

ABSTRACTS OF SIKH STUDIES

(Vol VII, Issue 2)

April-June 2005 / 537 NS

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RNI Regd No : 69639 / 98

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Rs. 25/-

Subscription Rates

(Indian Rupees)

	<i>India</i>	<i>Abroad</i>
Annual	100.00	500.00
05 years	450.00	2,250.00
10 years	900.00	4,500.00
Life	1,350.00	6,250.00

Bulk supplies (a parcel of 28 copies) to overseas destinations can be made
by surface mail @ Rs. 700/- plus postage charges (approx. Rs. 300/-)

Published by

Institute of Sikh Studies
Gurdwara Singh Sabha, Kanthala, Indl Area Phase II
Chandigarh -160 002 (India).

Printed at

Sidharth Media Printers, 24/9, Industrial Area Phase II, Chandigarh

EDITORIAL

THE NEED FOR A STANDARD ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF GURU GRANTH SAHIB

As a result of the programmes organized under the quadricentennial celebrations of Guru Granth Sahib, the awareness about the Sikh scripture and the living Guru of the Sikhs has reached an unprecedented level. It is increasingly being realized in knowledgeable circles that the message of the Gurus is universal in time and space and is not only relevant to the present century, but is indispensable for the future of mankind. More and more people want to read and benefit from it, leading to a demand for translation of the original text in *Gurmukhi* into all major and minor languages, Indian as well as foreign.

Selected hymns have been translated from time to time. The number of translations of *Japu ji* runs into hundreds. The other hymns in this category include *Sukhmani Sahib*, *Asa di Var* and the *bani*s of the *Nitnem*. The *Japu ji*, however, has been and will continue to be the favourite of translators.

A number of attempts have been made at translation of the full text of Guru Granth Sahib. There are over half a dozen extant translations into English. As we all know, the first among these was the one by Ernest Trumpp who was commissioned by the British government. He could not complete it, but what he did was indeed a disaster. He was incompetent as well as untrustworthy, and could not rise above his prejudices or bias as a Christian missionary. His work was, therefore, unanimously rejected by all sections of Sikh scholars. Max Arthur Macauliffe who undertook this job later, showed a much better understanding, and with the help of stalwarts like Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha, produced an English version which was hailed by all, Sikhs and non-Sikhs. The list of full text translations includes, *inter*

alia, the one by Giani Manmohan Singh, published by the SGPC (1962), the one by Dr Gopal Singh published by World Book Centre, New Delhi (1960) and Gurbachan Singh Talib published by the Punjabi University (1988), besides the ones by Chahal and G S Maakin. More recently, Dr Kartar Singh Duggal has undertaken to 'transcreate' an English version in versified form in four volumes, out of which the first volume has already been released.

The above efforts are laudable, and have gone a long way in introducing the Sikh thought to the world. It must be remembered, however, that these were largely individual attempts, and their interpretations of some key verses vary considerably. Examples abound, but let us take the case of the very first verse in the Guru Granth Sahib after the *mool mantra* :

ਸੋਚੈ ਸੋਚਿ ਨਾ ਹੋਵਈ ਜੇ ਸੋਚੀ ਲਖ ਵਾਰ ॥

Look at the different English versions :

- a) Beyond thought, no thinking can conceive Him, not even if the minds of men should think for ages and ages.

– Prof Puran Singh

- b) By thinking I cannot obtain a conception of Him, even though I think hundreds of times.

– M A Macauliffe

- c) ਜੇ ਮੈਂ ਲਖ ਵਾਰੀ (ਭੀ) (ਇਸ਼ਨਾਨ ਆਦਿਕ ਨਾਲ ਸਰੀਰ ਦੀ) ਸੁਚ ਰੱਖਾਂ, (ਤਾਂ ਭੀ ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ) ਸੁੱਚ ਰਖਣ ਨਾਲ (ਮਨ ਦੀ) ਸੁੱਚ ਨਹੀਂ ਰਹਿ ਸਕਦੀ।

– Dr Sahib Singh

In this version ਸੋਚਿ means bath or cleanliness, while ਸੁਚਿ refers to purity of mind.

- d) By pondering man cannot have a conception of God, even though he may ponder over lacs of times.

– Giani Manmohan Singh

- e) Ritual purification, though million-fold may not purify the mind.

– G S Talib

- f) Thinking avails not, how so hard one thinks.

– Dr Gopal Singh

- g) (ਕੂੜ ਦੀ ਕੰਧ ਸਰੀਰ ਧੋਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਕਰਮਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਨਹੀਂ ਟੁਟਦੀ, ਕਿਉਂਕਿ) ਸੋਚ ਕਰਨ ਨਾਲ (ਮਨ ਦੀ) ਸੁਚ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੁੰਦੀ, ਚਾਹੇ ਲੱਖ ਵਾਰ ਸੁੱਚਮ ਪਿਆ ਕਰਾਂ।

– Bhai Vir Singh

In the above verse, there are two kinds of interpretation. In some the reference is to ritual physical purification, while in the others reference is to pondering, thinking, etc. And there are respectable scholars on both sides.

Similarly, in the verse ਕਰਮੀ ਆਵੈ ਕਪੜਾ ਨਦਰੀ ਮੋਖੁ ਦੁਆਰੁ in the *Japu ji Pauri* 4, ਕਪੜਾ is interpreted variously as ‘cloth’, ‘robe of honour’, or ‘human body’ or ‘birth’, etc.

Some more examples of variant interpretations of *gurbani*, are given in a couple of articles in the present issue of the *Abstracts*. Fortunately, in the above two examples, no doctrinal conflict is involved. But when more and more scholars enter this field, individual interpretations may challenge some basic doctrines as well. Even the possibility of motivated misinterpretation of *gurbani* cannot be ruled out.

With the recent increased emphasis on the need for translation of Guru Granth Sahib into other languages, a number of organizations/individuals have come forward, and are responding to the call in their own way. DSGMC entrusted the task of translation and transliteration into a dozen Indian languages to one Shri Bhannu Murti. The project has already run into rough weather, and the work done so far has had to be withdrawn, because enough thought was not given to the modalities required. Bhai Chella Ram’s organization has been busy translating the scripture for some time past and has already covered some Indian languages. A society has recently been set up at Mohali (Guru Granth Sewa Mission), and is actually engaged in translation work through hired scholars, according to Press reports. Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar has planned an ambitious project to accomplish the task. Apart from such organizations, some individuals are also busy doing the same thing. Dr Jarnail Singh of Canada has single-handedly translated the Guru Granth Sahib into French and German.

All the above efforts are welcome. One fears, however, that we are heading towards a flood of translations with each individual or organization giving variant interpretations with consequent confusion, and differences and division of the Panth. The present enthusiasm need not be deplored. Infact, it is desirable, but it needs to be regulated

and channelised, so that translations present one accurate, clear and consistent message as bequeathed to us by the Gurus.

This responsibility has to be entrusted to a central body of the Sikhs. At the moment it devolves on the SGPC. The following steps appear necessary :

- a) Convene a meeting of scholars who have made or are likely to make a contribution in this regard, from universities and other Sikh organizations.
- b) Constitute a panel of scholars to examine the existing translations and resolve the differences.
- c) To prepare one standard English translation of the Guru Granth Sahib acceptable to the Panth.
- d) To promote translation into other languages based on the above standard English translation only. No other translation should be permitted for use and the SGPC should ensure this.

The proposal has financial and organizational implications which, it is hoped, will be taken care of by the SGPC in consultation with other Panthic organizations.

On the need for accuracy in translation of a sacred scripture, the following popular warning must be borne in mind :

“Translation is a custom house through which passes, if the custom officers are not alert, more smuggled goods of foreign idioms, than through any other linguistic frontier.”

□

*God ordains as He wishes.
No one can order what he should do.
For, He is the King, the King of Kings,
And we are only to live as He wills.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 6

ਜੇ ਤਿਸੁ ਭਾਵੈ ਸੋਈ ਕਰਸੀ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਨ ਕਰਣਾ ਜਾਈ ॥
ਸੇ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹੁ ਸਾਹਾ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਰਹਣੁ ਰਜਾਈ ॥

THE NATURE OF GOD OR THE NAME*

PRINCIPAL TEJA SINGH

God is described both as *nirgun*, or absolute, and *sargun*, or personal. Before there was any creation God lived absolutely in Himself, but when He thought of making Himself manifest in creation He became related. In the former case, 'when God was Himself self-created, there was none else; He took counsel and advice with Himself; what He did came to pass. Then there was no heaven, or hell, or the three-regioned world. There was only the Formless One Himself; creation was not then (*Gujri-ki-Var* of Guru Amar Das). There was then no sin, no virtue, no Veda or any other religious book, no caste, no sex (Guru Nanak's *Maru Solbe*, xv and Guru Arjun's *Sukhmani*, xxi). When God became *sargun* or manifest, He became what is called the Name, and in order to realise Himself He made Nature wherein He has His seat and 'is diffused everywhere and in all directions in the form of Love' (Guru Gobind Singh's *Jap*, 80)

In presenting this double phase of the Supreme Being, the Gurus have avoided the pitfalls into which some people have fallen. With them God is not an abstract idea or a moral force, but a personal Being capable of being loved and honoured, and yet He is conceived of as a Being whose presence is diffused all over His creation. He is the common Father of all, fashioning worlds and supporting them from inside, but He does not take birth. He has no incarnations. He Himself stands for the creative agencies, like the *Maya*, the Word and Brahma; He Himself is Truth, Beauty and the eternal yearning of the heart after Goodness (*Japji*). In a word, the Gurus have combined the Aryan idea of immanence with the Semitic idea of transcendence, without taking away anything from the unity and the personal character

* Reproduced from *Essays in Sikhism*, Language Department, Punjab

of God.

