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ABSTRACTS OF SIKH STUDIES

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EDITORIAL

ਅਗਾਹਾ ਕੂ ਤ੍ਰਖਿ

Sikh religion and the Sikhs as a religious community are five hundred fifty five (555) years old on this planet earth. By virtue of the catholicity of its theology and enterprising and risk averse nature of the Sikhs, Sikh religion has become the fifth largest religion of the world in a short span of five centuries or half a millennium. A broad survey puts its population around 24 millions all over the globe which amounts to 0.4 of the total world population. In India, its home and place of origin, it constitutes 1.9% of India's population. While around 70% of its population in India lives in Punjab out of which around 50% of it lives on agriculture, rest of 30% being fairly scattered all over India in business and services.

Sociologists and philosophical thinkers believe that an overall status of a nation or a religious community among the comity of nations is determined and known by the quality of its human source, its economic assets, skilled percentage of its population, its educational, mental, intellectual level, status of women and its religious, moral and spiritual beliefs in this life and life after. It is broadly on these parameters that a community's reputation as a civil society is generally assessed or reckoned. Moreover, half a century is a fairly adequate span of time to analyse, assess and evaluate critically, the economic, social, political, educational, intellectual, religious, cultural and psychic state of a religious community.

Sikhs with their theology mandated work ethics of earning one's livelihood diligently and sharing it with the needy (*Ghaal Khaye kichh Hathon day*, p. 1245) and their enterprising, hardworking genetic nature they are overall self-reliant, fairly well provided and are leading a

dignified existence as a religious community. They are fairly well widespread in agriculture, medium scale industry, trade, business and services. Majority of the Sikhs belong to the middle class and there's comparatively less economic inequality among them than among some other religious minorities. With hardly any billionaire along them, there is a fairly significant number of millionaires and affluent Sikhs. Having a knack for good standard of living and being risk averse, they do not hesitate to venture out to greener pastures wherever they discern better economic prospects. This explains their presence in almost every part of the globe. With land holdings getting smaller and unviable in their native state of Punjab and income from agriculture having peaked, the Sikh youth is migrating on a large scale to the seemingly prosperous west. What is disturbing and religiously and morally offensive is the increasing trend of Sikh youth's indulgence in the dark world of drugs and crime. This tendency among the Sikh youth to indulge in drug addiction, drug trade and gangsterism is highly regrettable and worrying because this kind of indulgence violates the Sikh ethic of earning one's livelihood through honest means. Sikh religious leadership and Sikh society must make concerted efforts to curb this menace. Impressive and effective preaching of Sikh gospel by enlightened Sikh preachers through the use of electronic media can bring back the prodigal Sikh youth into the mainstream. Free skill training to the needy unemployed Sikh youth, de-addiction of the addicts through proper counselling to those involved in crime can restore them into a life of economic well-being and dignity.

Socially, the Sikhs, as a society at present, are equally organized as well as disorganized. At a moment of crisis when there is a threat to their identity or religious interests or sentiments, they get immediately united and stand up to face the impending challenge and do not hesitate to make the highest sacrifices for their cause. Similarly, during the occurrence of natural calamities or spread of epidemics in any part of the world, Sikhs are the first to reach the affected place and provide free food and medical aid to the victims and rescue those in danger to places of safety. Sikh service of Langar or community kitchen for

providing free food and a few Sikh organizations like Khalsa Aid are known worldwide for rendering free social service. During the recently passed Covid pandemic crisis, the Sikhs have rendered a yeoman's service to the Covid affected people through free supply of oxygen, medicines, food, ambulance service and even cremation of the dead at the greatest risk to their own lives. Sikh Gurdwaras and their Sikh volunteers provided every conceivable service to the suffering humanity without any discrimination. This kind of selfless humanitarian service gives a distinct recognition to the Sikhs as a distinct religious community and a well organized society.

Contrary to this highly organized socio-religious society, we also find serious faultiness in its social structure. Despite the fundamental theological Sikh ethics of equality of human status and gender among the Sikhs, (*Ek Pita Ekas ke Ham Barak*, p. 611); (*Manas ki Jaat Sabhay Eko Pebchanbo* – Dasam Granth). We find the entire Sikh society severely divided into sub-communities on the basis of caste, ethnic and racial lines. These divisive distinctions have come to vitiate and compartmentalise not only the scope for healthy matrimonial alliances but also the sanctity of religious worship as some caste based Sikh communities have established their own caste named separate places of worship called Gurdwaras. Political patronage, based on vote bank politics, has further aggravated this caste divide and is weakening the religious and cultural unity of the Sikh society. Similarly, despite the explicit Sikh theological message of gender equality (*So kion Manda Akhija*, p. 473) There still exists a bias against women in Sikh society. There is a rampant occurrence of female feticide because of this gender bias. Another faultline that occurred in recent years is the complete divide between the Sikhs and the *Sehajdhari* Sikhs. Instead of keeping the whole Sikh society united by giving a nominal representation to the *Sehajdhari* Sikhs in the SGPC house through cooption or nomination without giving them any voting rights, the powers that be entered into a long litigation and got the parliamentary amendment done in the SGPC act after Supreme Court's verdict in favour of *Sehajdhari* Sikhs representation in the Supreme Sikh religious body. This ill-advised move has alienated lacs of *Sehajdhari* Sikhs from the Sikh mainstream.

With unstoppable fast paced trend of apostasy among the younger Sikh generation going on, coupled with alienation of Sehajdhari Sikhs alienation, there is a serious existential threat to preserve and maintain the distinct Sikh identity. Thus Sikh society is more disorganized at the deeper level than being organized at the visible level.

At the religious level as well, the present day Sikh society is replete with several paradoxical and contrarian tendencies. While the Sikh religion is believed to have achieved the fifth position among the world religions and its presence is visible in the form of its places of worship, the Gurdwaras all over the world, its core concerns such as its preaching and propagation of Sikh religion adherence to its values and code of conduct, especially among the Sikh youth, is inadequate and leaves much to be desired. It lacks a trained and enlightened cadre of multilingual Sikh preachers who could communicate with the younger Sikh generation which is unable to read the text of their sacred Sikh scripture and other Sikh classics in Gurmukhi script. Nor is any authentic and reliable English translation of these texts readily available. On the contrary, the mechanical, ritualistic non-stop reading of text with indifferent and scant audience and superfluous ostentation on Sikh family, religious and cultural functions are more ritualistic than genuinely religious which lacks the required religious essence and spirit. Sikh celebrations and festivals, which are increasing in number with each passing year, are marked with mass gatherings, with pageant like processions, bursting of crackers, lavish eating stalls, langars at very short distances from each other even on solemn occasions like martyrdom of younger Sahibzadas, lack religious sanctity and gravitas of a truly religious occasion. So while Sikh religion is expanding at the superficial level and outer shell, it is shrinking in its essence and kernal.

Sikhs have also been unfortunate so far as the political management of their affairs is concerned for a long time particularly after India's independence. Sikh political leadership in Punjab and India, by and large, with individual exceptions, has been lacking in their commitment to the community's cause due to the priority being given

to personal vested interests, lacking in diplomatic shrewdness and inbuilt factional feuds. Similar, lack of profoundness in political vision seems to prevail among Sikhs in their political leadership in Indian states outside Punjab and diaspora Sikhs. It needs basic education, indepth knowledge of and lifelong adherence to fundamental Sikh ethics, personal integrity, clear view of issues involved, capacity to discuss, debate and arriving at a consensus and proceeding to negotiate with the powers that be to derive maximum benefit for one's community's cause. Moreover, leadership is an image-building quality which in public perception is honest, self-sacrificing and committed to community's welfare. A hand full of existing Sikh ideologues and thinkers need to endeavour to inculcate these qualities through their written and spoken word among the present discredited, scattered and fragmented Sikh political leadership.

Nothing is more striking and agonizing than the more pervasive indifference among the Sikhs on the whole towards reading in general and things intellectual, brain stimulating and general knowledge enhancing in particular. Preference to things more brawny than brainy seems to be the norm among a large section of the male Sikh youth, especially the rural Sikh youth in Punjab. Majority of the Sikh youth among those migrating to gulf countries and the West are poorly educated, unskilled and broadly allergic to higher studies and mental academic hardwork even when higher education in some disciplines is available online at a modest cost. There are several Sikh organizations, Sikh NGO's which are engaged in providing financial assistance as well as logistic support free of cost to the needy and meritorious Sikh students for pursuing higher education and all kinds of competitive and entrance examinations. The fact that hundreds, may be thousands of Sikh youth, are engaged in manual labour class jobs and living in crowded, underground insanitary and unsafe basements, abroad, some of them engaged in drug trade and in criminal, gangster activities in India and abroad, is a sad reflection on the mental caliber of the Sikh youth. With their embedded allergy to academics or other activities involving mental exercise and study of science subjects, Sikh presence

in highend engineering, medical, bio-scientific, mathematical research jobs and related organizations in India and abroad is hardly visible or marginal in proportion to their population. A present thinker has accused the present Sikh generation of mental bankruptcy as compared to the mental capability of some similarly populated minority communities. Mental, intellectual enlightenment of a community is a stepping stone to becoming a civilized society. Adoption of proper work culture, inquisitiveness, being adequately mentally and intellectually equipped, dreaming, imagining and nursing high end ambitions for one's self and community are the pathways to health, happiness and prosperity. Identifying role models in one's own community and among others and emulating them can lead to the compensate the perceived mental bankruptcy among the Sikhs. Let those constituting the creamy layer among the Sikh intellectuals exhort the Sikh masses and Sikh youth to inculcate a habit of reading books and general knowledge stuff, since majority of the Sikhs are atleast literate at present. Being adequately educated, sufficiently skilled and productive and self-reliant is the best shield for a minority community both for living a dignified existence and against majoritarian overlordism.

All the above mentioned economic social, political, religious, educational, intellectual parameters which we have analyzed and evaluated in respect of Sikh community go to make the cultural and civilizational profile of the Sikh community. Since in each parameter, the state of Sikh community is neither ideal nor perfect, nor miserably deficient and dismal except politically, Sikhs have culturally and civilizational little impact on world affairs or even on Indian affairs. Being religiously and politically divided into castes, religious sects and, political factions, their one time image of being a well united religious community is on the wane and losing steam. As a result, even their genuine, legitimate grievances or demands are not being heard and addressed by the powers that be except in one odd country like Canada where they are share holders in political power despite being only 2% of its total population.

Psychologically also, are the Sikhs healthy, happy and balanced people in body, mind and soul? Is majority of them conversant with basics of maintaining a healthy body such as proper nutrition, personal hygiene, body weight-height balance? Are they mentally aware of the world around them and the present day national and international state of affairs and the environmental and ecological state of our planet earth and universe? Are they aware of their religious and spiritual heritage and the need for passing on its finer points of Sikh's moral integrity, community service and spirit of sacrifice and guaranteed emancipation while living and working in this world to its younger generation? All these factors together determine the psychic state of individual Sikhs and Sikh community. Here also we find the glass neither full nor completely empty It seems to be less than half full.

Passage of a little more than five centuries in the life span of a community is an appropriate time span for the Sikhs as a community to assess, introspect, speculate and plan a road map for the future. Let all the sensitive, enlightened, intellectuals, professionals, social activities and spiritual savants, among the Sikhs look forward to Sikh Gurus' injunction:

ਅਗਾਹਾ ਕੂ ਤ੍ਰਾਪਿ ਪਿਛਾ ਫੇਰਿ ਨ ਮੁਹਡੜਾ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਸਿਝਿ ਇਵੇਹਾ ਵਾਰ ਬਹੁੜਿ ਨ ਹੋਵੀ ਜਨਮੜਾ ॥

(Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1096)

*Look thou ahead, turn not thy face backwards,
Saihb Nanak: Make life fruitful this time –
Never more shalt thou see birth.*

(Translation of Sri Guru Granth Sahib,

G.S. Talib, Vol III, p. 2229)

Let us make concerted efforts to upgrade the Sikh community in all these spheres and be a community of productive wealth creators, brilliant inquisitive minds, morally upright, honest citizens and social service crusaders.

CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP AMONG THE SIKHS

DR.. SUKHMANDER SINGH*

ABSTRACT

It is presented that the leadership in the form of an individual (single person) has damaged the Sikh destiny over the years. The concept of **Collective Wisdom** is presented and is recommended as the way to advance the Panth.

When Guru Gobind Singh Ji gave Gur-Gaddi to Shri Guru Granth Sahib; it meant that, henceforth, Sikhs would not look for a single person to guide them. In other words, the leadership in the form of an individual was completely dissolved. The concept of Collective Wisdom was demonstrated by assigning five Sikhs to Baba Banda Singh asking him to act in consultation with them on all matters such as location of Jathaas, war and armaments, territorial and other strategic planning, etc. Baba Banda Singh faithfully followed the dictum and was successful. But, when once the cunning Moghul ruler conspired to make Banda Singh as an individual and Banda Singh fell into this trap, his tragic fall followed.

The Khalsa Raj during Maharaja Ranjit Singh had its foundations on the Collective Wisdom provided by Hari Singh Nalwa, Akali Phoola Singh, and Sham Singh Attari-wala; they were always consulted and their advice followed. The Maharaja would even sign treaties as Sarkare Khalsa. But, under the tricky influence(wine and dine) and sexual bribery of Dograas, Maharaja Ranjit Singh stopped the use of collective wisdom and started side-lining the brave Sikhs. He even

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started signing as Ranjit Singh (Maharaja) and not as a Sarkare Khalsa on all decisions related to the kingdom. Consequently he did not care to appoint any of his sons as heir to the Kingdom after him. The rest is history as to how the tragic fall of his kingdom occurred. Since Maharaja Ranjit Singh switched from signing as Sarkare Khalsa to Maharaja, it is a clear evidence of the abandoning of the Collective Wisdom tradition.

The Indian leaders of Congress, Muslim League and Baldev Singh were called to London in early December to participate in the conference on December 6, 1946. The purpose of the conference was to seek cooperation from all parties in the Constituent Assembly. Baldev Singh seemed to have started showing disregard for the Akali party (his parent party in Punjab) ever since he was appointed defence minister. According to Dr. Kirpal Singh in his book "The Sikhs and Transfer of Power, 1942-47" published by the Punjabi University, Patiala, Baldev Singh accepted the appointment without consulting the President of the Shiromani Akali Dal, Giani Kartar Singh. He never informed or discussed his visit to London on December 6, 1946 with the Sikh leaders in Punjab. A total disregard to the concept of Collective Wisdom. Dr. Kirpal Singh revealed new details in his book, which are not, otherwise, available. Regarding his discourse with Major Short (Who Accompanied the Cabinet Mission to Delhi in March 1946), Dr. Kirpal Singh stated, "Major Short told me that Baldev Singh was invited by some members of the British Parliament, to stay in England after the conference, to deliberate on the demands of the Sikhs. But he did not stay because Pandit Nehru persuaded him to accompany him back to India, where the Constituent Assembly (299-member, assembly responsible for the framing of the Constitution of India) was to be inaugurated later in December 1946." "The author also revealed that Sir Stafford Cripps proposed to Baldev Singh that the 'Sikhs should jointly present Sikh case along with the Sikh States in order to strengthen their demand for a Sikh State'. Baldev Singh is believed to have responded, that the Sikh State was going to be too small.' It seemed likely that Pandit Nehru had cautioned Baldev Singh

against the Sikh State, since Baldev Singh's Steel business in other states, might not be accessible in the event of a Separate Sikh State. With that in mind Baldev Singh seemed to have sacrificed the interests of his community to protect his own. On the other hand, Pandit Nehru persuaded Baldev Singh to accompany him back to India, from London. Nehru, had started using Baldev Singh as a representative of the Sikh community, knowing that Singh had distanced himself from his community leaders in the Punjab.

“Ye jabar bhi dekha hai, Tarikh ki nazron ne, Lambon ne khata ki thi, sadiyon ne sazapayiee”.

‘The History has witnessed the brutality of time, where moments erred, and the centuries suffered’.

(Muzaffar Razmi)

Master Tara Singh and Baba Kharak Singh were the front runners of the ‘Nationalists’ movement in struggle for independence of India. In 1930 Master Tara Singh supported the Congress in their civil disobedience movement (Non-cooperation) for which he went to jail. While still in jail he was elected the president of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. From then on up to 1947, he played a dominant role in S.G.P.C. and the Shiromani Akali Dal with some exceptions. But he was no match for the shrewd and opportunistic minds of Nehru and Jinnah. The concept of Collective Wisdom would have made up for the difference. Akali Dal joined Congress and his efforts to keep India united failed. On the contrary he was portrayed as against the interests of Muslims. The existing racial hatred, while negotiations for the partition of India were ongoing was too painful for the highly dedicated Sikh representing the Sikh Panth. A controversy has been going on with regards to the role of Master Tara Singh in brandishing sword to tear Pakistan flag while uttering slogan against Pakistan. However, in a recent article in September 2023 issue of The Sikh Review, Dr. Bhai Harbans Lal has demolished this controversy and has provided details that this is not true. In fact Dr.Lal explained that while meeting Master Tara Singh at his Puttlighar residence in Amritsar, he responded in negative for not carrying Kirpan, Master ji

“asked his brother to fetch a particular Kirpan....when Kirpan was brought Master Tara Singh ceremoniously presented it to me” and it was the same Kirpan about which the controversy was spread. Anyway, as noted above Baldev Singh's role and betrayal of Master Singh by the Congress and Muslim parties. Had there been the tradition of Collective Wisdom, we might not have fallen prey to the opportunistic leaders. Alas! partition is a gruesome history tainted with the blood of thousands of innocent lives

After partition, The Sikh chief minister, Partap Singh Kairon, the so called ‘statesman by some intellectual political scientists’ was so power starved that he could not see through the fine print of Mr. Nehru’s evil designs regarding Punjab. Nehru and his Congress both at the Centre and in Punjab started stealing Punjab’s share of the natural resources. Prime example was that of Sutlej waters which was being taken away through the Bhakra Main Line ever since it was dug up in the early 1950s and the electricity for Delhi and Chandigarh from Punjab’s share. On January 23, 1956 he was sworn in as chief minister of Punjab after the resignation of Mr. Bhim Sen Sachar. During his tenure as chief minister his own compromising political and administrative practices coupled with his sons’ immoral behaviour as a super brat brought him into disrepute. Mr. Nehru always protected his corrupt practices and his family’s wrong doings. Mr. Nehru’s intervention always hushed up his opponents in his own party in the Punjab assembly. He was the first chief minister to amass lots of commercial property in almost every big city in Punjab through his son in the form of Cinema Halls and cold stores. He almost legalized corruption as well as smuggling only for his close associates. Consequently precious Water of Punjab was given away free to Rajasthan by a Sikh Leader, acting in an individual capacity, to retain a top political position. The story of Pratap Singh Kairon’s deal with the center is an often-talked issue each time distribution of Punjab waters comes up. If only he had consulted experts who could have alerted him to the long-term disastrous impact on shortage of water leading to Punjab becoming barren. One can lament deeply upon his decision when one sees the Rajasthan Canal tearing through the heart

of Punjab but not a drop is available for Punjab.

We can be advancing into history, how Sant Fateh Singh bailing out of his Solomon oath have brought shame to the Sikh Panth and how an individual leadership has done harm to the cause of Sikhs

Subsequent periods through the nineties, plus two more decades, have been witness to the destruction of Sikh youth and Punjab by ego-driven, selfish, and corrupt Sikh politicians. In each case for the sake of self glory and greed, a Sikh leader can stoop down to any level. First, Chief Minister Beant Singh, then the Badals, and Chief Minister Amarinder Singh and so on may make Punjab sink deeply into further chaos.

Even in areas other than politics, pursuant of individual glory over that of Collective Wisdom is quite common among Sikhs. For example in an academic field an individual would try to minimize the impact of another, though equally qualified, individual. As a result, formation of a focus group in many fields has not emerged among Sikhs

In view of the foregoing presentation, it appears that once decision-taking power is given to a Sikh Leader, by way of a political or a religious process, it is likely that more harm than good will result for Punjab and the Sikhs. Yet we are looking for an individual to miraculously appear and lead us. Is it not against what Guru Gobind Singh commanded us to follow? So, how can the concept of "Collective Wisdom" be used nowadays?

The current political system has miserably failed to bring about wisdom in the Panth. Nowadays, even a completely illiterate person can be an Education Minister. These elected politicians are mostly mercenaries and are far from being expert in any field. This system cannot provide any wisdom to our Panth and society that has to successively evolve socially, economically, religiously, industrially, politically and culturally in the correct direction. We need to bring about the best of talent and leadership vision to bear upon each one of the above-mentioned fields

A SUGGESTION

One approach is to set up an “Advisory Cell” of experts in each one of these fields. These experts can provide collective wisdom as well as guidance on an issue related to any one of the fields. It is not going to be an easy task that our perceived selfish and corrupt, elected leaders would agree to such a concept. But, if the general public is made aware of the misery and suffering that has been brought upon the panth for not following the concept of collective wisdom, it may, in due course, bring about a change.

□

ਹੋਇ ਇਕਤ੍ਰ ਮਿਲਹੁ ਮੇਰੇ ਭਾਈ ਦੁਬਿਧਾ ਦੂਰਿ ਕਰਹੁ ਲਿਵ ਲਾਇ॥
ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੈ ਕੇ ਹੋਵਹੁ ਜੋੜੀ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਬੈਸਹੁ ਸਫਾ ਵਿਛਾਇ ॥

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1185

OFF THE RESURGENT PATH

GURDEV SINGH*

“The Shromani Akal Dal played a stellar role in India's long struggle for freedom and as an ameliorator of Sikhs interests. To attain these objectives, Sikhs led by Shromani Akali Dal, made remarkable sacrifices. To keep Akalis/ Sikhs associated as energetic partners in campaigns for independence solemn assurances were given to them by the country's then leadership (Indian National Congress) to fulfil the Akali demands for an honourable status and suitable positions to Sikhs in free India. After India became free, Congress leaders who were at the helms of India's government and who had made solemn assurances to Akalis before independence, ignored all the assurances soon after independence. When the Sikh leadership urged the Indian government to abide by the pledges held out before independence, the Indian government slighted them observing that now the circumstances had changed and the government was not obliged to make good the pre-independence promises.“During India's long drawn movement for freedom from foreign rule, the Indian National Congress had resolved that after independence, provinces (states) would be organized on linguistic basis to provide equable development of country's varied ethno-cultural aspirations. Pursuant to that pre-independence commitment of the Congress, new states were formed on the pattern of languages spoken in various parts of India's Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh etc. etc - a similar status was denied to the Punjabi speaking people and their State. Consequent to unremitting struggles and bitter campaigns by Akalis, Government of India finally acquiesced to form a new state for Punjabi speaking citizens. In charting domain of the newly created

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Punjab State, important segments of Punjabi speaking areas were kept outside so much so that even Punjab's capital was not included in the state of Punjab. Though newly formed states are routinely assigned their capitals, high courts, electricity/ water dams, Punjab was not invested with the dignity of its own high court and control of its water resources. The High Court of Punjab and Haryana is not an integral entity of Punjab whose water electricity/ water dams are outside the sway of Punjab government. "The Shromani AKali Dal has been agitating for redressal of their grievances but of no avail. Sikhs in Punjab supporting and looking to Shromani Akali Dal to secure their entitlements were getting impatient and felt that Shromani Akali Dal was not doing enough to attain the objectives for which they had made huge sacrifices. Consequently the support and backing Shromani Akali Dal used to get from Sikhs in elections continued diminishing. As the time passed, anger of Sikhs against Shromani Akali Dal, which they have always reckoned as their protector, burst with full vigour that was amply apparent from dismal SAD's performance in 2022 assembly elections and 2019 and 2024 parliamentary elections. "Shromani Akali Dal is badly bruised and finds itself in doldrums. We hear of attempts to put SAD on even keel so that it is able to function as a competent body to safe-guard Sikh interests.

Here I venture to throw an earnest warning to the leaders claiming to be path setters and cherishers of Sikh interests that mere change in the positions of pieces in the organizational chess board is not going to be of any avail to overcome the prevailing challenges. Any organization, including Shromani Akali Dal, wishing to lead the Sikhs must be prepared to face the most formidable challenges for the redressal of Sikh grievances. It is pertinent to add that central government should apply much needed poultice to smoothen irritants that are so apparent vis-a-vis Punjab and Sikhs. "Sikhs are as much citizens of India as any other fellow citizen; they have the right to ventilate their grouses and seek relief at par with their co-citizens. It is not in national interest to let Sikhs continue sulking and rueing. Frustration among Sikhs could lead to outcomes that we have been seen in the recently held parliamentary election results.

POLITICS THAT LED INDIRA GANDHI TO SEND AN ARMY TO THE GOLDEN TEMPLE

JASPAL SINGH SIDHU*

A lot has already been written and said about the political stand made of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi not to make any settlement with the agitating Akali Dal, a Sikh political outfit, and chose to send the army to the Golden Temple in June 1984. During the past four decades, several revelations about domestic politics have offered new insights into the army's action, codenamed Operation Blue Star.

Historical Perspective: Broadly, the roots of the June 84 tragic events lie in the 1947 Partition of Punjab as a consequence of the transfer of power by the British imperialist power to the Indian Congress and the Muslim League. In the words of journalist M J Akbar, the Partition was an 'unfinished agenda' of Indian Independence. That, surgical operation, conducted by the outsiders to Punjab brought a lot of bloodshed and uprooting and wounds continued to simmer. And the tiny Sikh minority suffered the most and fell into such a predicament that has not been resolved till today.

Earlier, non-visionary Akali Dal leaders failed to comprehend what future awaited them in the 1940s and chose or trapped them to side with Congress. They rarely explored the possibility of understanding/alliance/ settlement with the Muslim League even as a counterpoising act against the overbearing Congress having a clear bent towards Hindu culture and ethos. The British had recognized the Sikhs as a third entity along with Congress and League during the negotiations for the 'transfer of power'. The Sikh leaders attended round-table conferences in London in the 1930s and the negotiations

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with the Cabinet Mission on the transfer of power in December 1946. Besides that, the Sikhs overwhelmingly participated in the Independence struggle. But the Sikhs were not given any special consideration in free India which has been impelling them to compare their pre and post-Partition placings.

The Sikhs faced hardships and restrictions after Independence. They were not only bluntly denied due accommodation in the power structure but Nehru and newspapers toeing his line had presented Akalis as the “Punjab Problem”. Sandwiched Akali leaders merged their party with Congress, soon to be felt ignored and suffocated. Akali leader Master Tara Singh chose to part ways with Congress and revive his party.

Just after gaining Independence, Congress leaders were obsessed with the immediate task of consolidating the diversified sub-continent into an Indian Nation on a European pattern of a Nation-State with a strong New Delhi center before it fell asunder. They used a ‘stick and carrot’ policy to make the Akali Dal fall in line. In a nutshell, the Sikhs too became ordinary Indian citizens like other Indians and they lost all opportunities to secure even cultural protection as a separate entity.

Feeling robbed and ignored, Akali Dal attempted to retrieve their lot by launching an agitation for Punjabi Suba—a Punjabi language-based state to be carved out of the then Hindu majority larger Punjab. After Independence, the reluctant ruling Congress agreed to carve out several language-based states like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka et al in 1956, but outrightly rejected the Akali Dal’s demand and branded it as a “separatist one”. Rather, the Indian Establishment visibly attempted to create a Hindu-Sikh divide and prompted the Punjabi Hindus to deny their mother tongue, Punjabi and the Hindu leaders launched ‘Mahan- Punjab (Greater Punjab) and anti-Sikh campaigns. The Ruling Congress at the Center also ruled Punjab roping in a sizable number of Akali Dal turncoats to the ruling party.

A 16-year long–drawn Akali struggle (morcha) could achieve a lame-duck type Punjabi Suba in 1966- a constitutionally incomplete one. Practically, instead of carving out a Punjabi language area, the

Indian Establishment deliberately made an incisive cut deep into the Punjabi areas to encircle around Punjabi Suba; Punjab's capital Chandigarh was made a Union Territory even as it was built up by removing three dozen Punjabi speaking villages and river headworks were also taken away. The Punjab Reorganization Act of 1966 was passed in the Parliament with 78,79 and 80 clauses that empowered the New Delhi rulers to adjudicate the distribution of Punjab river waters and other natural resources.

On top of it, the ultra-nationalist Hindus always considered Sikhs as part of Pan-Hindu society. The Arya Samaj in Punjab in the 1870s attempted to bring the lower strata of Sikhs back into the fold of Hinduism. Under the influence of Singh Sabha when idols of Hindu gods/goddesses were removed from the 'parikarma' of the Golden Temple, Hindu Mahasabha and Arya Samaj leaders got a piece of land in Amritsar itself allotted by the British District Magistrate for constructing Durgiana Temple with similar layout style as that of Sikh shrine. The idols removed from the Sikh temple were installed in the Hindu Temple (Durgiana) thereby creating two powerful symbols of the Hindu-Sikh divide and rivalry for the future. The divide between Sikhs and Hindus remained manageable when both communities were placed together against their common opponent—Muslims in Punjab but soon fell against each other when the Muslims' opposition ceased to exist in free India.

Earlier in 1921 Mahatma Gandhi too expressed surprise on his visit to Punjab in the aftermath of the Nankana Sahib tragedy that 'how Sikhs could claim themselves as religiously different' from the Hindus'. In the above context, the New Delhi establishment patronized the Radha Swami, Nirankari, and other Sikh sects to dilute the Sikh core. This was the root cause that set the stage for the Sikh-Nirankari clash on Baisakhi Day, 13 April 1978 at Amritsar which saw 13 Sikh volunteers killed. The clash was a triggering point for Operation Blue Star which took place six years later. Sant Jarnail Singh Bhinderanwale, heading the Damdami Taksal (a Sikh seminary) at Mehta Chowk, in Amritsar had taken the cause of getting justice for 13 Sikhs killed in the Amritsar clash.

Earlier, when Indira Gandhi imposed an Emergency in June 1975 the Akali party opposed it by courting arrests for its 19-month-long duration. During that period in 1976, Indira Gandhi announced her award for the distribution of Punjab river waters between Punjab and Haryana, favoring Haryana. That award further sowed seeds of discord between two neighboring states which were /are being exploited by political parties till today.

