dharam Yudh or Just War stood out differently in the Sikh tradition; while the wars fought world-wide were fought over territory, riches or women; the Sikhs fought to defend human rights, ameliorate the sufferings of all, and helped to preserve other religious traditions.

It was for all these qualities that the British decided to recruit the Sikhs in their army in large numbers, it achieved their larger aim of keeping the Sikhs away from Punjab and keeping them busy elsewhere. The British benefitted from their loyalty and fighting skills, the Sikhs went on to earn repute in the Afghan Wars in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). Of the many memorable battles, the defensive battle at Saragarhi stands incomparable in resilience and taking a stand till 'Last man Last Round'. The World Wars saw them clash with the more experienced and better equipped armies of the West and bested them in most battles and earned their place on a pedestal in the pantheon of soldiers world-wide. Post 1947, the Sikh Soldier as part of the Indian Army has continued to prove his worth in every sphere, he has served with tremendous zeal and unquestionable fidelity in all wars, internal strife and insurgencies and as part of United nation Peace Keeping.

### **THE CURRENT SCENARIO**

The Sikh Regiment continued to grow over the years (today it boasts of twenty-three regular battalions, three Rashtriya Rifle Battalions, three Territorial Army Battalions) besides Sikh soldiers have also been recruited in other arms (Armoured Corps, Artillery, Engineers and Signals) and services (ASC, Ordnance, Medical etc.), Navy and the Air Force. However, over the last few years, the number of recruits has dropped gradually, creating a shortage of recruits, particularly in the Sikh Regiment which has an All-Sikh (other than Mazhabi and Ram Dasia) troops profile. Recruitment of Sikhs to the Armed Forces further worsened, post the launch of the Agniveer scheme by the Central Government replacing the long well functional regular recruitment pattern of other ranks. The Agniveer Scheme envisaged retention of only 25% of those recruited after serving for four years, and release of the balance 75 %, with assurance for a second employment for those released in various central and state police forces and other government establishments, besides payment of a bulk sum amount to each individual not retained.

However, despite the lack of employment opportunities in Punjab and realising the consequences to the community, a negative mindset was created in the environment about joining the Armed Forces as an Agniveer. This worsened the already existing shortage of Sikh recruits and showed up distinctly in the Sikh Regiment. A tradition which needed to be cherished and continued, now was heading towards a crisis situation. To add, is a very concerning shortage of suitable young men to join the Armed Forces, both educationally and physically. Reasons are manifold and well known; the education system in the rural areas (the main source of recruits) leaves much to be desired in the State, coupled with the scourge of wide spread usage of drugs and the lure of going abroad for greener pastures. If individuals from a particular region do not join the Agniveer Scheme it would only go to their disadvantage. A viable and traditional option for the youth will be lost, and will further increase unemployment in the state.

### **THE WAY AHEAD**

The success or failure of the Agniveer scheme will only be known after the release of 75 % of a batch, how they will be absorbed for a second career and society accepts them. A conclusion cannot be made post release of the first batch only but at least 4-5 batches spread over

minimum five years. The government has taken a major decision and till date shown no sign of making changes suggested, specially of retaining a larger %, ideally 75%. This change in recruitment pattern directly affects the backbone of fighting troops and should have been implemented after proper and successful validation by a pilot project spread over minimum six years and covering all uniformed services. It is most desirous that the Central government urgently have a very deliberate relook at the scheme, there cannot and must not be discrimination of terms of service within the same organisation, release of such a large population of trained soldiers is a waste of public money, the society at large must be assured, the unstated reason of reducing the pension bill of the armed forces is most ridiculous, the Nation's security cannot be weighed in financial terms. Meanwhile the Sikh community has to rise to address the situation. All serving ranks and veterans of the Sikh Regiment have already taken the initiative to leave no stone unturned to ensure that recruitment picks up and the fall short is made up at the earliest. The Sikh community must realise, that it is the bounden duty of all stake holders particularly those in governance specially at district and village levels and leading religious bodies, come forward and help to overcome the crisis and convince the youth to join the forces. The tradition of soldiering cannot be allowed to fade away.

~ ~ ~

### REFERENCES

1. Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p.74, translation by S. Gurbachan Singh Talib.
2. Clark Archer John, The Sikhs in Relation to Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Ahmadiyas, p.171.
3. Toynbee Aj, A Study of History, V, p.665.
4. Cunninham JD, A history of the Sikhs, edited by HLO Garret p.109.
5. McAuliffe MA, The Sikh Religion, 4, p.386.
6. Trilochan Singh, Guru Tegh Bahadur, p.321.
7. Payne CH, A Short History of the Sikhs, p.208.
8. Sandford, leaves from the Journal of A subaltern.
9. Thackwell EJ, Narrative of the Second Sikh War, p.213.
10. Amarinder Singh, The Last Sunset, p.90.
11. George Bruce, George, Six battles for India, p.229.
12. Khushwant Singh, History of the Sikhs, 2, p.80.
13. Sandford, Leaves from the Journal of Subaltern.

## WHO WAS AFRAID OF MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH?

ZUBAIR AHMAD

---

Who was afraid of Maharaja Ranjit Singh? The British — the colonizers, usurpers, and occupying power in India. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was the last major ruler in the region to stand in the way of their ambition to establish control over the whole of India. The area under British rule and the territory under Maharaja Ranjit Singh's authority stood in direct geopolitical opposition. Aamir Riaz meticulously traces the various conspiracies that, in his account, were devised throughout the Maharaja's reign.

His first argument is that it was the Lahore Darbar, not the Sikh Darbar, and he insists strongly on this distinction. Sikhs, he argues, should call it the Lahore Darbar because this designation reinforces the broader historical significance of Sikh rule. Muslims, on the other hand, might insist that it was a Sikh kingdom. Yet here an author who is Muslim by birth argues for a different understanding.

There is a painting in the Sikh Gallery, now perhaps deserving of the name Punjab Gallery, at the Lahore Fort. It depicts the full court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. People from different backgrounds are gathered there. A boy stands with his goat, and even a little mud is visible, apparently because of the rain. There is no elaborate decorum, pomp, or ceremonial display. It is, a truly people's Lahore Darbar.

### A SYNCRETIC KINGDOM

Although Maharaja Ranjit Singh was a devoted Sikh, he did not govern as a religious ruler. Muslims, Hindus, and Europeans, including French officers, served in his court, some in senior positions. In many

---

\* Zubair Ahmad is a Lahore born Punjabi author. He is a short story writer, poet and critic; E-mail: <*kitab.trinjan@gmail.com*>

areas under the Lahore Darbar, Muslims constituted the majority of the population. Yet, according to the author, British writers who documented the region after approximately fifty years of rule could not record a single instance of conflict between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs.

The author writes: "The Maharaja took care of gurdwaras, mosques, temples, and khanqahs, issuing grants for their upkeep. He distributed offerings and alms during times of war and disease. Under the guise of criticizing superstition, the British writers, modernists and rationalists in reality, made a clever attempt to turn people's minds against Ranjit Singh by portraying him as an opponent of pirs and faqirs." (p. 20)

Politically, Maharaja Ranjit Singh was a true heir to the teachings of Baba Guru Nanak, while in his personal life he was like all kings.

While celebrating the syncretic character of the Maharaja's rule, Aamir Riaz argues that many of the divisions between Muslims and Sikhs, as well as between Sikhs and Pathans, were encouraged or manufactured by British colonialists. The chapter seeks to expose the conspiracies that, according to the author, were designed and developed by British imperialism. He provides an extensive account of the Lahore Darbar's political, military, and economic organisation, as well as its important trade routes, including those connected to Lahari Bandar.

The British, looking beyond Punjab, wanted to establish control over Sindh and the Frontier. They entered into an agreement with Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1809, commonly known as the Treaty of Sultej. However, according to the author's argument, the British did not honour the spirit of the agreement and continued to work against the Maharaja. Ludhiana and Patiala became important centres of opposition to his authority.

### **PUNJAB AND THE IDEA OF A NATION-STATE**

Under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Punjab possessed many of the features that could have supported the development of a nation-state, comparable in some respects to France and Germany. It had a long historical tradition, a defined territory, a distinctive culture, and its own language.

However, the author argues: "The British also moved our lands

towards becoming a nation-state, but they established a colonial system in which the people were treated as subjects rather than citizens.” (p. 12). The British continued their efforts to undermine the Maharaja despite their agreements with him, and these efforts, according to the author, had been underway since 1831. During the final years of Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s life, surveillance was so extensive that the British reportedly knew which medicines he was taking and what treatment he was receiving. The Maharaja is said to have remarked: “It will all turn red.” The reference, as the author understands it, is to the red coats worn by British soldiers.

### **FROM THE ANNEXATION OF PUNJAB TO PARTITION**

The question remains: if the people of Punjab were able to live together under Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s rule for approximately fifty years, what happened in 1947? The answer, in Aamir Riaz’s interpretation, lies in the annexation of Punjab by the British in 1849 and their subsequent rule until 1947.