“O ! give me, give some intelligence of my Beloved.
 I am bewildered at the different accounts I have of Him.
 O happy wives, my companions, say something of Him.
 Some say that He is altogether outside the world;
 Others that He is altogether contained in it.
 His colour is not seen; His features cannot be made out:
 O happy wives, tell me truly —
 “He lives in everything; He dwells in every heart :
 Yet He is not blended with anything. He Is separate.”¹

“Why dost thou go to the forest in search of God ?
 He lives in all, is yet ever distinct: He abides with thee too.
 As fragrance dwells in a flower, or reflection in a mirror,
 So does God dwell inside everything; seek Him therefore in the
 heart.”²

People who come with preconceived notions to study Sikhism often blunder in offering its interpretation. Those who are conversant with the eastern thought fix upon those passages which refer to the thoughts of immanence and conclude that Sikhism is nothing but an echo of Hinduism. Those who are imbued with the Mohammedan or Christian thought take hold of transcendental passages and identify Sikhism with Islam or Christianity. Others who know both will see here no system, nothing particular, nothing but confusion.

If, however, we were to study Sikhism as a new organic growth evolved from the existing systems of thought to meet the needs of a newly evolving humanity, we would find no difficulty in recognizing Sikhism as a distinct system of thought.

Take, for instance, Guru Nanak's *Asa-di-Var*, which in its preliminary stanzas lays down the fundamentals of Sikh belief about God. It is a trenchant clear-cut monotheism. God is called ‘the indweller of Nature,’ and is described as filling all things ‘by an art that is artless’ (xii. 1-2). He is not an impotent mechanic fashioning pre-existing matter into the universe. He does not exclude matter, but includes and transcends it. The universe too is not illusion. Being rooted in God who is real, it is a reality; not a reality final and abiding, but a reality on account of God's presence in it (ii. I). His Will is above

Nature as well as working within it, and in spite of its Immanence it acts not as an arbitrary force but as a personal presence working 'most intelligently' (iii. 2).

The first thing about God is that He is indivisibly one, above every other being, however highly conceived, such as Vishnu, Brahma or Shiv (i), or as Rama and Krishna (iv. 2). The second thing is that He is the highest moral being (ii. 2), who has inscribed all men with His Name or moral presence (ii). He is not a God belonging to any particular people, Muslim or Hindu, but is the 'dispenser of life universal' (vi). The ways to realize Him are not many, but only one (xii 3), and that way is not knowledge, formalism (xiv. 2. xv. 1-4), or what are received as meritorious actions which establish a claim to reward (viii. 2), but love (xiii. 2) and faith (xiv. 2), the aim being to obtain the grace of God (iv. 2. v. 2, viii 2, xiii. 1). The only way of worshipping Him is to sing His praises (vi 1., vii. ix. xii. 2. xix 2. xxii. 3) and to meditate on His *naam*³ (ii., viii. 1, ix. 2. xvi. 1).

~ ~ ~

REFERENCES

- 1 *Jasitsri* of Guru Arjun.
- 2 *Dhanasri* of Guru Tegh Bahadur
- 3 'Name' is a term, like 'logosis' in Greek bearing various meanings. Sometimes it is used for God Himself, as in *Sukhmani* xvi 5 : "The Name sustains the animal life; the name supports the parts and the whole of the universe." It is described as being immortal, immaculate in-dweller of all creation, and is to be sung, uttered, thought upon, served and worshipped. In most cases it means the revelation of God as found in the sacred Word.

THE ART OF SEEKING GOD'S GRACE THROUGH SELF-ANNIHILATION

BHAGWANT SINGH*

The splendour of the Master's word – and our Guru – is so spectacular that one is left wondering at the efficacy of his commands. The wonder that Guru Granth Sahib bestowed on us in the form of this perpetual faultless wisdom and guidance cannot be described in totality. Yet, the mastery of Guru Gobind Singh in handing us all over to his successor in the form of Word Guru, Guru Granth Sahib, explains the love that the perennial Word of God offers to all mankind. We are fortunate that we have been rid of the slavery of man to man. On the contrary, the slavery of the word Guru leads us to liberation-in-life. Just as the Guru himself says *Sahib mera neet nawan* - my Lord shows Himself in new light all the time – I am delighted to analyse, experience and relish the beauty of every *shabad* in Guru Granth Sahib, when I come across it while doing my spiritual reading at home or listening to *Amritvela Kirtan* from Harmandir Sahib everyday or delivering *Gurmat* lectures in the Gurdwara.

The pen-picture of a disciple begging at the feet of the Master, conveyed in the shabad of Guru Arjun transmitted by the *raagis* this morning left an indelible impression on my mind. Not only that. I was struck by the instantaneous divine response of the Lord in the *shabad* itself. Let us experience this :

My Lord, I come to you, to seek Your refuge. And I come with absolute faith and, in fact, I have come only through Your Grace. Now, howsoever it pleases you, my Lord, protect me, because this path has been shown to me by my Guru. The deluding *maya* hoodwinks me. This *maya* is like passing wind, when I hear about

* Tapovan, Amravati - 444 602 (Maharashtra)

the hard-heartedness of Dharamraj I am frightened. I find that this world is like a dark well or a burning fire. That is why I now want to hold on to the support of my Guru. Says Nanak : I concentrate on the Lord. And I find that I have now received the Perfect Lord in my heart.¹

What strikes me is not only the form of prayer and its total surrender but also the confidence and faith with which the prayer is offered. I had heard so many *shabads*, two of which I detail below in English translation which command us to lose our vanity in prayer and show ourselves as supportless and absolutely helpless. But the above *shabad* exudes confidence and later shows that the Lord is not only responsive but also responds immediately. Let me refer to the English rendering of the verses of the two *shabads* envisaging similar, but not identical *ardas*.

In total helplessness, my Lord, I have come to seek Your shelter. And now that I fall at Your feet, I come with the determination never to leave, whether You protect me or You kill me. And then, I have now decided never to care for people's criticism or praise; I throw both in the fire. Also whether people call me good or bad, I am sold unto You.²

In absolute humility I fall at your feet, my Satguru, Guru is the pride of the prideless and welcomes me.³

Our system of prayer and our philosophy are distinctly dependent on the purity of the soul and have nothing to do with *karam kand*. On the other hand, our Guru strictly forbids mere *karam kand bhakti*. Let us look at the following verse :

Whatever *karam-kand* is performed for devotion is really a form of public hypocrisy, because this kind of devotee will be subject to the onslaught of Yamas. On the other hand, if you devotedly sing the praises of the Lord without any expectation of material reward, even an instant of remembrance can liberate you.⁴

Since Guru Granth Sahib now is my only support in the world, I literally experience the warmth of every word that I meditate on. Every word, every *shabad* and every thought has a spiritual meaning, distinctly different from religious connotations. Since this scripture is really for all mankind, the messages are truly universal. And I happen to witness this everyday, living with over a thousand people, none of whom is a

Punjabi. But when I sing the universality of our Scripture, Allah, Ram, Khuda, convey to me not only the same meaning but they also indicate to me the love that our philosophy has for all human beings irrespective of their background, religion, etc.

But what particularly impresses me, not only as a Sikh, but also as a human being, is that our religion is a systematized practice of spirituality in all walks of life. In other words, we do not look at anyone's religion but at the deeds, and if someone is connected to God in his own religion, for us he is as respectable as a Sikh, just as Farid, Ravidas, Kabir and other Bhaktas in Guru Granth Sahib sit in Guru Granth Sahib with Sikh Gurus in complete equality and complete unity of man.

Before I discuss the connotations of this morning's Harmandir Sahib *shabad 'tau main aaya, sarni aaya'*, let me mention the various ways of entreaties in which a Sikh is instructed to seek the grace of the Lord, but one thing is exquisitely enchanting. In most of the *shabads*, the response is inbuilt but the course of prayer must begin with the innermost feelings of abject surrender. Let us see in the following hymn in *Chandi Charitra* which I discuss in translation :

Deh Siva bar mohe ehai.....

Grant me, Lord, the boon that I should never shirk good deeds,. Never should I fear the enemy and when I enter the field to fight (tyranny and highhandedness), I should have a certain faith that I am going to win.

The depth of inner feelings and, later, the determination to lay down his life in the battle of righteousness while entrenched in singing the praises of the Lord with greedy lust is vividly evident in the confidence of victory and the victory of God. Look at the words :

Ar Sikh ho apne hee mannkau, eh lalach hown gun tau uchron

Jab aav ki audh nidhan banai, att hee ran mein tab joojb maron.