The acquittal of all the 60 odd Nirankaris and their supporters accused in the Amritsar clash by a Haryana's Karnal court where the case was transferred had angered the Sikhs, particularly Sant Bhinderanwale camp. Lala Jagat Narain, owner-editor of the Jalandhar-based Punjab Kesri Group of newspapers was the ace witness who had deposed in the court in favor of Nirankaris. Sant Bhinderawale launched an open campaign against Nirankaris as well as against the Akali Dal leaders, particularly against Parkash Singh Badal for allegedly shielding Nirankaris and their supporters in the Janata Party as chief minister.

Army Attack on Golden Temple in Making: With the fall of the Janata Party, a loose coalition of different ideological politicians, a stronger Indira Gandhi bounced back to power as Prime Minister at the Centre in January 1980. As an act of vengeance, she dissolved more than a dozen opposition-ruled elected state governments including Badal's in February 1980. Congress with Darbara Singh as chief minister formed the government in Punjab.

In the wake of the Haryana assembly polls in 1982, Indira Gandhi took another anti-Punjab step of laying the foundation of the Satluj-Yamuna Link (SYL) canal at Kapoori village in Patiala district of Punjab. The SYL canal was to be dug to take a "surplus" share of river waters to Haryana as per her earlier award in 1976. Akalis projected this as another act of discrimination against Punjab/ Sikhs in addition to several others. Thus, Akali Dal launched an agitation (morcha) against the Kapoori episode joined by the CPI(M) soon to part away.

On top of it, Indira Gandhi forced Darbara Singh to withdraw

the Punjab case filed by the Akali Dal against her 1976 award in the Supreme Court. That case challenged 78,79,80 clauses of the Punjab Reorganization Act too.

Historical pieces of evidence vouchsafe that Indira Gandhi abandoned Congress's earlier centrist/ secular policies and adopted Hindutva openly or tactically to promote her political interests and broaden her party base in the larger majority. And, in the 1980s Indira Gandhi openly allied with RSS and its third chief Balasaheb Deoras. Thus, she prepared a fertile ground in India for Hindutva politics which culminated in the first place as 'majoritarian rule' in India and then catapulted the Narendra Modi regime out to convert India into a 'Hindu Rashtra'.

Earlier, Indira Gandhi had admitted in her book 'My Story' that she was opposed to the formation of Punjab Suba taking it as a "betrayal of Hindu Punjabis" who had always sided with Congress.

Against the above background the observations of the Senior intelligence agency, RAW's officer GBS Sidhu, who retired as "Special Secretary" are worth mentioning that Indira Gandhi chose to cultivate the Hindu majority base by targeting minorities. Mr. Sidhu was privy to the 1980s development at New Delhi 'corridors of power' and writes down tersely in his book "The Khalistan Conspiracy" that "the prime minister has taken a decision, as advised by Sanjay Gandhi (her son), to win the next general elections by using services of Bhinderanwale to create a serious Hindu-Sikh divide and plant the fear of Khalistan in the minds of the majority". An all-powerful special team of Congress leaders with an office at Indira Gandhi's official residence- 1 Akbar Road- was created to act upon that tacit operation, states Mr. Sidhu (p-6). The book sums up that during "two phase operation.... ended with Operation Blue Star in June 1984" was taken up by the 1 Akbar Road Special Group that managed the newspapers to trumpet non-existent Khalistan, raise the pitch of violence in Punjab attributing it to hardliner Sikhs and linking them up with Pakistan and ISI and also sharpened the Hindu-Sikh divide by creating equally matching Hindu militancy as Hindu Suraksha Samitis etc.

It is interesting to observe that when Akali Dal's Kappori morcha was tottering, Punjab police arrested Sant Bhinderanwale's close aides Bhai Amrik Singh and Thara Singh under some trumpeted charges, forcing the hardliner Sant to launch an agitation. He came down to the Golden Temple complex from Mehta Chowk and began sending his followers to court arrest demanding the release of his aides on 25 July 1982.

At that time a break-away Akal faction of Jagdev Singh Talwandi was also running a separate morcha for implementing the Anadpur Sahib Resolution seeking more rights to the states. His morcha was shaky as Talwandi was countering difficulty in mobilizing workers and money for demonstrations in Delhi.

In a bid to outwit Congress seeking to win over Sant Bhinderanwale, Akali Dal (Longowal) leaders-- Tohra and Badal--quickly bought three warring Sikh groups on a single platform and launched a united fight in the name of 'Dharam Yudh Morcha' on 4 August 1982 with a focus on the implementation of Anandpur Sahib Resolution(ASR) with some peripheral religious demands. Taking up the ASR meant directly hitting India's Nation-State restructuring with the centralization of power at the New Delhi center. In other words, It amounted to attacking Hindu Nationalism- the basis of the Hindu Nation building project. In this way, the entire Sikh Panth (from soft to hardliners) lined up against the Indian State as emerged in 1947.

Leader of the largest Akali Dal faction Sant Harchand Singh Longowal was unanimously accepted as leader (dictator) of the morcha. Around 2 lakh Akali volunteers were arrested peacefully in 22 months till the army action in June 1984. But Indira Gandhi ignored the peaceful morcha and its demands. And by using media and powerful official propaganda machinery she succeeded in branding the morcha as "anti-national and separatist".

Spreading of fake/ distorted news became an official strategy against the morcha. In November 1982 when Asiad was being held at Delhi a distorted news captured newspapers' headlines that 'Akalis decided a to disrupt Asian Games (Asiad)" while Akalis had decided

only to stage protests at Delhi during Asiad to highlight their demands. Haryana's Congress Chief Minister Bhajan Lal asked police to search every Sikh traveling to Delhi through his state.

Even highly placed Sikhs in Defence forces and bureaucracy were not spared, a majority were humiliated. This generated an expected action and reaction. Some extremist Sikhs sprayed bullets targeting Hindus at Patti, Tarn Tarn, and Bhikhiwind in Amritsar district. As a reaction, Sikh shopkeepers came under attack in Panipat and other Haryana towns.

That is how a communal die was set to produce replicated violence on innocent Sikhs in Haryana and Hindus in Punjab.

Earlier, on 25 April 1983 Police DIG Avtar Singh Atwal was gunned down when he was stepping out of the Golden Temple and the then, Congress government headed by Darbara Singh was obstructed by the Delhi Establishment from sending security forces into the shrine. The police officer's body lying at the staircase for hours created the scariest scene for Indians. That was how the Sikhs were demonized in the eyes of Indians.

It looks like Sikh extremists never realized that they were being trapped in 'revenge killing' which involved soft-targeting mostly innocent Hindus. That helped the Government in branding Sikh militants as 'terrorists'. For example, who prompted, these killings remains a mystery till today but killings of Hindu bus passengers by Sikh hitmen at Punjab's Dhilwan and Naushehra villages were ugliest and naked acts of terrorism which are considered a slur on Sikh traditions and philosophy as well. No one bothered about Sant Longowal and Sant Bhinderanwale's repeated denial and attribution that the violent activities including bus passengers' killings were the handiwork of the government agencies and Congress operatives. But newspapers and the Government's propaganda harked that killers and murderers were residing in the Golden Temple complex.

Hue and cry on the Dhilwan bus killing came in handy for the Indira Gandhi regime as it quickly removed the Darbara Singh government- a cushion between Akalis and the Center and took Punjab

under its direct control.

Another armed group, Babbar Khalsa also emerged in the Complex whose leader publically claimed in the press to have gunned down 30 odd Nirankaris in Punjab. His assertion was an attempt to outmatch Sant Bhinderanwale's armed followers. But Babbars' claim justified the Government's contention that the "killers and murderers were sheltering themselves in the Golden Temple complex".

The rising pitch of violence in Punjab overshadowed the peaceful Dharamyudh morcha and its demands. Failure of each of the 26 rounds of talks between Indira Gandhi and Akali leaders weakened the latter and strengthened the status and reach of the Sant Bhinderanwale camp among the Sikhs. Since the Sikh-Nirankari clash of 1978, the hardliner Sant had openly been accusing Akali leaders of playing politics on the Sikh religious and other issues for power. But in mid-1983 Longowal and Bhinderanwale camps fell apart within the Golden Temple complex even as the morcha continued on various issues. But indirectly/ through innuendos they attacked each other.

Towards the end of 1983, Indira Gandhi succeeded in her strategy of weakening the Akali leader by staging a charade of talks including tri-partite parleys involving the Opposition on demands of the morcha. Each time she wriggled out of the talk on one or other pretext and projected Akalis as unamenable/ unreasonable. Not to give any credit to Akalis, the Prime Minister attended a religious ceremony at Bangla Sahib Gurdwara in Delhi and on her own announced the acceptance of some of their religious demands including the transfer of Kotwali to Sis Ganj Gurdwara in Delhi. All this went to provide an upsurge in the Bhinderanwale camp which she used to accentuate the communal divide by giving a parallel uplift to the Hindu organizations like Hindu Shiv Sena and Hindu Suraksha Samitis.

In May 1984, a few weeks before the army action Punjab was embroiled in senseless communal frenzy as Hindu organizations went on enforcing the "Punjab Bandh" with tacit official and police support. Shops of several Sikhs were attacked at Hoshiarpur and other places provoking Sikhs for retaliatory acts.

On one hand, Indira Gandhi enacted a drama of peaceful settlement of the morcha, on the other hand, she began arranging special forces and consulted the foreign governments and experts for a sudden swoop at the Golden Temple complex and for the airlifting of Sant Bhinderanwale from there. And replica of the Golden Temple was erected at Chakrata for training the special commandos for entry into the complex.

Punjab Governor BD Pande's memoirs provide a good peep into Indira Gandhi's mind and her policies on Sikhs/ Punjab. An ICS bureaucrat of 1939 batch and eminent administrator Pande was specially brought to Punjab as Governor from Calcutta (now Kolkata) in October 1983 to govern the state. He held several crucial one-to-one meetings with Indira Gandhi during those sensitive days before Operation Blue Star. Visibly disgusted with the developments, he resigned just after the June army action in July 1984 and went to his native place, the Himalayan district of Kumaon where he penned down his memoir about Punjab and Sikh affairs and sealed them with directions to the family members that "not to be opened until five years after my death or 1 January 2001 whichever is later". Anyhow, Pande's daughter got memoirs published as a book, "In the Service of Free India" only in 2021.

Pande puts his observations on the development in perspective as he underlines that though technically minorities have been given rights in the constitution, for the tiny Sikh minority harboring feelings of being discriminated against is most natural. Truly "they had not got their due" in free India as Sikhs were more privileged in British India with better employment, 33 percent share in the armed forces, owning double the share of fertile land.

The Sikhs, as a third entity along with Congress and the Muslim League called to round table conferences in the 1930s and they made special representations at Cripps and Cabinet missions in early 1940s. All that made Gandhi-Nehru announce that "Sikhs be given special consideration in Independent India". But, Pande writes, it happened another way round "... Punjabi Hindus were prompted to deny Punjabi

as their mother tongue in 1951 census; the demand of Punjab Suba rejected on border's security grounds. Pertinently, Pande says Indira Gandhi in her award on river waters distribution "Haryana was given unduly larger share"; Anandpur Sahib Resolution was knowingly propagated as "seditious"; and "fake reporting is mostly carried by Hindu owned national press". He mentions that "more Sikhs were killed than Hindus" and "the worst offenders are Hindu chauvinists, neo-fascist type on top like Hindu Shiv Sena backed by reactionary and political power".

Importantly, Pande underscores that a few months before the army action, the "atmosphere and propaganda was anti-Punjab (Sikhs)". Pande says, "I felt greatly disturbed at the thought and consequence" when in a one-to-one meeting Indira Gandhi "stressed her determination to stamp out terrorists (read Sikhs). all measures be taken ... added that she would not hesitate to bomb the Golden Temple if she had to". He observes that Mrs. Indira Gandhi had an "element of ruthlessness in facing and removing her adversaries she introduced what may be called amoral theory in Indian politics as power had to be seized and retained --- all measures adopted did not really matter".

Immoral and dictatorial measures were, thus, adopted by the Delhi regime to project that Punjab was on fire with threats of dismemberment of India and branded Sikhs as Khalistanis and terrorists. Almost all opposition leaders including of Left and former prime minister Charan Singh, L.K Advani, and A B Vajpayee publically forced Indira Gandhi to send an army to the Golden Temple without further delay. Thus, she secured a "political Consensus" in favor of her plans of striking at Amritsar/ Punjab and on the Sikhs in a big way to emerge and then to emerge as the "protector/ defender" of the Nation... a 'Durga' goddess.

At last, on 29 May (1984), she approved General A S Vaidya's (or General Sunderji's) military plan of making a sudden swoop on the Golden Temple with the largest show of strength to pull out within two hours the insiders like rats from their holes. But the army faced

fierce and strong resistance from Bhinderanwal's armed men. It took 72 hours for the army to reinforce and reequip it with tanks and lethal weaponry to silence fighters and clear the complex. Curfew was clamped in the entire Punjab and 42 other historical gurdwaras too were assaulted by the army. It seemed that the Indian State attempted to suppress the Sikh dissent for all the times to come. Punjab was undoubtedly relegated behind in every aspect thereafter. And, Sikhs too suffered a lot in the process.

Historically, Indira Gandhi herself fell and paid a heavy price for her political misadventure. She changed the character of Indian politics, weakened democracy. Mainstream politicians, thereafter, lost their free walk around and got encircled by police guards signaling a widening gap between them and the people even as India goes on flaunting having the largest democracy in the world.

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ਪਾਪੀ ਕਰਮ ਕਮਾਵਦੇ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਾਏ ਹਾਇ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਜਿਉ ਮਥਨਿ ਮਾਧਾਣੀਆ ਤਿਉ ਮਥੇ ਧ੍ਰਮ ਰਾਇ ॥

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1425

BLUE STAR WAS ILL-PLANNED, BADLY EXECUTED*

RAMESH INDER SINGH

The year 1984 was cataclysmic. Its defining moments — Operation Blue Star, assassination of the Prime Minister and the anti-Sikh pogrom — determined the internal discourse and history of the nation as probably no other year has since Independence.

The lapse of 40 years has not helped to heal the hurt. The perceived non-delivery of justice to the victims and non-closure of the tragedy still haunt. A Truth and Reconciliation Commission to fix the responsibility of all concerned — the political elements, state actors, militants and killer mobs — would have lent finality and closure through a judicial process and reconciliation.

Was Blue Star avoidable? Then Central Government projected it as an imperative action to eliminate militancy. Armed militants had usurped the shrine, fortified it with weapons and challenged the legitimacy of the constitutionally established polity. Would there have been any need to mobilise the Army had there been no armed militants and fortifications in the temple — so runs the argument.

The perception of the devout, however, is different. Blue Star is viewed as a premeditated desecration of the holiest shrine with the political objective to polarise the nation to secure votes in the parliamentary elections that were a few months away. One has to only look at the election campaign for the eighth Lok Sabha to understand this. Advertisements underpinning polarisation, like “Will the country’s border finally be moved to your doorstep” or one showing a Sikh taxi

* Courtesy: The Tribune, June 3, 2024

driver, with a poser to the readers — “Do you feel safe in the taxi?” — dotted the election campaign.

Catastrophic happenings often obscure objectivity, particularly in matters of faith. In the case of Blue Star, however, by now, certain facts are well-established and undisputed. To recapitulate, the Shiromani Akali Dal had launched a morcha on August 4, 1982, in support of its 10 demands — a mix of religious, political, economic and inter-state issues; it was daily courting peaceful arrests. Till June 1984, about 1,70,000 workers had courted arrests. There was hardly any village out of 12,000-odd in Punjab from where people had not contributed. The Akalis believed, in retrospect naively, that if they choked the jails with people, the Centre would be forced to concede their demands.

The nearly two years of the agitation were interspersed with 26 negotiation conclaves, some of these attended by the Prime Minister and Opposition leaders. At least on two occasions, an understanding was reached, but the Centre withdrew at the last minute. It seems that the government had made up its mind against a political settlement and a Cabinet sub-committee decided in May 1984 for a military solution. Pranab Mukherjee’s note of caution was brushed aside by the PM: “Pranab, I know of the consequences... The decision cannot be avoided.”

The Chief of Army Staff was ordered by the PM on May 25 to march on to Amritsar, while a façade of negotiations was sustained by inviting Akali leaders for talks with a group of Union ministers on May 29. An understanding was arrived at, only to be retracted later by the Union ministers, saying “Madam does not agree.”

Then Governor BD Pande was directed to requisition the Army and a formal order was issued by the Punjab Home Secretary on June 2. The troops carried out operations at the Golden Temple and 42 other gurdwaras. Pande had pleaded against the Army action and later confirmed that the PM “did not want a political settlement”.

Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, after the government backed out of

two proposed meetings with him, including an aborted rendezvous with Rajiv Gandhi, cautioned his followers: “Keep having negotiations but also have your preparations complete.” The preparations were for an armed struggle that ran parallel to the peaceful morcha of the Akali Dal.

The militants called it ‘hakkan di hinsa’ or violence to secure their rights. To them, violence and consequential police reprisal were also a type of dialogue with the State, though by other means. Since the militants lacked legitimacy, they fell back on what scholar Mark Juergensmeyer called “meta-morality that religion provides”.

The violence accelerated. Pakistan stepped in to train and arm the militants. The State appeared ineffective, if not complacent. Weapons, including machine guns, now fortified the temple and if then Punjab Police chief Pritam Singh Bhinder is to be believed, “they (read weapons) were not intercepted because there were oral instructions ‘from the top’ until two months ago not to check any of the kar sewa trucks”.

The troops surrounded the temple on the night of June 3. The Army made no attempt to negotiate with the militants to make them come out of the temple. Major Gen Shabeg Singh, who led the militants, was an instructor at the IMA when Maj Gen Brar, who commanded the Army troops, was a cadet — both knew each other well. Had they talked, probably a bloody tragedy may have been averted — but these are ifs of which history is made. The militants fought, as Lt Gen VK Nayar, who served as GOC, Western Command, wrote, “because they were given no option”.

The intervening night of June 5 and 6 was horrific. The Akal Takht, the historical symbol of Sikh sovereignty and struggle against Mughal and Afghan tyranny, was in ruins. About 330 security personnel and around 780 civilians, including pilgrims who were in the temple to commemorate the martyrdom day of Guru Arjan Dev, died. Private property beyond the western end of the temple suffered collateral loss, with shells overshooting the intended target. About 160 shops and 15 houses were destroyed.

What was achieved? The troops liquidated a few hundred armed militants. However, it was a pyrrhic victory. Blue Star sowed the seeds for an ethno-national struggle, triggering greater violence. The nation was at war with itself, with soldiers, some of them armed, abandoning barracks at many places. The militants were soon back in the temple and declared Khalistan in April 1986 from its precincts. Operations Black Thunder (1 and 2) had to be conducted.

The ill-planned and badly executed Blue Star, without politically addressing the Punjab problem, proved disastrous. The Rajiv-Longowal Accord could have shown the way forward, but it was never honoured.

Punjab suffered humongous losses. About 30,000 people died in a decade of violence. The state slipped from the number one position to below 15th among states on most of the socio-economic parameters. The ethno-national movement is dead, but it still resonates with a microscopic element abroad, raising concerns in India.

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ਅਸੰਖ ਮੂਰਖ ਅੰਧ ਘੋਰ ॥ ਅਸੰਖ ਚੋਰ ਹਰਾਮਖੋਰ॥
 ਅਸੰਖ ਅਮਰ ਕਰਿ ਜਾਹਿ ਜੋਰ ॥ ਅਸੰਖ ਗਲਵਢ ਹਤਿਆ ਕਮਾਹਿ ॥
 ਅਸੰਖ ਪਾਪੀ ਪਾਪੁ ਕਰਿ ਜਾਹਿ ॥

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 4

DEBUNKING THE MYTH OF DESTRUCTION OF SIRHIND BY BANDA SINGH BAHADAR IN 1710

INDERJEET SINGH*

INTRODUCTION

Banda Singh Bahadar has been accused of sacking the city of Sirhind in 1710 which according to many was only next to Lahore in Punjab in terms of grandeur. Mirza Mohd (1719) wrote that Banda Singh & his troops in their zeal to kill Muslims did not spare children and pregnant women.¹ Mohd Qasim (1723) in *Ibratnama* has stated Banda Singh in Sirhind destroyed prosperous places and broke and damaged mosques and tombs of ‘men of God’.² Subsequent Mughal chroniclers have added further exaggeration and interestingly the traditional Sikh writers who were biased against Banda Singh accepted it.³ Even modern Sikh historians who are relatively more rational agree that Sirhind was destroyed by Banda Singh and his troops.⁴ Then there is a section of Sikhs who justified ‘this destruction’ of Sirhind as revenge against Wazir Khan, the Faujdar of Sirhind who martyred the younger children of Guru Gobind Singh.

Based on this narrative, Banda Singh is a much-hated historical personality across Ravi in West Punjab. Successive modern historians and academics have accepted it as gospel truth without bothering to examine the current landscape of Sirhind. This write-up will look at the three-dozen existing Muslim structures in Sirhind which were all built before 1710. Dr Subhash Parihar has extensively written on Islamic buildings and their architecture in Punjab & Haryana. He is considered an authority on the subject and his academic works have been copiously used in this article.

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HISTORICAL MOSQUES

The city of Sirhind hosts 12 historical mosques. The Mosque of Sadhana Qasai (Butcher) lies near the railway crossing of Fatehgarh Sahib. It was built during Khilji (1290-320) or early Tughlaq period (1320-1412). His one hymn is present in Guru Granth Sahib, in Raag Bilawal (p858). It is a state-protected monument under the Archaeology Department of Punjab.

There is a mosque on the road to Khanpur village. Dr Parihar writes that the building appears to be a mosque, but local people believe it was a treasury. It belongs to the same period as the Mosque of Sadhna Qasai.

The compound of the Rauza Sharif or Dargah of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi has three mosques. The first one was built in 1599-1600. Later a bigger mosque was built during the reign of Shah Jahan (1627-58). The second mosque is near the tomb of Khwajah Muhammad Masum and was constructed during the early years of the rule of Aurangzeb (1658-1707). The third and the smallest mosque was erected by Khwajah Zubair between 1703-09.

A mosque in a ruinous state is situated in the field west of the Rauza Sharif. It is considered to have been constructed during the monarchy of Shah Jahan. In the village, Talanian about 1.5 kilometers north of Rauza Sharif exists a Mosque which was completed in 1703. It is in good condition and was used as a Gurdwara.

About 1.5 kilometers west of Sirhind railway station at Shaikhupura a mosque exists and is contemporary to the period of the rule of Shah Jahan.

The White Mosque or Chitti Masjid near the village of Mahadian also belongs to the period of the rule of Shah Jahan. It was used as Gurdwara till the 1980s but now is locked. A new Gurdwara was built adjacent to the mosque. There are no Muslims in the village and the local Sikhs who look after the structure have whitewashed the building and it is now known as Chitti Masjid.

The Red Mosque or Lal Masjid is a functional mosque and was

built by Shaikh Saifaldin (d. 1685). There are two mosques in the village of Mir Miran. The smaller mosque is used as a private residence and is in decent condition and built after 1710 but before 1763. The bigger mosque was built in the late 19th century has no dome and is also used as a private residence.⁵

All these structures are in decent condition and have been standing majestically for over 300 years.

HISTORICAL TOMBS

There are 23 historical tombs in Sirhind. Four of them belong to the Delhi Sultanate (1206-1526) period and the rest were built during the Mughal era.⁶ It is not possible to write about all of them in a short article, but the important ones are being discussed.

The tomb of Princess Subhan, daughter of Sultan Bahlul Shah Lodi was completed in 1496. Amongst the locals, the tomb is known as Dera Mir Miran.⁷ The structure is entirely made of stone probably procured by demolishing an ancient monument. It is in good condition and protected by the Department of Archaeology, Punjab.⁸

Another tomb of this period is situated in the village of Talanian but bears no inscription. It is popularly known as the tomb of Bibi Taj. Most probably a member of the ruling Lodi family lies interred in the tomb. Sadly, it is in a state of ruin and neglect. The local farmer in whose fields this tomb stands uses it for storage of farm produce.⁹

Near to the Aam Khas Bagh is the tomb of Hajji Muhammad built during the early 17th century.¹⁰

Same as Nakodar (district Jalandhar) there exist tombs of Ustad & Shagird in Sirhind but they belong to different individuals. The 'Ustad' was probably Saiyad Khan Chaghatai, a governor of Punjab during the early years of Emperor Jahangir's reign and he died around 1605-06. Another view is that this tomb was raised as a memorial to the great architect and builder Ustad Syad Khan.¹¹

Near the tomb of Ustad, there is another beautiful tomb of Khawaja Khan the 'Shagird' (Assistant) of Ustad Syad Khan. He too had attained great proficiency as a builder. The outer structure and

design resemble that of Humayun's tomb in Delhi.¹²

Rauza Sharif is the dargah of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi who lived here from 1563 - 1624 and was the contemporary of Mughal Emperors, Akbar & Jahangir. The large complex also has mosques and several tombs built by Mughal Emperors. The Urs celebration (death anniversary) of the Shaikh is held here and is largely attended by Muslims from India and neighbouring countries.¹³ Interestingly there is a letter from the Shaikh to Murtaza Khan, Governor of Punjab expressing his delight at the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Ji in 1606. This letter in Persian came to the public forum only in the 20th century.¹⁴

Within the Rauza Sharif complex, there are several tombs. Towards the west of the tomb of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi lies the tomb of his son and successor Khwaja Mohammad Masum who died in 1668.¹⁵ The tomb is also the remains of the seven of his descendants. To the north of this tomb is situated the tomb of his son, Khwaja Mohammad Siddiq. It was constructed in 1718. With the complex exists the tomb of Shaikh Mohammad Parsa, the grandson of Khwaja Mohammad Masum who died in 1732-33. To the south of the tomb of Khwaja Mohammad Masum, is the tomb of Khwaja Mohammad Zubair who died in 1740-41, and towards the west, lies the tomb of Mohammed Ismail.¹⁶

The tomb of Khwaja Mohammad Naqshband, another son of Khwaja Mohammad Masum exists half a kilometre north of Rauza Sharif. It was erected in 1702.

JAHAZ HAVELI

In 1871, Alexander Cunningham described the structure as the Haveli or dwelling house of Sahabat Beg, or Sandik Beg, the largest existing specimen of the ugly domestic architecture of the wealthy Mohammadans of the Mughal Empire. The *Punjab State Gazetteers 1904 Phulkian States* seems to be the first book to represent the structure as Jahaz (ship). Further, *Sirhind Through the Ages* published in 1972 seems to be the first work that refers to Diwan Todarmal as the owner of

Jahazi Haveli without providing any reference.¹⁷ After the partition of India, the structure fell into rapid disrepair and collapsed in many places.

AAM KHAS BAGH

Aam Khas Bagh, this Mughal Garden was founded between 1561-81 during the reign of Akbar. Daulat Khana-i-Khas or royal residence was built during the reign of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan (1628-58). The Royal couple used to stay here while going to and coming back from Lahore. The royal residence is in ruins although the garden is adequately kept. This was probably destroyed during the last attack by Sikhs on Sirhind in 1764. All other buildings of this garden namely Sard Khana, Hammam, tank, Naughara, Shish Mahal, etc. are intact.¹⁸

The bridge built during Shah Jahan's period is in good condition and the Sirhind – Fatehgarh Sahib road passes over it. A Baoli (stepwell) probably built during this period lies buried under debris to the east of Aam Khas Bagh in the fields.¹⁹

EXTINCT STRUCTURES

Dr Parihar in the last chapter of his exceptional work, *History & Architectural Remains of Sirhind* mentions a tomb, tank with tower & bridge, Idgah, and Sirhind fort which existed during the British period and have gone extinct due to negligence and vandalism.

SIRHIND FORT – THE STORY OF THROWING OF THE BRICKS INTO THE RIVER.

The old Sirhind fort suffered damage during the successful capture of the city by Sikhs in 1764. The Misl Sardars (Sikh chiefs) were reluctant to take the detest city of Sirhind. It was given to Bhai Buda Singh, who soon after transferred the possession to Sardar Ala Singh, founder of the Patiala ruling family in August 1764 for an amount of Rs 25 lakhs.²⁰ The residents of Sirhind who had left the city were encouraged by Ala Singh to come and settle in his new capital, Patiala.²¹

Alexander Cunningham who visited Sirhind in 1863/64 writes that some Muslim families (from Sirhind) settled in the village Bassi

(Pathania), four miles north of Sirhind and the village has transformed into a prosperous town.²²

The old Sirhind Fort stood where now stands Gurdwara Fatehgarh Sahib. On 1st April 1822, Major Sir William Lloyd and Captain Alexander Gerard visited the old fort in Sirhind and noted that it was of moderate dimensions and built of bricks but in a ruinous state. In it were the 'tombs of Guru Gobind (Singh)'s mother, and of his two children, who were cruelly put to death'.²³

Later Maharaja Karam Singh of Patiala (1813-45) had Gurdwara Sahibs constructed in Sirhind in memory of the young martyrs and their grandmother.

Alexander Cunningham writes that every Sikh passing through Sirhind carries away a brick that he is supposed to throw into the river with the hope that in time this detested city will be removed from the face of the earth.²⁴ The British hastened the demise of old Sirhind (fort) by liberally using the bricks of Sirhind fort as ballast material while laying down the railway lines.