The author argues that the communal hatred and sectarian divisions that erupted during Partition were not characteristic of the Maharaja’s reign, but developed and intensified during the ninety-eight years of British rule. He attributes these divisions to the colonial policy of divide and rule, which helped create and reinforce identities based on caste, class, and religion.

We forgot the harmony and syncretism taught by Baba Farid, Baba Guru Nanak, and the many pirs, faqirs, and Gurus of Punjab.

Aamir Riaz has rightly begun his book with Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The title, “The Story of a Kingdom That Was Deliberately Erased from Memory,” expresses the central argument of the work: that the history of the Lahore Darbar and its political, cultural, and social legacy deserves to be reconsidered beyond the narrow boundaries of religious historiography.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s kingdom represents, for the author, one of the last significant expressions of Sanjha Punjab—a shared Punjab whose history and memory transcend religious divisions.

(To be continued)

# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB IN THE QUEST FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

DR PARNEET KAUR\*

---

## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the concept of social justice as articulated in the Guru Granth Sahib, the foundational text of Sikhism. Rooted in the teachings of the Sikh Gurus, the scripture offers profound insights into the principles of equality, human dignity, and the moral imperatives for societal justice. The Guru Granth Sahib denounces social hierarchies and discrimination based on caste, gender, and religion, advocating for a vision of society where all individuals are treated with respect and fairness. Key hymns underscore the importance of selfless service (*seva*) and community welfare, emphasizing that true spirituality manifests through actions that uplift the marginalized. Through a critical analysis of selected verses, this study reveals how the Guru Granth Sahib not only critiques social injustices but also provides practical guidance for creating a just society. It highlights the role of collective responsibility in addressing societal issues, encouraging followers to engage actively in the pursuit of justice. The paper also contextualizes these teachings within contemporary social justice movements, illustrating their enduring relevance in addressing systemic inequalities. Ultimately, this exploration of the Guru Granth Sahib positions it as a powerful source of inspiration for social justice advocates, offering a spiritual framework that aligns with modern ethical considerations. By fostering a deeper understanding of these teachings, the study aims to encourage a dialogue about the intersections of

---

\* Assistant Professor, Department of History, SGGSWU, Fatehgarh Sahib (Punjab).

spirituality and social activism in the quest for a more equitable world.

## INTRODUCTION

Sikhism emerged in the 15th century, a time of significant social stratification and religious intolerance in India. The Sri Guru Granth Sahib, composed by various Sikh Gurus and other saints, provides profound insights into social justice, emphasized the need for social reforms and equality, advocating for equality and human rights. Sri Guru Granth Sahib stresses the importance of removing discriminatory barriers based on caste, class, and gender, and has condemned the caste system and the demeaning position of women.

## WHAT IS SOCIAL JUSTICE?

Social justice refers to the fair distribution of resources, opportunities, within a society. Social justice can be interpreted in various ways, depending on a person's political introduction, religious background, and political and social philosophies. Social justice is all about equal justice throughout society, not just in the courts. This concept demands that everyone, from the poorest person on the margins of society to the wealthiest, deserves justice, human rights, freedom, and equal opportunities. Justice is represented by certain words in Sri Guru Granth such as Niyaye, Niyam, Tapavas, Adal, Sac, and Dharma. The Sikh Gurus also advocated for righteousness and urged people to incorporate it into their lives. They emphasized the significance of practicing truth and living truthfully in this manner. The actions of the Sikh Gurus and their contemporary Bhagats were based on truth. Their message was based on Truth. The Sikh Gurus advocated for a society where everyone was treated equally. They criticized and rejected social evils, superstitions, and inequalities in the social, economic, religious, and political realms due to this reason. Their objective was to share the message of dharma, hukam, fraternity, justice, equality, and freedom with the world's population.

## CORE TEACHINGS ON SOCIAL JUSTICE OF SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB *EQUALITY OF ALL HUMANS:*

**Concept of *Ik Onkar*:** The fundamental doctrine of Sikhism, "Ik Onkar" (One God), establishes that all humans are equal,

transcending caste, creed, and gender. Everyone in the world is equal. All beings and creatures of God; He belongs to all. (Guru Granth Sahib 425). In order to eliminate discrimination and establish social justice. Equality is the pillar of social justice. Guru Nanak dev immediately after his appearance, coming out of river Vein, uttered these words 'Nâ koî Hindu Nâ koî Muslim'. These words indicate that all are equal and the children of One God. There are some verses also mentioned in Sri Guru Granth Sâhib which shows the equality of humanity. For example:

ਏਕੋ ਪਵਣੁ ਮਾਟੀ ਸਭ ਏਕਾ ਸਭ ਏਕਾ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਬਾਈਆ ॥  
 ਸਭ ਇਕਾ ਜੋਤਿ ਵਰਤੈ ਭਿਨਿ ਭਿਨਿ ਨ ਰਲਈ ਕਿਸੈ ਦੀ ਰਲਈਆ ॥  
 ਗੁਰਪਰਸਾਦੀ ਇਕੁ ਨਦਰੀ ਆਇਆ ਹਉ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਵਿਟਹੁ ਵਤਾਇਆ ਜੀਉ ॥੩॥

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 96

From the same air, the same clay all creation comes forth; in all shines the same Light. With one light yet are all distinct-no way had one with the other confounded. By the preceptor's grace are all beheld as one essence to such holy preceptor may I be a sacrifice! Nanak servant of God, to the ambrosial word gives utterance; that to the hearts of the Master's disciples is pleasing. Such teaching from the holy preceptor comes- the perfectly-endowed, all cherishing. Sikhism teaches equality of all people of different races, religions, or sex. Sikhism teaches the full equality of men and women. Women can participate in any religious function, perform any Sikh ceremony, or lead the congregation in prayer.

### ***REJECTION OF CASTE SYSTEM***

Indian society's caste system is a distinctive feature that is based on Varna System. Initially, the Hindu community was divided into four groups. Varna's namely Brahmans, Kashatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudars. The Hindu hierarchy had the Sudras as the lowest rank. At a later time, these Varnas were transformed into castes. Sudars in certain areas have been deemed untouchable and have been the targets of social injustice from centuries. The Granth denounces caste-based discrimination, advocating for a society where individuals are judged by their actions rather than their birth. Guru Granth Sahib preaches denounces caste system. The Holy Scripture states that acting arrogantly due to one's caste is a deed that is worthless and witless.

Everyone has equal worth:

ਜਾਤਿ ਕਾ ਗਰਬੁ ਨ ਕਰੀਅਹੁ ਕੋਈ॥  
 ਬ੍ਰਹਮਬਿੰਦੇ ਸੋ ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣੁ ਹੋਈ॥੧॥  
 ਜਾਤਿਕਾ ਗਰਬੁ ਨ ਕਰਿ ਮੂਰਖੁ ਗਵਾਰਾ॥  
 ਇਸੁ ਗਰਬੁ ਤੇ ਚਲਹਿ ਬਹੁਤੁ ਵਿਕਾਰਾ॥੮॥ਰਹਾਉ॥  
 ਚਾਰੇ ਵਰਨ ਆਖੈ ਸਭੁ ਕੋਈ॥ ਬ੍ਰਹਮਬਿੰਦੁ ਤੇ ਸਭ ਓਪਤਿ ਹੋਈ॥  
 ਮਾਟੀ ਏਕੁ ਸਗਲ ਸਿੰਸਾਰਾ॥ ਬਹੁ ਬਿਧਿਭਾਂਡੇ ਘੜੈ ਕੁਮਾਰਾ॥

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib, pp. 1127-28

All are “Bhais” as Guru ji called, “My fellow brothers” whether kings or slaves, the rich or the poor. No caste and creed counts in the court of the Lord. Gurbani states that “No one should be proud of one’s social class and status. He alone is a Brahmin, who knows God. Do not be proud of your social class and status, you ignorant fool! So much sin and corruption comes from this pride.” Sri Guru Granth Sahib preaches against discrimination or privileges on the bases of caste, as Bani states, “If you are indeed a Brahmin, born of a Brahmin mother, then why didn’t you come by some other way? So in the court of God, one will not be treated on the basis of one’s caste as all human being will be treated as equal, “In the next world caste and power count not; the moral has to deal with the new beings. Guru Nanak Dev ji emphasized on the equality of all men as he states:

ਫਕਤ ਜਾਤੀ ਫਕਤੁ ਨਾਉ ਸਭਨਾ ਜੀਆ ਇਕ ਛਾਉ॥

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p.83)

Those who engage in false and immoral deeds and fail to follow the true path of God are advocating against by Sri Guru Granth Sahib’s teachings, even if they belong to an upper caste, and are not given any regard or status.