– Chandi Charitra

In a way our Gurus emphasized that a Sikh should never waver from the belief that his prayer is definitely going to be answered. Indeed we are forbidden to pray for material things, although praying for *Naam*, the presence of Lord within, without interruption, automatically ensures all kinds of boons, as the Guru himself stresses :

The Lord looked after me until the end; there was nothing that I

ever wanted and did not get.⁵

When the Lord inculcated in me the habit of meditating on Him, says Nanak, I found that I was always in peace, both at home in the heart and outside.⁶

When I held on to the feet of the Lord, says Nanak, I found peace day in and day out.⁷

The absolute humility with which our Guru teaches us to pray in the following hymn will make my point even more clear. In English, we say, beggars are not choosers. Our Guru determines that unless we annihilate ourselves and become determined (*dbeeth*) we cannot persuade the Lord to listen to our entreaties. The following hymn of Guru Arjun will bear me out. I take it in translation :

On your innumerable qualities I cannot meditate for I am meritless and You are my provider. How can a purchased slave show his cleverness ? I can only offer at your feet, everything which includes body and mind. I yearn for your vision, my glamorous beloved Lord, but I know there is nothing that I can do for You because You are always limitless, unassessable. How shall I serve You, what shall I say to please You, how shall I have Your *darshan* ? Although I pine for You all time, I cannot fathom Your contours, Your limitlessness. But I have become *dbeeth* (determined) to beg You to grant me the dust of the feet of the saints (my Guru). And, says Nanak, the slave, the Lord showed His graciousness and, holding my hand, made me cross the ocean of life.⁸

I am indeed bewildered pleasantly to see, on the one hand, abject surrender and absolute willingness to become a non-entity and, on the other, so much graceful response that the Lord is prepared to make the disciple like Himself. Two hymns of Kabir exemplify this so-called mystery. Actually, it is not a mystery at all. Because, even at the cost of repetition, I say : Guru Granth Sahib's slavery is the greatest liberation. Witness this spectacular wonder of Kabir. The first hymn talks of his desperate condition of separation and yearning to be united, and the second dwells on his absolute merging with the Lord :

I am sacrifice unto You, my Lord, why do You kill me by showing Your back on me ? It is better that you thrust a knife into my being, but I cannot bear Your separation. Please, Lord, listen to my pleadings, embrace me.⁹

I now sit on the throne of the Lord and am one with Him so devotedly that no one can know / recognize who is the lord and who is Kabir.¹⁰

Similarly, take Guru Arjun Devji's way of telling us how to pray for strength to get rid of the five mighty thieves, *kaam, krodh, lobh, moh, ahankar* in the following hymn. Indeed when the prayers are in the same way as that of a helpless beggar, a supportless non-entity, and the self-surrender is evident, the Lord's *bird* (nature) is to help. That is why we see in Guru Granth Sahib a verse *Hamari ganat nan gniya kae apna bird pachhan* (Guru Granth Sahib, p. 619). Guru Arjun Dev puts this prayer in our heart in the following words :

My Lord, I am a lone poor soul but these mighty robbers are Five, please protect me from them. They always trouble me and give me extreme torture; that is why I have sought refuge at Your feet.¹¹

The stress that I am giving in this piece is on the self-annihilating prayer and the most gracious response of the Lord. In other words, as we are told, the life is to be led on spiritual lines as *Jeevatian mar rahije*, so that the oneness with the Lord is assured. To my utter surprise – and delight – when I came to the following hymn of the same Guru, Guru Arjun during my readings from Guru Granth Sahib, the automatic *Wah Wah* became my *mantra*. Savour this :

Look at this wondrous event. The Lord that I heard was unapproachable and unknowable, was found right in my heart with Guru's grace.¹²

The mighty tyrants who tortured me endlessly are now afraid of me. They beg me now to save them from my Master and fall at my feet.¹³

I was really bowled over when I went through the second of the above two verses. First one, I had always come to accept that God resided in our heart, but could be recognized only with the grace of one's Guru. But the second one overwhelmed me in that a time can come when the devotee, after self-annihilating surrender, can experience the death-causing demons yearning to fall at the devotee's feet for protection. But, then, this is exactly what I set out to explain, when I heard the hymn that I mentioned at the outset.

If the devotee is in absolute surrender and, guided by the Guru, Guru Granth Sahib, is emphatically confident of the Lord's gracious

response and because of the fear that he will have to render the account of his life on earth to Dharamraj, implores the Lord to save him from the burning world, and tries to live in 24-hour presence of the Lord on the basis of Guru's commands, he will definitely perceive the perfect Lord in his heart.¹⁴

The essence of our Guru's message is *shabad-vichar*. External manifestation of piety and obeisance has little relevance to internal revolution. When *shabad-vichar* is accompanied by self-annihilation, the Lord's grace is guaranteed. Let me conclude with Guru Amar Das' two verses :

Shabad-Vichar : I recognized my Lord in truth while others lost the track in sinful life. I am always in love with my Husband through *shabad-vichar*.¹⁵

Self-annihilation : The highest state of peace comes with self-annihilation.

May God show us the wisdom to live *gurbani* to enable us to relish *Har-Ras*.

~ ~ ~

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*All bounties come from the Lord,
None can expect them from Him,
as a matter of right.
Some even awake do not get them,
while others He wakes out of sleep and blesses.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1384

ਦਾਤੀ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਸੰਦੀਆ ਕਿਆ ਚਲੈ ਤਿਸੁ ਨਾਲਿ ॥
ਇਕਿ ਜਾਗੰਦੇ ਨਾ ਲਹਨਿ ਇਕਨਾ ਸੁਤਿਆ ਦੇਇ ਉਠਾਲਿ ॥

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES IN SCIENCE AND SIKH RELIGION

HARDEV SINGH*

ABSTRACT

Religion and Science are both engaged in the exploration of ultimate reality, but they are following two different routes, viz; consciousness and material world. However, the quantum theory has broken the barrier between the two modes of perception by accepting the role of consciousness in both theory and experiment. The conflict between Science and Religion which started in Europe during 15th century is yielding place to an era of reconciliation and dialogue during recent times. Inter-faith dialogue and global perspectives of science-spirituality dialogue have an important role to play in this era of globalisation. Global perspectives in Science find an echo in the philosophy of Sikh religion.

INTRODUCTION

Human life is based on the interaction of physical, cultural and even religious forms of life. Man is part of nature. Human mind has access to reality through *four* modes of knowledge : *sensory experience, discursive cognition, intuition, and revelation*. In the first two modes, the subject-object duality remains intact. Hence the religious experience, which transcends this distinction, does not belong to the realm of these modes. While mysticism involves intuition, spiritualism bases its self-certifying validity on revelation. The revealed word has no transcendental source, but is immanent in the cosmos and is revealed to and heard by the sages. This is how the *Vedas* were revealed as *sbrutis*.

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Religion and Science are both engaged in the exploration of Ultimate Reality. The field of religion concerns consciousness and its flux in moulding the destiny of man. Science explores the nature or its manifestation through the material world. It starts from gross matter and moves toward subtle consciousness pervading in the material world. The modern science, namely, quantum mechanics, has brought consciousness into the frame of reference of experimental and theoretical physics.

RETREAT OF RELIGION AND DOMINANCE OF SCIENCE

The conflict between Science and Religion started after Renaissance in Europe. Both moral and intellectual revulsion against religion took place in the mind of the western man, and his mental energies were diverted toward natural sciences. Diderot, in his Encyclopaedia, encouraged men to follow Natural Science in preference to Theology. Newtonian world-view gave birth to the mechanical philosophy of Nature, and Religion was dethroned from the realm of western man's life. Cartesian philosophy stressed that reality was knowable to man through senses and intuition, hence revelation and mysticism have no role to play. Reality was considered to be of material nature and spirituality was considered to be redundant. Deterministic materialism, as such, was held to be the ultimate paradigm of material reality. The Hegelian postulate that 'the real is rational, the rational real' implied another 'universal' which ignored spirituality and advocated historical materialism which led to the advent of Marxism. Both these philosophies, viz., Cartesian dualism and Marxian socialism dethroned religion from the world-view of modern man till middle of twentieth century.

During the latter half of the 20th century, a crisis in this grand narrative of modern Western civilization has appeared. The myth of reason, rationality, progress and historical materialism exploded. The dialectic of class contradictions gave way to that of ethnic, ethno-religious and ethno-political contradictions in the context of growing tensions between secular nationalism and religious nationalism. The technological inventions and the powers placed in the hands of the western man have been instrumental in giving him economic and political dominance over the eastern societies. The collapse of the

grand narrative of modern western civilization is the collapse of the metanarrative of reason.

SCIENCE-SPIRITUALITY DIALOGUE

During the new millennium, the conflict between Science and Religion finds a retreat, and we are living in a world where a dialogue between Science and Spirituality has become possible. Paradoxically, the inadequacy of reason has been revealed by reason itself. The Uncertainty Principle proposed by Werner Heisenberg has demolished the pyramid of deterministic philosophy based on Newtonian world-view. Here was an impasse beyond which reason could not go in its understanding of reality. The knower and the known are being seen as intertwined, mutually inclusive and not mutually exclusive. It is being felt that the traditional (dualistic, atomistic, reductionist) view is incapable of revealing the essence of reality. A new 'holistic' view is needed to see Reality in its concrete wholeness – a view that would see the whole in the parts and the parts in the whole, envisioned as 'dynamic becoming' and not 'static being'. This necessitates what is termed as "the paradigm shift" or the breakthrough of a new problematic in our thinking. This would not mean a negation of reason but going beyond it, to the realm of spirit. The notion of 'spirit' in this sense would be the foundational principle of the global civilization of the third millennium analogous to the way in which 'reason' was the foundational postulate of the modern Western civilization after the Renaissance in Europe.

POST MODERN ERA : AN AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

Due to a large number of technological advances in the post-modern era, the world is rapidly shrinking. Globalization has become the buzzword everywhere. Some profound changes are taking place which are distinctly different from the modern era. Obviously, there is rethinking and reconfiguration of modern era ideologies, causing many tensions, confusions and insecurities. Post modern era can be described as an era of conflict and anxiety. Inter-faith dialogue and global perspectives of science-spirituality dialogue have become of utmost importance in the post-modern era.