PRACHIN PANTH PARKASH

Bhai Rattan Singh Bhangu completed his *Sri Gur Panth Prakash* popularly known as *PrachinPanth Prakash* in 1841. He states that Banda Singh did not destroy Sirhind and expresses his unhappiness. He writes "Banda entered into the precincts of the city of Sirhind and took possession of the whole treasure of Wazir Khan. He occupied, but he did not ransack the city of Sirhind, for which lapse he had to repent later on."²⁵

It further states that Banda (Singh) stopped the plunder and safeguarded the city. Bhangu seems aggrieved that the city was not destroyed contrary to the advice!²⁶

PREVIOUS WRITERS ON BANDA SINGH & SIRHIND

John Gordon in 1904 wrote that when implored by Sikhs to destroy Sirhind, Guru Gobind Singh told them that the death of his sons would not be avenged by the destruction of the town, which had done no harm, but that for the future every true Sikh who passed that

way should pull down two bricks and throw them into the river in detestation of the crime committed on innocent children.²⁷

Ganda Singh in 1935 wrote that the allegation about the desecration of mosques by Banda Singh was unfounded. He quotes Gokul Chang Narang's *Transformation of the Sikhism* written in 1912 where it is stated that the mausoleum of Ahmad Shah (Shaikh Ahmad Mujaddid Alf Sani), the most magnificent of all such buildings, still stands as it did before the battle.²⁸

CONTEMPORARY REPORTS

The letter written by Chabeel Das to his overlord, Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh of Jaipur in 1710 states that Sikhs have established their authority in Sirhind and have decreed that no one should kill any bird or any animal.²⁹

It seems very strange for someone who is accused of the destruction of the city and mass murders, Banda Singh proclaimed that no one should be killed, not even a bird or animal.

Akbbbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla were Mughal Court bulletins in the Persian language which included provincial newsletters and reports of generals and governors, orders, activities, and observations of the Emperors, appointments, promotions, transfers, dismissals, and references to other matters of State.

Akbbbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla dated 23rd June 1710, five weeks after the victory and occupation of Sirhind, reports that Banda Singh told Jan Muhammad, the Zamindar of Gulab Nagar (Buriya) "I have forgiven your crime and made you the Zamindar of the whole paraganah. You should proceed with your men and bring in Sardar Khan of Chundla. Then you will accompany me for the chastisement of Jalal Khan Afghan."³⁰

Jalal Khan Afghan was harassing Sikhs and Hindus in his region. Banda Singh went there with his Muslim supporters to chastise him.

Banda Singh was not against Muslims but against oppression. People from poor segments of society from all communities joined

him. Most of them were farmers but there were others as well.

Akbbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla dated 28th April 1711 notes “The rebel Nanak-worshipper (Banda Singh) was encamped at Kalanaur upto April 26. He had given a word and expressed his resolve not to harass the Muslims. Therefore, all those Muslims who joined him (Banda Singh) were given daily allowance and wages and were properly looked after. He had permitted them to read khutba and offer prayers. Thus, 5000 Muslims had joined the service of the rebel Sikh leader. With freedom of azan (call for prayer) and the namaz (daily prayer), these Muslims were feeling comfortable in the army of the rebels (Sikhs).”³¹

CONCLUSION

Some medieval chroniclers have stated Sirhind had 360 mosques, gardens, tombs, caravanserais and wells. This is figure of speech or poetic exaggeration and not meant to be taken literally. Sirhind may have been beautiful during the Shah Jahan & Aurangzeb’s era but the only garden in the city which finds mention in Farsi records is the Naulakha Bagh which is identified as Aam Khas Bagh. Similarly, only two caravanserais outside Sirhind Fort are mentioned in the historical documents.³²

Amritsar was the city of gardens under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The Maharaja laid down at least a dozen gardens in Amritsar. Now there are hardly 1-2 gardens in the whole city. Post-partition the haphazard construction and converting the cities into concrete jungle has meant that they have lost almost all their gardens. One cannot blame Banda Singh or Misl Sardars for the loss of gardens, if any in Sirhind.

Sirhind lost its royal patronage and became one of the towns of Punjab under the Sikhs. It is wrong to say that it was destroyed by Banda Singh Bahadar or later by Misl Sardars. There are over 3 dozen preserved Islamic structures mostly built before 1710. There is a huge difference between destruction and neglect. Punjab is not very good at preserving its heritage. Even structures like Baradari in Dinanagar (district Gurdaspur) built by Maharaja Ranjit Singh who was state icon

are facing neglect.

Mughals recaptured Sirhind by the end of 1710, within 6 months of losing it however it was again won by Banda Singh, but Mughals again captured the city, but Banda Singh and his troops held the swap in the countryside till 1716. Mughals held Sirhind till 1752 when it passed on to Ahmad Shah Abdali who eventually lost it to Misl Sardars in 1764. There is no Mughal account that they had to rebuild the city after recapturing it from Banda Singh. The contemporary Mughal newsletters make no mention of any destruction of Sirhind or killing of inhabitants by Sikhs or anyone.

Many of us in East Punjab have metaphorical heard the idiom that Banda Singh Bahadar *Ne Sirhind de Itt naal Itt Kharakti*. This idiom means the annihilation of Mughal power in Sirhind and does not mean the destruction of the city and the killing of its population. Mughal history is well documented and people who subscribe to the view that Banda Singh (or Misl Sardars) destroyed and sacked Sirhind (especially Muslim structures) should quote from Mughal records, the names of Mughal or Muslim historical structures that were completely razed to the ground by Sikhs. If they are unable to name them then it is time to revisit the so-called destruction of Sirhind by Banda Singh Bahadar and set the record straight. The documentary evidence reproduced above in this article and the exact state of existing Islamic structures in Sirhind at present (2024) bears testimony to the fact that Banda Bahadur has been more sinner against than sinning. .

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## AN OUTLINE OF THE LIFE OF BANDA SINGH BAHADUR AND HIS AGRARIAN MOVEMENT (1708-1716)

D.S. MANGAT\*

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Banda Singh Bahadur (Gurbakhash Singh, Madho Das Bairagi or Lachhman Dev), an eighteenth-century Sikh warrior, who seized territory for the Sikhs and laid the foundation of conquering Punjab, for the first time in history. Banda Singh Bahadur was born in a 'Minhas' Rajput family, on October 16, 1670 at Rajauri in the Puncchh district of Kashmir. (Very seldom, the historians agree on dates and places regarding any incident in the Sikh History. Each one provides evidence in the dates and places according to his research). Same is true regarding Banda Singh. Dr Hari Ram Gupta believes, Sirmaur, as the birth place of Banda Singh. "He was named Lachhman Dev. As a young man, he was active, energetic and given to wrestling, horse-riding and hunting. During one of the hunting trips, he was moved by the scene of a dying-doe, which changed his life for ever. Incidentally he met an ascetic (Bairagi) Janaki Das, who completely changed Lachhman Dev's personality. He got his new name 'Madho Das' from another Bairagi, Ram Das of Ram Thamman near Kasur. He roamed about all over till he settled down near Nasik in Panchvati woods. Here, Yogi Aughar Nath trained him in Yoga. After his death, Madho Das moved to Nanded and settled down on the left bank of river Godavari."<sup>1</sup> Here, Guru Gobind Singh met him on September 3, 1708. At the end of his discourse with the Guru, Madho Das became Guru's disciple. The Guru brought him to his camp and initiated him into the Khalsa-Order and named him Gurbakhsh Singh. The Guru blessed Banda with five

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arrows of his own and sent five of his disciples to accompany Banda to Punjab to punish Wazir Khan, the tyrant ruler of Sirhind. The five companions of Banda Singh were, Binod Singh, Kahan Singh, Baj Singh, Daya Singh and Ram Singh. Most of them participated in the battle of 'Chappar Chiri' (near Mohali) fought between the Khalsa forces of Banda and the combined forces of Wazir Khan of Sirhind, Sher Muhammad Khan of Malerkotla and other Nawabs under Wazir Khan.

### **BANDA SINGH BAHADUR WAS WELL RECEIVED IN PUNJAB**

As Banda Singh reached Punjab, the Sikhs began to lend their support behind him. First among them were Fateh Singh, a descendent of Bhai Bhagtu, Karam Singh and Dharam Singh of Bhai Rupa and Ali Singh, Mali Singh and other Sikhs of Salaudi, Ram Singh and Tilok Singh (Ancestors of the Phulkian rulers pledged financial and material help). "There was, however no obstacle in the way of southern Sikhs and they were, therefore, the first to rally round Banda Singh's standard. Next to the Banjaras, who came in with a train of bullocks laden with rations, joined Bhai Fateh Singh, a descendant of Bhai Bhagtu, Karam Singh and Dharam Singh of Bhai Rupa, Nigahia Singh and Chuhar Singh with as many followers as they could collect. Many Jat and Barar Sikhs of the neighbourhood and Bangar territory came in of their own accord. Although Chaudhris Ram Singh and Tilok Singh, the ancestors of the Phulkian Chiefs could not join in person, they liberally contributed in men and money. A large number of professional robbers and soldiers of fortune, who anticipated a large booty from the condemned city of Sirhind, also joined the holy warriors."<sup>2</sup> To execute his plan to launch a revolt against the Mughal empire in India, he needed money to start his pilot project in the Punjab. The Punjab was ripe for his crusade, due to the abundant supply of brave volunteers to join him, ready to make handsome donations, and to embrace the ultimate sacrifice happily. Why Punjab? All the invaders from the west trampled Punjab, looted the non-Muslim population and took away the young females for their harems and domestic help.

### ATTACK ON SMANA

The emperor was busy subduing his brother in the Deccan. Banda was watching his progress. There was no cooperation among the governors of Jammu, Lahore, Sirhind and Delhi. According to Dr. H.R. Gupta, 'never before, in the history of Punjab, the circumstances favoured the ambitions of a leader, exceptionally talented to lead the war-like people of Punjab, ready to support him in any undertaking'. Banda started his campaign by looting the government treasuries of Bhivani, Sonipat and Kaithal, to support their plan financially. He distributed the booty among his followers. Banda was well received at Hissar (Bagar Desh also known as Bangar Desh). He was encouraged by the success of his first expeditions. His next plan was to attack Samana, the native town of Sayyed Jallalu-ud-Din the executioner of Guru Teg Bahadur, and of Shashal Beg and Bashal Beg the executioners of the younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh. The attack on Samana (The richest town in the neighbourhood) took place, early in the morning, on November 26, 1709. Bhai Fateh Singh was appointed the administrator of Samana. Other muslim towns that bore the brunt of Banda's wrath were, Kunjpura, Ghurham, Thaska, Damla, Shahbad-Markanda and Mustafabad. Banda's next target was Sadhaura, but on the way he dealt with the Amir of Kapuri, who was lustful female molester, and killed him.

Sadhaura, the town of Osman Khan, who had tortured and Killed Sayyed Budhu Shah, for helping Guru Gobind Singh in the battle of Bhangani. He was also notorious for mistreating his non-muslim subjects. The contemporary historian Khafi Khan (1663-1731) the author of *Muntakhab Ul-Lubab*, hated the Non-Muslims. He addressed the Sikhs as 'Dogs' with contempt. He wrote about Banda Singh, "In two to three months' time, four to five thousand pony-riders, and seven to eight thousand war-like footmen joined him (Banda). Day by day their number grew, and abundant money and material, by pillage, fell into their hands. Soon eighteen to nineteen thousand men in arms, under him raised aloft the standard of plunder and persecution". (*Muntakhab-ul-Lubab*, 11, 652). He further adds, "Numerous villages

were laid waste and he appointed his own police officers (*Thanedars*) and collectors of revenue (*Tehsildar-i-mal*)". (*Muntakhab-ul-Lubab*, 11, 652)

### **BANDA'S MARCH TOWARDS SIRHIND**

Mukhlispur (Lohgarh); After subduing Sadhaura, Banda Singh retired to Mukhlispur for few days in the beginning of February 1710, to assess his strategy to attack Sirhind. The Fort was built by Mukhlis Khan under the instructions from emperor Shah Jahan who used it as his Summer-capital. Banda Singh used Mukhlispur fort to deposit all the booty he raised during his exploits against the tyrant muslim landlords, (money gold and other valuables). His chief aim was to punish Wazir Khan, the Governor of Sirhind, who had tortured and killed Guru Gobind Singh's younger sons and mother. In the mean time the Sikhs of Majha and Doaba had gathered on the west side of Satluj, near Kiratpur. Banda Singh marched towards Ropar through Ambala, Chhat and Banur. He subdued both Chhat and Banur without any resistance. By that time the Sikhs of Majha and Doaba had crossed the Satluj at Kiratpur and were advancing southward. On the other hand, Wazir Khan was watching the progress of Banda, and his defence-men from Malwa. Banda was marching from Chhat towards north. Wazir Khan was perturbed about the numerical superiority of the Banda's forces, who had no cannons, no elephants, hardly any trained army, armed with swords and spears. "By this time the Sikhs from the other side of the Sutlej crossed over Kiratpur. . . . Wazir Khan the Faujdar of Sirhind was very much alarmed at the news of Banda Singh's conquests in his own 'Chakla' (territorial division) and his anticipated advance at the city of Sirhind. His fears were further aggravated when he heard that a large number of Sikhs from the Doaba and the Majha were soon expected to join Banda Singh, whose efforts, at this time, were mainly directed against himself. With so small a force, as Banda Singh had under his command up to this time, he had been eminently successful in all his expeditions. With the reinforcements from the central Punjab, it was feared he would become too strong for any army that Wazir Khan might bring against the Sikhs.

His only safety lay, therefore in preventing the combination of the two forces. With this object, he deputed Sher Muhammad Khan of Malerkotla to deal with the Sikhs coming down from the north before they could join the main force of Banda Singh.<sup>23</sup> (Banda's defence force comprised of, first, Devotee volunteers with no self aggrandisement, second, were paid soldiers recruited by Banda Singh or sent by the chieftains like Ram Singh and Tilok Singh, third, were entirely plunderers or professional robbers). With a view to prevent the two columns of Banda's army from uniting, Wazir Khan deputed Sher Muhammad Khan of Malerkotla at Ropar. At Ropar Sher Muhammad Khan intercepted the Majha and Doaba Sikhs. Despite the superiority of Sher Muhammad Khan, his brother, Khizar Khan, the Ranghars of Ropar, reinforcements from Sirhind, and professional army and equipment, the Sikhs of Majha and Doaba managed to fight back the Wazir Khan-backed army in the battle near Ropar. Khizar Khan, his cousin Nashtar Khan and Wali Muhammad Khan were killed and Sher Muhammad Khan, himself was severely wounded. The Mughals took to flight and the Sikhs acquired lots of arms, ammunition and rations. The Sikhs proceeded south to meet their leader, and on the other hand Banda, after subduing Banur on the way and marched north. "Without loss of time, they now hurried southwards to join their leader as early as possible. While the northern Sikhs were fighting with the Afghans of Malerkotla, Banda Singh had marched upon Banur, which offered no appreciable resistance and fell before him without striking a blow. Banda Singh at this time, was highly pleased to hear about the glorious victory of his gallant allies at Ropar and marched out a few miles from his camp to receive them. The memorable junction took place between Kharar and Banur on the Ambala-Ropar road."<sup>24</sup>

#### **BATTLE OF CHAPPAR CHIRI**

The two columns of the Sikh forces met almost halfway at Chappar Chiri. Wazir Khan attacked Banda's forces on May 12, 1710. "In the first shock of battle the booty-loving irregulars in the ranks of Banda took to their heels. They were followed by a thousand men who had been smuggled in by a nephew of Sucha Nand, the notorious



Hindu Diwan of Sirhind. To stem the tide of desertion Banda Singh himself rushed to the front of his army and boldly led them on to attack.”<sup>5</sup> Despite the professional, equipment and resource-rich, superiority of the Mughal forces, a pitched battle was fought, in which both the ace-generals of the Mughal army, Sher Muhammad Khan and Wazir Khan were killed. Wazir Khan’s son and son-in-law also perished in the battle. Mughal army was completely destroyed. According to Khafi Khan, who is believed to be an eye-witness to the battle of Chappar Chiri, in his famous work, ‘Muntkhab Ul-Lubab translated by Elliot and Dawson’”Not a man of the army of Islam escaped with more than his life and clothes, he stood in. Horsemen and footmen fell under the swords of the infidels (Sikhs) who pursued them as far as Sirhind”. The treatment of the remains of Wazir Khan is too gruesome and graphic to visualise. He was beheaded and his head, was mounted on a spear, installed on an elephant and paraded through the streets of Sirhind. Two days later the Sikh army of Banda Singh reached Sirhind and the town was completely destroyed. Despite Banda Singh’s exhortations to show restraint, it was a haven for looters, plunderers and robbers. A rich booty worth about Rs. 20 million (Two crores) was acquired from the palaces of Wazir Khan. A lot more money and valuables of Sucha Nand and his family and other nobles, was confiscated and sent to the Fort of Mukhlispur. Only two or three mausoleums were spared. The muslim population in Sirhind was indiscriminately destroyed sparing the poor, children, women and the elderly. According to Dr. Ganda Singh, a large number of Muhammadans abandoned Islam and took solemn oaths and firm pledges to stand by Banda Singh. Ali Singh, Mir Nasir Singh and Dinder Singh are some of the examples of quick conversions to save their lives. Banda also punished Jani Khan and Mani Khan of Morinda and the Gangu Brahamin of Saheri (Kheri, 2.5 Kms north of Morinda).

According to Dr. Ganda Singh in his ‘Life of Banda Singh Bahadur’ on page 42, “Banda Singh had no artillery and no elephants, nay, not even the required number of horses for all his men. Only a few of his men possessed matchlocks. Long spears arrows and swords

were the only weapons of war that the Sikhs were equipped with. The indomitable courage and unsurpassable activity of Banda Singh and his devoted Sikhs, however, made up for the scantiness of their resources. He mostly depended, for his success, upon the spirit that he knew, would be infused in the minds of his men at the very sight of the city associated with the cold-blooded murder of the young sons of their prophet.” Khafi Khan has given graphic details of the events in the battle of Chappar Chiri in his ‘Muntakhib-ul-Lubab’.

### **BANDA CAPTURES SIRHIND**

Banda Singh became the undisputed master of the 28 Administrative Districts, (Parganas) of Sirhind, extending between the Sutlej and the Yamuna, and between Shivalik hills and Kunjpura, Karnal and Kaithal (3 Ks) with an annual revenue between Rs.3.6 million (36 Lacs of Rupees). According to the ‘A Short History of the Sikhs’ by Teja Singh and Ganda Singh on P. 83, “Baj Singh, a companion and counsellor of Banda, was appointed the Governor of Sirhind, with Ali Singh of Salaudi as his deputy. Fateh Singh of the Bhai Ke family, was given charge of Samana, and Ram Singh, brother of Baj Singh, that of Thanesar, jointly with Baba Binod Singh. The Imperial deputies, in charge of various parganas of Sirhind were so terrified that they submitted to the authority of Banda Singh, without striking a blow, and thus the entire province of Sirhind, extending from Karnal to Ludhiana and yielding a revenue of about thirty-six lakhs a year, came into the hand of the Sikhs.” The Benevolence of Banda Singh Bahadur so captivated the hearts of all his subjects. The prominent Hindus and the Muhammadans of Sirhind started converting to Sikhism. Dinder Khan became Dinder Singh and Mir Nasir-ud-Din, the official reporter of Sirhind, became Mir Nasir Singh. Banda Singh, receiving tribute (Nazrana) of Ghadani, Ghaloti and Dhamot, marched on to Malerkotla, where he ordered the remains of Bibi Anup Kaur be exhumed from her grave and cremated according to the Sikh rites. The Sons of Sher Muhammad Khan had fled, but Banda had no intention to damage Malerkotla, since Sher Muhammad Khan had pleaded for mercy towards Guru’s younger sons at the court of Wazir Khan. From

Malerkotla, Banda Singh proceeded to Rai Kot where the ruler accepted Banda as his over-lord and presented him with a handsome tribute. After the fall of Sirhind Banda Singh was honoured by the non-Muslim inhabitants of Sirhind, with the title of “Banda Singh the Brave”, (Banda Singh Bahadur). Banda Singh Bahadur established his headquarter at Mukhlispur in the lap of Shivaliks, away from the major route, of Grand Trunk Road used by the Imperial forces. He had the fort repaired and named it ‘Fort of Steel’ “Lohgarh”. According to Dr. Ganda Singh, in the ‘Life of Banda Singh Bahadur’ on page 55-56, “The fort of Mukhlispur was built by one Mukhlis Khan under instruction from Emperor Shah Jahan who occasionally spent his summer there. It was a strong hill-fort about halfway between the towns of Sadhaura and Nahan (About nine kos from Sadhaura), within the boundary of village of Amuwal, among the steeps of Himalayas on an elevated summit which could be approached only by craggy rocks and ravines. It was surrounded by two rivulets, Pamu-wali and Daska-wali ‘Khol’s’ or ‘Khuds’, which originally formed only one stream, parting into two to embrace the hillock of the fort.” Banda Singh Bahadur released coins and added ‘Deg’ community-kitchen, representing social equality free from caste distinction, and ‘Teg’ (the sceptre of Spiritual-Authority) along with the names of the Gurus. He helped the farmers by abolishing feudal system, the basis of ‘Zamindari’, and replacing it, by giving the land ownership rights to the tillers of the land.

Banda attacked Lahore but was held outside the city by the forces of Sayyed Islam Khan, the governor of Lahore combined with the (fanatic-warriors who had declared, the Holy-war). Jihadis, put up tough resistance to Banda Singh. Banda left Lahore and returned east to Saharanpur to punish the feudal-chiefs (Land-Lords) who were abusing the Gujjars tillers of their lands. Just before the monsoons, Banda Singh crossed the Yamuna in July 1710, and occupied Saharanpur and reached Nanauta, where the Gujjars, claiming themselves to be followers of Nanak (Nanak-Prast) joined his ranks. The Sikhs advanced towards Jalalabad at the end of July, 1710, and laid a siege to the town. Jalal

Khan the Faujdar of the town put up a tough resistance. In view of the approaching monsoons, Sikhs raised the siege of Jalalabad and hurried back to cross Yamuna before the monsoon floods and on to Punjab to subdue Sultanpur, Batala and Kalanaur. Banda Singh occupied Pathankot town and the administrative unit (Parganah). Banda had divided his forces in four detachments.

Around November 1710, the Sikhs attacked Sultanpur Lodhi, but the Faujdar Shamas Khan's forces held them at Rahon and repulsed the attack. Shamas Khan proceeded towards Sirhind and defeated Baj Singh and Ali Singh, who fled to Lohgarh. Bahadur Shah defeated and killed his brother in the Deccan and reached Ajmer to deal with the Rajputs. According to Dr. Ganda Singh, on May 30, 1710 he was informed of the Banda's uprising in Punjab. He hurried back to deal with Punjab situation and reached Sonapat at the end of October, 1710. Bahadur Shah planned to attack Banda at Lohgarh. A strong contingent under Rustamdil Khan was organised, and dispatched towards Lohgarh, who were ambushed about 5 Kms out of Lohgarh by Banda's forces. Loss of life on both sides was immeasurable. According to Khafi Khan in 'Muntkhab Ul-Lubab' VII, 423-24, "It is impossible for me to describe the fight that followed. The Sikhs in their Faqir dress struck terror into the royal troops. . . . for a time, it seemed they (the royal army) was losing ground". The fighting went on for several days and the supplies to the Sikhs, were cut off by the siege, around the fort.

#### **BANDA'S ESCAPE FROM THE FORT OF MUKHLISPUR (LOHGARH)**

According to Dr. Ganda Singh and Dr. H.R. Gupta, Gulab Singh (d June 9, 1716), a Bakhshi Khatri, had close resemblance with Banda Singh, offered to sacrifice his life for the sake of his religionist. At 3 A.M. on December 11, 1710 exchanged his clothes with Banda Singh and asked Banda and his fellow Sikhs to leave the fort. The Sikhs filled the trunk of a tree with Gunpowder and blew it, and kept on firing their guns simultaneously. In the confusion among the Royal troops, caused by the sudden explosion, Banda Singh along with his

companions escaped in the night, towards Sirmaur hills. He reached Kiratpur on December 12, 1710. The royal army launched a furious attack on the fort in the morning of December 11, 1710. Gulab Singh and about thirty of his companions kept on firing till they were captured by the enemy. The jubilation in the royal camp was unimaginable for apprehending their man alive. Later in the day they realised that the real Banda had escaped and the one they captured was Banda's look-alike. Their celebrations turned into embarrassment. According to Khafi Khan, "The hawk had flown and an owl had been caught." "Within a fortnight of his escape, Banda issued circular letters, called 'Hukamnamas', to the Sikhs of various places, calling upon them to join him at once. One such letter, dated Poh 12, Sammat 1 (12<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1710), addressed to the Sikhs of Jaunpur, reads thus:

Seal

Deg o teg o fatch o Nusrat bedirang  
 Yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh  
 One God! Victory to the Presence.  
 This is the order of Sri Sacha Sahib (The real Great Master)  
 to the  
 Entire Khalsa of Jaunpur. The Guru will protect you. Call  
 upon the  
 Guru's name. Your lives will be fruitful. You are the Khalsa  
 of the  
 Great immortal God. On seeing this letter, repair to the  
 presence,  
 Wearing five arms. Observe the rules of conduct laid down  
 for the  
 Khalsa. Donot use bhang, tobacco, poppy, wine or any other  
 Intoxicant. Do not eat meat, fish or onion. Commit no theft  
 or adultery.  
 We have brought about the Golden Age (Satya yuga). Love  
 one another.  
 This is my wish. He who lives according to the rules of the  
 Khalsa

Shall be saved by the Guru.

Poh 12, Sammat 1, Lines ten (10)<sup>26</sup>

In response to this call, Sikhs from all directions flocked to him at Kiratpur and he led an expedition against some of the Hindu Hill chiefs who had been bothering the last Guru. Banda, on the other hand, passing through Kiratpur reached Chamba, where, Raja Udai Singh offered Banda, the hand of his princess in marriage. She bore him a son named Ajay Singh. Early in the year 1711, Bahadur Shah left in pursuit of Banda, passing along the foothills of Shivaliks via Ropar, Hoshiarpur and reaching Kahnawan on July 17, 1711. On August 11, 1711, he reached Lahore. Towards the end of January 1712, Bahadur Shah was taken ill and his health started deteriorating by the day. By mid February he started showing signs of mental imbalance. During the night of February 27-28, 1712, Bahadur Shah passed away at Lahore. His dead body was buried near the shrine of Khawaja Qutub-ud-Din Bakhtiar Kaki. In Delhi, Jahandar Shah, Bahadur Shah's son ascended the throne on March 29, 1712, after killing his brothers, Jahan Shah and Rafi-us Shah. About 10 months later, Jahandar Shah's nephew, Farrukh Siyar rebelled against the emperor and the former proceeded to suppress it. In the battle Jahandar Shah was defeated and was executed on February 11, 1713. Farrukh Siyar became emperor.

#### **BANDA'S RECAPTURE OF SULTANPUR LODHI, SIRHIND AND THE SIEGE OF LOHGARH**

In September 1711, Banda Singh came out of the hills, took over Pathankot and Gurdaspur, and prepared to attack Raipur and Bahrapur. Shamas Khan left from Sultanpur Lodhi along with his nephew to oppose Banda. Banda used his tactic, 'hit and run and hit again'. In the battle Shamas Khan was killed and his nephew Qutub-ud-Din was seriously wounded and died three days later. Batala, Kalanaur and Santokhgarh fell next. Early March 1712, after the death of Bahadur Shah, his sons were busy in the war of succession and Banda taking advantage of the situation attacked Sirhind, and the Governor Bayazid Khan, unsuccessfully, fought back and, post battle,

was assassinated. Banda appointed the administrator at Sirhind and retired to Lohgarh. Banda's Sikhs were occupying Sadhaura. Abdus Samad Khan and Zain-ud-Din Ahmad Khan were stationed at Sadhaura in April 1713 and started fighting. Banda and his Sikhs held their ground for about six months. As soon as the supply of food and fodder ran out, in early October 1713, Banda disappeared into the hills. Banda retired to his 'Dera Baba Banda Singh Sahib', on the left Bank of river Chenab, 28 miles north-west of Jammu. The Governor of Jammu, Zakriya Khan attacked Banda resulting in loss of life. Banda reappeared at Ropar in August 1714 with 7000 Sikh warriors. The governor of Sirhind, Zain-ud-Din Ahmad Khan attacked Banda Singh and his 7000 warriors on August 26, 1714. Banda Singh disappeared into the hills.

#### **FORMATION OF BANDAI KHALSA AND TATT KHALSA**

Dr. Ganda Singh in his book, 'Life of Banda Singh Bahadur' Appendix 1 on page 172, discussed the reason for the division of the Khalsa that erupted from the sharing of the offerings at the Harimandir. According to Dr. Ganda Singh, "A dissension arose and two parties formed. The Khalsa identified the division of the offerings with heresy and bracketed it, out of contempt, with the longforgotten, innovation of Banda Singh. The opposite party was nick-named 'Bandais', or the followers of Banda Singh. In the party of Bandais, there appeared to have some sincere people, who in their heart of hearts believed in Banda Singh as a successor of Guru Govind Singh, and in everything that he did as all truth, while others were merely adventurers and exploiters, some of whom are said to have gone far ahead of the sincere followers in reviving the 'Fateh Darshan' and introducing the innovations which Banda never seems to have dreamt of. This created resentment, and day by day, the differences between the two parties increased and no amicable settlement or compromise could be effected. The Bandais are said to have claimed fifty percent of the income of Darbar Sahib, while the other Khalsa (Tatt Khalsa) dismissed their claim as wholly inadmissible. It was constantly feared that the arbitration of the sword might at any time be invoked by the warring

factions.” They adopted two solutions for peaceful conclusion of the situation, first by floating two pieces of paper bearing names of the two factions in the Sarowar. The one with the Bandais name sank while that of the Tatt Khalsa floated. The second test was decided by wrestlers of both factions. In that the Bandais lost again.

### **DELHI'S DIPLOMATIC GAME**

According to Dr. Hari Ram Gupta, “A determined effort was now made by Farrukh Siyar to suppress the Sikh rebellion through diplomacy as well as military action. He was disappointed that the Mughal Empire with all the resources at its command had failed in capturing the Sikh leader. He formed a plan to use Mata Sundri, widow of Guru Gobind Singh who was living in Delhi (under house arrest). She was asked to persuade Banda to stop his lawless activities, accept ‘jagirs’ for himself and other Sikh leaders, and to get his Sikh soldiers recruited in the Imperial army. On receiving Mata Sundri’s communication Banda replied that he had no faith in Government promises. The emperor imprisoned Mata Sundri and Mata Sahib Devi. The emperor knew that the Sikhs would make submission in order to have the honour of Guru’s widows. Mata Sundri again wrote to submit. Banda said that the ladies must endure all the hardship because his submission implied annihilation of the Khalsa, and failure of his mission entrusted to him by the Guru. The emperor tightened the restrictions imposed upon the ladies. Mata Sundri ordered Banda immediately to submit or face excommunication.”