ਖੋਟੇ ਜਾਤਿ ਨ ਪਤਿ ਹੈ ਖੋਟਿ ਨਾ ਸੀਝਸ ਕੋਇ॥

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 23

Sikh Gurus have demonstrated the importance of equality through the ‘*Langar Pratha*’, which involves sitting in line (*Pangat*) without discrimination and being served meals prepared in a communal kitchen. Guru Gobind Singh strengthened the notion of equality through the ceremony of baptism in which everyone has to drink from a common bowl.

***GENDER EQUALITY & EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN:***

The image of society is reflected in the way women are treated in society. In patriarchal societies, women are the most oppressed and victimized human beings. Women struggle to achieve justice, equality, and peace worldwide. The scripture acknowledges women's rights to education, property, and participation in religious practices. Therefore in Sikhism female is conceived as the half of man. She has equal place with man in Sikhism. She can worship of Almighty. Guru Nanak, dared to champion her cause, rescue her from the pitiable conditions and put her equal with man. He said that even great men are born of woman. "Why call her bad, from whom are born the kings"

ਭੰਡਿ ਜੰਮੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਨਿੰਮੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਮੰਗਣੁ ਵੀਆਹੁ ॥  
 ਭੰਡਹੁ ਹੋਵੈ ਦੋਸਤੀ ਭੰਡਹੁ ਚਲੈ ਰਾਹੁ ॥  
 ਭੰਡੁ ਮੁਆ ਭੰਡੁ ਭਾਲੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਹੋਵੈ ਬੰਧਾਨੁ ॥  
 ਸੋ ਕਿਉ ਮੰਦਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਜੰਮਹਿ ਰਾਜਾਨ ॥

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 473

From woman, man is born; within woman, man is conceived; to woman. He is engaged and married. Woman becomes his friend; through woman, The future generations come, when his woman dies, he seeks another Woman; to woman he is bound. So why call her bad? From her kings are Born. From woman, woman is born; without woman; there would be not at all. Guru Nanak Dev strongly condemns the rape and torture that occurred against women by Babar, the Mughal invader.

ਏਤੀ ਮਾਰ ਪਈ ਕਰਲਾਣੇ ਤੈਂ ਕੀ ਦਰਦੁ ਨ ਆਇਆ॥

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 360

According to Guru Nanak Dev among all the women and the men, His Light is shining:

ਨਾਰੀ ਪੁਰਖ ਸਬਾਈ ਲੋਇ

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 223

Guru Amardas condemned the practice of widow-burning (Sati): they are not Satīs who born themselves with the dead bodies of their husbands. Those are real Satīs who die of the mere shock of separation from their Husbands. Guru Hargobind called woman "the conscience of man". Bhai Gurdas, also affirmed, "Woman is man's other half,

and as such, helps him in attaining to salvation”.

### **SOCIAL SERVICE**

Social service (*seva*) for the betterment of an individual or community is an fundamental part of Sikhism. Love, compassion, sacrifice etc. are the words for social justice. The concept of “seva” encourages individuals to serve others, and highlighting the Sikh commitment to community welfare. *Naam, Daan, Ishnaan* also signify seva and social justice. Gurbani states in Sri Raga, “In this world perform service. Then, (shalt thou) get a seat in Masters Court:”

ਵਿਚਿ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਸੇਵ ਕਮਾਈਐ॥ ਤ ਦਰਗਹ ਬੈਸਣੁ ਪਾਈਐ॥

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 26

The practice of langar represent the principle of equality, where individuals from all backgrounds share a meal, and breaking down social barriers. Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of Sikhism, strongly spread the message of “*Langar*” - a community kitchen where free meals are served to all, rich or poor, to promote social equality and humility.

### **HUMAN RIGHTS**

Human rights are a set of criteria that recognize and safeguard the dignity of all human beings. These rights belong to all humans, regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, race, language, religion, or gender. These rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom of opinions and expression, freedom from slavery and torture, the right to education and work, and many other things.

### **RIGHT TO LIFE**

The right to life stipulates that no one, not even the Government, has the authority to end a person’s life. Sikh doctrines firmly support the idea that everyone has the right to life. According to Sikh Gurus, human life is precious as it is God’s gift; therefore, no one has the right to end it. Guru Amar Das states:

ਹਰਿ ਕੈ ਭਾਣੈ ਜਨਮੁ ਪਦਾਰਥੁ ਪਾਇਆ ਮਤਿ ਊਤਮ ਹੋਈ ॥

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 365

### **RIGHT TO FOOD**

The right to adequate food mandates that everyone, whether they

are alone or part of a community, should always have adequate physical and mental health. According to Sikh doctrines, everyone should have the right to access food because it is a God-given right and should not be denied.

ਵਿਚਿ ਆਪੇ ਜੰਤ ਉਪਾਇਅਨ ਮੁਖਿਆ ਪੇਦੇ ਇਗਿਰਾਸੁ॥

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 302

### ***RIGHT TO MARRY AND HAVE FAMILY***

Men and women of full age have the fundamental human right to marry and have a family, regardless of their nationality, race, or Religion. In Sikhism, marriage is seen as a holy bond that offers mutual assistance in attaining the pinnacles of worldly and spiritual life. It signifies the unity of mind and soul. It is a way to attain spirituality. In Sikhism, marriage is all about the union of both souls with the Almighty Lord.

ਧਨ ਪਿਰੁ ਏਹਿ ਨ ਆਖੀਅਨਿ ਬਹਨਿ ਇਕਠੇ ਹੋਇ ॥  
ਏਕ ਜੋਤਿ ਦੁਇ ਮੂਰਤੀ ਧਨ ਪਿਰੁ ਕਹੀਐ ਸੋਇ ॥

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 788

They are not said to be husband and wife, who merely sit together. They alone are called husband and wife, who have one light in two bodies. Guru Granth Sahib advocates for Sikhs to live together as a family and provide for each other. According to Guru Arjan Dev, one's birth in a family is a result of God's will.

ਜਾਤਿ ਸੁਭਾਣਾ ਤਾ ਜੰਮਿਆ ਪਰਵਾਰਿ ਭਲਾ ਭਾਇਆ

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 921

According to His (God's) Will, a child is born, in a blessed family.

### ***RIGHT TO OWN THINGS***

The right to own property exists for everyone, whether they own it alone or in partnership with others. It constitutes a fundamental right, a person has the right to possess what they desire without being forced to give it up. Without this right, one would be unable to possess things. The Sikh Gurus believe that depriving others of their rights is an act of injustice. It is a sin to desire other people's possessions or property. Guru Nanak says:

ਹਕੁ ਪਰਾਇਆ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਉਸੁ ਸੁਅਰ ਉਸੁ ਗਾਇ॥

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 141

To take what rightfully belongs to another must strictly be taboo as pork eating is for a Muslim and beef-eating is for a Hindu. Sikh doctrine is strongly in favour of the human right to possess things.

### **GOOD DEEDS**

Sikhism conceives of a human society in which all of us have duties to respect each other, perform good deeds, as Gurbani. Honesty is the basic concept for all human kinds. Gurmukh should be true in all aspects of his life. According to Gurbani, "Do thou not ever such deed, of which thou may have to repent in the end:"

ਐਸਾ ਕੰਮ ਮੂਲੇ ਨ ਕੀਚੈ ਜਿਤੁ ਅੰਤਿ ਪਛੋਤਾਈਐ ॥

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 918

The importance of good deeds and actions is explained by this shabad in Guru Granth Sahib. The Guru tells us that "by their deeds and their actions, they shall be judged". The final judgment will be determined by our deeds and actions.

ਕਰਮੀ ਕਰਮੀ ਹੋਇ ਵੀਚਾਰ॥

ਸਚਾ ਆਪਿ ਸਚਾ ਦਰਬਾਰ॥

ਤਿਥੈ ਸੋਹਨਿ ਪੰਚ ਪਰਵਾਣ॥

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 7

Those who perform virtuous actions and deeds will go along one route and ones who perform negative deeds and action will go in the opposite direction.

ਅਮਲਕਰਿ ਧਰਤੀ ਬੀਜ ਸਬਦੋ ਕਰਿ ਸਚ ਕੀ ਆਬ ਨਿਤ ਦੇਹਿ ਪਾਣੀ ॥

ਹੋਇ ਕਿਰਸਾਣ ਈਮਾਨ ਜੰਮਾਇ ਲੈ ਭਿਸਤ ਦੋਜਕ ਮੂਕੋ ਝਵ ਜਾਣੀ ॥੧॥

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 24

Make good deeds the soil, and let the Word of the Shabad be the seed; irrigate it continually with the water of Truth. Become such a farmer, and faith will sprout. This brings knowledge of heaven and hell, you fool.

### **THE MESSAGE OF UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD**

Guru Granth Sahib's philosophy is to build a healthy society. As Gurbani states, "First, Allah created the Light; then, by His Creative Power, He made all mortal beings. From the One Light, the entire universe welled up. So who is good, and who is bad?"