Post-modernism has questioned the empirical methods of the

modern era to search for the absolute reality. It contends that ultimate reality can never be found through senses and scientific instruments. According to Lyotard, scientific and rationalist discourses of the modern era have lost their legitimacy during the post-modern times. Quantum physics and chaos theory are some prime examples to demonstrate that science cannot make reliable predictions. Truth and reality transcend the obvious.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES IN SCIENCE AND SIKH RELIGION

Recent advances in both experimental and theoretical physics have established that quantum theory supports the idea of a cosmic spirit pervading the cosmos and inter-relationship of individuals in world society (parts and wholes). Roger Penrose in his book, *Shadows of the Mind*, has tried to establish the role of consciousness in new physics which looks beyond quantum theory. In the chapter, *Structure of the Quantum World*, he probes the limitations of the quantum theory to describe physical reality. Earlier, EPR paradox brought into focus the limitations of quantum theory : “The quantum-mechanical description of reality given by the wave function is not complete or, in other words, when the operators corresponding to two physical quantities do not commute, the two quantities cannot have simultaneous reality.” EPR paradox was explained by John Bell in his famous theorem implying some hidden variables. Theoretical predictions of Bell’s theorem have been verified by Aspect Experiments. The implications of Bell’s theorem and its experimental findings are staggering. They have established the interplay of consciousness and the physical world and changed our world-view where the notion of an objective world is in conflict with quantum theory. The inter-relation of human consciousness and the observed world is obvious in Bell’s theorem. What we call physical reality, the external world, is shaped to some extent, by human thought. This train of thought was led further by David Bohm who proposed that the information of the entire universe is contained in each of its parts. For Bohm, order and unity are spread throughout the universe in a way which escapes our senses. We are living in a holographic universe. The world is an indivisible whole.

Similar sentiments were expressed by John Donne, a mystic poet,

in his poem during 17th century : “No man is an island, entire of itself, everyman is a piece of the continent; if a clod is washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, any man’s death diminishes me because I am involved in mankind.”

Global perspectives in science find its echo in the philosophy of Sikh religion, founded by Guru Nanak during the fifteenth century in India. It has some parallelism with Renaissance and Reformation movements in Europe. Guru Nanak challenged the orthodox ideas of Indian society based on Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. Sikh philosophy as expounded in Guru Granth Sahib, the Holy Book of the Sikhs, is unique in its epistemology. It rejects myths, rituals and dogma, and as a consequence it has a universal appeal for humankind irrespective of its religious and cultural affiliations. In the holistic vision of Sikh philosophy, God, nature and man are integrally bound to each other. According to Rev. H L Bradshaw, “Sikh religion is a universal world faith, a message for all men. The religion preached by Guru Nanak is the faith of the New Age. The other religions contain the truth but the Sikh religion contains the fullness of truth.”

Sikh religion is compatible with modern science in its approach to cosmology, nature of reality, relation of microcosm to macrocosm and consciousness. Sikh religion believes in transcendental nature of reality : “In this realm, one sees but without the eyes; one listens but without the ears, one walks but without the feet; one works but without the hands; one speaks but without the tongue; thus attaining life in death. O Nanak, one meets the God after realisation of the divine law.”

Sikh religion advocates dual nature of the Reality, transcendental and immanent. God himself transforms into creation, changing his *nirguna* form (energetic state) to *sarguna* form (material state). Space and time were created at the epoch of Big-Bang and creation process has occurred several times. The universe was created out of *sunya* phase (cosmic void) billions of years ago. There are millions and billions of stars, solar systems and galaxies in the universe and it is difficult to account for the whole system.

Guru Nanak discards the Vedantic concept of reality which considers this universe as an illusion or *Maya*. The Sikh view-point is: “Real are Thy Continents; Real is the Universe; Real are these Forms

and material objects; Thy doings are real, O Lord.” Truth is considered supreme in all religions but the Sikh religion lays more stress on truthful living than on truth : “Truth is high but higher still is truthful living”. Hence the Sikh religion does not condemn the worldly life as *maya* (illusion). Reality is perceived in a holistic mode in both microcosm and macrocosm. Guru Nanak has identified the manifest reality with nature : “Nanak, the beneficent Lord alone is True, and He is revealed through His Nature”.

The need of the hour is a dialogue between Science and Spirituality. It will be most appropriate to promote Global Perspectives of Science and Spirituality with the Sikh religion as a basis.

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RELEVANCE OF GURU GRANTH SAHIB IN THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY

TEJPAL SINGH*

Literature has the inherent quality of being relevant to all times. Art and literature never die. It remains invariably fresh and lively. Guru Granth Sahib, as a genre, enshrines the highly inspired utterances of the divinely oriented poets, communed with God. Its universal appeal is to the whole of mankind. It typifies the man who is the measure of all things. Its vision is splendid, which covers the basic characteristics of man: his ego, tensions, fears, frustrations, anxieties, temptations as well as aspirations. Guru Granth Sahib's appeal is ecumenical: everybody irrespective of caste, creed, religion, race, gender, region is welcome. Guru Granth Sahib is a major repository of spiritual cognition. Whatever relevance Guru Granth Sahib had four or five centuries ago, it has the same today in the twenty-first century for mankind. The scenario at the global stage has not changed much, and is marked by fear, suspicion, disunity and strife. Man is still groping for light in the dark in its search for peace and happiness. Mankind is beset by acts of genocide, violence, holocausts, terrorism and threats of nuclear wars. Imminently, Man's existence is in peril. Guru Granth Sahib appeals to the Almighty for deliverance:

Save by Thy grace, the world in flames;
Save it at whatever portal it may be saved.¹

The world is on a heap of gunpowder. Any ignition can explode it. Hitler's invasion of Poland in September 1939 led to the Second World War, which killed 55 million people. Like Pearl Harbour and September 11, the Belsan school slaughter, Bali and Jakarta bombings are still fresh in our memory. The oil inflation of the 1970 changed

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world scenario.

Blasting of Akal Takhat at Amritsar led to the assassination of Mrs Indira Gandhi, which caused the massacre of the Sikhs. Massacre of Muslims in the state of Gujarat, led to the downfall of the BJP Government at the Centre. This is how the mighty fall. Hatred begets hatred.

Guru Granth Sahib advises to adopt the policy of *detente*. It asserts to resolve all tensions through dialogue:

Brethren! All in unison meet,
And by absorption in God cast off duality.²

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1185

The basic ideology enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib's Fundamental Creed (*Mul Mantra*) is Absolute Monotheism, which reads:

He is the Sole Supreme Being; of eternal manifestation; Creator; Immanent Reality; Without Fear; Without Rancour; Timeless Form; Un-incarnated; Self- Existent; Realized by grace of the holy Preceptor.³

God as 'the Sole Supreme Being', has broad definitions that He is universal and immortal, without fear and rancour. But, here it differs from Christianity. God says:

"You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, Lord your God, am a jealous God..."⁴

The truth of the Fundamental Creed was relevant in the past, it is relevant even now and it will be so in the future. The utterance of *Ek Oankar* echoed over the continents in the past, it is resounding now, and shall continue in future solacing the hearts of the suffering humanity.

Guru Granth Sahib has dealt with the five evils of man, namely, lust, anger, greed, attachment, and ego. These evils are characteristically inherent in mankind. These evils are the main cause of man's suffering. Guru Granth Sahib advises control over these five evils for a life of equipoise (*sehaj*):

The Five Demons hast Thou subdued, torment of Death annulled.²

Alcoholism, gambling, narcotism and smoking are the dooms of modern life. Guru Granth Sahib condemns all these evils:

Lust and wrath disintegrate the body, as borax gold.⁵

Flee ever by day or night lust, violence and
Consorting with the evil-minded.⁶

For pleasure of lust lasting for twinkling of an eye,
For millions of days does man suffer:
For a brief hour in pleasure he indulges;
Later into endless regrets falling.⁷

In involvement with in lust, wrath, avarice, attachment and
pride lies not joy.⁸

One brought in a flask full of wine.
Another a cup filled with that, drinking of which takes away sense,
And dementia results.
Man then distinguishes not between what is right and what wrong,
And so from the Lord is pushed away.
Its drinking, of the Lord makes one forgetful,
And at the Divine Portal brings chastisement.
As far as lies in your power, drink not this false wine.⁹

Those consuming liquor of mad evil-thinking,
Are like husbands of harlots.¹⁰

Saith Kabir : Creatures that consume hemp, fish or liquor
Even though visiting holy spots, keeping fasts and vows,
All to nethermost hell must go.¹¹

Guru Granth Sahib attaches much importance to ethical values:
Let his eye not cast a glance at the womenfolk of others'
And in holy company should serve the holy.¹²

Of evil passions of lust and wrath hard is the burden.
How without the Name can noble qualities arise?¹³

Go, daughter-princess!
Repeat God's Name, at dawn decking yourself with truth.¹⁴

The main protagonists in Guru Granth Sahib are *Gurmukh*, *Brabamgyani*, *Dervaisb*, *Sachiara* and the antagonist is *Manmukh*. *Gurmukh* is that person who is a God-oriented man. He has all the qualities of head and heart. He is a person of deep spiritual feeling. *Manmukh* is an egoist. He is self-centred. He has always his own axe to grind. He is without God's *Naam*:

Egoists contemplate not the *Naam*,
Without the *Naam*, in suffering they wail.¹⁵

Guru Granth Sahib eulogizes the *Brabamgyani*, i.e., God-enlightened, who is an idealized form of the prototype. The God-enlightened is the ideal one to be typified by the Sikhs. He is full of equipoise. He is a worshipper of God. He becomes analogous with God. Perhaps, the idealized form of the example that has been given here for the human beings to follow is unparalleled in world literature:

The God-enlightened one is of all creation the Maker;
Ever-living, death touches him not.
From the God-enlightened comes liberation,
Way of life and life itself.¹⁶

Similarly, *Gurmukh* and *Manmukh* are compared and contrasted. *Gurmukh* is a gainer whereas *Manmukh* is a loser :

Those by egoism gripped are bound,
The God-instructed liberated.¹⁷
The God-directed attain, the egoists forfeit.¹⁸

Guru Granth Sahib rejects the *Hath Yoga* as a way for achieving liberation. Torturing the mind and body in any form is unacceptable. Similarly, going to the pilgrimages and fasting are denounced:

Not by *batha* and self-suppression is the Lord attained.
Saith Nanak: By *Sehaj* is attained the Life of the Universe.
This enlightenment by the holy Preceptor is granted.¹⁹

For further discussion please compare Guru Granth Sahib pp 68, 197, 226, 333, 906 919.