“Mata Sundri charged Banda with disobedience and non-observance of Guru Gobind Singh’s instructions. She issued orders of excommunication of Banda to all the Sikh leaders serving under Banda on the ground that he had married, that he had substituted ‘Fatah Darshan’ for ‘Wah Guru Ji ka Khalsa, Wah Guru Ji ki Fatah’ and that he wanted to rule over the Singhs as their Guru.”<sup>7</sup>

Again Dr. H. R. Gupta mentioned on page 32 of Vol. II, with reference to Karam Singh’s ‘Banda Bahadur Kaun Tha’ P. 101 (Urdu), “Kahn Singh son of Binod Singh was the leader of the ‘Tatt Khalsa’



who had gone over to the Mughals and fought against Banda at Lahore. He declined to join the Imperial army in the siege of Gudas Nangal. He was arrested and sent in the retinue of Banda to Delhi. When the regular slaughter of the Sikhs began in front of the Kotwali, Mata Sundri planned to save Kahan Singh's life. The Mughal officers and guards on Sikh prisoners were heavily bribed and Kahan Singh was substituted by another Sikh. Baj Singh who was a descendant of Guru Amar Das also escaped.”<sup>8</sup>

According to 'A Brief History of The Sikhs' by D. S. Mangat, “When nothing seemed to work, the Mughal authorities in Delhi played a diplomatic game by tightening a grip on Mata Sundri by cutting off her facilities, forcing her to issue ‘Sacred Orders’ (Hukamnamas) to Banda to relent his activities. It appeared that some disagreements had developed between Banda and Mata Sundri regarding his, carrying on the struggle and the serious crack that developed among the Sikhs, namely ‘Tatt Khalsa’ and the ‘Bandai Khalsa’. Followers of the Tatt Khalsa are believed to be young-blood with a liberal approach towards meat eating, whereas the Bandai Khalsa was conservative, strictly vegetarian and observing ‘Bairagi’ tradition. It appears, the rift, caused by the Tatt Khalsa and Bandai Khalsa divided the Sikhs in half. As Banda proceeded to attack Lahore, he was disheartened to find Miri Singh, a young man in his twenties, was the son of Kahan Singh, son of Binod Singh, (Banda Singh’s companion from Nanded), defending the imperial army and opposing Banda’s attack on Lahore. Mata Sundri was head of the Khalsa-Order. It is believed that she sent ‘Sacred-Orders’ (Hukamnamas) to restrain Banda from punishing the cruel, unjust and religiously biased Muhammadan society. They were supported by the Mughal Government in Delhi. In view of Guru Gobind Singh’s clear direction (Banda’s first- hand experience with the Guru) and that of Mata Sundri appeared to have differed, and Banda might not have complied her orders fully. Mata Sundri is believed to have excommunicated Banda for non-compliance of her Sacred-Orders. Mata Sundri, being under detention (House-arrest) of the imperial government might not have discerned the socio-political

situation of non-Muslims, as clearly as Banda did. That destroyed Banda's dream to establish the Sikh Kingdom by taking advantage of the crumbling Mughal Empire.”<sup>9</sup>

On a personal note, Banda's insurrection was agrarian in nature. During his expeditions to Saharanpur, the 'Nanak-panthi' Gujjar tillers of land complained against the feudal chiefs (Landlords) who were abusing them. Banda punished the feudal chiefs and gave land ownership rights to the tillers of the land. That was the first land reform in history of the north-west. Banda demonstrated to the peasantry to stand against the unjust landlords. Secondly Banda Singh demonstrated the 'Strong-Man' concept to the downtrodden people of Punjab. It inspired the succeeding generations of the Sikhs in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to face and endure the severest pain and suffering and survive in the midst of severest odds. It was as much a struggle for survival as a do or die battle for maintaining their religious identity. This gave rise to Misls in the form of twelve Banda Singh Bahadurs against the Mughals of Delhi and the Afghan invaders of the north-west. Even the cruel Mughal authorities were apprehensive of the Misdars which mitigated the troubles of the common-man. Banda Singh Bahadur and the succeeding Misdars never mistreated the public due to their religious identity. Towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, they helped establish the Lahore Darbar with the help of Punjabi Muslims and Hindus. Banda Bahadur's and his captured followers supreme sacrifice in the true tradition of two martyred Sikh Gurus should wipe out all the blemishes about his character as narrated by some of the earlier Sikh Historians. Regarding his excommunication by Mata Sundri, most likely, it seems she may have done it under pressure from the Mughal authorities in Delhi. Banda Singh Bahadur and his followers strictly observed the human rights of today, three hundred years ago.

#### **BANDA SINGH'S FLIGHT TO GURDAS NANGAL AND HIS CAPTURE**

On seeing the Tatt Khalsa, on the side of the imperial forces against the Sikhs, Banda returned from Lahore and headed towards

Gurdaspur fort. The strength of the combined forces of the imperial army was 35000 strong blocked Banda's entry into the fort from three sides. In the desperate condition, odds against, Banda took shelter in the huge building with a large compound, 'Haveli', owned by Duni Chand at the village of Gurdas Nangal, four miles west of Gurdaspur in early April, 1715 along with around 1250 of his Sikh companions. The combined imperial army consisted of Delhi force of 20,000 under Qamaru-ud-Din, 10,000, under Abdus Samad Khan from Lahore, 5,000 under Zakriya Khan of Jammu and the troops of the Governor of Sirhind, Zain-ud-Din Ahmad Khan. The best possible account can be quoted of Muhammad Qasim, the author of "Ibrat Namah" (Translated by Dr. Ganda Singh), is believed to be participating in this operation from Lahore contingent, states; 'The brave and daring deeds of the infernal Sikhs were wonderful. Twice or thrice, everyday, some forty or fifty of the black-faced Sikhs came out of their enclosure to gather grass for their cattle, and when the combined forces of the Imperialists went to oppose them, they (the Sikhs) made an end of the Mughals with arrows, muskets and small swords, and disappeared. Such was the terror of the Sikhs and the fear of the 'sorceries' of the Sikh chief, that the commanders of this army prayed, that God might so ordain things, that Banda (Singh) should seek his safety in his flight from the Garhi.' The siege lasted for over eight months. By end of November 1715, all the supplies of food and fodder ran out. The animals and the Sikhs died of starvation consequently the resistance from the Garhi had almost died down. On Wednesday, December 17, 1715 (the 21<sup>st</sup> Zi-ul-Hijja, 1127) the Mughal army made their way into the fortress of Gurdas Nangal. They overcame the resistance from inside the fortress and arrested, Banda and his companions, numbering 740 and sent them first to Lahore and then to Delhi, indignantly exposing the prisoners on the way. The emperor, Farrukh Siyar got the news on December 22, 1715, as he was celebrating his victory over Jahandar Shah. Banda and some of his dreaded companions were chained and caged and put indignantly, on the elephants.

Since the rumors of the magical spells of Banda Singh, were

wide spread among the Mughals, two of the officers of the imperial army were chained physically to Banda Singh for fear of his mysterious disappearance through his magical powers. The gruesome scene of the caravan of the prisoners passed through Sirhind on way to Delhi. The guards were carrying the heads of the Sikhs, on their spears just like the trophies. Banda's companions were mounted on saddle-less donkeys and camels, chained, two together. At the end of February, the gory, procession reached Delhi, the graphic details of which are extremely offensive for a common man to visualise, even after 400 years. At Delhi, they were paraded through the streets of the city, indignantly, displaying the horrible scene.

By the orders of Emperor Farukh Siyar, Banda Singh, Bhai Fateh Singh and Bhai Baj Singh and some other leaders were separated from the rest and handed over to Ibrahim-ud-Din Khan Mir Atish to be imprisoned at Tripolia. Banda Singh's wife, four-year-old son Ajai Singh and his nurse were handed over to Darbar Khan, an official of the harem (Nazir). Banda Singh and about (17-26) of his officials were separated from the rest by Sarbrah Khan, (Sheriff) Kotwal. On March 5, 1716, the executions started. One hundred prisoners were taken out of the prison, (Chabutra Kotwali) every day, under the supervision of the Sheriff, given a final choice between embracing Islam and death, and without exception they opted for death, while reciting, 'Wahiguru, Wahiguru'. They were begging the executioner, (Calling him, Deliverer) Mukta, for priority.

Messers John Surman and Edward Stephenson, two representatives of the British East India Company, British Embassy to Emperor Farrukh Siyer, submitted their report on March 10, 1716, to Honourable Robert Hedges, the Governor of Fort William, Calcutta, in which they state about Banda Singh, "He at present has his life prolonged with 'Mutsuddys' in hope to get an account of his treasure in the several parts of his Kingdom and of those that assisted him, when afterwards he will be executed, for the rest 100 each day beheaded. It is not a little remarkable with what patience they undergo their fate, and to the last, it has not been found that none apostatised from their

new formed religion.”

Some historians indicate the intervention of Mata Sundri, (had bribed the Jail officials) to have Kahan Singh and Baj Singh, released from the death-row, and replaced them with another Sikh. Another legend goes that an old lady came with a young girl, believed to be her daughter-in-law. Both the mother and wife of the young man were grieving over the impending execution of the youth. They were claiming the young man’s innocence and approached the prime-Minister, Sayyad Abdullah Khan with the help of Rattan Chand, Diwan of the Prime-minister. The Emperor Farrukh Siyyar is believed to have sent an officer with the order to release her son. Her young son claimed that his mother was lying, and he claimed that he was the Sikh of Guru Gobind Singh. According to Khafi Khan the youth claimed, ‘My mother is a liar. I am in heart and soul a devoted follower of the Guru. Send me quickly after my companions’.

#### **EXECUTION OF BANDA SINGH BAHADUR**

On June 19, 1716, Banda and five of his companions and his four-year-old son Ajai were paraded through the streets of Delhi, on the way to the tomb of Bahadur Shah in Mehrauli. Banda Singh was given a choice between embracing Islam and death. Banda Singh chose the latter. A Mughal noble man asked Banda, ‘It is surprising that one, who shows so much acuteness in his features and so much of nobility in his conduct should have been guilty of such horrors.’ Banda replied, ‘I will tell you. Whenever men become so corrupt and wicked as to relinquish the path of equity and abandon themselves to all kinds of excesses, then Providence never fails to raise up a scrouge like me, to chastise a race so depraved; but when the measure of punishment is full then he raises up men like you to bring him to punishment.’ (Siyar-ul-Mutakherin, 79-80). Next Banda was brought out of his cage and made to sit on the ground and his son, Ajai Singh was placed in his lap. Banda was ordered to kill his son. On his refusal Ajai Singh was killed in front of Banda’s eyes and thrust the boy’s heart into Banda’s mouth. Banda closed his mouth tightly and remained calm. After that Banda Singh’s right eye was pulled out with a sharp object, then the left eye.

His foot was amputated and then the second foot and then both the arms. Then he was decapitated. Once so many of his body parts amputated, he might have lost all of his blood and died even before he was decapitated. If the executioner was still applying torture to his body after that it may be to satiate his appetite for inhumane brutality. During the moments of torture, Banda remained calm, composed and tranquil, resigned to the 'Will of God.'

According to Dr. Ganda Singh on page 177 in his work 'Life of Banda Singh Bahadur' after their eviction from Darbar Sahib, the Bandais assumed the quiet role at their headquarters at Dera Baba Banda Singh in the Parganah of Riasi, of the Jammu state. Banda Singh is believed to have spent most of his time there from October 1713 to February 1715, when, "according to his descendants, he solemnised a second marriage with Bibi Sahib Kaur, the daughter of a Khatri of Wazirabad, of whom his second son Ranjit Singh was born. The mother and child were here when Banda Singh was taken prisoner from Gurdas Nangal and taken to Delhi with his first wife and son Ajai Singh, who was hacked to pieces on the 19<sup>th</sup> June 1716. Bibi Sahib Kaur and Ranjit Singh fortunately escaped the notice of Abdus-Samad Khan and his son Zakriya Khan Bahadur, lived in peace in the mountain recesses of Bhabbar."

Banda Singh Bahadur's life history is the most fascinating. He made it possible, the likelihood of a Sikh Kingdom in the most dormant, socio-political environment of the Punjab. He gave his people a "Strong-man" concept to which the Punjabi blood, full of the spirit of freedom and insubordination to repression and tyranny, is known for. Punjab was under the British for 98 years, last to be annexed. "Banda's followers were undoubtedly guilty of savagery practised by most victorious armies of the time, but the movement was clearly an agrarian revolt and not an anti-Islamic crusade."<sup>10</sup> "Banda...renounced both pacificism and the life of solitude to rouse a downtrodden peasantry to take up arms; a man who shook one of the most powerful empires in the world to its very foundation with such violence that it was never again able to re-establish its authority."<sup>11</sup> Inspired by Banda

Singh Bahadur, the Sikhs carried on their struggle against the Imperial authorities, which gave rise to the Misls (Sikh confederacies). After the death of Aurangzeb, the Mughal empire, crumbled and weakened with every successive emperor. With the deterioration of the Mughal empire, the Sikh confederacies (Misls), progressively became stronger and better organised. In 1799, Maharaja Ranjit Singh laid the foundation of the Sikh empire by isolating the Afghan aggressors and sealing off the Western border, the Khyber Pass forever.

### **THE SUCCESSORS OF BANDA SINGH BAHADUR**

Dera Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, is situated on the left bank of the Chenab, about 28 miles north-west of Jammu, 14 miles south-west of Katra and seven miles south of Riasi. According to Dr. Ganda Singh, Banda stayed here for more than a year and solemnised his second marriage with Sahib Kaur. She bore him a son named Ranjit Singh. Ranjit Singh became ancestor of Banda's lineal descendants. Ranjit died in 1753 at the Dera. He had two sons, Jujhar Singh and Zorawar Singh. Jujhar Singh succeeded his father. Jujhar Singh had two sons, Fateh Singh and Suchet Singh. Fateh Singh assumed the custodianship (Mahant) of the Dera during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Fateh Singh died in June 1845. His brother Suchet Singh was pre deceased issueless. The direct line of descendants from Ranjit Singh to Jujhar ended with him and the custodianship of the Bandai Khalsa was passed on to the line of Ranjit Singh's second son Zorawar Singh. Zorawar Singh had a son Arjan Singh and a grandson Kharak Singh who should have succeeded. But due to a succession dispute his younger brother Amir Singh, the nominee and the adopted son of Fateh Singh's favourite wife Gulab Dei, became the Mahant. Amir Singh's only son, Pahar Singh died issueless. So, the custodianship of the Dera was bestowed upon Daya Singh, the only son of Kharak Singh. After the death of Daya Singh, a succession dispute erupted among his four sons. The court advised custodianship in favour of the eldest, Teja Singh and monthly allowances to his three brothers, Attar Singh, Sohan Singh and Sujan Singh. Teja Singh was succeeded by Attar Singh who was succeeded by Sardul Singh, the son of his

youngest brother, Sujan Singh. Baba Sardul Singh was an ex-student of the Shahid Sikh Missionary College, Amritsar. He is well versed in the history and philosophy of the Sikh religion.

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ਸੂਰਾ ਸੋ ਪਹਿਚਾਨੀਐ ਜੁ ਲਰੈ ਦੀਨ ਕੇ ਹੇਤ ॥  
ਪੁਰਜਾ ਪੁਰਜਾ ਕਟਿ ਮਰੈ ਕਬਹੂ ਨ ਛਾਡੈ ਖੇਤੁ ॥

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1105



## SARDAR JASSA SINGH RAMGARHIA LIFE AND ALLEGATIONS AGAINST HIM

GURDEV SINGH ROOPRAI\*

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In our Sikh history, various historians have made significant alterations over time. Some changes are based on new research and sources, while others seem less credible and difficult to believe. Without substantial evidence or references, historical writings can become more like stories rather than factual accounts. There are many such instances, but here we will focus on Gen. Sardar Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, the 18th-century founder of the Ramgarhia Misl, and the allegations of female infanticide against him by some historians.

Looking into the background of Sardar Jassa Singh Bamrah, we find that his family had been connected to the Sikh Gurus since the time of the sixth Guru, Sri Guru Hargobind Ji. Bhai Bidhi Chand chhina, a prominent Sikh warrior of that era, hailed from the village of Sur Singh (40 km from Amritsar on the Khem Karan road). Bhai Ramu Ji Bamrah, a neighboring blacksmith and carpenter, assisted Bhai Bidhi Chand in making weapons. Such was his admiration for Bhai Bidhi Chand chhina that he named his own new born son Bidhi Chand as well. This deep devotion and love for the Guru's house permeated his family from that time onward. Later, a son was born to this Bidhi Chand Bamrah, named Hardas.

Bhai Hardas Ji Bamrah received Amrit initiation (*Khande di Pabul*) from lotus hands of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, becoming Hardas Singh. His son was named Bhagwan Singh, who later became renowned in the Sikh Panth as Giani Bhagwan Singh Bamrah. Both father and son served Guru Gobind Singh Ji in Anandpur Sahib. In 1684, Baba Hardas

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Ji wrote a manuscript of the Adi Granth Sahib, authenticated by Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji himself with his signatures. (This manuscript was present in the Sikh Reference Library, Amritsar until 1984). Pleased with his service, the Guru blessed him with royal rewards:

“ਇਨਕੋ ਬਡੇ ਸਿੰਘ ਹਰਦਾਸ, ਰਹਿਓ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਪਾਸ।  
ਮਨ ਤਨ ਧਨ ਕਰ ਸੇਵ ਕਮਾਈ, ਗੁਰ ਬਰ ਦੀਨੋ ਰਾਜ ਲਭਾਈ” ॥

*His ancestor served Sri Guru Gobind Singh with utmost sincerity for which he was rewarded by the Guru.*

(Giani Gian Singh)

Hardas ji participated in all the battles of Guru Gobind Singh Ji and later fought alongside Banda Bahadur, eventually achieving martyrdom in the Battle of Bajwara (Hoshiarpur).

Giani Bhagwan Singh (son of Baba Hardas Singh ji), deeply devoted to the Guru, was known for his teachings on Gurbani and Sikhism, earning him the title of ‘Giani Ji’ from the people. He had five sons, the eldest being Jassa Singh. During Nadir Shah’s invasion (1739-40), upon hearing the news, Khan Bahadur Zakariya Khan sought the Sikhs’ help for military assistance. Giani Bhagwan Singh, along with his son Jassa Singh and others, joined the battle. While saving Khan Bahadur’s life, Bhagwan Singh was wounded and martyred. Impressed by their bravery, Khan Bahadur granted Jassa Singh and his brothers five villages: Valla, Verka, Sultanwind, Tung, and Chabba (Chabbal) .

Sardar Jassa Singh Bamrah was, like his ancestors, a devoted follower of the Guru and a brave warrior. A great devotee of Guru Ram Das, he named everything in the Guru’s honor, such as Ram Rauni for the fort he built in Amritsar, and Ram Garh for the fortified structure he constructed. He called his langar “Ram Roti,” his weapons “Ram Ban” and “Ram Jange,” and his treasury “Ramras.” He even named his Misl, the Ramgarhia Misl. His bravery and foresight were well-recognized among the Misls and the Panth. His life exemplified protecting others, providing refuge, and fighting alongside the Khalsa in every major battle. His character included safeguarding the honor of women and taking a stand for the downtrodden.

Attributing baseless allegations to such a significant figure without concrete evidence tarnishes not only this legacy but also disrespects the sacrifices made by these great warriors. This principle applies not only to Sardar Ramgarhia but to some other prominent figures in the Panth. Unfounded accusations without substantial proof are unjust. After all, it is due to the sacrifices of these generals and warriors that we live with our heads held high today.

Let's explore the historical allegations against Sardar Jassa Singh Ramgarhia regarding the killing of girl. Efforts have been made to keep the discussion brief to avoid making the article overly long. Many questions arise regarding the writings of authors, but the attempt is to delve into minimal detail.

No Persian source from antiquity mentions any incidents of Sardar Jassa Singh Ramgarhia killing a girl. The first mention appears in "*Prachin Panth Prakash*" by Ratan Singh Bhangu, first published in 1858. Here S. Bhangu ji gives only a small hint in single line only.

ਚੌਪਾਈ: ਸਿੰਘ ਤਰਖਾਣ ਜੱਸਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੋਇ, ਦੀਨੋ ਸਿੰਘਨ ਛੇਕ ਥੋ ਸੋਇ।  
ਸੋ ਆਇ ਦੀਨਾ ਬੇਗ ਪੈ ਰਹਾ, ਸਿੰਘ ਸੈਕਰੋ ਉਸ ਸੰਗ ਅਹਾ”

*Jassa Singh, a carpenter by profession, he was excommunicated by the Singhs. He took shelter with Adina Beg, taking hundreds of his camp follower with him.*

– Sri Gur Panth Parkash, Sakhi 120, 45

Here, Bhangu does not provide any specific reason, date, month, or place for the incident. When making allegations, it is crucial to mention evidence.

Ratan Singh Bhangu's father, Bhai Rai Singh, was raised by Sardar Sukkha Singh Kalsi (Tarkhan Mari Kamboji) because he was the son of Bhangu's father's close friend, Sardar Mehtab Singh Bhangu (Miran Kotia). After his martyrdom, Rai Singh was targeted by Mughal forces but survived and was raised by Sardar Sukkha Singh as his son. Bhangu mentions this entire episode in his book "*Prachin Panth Prakash* or *Sri Gur Panth Parkash*."

Bhangu writes that he has documented what he heard from elders. In the entire text, there are only two references to the bravery of the

Ramgarhia clan: Sardar Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and Sardar Sukkha Singh Kalsi (Madi Kamboji), with over ten chapters and around 500 stanzas dedicated to them. There is only one episode of Bhangu's father, Sardar Mehtab Singh, slaying Massa Ranghar in the Golden Temple with Sardar Sukkha Singh. This context could have led to some bias against the Ramgarhias, hence, the few disparaging remarks.

Bhangu mentions that when Sardar Jassa Singh's brother Mali Singh captured Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Sardar Jassa Singh Ramgarhia was angry at his brother and treated Ahluwalia with respect and released him with appropriate gifts. Bhangu's choice of words in some contexts raises doubts about his intentions, as seen in:

“ਇਸੇ ਮਾਹਿੰ ਇਕ ਔਰ ਹੀ ਸੁਣੋ ਜੁਲਮ ਕੀ ਗਲ।

ਰਾਮਗੜੀਏ ਜਿਮ ਵੱਧ ਘਣੇ ਗਏ ਖੇਹ ਮੇ ਰਲ॥”

*Amidst this, listen to an other atrocious incident:*

*How the Ramgarhias proliferated and then perished.*

The next significant mention is in “Sri Guru Panth Prakash” by Giani Gian Singh, first published in Delhi in 1880 and available in a 1987 edition by the Language Department. Gian Singh Ji provides a comprehensive account of the Ramgarhia Misal. He describes how Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji blessed Baba Hardas Ji with prosperity, and later, how Sardar Jassa Singh participated in battles against Nader Shah and was granted five villages as a reward for his bravery. Gian Singh mentions:

“ਫੇਰ ਅਦੀਨਾ ਬੇਗ ਕੇ ਪਾਸ ਰਹੋ ਇਹ ਜਾਏ।

ਜੰਗ ਰਾਮਗੜ ਕੈ ਵਿਖੇ ਮਿਲਿਯੋ ਪੰਥ ਸੋ ਜਾਇ।5।

ਕਿਲ੍ਹਾ ਰਾਮਗੜੁ ਇਨੀਕੋ ਬਕਸ਼ ਪੰਥ ਨੈ ਦੀਨ।

ਨਾਮ ਰਾਮਗੜੀਏ ਭਣੋ ਇਸੀ ਹੇਤ ਤੈ ਚੀਨ”

*Then he (Jassa Singh Ramgarhia) joined Adina Beg, but he rejoined the Sikh Panth during the Battle of Ramgarh.*

*Thereafter the Khalsa Panth rewarded him with the Ramgarh Fort,*

*After which his clan was named as Ramgarhias*

Further he describes the construction of the Ram Raouni fort and the siege led by Adina Beg. He recounts how Sardar Jassa Singh entered the fort to aid his fellow Sikhs, emphasizing his devotion to

the Panth:

“ਠਟੀ ਸ਼ਹੀਦੀ ਲੈਨ ਸਿੰਘਨ ਜਬ ਐਨ ਪੁਕਾਰਾ।  
ਜੱਸਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਤਰਖਾਣ ਸਿੱਖ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਿਦਕੀ ਭਾਰਾ।  
ਨੌਕਰ ਦੀਨਾ ਬੇਗ ਪਾਸ ਥਾ ਬਹੁ ਦਿਨ ਕੇਰਾ।  
ਸੰਗ ਤਾਹਿ ਅਸਵਾਰ ਏਕ ਸੌ ਸਿੰਘ ਅਛੇਰਾ।  
ਤਿਸ ਨੇ ਸੁਣ ਮਨ ਧਰੀ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਭ ਲੈਹੇ ਸ਼ਹੀਦੀ।  
ਫੇਰ ਮੋਹਿ ਨ ਤਜੇ ਤੁਰਕ, ਮਾਰਿਹ ਕਰ ਗੀਦੀ।  
ਤਾਂਤੇ ਚਾਹੀਏ ਅਬੀ ਪੰਥ ਸੋ ਮਿਲ ਕਰ ਮਰਨਾਂ।  
ਵਿਛੁੜ ਪੰਥ ਤੇ ਰਹਿਨ ਖੇਤ ਮੇ ਜੈਸੇ ਡਰਨਾ” ॥ 17 ॥

*Singhs achieve martyrdom when the occasion rises;  
One of them was the devout Sikh carpenter Jassa Singh.  
He was an employee of Adina Beg for some time;  
Along with his one hundred companions.  
As he heard about all other Singhs making sacrifices;  
His own allegiance with Mughals would be considered cowardice;  
So he should also sacrifice his life along with other singhs;  
Otherwise, alienated from Panth would he be a scarecrow only.*

In the provided text, there is no mention of any allegations against Jassasingh Ramgarhia regarding the killing of a girl. Giani ji, Instead, it is stated, that when Sardar Jassa Singh learned about the condition of the Sikhs inside the fort, he immediately went inside the fort to help his Sikh bretherens, leaving Adina Beg. Giani: Gian Singh spent 20 years researching and writing this book.

Another manuscript by Giani Gian Singh is “Twarikh Guru Khalsa Part 3 Raj Khalsa” (first printed in 1892). Pages 548 to 556 discussed the Ramgarhia Misl. Interestingly, Giani ji does not mention any allegations against Sardar Jassa Singh Ramgarhia regarding the killing of a girl; instead, he praises his bravery everywhere. At the beginning of episode , he describes about Jassa Singh’s father, Giani Bhagwan Singh.

“In Samvat 1797 (1739-40 AD), during Nadir Shah’s invasion, he saved Khan Bahadur’s life by sacrificing his own, for which the Nawab appointed his son Jassa Singh as Sardar and granted him revenue-free land in Valla, Verka, Tung, Sultanwind, and Chabba (five

villages). Once, as a representative (*vakil*) of sikhs regarding the case of Shah Nawaz, he went to Adina Beg. Seeing him as handsome, young, brave, and charming, Adina Beg kept him by his side by accepting his demands on behalf of Khalsa. Later, during the battle of (Ram Rauni), when Adina Beg came to fight the Sikhs, Jassa Singh joined the Khalsa with his hundred horsemen. This angered Mir Mannu, who took away those parganas from him. However, the Khalsa greatly honored him and granted him the fort of Ramgarh, making him famous as Ramgarhia.”

Readers can understand that Giani Gian Singh Ji did not mention the incident of killing a girl or being excommunicated from the Panth. Remember that at that time, the various Sikh jathas were independent and operated in their own ways; none were under any single authority. (By 1747-48, the number of Sikh *jathas* had reached 65. The formation of Misls occurred during Vaisakhi in 1748). In this regard, Hari Ram Gupta mentions Ali-ud-Din’s “*Ibrat Nama*” about above incident in the foot note of his book *History of the Sikhs*.

In the second part of *Twarikh Guru Khalsa, Shamsber Khalsa*, when discussing the battle of Ram Rauni, Giani Ji writes, “At one time, a true or lie rumour spread about Jassa Singh, that a daughter was born in his house, whom his wife had aborted. Due to this, the Panth excommunicated him.” This statement indicates that Giani Ji himself is not certain. That’s why he does not mention this incident while discussing the Ramgarhia Misl on page 549, especially not in *Panth Prakash*. This is something readers should consider and researchers should research.

Now, let’s discuss Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha’s book *Mahankosh*, first published in 1930. Bhai Sahib holds great respect in the Sikh Panth and has received the Padma Bhushan award. In his book, he provides detailed information based on facts and sources. Every 20th-century writer uses this book as a reliable reference work. However, for some unknown reason, he included this baseless, hearsay incident in his book, attempting to defame this great general by putting a slanderous allegation on him. He does not mention the source of his

information. This can only be attributed to hatred towards the Ramgarhia community. A scholar like him should have conducted a thorough research on this matter.

“This was the son of Giani Bhagwan Singh. He was skilled in martial arts and very brave. The Khalsa Panth excommunicated him for the stigma of killing a girl. He then went to serve Adina Beg with his brothers.”

See how he states that the Khalsa put a stigma on him, meaning there is a difference between being actually stigmatized due to events and having a stigma put on you. This clearly shows that these incidents were fabricated by writers to include them in their books with the intention of defaming him. Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha should have mentioned the date and time of such events. If someone is excommunicated or declared a Tankhaiya by the Panth, then the name of the place, time, and the names of the leaders of the Khalsa who imposed the punishment should have been mentioned. An allegation without factual evidence is a hearsay.