ਅਵਲਿ ਅਲਹ ਨੂਰੁ ਉਪਾਇਆ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਕੇ ਸਭ ਬੰਦੇ ॥

ਏਕ ਨੂਰ ਤੇ ਸਭੁ ਜਗੁ ਉਪਜਿਆ ਕਉਨ ਭਲੇ ਕੇ ਮੰਦੇ ॥੧॥

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1349

The brotherhood of men is a natural complement to the fatherhood of God. All individuals belong to the same family, and therefore are siblings and fellow beings. It is not possible for someone to think negatively about the members of their family. All of God's children are treated with equal love and he expects the same from us. One's love for God is measured by how much they love His creation. Guru Nanak's teachings revolve around the concept of love:

ਜੋਰਤੇ ਸਹਿ ਆਪਣੈ ਤਿਨ ਭਾਵੈ ਸਭਿ ਕੋਇ॥

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 557

All people are treated with the same level of compassion. Even detractors are not treated with any hatred. Physical force is not capable of suppressing heresy. The Truth, the Word of God, is the key to victory:

ਬੁਰਾ ਭਲਾ ਕਹੁ ਕਿਸਨੋ ਕਹੀ ਐਸ ਗਲੇ ਜੀਅ ਤੁਮਾਰੇ॥

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 383

Sri Guru Granth Sahib is dedicated to the ideals of universal brotherhood of all and the universal parenthood of God. As Guru Arjan Dev states:

ਏਕੁ ਪਿਤਾ ਏਕਸ ਕੇ ਹਮ ਬਾਰਕ॥

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 611

One God is the father of all and we are his children.

The message of love even for those who are not good human beings is preached by the Holy Scripture. The couplets of Baba Farid states:

ਫਰੀਦਾ ਬੁਰੇ ਦਾ ਭਲਾ ਕਰਿ ਗੁਸਾ ਮਨਿ ਨ ਹਵਾਇ॥  
ਦੇਹੀ ਰੋਗੁ ਨ ਲਗਈ ਪਲੈ ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁਪਾਇ ॥

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1382

First, God produced his sacred creative glow. By his sacred creative power, nature has created all humans equal. From one sacred glow, the entire universe welled up. Hence, no one is good, no one is bad. God made man with the same privileges all the world over. All men are born equal. They come into the world in the same way after a fixed period of gestation. All men have the same outer and inner construction

in the matter of limbs and various body parts and organs like hands and feet, lungs, liver, stomach and the like. Guru Nanak Dev gave practical lessons on the principle of universal brotherhood in community living. Guru Nanak established a community kitchen in Kartarpur, where they cooked and dined together as a family, and prayed together for the betterment of humanity. Guru Granth Sahib's teachings reflect a spirit of true humanism, spiritualism, socialism and secularism. At this time, Guru Granth Sahib's teachings are as relevant as were five hundred years ago.

### ***JUSTICE AND SPIRITUALITY***

In Sikhism, both spirituality and justice are interdependent. Both are equally important. The notion of *Miri* (temporal) and *Piri* (spiritual) is a representation of the connection between spirituality and justice. In Sikhism, spirituality is not just about devotion to God or oneness with God, but also about temporal power. The Sikh Gurus and their followers are united in their quest for justice and righteousness, regardless of caste or creed. At the same time, they served as both saints and soldiers. According to the statement, they represent Bhakti (spiritual power) and Shakti (temporal power). The spiritual aspect of social justice was explained by the Fifth Guru: I don't have any enemies; everyone is my friend, everyone is equally created by One God, and no one is separated from me.

ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਸਗਲ ਕੀਰੀਨਾ ॥ ਆਤਮ ਰਸੁ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਚੀਨਾ ॥  
ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਕੀ ਸਭ ਊਪਰਿ ਮਇਆ ॥ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਤੇ ਕਛੁ ਬੁਰਾਨ ਭਇਆ ॥  
ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਸਦਾ ਸਮਦਰਸੀ ॥ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਕੀ ਦ੍ਰਿਸਟਿ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਬਰਸੀ ॥

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 212-213

The God-conscious being is the dust of all. The God-conscious being knows the nature of the soul. The God-conscious being shows kindness to all. No evil comes from the God-conscious being. The God-conscious being is always impartial. Nectar rains down from the glance of the God-conscious being. The spiritual element of justice brings people together with no distinction between caste and creed, friend and foe, and high and low. Spirituality can lead someone to freedom from all bonds.

### ***CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE***

The teachings of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib remain relevant in

today's society, addressing ongoing issues of inequality, discrimination, and social injustice. Sikh organizations globally advocate for human rights, engage in social service, and promote interfaith dialogue, embodying the principles outlined in the scripture."The central message of the Sikh Holy Scriptures, Sri Guru Granth Sahib is of humanism and universal brotherhood. It is a source of inspiration for those who seek social justice, the equality of all people, the empowerment of women and of the under privileged. It is for those reasons that the text has remained alive as a guide to all those who value these fundamental principles of humanism and human integrity

### CONCLUSION

The Sri Guru Granth Sahib offers a robust framework for understanding and promoting social justice. Its teachings encourage a commitment to equality, human rights, and community service. By embodying these principles, individuals and communities can work towards creating a more just and equitable society.

~ ~ ~

### REFERENCES

- *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*.
- Dhillon, S., "*Sikhism and Social Justice: A Historical Perspective*." International Journal of Sikh Studies, 2020.
- Kaur Gurdeep, *Political Ethics of Guru Granth Sahib*, Deep & Deep Publications PVT. LTD., New Delhi, 2000.
- Khalsa, R. (2018). "*Gender Equality in Sikh Teachings*." Sikh Review.
- Singh, P. (2015). "*The Concept of Social Justice in Sikhism*" Journal of Sikh Studies.
- Singh Gopal, Translated and annotated, *Sri Guru-Granth Sahib*, English version, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1960.
- Talib, Gurbachan Singh, tr., *Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Vol. I.-IV*, Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, Patiala, 2001.

## **THE MAN WHO BENT LIGHT & ENLIGHTENED GENERATIONS – CENTENARY TRIBUTE TO DR. NARINDER SINGH KAPANY**

**LT COL JAGTAR SINGH MULTANI\***

---

(31 October 1926 - 31 October 2026)

On the occasion of the 100th Birth Anniversary of Dr. Narinder Singh Kapany, I pay my respectful tribute to one of Punjab's most distinguished sons and one of the world's pioneering scientists. Born at Moga, Punjab, on 31 October 1926, Dr. Kapany rose from Punjab to the international scientific community through his extraordinary intellect, determination, imagination and spirit of innovation. His pioneering research in optical fibres and his successful demonstration of the transmission of images through fibre bundles laid important foundations for modern fibre-optic communication. He subsequently popularised and coined the term "fibre optics."

Today, when the world communicates through high-speed optical networks, the significance of his pioneering vision can hardly be overstated. His scientific work extended beyond fibre optics into lasers, solar energy, biomedical applications, communications and other fields, resulting in more than 100 patents and numerous scientific publications. But Dr. Kapany's greatness cannot be measured by his scientific achievements alone. He remained deeply conscious of his Sikh and Punjabi heritage. Together with his wife, Satinder Kaur Kapany, he established the Sikh Foundation in 1967, dedicating himself to preserving and presenting Sikh history, art, literature and culture to the wider world. His efforts helped bring Sikh heritage to internationally respected museums and institutions. He also established and supported academic initiatives in Sikh and Punjabi studies and opto-electronics.

\* Chairman & Managing Trustee, Jugraj Singh Gill Charitable Trust; Email: <jagtar.multani@gmail.com>

His life therefore represents a remarkable synthesis of Science, Enterprise, Education, Heritage and Seva. India recognised his extraordinary contribution by conferring upon him the Padma Vibhushan posthumously in 2021, one of the nation's highest civilian honours.

### **A MESSAGE FOR THE YOUNG GENERATION**

The greatest tribute we can pay to Dr. Kapany is not merely to remember his name, but to carry forward the values that shaped his life:

Dream beyond limitations.

Question conventional thinking.

Pursue knowledge relentlessly.

Convert knowledge into service.

Remain proud of one's heritage while respecting every culture.

And use achievement for the benefit of society.

For Punjab, Dr. Narinder Singh Kapany should be remembered not only as the "Father of Fibre Optics," but also as a shining example of how a son of Punjab can achieve global excellence while remaining connected to his roots. On his Centenary, let us resolve to make his legacy a source of inspiration for our children and youth-particularly by encouraging scientific curiosity, innovation, entrepreneurship, education, preservation of heritage and service to humanity.

### **MY HUMBLE TRIBUTE**

As a retired member of the Indian Army and as someone who has devoted the later part of my life to education, community development and social service, I find particular inspiration in Dr. Kapany's belief that achievement acquires greater meaning when it is shared with society. His journey from Moga to the world is a powerful message to every young Punjabi and Sikhs in particular—Your birthplace need not limit your destiny; Your circumstances need not limit your imagination; And your success should ultimately become a service to humanity.