Naam, *sabad* are very significant words in Guru Granth Sahib. Both are interchangeable. All creation is done through *Naam*:
Guru Granth Sahib says:

The Name (*Naam*) is superior to all charities,
Chanting of texts, austerities.²⁰

Guru Granth Sahib advises that there is no use of going to the

pilgrimages; because *Naam* is the real Pilgrimage, which is in you. The real Knowledge (*Gyan*) is to ponder over the *sabad* (Word).

Guru Granth Sahib is par excellence in aesthetics. At the end of the Granth, its compiler, Guru Arjun Dev visualizes universal and timeless qualities in the metaphor of salver, which has three viands- Truth, Contentment and Contemplation, combined with Lord's ambrosial Name, sustenance of all existence; whoever partakes of it, shall be saved.²¹

To conclude, the Belsan school slaughter, tensions in Africa and Asia portray a very dismal picture. Obviously, Twenty first Century needs desperately the prototypes of such protagonists as *Gurmukhs* and *Brahamgynis* of Guru Granth Sahib to save mankind from global annihilation. Hence, relevance of Guru Granth Sahib is paramount in the Twenty First Century. In fact this is the greatest legacy that the Sikh Gurus have bestowed upon humanity.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & REFERENCES

All the translations of *Gurbani* are from Sri Guru Granth Sahib (in English Translation) in four volumes

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2. ਹੋਇ ਇਕਤ੍ਰ ਮਿਲਹੁ ਮੇਰੇ ਭਾਈ ਦੁਬਿਧਾ ਦੂਰਿ ਕਰਹੁ ਲਿਵ ਲਾਇ ॥ Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1185
3. ੴ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥, Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1
4. Exodus 20:4. *The Holy Bible*, New International Version, 1988, p 55.
5. ਕਾਮੁ ਕ੍ਰੋਧੁ ਕਾਇਆ ਕਉ ਗਾਲੈ ॥ Guru Granth Sahib, p. 932
6. ਕਾਮੁ ਕ੍ਰੋਧੁ ਸੰਗਤਿ ਦੁਰਜਨ ਕੀ ਤਾ ਤੇ ਅਹਿਨਿਸਿ ਭਾਗਉ ॥, Guru Granth Sahib, p. 219
7. ਨਿਮਖ ਕਾਮ ਸੁਆਦ ਕਾਰਣਿ ਕੋਟਿ ਦਿਨਸ ਦੁਖੁ ਪਾਵਹਿ ॥ ਘਰੀ ਮੁਹਤ ਰੰਗ ਮਾਣਹਿ ਫਿਰਿ ਬਹੁਰਿ ਬਹੁਰਿ ਪਛੁਤਾਵਹਿ ॥ Guru Granth Sahib, p. 403
8. ਕਾਮ ਕ੍ਰੋਧ ਲੋਭ ਮੋਹ ਅਭਿਮਾਨਾ ਤਾ ਮਹਿ ਸੁਖੁ ਨਹੀ ਪਾਈਐ ॥ Guru Granth Sahib, p. 614
9. ਮਾਣਸੁ ਭਰਿਆ ਆਣਿਆ ਮਾਣਸੁ ਭਰਿਆ ਆਇ ॥ ਜਿਤੁ ਪੀਤੈ ਮਤਿ ਦੂਰਿ ਹੋਇ ਬਰਲੁ ਪਵੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਆਇ ॥ ਆਪਣਾ ਪਰਾਇਆ ਨ ਪਛਾਣਈ ਖਸਮਹੁ ਧਕੇ ਖਾਇ ॥ ਜਿਤੁ ਪੀਤੈ ਖਸਮੁ ਵਿਸਰੈ ਦਰਗਹ

- ਮਿਲੈ ਸਜਾਇ ॥ ਝੁਠਾ ਮਦੁ ਮੂਲਿ ਨ ਪੀਚਈ ਜੇ ਕਾ ਪਾਰਿ ਵਸਾਇ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਨਦਰੀ ਸਦੁ ਮਦੁ ਪਾਈਐ
ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਮਿਲੈ ਜਿਸੁ ਆਇ ॥ ਸਦਾ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਕੈ ਰੰਗਿ ਰਹੈ ਮਹਲੀ ਪਾਵੈ ਥਾਉ ॥ Guru Granth
Sahib, p. 554
10. ਦੁਰਮਤਿ ਮਦੁ ਜੋ ਪੀਵਤੇ ਬਿਖਲੀ ਪਤਿ ਕਮਲੀ ॥ Guru Granth Sahib, p. 399
 11. ਕਬੀਰ ਭਾਂਗ ਮਾਛਲੀ ਸੁਰਾ ਪਾਨਿ ਜੋ ਜੋ ਪ੍ਰਾਨੀ ਖਾਂਹਿ ॥ ਤੀਰਥ ਬਰਤ ਨੇਮ ਕੀਏ ਤੇ ਸਭੈ ਰਸਾਤਲਿ
ਜਾਂਹਿ॥, Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1377
 12. ਪਰ ਤ੍ਰਿਅ ਰੂਪੁ ਨ ਪੇਖੈ ਨੇਤ੍ਰੁ ॥ ਸਾਧ ਕੀ ਟਹਲ ਸੰਤਸੰਗਿ ਹੇਤ ॥ Guru Granth Sahib, p. 274
 13. ਕਾਮੁ ਕ੍ਰੋਧੁ ਬਿਖੁ ਬਜਰੁ ਭਾਰੁ ॥ ਨਾਮ ਬਿਨਾ ਕੈਸੇ ਗੁਨ ਚਾਰੁ ॥, Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1187
 14. ਗਾਛਹੁ ਪੁੜੀ ਰਾਜ ਕੁਆਰਿ ॥ ਨਾਮੁ ਭਣਹੁ ਸਚੁ ਦੋਤੁ ਸਵਾਰਿ ॥ Guru Granth Sahib, p.
1187
 15. ਮਨਮੁਖ ਨਾਮੁ ਨ ਚੇਤਨੀ ਬਿਨੁ ਨਾਵੈ ਦੁਖ ਰੋਇ ॥ ਆਤਮਾ ਰਾਮੁ ਨ ਪੂਜਨੀ ਦੂਜੈ ਕਿਉ ਸੁਖੁ ਹੋਇ ॥
Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1414
 16. ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਸਭ ਸ੍ਰਿਸਟਿ ਕਾ ਕਰਤਾ ॥ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਸਦ ਜੀਵੈ ਨਹੀ ਮਰਤਾ ॥ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ
ਮੁਕਤਿ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਜੀਅ ਕਾ ਦਾਤਾ ॥ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਪੂਰਨ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਬਿਧਾਤਾ ॥ Guru Granth
Sahib, p. 273
 17. ਹਉਮੈ ਬਾਧਾ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਛੁਟਾ ॥ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਆਵਣੁ ਜਾਵਣੁ ਤੁਟਾ ॥, Guru Granth Sahib, p. 131
 18. ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਲਾਧਾ ਮਨਮੁਖਿ ਗਵਾਇਆ ॥ Guru Granth Sahib, p 11
 19. ਜਪੁ ਤਪੁ ਕਰਿ ਕਰਿ ਸੰਜਮ ਥਾਕੀ ਹਠਿ ਨਿਗ੍ਰਹਿ ਨਹੀ ਪਾਈਐ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਹਜਿ ਮਿਲੇ ਜਗਜੀਵਨ
ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਬੁਝ ਬੁਝਾਈਐ ॥ Guru Granth Sahib, p. 436
 20. ਪੁੰਨ ਦਾਨ ਜਪ ਤਪ ਜੇਤੇ ਸਭ ਉਪਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ॥ Guru Granth Sahib, p. 401
 21. ਥਾਲ ਵਿਚਿ ਤਿੰਨਿ ਵਸਤੁ ਪਈਓ ਸਤੁ ਸੰਤੋਖੁ ਵੀਚਾਰੋ ॥ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਨਾਮੁ ਠਾਕੁਰ ਕਾ ਪਇਓ ਜਿਸ ਕਾ ਸਭਸੁ
ਅਧਾਰੋ ॥ ਜੇ ਕੋ ਖਾਵੈ ਜੇ ਕੋ ਭੁੰਚੈ ਤਿਸ ਕਾ ਹੋਇ ਉਧਾਰੋ ॥ Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1429

□

Religion consists of more than talk.