Baba Prem Singh Hoti Mardan was also a renowned historian. In his writing (*Khalsa Raj De Usaraiye* Part 2, 1942”), he mentions Sardar Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. On page 80, in a footnote, he writes:

“In ‘*Shamsber Khalsa*,’ it is written that Sardar Jassa Singh Ramgarhia killed his daughter. Due to this allegation, the Panth separated him. But we did extensive research and found no solid evidence to support this. When we look into his life’s actions, it becomes clear that someone who holds such respect and compassion for others’ daughters and puts himself in danger to save their lives could not possibly strangle his own daughter.”

On the same page 80, Baba Prem Singh Ji describes an incident in 1780, where the governor of Hisar abducted a poor Brahmin’s daughter, and when the Brahmin pleaded with Sardar Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, he immediately attacked the governor of Hisar, rescued the girl, punished the governor appropriately, and gave the girl 5000 rupees as a token of blessing, saying daughters should not be sent away empty-handed. This was the character of Jassa Singh

Ramgarhia.

Another example is by Sardar Prithi Pal Singh Kapoor, who in his book (“Sardar Jassa Singh Ramgarhia 1957”) comments on this incident in a footnote on page 36:

“It is noteworthy that earlier writers did not mention this at all. Especially Ali-ud-Din did not write anything about this incident in his book ‘Ibrat Nama.’”

From all the above references, it is clear that this entire fabricated story was concocted only to defame Maharaja Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and to quench the burning envy and hatred towards him.

Let’s now look at how other writers have altered the content in Giani Gian Singh Ji’s “*Panth Prakash*” and “*Twarikh Khalsa*” to distort history and tarnish Giani Gian Singh’s name.

Giani Gian Singh’s “*Sri Guru Panth Prakash*,” edited by Giani Kirpal Singh Ji in its 1974 edition.

“ਸੁਤ ਭਗਵਾਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਕੇ ਚਾਰੇ, ਭਏ ਬਡੇ ਜੱਸਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਦਾਰੇ।  
ਤਾਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਆਲੀ ਸਿੰਘ ਜਾਨੇ। ਅਰ ਖੁਸ਼ਹਾਲ ਸਿੰਘ ਪਹਿਚਾਨੇ ॥ 60 ॥  
ਜੱਸਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਨਿੱਜ ਬੇਟੀ ਮਾਰੀ। ਸੁਣੀ ਖਾਲਸੇ ਪੰਥ ਮਝਾਰੀ।  
ਪੰਥ ਖਾਲਸੇ ਵਰਤਨ ਤਿਆਗੀ। ਗੁੱਸਾ ਖਾਇ ਤਖਾਣ ਅਭਾਰੀ” ॥ 61 ॥  
*“Bhagwan Singh’s four sons grew up to be Jassa Singh,  
Tara Singh, Ali Singh, and Khushal Singh.  
Jassa Singh killed his own daughter,  
and the Khalsa Panth was informed.  
The Khalsa Panth abandoned him, and in anger,  
he was termed unfortunate.”*

However, the same writer in the 2019 edition says some thing more changed language about this incident.

“ਜੱਸਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਤਖਾਣ ਸਿੱਖ, ਇਕ ਥਾ ਗੁਰੂ ਕੇਰਾ।  
ਨੌਕਰ ਤੁਰਕਨ ਪਾਸ, ਰਹਿਤ ਥਾ ਬਹੁ ਦਿਨ ਕੇਰਾ।  
ਥਾ ਤਨਖਾਈਆ ਸੋਊ, ਪੰਥ ਨੇ ਤਿਆਗਦੀਉ ਥਾ।  
ਨਿਜ ਬੇਟੀ ਕਾ ਖੂੰ, ਤਾਹਿੰ ਕੇ ਹਾਥ ਭਣੇ ਥਾ” ॥ 105 ॥



*“Jassa Singh Thakan was a Sikh who served the Guru.  
He worked for the Turks for many days and was excommunicated by  
the Panth.  
He was accused of killing his own daughter,  
And his hands were stained with her blood.”*

Readers can see that the event mentioned by Giani Gian Singh in the 1974 edition is not present in the same form in the 2019 edition. It appears that the narrative was altered to mislead the community, suggesting that details omitted in 1974 were added in 2019 to influence readers' perceptions. Even if it is accepted that Giani Gian Singh mentioned this in “Shamsher Khalsa,” Giani Kirpal Singh should have credited the writing to Shamsher Khalsa by Giani Gian Singh. Instead, he altered the text significantly while still attributing it to “Sri Guru Panth Prakash” by Mahakavi Giani Gian Singh, which seems deceptive.

Other historians like Hari Ram Gupta, Principal Satbir Singh, and Dr. Ganda Singh have discussed this issue, though often in brief or footnotes. Most references are to Rattan Singh Bhangu and “Panth Prakash” edited by Giani Kirpal Singh, which confirms that the accusation against Maharaja Jassa Singh Ramgarhia of killing his daughter is unfounded and appears to be a conspiracy to defame this great general.

The Sikh community should strongly condemn such narratives and request the SGPC to correct these texts to ensure accurate historical information reaches the Panth. New writers should also be urged to avoid describing events without complete and solid evidence. The Sikh history has already seen suffering from significant alterations, so it is crucial to remain vigilant. Our intention is not to offend anyone but to present an accurate history.

## **THE SIKH ARCHIVES: ITS LOSS AND NEED FOR REORGANISATION**

**DR MADANJIT KAUR\***

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Among the religious communities of India, the Sikhs are the most conscious about their cultural identity and survival as a distinct community within the Indian social framework. They possess a strong sense of history and a cherished desire to keep contact with their past. The Sikhs have a glorious heritage and their annals are full of sagas of heroism and sacrifice. However, in spite of this historical consciousness, the Sikh organizations have paid scant attention to preserve their past in modern scientific terms.

It is a known fact of history that the Sikh community has moved through the most hazardous challenges but they have kept their trust with destiny to survive. However, the periods of trial under the later Mughals and the Afghan invaders proved arduous for protection and preservation of literature, historical records, monuments, relics and remains. This period of darkness and uncertainty is difficult to be explained in the absence of adequate historical evidence. Admittedly, documentary evidence on the early history of the Sikhs is meagre and it is difficult to reconstruct the true picture of the contemporary Sikh society in actual historical perspective. But this is not true of the later history of the Sikhs when ideas on religion, theology and politics were not only revitalized but also made to guide the religious actions of their organizations. The Sikhs confronted a crisis of identity under the dominating impact of Brahmanism. The period comprised the problem of identity as a distinct community. There was the phenomenon of the Sikh resurgence under the leadership of the Singh

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Sabha Movement. The Sikhs moved from political confusion into a new self-awareness and evolved into a political entity with the formation of the Akali Dal and the organisation of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. The new self-awareness heralded an era of awakening among the Sikhs in the third decade of the twentieth century. Attempts were made in literature and journalism to produce tracts and pamphlets glorifying the lives and teachings of the Sikh Gurus and the heroic culture of the Khalsa. The authors focussed their attention on understanding fundamental Sikh doctrines and recording true Sikh traditions. A large number of tracts, booklets, pamphlets, commentaries and glossaries were published. The Sikh scholars were exhibiting keen interest in their past. Much of their efforts were aimed at searching old literary sources and evaluating historical documents and records in Sikh context.

The development of the sense of history and desire to preserve their heritage were the products of the cultural revolution which had shaped the Sikh community in modern times. Later on, the secularization of thought and growth of scientific methodology and questioning of all systems embodying eternal truths enhanced the importance of Sikh studies in the present context.

The Sikhs' historical awareness that fostered research and writings also resulted in the preservation of religious texts. By the end of the nineteenth century organised attempts were made at the institutional level by two Sikh societies, viz. the Gurmat Pracharak Sabha of Amritsar and the Gurmat Granth Sudharak Committee of Lahore. Both these organisations sponsored collection of religious texts and their historical study. These societies examined texts and attempted to prevent the printing of inferior editions of the *Adi Granth* and unauthentic versions of the *Janamsakbis*. The contributions of these institutions were supplemented by the efforts of individuals like Gian Singh Giani, Bhai Kahan Singh of Nabha and Bhai Dit Singh. The voluminous works produced by these scholars are not only sources of Sikh history and scriptures but also indicative of interests and ambitions of the contemporary Sikh generation trying to formulate Sikh doctrines and preserve records for future reference. Subsequently, the spread of education among the Sikhs and the growth of Punjabi

Literature reflected similar concerns of the Sikh community. Moreover, the growth and development of Sikh journalism offered effective means of communication. The response of the Singh Sabha leaders was indeed praiseworthy. Consequently, a number of printing presses were set up and journals, tracts and weeklies began to pour out. Sikh organisations like Chief Khalsa Diwan and Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee also began to maintain libraries. The Sikh Reference Library established by the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee which preserved the old and the new records was the most substantial archive.

One of the most deplorable acts of the 'Operation Bluestar' in the Golden Temple complex from 4th to 7th June 1984 is the destruction of the treasure-house of the Sikh scriptures and Sikh records preserved in the Sikh Reference Library housed on the first floor of entrance (*deohri*)<sup>1</sup> to the *Parikarma* (circumambulatory path) on the Ata Mandi side of the Golden Temple. This Library fell a victim to the Army action in the Temple on 6th-7th June, 1984.<sup>2</sup> The idea of establishing a Sikh Reference Library can be traced to year 1929 when Sikh History Research Board was constituted by the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. Meanwhile, Sikh Historical Society had been established at Lahore with the efforts of Bawa Buddh Singh Bhalla in 1930. But the society could not fulfil the requirements of a Research Library. However, it was only after a span of fifteen years that the Sikh scholars and historians came to the forefront. A meeting was held at Khalsa College, Amritsar on the occasion of the visit of Princess Bamba (the last successor of Maharaja Duleep Singh) on February 10, 1945.<sup>3</sup> There, the founding of the Sikh History Society, Amritsar was announced.<sup>4</sup> Now the Sikh organisations realised the urgency of establishing a Reference Library. Consequently, the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee in its meeting held on March 10, 1945 under the presidentship of Jathedar Mohan Singh chalked out a programme for next six years. The third resolution of the meeting was to establish a full-fledged Reference Library to promote research in the Sikh History.<sup>5</sup> It was also decided to make arrangements for publication of new books on Sikh History. Subsequently, the Sikh Reference Library came into existence on February 9, 1947.<sup>6</sup> Sardar

Randhir Singh, the Gurdwara Inspector, extended his full support in the organisation of the Library. Originally the Sikh Reference Library was housed in Hall No. 4 of Guru Ram Dass Sarai.

In establishing the Sikh Reference Library, the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee had kept two aims in view viz., to collect source material on Sikh History and to provide facility of its consultation to scholars working on Sikh History. It was proposed to be a reference library only and the manuscripts and books kept here were not to be issued or lent out.<sup>7</sup> No doubt the scope of the collection of Sikh Reference Library remained confined to source material on Sikh Religion and Sikh history, but in order to have a better understanding of Sikhism and its Indian context, books on other religions, communities and religious groups were also procured for the benefit of readers visiting the library.

The collection of the treasure-house of historical material preserved in the Sikh Reference Library was the achievement of strenuous efforts on the part of institutions and certain individuals. The name of Dr. Ganda Singh, the doyen of Sikh historians is the foremost in this respect. The material collected from various places of the Punjab (including the West Pakistan) was placed here. Subsequently, new material including manuscripts, documents, photographs, rare books, paintings, blocks of paintings of historical events and Sikh heroes, and files of old newspapers were also added to the collection. The Sikh Reference Library was equipped with rarest manuscripts. Copies of many valuable manuscripts from different collections in India transcribed in elegant calligraphy, were kept here.<sup>8</sup> Many of these manuscripts were the works of unknown or less known authors.<sup>9</sup> Majority of them being Hindus. Out of these manuscripts half the stock belonged to Punjabi, one third to Braj and the rest comprised Urdu, Hindi, Persian, Sanskrit, Rajasthani etc.

From its very inception, the Sikh Reference Library had been designed to facilitate researchers and historians and to help scholars to locate items relating to their special interests covering the wider perspective of Sikh Studies. Research scholars, men of letters, teachers, students, journalists, politicians and general readers used to visit the Library for their individual requirements. The academic and educational

potential of the Library can easily be judged from the source material (in manuscripts form) preserved here pertaining to Religion, Literature, Theology, Philosophy, Rhetorics, Poetics, Epic, Mythology, Ethics, Grammar, Music, Indian Systems of Medicine, Surgery, Astrology and Astronomy. A number of research scholars have worked on these manuscripts and have obtained Ph.D degrees for their thesis. These manuscripts and books preserved in the Sikh Reference Library covered the range of language groups from Sanskrit, Braj, Rajasthani, Punjabi, Sindhi, Assami, Bangla, Persian, Arabic, Urdu, English and French.

The Sikh Reference Library remained housed in Guru Ram Das Sarai upto 1958. As the space in Hall No. 4 had limited stock area, the Sikh Reference Library was shifted to a bigger mansion, to its present location in the Golden Temple Complex. The building accommodation of the Sikh Reference Library consisted of a big hall and two small rooms. The main hall of the library was named after Bhai Santokh Singh, a poet-historian of the nineteenth century.

The staff of the Sikh Reference Library is appointed by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. The staff consists of five members including Incharge Librarian, Research scholar (who is also incharge of the Sikh History Research Board), typist and two *senadars*. The staff has been provided with residential facility in the Temple complex. Now, the staff has increased on account of setting computers in the library.

The Sikh Reference Library is financed by Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee.<sup>10</sup> Every year the Sikh History Research Board used to spend an amount for Rs. 10,000/- for the purchase of books for the Sikh Reference Library. According to late S.S. Amol, former Incharge Sikh Itihas Research Board, the total number of books collected in the Sikh Reference Library was 12,500 (including hundreds of rare and valuable manuscripts) in the year 1982. However, opinions vary on the total number of the manuscripts and books stocked in the Sikh Reference Library. It is estimated that the stock of Sikh Reference Library had gone upto approximately 20,000 Books and 3000 valuable manuscripts.

The above mentioned rich treasure-house of learning preserved

in the Sikh Reference Library has been destroyed during the military action at the Golden Temple. The loss includes 1500 valuable rare manuscript copies of the *Adi Granth* (including a copy of the *Kartarpur Vali bir*), *Mangal Vali bir*, *Damdami bir* dated BK 1739 and *Bhai Hardas Vali bir* with the *Mulmantra* scribbled by Guru Tegh Bahadur in it) *Dasam Granth*, a score of *Nisans* and *Hukamnamas* (some of them bearing autographs of Sikh Gurus), various versions of *Rahatnamas*<sup>11</sup> and *Sakhis* and *Janamsakhis* (some of them illustrated with beautiful miniatures), about 500 manuscript copies of commentaries and indexes on *Guru Granth Sahib*; rare manuscripts of *bhagat bani* (like that of *Sein Bhagat di bani*, *Pothi Mahan Sundar Sachiar Ki*, *Parchian Bhagtan Kian*, Biddhi Das' *Bhagat Sudhasar*, Kavi Jassa Singh's *Bhagat Premakar*; Sikh documents, photographs of *hukamnamas* (of Guru Hargobind, Guru Tegh Bahadur, Baba Gurditta, Guru Gobind Singh, Mata Gujari, Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devi); paintings of Bhai Bidhi Chand, Baba Gurdita, Baba Jawahir Singh Dhirmalia; portraits and miniatures of Sikh Gurus and Bhagats (Kabir, Jai Dev, Trilochan, Dhanna, Beni, Mira and Ramanand)<sup>12</sup>; photographs of Maharaja Duleep Singh and his family, photographs of Maharaja Duleep Singh's correspondence<sup>13</sup>; photographs of correspondence related to Maharani Jindan; photographs of the *firman*s (royal orders) of Maharaja Duleep Singh addressed to some feudal Chiefs of Lahore; photographs of Native Indian Chiefs, photographs of Princess Bamba's visit to Khalsa College, Amritsar; photographs of historical events and Sikh personalities, photographs of the first and last folios of a manuscript of *Guru Granth Sahib* dated 1711 BK, photographs of the coins of Sikh chiefs from R.C. Temple's collection;<sup>14</sup> Records of the Akali Movement, Gurdwara Reforms Movement, Akali Morchas<sup>15</sup>, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Punjabi Suba Agitation and files of old Newspapers. Manuscripts of some of the significant research projects (under publication) viz. *Panth Parkash* (Rattan Singh Bhangu), *Banda Bahadur* (Karam Singh historian), and *Sri Gur Granth Sahib dian hath likhat Biran da Itibas* (Shamsher Singh Ashok) were also kept here. Also these valuable sources of information were gutted alongwith its furniture. Not even a book has survived the holocaust. Only small bits of burnt index cards and a heap of junk shelves, cupboards and

steel almirahs were the remains of the Sikh Reference Library. The walls and floor of the building were charred and chips of cement plaster blown off. The damage to the library, to its contents, furniture and building amounts to millions of rupees. The damaged building of the *deobri* housing the Sikh Reference Library has been repaired now.<sup>16</sup> But the academic and cultural loss of Library is irreparable. The Sikhs, in particular, and the country, in general, have lost a rich storehouse of archival material. The Sikh reaction at this academic loss is beyond expression.<sup>17</sup> The tragedy is that the Sikh psyche is deeply hurt at the sacrilege of their scriptural and religious texts preserved in the Sikh Reference Library. We hardly find any comparison to this episode of cultural destruction in Indian History. Even the autocrat, militant, fanatic Muslim rulers of Turkish period refrained from such actions.<sup>18</sup> However, a parallel can be found in the Cultural Revolution in China where centres of old Chinese culture and learning were destroyed mercilessly in the early seventies of this century.

Whatever the outcome of the criticism of the 'Operation Blue Star' it is unlikely that the historians are going to spare the Governments of its responsibility for the uncivilized action of destroying the Sikh Archives. Although the destruction of the Sikh Reference Library by the army may be labelled as unpredictable, the political bias was unmistakable. The attack was aimed at destroying the Sikhs physically and culturally. Already more than half of the Sikh Archives containing priceless historic documents since the time of the Gurus had been destroyed deliberately by the Government of India during the period of the Operation Blue Star.

The Sikh historians' response to the archival loss is that of anguish even though the state may find their attitude uncomfortable. But as long as society seeks knowledge of the past, the historian must accept his responsibility to society i.e. his task to reconstruct the past. We know that knowledge of the past may help to reveal the meaning of human experience and that the recollection of the past may harden our resolutions and confirm our vision in the struggle of the present. The task of the historian is very difficult in the present shifting conditions under which the affairs of the Punjab are moving. The



tragic experience of the 'Operation Blue Star' had a profound unsettling effect on the Sikh community and some of the basic presuppositions do not seem adequate to be discussed here.

The destruction of Sikh Reference Library (as well as the records of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee kept in the Samundari Hall) may have a profound, lasting impact on Sikh historians. To have lived through all this could not but effect their historical imagination.<sup>19</sup> As Neibuor recognized:

When a historian is reviving former times, his interest in them and sympathy with them will be the deeper, the greater the events he has witnessed with a bleeding or rejoicing heart.<sup>20</sup>

The historian must serve two masters, the past and the present. But the past must always claim his first loyalty, he must accept the fact that the choices he makes as a historian are not of consequences to him alone, but will affect the moral sense and the wisdom of his generation.<sup>24</sup> This is a serious task, as he deals with men and their lives in society, both past and present. We are aware of the fact that the socio-psychic factor is the most determining factor in history. This exemplifies in the historians treatment of motivation behind each historical event and action. According to G.M. Young, "the essential matter of history is not what happened, but what people thought and said about it..."<sup>21</sup>

The 'Operation Blue Star' has forcibly lifted Sikh history out of its protected shelf. This apparent break with the past tradition has compelled the Sikhs to reconstruct their archives. The problem here is a moral issue. The lesson of the tragedy is to create more secure methods and places of preservation of Sikh Archives.

One of the serious problem confronting the Sikh historians at present is how to restore the lost repository of Sikh Literature; what are the possibilities of tracing out sources to recover copies of the manuscripts, documents and rare books destroyed in the bonfire of the army action on the Golden Temple; which institutions, libraries and individuals are to be contacted and tapped for the recovery of copies of the lost material?<sup>22</sup> It is the duty of research institutions and individual scholars working on the socio-cultural history to give a

serious thought to this problem. It is the purpose of this study to appeal to historians, students and institutions interested in Sikh Studies to explore possibilities for procuring source material for the reconstruction of Sikh Reference Library with a devoted zeal.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

It has been reported that during the Operation Blue Star a lot of items of Sikh Reference Library were taken away by the Army during the Operation Bluestar in 1984. The SGPC have been trying for the recovery of the books and manuscripts. Even the Defence Minister, George Fernandes replied in his letter to the SGPC dated 3 May 2000 that books and documents that were recovered from the Golden Temple Library had been handed over to the CBI army authorities in July 1984. But the CBI has categorically denied that such material was in its possession and all the material was returned to the SGPC (See Appendixes G and H). Since then, the loss of Sikh Reference Library have become a controversial issue giving rude shock to Sikh community. The SGPC till now, says only some of the above mentioned material have been returned which is very small in number. Now, the matter is in Court. However, the issue of the recovery of the rare and invaluable collection of Sikh reference Library taken away by the Army in 1984 is lying in the dead lock. Therefore, the SGPC has to take up the task to reconstruct the Sikh Reference Library seriously with immediate effect.

Setting up of numerous commercial Internet services under the garb of Sikh Libraries and Sikh Archives is not serving the real purpose of the Archives. Their major aim is to earn money at the cost of the readers and devotees and not to supply authentic documentations of the Sikh archives because they do not possess academic expertise in the field.

All attempts should be made to explore and collate collective efforts of individuals and agencies to work out various parameters demanding research in respect of conservation and preservation of original Sikh manuscripts, Sikh scriptures, Sikh literature and Sikh Archival/artifacts. The Sikh Archives should be organised and established at more than one central place. Our aim should be to clinch

the issue of reconstructing the Sikh Archives and to acquire upto date publications in various languages on Sikh Studies including different discipline. The Archives need to be equipped with modern electronic technology and machinery. For this purpose the help of Sikh Engineers and computer scientists settled abroad may be sought with efforts. The Sikh community is no longer confined to Indian Sub-continent, it is now a global community. Only collective efforts can make our dream of re-constructing of the Sikh Archives true at practical level.

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Notes & References

1. This *deobri* (entrance gate) was constructed by Sant Bhuriwale under the *Karsewa* of the new *parkarma* (circumambulatory) scheme to impart uniformity to the architectural design of the outer *parkarma*. The building was constructed after Independence of India 1947. The *deobri* comprised one of the four main entrance-gates to the Golden Temple.
2. Opinions vary on the date of the destruction of the Sikh Reference Library. The controversy surrounding the destruction of the Library is unfortunate indeed. While the Army claims that it caught fire on the morning of 6th June, 1984, when fighting was in progress, the Temple *sewadars* and *granthis* present during the Operation maintain that the Sikh Reference Library was set on fire on 7th June, 1984. (The eye witnesses include, Hardit Singh, a Hazuri Ragi of Sri Darbar Sahib, Jathedar Kirpal Singh, Head Priest of Sri Darbar Sahib and S. Devinder Singh Duggal, Research Scholar, Sikh History Research Board and Incharge Sikh Reference Library.
For verification see *White Paper on the Punjab Agitation*, issued by the Government of India and Lt. Gen. J.S. Aurora's article "Assault on the Golden Temple Complex" in the *Punjab Story*, Pub. Roli Books International, New Delhi, 1984, p. 95.
3. See Ganda Singh's Annual Report of the Sikh History Society dated 5th May, 1949, in *Itihasak Patre Sainchi I*, Ank I, Baisakh,

- Jeth, Harh, 2006BK, AD 1949, Pub. by Sikh History Society, Amritsar, p. 9.
4. The Society was an autonomous body. It received financial aid from the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. The members of its Managing Committee were : Prof. Teja Singh, Bawa Prem Singh, Prof. Gurmukh Nihal Singh, Bawa Harkrishan Singh and Prof. Ganda Singh. As the society had limited funds at its disposal, evidently it was not equipped with resources to organise a reference library.
 5. For full details of the meeting see S. Shamsheer Singh Ashok's *Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee da Punjab sala Itihas* (1926-1976). Pub. by Sikh Itihas Research Board, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar, 1982, p. 222.
 6. See Ganda Singh (ed.) *Suchi Patre Punjabi Gurmukhi Pustakan Sikh Reference Library* Amritsar, Part-I, 1950, foreword.
 7. *Ibid.*
 8. A descriptive catalogue of the manuscripts kept in the Sikh Reference Library, Sri Guru Ram Dass Library and Central Museum was prepared by S. Shamsheer Singh Ashok. The Catalogue was published in 1968 by the Sikh Itihas Research Board, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar under the title '*Sada hath-likhat Panjabi Sabitya*'.
 9. S. Shamsheer Singh Ashok, the author of *Sada hath-likhat Panjabi Sabitya* had listed names of 176 writers in this context.
 10. The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee had earmarked Rs. 80,000 for Sikh History Research Board in its annual Budget. The Annual Budget of Sikh History Research Board for 1981-82 was Rs. 1,79,000/-. Now the amount is being enhanced considerably.
At the time of the Operation Blue Star, Mr. Balbir Singh held the post of the Librarian, Mr. Devinder Singh Duggal was the Research Scholar and S. Hardip Singh and S. Balwinder Singh were the *sewadars* of the Library.
 11. A collection of the selected texts from six different manuscripts of the *Rahitnamas* (Sikh codes of conduct) was prepared by S.

Shamsher Singh Ashok, Research Scholar, Sikh History Research Board, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar. The edited version was cyclostyled under the title *Guru Khalsa de Rahitname* by Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee for its circulation in October, 1979.

12. Miniatures of these Bhagats in *pahari kalam* are preserved in the Shish Mahal Museum, Patiala.
13. For full details of the text of Maharaja Duleep Singh's correspondence see, Ganda Singh (ed.) *History of the Freedom Movement in the Punjab, Vol. III, Maharaja Duleep Singh's Correspondence*, Pub. by Deptt. of Punjab Historical Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1972.
14. For full details see Ganda Singh, (ed.), *Suchi Puratan Khararian, bath likhat Panjabi pustakan di Sikh Reference Library*, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar, July, 1957.
15. On the documentary evidence of this record hundreds of volunteers who participated in the Akali Morchas (Gurdwara Nankana Sahib, Guru Ka Bagh, Bhai Pheru, Gangsar Jaito etc.) were awarded pensions by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee.
16. Even a casual glance at the side-domes of the *deobri* would reveal the fact that details of the old architectural pattern could not be restored by the repair done through the Government. Later it was renovated by the *Karsewa* carried through SGPC.
17. I regret to say that the saddest part of the tragedy of the Sikh Reference Library is that the Sikh History Research Board had paid scant attention to the preservation of the records kept here. To store this valuable source material for the benefit of the future students of history at least microfilming and photostat should have been done and deposited in safe vaults at other places.
18. It is recorded by the medieval historians that Firoz Tughlaq during his invasion of Nagarkot, Kangra (AD 1365) ruled by the Hindu Raja, Rup Chand, took every care not to damage Sanskrit Library housed within the precinct of the Jawalamukhi

Temple. The Sultan was filled with admiration when he found such a rich collection of 1300 volumes of old manuscripts on various subjects. He ordered his army for the safe transportation of the stock of the Sanskrit works to his capital. After the conquest, when Firoz Tughlaq returned to Delhi, he selected a number of important manuscripts relating to Philosophy, Astrology and other sciences and got them translated into Persian. Out of which two gained immense popularity viz., *Phaalit Jyotish* (astronomy) and *Pasu Chakitsa* (animal husbandry). The famous Persian writer of the age-Issa-ud-din Khalid Khani translated into Persian verse one of the books on the rising and setting of seven planets, their good and evil import, auguries and omens. (See Firishta, Mulla Mohad Hindu Shah, *Tarikh-i-Firishta*, Vol.I, Eng. Tr. Briggs, Calcutta, 1908, pp. 454-462); *A Comprehensive History of India* (in Twelve volumes), Volume Five, *The Delhi Sultanate* (AD 1206-1526), ed. K.A. Niazmi, Pub. People Publishing House, New Delhi, Reprint, 1982, p. 594. See also *The History and Culture of the Indian People; The Delhi Sulnat*, ed. RC Majumdar, Pub. Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, second edition, 1957, p. 101. The translation was named after Sultan and was entitled *Dalal-i-Firoz Shabi*, Badayuni Read it in 1591-92 at Lahore and was moderately impressed (See, R.C. Jauhari, *Firoz Tughluq*, Shiv Lal Agarwal & Co. Agra, 1968, pp. 74-75.

19. Fritz Stern (ed.), *The Varieties of History, From Voltaire to the Present*, Macmillan & Co. Ltd. Second edition, Chausser Press, Bungay Suffolk, Great Britain, 1970, Introduction, p 15.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
22. For detailed study of the controversy see chapter 3, Madanjit Kaur, *The Golden Temple – Past and Present*, Pub. Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 3rd edition, pp. 109-111.

THE SOCIO-SPIRITUAL CURRENTS OF MEDIEVAL INDIA AS MIRRORED IN THE TRAVELOGUES OF GURU NANAK

PROF HARPAL SINGH*

Travelogues (Udasis) of Guru Nanak are primarily the various important and reliable sources that throw light on the life-long events of his momentous life and define him as a founder of the universal religion that we call Sikhism today. All writers who have chronicled the journey of Guru Nanak through the annals of medieval India speak of him as the founder of a world religion that aimed at diminishing the raging conflict between opposing cultures and civilizations besides shaping a man of higher moral and ethical disposition. Writes the twentieth century historian Arnold Toynbee:

“The Sikh religion might be described not inaccurately as a vision of the Hindu-Muslim common ground. To have discovered and embraced the deep harmony underlying the historic Hindu-Muslim discord has been a noble spiritual triumph; the Sikhs may well be proud of their religion’s ethos and origin.’