On this historic Centenary, I bow with respect to the memory of Dr. Narinder Singh Kapany. May his life continue to inspire generations of scientists, students, entrepreneurs, social workers and young Punjabis to think boldly, serve selflessly and contribute meaningfully to the world. Dr. Narinder Singh Kapany - A son of Punjab, A scientist of the world, A custodian of Sikh heritage, And an inspiration for generations.

## ON THE ISC FRONT

KANWAL PAL SINGH\*

---

The third quarter of 2026 at the International Sikh Confederation (ISC) was marked by the successful conduct of a Round Table Discussion on the Institution of Sri Akal Takht, to comprehend its doctrine and foundation. This brought together eminent scholars and thinkers for in-depth deliberations.

On 27th June, 2026, the International Sikh Confederation conducted a Round Table Discussion on *Akal Takht – Doctrine & Institution*, at the People's Convention Centre, Sector 36, Chandigarh. The keynote address was delivered by S Amarjit Singh Grewal, setting the intellectual framework for the deliberations. He emphasized the need to understand Akal Takht in the context of 'Principle and Institution', stating that the authenticity and effective Panthic leadership of the institution lie in the clarity of its principles and its alignment with Gurmat.

The session was chaired by Dr (Prof) Balkar Singh. The panel comprised renowned scholars and intellectuals, such as, Dr Kehar Singh, S Karamjit Singh, S Jaswant Singh Zafar, Bhai Paramjit Singh Gazi, Giani Kewal Singh, Adv Manjit Singh Khaira, Dr Hardev Singh Virk, S Gurpreet Singh, Dr Harjinder Singh Rose, S Malkiat Singh Rana, S Jagjit Singh Rattangarh, S JS Gogia, Capt Gurdip Singh, S Gurbir Singh, S Jaspal Singh. The participating scholars and attendees termed this dialogue highly meaningful, a need of the hour, and a significant Panthic initiative. They were of the view that serious academic dialogue regarding the concept and institutional framework of a supreme Panthic institution like Akal Takht must continue

---

\* General Secretary, International Sikh Confederation (ISC), [iscchd2006@gmail.com](mailto:iscchd2006@gmail.com)

uninterrupted. It was also emphasized that such discussions should not remain limited to Punjab, but should be held regularly with the active participation of Sikh scholars, researchers, and the *sangat* from all over the world, so that Gurmat-based Panthic dialogue is strengthened and a comprehensive understanding of the doctrine of Akal Takht can be developed.

The program included panelists' views, open discussion, and concluding presidential remarks, followed by a vote of thanks. The event provided a significant platform for collective reflection by the intelligentsia on the doctrinal and institutional role of the Akal Takht. The video recording of the event is available on the website of ISC [www.sikhconfed.org](http://www.sikhconfed.org).

ISC also advanced preparations for its Conclave series - 'The Way Forward, titled "SGPC Elections". These initiatives reflect ISC's commitment to fostering dialogue, strengthening institutional accountability, and addressing issues of contemporary relevance to the Sikh Panth.

In its Executive Committee meeting held on 22nd April, 2026, the International Sikh Confederation resolved to hold its Conclave 2 on the subject of *SGPC Elections*. The decision followed the outcome of Conclave 1, where a majority of participants raised concern about underperformance of some major Sikh institutions. It was, therefore, felt that it is essential to restore democratic functioning thereof. It was noted with concern that Gurdwara elections have not been held for 21 years and SGPC elections have been pending for 15 years, reflecting a callous approach by Governments. To deliberate on this pressing issue, ISC is convening Conclave 2 of its series 'The Way Forward, titled "SGPC Elections" on 28th September 2026 (Monday) at 2:30 PM at the People's Convention Centre, Sector 36, Chandigarh. The session will be chaired by S Tarlochan Singh, Former Member of Parliament and Former Chairperson, National Commission for Minorities, with the keynote address delivered by Dr. Kashmir Singh, Former Head & Dean, Faculty of Law, GNDU Amritsar, & presently Chairperson, Advisory Council on Legal Affairs, ISC.

Dr Birendra Kaur and S. Gurpreet Singh held a meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2026, with Justice (retd) SS Saron, Former Commissioner,

Gurdwara Election Commission, to deliberate on the pressing issue of SGPC elections. The ISC representatives shared with him the Confederation's plan for organizing its **Conclave – The Way Forward, titled “SGPC Elections”**. The discussion was highly informative, providing valuable insights into the challenges and possible approaches for restoring democratic processes in Sikh institutions. The meeting served as a constructive step in defining the way forward to address the long pending issue of SGPC elections.

The International Sikh Confederation has initiated the establishment of a **Sikh Think Tank** as a forum bringing together scholars, academia, professionals, intellectuals, administrators, and experienced individuals to deliberate on matters of importance to the Sikh Panth. Its strength lies in the collective wisdom, diversity of experience, and independent thinking of its members. ISC proposes to maintain regular communication and interaction among members through discussions, consultations, and thematic deliberations on issues of contemporary relevance. To facilitate this, ISC is collecting information about members' professional qualifications, experience, and subject areas of interest, for which a dedicated email id has been created. The email id of the Sikh Think Tank is *sttchd2026@gmail.com*

The International Sikh Confederation, on 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2026, had submitted a representation to the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Punjab, S Bhagwant Singh Mann, emphasizing the urgent need for a high-quality Punjabi–Punjabi monolingual dictionary on the lines of English monolingual dictionaries, such as, Oxford, Collins, Merriam-Webster, etc. The same was referred to Language Department, Govt of Punjab, Patiala, by the CM office. The reply received here from mentioned the translation and uploading works being undertaken by it. It also, however, reflected shortage of staff and funds. Now vide our letter dated 10.08.2026, it has been reiterated to the Hon'ble Chief Minister, Punjab, the urgent need for a comprehensive **Punjabi to Punjabi monolingual dictionary**. ISC has emphasized that the absence of such a dictionary continues to hinder the robust development of Punjabi. The proposed dictionary must include meanings, grammatical forms, usage examples, synonyms, antonyms, and etymological details. Punjabi language also needs to be enriched by incorporating words

from Sri Guru Granth Sahib as well as adopting/ coining new words for the emerging technological terms. ISC has urged the Govt of Punjab that this project be taken up as an independent initiative with dedicated funding, sanctioned staff, expert involvement, and a fixed timeline. As an initial step, ISC has suggested the constitution of a five member committee of eminent Punjabi scholars to prepare a detailed blueprint for the same. ISC has also offered to implement and/or oversee the project, if required.

The International Sikh Confederation deeply mourns the passing of **S Gurdev Singh Brar ji**, IAS (retd), Co Convener of ISC, who left for his heavenly abode on 17<sup>th</sup> September, 2026. A distinguished personality, he dedicated his retired life to education and community welfare. He was, indeed, a legend, not merely because of the positions he held, but because of the values he embodied and the lives he touched. He was a devout Sikh who devoted himself to the cause of *sikhi*, and his contributions will continue to inspire generations.

While his demise has created a void that cannot be filled, ISC remains committed to carrying forward the vision he anticipated and the path he illuminated. His ideals of service, integrity, and devotion to *Sikhi* will continue to guide ISC's initiatives.

## ETERNAL WISDOM, EMERGING WORLDS

A REVIEW BY PROF H.S. VIRK\*

---

*Authors: Dr. Devinder Pal Singh and Dr. Bhai Harbans Lal*

*Publishers: Center for Sikh Thought and Learning, Mississauga, ON, Canada*

*& Academy of Guru Granth Studies, Arlington, TX, USA*

*Year of Publication: 2026; Price: Rs.750; US \$12,*

*ISBN: 9798187741274*

Prof. Pashaura Singh in his Foreword has given a brief introduction about both the authors. I believe he has read only the Preface and then summed up his views about the book. My interaction with authors goes back to Guru Nanak Dev University (GNDU), Amritsar, where Dr DP Singh joined as a Research Scholar and Faculty Member in 1983, and Dr Bhai Harbans Lal was a frequent visitor to participate in Conferences held in GNDU. Most of these articles included in this book have been published by the authors; by Dr Lal as his Blogs, and Dr Singh in various magazines and journals. This book has been written with a futuristic outlook and a purpose to create awareness among its readers to remain watchful while using AI based technologies.