He who looks on all alike

And considers them as equals,

May be acclaimed as religious.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 730

ਗਲੀ ਜੋਗੁ ਨ ਹੋਈ ॥

ਏਕ ਦ੍ਰਿਸਟਿ ਕਰਿ ਸਮਸਰਿ ਜਾਣੈ ਜੋਗੀ ਕਹੀਐ ਸੋਈ ॥

TRANSLATION OF GURBANI – SCHOLARS PLEASE WATCH YOUR WORDS –

GURBAKHSI SINGH USA*

The fourth centennial year of the first installation of Guru Granth Sahib is over. During this occasion, competent scholars and *gianis* should have been deputed to discuss and prepare an authentic translation/interpretation of the whole *gurbani* or at least of some important hymns. This is extremely essential to spread *gurmat* teachings by sharing the correct message of *gurbani* with world scholars. Also, suitable English terms, which convey proper meaning/connotation of some Sikh terms, should have been agreed upon by them.

I was surprised to read many meaningless translations in the papers presented at the Fourth International Conference on Guru Granth Sahib (December 9-11, 2004) at Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. For example, *kaley lek* translated as 'blackened essays'. This and some other literal translations reminded me of a school-days joke, *mera sir chakar kha rha hai*, translated as 'my head is eating circles'.

As an outcome of the recent celebrations of the fourth centennial of Guru Granth Sahib, many organisations have started translations of *gurbani* into major Indian and foreign languages. Already some translations of Guru Granth Sahib into English have been published. However, their study reveals that they have many literal and even meaningless/wrong translations. More efforts being made now, again by many individual scholars, will result in further misinforming and confusing the readers about the message of *gurbani*. Therefore, it is appealed that by the joint efforts of a team of university scholars and *gianis*, under the auspices of the Akal Takht, atleast one standard English translation be prepared. It may also be edited by more than one scholar before it is finally approved for publication. This translation

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may then be adopted to prepare translations in other languages.

CONFUSING TRANSLATIONS OF *GURBANI*

1. i) About two decades ago, during a weekly youth class at the Punjab Agricultural University campus, Ludhiana, while teaching *Asa di Var*, I translated the hymn, ਜੇ ਸਉ ਚੰਦਾ ਉਗਵਹਿ ਸੂਰਜ ਚੜਹਿ ਹਜਾਰ ॥ ਏਤੇ ਚਾਨਣ ਹੋਦਿਆਂ ਗੁਰ ਬਿਨੁ ਘੋਰ ਅੰਧਾਰ ॥ p. 463, as “*Even when 100 moons and one thousand suns arise, without a Guru, there will remain pitch darkness*”. A smart student caught my omission. He smiled and asked, “If 2000 suns arise then...?”. I immediately realised my mistake and corrected the statement : “The numbers 100 and 1000 are used as a phrase and mean ‘as many as possible, or innumerable’.

Similarly, the number 100 or any other such number may be used to lay stress on a point or a fact. For example, once a student complained to me : ਮੈਂ 100 ਵੇਰੀ ਦਫਤਰ ਗਿਆ, ਬਾਬੂ ਬੈਠਾ ਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ । I went to the office a 100 times, the clerk was not there.” The student had actually gone there only twice or thrice.

Here this hymn tells that *whatever the number of suns, without the presence of a guru* (the giver of *gian*, spiritual light, knowledge) the *ignorance* (darkness) *will remain*. The couplet lays emphasis on the need for a Guru for the spiritual enlightenment of people. The translation must bring out this message of the hymn. A strictly literal translation does not always do that. Examples of such mistakes abound in the extant translation.

In the above, the word ਘੋਰ ਅੰਧਾਰ referring to ‘total ignorance’ (antonym of *gian*, knowledge), has been translated literally as ‘pitch darkness’, ‘appalling darkness’ or ‘dismal and dark’. These words fail to convey the message given by the hymn.

2. A classical literal translation, confusing the reader, may be seen in the paper, *Peeking Back to Move Forward*, p. 6, Papers and Abstracts, the Fourth International Conference 2004 on Guru Granth Sahib, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar.

ਫਰੀਦਾ ਜੇ ਤੂ ਅਕਲਿ ਲਤੀਫੁ ਕਾਲੇ ਲਿਖੁ ਨ ਲੇਖ ॥ ਆਪਨੜੇ ਗਿਰੀਵਾਨ ਮਹਿ ਸਿਰੁ ਨੀਵਾ ਕਰਿ ਦੇਖੁ ॥ (page 1378)

Farid, if you are a master of wisdom, then do not keep on writing blackened essays, Rather, Look underneath your own collar instead.

In this translation the message of the hymn is the casualty. First, the *slok* is not addressed to Farid, he is the author; secondly, ਕਾਲੇ

ਲੇਖ ਲਿਖਣਾ does not mean to *write blackened essays* (these are meaningless words); it is a phrase which refers to evil deeds; thirdly ਆਪਣੇ ਗਿਰੀਵਾਨ ਵਿੱਚ ਦੇਖਣਾ means looking into one's own faults and not 'under the collar', as translated by the author.

The message of the couplet is : *A wise person should not use his intelligence to find faults with other persons, but he should strive to get rid of his own shortcomings and weaknesses.*

- 3 There is another interesting experience. It also stresses the need of providing understandable and meaningful translation of *gurbani* into other languages.

During a religious lecture by a Sikh to a non-Punjabi group of Canadian Auto Workers Association (Ontario), a member asked, "Can Sikhs eat rooster?" The speaker could not understand the purpose behind this unusual question. Showing a *gurbani* translation book in his hand, the member explained his question, "Here it is mentioned : *Why should you kill a hen ?* I want to know if killing of a cock is permitted."

The speaker recited the related hymn and explained it as below :

ਬੇਦ ਕਤੇਬ ਕਹਹੁ ਮਤ ਝੂਠੇ ਝੂਠਾ ਜੋ ਨ ਬਿਚਾਰੈ ॥
ਜਉ ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਏਕੁ ਖੁਦਾਇ ਕਹਤ ਹਉ ਤਉ ਕਿਉ ਮੁਰਗੀ ਮਾਰੈ ॥ ੧ ॥
ਮੁਲਾਂ ਕਹਹੁ ਨਿਆਉ ਖੁਦਾਈ ॥ ਤੇਰੇ ਮਨ ਕਾ ਭਰਮੁ ਨ ਜਾਈ ॥ ੧ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥
ਪਕਰਿ ਜੀਉ ਆਨਿਆ ਦੇਹ ਬਿਨਾਸੀ ਮਾਟੀ ਕਉ ਬਿਸਮਿਲਿ ਕੀਆ ॥
ਜੋਤਿ ਸਰੂਪ ਅਨਾਹਤ ਲਾਗੀ ਕਹੁ ਹਲਾਲੁ ਕਿਆ ਕੀਆ ॥

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1350

The literal translation 'why do you kill a hen?' of the line ਤਉ ਕਿਉ ਮੁਰਗੀ ਮਾਰੈ is not wrong, but it ignores the text and fails to convey the message.

The hymn mentions the futility of killing an animal in the name of God by a Muslim (this meat is called *halal*). Kabir addresses a Hindu and a Muslim each telling that the other's books are false. It advises them not to say that the books are false, but to know that false is the statement of a person who does not study these books and does not reflect on their message.

In the second part, the couplet questions the Mullan, "When you say that the spirit of God vibrates in every living being, then why do you kill an animal (the word hen is mentioned for the helpless animal being sacrificed) for offering to God ? The animal becomes dead (dirt) while the spirit is indestructible and prevalent

everywhere (including the animal sacrificed). Then what is *halal* that you claim to offer to God ?

COMMONLY USED SIKH TERMS

There are some popular *but not correct* translations of very commonly used Sikh terms. The following four examples given by a British-born English teacher married to a Sikh in Canada, illustrate the point :

1. Baptised Sikh : Baptism is a Christian term. Therefore, an *amritdhari* Sikh cannot be a *baptised* Sikh. We know, there is no *amritdhari* Christian. *Amritdhari* Sikh may be explained as a person formally initiated into the Sikh faith through the *amrit* ceremony. Further, there is no parallel word in English for *amrit*. *Amrit* is not even nectar, which is the drink of the Greek and Roman gods.
2. Sikh Church : Church is a Christian place of worship. Sikh Church to mean gurdwara is as wrong as to call a Church a Christian gurdwara. 'Gurdwara' may be described as a place for Sikh congregation and religious services. It is *not a Sikh worship place* either, because Sikhs do not worship Guru Granth Sahib as Hindus worship the statues of their gods.
3. Saint : *Sant* is not a saint. For the western people saint is a special title conferred posthumously only on Christian holy people who possessed the power of performing miracles. We may use the Punjabi word *sant* and explain it.
4. *Jathedar* Akal Takht is not the Pope of the Sikhs. The statement sends the wrong signal to the English-knowing people. The status of the *jathedar* may be explained when there is need for it.