(Selections from ‘Sacred Writings of the Sikhs’, UNESCO)

All travelogues are unanimous in telling us that Guru Nanak in the first two journeys travelled to the far East and deep South extending upto Sri Lanka to acquaint himself with the beliefs and practices of the ancient Hindu thought. The visits to great centres of pilgrimages offered to him an opportunity to see for himself the great charm between the truth enshrined in the sacred scriptures and the conduct of those who professed them. Combined together the first three travels

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of Guru Nanak may be viewed as a preparation for the last and most challenging journey into the home of Islam in central Asia.

A brief account of Guru Nanak's early life clearly demonstrates his preparedness for the events he was to face and encounter in later years. He was sent to the village Pathshala under a Brahmin teacher from whom he learnt the reading and writing of the current 'devnagri' script besides Arithmetic, Book-keeping and Accounting. Subsequently he was sent to the seminary of a local Muslim teacher sayyad Hassan. Here Nanak studied the rudiments of Persian and Arabic and Indian Islamic literature which became the foundation of his later acquaintance with the highest religious thought, then current in the Islamic world.

Guru Nanak's disappearance in Vein River at Sultanpur was the miraculous turning point in his life. The chroniclers inform us that during this Jal Samadhi Nanak was commissioned by God Almighty to go forth into the world to praise and preach the religion of His name '*Mera Naun Parbrahm Parmesar, Tera Naun Gur Parmesar*' (ਮੇਰਾ ਨਾਉ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਪਰਮੇਸਰ, ਤੇਰਾ ਨਾਉ ਗੁਰ ਪਰਮੇਸਰ - ਪੁਰਾਤਨ ਜਨਮਸਾਖੀ)

It was after the emergence from Vein that Nanak decided to quit the job and other engagements that would bind him to Sultanpur and Talwandi. By now he had prepared to proceed on long sojourns in pursuit of the mission that resided deep in his mind. Thereupon, he declared his message to all the religious men of Islam in Sultanpur and others around him. He was asked by the Muslim clerics to categorically state his allegiance to either of the two religions – Hinduism or Islam. To this, his cryptic reply was that it was the conduct and not the allegiance to any religion that made someone really religious.

The first travel of Guru Nanak took him to Saidpur now known as Emnabad where he came to know of Lalo, a carpenter by profession. He learnt of him as a man who made an honest living and welcomed passersby who halted to see him. The first of the three dimensional principle – ਕਿਰਤ ਕਰੋ, ਨਾਮ ਜਪੋ, ਵੰਡ ਛਕੋ (*Work diligently, meditate and share with the needy*) – was first affirmed here.

The next twenty years were spent by Nanak visiting numerous places in and outside the Indian sub-continent. He saw, as he says in

his bani (compositions); shops, cities, markets, pilgrimage centres and sacred places on river banks. The path that he discovered through long and deep searching was offered to all who came in contact with him.

Guru Nanak's visits to Hardwar on the eve of Baisakhi and to Kurukshetra on Solar eclipse are described as most significant in the early part of his first travel. The encounter with Vaishnwa saints at Hardwar offered an opportunity to Nanak to settle the issue of, as to what constitutes pure and impure food. Here the Nanak emphasized that the food which is not available to the needy irrespective of his caste or calling is patently impure.

The visit to Kurukshetra is important as it deals with the issue of what is considered as impure food. More so because a particular kind of food was not to be consumed on days considered auspicious.

Further into the far-east Guru, Nanak had the audacity of entering the shunned land of Kamrup which is our modern Assam. Janam Sakhis of Nanak refer to it as Kamru Des (ਕਉਰੂ ਦੇਸ). From the earlier times Bengal and Assam were the home of Tantric feats. The magic of Bengal, even today, is a household word and its spell is readily believed and felt. A seventeenth century writer refers to Kamrup as a land which anyone would enter at his own peril. He says:

ਤੰਗ ਹਨ ਇਸ ਦੇਸ਼ ਦੇ ਦਰਵਾਜ਼ੇ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਬਾਹਰਲੇ ਲੋਕ ਅੰਦਰ ਆ ਸਕਣ।
ਲੰਗੜੇ ਹਨ ਉਹ ਕਦਮ ਜੋ ਕਾਮਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਰਹਿ ਕੇ ਬਾਹਰ ਜਾਣ ਦੀ ਸਮਰਥਾ
ਰਖਣ। ਜਿਹੜੀ ਵੀ ਫੌਜ ਕਾਮਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਆਈ, ਉਹ ਵਾਪਸ ਮੌਤ ਦੇ ਦਰ ਰਾਹੀਂ
ਹੀ ਇੱਥੋਂ ਨਿਕਲੀ। ਜਿਹੜੇ ਵੀ ਕਾਰਵਾਂ ਇਥੇ ਆਏ, ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੇ ਮੌਤ ਦੀ ਦਹਿਲੀਜ਼
'ਤੇ ਹੀ ਜਾ ਕੇ ਸਾਹ ਲਿਆ। ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਜਿਹੜਾ ਵੀ ਇਸ ਦੇਸ ਆਇਆ, ਜੀਉਂਦਾ
ਵਾਪਸ ਨਹੀਂ ਗਿਆ।”

Narrow indeed are the doors of this country through which outsiders could enter. Paralytic are those feet which, after stay in Kamroop, could walkout. Whichever Army entered Kamroop, it could go out only with its death. Whichever caravans came here these passed through death traps. Whosoever came here alive returned only after his death.

But Guru Nanak was confident of the power of his word and sure of the thrust and power of his persuasion. No terror or dread

could deter him from his avowed path of correcting social distortions and preach his universal message.

Returning from the sojourn to Assam, Bengal and Dhaka, the visit to the famous Jagannathpuri was also meant to engage the custodians of rituals into a gainful dialogue to deliver a message of eternal significance. The Jagannath temple, commemorating the last moments of Krishna on earth, is believed by the biographers of Guru Nanak to have inspired his wondrous composition *Aarti – Gagan mei Thaal*. In it, Guru Nanak celebrated the universal nature which is in a State of perennial worship and prayer staged by the God Creator.

The third sojourn to the interior of Himalayas is considered very significant in view of the fact that Guru Nanak has offered a firsthand description of his sustained dialogue with the Siddh Jogis in his bani *Siddh Gosht*.

Away from the mundane world these yogis had made the snow-clad high peaks of Himalayas their home. For Nanak it was a challenging venture to reach their hide-outs and bring them out for prolonged discussions. (It is based on the accounts provided in *Siddh Gosht*, different Janam Sakhis and Nanak Parkash of Mahakavi Santokh Singh).

Prof Harjeet Singh Gill, Professor Emeritus, Punjabi University Patiala has given a very touching and vivid account of what happened when Guru Nanak woke up the yogis up from slumber :

“When finally they reached the summit of Sumer Parbat,
 The snow clad golden hills,
 Which were famous for their diamonds,
 Their gold and silver
 Their yogis and siddhas
 They saw the yogis lying in trance
 Since ages they had not moved
 The Baba uttered the divine shabad,
 The heavenly word the yogis moved to the strange voice
 That came from the depths of nowhere
 For they had forgotten even the human
 For centuries they were oblivious of the affairs of the world

They had gone into slumber
 Never to wake
 Never to bother about this mundane world.¹

Guru Nanak thus accessed and gauged the religious, spiritual and socio-political temperament of contemporary India. It was imperative for the seed of universal religion to grow and flourish as a future hope from the mankind.

Thus, by going about the length and breadth of India, Guru Nanak meant to access and understand the religious, spiritual and socio-political impulses of the country. It was also a prelude to his last and most challenging sojourn to the cardinal centres of Islam in central Asia. The centuries of Muslim rule had impacted every aspect of the lives of the people across the vast tract of this subcontinent. It was left for Guru Nanak to perform the daunting task of travelling to Mecca and Baghdad to engage himself with the essential practioners of this religion.

He made them see God and nature in unison. As in his childhood, the shade of the tree changed places in the eyes of ordinary mortals but not for him who saw the shadow as a fleeting image in the face of the eternal reality. Guru Nanak had the power of reason and conviction to make the Mullas realise that all religions, humans and the cosmic reality of God converge at one place. His message of the universality of mankind was conveyed to be believed. It had no room for coercion. The mission he carried in his heart had to be practiced and followed. Anything short of it was neither desirable and nor was acceptable to him.

The furious Mullah on seeing the feet of Nanak towards Kabah thought it as an extreme act of sacrilege and pulled them in the opposite direction. Nanak was awake only to see the bewilderment of the poor Mullah. His words,

“Do not worry, my dear Mullah
 Nothing has happened
 The Kabah is where it was
 Only the curtain of your ignorance has been removed
 The Kabah is where it was

But God is everywhere, Allah is everywhere
The greatest miracle is His omnipresence
You want to confine the greatest of the powers
To one small place
To one narrow quarter
It cannot be done.”²

There is a panoramic view of the socio-spiritual and religio-political reality which is reflected in Guru Nanak's travels of gargantuan proportions around the Indian subcontinent. It is mirrored in myriad dimensions in his compositions enshrined in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. The travels of Guru Nanak lie at the foundation of the religion — a path bearer for the mankind.

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2. Ibid, p. 215

AGRICULTURAL TOOLS AND IMPLEMENTS REFERENCED AND INTERPRETED IN SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB

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The utilization of Agricultural tools and machines to facilitate human labor has been a hallmark of societal progress throughout history, with early civilizations devising ingenious contraptions to enhance productivity. In the context of Guru Granth Sahib, an ancient Indian text (1604) renowned for its insights into various facets of life, a plethora of tools and machines of daily use are elucidated, offering a glimpse into the technological landscape of bygone eras. In the annals of early human civilization, tools and machines were often powered by rudimentary means, with a notable reliance on animal labor and manual exertion. In this text, references abound about mechanisms propelled by the strength of animals, such as oxen turning grinding mills or horses pulling carts laden with goods. These animals served as indispensable aides, augmenting human efforts and enabling tasks that would have been arduous or impractical to undertake solely through manual labor.

Moreover, Gurbani illuminates the prevalence of machines driven by human hands, reflecting the ingenuity and resourcefulness of ancient craftsmen and artisans. From simple devices like hand-operated looms for weaving textiles to more complex apparatuses like manually operated water wheels for irrigation, the range of tools and machines described in the text underscores the centrality of human agency in early technological endeavors. Despite the advent of mechanization, which

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would later revolutionize industrial processes, the presence of a human operator remained indispensable, imbuing these machines with a symbiotic relationship with their creators and users. Furthermore, the necessity for human oversight and intervention in the operation of these machines is a recurring theme within the Gurbani text. Even as animals provided motive force or mechanisms were manipulated by hand, the active involvement of human beings was requisite to ensure the proper functioning and maintenance of these contrivances. This symbiosis between humans, animals, and machines epitomizes the interdependence inherent in early technological ecosystems, wherein each component played a vital role in harmonizing the rhythms of daily life.

In Sri Guru Granth Sahib's text, the farming is often used as a metaphor for spiritual concepts and the cultivation of virtues. The metaphor of farming illustrates the process of spiritual growth and the effort needed to attain a higher spiritual state. Here are some references from the Guru Granth Sahib that depict the concept of the farmer and farming. In some hymns, God is described as the farmer who cultivates the field of the human heart.

The soul is likened to the field, and the virtues and divine qualities are the crops.(465) Farming is used to symbolize the cultivation of good deeds, truth, and righteousness.

The effort of a farmer to till the soil and grow crops is compared to the efforts needed to live a life of virtue and devotion (595).

ਮਨੁ ਹਾਲੀ ਕਿਰਸਾਣੀ ਕਰਣੀ ਸਰਮੁ ਪਾਣੀ ਤਨੁ ਖੇਤੁ ॥

ਨਾਮੁ ਬੀਜੁ ਸੰਤੋਖੁ ਸੁਹਾਗਾ ਰਖੁ ਗਰੀਬੀ ਵੇਸੁ ॥

Make thy mind the ploughman, good deed the farming, modesty the water and thy body the field.

Let Lord's Name be thy seed, contentment the earth-crusher and garb of humility thy fence.

The concept that one reaps what one sows is prevalent. Just as a farmer harvests the crop he has sown, a person experiences the results of his actions, whether good or bad. About farmers, see more references in Sri Guru Granth Sahib on pages 23, 43,73 116,304,416, 428,

488,914, 955, 987, 1104, 1379.

There are many references which highlight the spiritual teachings within Sikhism, using the farmer and farming as vivid metaphors to convey deeper truths about life, actions, and spiritual growth. There are many agricultural references such as Aharan, Darna, Chakki, Sugarcane crusher (Velna), Kohlu, Chatti and Madhani, Harahat, Axe, Phallay, Chajj, Chhuri, Basoley, Khurpa, Sohaga, Soil, Moisture etc.

All these references to agricultural tools and their operations have been used in Gurbani text by the Sikh Gurus and other contributors more as symbols and metaphors for stating or illustrating a moral truth or some spiritual insight than for their practical use or form of their structure. Some of these illustrations can be cited in this article. It is not possible to provide a picture of each tool in this article for the younger generation which can access these on Google easily.

AHARAN (ANVIL):

It is known as *Aharan* in Gurbani. An iron tool on which a blacksmith beats with a hammer by placing cold or hot iron. A blacksmith who makes agricultural implements *abran mat vayd batheear*.(8) Let understanding be the anvil, and spiritual wisdom the tools. (SGGS. 1369, 143) This tool is a metaphor for streamlining human mind after subjecting it to a set of disciplinary processes.

ਜਤੁ ਪਾਹਾਰਾ ਧੀਰਜੁ ਸੁਨਿਆਰੁ ॥ ਅਹਰਣਿ ਮਤਿ ਵੇਦੁ ਹਥੀਆਰੁ ॥
ਭਉ ਖਲਾ ਅਗਨਿ ਤਪ ਤਾਉ ॥ ਭਾਂਡਾ ਭਾਉ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਤਿਤੁ ਢਾਲਿ ॥

Make continence thy furnace, patience thy goldsmith, understanding thy anvil, Divine knowledge thy tools, God's fear thine bellows, practising of penance thy fire and Lord's love thy pot, where in filter the Nectar of God's Name.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 8

DARNA

It is the figure of a scarecrow erected in fields to deter stray cattle, animals, and birds which is known as Darna/ scarecrow. Also referred to as a crow flight, rakha, dhadaka, or drava in various regions, scarecrows are typically made by assembling sticks to form a human-

figure. The scarecrow figure in Gurbani stands for a human body at the fag end of its life.

ਫਰੀਦਾ ਤਨੁ ਸੁਕਾ ਪਿੰਜਰੁ ਥੀਆ ਤਲੀਆਂ ਢੂੰਡਹਿ ਕਾਗਾ ॥
ਅਜੈ ਸੁ ਰਬੁ ਨ ਬਾਹੁੜਿਓ ਦੇਖੁ ਬੰਦੇ ਕੇ ਭਾਗਾ ॥ (੧੩੮੩)

Farid, my aged frail body has become a skeleton and the crows peck at my palms.

Even till now, God has not come to my aid, see thou, that such is the fate of the man.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1383

CHAKI (MILL STONE):

The mill was a crucial tool used for grinding grain into flour. It consisted of two round millstones placed one above the other inside an earthen round container with an outlet for the grinded flour. There was an axle made of iron rod (killi) in the centre of these two stones with a round opening in the centre of the upper stone for putting ungrinded grain into this tool (chakki) and a wooden handle in one corner of the upper stone for rotating it. While the grain that comes under the stone gets grinded, the grain that remains around the axle remains intact and ungrinded. It is this reference to the axle and ungrinded grain which is used as an illustration for remaining physically, morally and spiritually safe and intact by synchronizing one's self with the Divine power:

ਦੁਇ ਪੁੜ ਚਕੀ ਜੋੜਿ ਕੈ ਪੀਸਣ ਆਇ ਬਹਿਠੁ ॥
ਜੋ ਦਰਿ ਰਹੇ ਸੁ ਉਬਰੇ ਨਾਨਕ ਅਜਬੁ ਡਿਠੁ ॥

Joining together both the quern stones people come and sit down to grind the corn.

They, which remain attached to the central axle, are saved. Nanak has seen a wonderful thing.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 142

VELENA (SUGARCANE CRUSHER)

The roller was used for crushing sugarcane, in order to extract its juice for consumption or further processing it into sugar or molasses. The whole cane crushing process including making jaggery etc from its juice by boiling it in a cauldron and using the dry sugar cane husk as

fuel is done for extracting sugar from sugarcane. Gurbani states that for the sake of acquiring material things seemingly sweet, human beings have to undergo sufferings like the sugarcane. Thus, both sugarcane and its sweetness are metaphors for human suffering. It states:

ਵੇਖੁ ਜਿ ਮਿਠਾ ਕਟਿਆ ਕਟਿ ਕੁਟਿ ਬਧਾ ਪਾਇ॥
 ਖੁੰਢਾ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਰਖਿ ਕੈ ਦੇਨਿ ਸੁ ਮਲ ਸਜਾਇ॥
 ਰਸੁ ਕਸੁ ਟਟਰਿ ਪਾਈਐ ਤਪੈ ਤੈ ਵਿਲਲਾਇ॥
 ਭੀ ਸੇ ਫੇਗੁ ਸਮਾਲੀਐ ਦਿਚੈ ਅਗਿ ਜਾਲਾਇ॥
 ਨਾਨਕ ਮਿਠੈ ਪਤਰੀਐ ਵੇਖਹੁ ਲੋਕਾ ਆਇ॥

See, that the sugarcane is sheared.

After cleansing and chopping off its plumes,

Its feet are bound to form it into bundles.

Placing it in between the wooden rollers of the press,

They crush and award it punishment.

Extracting the juice, they put it in the cauldron and it groans as it burns.

Even the empty crushed cane is collected and is burnt in the fire.

Nanak, how the sweet-leaved sugarcane is treated, come, and see, O' people!

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 143

KOHLU (OILSEED PRESSER):

The wooden machinery utilized for extracting oil from various oil seeds such as *mustard*, *tara-mira*, and sesame is traditionally known as a “*koblu*”. Similarly, the indigenous oil presser, which consisted of a big wooden bowl and oil seed crushing wooden heavy rod fixed insides to rotate with force by yoking a bull / Ox for extracting oil is also a symbol of a regular and disciplined spiritual following of an accomplished spiritual mentor / Guru, otherwise it will not result in spiritual fruition as raw oil seeds (*Kachi Sarson*) in an oil crusher produce neither oil nor the residual husk used as cattle feed (*Khat*):

ਕਬੀਰ ਜਉ ਤੁਹਿ ਸਾਧ ਪਿਰੰਮ ਕੀ ਪਾਕੇ ਸੇਤੀ ਖੋਲੁ ॥

ਕਾਚੀ ਸਰਸਉਂ ਪੋਲਿ ਕੈ ਨਾ ਖਲਿ ਭਈ ਨ ਤੋਲੁ ॥

Kabir, if thou desirest thy

Beloved, then play thou with the True Guru.

Pressing the unripe mustard, yields neither oil-cake nor oil.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1378

CHATTI AND MADHANI – CHURNING DEVICE & CLAY POT

The *chatti* and *Madhani* were used for kneading curd, which is a precursor to making butter. This tool highlights the traditional method of butter production, where curd was vigorously churned to separate the butterfat from the buttermilk. However, in Gurbani, this churning tool (*Madhani*) is a symbol / metaphor for human meditation by a spiritual devotee who keeps living worldly life represented by the clay pot (*Chatti*) full of cold milk. Kabir says only those who meditate receive the spiritual fruition (butter) while others leading a completely materialistic life keep on churning water only.

ਕਬੀਰ ਮਾਇਆ ਡੋਲਨੀ ਪਵਨੁ ਵਹੈ ਹਿਵ ਧਾਰ ॥
ਜਿਨਿ ਬਿਲੋਇਆ ਤਿਨਿ ਖਾਇਆ ਅਵਰ ਬਿਲੋਵਨਹਾਰ ॥

*Kabir wealth is the churning pot and the breath is the churning staff.
The saints eat the butter and the world drinks the butter-milk.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1365

Alternatively, the churning device (*Madhani*) is a symbol of torture and punishment and spiritual and moral retribution for the sinners and evil-doers meted out by the Divine judge (*Dharam Rai*) as their souls face the moment of judgement.

ਪਾਪੀ ਕਰਮ ਕਮਾਵਦੇ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਾਏ ਹਾਇ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਜਿਉ ਮਥਨਿ ਮਾਧਾਣੀਆ ਤਿਉ ਮਥੇ ਧੂਮ ਰਾਇ ॥

*The sinners commit evil deeds and then bemoan and bewail.
Nanak, as the churning-staff churns the curd, so does the Righteous
Judge churn them.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1425

HARHAT / MALTIND (PERSIAN WHEEL)

Both these words Harhat or Maltind are mentioned in Gurbani. The Persian wheel used to be a mechanical water lifting device operated usually by animals like bullocks, buffaloes or camels. It is used to lift water from water sources typically found in open wells.

In Sanskrit the word Arahatta has been used in ancient texts to describe the Persian Wheel. Bulls and oxen are very helpful in the traditional Irrigation system. Irrigation through Persian wheels used to be a common mode of irrigation till late in 20th century in India.

However in Gurbani, it is symbol of a soothing meditative and devotional sound as its *tak tak* sound/voice resembles the repetitive *toon toon* devotional voice of a devotee.

ਹਰਹਟ ਭੀ ਤੂੰ ਤੂੰ ਕਰਹਿ ਬੋਲਹਿ ਭਲੀ ਬਾਣਿ ॥ (੧੪੨੦)

The persian wheel too cries, "Thou, Thou" and utters sublime words.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1420

The Persian wheel also cries out, “*Too! Too! You! You!*”, with sweet and sublime sounds.

Is cyclically revolving chain bringing up buckets full of water tied to a chain, emptying them in a container and then going down after emptying and filling again stand for the cycle of human birth and death and rebirth again.

ਜੈਸੇ ਹਰਹਟ ਕੀ ਮਾਲਾ ਟਿੰਡ ਲਗਤ ਹੈ ਇਕ ਸਖਨੀ ਹੋਰ ਫੇਰ ਭਰੀਅਤ ਹੈ ॥

ਤੈਸੇ ਹੀ ਇਹੁ ਖੇਲੁ ਖਸਮ ਕਾ ਜਿਉ ਉਸ ਕੀ ਵਡਿਆਈ ॥

Just as the buckets hung on the chain of the persian wheel rotate, emptying one and filling the other.

So is this play of the Lord. He acts as is His wondrous glory.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1329

SUHAGA:

An agricultural implement for leveling the ploughed land with a thick wooden plank is called *Subaga*. Due to the lesser effect of sunlight and heat on the soil leveled by *Subaga*, the soil remains moist. *Subaga* was earlier driven by one pair of bullocks or one camel but today the era of mechanization has come. Therefore, today the *subagas* / levellers are also made of wood and iron and are driven by tractors.

Subaga in Gurbani text stands for the virtue of contentment which makes human life smooth and enriched just as the soil levelled by a leveller (*subaga*) preserves moisture for the proper germination of seed. Gurbani states:

ਮਨੁ ਹਾਲੀ ਕਿਰਸਾਣੀ ਕਰਣੀ ਸਰਮੁ ਪਾਣੀ ਤਨੁ ਖੇਤੁ ॥

ਨਾਮੁ ਬੀਜੁ ਸੰਤੋਖੁ ਸੁਹਾਗਾ ਰਖੁ ਗਰੀਬੀ ਵੇਸੁ ॥

Make thy mind the ploughman good deed the farming, modesty the water and thy body the field.

Let Lord's Name be thy seed, contentment the earth-crusher and garb

of humility they fence.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 595

HAL (PLOUGH)

A plough is an agricultural tool used to cultivate or cultivate the soil in preparation for sowing seeds. The purpose of which is to break or loosen the top soil. In traditional practice the plough was traditionally pulled by animals such as horses or cattle, but in modern times by tractors.

In Gurbani, plough (*Hal*) is a symbol of good human deeds which result in happiness and meaningful life just as the cultivation/ ploughing of soil with a plough result in the production of plenty of crop.

ਮੈ ਸਤ ਕਾ ਹਲੁ ਜੋਆਇਆ ॥
ਨਾਉ ਬੀਜਣ ਲਗਾ ਆਸ ਕਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਬੋਹਲ ਬਖਸ ਜਮਾਇ ਜੀਉ ॥

I have yoked the plough of Truth.

I begin to sow the Name in this hope that God, by His beneficence, will cause to yield heaps of corn.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 73

DATI (SICKLE)

The Dati is a traditional agricultural tool made of iron with a wooden handle, used for cutting crops or plants. This tool has been a daily necessity for farmers due to its efficiency in manual harvesting.

In Gurbani, Dati or sickle is a symbol or messenger or agent of death. Human life is cut short when the Divine command comes just as workers arrive in the field to harvest the crop whenever the landlord summons them.

ਹਰੀ ਨਾਹੀ ਨਹ ਡਡੁਰੀ ਪਕੀ ਵਢਣਹਾਰ ॥
ਲੈ ਲੈ ਦਾਤ ਪਹੁਤਿਆ ਲਾਵੇ ਕਰਿ ਤਈਆਰੁ ॥
ਜਾ ਹੋਆ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਕਿਰਸਾਣ ਦਾ ਤਾ ਲੁਣਿ ਮਿਣਿਆ ਖੇਤਾਰੁ ॥

The reaper (of the crop of life) neither sees unripe, nor half-ripe nor ripe. Having made preparation, seizing and taking their sickles the croppers arrive. When the Land-Lord's order is issued then is the field-crop reaped and measured.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 43

Overall, the agricultural tools and implements mentioned in the

Guru Granth Sahib offer insights into the daily life, economy, and spiritual emphasizing the interconnectedness of material and spiritual aspects of human existence. Gurbani serves as a testament to the resourcefulness and innovation of ancient societies in harnessing the power of tools and implements to alleviate the burden of labor.

CONCLUSION

Besides these ten agricultural tools, there are several other tools which have been referred to in the Gurbani text both for their agricultural use as well as for their symbolic relevance to some human, moral or spiritual value or opposite idea. Some of other such tools are Axe (Kohara), Chhaj (winnowing tool), *Kburpa* (*soil turning tool*), *Kyare* (sections) etc. Since, Sikh theology is deeply rooted in ecology in both theory and practice, agriculture, and its operations, and agricultural life is also an integral part of ecology. Since Sikh Gurus found agriculture and multifarious operations and its tools to be the most appropriate medium to convey their teachings to their devout followers and readers, they made a profuse use of these tools in their Gurbani text. Repeated references to these tools in the text is a means to an end, the end being the communication of their teachings.

JAPUJI
ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF PAURI/ STANZA 27

PROF KULWANT SINGH*

JAPUJI

ਸੋ ਦਰੁ ਕੇਹਾ ਸੋ ਘਰੁ ਕੇਹਾ ਜਿਤੁ ਬਹਿ ਸਰਬ ਸਮਾਲੇ ॥
ਵਾਜੇ ਨਾਦ ਅਨੇਕ ਅਸੰਖਾ ਕੇਤੇ ਵਾਵਣਹਾਰੇ ॥
ਕੇਤੇ ਰਾਗ ਪਰੀ ਸਿਉ ਕਹੀਅਨਿ ਕੇਤੇ ਗਾਵਣਹਾਰੇ ॥
ਗਾਵਹਿ ਤੁਹਨੋ ਪਉਣੁ ਪਾਣੀ ਬੈਸੰਤਰੁ ਗਾਵੈ ਰਾਜਾ ਧਰਮੁ ਦੁਆਰੇ ॥
ਗਾਵਹਿ ਚਿਤੁ ਗੁਪਤੁ ਲਿਖਿ ਜਾਣਹਿ ਲਿਖਿ ਲਿਖਿ ਧਰਮੁ ਵੀਚਾਰੇ ॥
ਗਾਵਹਿ ਈਸਰੁ ਬਰਮਾ ਦੇਵੀ ਸੋਹਨਿ ਸਦਾ ਸਵਾਰੇ ॥
ਗਾਵਹਿ ਇੰਦ ਇਦਾਸਣਿ ਬੈਠੇ ਦੇਵਤਿਆ ਦਰਿ ਨਾਲੇ ॥
ਗਾਵਹਿ ਸਿਧ ਸਮਾਧੀ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਗਾਵਨਿ ਸਾਧ ਵਿਚਾਰੇ ॥
ਗਾਵਨਿ ਜਤੀ ਸਤੀ ਸੰਤੋਖੀ ਗਾਵਹਿ ਵੀਰ ਕਰਾਰੇ ॥
ਗਾਵਨਿ ਪੰਡਿਤ ਪੜਨਿ ਰਖੀਸਰ ਜੁਗੁ ਜੁਗੁ ਵੇਦਾ ਨਾਲੇ ॥
ਗਾਵਹਿ ਮੋਹਣੀਆ ਮਨੁ ਮੋਹਨਿ ਸੁਰਗਾ ਮਛ ਪਇਆਲੇ ॥
ਗਾਵਨਿ ਰਤਨ ਉਪਾਏ ਤੇਰੇ ਅਠਸਠਿ ਤੀਰਥ ਨਾਲੇ ॥
ਗਾਵਹਿ ਜੋਧ ਮਹਾਬਲ ਸੂਰਾ ਗਾਵਹਿ ਖਾਣੀ ਚਾਰੇ ॥
ਗਾਵਹਿ ਖੰਡ ਮੰਡਲ ਵਰਭੰਡਾ ਕਰਿ ਕਰਿ ਰਖੇ ਧਾਰੇ ॥
ਸੋਈ ਤੁਧੁਨੋ ਗਾਵਹਿ ਜੋ ਤੁਧੁ ਭਾਵਨਿ ਰਤੇ ਤੇਰੇ ਭਗਤ ਰਸਾਲੇ ॥
ਹੋਰ ਕੇਤੇ ਗਾਵਨਿ ਸੇ ਮੈ ਚਿਤਿ ਨ ਆਵਨਿ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਕਿਆ ਵੀਚਾਰੇ ॥
ਸੋਈ ਸੋਈ ਸਦਾ ਸਚੁ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਸਾਚਾ ਸਾਚੀ ਨਾਈ ॥
ਹੈ ਭੀ ਹੋਸੀ ਜਾਇ ਨ ਜਾਸੀ ਰਚਨਾ ਜਿਨਿ ਰਚਾਈ ॥
ਰੰਗੀ ਰੰਗੀ ਭਾਤੀ ਕਰਿ ਕਰਿ ਜਿਨਸੀ ਮਾਇਆ ਜਿਨਿ ਉਪਾਈ ॥
ਕਰਿ ਕਰਿ ਵੇਖੈ ਕੀਤਾ ਆਪਣਾ ਜਿਵ ਤਿਸ ਦੀ ਵਡਿਆਈ ॥
ਜੋ ਤਿਸੁ ਭਾਵੈ ਸੋਈ ਕਰਸੀ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਨ ਕਰਣਾ ਜਾਈ ॥
ਸੋ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹੁ ਸਾਹਾ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਰਹਣੁ ਰਜਾਈ ॥ ੨੭ ॥

so dar kayhaa so ghar kayhaa Jit bahi sarab samaalay.
vaajay naad anayk asankhaa kaytay vaavanhaaray.
kaytay raag paree si-o kahee-an kaytay gaavanhaaray.
gaavahi tuhno pa-un paanee baisantar gaavai raajaa dharam du-aaray.
gaavahi chit gupat likh jaaneh likh likh Dharam veechaaray.