Authors write in the Preface: “In November 2022, the release of ChatGPT marked a watershed moment in human history. Within months, artificial intelligence (AI) shifted from a specialized technical domain to a force reshaping education, creativity, governance, and spiritual practice. By 2024, AI systems were writing poetry, diagnosing diseases, generating deepfake avatars of the deceased, and making decisions that affected millions of lives”. Further, the purpose of writing this book is explained by the authors as follows: “This book

---

\* Professor of Eminence, SGGS World University, Fatehgarh Sahib (Punjab)

addresses multiple audiences, each with distinct needs. For academic scholars in religious studies, philosophy, and science and technology studies, offer a substantive non-Western voice in debates dominated by Judeo-Christian and secular frameworks. For AI researchers and technologists grappling with ethical questions, we provide a comprehensive moral vocabulary grounded in concepts like divine order, service, and collective flourishing. For Sikh practitioners and community leaders, we demonstrate how traditional teachings remain dynamically relevant without requiring dilution or distortion. For general readers concerned about technology's impact on human dignity and spiritual life, we offer accessible yet rigorous analysis. For policymakers navigating questions of AI governance, religious freedom, and pluralism, we illustrate how wisdom traditions can inform public discourse without imposing sectarian agendas."

The book has 20 Chapters divided into two parts. Bhai H. Lal, in the opening Chapter of this book, explains the need for making Sri Guru Granth Sahib available in all languages as its universal message transcends geography, ethnicity, and culture. He is highly critical of our approach to Sikhi: "We Sikhs take great pride in the universality of the Gurus' message, meaning that our Gurus revealed it for the benefit of all peoples and communities. Our clerics and our leaders miss no opportunity to emphasize this distinction of our Guru's message. Similarly, we speak of our Gurdwaras and other congregational institutions open to everyone in the global village. But we fail to realize that by trussing Sikh beliefs and practices far too tightly with Punjabi language, ethnicity, and lifestyle, we commit the sin of utterly refusing to share our religion with the rest of the world".

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Chapter, DP Singh sums up the creation process of Guru Nanak in SGGS as follows: "Guru Nanak's reflections on creation present one of the most comprehensive spiritual visions of the cosmos found in world religious literature. His hymns neither attempt to provide a scientific textbook nor discourage rational investigation; instead, they inspire humility, wonder, and a lifelong search for truth. The comparisons presented in this article indicate that several themes articulated by Guru Nanak, including the unknowability of the precise moment of creation, the emergence of the universe through Divine

command, the immensity of creation, the possibility of multiple worlds, the origin and diversity of life, and the eventual transformation of the cosmos, display remarkable conceptual resonance with contemporary scientific understanding. At the same time, Guru Nanak consistently reminds humanity that ultimate reality transcends complete intellectual comprehension”.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> Chapter, both the authors join hands to explain the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur for freedom of conscience and religious pluralism in societies: “This article explores Guru Tegh Bahadur’s martyrdom through the lens of pluralistic societies. It draws connections between his advocacy for universal religious freedom and contemporary frameworks of interfaith harmony, human rights, and secular governance”. In 4<sup>th</sup> Chapter, Bhai Lal explains the significance of Langar as practical expression of Sikh faith translated into action. He goes on to describe the Langar Sewa of various Sikh organizations globally. Langar is explained beautifully as follows: “Langar emerges as an act of justice, compassion, and shared humanity, demonstrating how spiritual principles can be lived rather than just proclaimed”.

In Chapter 5, DP Singh has given a vivid description of legacy of Guru Gobind Singh: “His advocacy for the equality of all people, regardless of caste, gender, or religion, underscores the relevance of inclusivity and social justice. His leadership style, rooted in humility and empowerment, offers valuable lessons for modern leaders. Through the teachings of Guru Gobind Singh, individuals are encouraged to lead lives of integrity, compassion, and unity, making his legacy a timeless source of inspiration for the world today”. In Chapter 6, DP and Lal give the historical analysis of revelation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh: “*Understanding this distinction between “revealing” versus “creating” the Khalsa provides several important insights. First, it establishes historical continuity in the development of Sikh institutions from Guru Nanak through Guru Gobind Singh. Second, it helps explain why not all Sikhs immediately adopted Amrit after 1699, even as they still considered themselves part of the Khalsa Panth. Finally, it demonstrates how Guru Gobind Singh’s actions represented both practical organizational reform and profound theological innovation*”.

In Chapter 7, both the authors focus on “Vaisakhi in Sikh

Tradition” and trace its scriptural roots and historical transformations. They conclude: “By tracing Vaisakhi’s layered development, this article demonstrates that its enduring relevance lies in its capacity to integrate spiritual realization with social transformation. Vaisakhi stands not merely as a historical anniversary, but as a continuing call to embody Sikh ideals of equality, courage, humility, and divine awareness in collective life”. In Chapter 8, authors discuss “Anand Marriage Act” and its historical origins and implications. In Chapter 9, they describe the limitations of Sikhi due to its entanglement with Punjabi nationalism and ethnicity: “By distinguishing religion from ethnicity, embracing intercultural pedagogies, and supporting diverse Sikh identities, the global Sikh community can make Sikhi accessible to seekers worldwide, without compromising its spiritual integrity. When Sikhi is disentangled from Punjabi nationalism, its core message of divine unity, justice, equality, and compassion becomes universally compelling”. Chapter 10 continues to discuss the same theme as presented in Chapter 9. The authors provide a framework to improve the situation: “*Examining historical, linguistic, institutional, and sociological factors, the article highlights the need to reclaim Guru Nanak’s intercultural approach through multilingual education, inclusive gurdwara practices, global translations, and broader representation. By distinguishing Sikh spiritual principles from ethnic expressions, Sikhi can evolve as a truly global faith while preserving its authentic identity and universal humanistic foundations*”.

In Chapter 11, DP Singh tries to explore the environmental wisdom in the Sikh Scripture (SGGS). It is a new approach to the study of SGGS. He traces a profound reverence for nature expressed in the SGGS. According to DP: “Key verses, such as “*Pavan Guru, Pani Pita, Mata Dharat Mahat,*” highlight the Earth, air, and water as revered life-givers and spiritual guides. SGGS condemns greed and material exploitation while promoting virtues such as contentment, humility, and selfless service (*seva*), all of which foster ecological balance and sustainability”. In Chapter 12, Bhai Lal uses a metaphor of breaking the egg shell, first used by Max Arthur Macauliffe, the celebrated translator of SGGS, to examine the contemporary condition of Sikh community. He calls for a return to Guru Nanak’s rational, ethical, and spiritually authentic vision, urging Sikhs to embrace self-reflection, scriptural understanding, and reform to preserve the vitality

and universality of the Sikh faith.

In Chapter 13, DP finds fault in modern practices vs Guru Nanak's vision which emphasized the oneness of God, equality, social justice, selfless service (*seva*), truth, and living a balanced life. He is of the opinion that the rise of materialism, caste discrimination, religious ritualism, sectarianism, and the neglect of *seva* are the main causes of this divergence. In Chapter 14, authors use Sikh Philosophy to explore the phenomena of super-aging and mental resilience. On the basis of integrative model of aging, authors conclude: "Cognitive longevity may not depend solely on genetics or lifestyle but is shaped by a harmonious interplay among body, mind, and spirit, as emphasized in Sikh philosophy". In Chapter 15, DP Singh traces the multifaceted legacy of Harmandir Sahib and concludes: "*Harmandir Sahib's legacy transcends religion, offering a timeless model of compassion and unity that reinforces its role as a spiritual and cultural beacon for humanity in an increasingly divided world*".

In the Preface, authors give the classification of Chapters as follows: "The first section of fifteen chapters establishes the philosophical foundations to examine core Sikh teachings on universal spirituality, religious freedom, ecological consciousness, social equality, and institutional reform. The second section of five Chapters then applies these philosophical resources to the specific challenge of AI". Keeping this classification in view, Chapters 16-20 gain prominence in this book. In Chapter 16, authors conclude on the Sikh perspective of GPT-5 as follows: "From a Sikh perspective, GPT-5 is neither inherently liberating nor inherently perilous. Like all tools, its impact is determined by the consciousness with which humanity wields it. When guided by greed, ego, and disregard for nature, it risks becoming an extension of Maya and exploitation. Conversely, when used with humility, justice, and a spirit of *seva* (selfless service), it can become a potent instrument for upliftment. Sikhism does not reject technological progress; instead, it calls for grounding innovation in spiritual wisdom (*Gian*), righteous action (*Kirat*), and selfless service (*Seva*)".

In Chapter 17, DP Singh provides a Sikh critique of Artificial Intelligence in tune with teachings of SGGS: "Rather than rejecting

innovation, Sikhism calls for spiritually guided technology that upholds human dignity, service, and divine remembrance. The machine must serve humanity, not replace its soul". Chapter 18 "Deepfake Eternity vs Eternal Naam: Sikh Responses to Artificial Intelligence" is one of the most significant Chapters of this volume. The authors are highly critical of new technology versus eternal Naam. They conclude: "In choosing the path of *Naam* over digital simulation, Sikhs affirm that authentic eternity cannot be programmed, purchased, or artificially preserved; it can only be realized through the timeless practice of divine remembrance that connects all beings across the apparent boundaries of life and death". In Chapter 19, DP Singh pleads for use of AI technology to enhance knowledge and understanding of Sikh doctrines by improving access to information, enabling personalized learning, supporting language translation, and facilitating the analysis of Sikh scriptures. Author recommends the use of AI through digital libraries, intelligent assistants, immersive virtual experiences, and collaborative platforms to deepen engagement with Sikh teachings and cultural heritage. In Chapter 20, DP Singh recommends to harness AI to promote Sikhism. I agree with the views of author: "Artificial Intelligence presents unprecedented opportunities to promote Sikhism by expanding access to authentic knowledge, preserving cultural heritage, and connecting the global Sikh community through innovative digital technologies. AI-powered tools can democratize learning, overcome linguistic and geographical barriers, facilitate scholarly research, and create engaging educational experiences that inspire both current and future generations".