ON TRANSLATION OF HOLY TEXTS

GAJINDAR SINGH*

The mushrooming of translations and reviews of the sacred *gurbani* in recent times have accelerated with many writers taking up their pens and trying to match their wits with our Gurus. These efforts may be welcomed and appreciated to a point, as the Sikh texts have been shrouded in a secrecy in the tradition of the old Hindu scriptures, which were restricted to only a few selected scholars and others were supposed to make do with the mere recitation and the vocal sounds of *mantras*. Our Gurus struggled to throw open not only the holy places to the commoners but emphasised the need of imparting divine knowledge to all, rejecting selectivity and secrecy. Our Gurus openly shared their wisdom with one and all. Guru Gobind Singh went on to engage a team of eminent poets to translate Hindu scriptures for the benefit of common folks who had never known about the *Vedas* and *Shastras* before, being strictly a Brahmin preserve.

The Gurus were prolific writers themselves, and encouraged excellence in any task, spiritual or mundane, for which the Sikhs were groomed in a lofty tradition for over two hundred years. Thus, while we must allow the numerous efforts at translating the sacred *gurbani* in as many languages as possible, we have to pause for caution to let only authentic and honest translations of the same genre to be attempted and those who undertake the task must be sure of their ability and thorough knowledge of *gurbani*.

The first hurdle would appear, therefore, in selection of scholars who may take up this very responsible exercise of translating our Gurus' sublime poetical works, which are held in highest esteem by millions not only in the excellence of expression but the direction of

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thought and spirituality. There are many well-meaning scholars who are eager to write on this subject and to translate the Sacred Texts. Not all of them, however, may qualify to do so. Each one has the indelible imprint of his own level of understanding and spiritual experience, and it is but natural that they view the sacred *gurbani* by the yardstick of their own competence. As Guru Gobind Singh says:

Aap aapni budhi bei jeti,

Barnat bhin bhin tobe teti.

– *Benati Chopai*, p 10

Each one to his own level of wisdom

Expresses differently about You, the Lord.

There are two types of people. Persons who are centred into their own shell and see matters in myopic sense according to their own experience and knowledge, are categorised as ‘Self-willed’. There are others, few in numbers, of course, who have the gift of experiencing the feelings and the views of others, called ‘Empathic’. The two are opposite to each other in nature. Although the Empathic are fewer compared to the Self-willed, it is desirable to entrust the job of translation to the former in preference to the egotists.

The translator of any writing has to develop two basic skills before taking up the very responsible task of presenting the thoughts of the original text to the unwary public who has no other means of access to the author. More so, when the writings are sacrosanct and may affect multitudes of people, who are dependant on the correct interpretation of the text. Translations should not lead haywire and allow incorrect perceptions. These two skills are, firstly, the in-depth personal understanding of the subject of metaphysics and flight of imagination in divinity, and, secondly, the maturity of expression in apt phrases of what one wishes to convey. It will, indeed, involve wide and excellent vocabulary in a translator. In the case of any sacred text, the author, while writing the piece, requires not only poetic maturity in view but also its effect on innocent souls who eagerly take to the preaching contained therein. The translator has the onus of passing on the essence and the ethos of the original to the reader, totally eclipsing his own personal feelings and preferences. It is not sufficient to rhyme the text, but to correlate the contents as conveyed in the translation with the original

There have been errors of colossal proportions in the translations

which have so far already hit the market, which can damage the intention and purport of the original, as illustrated in the following few examples:

1. The text in Guru Granth Sahib reads :

*Sabu hamara tun dhani,
jaisi tun ras deh taisi hum leh.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 165

It is translated as :

*You are my rich money lender,
The amount of capital you loan, I take.*

The translator has not bothered about the term *ras* in the original, which is the key to the spirit and direction of the idea of the *sabd*. If the writer had referred to the meaning of *ras*, the spiritual capital, it would become clear that there is no mundane requirement of the supplicant for a ‘loan’ from the ‘money lender’, but it is the pleading for spiritual enlightenment from the Guru, who has abundant divine knowledge.

2. Let us refer to another sample of self-willed translation being fed to the public eager to imbibe the purport of *gurbani*.

Gurbani text :
*Sabd marey so mua jape
Kaal n chappe dukh(u) n santape.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 112

Translated as:

*He who dies reciting the Holy Word
Only appears to be dead.
Death suppresses him not,
Nor can pain dread.*

‘Dying while reciting the Holy Word’ would not by any stretch of imagination mean physical death. The *gurvak* actually states that by annihilation of I/me/my, it may seem that a person is vanquished, but death (spiritual) cannot claim him nor worry beset him. Dr Sahib Singh has expressed it thus:

“A person imbibing the Guru sabd experiences the death of his ego. Such a death of ego receives honours and respect in the world. He cannot be ensnared by spiritual degradation. He is not bothered by materialistic worries. His person merges into Godhead.”

3. Another writer has cursorily translated the following simple *gurbani* verse ambiguously:

*Ram na kabboo chetio
hun kehan na mile kbudai,*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 417

Translation:

*Previously they did not remember Ram,
Now they cannot utter His Name.*

Kabhoon cannot be properly rendered as ‘previously’; it should be ‘never.’ *Khudai* cannot be ‘His Name’. The poignancy of the original verse is fully lost in the turpid translation.

Such translations by eminently renowned writers are but a sad commentary on individual endeavours of our scholars. It is one thing to be touched by the muses, pick up paper and pen and put down an enthralling idea for posterity. It may be easy to write a piece of poetry or prose which is one’s expression of the image kindled at a time and place. However, translating another’s thoughts strictly requires rating all pros and cons, dimensions and angles of that particular strain of thought and then honestly retaining the mood and gist of that point.

However, each person will insert his own aura and level of thinking, howsoever one may try to be dispassionate about it. What is required is to have translators and have checks on them by instituting a panel of scholars and intellectuals who may process each and every line or word to find the most suitable and appropriate finished work of translating *gurbani*. Such a work produced by most painstaking selfless efforts, *nishkam seva*, will remain an asset of rare value.

4. Let us study another attempt by a translator:

*Iss dhan kau taskar job(i) n sakai,
na uchakka le jai*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 511

*This wealth, a thief cannot spy out;
Nor can a robber take it away.*

It may be a literal translation, but using ‘spy out’ for *job(i)* does not fully express the essence of the original.

5. *Gurbani* text :

*Sabb ko meet hum aapan kina,
hum sabbna ke sajan.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 671

has been translated as :

All I have made my loving friends,

Friend of all am I grown.

There seems no need of 'grown'.

6. *Waho Waho tis nu aakhiye ji sabh meib rehia samai*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 514

has been translated as :

Address Bravo! Bravo! to Him who is contained amongst all.

Instead of 'Bravo', a better expression could be 'Hail' or even 'Salutations'. 'Bravo' is used in appreciation for a person of somewhat inferior status or of one's own size and standard. Some dictionaries also mention 'Bravo' as 'a daring villain, a hired assassin'.

Translation into English is perhaps the most challenging job as other language translations will closely follow it for authenticity and clarity. Such a panel should be formed by a responsible body like the Dharm Prachar Committee of Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Amritsar, headed by the Akal Takht. In case they do not do so, let us not sit idly but knock at the door of the Delhi Gurdwara Committee, which is equally competent to take up cudgels for this very important matter on which is hinged the spread of Guru's message to the future generations. Otherwise, immitigable and colossal damage will be done and we will be mute witnesses as spectators. The work is urgent as many spurious translations have already been floated in the international market, with none authentic enough to pass the litmus test.

There is no condemnation or criticism intended, as each translator tries to do his best within his reach and capacity, which is, however, no match to the excellence of the original Guru Granth Sahib. It is with anguish that one may perceive the failure of coming generations who are losing touch with Punjabi and the idiom of *gurbani*, and are reduced to partake of these unreliable and sub-standard works for their divine awakening.

More than four hundred years ago, King James I of England faced the same dilemma and constituted a committee of clergy men for authentic translation of the Holy Bible from Latin into English. That English translation stood the vagaries of time and is still regarded as the most authentic version of the Bible worldwide. There are many modern attempts to rewrite the Bible in modern English which are blamed as less than true and even of interpolation of spurious material.

This should jolt us to reality. If no other authority is seized of the urgency of the project, it is earnestly appealed to the Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh, to shoulder this stupendous task and once again lead the community to a major achievement.

Our image is sought to be tarnished and damaged by misleading propaganda by persons pushing their own faiths to the gullible Sikh masses. Recently, I heard about a padre speaking at a Sikh congregation in a village gurdwara, that Sikh Gurus were keen to promote Christianity. He quoted: *Nirmal sacbo mann vase, so janey abh pir*. He stressed that *Nirmal* stands for Jesus since he was the only one who was without any blemishes. He reinforced it by the *Chopai* of Guru Gobind Singh, *Pun rachhas ka kata sissa; Sri asketu jagat ke issa*. Triumphantly he argued that the Tenth Master reinforced the supremacy of *Issa* that is Jesus! Similarly some Hindu preachers are going round stressing that in *Jap*, Guru Nanak declared: *Asankh Granth, mukh Ved path*. He translated the word *mukh* as 'main' or 'predominant'!

We are talking of translations of Guru Granth Sahib into various languages spoken in various states of our country, and, on a wider scale, of the whole world. The desirability is, of course, strong and urgent. We have not pondered about the methodology of creating so many correct translations, for which panels of persons qualified in those languages are required. At the cost of repetition, it is stressed that the panels must be of persons of integrity and knowledge of the philosophy of *gurbani* and the lofty traditions of Sikhism. More than their name in print, such scholars must rather prefer anonymity and cherish the cause of the projects and genuinely create masterpieces for eternity. Surely, their names will live, may be, in finer print, but the task is tremendously important and urgent to be ignored any longer.