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TRANSLATION

How majestic is your mansion and how grand its portal;
 From which abode you are looking after your whole creation.
 It is resonating with countless symphonies melodies (*Naad*)¹;
 Being played upon by countless musicians.
 In countless musical measures (*Raag*)² and their subordinate tunes,
 Being produced by the countless singers indeed.
 Among these singers and musicians are (elements)³ air, water and fire;
 Together with celestial judge (*Rajadharam Duare*)⁴ holding his court.
 Among your devout singers are divine accountants *Chittar*, *Gup*⁵ as well;
 Who keep recording human deeds in their credit and debit ledgers.
 Among your other devout adorers are *Issar*, *Brahma*, *Devis*⁶;
 Who are seated in your splendid Divine Court in their splendid regalia.
 Among your devout singers is Indira⁷ seated on his throne;
 Along with his retinue of subordinate gods and goddesses.
 Among them are the *Sidhas*⁸ in their trance;
 As well as the saints engaged in deep philosophical deliberations.
 Among all these devotees are *Jattis*⁹, *sattis*¹⁰ and *santokbies*¹¹;
 As well as the indomitable heroes in all their prowess.
 Among your devout laudators are vedic scholars (*Pandits*)¹² & *Rikbisars*¹³;
 Who have been singing paeans to your glory since ages.
 Included among these Divine laudators are fascinating *Mohinis*¹⁴;
 Captivating the denizens of paradise, earth and nether world (*Machb*)¹⁵.
 Also included among these paean singers are the *fourteen rattans*¹⁶;
 As well as the deities and worshippers at the sacred *teeraths*¹⁷.
 Included among these Divine Laudaters are the mighty warriors;
 As well as the four sources (*Khanis*)¹⁸ and their modes of creation.
 In fact, the whole universe consisting several regions and continents;

gaavahi eesar barmaa dayvee sohan sadaa savaaray.
 gaavahi ind idaasan baithay dayviti-aa dar naalay.
 gaavahi sidh samaadhee andar gaavan saadh vichaaray.
 gaavan jatee satee santokhee gaavahi veer karaaray.
 gaavan pandit parhan rakheesar jug jug vaydaa naalay.
 gaavahi mohnee-aa man mohan surgao machh pa-i-aalay.
 gaavan ratan upaa-ay tayray athsath tirath naalay.
 gaavahi joDh mahaabal sooraa gaavahi khaanee chaaray.
 gaavahi khand mandal varbhandaa kar kar rakhay Dhaaray.
 say-ee tuDhuno gaavahi jo tudh bhaavan ratay tayray bhagat rasaalay.
 hor kaytay gaavan say mai chit na aavan naanak ki-aa veechaaray.
 so-ee so-ee sadaa sach saahib saachaa saachee naa-ee.
 hai bhee hosee jaa-ay na jaasee rachnaa Jin rachaa-ee.
 rangee rangee bhaatee kar kar Jinsee maa-i-aa Jin upaa-ee.
 kar kar vaykhai keetaa aapnaa Jiv tis dee vadi-aa-ee.
 jo tis bhaavai so-ee karsee hukam na karnaa jaa-ee.
 so paatisaahu saahaa paatisaahib naanak rahan rajaa-ee. ||27||

Created by you is singing paeans to your Divine glory.
 They alone applaud and sing your praises indeed;
 Who become worthy of your grace through their devotion.
 Besides all these aforesaid devotees myriad others applaud yours;
 Whose names, devout Nanak, fails to remember at present.
 The fact is He alone is the eternal and real Divine Lord;
 Permanently enduring and eternal is His Divine glory.
 Forever is His presence as it has always been and forever it shall be;
 Since he is the sole creator of entire creation indeed;
 Who has created His entire creation (*Maya*)¹⁹;
 In diverse ways and diverse shades.
 He looks upon His creation as it pleases Him indeed;
 And rejoices in His own glorious act of creation.
 He acts upon His own volition and sweet Will;
 Truly inscrutable is His commandment and Divine Will (Hukam).²⁰
 He is supremely sovereign among the sovereigns;
 Nanak, truly shall it avail to abide by His Will. ||27||

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REFERENCES

1. Naad: The is the sound or the symphony of the spheres which the Nath Jogis, practicing Hathayoga, claim to hear through their synchronization of "Sukhmana" Nari (Nasal Vein) which provides them spiritual pleasure or bliss - *Hatha Yoga Pardeepka, Chapter V, 65-76*, Quoted by Piara Singh Padam (PSP), *Guru Granth Sahib Sanketkosh*, Punjabi University, 1997, p. 223. However, Guru Nanak and successor Sikh Gurus claim that a similar blissful and ecstatic sound can be heard / experienced through the spontaneous (Sehaj) remembrance and recitation of Gurus' shabad/ Gurbani.
Subh Naad Ved Gurbani/ Man Raata Sarang Pauri Ramkali
(SGGS, M. 1, p. 879)
Gurmukh Nadagn, Gumukh Vedagn Gurmukh Rabai Samai.
(- Japuji, p, 2)
2. Raag: The Indian classical music in all its variety is best suited to sing the praises of the Supreme Divine. Barring a few verses, almost the whole text of the sacred Sikh scripture employs thirty one Ragas for the expression of the spiritual vision of the contribution authors and lays emphasis on their significance:
Dhan So Raag Surangre alapat Sabb Tikh Jaye -
Vaar Ramkali, 958
3. Elements of Nature... The Indian philosophy conceives of five elements, these are water air, earth, sky and fire of which the whole universe is made of.
4. Raja Dharam Duare: As per Hindu/ Indian belief, the human soul after human body's death, has to appear in the Court of Divinely appointed Judge Dharam Raj who recommends its entry into heaven or hell after processing the moral content of its human deeds committed during human life. Thus, Dharam Raj represents the just and impartial nature of the Divine:
Nanak Jeev upaike, Likh navai Dharam Bahalia.
- Vaar, Asa, 463
Dharam Rai nu Hukam Hai, Beh Sacha Dharam Bichar.
- Sri Raag, 38

5. *Chitra-Gupta*: According to Hindu Pauranic belief, these two figures are the two account keepers of Dharam Raj who keep account of each human deed and present this balance sheet before Dharam Raj at the approach of human soul in Divine court after bodily death. However, Sikh Gurus claim that meditation on the sacred name of the Divine writes off all human sins:

Chitra Gupta ka Kagad Pharia, Jamdootan Kachhu na Chali

– Sri Raag 5, 79.

Jab Abgat Agochar Prabh Eka, Tab Chitro-gupt kis Poochhat Lekha.

– Gauri Sukhmani, M. 5, p. 291

6. Issar: It is another name of Hindu God Shiva/ Mahadeva, one of the members of Hindu/ Mythological trinity believed to be responsible for the power of destruction. His trident (Trishul) and drum and Dancing posture (Tandav) are symbolic weapons of destruction of evil.

Brahma: He is one of the gods of Hindu's Holy trinity of gods assigned the duty of creation of all species. Believed to be born out of the lotus flower grown on the navel of Lord Vishnu resting on the coiled body of hydra headed Snake Sheshnag, his four arms and four mouths represent his multifarious powers of creation. But, even Brahma is subservient to the supreme Divine.

Nabh Kamal te Brahma upji, Ved Parabe Mukh Kanth Swar.

- Gujri, M 1, p. 489

Devi: Devis, as per Hindu Pauranic belief, the wives of several Hindu gods are called Devis. Some of these prominent goddesses are Laxmi, wife of Vishnu, Savitri Wife of Brahma, Parbati wife of Shiva, Suchi wife of god Indira. There are further incarnations of these goddesses, especially Parbati such as Bhawani, Durga, Chandi, Bhairvi, Vaishno Devi, Kamakhya etc, each symbolic of some supernatural/ esoteric power. Guru Nanak and other Sikh Gurus reject these lesser gods and goddesses and reassert the Supremacy of the Divine.

Devi Deva Pujeeye Bhai, Kia Mango kia Deb.

Pahan Neer Pakdaliyo Bhai, Jal Mahe Dube Teh.

- Sorath 1, p. 637

7. Indira: Next in Hindu Trinity of gods, Hindu god Indira occupies the highest seat in the abode of Hindu gods called Amaravati. He

is believed to be the god of rain and his main weapon is Bajar/ Vajra/ or thunder. There are several accomplished male and female musicians the Gandhrvas and Apsaras singing his eulogies. Guru Nanak refers to this belief but shifts the burden of their eulogies from Indira to the Supreme Divine:

Gawan Tudhno Indra, Indrasan Bethe Deotian Dar Nale.

– Asa Mahala 1, p. 8

8. *Sidhas*: Any person attaining a complete mastery/ command over a subject, phenomenon or Discipline as a result of his hard work is believed to be a Sidha in Indian/ Hindu belief. Nath yogis, Hindu tantric practitioners of esoteric practices and Buddhists believe in Sidhis or superhuman/ supernatural powers of such practitioners. But Guru Nanak believes them to be deriving their powers from the Supreme Divine and singing His eulogies.

Akhe Issar Akhe Sidh, Akhe Kete keetey Budh,

– Japji, p. 6

Gowbe Sidh Samadhi Andar, Gowbe Tudhno Sadh Vichare.

– Japji, p. 6

9. *Jati*: One who has complete control over his sexual urges/ desires. Hindu Mythology names six prominent jatis namely. Lachman, Gorakh, Hanuman, Bhishampatama, Bhairav. Jain sages are also believed to be Jatis. (Mahankosh, p. 490)

Chhai Jati Maya ke Banda –Bhairon, Kabir, p. 1160

10. *Sati*: A wife who immolates herself on her own volition on the burning pyre of her deceased husband while fighting in a war. Gurmat rejects this practice, but respects the noble feeling behind this practice which can be emulated in carrying on the legacy of her life partner and keeping devotion towards him. Guru Arjan Dev applauds such a female (*Jeev Istri*) who considers the Supreme Divine as her Husband and worships him.

Kabu Nanak jin Prio Parmeshar Kar Jania

Dhan Sati Dargah Parwania.

– Gauri 5, p. 185.

11. *Santokhis*: Who observe several kinds of austerities and live a life of contentment.

Un duniya tode bandhna, un pani thora kbaya.

– Asa Di Var, p. 867

12. *Pundit/ Ved*: Hinduism recognizes four most ancient scriptures called four Vedas namely Rigved, Samved, Yajurved and Atharvaved. These are the compositions of ancient Hindu sages. According to Brahmanic belief, their recitation leads to human emancipation. But Guru Nanak and Sikh Gurus reject such a contention and regard Simran and meditation upon god's sacred name as supreme. At least, Vedas are means to an end, not an end in itself. Similarly, Pundit is one who is a scholar of Vedas. Vedas are verses written in praise of God, Pundits being their readers and interpreters.

*Kabir Bahman Guru Hai, Jagat ka, Bhaghtan ka Guru Nahin
Arjh urjh ke Pach Mua, Charon vedon Mahin.*

– Salok Kabir, p. 1378

13. *Rikhisar*: The ancient sages, spiritually enlightened persons. According to *Satpathi Brahmana*, They are believed to be seven Rishis/ sages namely Kashyap, Atarav, Vashisht, Vishwamittar, Gautam, Jamdagan, Bhardwaj. Because of their spiritual qualities and immortal status, they have also been associated with seven prominent stars in the sky / firmament. This belief has been expressed in *swayyas* of Bhats in the Sikh sacred scripture as well. Swayyays M. 4, p. 1399.

14. *Mobinia: Apsaras*, the fairies or bewitching female courtiers of the Hindu god Indira whom he employs to disrupt the meditation or trance of other Hindu gods to maintain his own supremacy over them. The names of Urvashi, Rambha, Meneka etc are popular in Indian tradition. Guru Arjan Dev refers to these courtesans of Indira.

*Priya ki Sobh Suhawini Niki, Ha ha buhu gandharv apsara
Anand Mangal Ras Gawni Niki,*

– Malhar, M. 5, p. 1272

Even these fairies are singing paeans of the Supreme Divine.

15. *Machh/ Payale: Machh/ Matasya* is believed to be the first incarnation of Lord Vishnu. He is believed to have recovered one of Brahma's Vedas from the nether world under water where it was hidden by Hayagreeva Titan/ Giant/ or Rakhshas. There even Machh is a manifestation of divine power and singing His

praises and carrying on His orders even in the nether world.

16. *Fourteen Rattan*: It refers to the Pauranic belief that when the Gods churned the oceans, there came out fourteen rare objects / gifts which include *Shrva* mythical (Horse) *Kamdhenu* (Cow), *Kalapvariskhsb* (A Tree), *Rambha* (A Fairy), *Sura* (a wine), *Chandma* (Moon) *Dhanatar* (Medicine) *Panchjanaya* (Conchshell), *Kosumbhmani*, *Sarang* (bow) *Airavat* (An Elephant), *Amrit* (Elixir) *Luxmi* (Goddess of wealth), *Kalkoot* (Poison). (Mahankosh, p. 1020) These are god's rare creations forever singing His praises. Guru Nanak refers to these creations once again in *Japuji* in Dharam Khand verse:

*Kete Dev Danav Munkety, Kete Rattan Samund,
Keta Khani Kete Bani, Kete Pat Narind.*

Japuji, p. 7

17. *Athsath Teerath*: The Hindu Holy places of pilgrimage are believed to be sixty eight in number like, Hardwar, Kashi, Dwarka, Prayag Raj etc. A dip in their sacred waters is believed to ensure human emancipation. Although Guru Nanak includes these among the admires of the Supreme Divine, but he believes the remembrance of god's sacred name to be the real pilgrimage:

*Teerath Nawan Jao, Teerath Naam Hai
Teerath Sabad Vichar, Antar Gian Hai.*

Dhanastri M. 1, p. 681

18. *Khanis*: Indian Tradition/ Ancient Hindu religious texts believe in and refer to four kinds of procreation/ creation namely *Andaj* (born of egg), *Jeraj* (born of fetus/ Placenta) *Setaj* (born of Sweat/ perspiration/ and *Utthaj* (Born of earth) Entire creation is born through these four processes:

Andaj, Jeraj, Utthaj, Setaj, Tere Keete Janta.

Sorath M. 1, 596

19. *Maya*: This word has multiple meanings, but it refers to the visible creation of God in all its variety, temporal in nature in contrast to the permanence of the Supreme Divine.

Eh maya jit Har veesray, Moh Dooja laya.

Ramkali Anand, M.5, p. 921

20. *Hukam*: The Divine Will that prevails all over this creation which cannot be denied.

Hukam Rajai Challana Nanak Likhia Naal.

Japuji, Pauri 2, p. 1

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## INTERPRETATION OF PAURI/ STANZA 27 OF GURU NANAK'S JAPUJI

This verse, the 27th Pauri of Japji is the highest expression of Guru Nanak's intuitive, mystical and spiritual vision about the Supreme Divine Being's quintessential identity and nature. It projects the Divine Power as a sort of cosmic energy energizing each and every animated and inanimate object, while it itself is immanent as well as transcendent from its creation. It is monitoring, its creation as per its own incscutable Design. It also contains Guru Nanak's message for human beings to abide by its command. The various mythological names from the Pantheon of Hindu gods and Pauranic texts together with the superhuman and human figures having attained complete mastery over their chosen objects and skills are all subservient to the superme Divine Power and draw their inspiration from it. This verse is the spectacle of Guru Nanak's spiritual glimpse of the Supreme Divine in its grandest form during his rare intuitive mystical moment. The concluding line contains Guru Nanak's message to mankind to make a quantum jump from the world of intellect to the level of intuition based on faith to have a similar glimpse of the Divine. Guru Nanak has made a profuse use of Hindu mythology in this verse in their heararchical order in order to convey his vision about the supremacy of supreme Divine cosmic power. He has employed this mythological imagery because the belief in these mythological deities was quite prevalent among the Indian masses during Guru Nanak's time. So Guru Nanak used this contemporary belief system as a meduim to communicate his distinct vision of the Divine cosmic power and its imaginative identity as a sovereign Majestic Lord. This imagery taken from the vast pantheon of Hindu mythology from the highest Hindu god Indra in Heaven to the lowest categories of creatures in the nether regions are all subservient to the Divine Lord and are mandated to abide by His will and command. This is the grandest vision of the Divine cosmic power by Guru Nanak. More than two dozen illustrations employed in this verse from Hindu mythology by Guru Nanak complement the extent of his vision. This verse has been recorded in the sacred Sikh scripture thrice with minor variations on pages. □

**ON THE ISC FRONT**  
**(16<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2024 TO 15<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2024)**

**COL J.S. MULTANI\***

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The following activities were performed during the aforesaid quarter by ISC:-

Cycle Yatra 'Pedal4Peace from 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2024 to 26<sup>th</sup> March' 2024 from Chandigarh to Wagah Border, Amritsar

On the occasion of martyrdom day of Shaheed Bhagat Singh, freedom fighter, a cycle rally "Pedal4Peace from Chandigarh to Wagah Border, Amritsar was organized from 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2024 to 26<sup>th</sup> March' 2024 in association with an NGO YUVSATTA (Youth for Peace) headed by Sh. Parmod Sharma in which 18 cyclists from across the country including one from Dubai participated. The objective was to create awareness amongst youth about the principles of Shaheed Bhagat Singh for which he sacrificed his life. A team comprising Col J.S. Multani, Secretary General, ISC; S. Sher Jagjit Singh General Secretary ISC, S. Gurmeet Singh Jaura, Mrs. Sarabjit Kaur, S. Jaswinder Singh participated in the event.

The cycle rally was flagged off on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2024 from People Convention Centre, Sector 36, Chandigarh and the first halt was taken at Gurdwara Baba Deep Singh on way to Ropar for light refreshment. S. Sher Jagjit Singh and Mrs. Sarabjit Kaur escorted the cyclists in a car and oversaw the arrangements for water, tea, drinks, and snacks on the way. S. Jaswinder Singh was sent as advance party to arrange the things. The Cyclists reached the memorial of Shaheed Bhagat Singh at Khatkar Kalan, Banga around 3.30 PM & paid floral tributes at the statue of Shaheed Bhagat Singh. A press conference was organized

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\* Secretary General, International Sikh Confederation, Plot No 1, Madhya Marg, Sector 28, Chandigarh



through media partner Zee TV which was addressed by Brig. Ravi Muniswami and Sh. Sher Jagjit Singh on behalf of ISC. Thereafter we had a night stay at Banga.

Next day on 24<sup>th</sup> March, the team of cyclists left for Jalandhar and reached Lyallpur Khalsa College Jalandhar where we were welcomed by the college Principal S.Jaspal Singh along with his colleague Dr.Bains, Director (Sports). The college management had organized a meeting with the students which was addressed by Brig. Ravi and College Principal to explain the purpose of the cycle yatra. The college offered us a good lunch. The team then visited the local Sports market for shopping. On the way, the local police provided Pilot jeep as escort.

On the third day i.e. on 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2024 Col. Multani joined the cycle rally team at Dera Radha Soami Satsang Beas where Mr. Pankaj Singh,PA to Dera Head escorted us to the residence of S. Gursewak Singh Sekhon, a senior Parchark of the Dera and earstwhile Olympian hockey veteran of 1960. The team was given a warm welcome & served with a sumptuous lunch by Dera management.

Thereafter, all of us left for Amritsar to reach there around 4.30 PM. We were accommodated for night stay by Pingalwara Trust run under the guidance of Dr. Inderjit Kaur who held a meeting with the team members and students. The Trust management served us a very good food.

Next morning on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2024, the cyclists reached Khalsa College Amritsar where the Principal and his team welcomed the team. After giving brief about the history of Khalsa College, the principal Dr.Ranjit Singh flagged off the Inter-faith Peace March up to St. Paul Church. The Church Priest addressed the team and emphasized upon the message of oneness through every religion to maintain inter-faith harmony.

The team left for Wagah Border and held a prayer meeting by lighting the peace candles & attended the Indo-Pak Flag Retreat ceremony and enjoyed it.

With this the mission of Cycle rally event came to end and all the participants left for their respective places.

### MEETING WITH GLOBAL SIKH COUNCIL, USA

On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024, a team led by Col. Multani and accompanied by Mrs. Sarabjit Kaur, Sher Jagjit Singh reached Tarantaran to attend meeting organized by Global Sikh Council to explain their PEHEL(Punjab Education Health and Empowerment Lehar) where they have 18 HWTCs like that of ISC.GSC wanted to handover all these centres to ISC seeing that our model was better. Col. Multani was nominated as Director of Punjab Operations for these HWTCs, which was highly welcomed by ISC team. He is also taken on the Board of Directors of GSC.

Now a regular Zoom meeting takes place twice a week (Friday and Sunday) to assess the overall functioning of these centers. Mrs. Manpreet Kaur, Area Manager of GSC organizes such meetings for which ISC has given her a laptop also.

During this quarter,the ISC has given financial assistance to deserving children as follows:-

#### Financial Assistance through International Sikh Confederation

| Date       | Name of Institution/Person            | On Account                 | Amount(Rs.) |
|------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|
| 28-03-2024 | Donation Paid to Pinglewara, Amritsar | Food & Stay for Cyclists   | 5100/-      |
| 11-04-2024 | Donation paid to Mani Majra Masjid    | On Eid Celebration         | 2100/-      |
| 11-04-2024 | HWTC                                  | Salary to Teacher of March | 24000/-     |
| 12-04-2024 | Prabjodh Singh, Hyderabad             | For Purchase of Laptop     | 12000/-     |
| 06-05-2024 | HWTC                                  | Salary to Teacher of April | 22500/-     |
| 11-06-2024 | HWTC                                  | Salary to Teacher May      | 23000/-     |
|            | Grand Total                           |                            | 88700/-     |

#### Financial Assistance through Jugraj Singh Gill Charitable Trust

| Date       | Name of Institution/ Person | On Account                                                           | Amount  |
|------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 22/04/2024 | Finanacial Assistance       | for nursing<br>Preparing for exam<br>to Amit Pal Kaur VPO Raisar PTA | 12000/- |

|            |                                                                   |                                      |         |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------|
|            | (Kanikas Nursing Academy)                                         |                                      |         |
| 23/04/2024 | Financial Assistance to Arshpreet Kaur (Ekta Educational Society) | Fees                                 | 20000/- |
|            | 2nd year fee(part payment)                                        |                                      |         |
| 08-05-2024 | Paid to Simarjit kaur Vill. PEHER KHURD (Mata Gujri College)      | Final MBA Degree through her college | 15000/- |
| 14/05/2024 | Financial Assistance to Amanpreet kaur (Kanikas Nursing Academy)  | Competition exam                     | 10000/- |
| 11-04-2024 | Payment to Jagdeep Singh Coach                                    | Apr-24                               | 10000/- |
| 15-05-2024 | Payment to Jagdeep Singh Coach                                    | May 2024                             | 10000/- |
|            | Grand Total                                                       |                                      | 77000/- |

## GURU TEGH BAHADUR VIRSA TE VIRASAT -

A REVIEW BY INDERJEET SINGH\*

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*Author: Prof. (Dr.) Balwant Singh Dhillon*

*Publisher: Singh Brothers, Amritsar*

*Price: Rs. 550 (Hardbound)*

*Pages: 320*

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Prof. (Dr.) Balwant Singh Dhillon is a renowned Sikh historian and researcher. He was formerly a Professor and Head at the Department of Guru Nanak Studies and formerly Director, of the Centre for Studies in Sri Guru Granth Sahib at Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. During this period, he wrote two erudite books namely *Early Sikh Scriptural Tradition: Myth & Reality* and *Interfaith Study of Guru Granth Sahib*.

He retired from the University in 2010 and since then he has published several exceptionally well-researched books including *Rajasthani Documents on Banda Singh Bahadur* (2016), *Banda Singh Bahadur Farsi Sarot* (Punjabi, 2011), *Sikh Itihas Di Farsi Itihaskari* (Punjabi, 2022) and *Guru Tegh Bahadur Virsa te Virasat* (Punjabi, 2022).

### THE BOOK

The book's title, *Guru Tegh Bahadur Virsa te Virasat* could be translated in English as *Guru Tegh Bahadur Heritage & Legacy*. Every year some book on Guru Sahiban is written and published. Still, they lack in-depth research into early Punjabi manuscripts transcribed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century like the two *Mahima Parkashs* and three *Gurbilas*. The book has relied far less on mid to late-19<sup>th</sup>-century authors like Kavi Santokh Singh and Giani Gian Singh.

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### **CHAPTER REVIEW**

As the book's title refers to heritage and legacy, the book starts with Guru Nanak's legacy and contribution. Unlike the Hindu Sadhus and Yogis who would renounce the world and lead a celibate life, Guru Nanak advocated against abandoning the worldly and family life. He encouraged doing *Bhakti* while leading a married life in society. Unlike other Hindu and Muslim Saints who kept quiet, Guru Nanak was vocal in his criticism of Babur, the founder of the Mughal dynasty in India for the cruelty and killings of innocent people. These were a few of the many spiritual legacies of the first Guru of the Sikhs, discussed in the book. Many verses of Guru Nanak from Guru Granth Sahib have been considered to illustrate the philosophy of Sikhi.

Chapter 2 gives a brief history of the next four Gurus namely Guru Angad, Guru Amardas, Guru Ramdas, and Guru Arjan. All major episodes or Sakhis like Humayun's meeting with Guru Angad and Akbar's arrival at Goindwal, the foundation of the new city Chak Ramdas which came to be known as Amritsar, the compilation of Guru Granth Sahib amongst others are mentioned using varied sources. Following the death of Akbar, Jahangir became the Mughal ruler and found support by aligning with the fanatical elements amongst the Muslim clergy. The martyrdom of Guru Arjan based on non-Sikh sources namely Jahangir's autobiography, Father Jerome's letter, Shiekh Sirhindi's letter to Murtaza Khan, and *Dabistan e Mahazib* shows how the Mughal ruler and clergy were unhappy with growing popularity of Guru Arjan and Sikhi. The 18<sup>th</sup> century Sikh sources blame a revenue officer of Lahore, Chandu Lal/Shah for the martyrdom are grossly inadequate.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to the sixth Guru Hargobind. The martyrdom of Guru Arjan by Jahangir proved to be a turning point in Sikhi. The Sikhs were armed and trained to defend themselves under the Miri-Piri system. The circumstances leading to the imprisonment of Guru Hargobind at Gwalior Fort, the duration of confinement, and subsequent release are debated reviewing existing Sikh and Farsi sources. This is followed by the battles fought by the sixth Guru during the reign of Shah Jahan. The chapter clarifies the exaggerated friendship

of Jahangir and Guru Hargobind. Guru Sahib established Kiratpur near Siwalik Hills as the new Sikhi center. Dhir Mal got an endowment from Shah Jahan in the form of a jagir which included the town of Kartarpur as his property. The Mughals recognised him as the Guru of the Sikhs.

Chapter 4 describes the contemporary situation of Mughal India at the time of Guru Tegh Bahadur assuming the responsibilities of Guruship. Aurangzeb imposed harsh conditions upon Hindus by stopping their puja in temples, reading sacred texts, and destroying their places of worship. After the death of Akbar, there was a change in the religious policy of the Mughals. Sikhi was seen as a hindrance to the spread of Islam. There were some ideological differences as well. Islam believes, their prophet was the last one and Sikhs call their Guru Sacche Padshah (the True King/Emperor). Many followers of Sakhi Sarwar also joined Sikhi. The chapter discusses and analyses how the taxation system on farmers led to agrarian crisis and revolt.

Chapter 5 deals with how the Sikh religion was organised during this period at Kiratpur. The challenges from Sodhis namely Minas, Dhirmalias, and Ram Rais were contained and neutralised. The Minas controlled Harmandar Sahib and their leaders had written compositions in the pen name of Mahala 6, 7, and 8. Dhirmal claimed himself to be the Guru and so did the Ram Rai. Some of the Masands had aligned themselves with these sects and others had got arrogant. Eventually, Guru Gobind Singh had to disband the whole Masand regime.

Bhat compositions indicates the great spread of Sikhi during the Guruship of Guru Arjan. *Dabistan e Mahazib* states that there is no city under Mughals where Sikhs cannot be found. Bhai Gurdas Vaaran tells us about the presence of Sikh sangat in Lucknow, Jaunpur, Patna, Rajmahal, and Dhaka. The resentment by Baba Siri Chand if any had subsided and in Udasis, Sikhi got preachers that travelled throughout India.

Chapter 6 narrates Aurangzeb's views on Sikh Panth and his interactions with Sikh Gurus. History records that Guru Har Rai maintained a cavalry of 2200 soldiers. Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of Shah Jahan was of a Sufi temperament and became the governor of

Lahore. It is generally believed that he would have met Guru Sahib during this period. He perhaps influenced his father and during the last few years, Shah Jahan became tolerant towards minorities. The chapter covers Ram Rai's and Guru Harkrishan's visit to Delhi at the behest of the Mughal ruler. Aurangzeb was keen to interfere in the Sikhi perhaps with the aim of controlling it.