I consider this book as a welcome addition to Sikh literature. Authors have joined hands to provide the readers a futuristic view of Sikhi based on AI technology and its impact on Sikh society, in particular, and the global society, in general. Authors have given Bibliography after each Chapter but I feel lack of Index at the end of this book. I feel privileged to review this book for the intelligent reader and researcher of Sikhi, its legacy, and its institutions.

## KATHIHU AKATH KAHANI

A REVIEW BY DR. TARUNDEEP SINGH\*

---

*Authors: Gurbux Kaur Kahlon, USA*

*Publishers: Clear Eyed Publishing*

*Year of Publication: 2026; Price: Not Mentioned*

*Pages 211*

The book '*Kathihu Akath Kahani*' written by Gurbux Kaur Kahlon has been dedicated to Baba Vishakha Singh, the freedom fighter and one of the leading personalities of the Gadar movement, who also had the honour of being the Jathedar of Akal Takht Sahib, a position from which he resigned when some subordinates in his absence bestowed a *Siropan* to a representative of the British government.

The book is written in simple Punjabi and is divided into 11 chapters, each explaining different attributes of God. The author firmly believes that these attributes of God, given in the Guru Granth Sahib, are not figments of imagination but the actual felt experiences of the Supreme by the Gurus, Bhagats, and Gursikhs, whose compositions are enshrined therein. Thereafter, in each of the eleven chapters, the author first describes her understanding of various attributes of God, and then substantiates it with examples from Gurbani.

In chapter one, the author addresses the question of God's existence and concludes that whatever we see around us has been created and is governed by the One, the '*Karta Purakh*'. She then quotes from Gurbani, conveying that God pervades everything, living and non-living, that make up the world. After establishing the existence

---

\* Additional Prof., Dept. Of Community Medicine and School of Public Health, PGIMER, Chandigarh

of God, the author, in the second chapter, goes on to describe God as all-aware, ecstatic, full of love, ever-benevolent and beyond the bounds of time and death.

In the third chapter, the author addresses the question of whether the world is governed by an invisible and indescribable power or is a result of random events. With examples from Gurbani, she establishes that it is indeed the power of the invisible, formless, benevolent, and ever-wonderful One that drives the creation and dissolution of all form. Further, she cites Gurbani to prove that such creation and dissolution have occurred numerous times since time immemorial.

In the fourth chapter, the author establishes, on the basis of Gurbani, that the world is a wondrous play and that all of us are mere participants in this cosmic play, where all our deeds and thoughts are recorded. God has spiced up this wondrous play by creating challenges in the form of *Kaam*, *Krodh*, *Lobh*, *Moh* and *Abankar*. The author explains that, to make this wondrous cosmic play more interesting, God has led us to ignore the fact that we are all embodiments of the same power, that we are here in this world for a short time, and that our real goal is to merge into Him. To make matters even more interesting, God has not allowed us to know the time of our departure from this world. As such, God joyfully watches us, his children, play this worldly game while in a state of forgetfulness of Reality. The author cites Gurbani to establish that we are held accountable for our deeds and have to bear the fruits of our good and bad deeds. This cycle is repeated till we start living in His remembrance, cleanse our thoughts and deeds, and begin treading the path of righteousness. Once we follow this path, God bestows His Grace on us, and we return to our true home, having won the worldly game by freeing ourselves from the cycle of birth and death.

In chapters five and six, the author dwells on His grace and establishes through Gurbani that family life, the *Sehaj Yoga*, as a result of being imbued with the *Shabad* or *Naam*, are the simplest and most effective way of living in His remembrance and hope for His Grace. Gurbani discourages the practice of '*Hath Yoga*' or the renunciation of the world, as these may help obtain supernatural powers (*Riddhis* or *Siddhis*), but they do not make our minds humble and pure. On the

contrary, obtaining powers through such methods may actually fuel the ego and take us further away from the path of the Lord.

In chapters seven and eight, the author elucidates *Shabad*, or *Naam*, as the only way to reunite with Him and experience Him ecstatically. Quoting Gurbani extensively, the author concludes that God permeates the cosmos through the *anhad shabad* or *naam*. It is from this *anhad shabad* that all creation comes forth, and it is into this *anhad shabad* that all creation will re-merge as per God's will.

In chapters nine and ten, the author compares the mystery of the cosmos as explained in Gurbani with modern scientific thought and the journey of discovery into the world. Modern science is slowly authenticating the truths articulated in Gurbani. She also explains how we should lead our lives following the principles of '*Kirat Karna, Naam Japna and Vand Chhakna*'. She also interprets it as our duty to be in harmony with Nature and to take care of the environment.

In the last chapter, the author exhorts us to introspect our thoughts and actions so that we depart from this world, having won the Divine Grace and are welcomed back into the realm of God with honour.

The book makes an enlightening read. Most of concepts of Gurbani are explained in a very simple yet profound language, with extensive quotes from Guru Granth Sahib. This book has the potential to change many lives. The book deserves to be included in the essential readings in divinity classes and be a part of the syllabus in all missionary and Khalsa institutions. Even for regular practitioners of Gurbani, this book clarifies many doubts that occur in the mind of a genuine seeker.

## NEWS & VIEWS

---

### S GURDEV SINGH: AN ILLUMINATING PERSONALITY



The Institute of Sikh Studies (IOSS), Chandigarh, deeply mourns the sad demise of its revered former President and Patron, S. Gurdev

Singh Brar, IAS (Retd), who passed away last month. A distinguished administrator, scholar, and visionary leader, S. Gurdev Singh Brar leaves behind an indelible legacy of selfless dedication. During his tenure as President of the Institute, he spearheaded numerous groundbreaking initiatives and authored impactful articles for the Institute's Quarterly Journal, providing rigorous academic and legal direction to contemporary Panthic issues.

A monumental contribution of S. Gurdev Singh Brar was his researched advocacy of the Punjab river waters dispute. He authored several research papers, tracts, and some books detailing Punjab's legitimate legal rights over its waters. His efforts in this direction were instrumental in providing seminal support in the passage of the Punjab Termination of Agreements Act, 2006 during the Chief Ministership of Capt. Amarinder Singh. His efforts coupled with his administrative acumen are largely responsible for the implementation of the original Nanakshahi Calendar, besides formulating proposals for Sikh Personal Law and reforms in Gurdwara legislation.

Apart from his scholarly and administrative pursuits, he was a distinguished National Hockey player and an avid sports mentor. The IOSS pays its warmest tribute to S. Gurdev Singh Brar for his inspiration and guidance to the generations to come.

~ ~ ~

### **HIS 'PIND' IS IN LUDHIANA. AT 35, ANGAD SINGH DHILLON IS CANADA'S NEW AMBASSADOR TO UAE**

'Nothing can really take Punjab out of me... But of course, my loyalties are all with the country where I now live and serve, Canada'

With his roots in Punjab's Ludhiana district, the 35-year-old Indian-origin Sikh man — Angad Singh Dhillon — was recently named Canada's Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

In a significant political appointment by Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand in the Liberal Party-led Canadian government, Dhillon has been announced as "ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary" — the highest-ranking diplomatic representative sent by one sovereign state to head a mission in another host country.

Angad told The Indian Express over the phone that his “pind (village) is where he still belongs, no matter the top diplomatic post that he now holds in Canada”. His paternal family’s roots are in Ghungrana village in Punjab’s Ludhiana, and his parents still live in Chandigarh — where he was born.

Angad, who moved to Canada in 2010 for higher studies, said, “Nothing can really take Punjab out of me... I still eat Indian food at least five days a week. But of course, my loyalties are all with the country where I now live and serve, Canada.” According to Global Affairs Canada, “Angad Singh Dhillon was one of Prime Minister Mark Carney’s closest advisers,” and “he supported the Prime Minister in re-engaging Canada’s diplomatic relationships with key bilateral partners, including India and China, by helping restore high-level channels of communication and cooperation.” Global Affairs is the federal department that manages the country’s diplomatic relations.

Angad completed his schooling at Yadavindra Public School (YPS), Mohali. He completed his 12th from the pre-university international relations school, Mahindra United World College, Pune. When he was 19, he moved to Canada in 2010 for his bachelor’s degree in international relations from Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick.

Angad entered Canadian politics in 2015. He served as one of the closest advisers to PM Mark Carney. He joined the party as a field organiser in the Peel region during the federal election campaign. He then moved to Ottawa and joined the Liberal Research Bureau, where he contributed to policy-related work involving South Asian and East European communities.

During his visits to India, his village Ghungrana is always on his itinerary. “It is simply not possible that when I am in India, I don’t visit Ghungrana. We have our ancestral house and farm in the village. This year in March, when PM Carney was on a visit to Mumbai, I also visited my village.”

Angad said his long stays at the village with his grandparents connected him to rural Punjab. “We used to visit our village for summer and winter vacations to spend time with my grandparents. My grandfather was in politics, so we used to have rallies in the village... So, whenever I am in India, even for two days, I visit my pind where I

belong. My pind is where I feel a sense of belonging... that's where I am from... My pind is a constant reminder of where I come from."

Angad has also previously served as Chief of Staff to two federal cabinet ministers in the small business and transport portfolios. He supported Canada's engagements at the G7, G20, UN General Assembly, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), International Transport Forum, and Conference of the Parties (COP), Global Affairs Canada said.

His paternal great-grandfather, Gurnam Singh, was a member of the SGPC (Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee) in 1937 and also a close associate of SAD veteran and reformist Master Tara Singh. His grandfather, Jagjit Singh Dhillon, was also a senior Akali Dal leader. Jagjit Singh was a progressive farmer and served as a member of the High Powered Committee on Agriculture constituted by the Government of India, led by the then Prime Minister, V P Singh. Angad also said his paternal grandmother, late Dhanwant Kaur, had a great impact on his life and was a constant inspiration.

His father, Chandigarh-based Naininder Singh Dhillon, worked with several MNCs in the agriculture sector. His mother, Harpreet Kaur Dhillon, is an advocate at the Punjab and Haryana High Court. Angad's maternal grandfather, Avtar Singh Gill, was an additional sessions judge and a writer on Sikh history. (*Courtesy: Indian Express, Sept 29, 2026*)

❏

All persons, who wish to give donations to the IOSS, contribute subscription for the *Abstracts of Sikh Studies*, are requested to please note that the money can directly be deposited from anywhere in Institute's following Saving Accounts & inform at the contact no. or address given blow:

**Bank: Axis Bank**

**Bank: HDFC Bank**

A/c No: 919010071482516

A/c No: 13241000023350

Branch: Sector 19, Chd

Branch: Sector 27, Chd

NEFT IFSC: UTIB0003149

NEFT IFSC: HDFC0001324

### INSTITUTE OF SIKH STUDIES

Gurdwara Singh Sabha, Kanthala, Indl Area Phase II

Chandigarh - 160 002 (India)

Mobile & WhatsApp: +91 9915861422; E-mail: iosshd@gmail.com

## PUBLICATIONS OF THE INSTITUTE OF SIKH STUDIES

|                                                                               |   |                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| Sikhism – Its Philosophy and History (Rs 500/-)                               | : | Eds Daljeet Singh & Kharak Singh |
| Sikhism and Civilisation (Rs 150/- & Rs 100/-)                                | : | Daljeet Singh                    |
| Thoughts of Bhai Ardaman Singh (Rs 395/-)                                     | : | Compiled by Bhai Ashok Singh     |
| Essays on Sikh Philosophy (Rs 100/-)                                          | : | N Muthu Mohan                    |
| Episodes from Lives of the Gurus* (Rs 150/-)                                  | : | Eds Kharak Singh & Gurtej Singh  |
| Current Thoughts on Sikhism (Rs 400/-)                                        | : | Ed Kharak Singh                  |
| Apostasy Among Sikh Youth* (Rs 150/-)                                         | : | Ed Kharak Singh                  |
| On Sikh Personal Law (Rs 75/-)                                                | : | Ed Kharak Singh                  |
| On Gurdwara Legislation (Rs 75/-)                                             | : | Ed Kharak Singh                  |
| Khalsa and the Twentyfirst Century (Rs 250/-)                                 | : | Ed Kharak Singh                  |
| Martyrdom in Sikhism (Rs 100/-)                                               | : | Ed Kharak Singh                  |
| Guru Granth - Guru Panth (Rs 50/-)                                            | : | Ed Kharak Singh                  |
| Scramble for Punjab Waters (Rs 50/-)                                          | : | Gurdev Singh                     |
| Punjab Waters – SYL Canal (Rs 50/)                                            | : | Ed Gurdev Singh                  |
| Institutional Failure in Punjab With<br>Respect To Sikhism (Rs 40/-)          | : | Ed Kirpal Singh                  |
| Teaching Sikh Heritage to the Youth* (Rs 50/-)                                | : | Gurbakhsh Singh                  |
| Gurbani Ka Nagari Lipyantaran : Samasyaen<br>Aur Apekshaen (Hindi) (Rs 25/-)  | : | Harkirat Singh                   |
| Kalaam-e-Goya : Bhai Nand Lal (Rs 250/-)                                      | : | Tr Pritpal Singh                 |
| Connecting the Dots in Sikh History (Rs 150/-)                                | : | Harbans Singh Noor               |
| Fragments of Half a Century (Rs 500/-)                                        | : | Karnail Singh                    |
| Maharaja Duleep Singh – King in Exile (Rs 40/-)                               | : | Gurmukh Singh Sandhu             |
| Sri Gur Panth Parkash (Rattan S Bhangoo) (Rs 1050/-)                          | : | Tr Kulwant Singh                 |
| Guru Nanak - A Prophet with a Difference (Rs 50/-)                            | : | Kharak Singh                     |
| Guru Granth Sahib & The Sikh Society                                          | : | Ed Gajinder Singh                |
| Sikhs Living in States Other Than Punjab                                      | : | Ed Gajinder Singh                |
| Chappar Chiri di Larai ate Sirhind Fateh (Pbi)                                | : | Dr Sukhdyal Singh                |
| Sardul Singh Caveeshar - Vidvan-Syaistdan (Rs. 20/-)                          | : | Dr Paramvir Singh                |
| Perspectives on Guru Gobind Singh Ji                                          | : | Gajinder Singh                   |
| Sikhism and Women                                                             | : | Gajinder Singh                   |
| Scramble for Punjab Waters                                                    | : | Gurdev Singh                     |
| Sri Gur Sobha (Rs. 550/-)                                                     | : | Tr Kulwant Singh                 |
| Nereon Dithe Dr Kharak Singh (Rs 200/-)                                       | : | Jaswant Rai                      |
| Know Your Heritage (Rs 400/-)                                                 | : | Dr Dharam Singh & Kulwant Singh  |
| Gurdwara: Concept & Institution (Rs. 300/-)                                   | : | Dr Gurdev Singh Sangha           |
| Guru Nanak: Swami Dayanand ate hor<br>Vidwana di Nazar wich (Punjabi) (150/-) | : | Bhai Ashok Singh Bagrian         |
| Nari Mukti Lehar De Jharokhe 'chon Itihasik Sikh Narian:                      | : | Principal Prabhjot Kaur          |
| Abstracts of Sikh Studies (Rs. 20/-) (bound yearwise :                        | : | Rs 125/- per year)               |

### DISCOUNT

|                                                             |                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 50% to life members of the <i>Abstracts of Sikh Studies</i> |                 |
| 40% to book sellers for bulk supplies                       |                 |
| 25% to all buyers                                           | (Postage Extra) |

### Where Available

1. Institute of Sikh Studies, Gurdwara Singh Sabha, Kanthala, IA Phase II, Chandigarh
2. Singh Brothers, Bazar Mai Sewan, Amritsar, India 143 006
3. Sikh Book Centre, Model Town Extension, Ludhiana, India
4. Sikh Missionary Society, 10, Featherstone Road, Southall, UK

\* Out of print

Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers for India under no : 69639 / 98

To

## ABSTRACTS OF SIKH STUDIES

### OBJECTIVES

1. To bring the latest advances in Sikh Studies to the notice of scholars and general readers.
2. To project a correct image of Sikhism and the Sikh Community in India as well as abroad.
3. To watch, report and rebut any distortions or mis- representations of Sikh Religion and its History.
4. To serve as a living link, and provide coordination among organisations engaged in promotion of Sikh Studies.
5. To highlight problems of Sikh diaspora, and suggest solutions.
6. To arrange reviews of important publications relating to Sikhism.
7. To assist readers in framing an informed opinion on matters relating to Sikhism and Sikh Studies.
8. To give publicity to activities of various Sikh Societies around the world.
9. To act as a forum for expression of readers' views.
10. To advertise appropriate literature on Sikhism.

**If Undelivered please return to:**

**INSTITUTE OF SIKH STUDIES**

Gurdwara Singh Sabha, Kanthala, Indl Area Phase II

Chandigarh - 160 002 (India)

Phone : +91 172 2642580

Web address : [www.sikhinstitute.org](http://www.sikhinstitute.org)

E-mail : [iOSSCHD@gmail.com](mailto:iOSSCHD@gmail.com)

Price: Rs 20/-