Chapter 7 deals with the early life of Guru Tegh Bahadar till he became the ninth Sikh Guru. Contrary to the popular narrative, the author does not mention Guru Sahib meditating in a *Bhora* at Baba Bakala. The town is described as prosperous with many beautiful pools, wells, and baolis. Guru Sahib lived there with his wife and mother. He lived a strict and holy life, yet he was not a recluse and attended to family responsibilities. He made visits outside Bakala as well. The Hukamnamas have also been used to draw the account of Guru Sahib during this period.

Chapter 8 tries to put the travel of Guru Tegh Bahadar to Eastern India in chronological order using additional sources such as *Mahwa Desh Ratan Di Potbi*, and *hukamnamas* amongst others. To understand the route to East India, the travelogues of contemporary visitors like Peter Mundy and Jean Baptiste Tavernier have been used. The first arrest of Guru Tegh Bahadar in 1665 has been discussed in detail using the Assamese source, *Annals of Delbi Badshabat*. This important event is missed in many Punjabi books on Guru Sahib.

Chapter 9 is about Guru Sahib's travel from Patna to Dhaka & then to Assam. In this chapter, the author has introduced a new source. He has referred to Kolkata-based Sikh historian Jagmohan Singh Gill at least six times to chalk out the route and existence of Gurdwaras and Sikh colonies in Bihar, Bengal & Eastern India. The author has clarified using Assamese and Mughal sources that Guru Tegh Bahadar visited Assam with Raja Ram Singh of Amber at his request. Later Sikh sources erroneously gave multiple names of the Hindu Raja who went to Assam with Guru Sahib. Sadly, many Gurdwaras related to Guru Sahib in Bangladesh have been lost.

Chapter 10 is about Guru Sahib's travel from Patna to Punjab. The author agrees with Dr Fauja Singh and here refers to the second

arrest of Guru Sahib in 1670 by the Mughal authorities at Agra. Here Guru Sahib had a dialogue with Aurangzeb which seems correct as the Mughal ruler was not present in Delhi when Guru Sahib was martyred in 1675. The author speculates that Nawab Saif Khan may have intervened to secure the release of Guru Sahib.

Chapter 11 explores the bani, the compositions of Guru Tegh Bahadar which depicts the suffering of minorities under a cruel regime but gives them hope. The author also tries to estimate where Guru Sahib stayed the last 5 years of his life from 1670-75. Using *Mahwa Desh Ratan Di Sakhi Pothi*, the author concludes that Guru Sahib was in Malwa during the Vaisakhi of 1674.

Chapter 12 deals with the critique of the historical sources on the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadar including Farsi, English and Punjabi writings. Most non-Sikh historians have relied on *Siyar-ul-Mutakbirin*, written by Sayyid Ghulam Husain in 1782 which was commissioned by East India Company. Within a decade it was translated into English and the British proclaimed it as the most exhaustive and comprehensive account ever written on the history of India. Many non-Sikh historians right from JD Cunningham till today rely on it. This account states that Guru Tegh Bahadar and Hafiz Adam, a disciple of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (contemporary of Jahangir, in one of his letters he had expressed great delight at the execution of Kafir of Goindwal (Guru Arjan) had collected a large body of men. They moved about in the countryside and seized money and material by force. It was feared they might revolt against the government!

Sayyid Ghulam Husain was a plagiarist. His narrative on the Sikhs has been copied from a very biased account of Yahya Khan's *Tazkirat-al-Muluk* written in 1736-37. Hafiz Adam was banished by Shah Jahan in 1642, thirty-three years earlier. Hafiz went on a pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina where he died in 1643. Dr Fauja Singh in 1975 had quoted several works (with page numbers) to prove the discrepancy of the year by Ghulam Husain and the fallacy of his allegations. Ghulam Husain also copied other older Farsi accounts including Sujana Rai Bhandari. The author to his credit has critically examined *Siyar-ul-Mutakbirin* like never before.



Chapter 13 deals with the events leading to the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadar. Traditional Sikh sources do not mention the arrest of Guru Sahib prior to 1675 and mix them up. The Sikh and Farsi sources are thoroughly probed and analysed to paint a picture of those poignant days. Chapter 14 is a discourse on the effects and consequences of the martyrdom of Guru Sahib.

The last chapter is on the multi-facade personality of Guru Tegh Bahadar. The author quotes hukamnamas where Guru Sahib tells the Sangat *Guru Guru Japna* and gives them confidence by writing *Guru Rakha*. In the compositions Guru Sahib introduces *Insha* poetry writing which is akin to the expression of one's innermost feelings. The author notes the cursor writing of Guru Sahib which depict his artistic vision as well. Other aspects like righteousness, mercy, and justice have also been discussed.

### CONCLUSION

The writers born and brought up in Punjab seem to treat the Sakhis related to Gurus as a matter of fact and do not try to find their original source or analyse them. This book has over 700 references and footnotes and many more in the body of the text. This will be a huge help for future students and scholars of Sikh history. In addition, the verses of Guru Granth Sahib have been used to describe to socio-economic-political environment of that time. This aspect has almost totally been ignored by many Sikhs and all non-Sikh historians perhaps due to lack of knowledge of Gurmukhi. The book also uses modern non-Punjabi scholarship on Mughal India to build the picture of how the socioeconomic, political, and religious environment of the country changed during the reigns of Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan, and lastly Aurangzeb.

This is a remarkable book in Punjabi and perhaps the best on the subject and one could hope that it would be read and used by Sikh *Parcharaks* and *Kathakars* in addition to general readers.

## NEWS & VIEWS

### ਦਸਵਾਂ ਡਾ. ਖੜਕ ਸਿੰਘ ਮੈਮੋਰੀਅਲ ਲੈਕਚਰ

ਚੰਡੀਗੜ੍ਹ, ਜੁਲਾਈ 25, 2024 - ਪੱਛਮੀ ਤਰਜ਼ ਦੀ ਨੋਸ਼ਨ-ਸਟੇਟ ਅਧਾਰਤ ਸਿੱਖ “ਸਾਵਰਨਟੀ” ਦੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਿਧਾਂਤ ਵਿੱਚ ਕੋਈ ਥਾਂ ਨਹੀਂ:- ਡਾ ਸਵਰਾਜ ਸਿੰਘ

ਚੰਡੀਗੜ੍ਹ, 25 ਮਈ (2024) ਪੱਛਮੀ ਸਭਿਆਚਾਰ ਅਤੇ ਨੋਸ਼ਨ-ਸਟੇਟ ਅਧਾਰਤ ਪੱਛਮੀ ਸਿਆਸੀ ਮੁਹਾਵਰੇ ਦੀ ਅੰਧਾ-ਧੁੰਦ ਨਕਲ ਅਤੇ ਅਮਲ ਕਰਨ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਹੀ ਸਿੱਖ/ਪੰਜਾਬ ਦੀ ਬਹੁ-ਮੁੱਖੀ ਸਮੱਸਿਆਵਾਂ ਪੈਂਦਾ ਹੋਈਆਂ ਹਨ ਅਤੇ ਨਾਲ ਨਾਲ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਿਧਾਂਤ ਅਤੇ ਫਲਸਫਾ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਜੀਵਨ-ਜਾਂਚ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਖਾਰਜ ਹੋ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ।

ਇੰਸਟੀਚਿਊਟ ਆਫ ਸਿੱਖ ਸੱਟਡੀਜ਼ ਵੱਲੋਂ “ਸੱਚ ਸੁਣਾਇਸੀ ਸਚ ਕੀ ਬੋਲਾ” ਵਿਸ਼ੇ ਤੇ ਕਰਵਾਏ ਗਏ ਦਸਵੇਂ ਡਾ ਖੜਕ ਸਿੰਘ ਯਾਦਗਾਰੀ ਲੈਕਚਰ ਸਮੇਂ ਬੋਲਦਿਆਂ ਡਾ ਸਵਰਾਜ ਸਿੰਘ ਨੇ ਕਿਹਾ ਕਿ ਹਰੇ ਇਨਕਲਾਬ ਦੇ ਆਉਣ ਨਾਲ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਵਿੱਚ ਪੈਦਾਵਾਰੀ ਰਿਸ਼ਤਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਸਰਮਾਏਦਾਰੀ ਲੀਹਾਂ ਉੱਤੇ ਖੜ੍ਹੇ ਹੋਣ ਨਾਲ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਿਧਾਂਤ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਅਮਲ ਵਿੱਚ ਵੱਡਾ ਪਾੜਾ ਪੈ ਗਿਆ। ਧਰਮ-ਸਦਾਚਾਰ ਉੱਤੇ ਪੈਸੇ ਦਾ ਬੋਲਬਾਲਾ ਵੱਧ ਗਿਆ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਜੀਵਨ ਜਾਂਚ ਵਾਲੀ ਪਹਿਚਾਣ ਉੱਤੇ ਸਮੇਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਲੋੜਾਂ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਬਦਲ ਹੋਈ ਪਹਿਚਾਣ ਦਾ ਗਲਬਾ ਵਧ ਗਿਆ। ਇਸ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਸਾਰੀਆਂ ਅਲਾਮਤਾਂ ਨੇ ਜਨਮ ਲਿਆ ਹੈ।

ਡਾ ਸਵਰਾਜ ਸਿੰਘ ਨੇ ਕਿਹਾ ਭਾਵੇਂ ਹਰ ਪੱਧਰ ਉੱਤੇ ਸਰਮਾਏਦਾਰ ਪੱਛਮ ਰਸਾਤਲ ਵੱਲ ਜਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਅਤੇ ਪੂਰਬੀ ਚਿੰਤਨ ਅਤੇ ਜੀਵਨ-ਜਾਂਚ ਦੀ ਤਰੱਕੀ ਹੋ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ ਪਰ ਫਿਰ ਵੀ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ/ਪੰਜਾਬੀਆਂ ਅੰਦਰ ਵਧਦੀ ਪੈਸੇ ਦੀ ਦੌੜੇਹਵਸ ਨੇ ਬੌਧਿਕਤਾ ਪਰਵੀਨਤਾ ਅਤੇ ਸਬਰ-ਸਬੂਰੀ ਮਾਨਸਿਕਤਾ ਨੂੰ ਦਰੜ ਹੀ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਹੈ। ਇਸੇ ਕਰਕੇ, ਸਿੱਖ/ਪੰਜਾਬੀਆਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਵੈਮਾਨ, ਸਭਿਆਚਾਰਕ ਜੁੜਤ ਅਤੇ ਵਿਰਸੇ ਦਾ ਮਾਨ ਆਦਿ ਕਦਰਾਂ-ਕੀਮਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਅਜਿਹੀ ਢੰਗ ਲੱਗੀ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਤੋਂ ਵਿਯੋਗ ਹੀ ਮਹਿਸੂਸ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ ਅਤੇ ਅੰਧਾ-ਧੁੰਦ ਪ੍ਰਵਾਸ ਵੱਲ ਰੁਚਿਤ ਹੋ ਗਏ ਹਨ।

ਭਾਵੇਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਗਲੋਬਲ ਭਾਈਚਾਰਾ ਬਣ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੁਨੀਆਂ ਦਾ ਪੰਜਵਾਂ ਵੱਡਾ ਧਰਮ ਹੈ ਪਰ 30 ਮਿਲੀਅਨ ਸਿੱਖ ਅਬਾਦੀ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ 75 ਪ੍ਰਤੀਸ਼ਤ ਅਜੇ ਵੀ ਪੰਜਾਬ

ਵਿੱਚ ਵਸਦੇ ਹਨ। ਡਾ ਸਵਰਾਜ ਨੇ ਕਿਹਾ ਭਾਵੇਂ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਸਦੀਆਂ ਤੋਂ ਪਰਵਾਸ ਕਰਦੇ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ ਪਰ ਅੱਜ ਦਾ ਪਰਵਾਸ ਸਾਮਰਾਜੀ ਤਰਜ਼ ਦਾ ਹੈ ਜਿਹੜਾ ਪੰਜਾਬ, ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਬੋਲੀ ਸਭਿਆਚਾਰ ਅਤੇ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਵਿਰਸੇ ਨਾਲੋਂ ਜਲਦੀ ਤੋੜ ਦਿੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਹੁਣ ਪਰਵਾਸ ਕਲਪਤ ਅਯਾਸੀ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ ਤੋਂ ਪ੍ਰੇਰਤ ਹੈ। ਜਦੋਂ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਅਸਲੀ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ ਵੱਖਰੀ ਮਿਲਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਸਾਡੇ ਨੌਜਵਾਨ ਮੁੰਡੇ / ਕੁੜੀਆਂ ਭੜਕ ਪੈਂਦੇ ਹਨ। ਨਸ਼ਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਤਸਕਰੀ ਅਤੇ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ ਵੱਲ ਖਿਚੇ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਹਨ। ਕੋਈ ਅਜਿਹਾ ਜੱਟ ਗੋਤ ਨਹੀਂ ਜਿਸ ਨਾਮ ਉੱਤੇ ਬਾਹਰ ਗੈਂਗ ਨਾ ਬਣਿਆ ਹੋਵੇ। ਸਿੱਖ / ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਭਾਰਤ ਅਤੇ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਵੀ ਉੱਚ ਵਿਦਿਆ ਵਿੱਚ ਪਿਛੇ ਰਹਿ ਗਿਆ। ਸਮਾਜਿਕ / ਪਰਵਾਰਕ ਤੌਰ ਉੱਤੇ ਭਿਆਨਕ ਟੁੱਟ-ਭੱਜ ਸ਼ਿਕਾਰ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ / ਸਿੱਖ ਸਮਾਜ ਮਾਨਸਿਕ / ਸਰੀਰਕ ਰੋਗਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਵੱਧ ਗਰਸਿਆ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ। ਦਿਲ ਦੇ ਦੌਰਿਆਂ ਨਾਲ ਮੌਤਾਂ ਵੱਧ ਗਈਆਂ ਹਨ।

ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਗੁਰੂਘਰ ‘ਸੰਗਤੀ’ ਹੋਣ ਦੀ ਥਾਂ ਕੁਝ ਕੁ ਵਿਅਕਤੀਆਂ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਬਣਾਏ ਟਰੱਸਟਾਂ ਦੀ ਮਲਕੀਅਤ ਹਨ। ਇਸੇ ਹੀ ਸਬੰਧ ਵਿੱਚ ਪ੍ਰਧਾਨਗੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਨ ਦਿੰਦਿਆਂ, ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਟ੍ਰਿਬਿਊਨ ਦੇ ਸਾਬਕਾ ਐਡੀਟਰ ਡਾ. ਸਵਰਾਜਬੀਰ ਨੇ ਕਿਹਾ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਉੱਤੇ ਪੁਜਾਰੀ ਜਮਾਤ ਕਬਜ਼ਾ ਵੱਧ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਕਰਮਕਾਂਡ ਜ਼ੋਰ ਫੜ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ। ਈਸ਼ਵਰ ਦੇ ਨਾਮ ਉੱਤੇ ਵਣਜ-ਵਪਾਰ ਹੋ ਰਿਹਾ ਜਿਸ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਡੇਰੇਦਾਰੀਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਟਰੱਸਟਾਂ ਦੀ ਮਾਲਕੀ ਵਾਲੇ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰੇ ਉਭਰ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ।

ਡਾ ਸਵਰਾਜਬੀਰ ਨੇ ਸਿੱਖ / ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਦਾਨਿਸ਼ਵਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਬਾਬੇ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇ ਫਲਸਫੇ / ਜੀਵਨ ਜਾਂਚ ਬਾਰੇ ਸੰਦੇਸ਼ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਝਣਾ ਅਤੇ ਫੈਲਾਣਾ ਪਵੇਗਾ। ਇਹ ਵੀ ਖੋਜਣਾ ਪਵੇਗਾ ਕਿ ਦੇਸ਼ ਅੰਦਰਲੀਆਂ ਨਾਨਕਪੰਥੀ ਸੰਸਥਾਵਾਂ ਕਿਉਂ ਤੇ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਖੁਰ ਗਈਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਜਾਤਪਾਤ ਮੁੜ ਫਿਰ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਮਾਜ ਵਿੱਚ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਉਭਰ ਆਈ ਪਿਛਲੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਹਿਸਟਰੀ ਨੂੰ ਵਾਚਦਿਆਂ, ਡਾ. ਸਵਰਾਜਬੀਰ ਨੇ ਕਿਹਾ ਗੁਰੂ ਯੁਗ ਅਤੇ ਬਾਅਦ ਵਿੱਚ ਬੰਦਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਬਹਾਦਰ ਅਤੇ 18ਵੀਂ ਸਦੀ ਦੇ ਕੁਰਬਾਨੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਦੌਰ ਵਿੱਚ ਜਾਤਪਾਤ ਦੀ ਥਾਂ ਭਾਈ ਦੀ ਉਪਾਧੀ ਪ੍ਰਚਲਤ ਸੀ। ਮਿਸਲਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਰਣਜੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਮੇਂ ਵੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਆਪਣੇ ਨਾਮ ਨਾਲ “ਜਾਤੀ ਸੂਚਕ” ਨਹੀਂ ਲਗਵਾਂਦੇ ਸਨ। ਗਦਰੀ ਬਾਬਿਆਂ ਤੱਕ ਵੀ ਇਹ ਪਰੰਪਰਾਂ ਕਾਇਮ ਰਹੀ।

ਨਾਮ ਨਾਲ “ਜਾਤੀ ਸੂਚਕ” ਪ੍ਰਚੱਲਤ ਹਰੇ ਇਨਕਲਾਬ ਤੋਂ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ ਬਸਤੀਵਾਦੀ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਨੇ ਸ਼ੁਰੂ ਕੀਤਾ। ਡਾ ਸਵਰਾਜਬੀਰ ਨੇ ਕਿਹਾ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ਾਂ ਨੇ ਵੀ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਦੇਸ਼ ਨੂੰ ਜਾਤਾਂ / ਧਰਮਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਵੰਡਿਆ। ਇਸੇ ਪ੍ਰਕਿਰਿਆ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਦੀ 1947 ਵਿੱਚ ਵੰਡ ਹੋਈ ਜਿਸ ਨਾਲ ਪੰਜਾਬੀਆਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਸਮਸਿਆਂ ਬਹੁਤੀਆਂ ਵਧੀਆਂ। ਪਰਵਾਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਗਲ ਕਰਦਿਆਂ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਕਿਹਾ, ਸਰਮਾਏਦਾਰੀ ਨਿਜ਼ਾਮ ਬੰਦੇ ਨੂੰ ਵਿਹਲਾਂ ਵੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਰਹਿਣ ਦਿੰਦਾ ਅਤੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਪੁਰਾਣੇ ਸਭਿਆਚਾਰ ਅਤੇ ਜੀਵਨ-ਜਾਂਚ ਤੋਂ ਵੀ ਤੋੜ ਦਿੰਦਾ। ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਦੇ ਵਿਯੋਗੇ ਜਾਣ ਪਿਛੇ ਸਰਮਾਏ ਦੀ ਲਾਲਸਾ, ਕੋਹਲੂ ਦੇ ਬੈਲ ਵਾਲੀ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ ਜਿਸ ਨੂੰ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ / ਕਲਚਰ ਤੋਂ ਬੇਮੁੱਖੀ ਹੋਰ ਦੁਖਦਾਈ ਕਰ ਦਿੰਦੀ ਹੈ।

ਇਸ ਮੌਕੇ ਉੱਤੇ ਇੰਸੀਚਿਊਟ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਧਾਨ ਜਨਰਲ ਰਜਿੰਦਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਸੁਜਲਾਨਾ, ਕਰਨਲ ਜਗਤਾਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਮੁਲਤਾਨੀ, ਪ੍ਰੋ ਕਲਵੰਤ ਸਿੰਘ, ਪ੍ਰਿੰਸੀਪਲ ਪ੍ਰਭਜੋਤ ਕੌਰ ਨੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਕੀਤੇ।

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10-DAY TREK SETS NEW RECORD FOR YOUNGEST SIKH TO ACHIEVE ASCENT AT EVEREST BASE CAMP

Tegbir Singh, age five and a 1st Standard student in Shiwalik Public School of Ropar a state of eastern Punjab in Northwest India, set a new record in April 2024 as the youngest Sikh ever to reach a Mount Everest Base Camp. Hiking with his father Tegbir Singh's record-setting trek took 10 days of rigorous hiking and required a year of training to prepare for the challenges of sustained hiking in a high-altitude climate.

Training, and Preparation: Inspired by record-setting Sikh mountaineers and other young climbers, Tegbir Singh, the son of hospital administrator Sukhinderdeep Singh and his wife Dr Manpreet Kaur, began preparation for his climb at age four with Bikramjit Singh Ghuman, a retired coach. Bikram Singh designed a strict diet regimen and trained Tegbir Singh with cardio exercises designed to increase lung capacity. Training to build stamina for the rigors of high-altitude climbing included weekly hikes in various mountainous areas accompanied by his father and his coach.

Trek to South Base Camp Nepal: Tegbir Singh flew with his father on April 8, 2024, from Kathmandu to Lukla, which has an elevation of 9,333 ft (2,845 m) and has been rated as the most dangerous airport in the world. They began their trek the next day, on the 9th of April, all the while climbing steadily at an ever-increasing altitude with an ever-decreasing oxygen level in temperatures well below freezing. Tegbir Singh hiked the entire 33-mile (53 km) trek, turning down well-meaning offers of mule rides, insisting that he wanted to reach the base camp with his own two feet. Supported by the principles

of his Sikh faith, five-year-old Tebir Singh listened to stories of Sikh heroes told by his father and recited “*Wabeguru Wabeguru*” along the way to maintain the keep-up spirit of *Chardhi Kalaa* whenever he felt tired. Hiking five to six miles (8 to 10 km) each day, they reached their destination on the 17th of April arriving at South Base Camp of Mount Everest in Nepal, which has an altitude of 17,598 ft (5,364m) and a temperature of 10.4 degrees Fahrenheit (-12 Celsius). Tebir Singh marked his ascent with an orange-colored flag on which is printed a blue khanda, a symbol of the Sikh faith, and had a photograph taken with his father at the Base Camp summit to record his achievement. Inspired by his success, Tebir Singh, the youngest Sikh Mountaineer, is already dreaming of new and higher summits to be conquered in the years to come and hopes one day to successfully scale Mount Everest. (Courtesy: Sikhnet.com)

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#### **A PUNJABI LANGUAGE CELEBRATION DAY WAS ORGANIZED IN THE CITY OF BRANDON, MANITOBA, CANADA**

Brandon is the 2nd largest city in the province of Manitoba. One of its Guiding Principles is Diversity: Respect, Honour and raising awareness of ethnocultural diversity, through celebratory and educational opportunities. That makes Brandon a cultural center for the southwest region of Manitoba.

The members of the Punjabi Community approached city Mayor Jeff Fawcett’s office to proclaim Punjabi Language Day in the City of Brandon. The presentation was successful and the mayor signed the Proclamation that February 24, 2024, to be Punjabi Language Day in the city of Brandon.

It was an exciting day for members of the Punjabi speaking community as they were celebrating their mother language first time in their lives. The social get-together included children and adults and took place at the newly established Sikh Centre of Brandon. As it was our very first celebration of this type the entire programme was kept

very informal and friendly.

Most attendants took part saying few words in praise of the event. Like any Punjabi celebration, the function ended with serving sweet refreshments (ladoos and gulab jamuns) and tea which everyone enjoyed.

My humble suggestion to Punjabi speaking communities living in Canada, USA, Australia, UK, India, Pakistan and other countries is to start having Punjabi Language Day in their towns and cities. This will create a big boost to our mother language (Punjabi). (*Courtesy: Sikhnet.com*)

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#### **448 SIKH PILGRIMS ENTER PAKISTAN FOR CELEBRATING MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH'S DEATH ANNIVERSARY**

Amritsar, June 21. Amid reverberation of 'Bole So Nihal', the Sikh jatha comprising 448 pilgrims crossed over to Pakistan to observe the death anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh through the Attari-Wagah joint checkpoint today.

The Pakistan High Commission has issued 509 visas for the pilgrimage. The pilgrims, under the umbrella of various Sikh organisations, including the SGPC, DSGMC, Khalra Mission Committee, Bhai MardanaYaadgar Kirtan Darbar society, Ferozepur, crossed the border.

SGPC secretary Partap Singh flagged off the jatha under the leadership of SGPC member Khushwinder Singh Bhatia and Gurmeet Singh Buh from its headquarters located in the Golden Temple complex.

The main event would be commemorated on June 29 at Gurdwara Dehra Sahib, Lahore, located near his 'samadh' (memorial).

During their stay from June 21 to June 30, the pilgrims would visit Gurdwara Sri Nankana Sahib, Gurdwara Panja Sahib in Hassanabdal, Gurdwara Sacha Sauda in Sheikhupura and Gurdwara Kartarpur Sahib in Narowal.

At the Wagah border side, officials of the Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (PSGPC) and the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) received the Indian jatha. The Pakistan authorities have put in place special arrangements, including travelling, accommodation and security for the pilgrims. (*Courtesy: The Tribune, June 22, 2024*)

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NOTED PUNJABI POET SURJIT PATAR PASSES AWAY AT 79

Several political leaders, including Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, expressed grief over the demise of Patar. Noted Punjabi poet Surjit Patar, 79, a Padma Shri recipient, passed away on Saturday (May 12, 2024) in Punjab's Ludhiana.

Several political leaders, including Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, expressed grief over the demise of Patar. Punjab Vidhan Sabha Speaker Kultar Singh Sandhwan, expressed deep sorrow, saying Mr. Patar made a significant contribution to spreading the promotion of the Punjabi language across the globe.

Patar's notable achievements include receiving top honours like Padma Shri and the Sahitya Akademi Award for his work of writing in a regional language. Patar hailed from Patar Kalan village in Jalandhar and retired as a professor of Punjabi from Punjab Agricultural University. He received the Padma Shri in 2012 and served as the president of the Punjab Arts Council.

Former Union Minister of Law and Justice Ashwani Kumar, said "The passing away of Dr. Surjit Patar, the eminent and acclaimed Punjabi poet, has left a deep void in the world of Punjabi literature. As a 'philosopher of the heart', Dr. Patar kept alive in his writings, our deepest yearnings, ensuring that private and social realities were not kept outside the language of our heart. It can be said of him that the poet and his poetry were revealed in each other," he said.

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### **OPERATION BLUE STAR ANNIVERSARY PASSES OFF PEACEFULLY**

Amritsar, June 6. The 40th anniversary of the Operation Blue Star went off peacefully on the jampacked Akal Takht campus in the Golden Temple here today.

For a change, Sikh hardliners restrained themselves from brandishing swords or any violent display during the event, unlike earlier occasions. Heavy police force in 'mufti' and SGPC task force was there to deal with any untoward incident.

A substantial number of devotees thronged Akal Takht to attend the 'bhog' ceremony that began on June 4.

Supporters of the SAD (Amritsar), led by its president Simranjit Singh Maan who lost the Sangrur Lok Sabha seat in recent elections, the Dal Khalsa and other Sikh groups carried the posters of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and raised pro-Khalistan slogans, demanding the release of 'Bandi Singhs' for a few minutes.

Emotions ran high among the followers after having a glimpse of the bullet-riddled saroop of Sri Guru Granth Sahib which was put on display at a gurdwara located just behind Akal Takht. The saroop, enshrined in the sanctum sanctorum of Golden Temple, was hit by a bullet during the operation. It pierced its 25 'angs' (pages) before it was stuck on its title cover. The bullet shell was also on the display.

Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Raghubir Singh read out the customary message from the Akal Takht podium. The Jathedar and SGPC president Harjinder Singh Dhani honoured the kin of those killed during the Operation Blue Star. On Dal Khalsa's call for 'Amritsar bandh', all establishments remained closed. (*Courtesy: The Tribune, June 7, 2024*).

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SIKHS' BODY TO MOVE SUPREME COURT FOR POLL AT PATNA SAHIB

New Delhi, June 3. Sikh politics at Patna Sahib has taken a new turn. A group of Sikhs has formed the 'Patna Sahib Panth Sewak

Jatha' to seek the elections to the Takht Patna Sahib Parbandhak Committee, whose term ended in July last year.

A meeting of the Sikh community was convened on June 1 at Patna and the decision was taken to form a seven-member body, said Charanjeet Singh, a former general secretary of the Takht Patna Sahib Parbandhak Committee, who will lead the 'jatha'.

A statement of the Patna Sahib Sewak Jatha said, besides Charanjeet Singh, a six-member panel had been formed comprising social and religious activists.

A statement of the jatha said it would uphold the constitution of Takht Patna Sahib and decided to "approach the Supreme Court to ensure immediate elections to the committee".

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### **SIKH WOMAN ASKED TO REMOVE 'KIRPAN' TO SIT FOR JUDICIAL EXAM**

AMBALA: An initiated female Sikh aspirant of judicial services, Lakhwinder Kaur of Ambala Cantonment, alleged that she faced discrimination and harassment when she went to appear in the preliminary examination for direct recruitment as civil judge conducted by Rajasthan High Court in Jodhpur.

Lakhwinder Kaur natively belongs to Salarheri village of Ambala district, and she works as an assistant professor at a private law college in Rupnagar. She is also pursuing Ph.D. last year from Panjab University, Chandigarh.

Sharing her ordeal with the media in Ambala, Lakhwinder Kaur said, "I went to appear in the preliminary judicial exam for recruitment as civil judge at a center namely Shri Sumer Mahila Mahavidyalaya in Jodhpur on June 23, 2024. This exam was conducted by Rajasthan High Court at Jodhpur. As I was wearing my *Kakaars* (Sikh symbols of faith) *Kirpan* and *Karra*, I was asked to leave the queue and approach the on-duty officials, who asked me to remove my *Kakaars* if I wanted

to appear in the exam.”

Lakhwinder said she told the exam officials to give this in writing that they will not allow her entry for the exam as she was wearing Sikh *Kakaar*, but they did not do so. She said she also tried to inform them about the Sikh *Kakaars*, being part of her faith to be kept on body throughout the life, but to no avail. (*Courtesy: The Times of India, July 1, 2024*)

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