SIKHISM – PANACEA FOR ALL ILLS

RAGHBIR SINGH*

*Ego is a very chronic malady, remedy also lies in it.***

Ego of super powers like the USA, UK, France and their allies about their superiority in war material and ideologies they pursue, is the main cause of ills of the humanity in different countries, nations, races, etc. First and Second World Wars, confrontation in Cambodia and Laos, Afghanistan and Iraq were the results of the ego. Every time these powers failed in their evil designs, but they left behind enormous loss of human lives and natural resources. Almost similar damage occurred in India at the Partition time. Even later, the so-called Indian democratic governments have adopted policies, which are not conducive to the welfare of people, and the minority communities like Muslims, Sikhs and Christians are their special victims.

The recent tri- and quadri-centennial celebrations of historical Sikh events like birth of the Khalsa, installation of Guru Granth Sahib and martyrdoms of young sons of Guru Gobind Singh, have brought into focus of the entire world, aims and objects of *gurbani* which preaches :-

- a) Welfare of everybody without any discrimination based on nationality, religion, caste, creed or social status;
- b) Brotherhood of humanity, adoption of 'live and let live' attitude, friendship with all, poor or rich; and
- c) Control of ego and jealousy.

Today all knowledgeable persons are sincerely concerned with the establishment of a world order in which nations may be contented,

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** ਹਉਮੈ ਦੀਰਘ ਰੋਗੁ ਹੈ ਦਾਰੂ ਭੀ ਇਸੁ ਮਾਹਿ ॥ Guru Granth Sahib, p 466

peaceful, prosperous and free from any bias. They have turned their eyes towards the teachings of Sikh Gurus for achieving this goal. World celebrities like Koffi Annan, Secretary General of UNO and other Asian and European leaders including the President of India APJ Abdul Kalam, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Ex-Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpai and many others share the view that these teachings which were relevant in the times of Sikh Gurus, are relevant today and would ever be so in times to come. Thus, a responsibility devolves on the Sikh community and its leaders to rise to the occasion. The Sikh period from 1469, birth of Guru Nanak Dev, to 1708, demise of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru, and the later century and a half depicting the ascendancy of Sikh Panth and its rule, not only over the Punjab of that period but also in the regions like Jammu and Kashmir and Afghanistan, etc., was a golden period that marks the awakening of suppressed people in respect of their rights which had been denied to them since the dawn of civilization by the ruling class of educated, clever and smart people.

Guru Nanak Dev, in his teachings, had not only all that is good in Marxist Theory, but also much more than that. Marxism would not have failed the way it did, had this theory been as comprehensive as that of Guru Nanak. Marxist theory pleads for equality in material needs of the people, which alone does not ensure contentment and peace of mind. Guru Nanak's theory paid attention to the spiritual needs as well, without which a person would never feel satisfied, howsoever large the material comforts. In this regard, Guru Granth Sahib contains the following exhortation on page 1013 :

*Mind falters without spiritual knowledge. Mad after material gains it rushes from place to place (poison) instead of Nectar (which is the elixir of life as described in Gurbani).**

It is time for the Marxist friends to turn to the Sikh philosophy, if they are really sincere about the welfare of the poor. Marx gave his theory in 19th century while Guru Nanak spelled it out much earlier in the 15th. The French Revolution of 1789 extolling the principles of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity also took place much later. The

* ਮਨੁਆ ਡੋਲੈ ਦਹ ਦਿਸ ਧਾਵੈ ਬਿਨੁ ਰਤ ਆਤਮ ਗਿਆਨਾ ॥
ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਛੋਡਿ ਮਹਾ ਬਿਖੁ ਪੀਵੈ ਮਾਇਆ ਕਾ ਦੇਵਾਨਾ ॥

Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the UNO in 1948 is a happening of recent past. Sikh Gurus were pioneers of philosophy of non-violence. At the same time they were not against use of force, but only when all other means to achieve a noble goal fail. The idea of non-violence as preached by Gandhi was not new. In practice, however, it was a policy of timid people who wanted to serve their nefarious ends, but could not face violent forces of falsehood and tyrants. They were never sincere about what they preached. They wanted to beguile the innocent illiterate people. Events which happened in India in pre- and post-Partition period are testimony to this. The problems of Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir, and North East India are largely their creations and they are not sincere to solve them judiciously. There are disturbances in almost all parts of world either on account of racial or ethnic discrimination or because of class hatred. There is no end in view, and such happenings continue to cause tremendous loss of human lives and natural resources.

So far the teachings of *gurbani*, the practical solution of all the ills, have remained largely confined to the boundaries of Punjab with a small trickling to other parts of India and in some parts of UK, USA and Canada. In this electronic era, the people of the entire globe have come very close to one another, and the information technology has facilitated the dissemination of knowledge to every nook and corner of the world. It is the most appropriate time now to take advantage of the electronic media to spread the message of Sikhism in every part of the globe. Religious leaders of Sikh community, the SGPC and Sikhs living abroad can and should play a major part in this respect.

SGPC

Persons well versed in at least two foreign languages should be trained in *gurmat* in order to convey the message of Sikhism to the people in other countries in their language. Learned scholars should be engaged to write small books in foreign languages, faithfully describing the teachings of the Sikh Gurus. These books should be published in a beautiful getup. Their cost should be subsidized where necessary. Efforts should also be made to publish small tracts for free distribution abroad, as is done by the Christian community. More funds be made available for *Dharam Parchar* which is more important

than marble buildings. There should be an international body of religious persons with local branches who should be available to the Akal Takht Jathedar for consultation about the problems of foreign-based Sikh population that need to be handled at national or international levels to avoid unnecessary scrambling over gurdwara positions and matters of *Rahit Maryada* etc.

More attention should be paid to religious instruction in Sikh educational institutions, specially the technical institutions, so that those students who choose to go abroad can talk convincingly about their religion to foreigners. A powerful TV channel should be set up preferably at Amritsar to telecast Sikh Gurus' message and *sakbis* about their lives. Frequent *shabad vichar* and discourses about Sikhism in English should be regularly arranged and telecast for the benefit of foreigners.

RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Popular religious leaders and saints who are proficient in English and conversant with *gurbani*, should be financially helped and encouraged to visit countries abroad in consultation with the Sikhs there. Such saintly people may, apart from *kirtan*, lay more stress on *shabd vichar*. The *Dharam Parchar* committee of the SGPC should formulate a panel of such leaders and they should be routinely sent abroad to different parts for a specified period, and there should be a monitoring cell in the committee to assess their performance in the countries visited. Funds should be created abroad by the religious bodies there and by the SGPC here for this purpose.

FOREIGN SIKH POPULATION

The role of NRIs in introducing Sikhism in foreign lands is very crucial. So far they have failed to do much in this direction. They are in a better position to interact with foreigners about Sikh religion in their language. Incidents of hate campaign against Sikhs after 9/11 WTC blast were the result of this lack of introduction of Sikh community as different from Muslims. Otherwise, Sikhs would not have been mistaken for Muslims of Iraq, etc. They should publish small tracts about Sikhism and regularly distribute them in thousands amongst foreign citizens. Good, informative and pictorial books about Sikhism for the use of children should be published. *Shabad vichar* in

foreign language should be arranged frequently in gurdwaras and other public places on Sundays to which foreigners should be invited. Discussions on different topics concerning Sikhism may be arranged in which foreign students and elders should be encouraged to participate. Some prizes for outstanding participants may be given as matter of encouragement. Some magazines illustrating Sikh culture through suitable articles may be published and supplied to foreign citizens. Groups of foreigners be encouraged to visit Gurdwaras in their cities and also historical gurdwaras in Punjab and other parts of India to get firsthand information about Sikhism. *Dharam Siksha* period may be introduced in the schools managed by Sikhs. They may introduce TV channels where *gurbani* and Sikh *sakbis* may be telecast at regular intervals. A suitable international body of foreign Sikhs with local branches should be set up to formulate programmes for the preaching of Sikh religion in their respective countries. They should impress upon their governments to introduce courses on Sikh Gurus' teachings in their educational system and also to keep *gurbani* in view while formulating their policies of development and foreign relations.

The Sikh community shall be doing a really great service to the global humanity, if it successfully adopts the above programmes.

□

*Admirers praise Him
But do not know the extent of His greatness;
As streams and rivulets flowing into the sea
Do not know its depth or vastness.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 5

ਸਾਲਾਹੀ ਸਾਲਾਹਿ ਏਤੀ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਨ ਪਾਈਆ ॥
ਨਦੀਆ ਅਤੈ ਵਾਹ ਪਵਹਿ ਸਮੁੰਦਿ ਨ ਜਾਣੀਅਹਿ ॥

SAKA NANAKANA SAHIB (1921)

JOGINDER SINGH*

For some years, Mahant Narain Dass of Nanakana Sahib had been indulging in unscrupulous and immoral acts in the Gurdwara Nanakana Sahib, a most sacred Sikh shrine. Immediate cause of provocation was an incident of molestation of a 13 years old daughter of a Sindhi Engineer of Karachi who was a devotee of Guru Nanak and who had to stay overnight. This shook the conscience of Sikhs. Earlier, a group of six women devotees of Jaranwala, Dist Layallpur was treated similarly by the Mahant and his cohorts. Mahant was affluent, as he had under his control 760 squares (each square equals 25 acres of land) of rich and fertile land and huge offerings by devotees. Such immoral practices ignited the immediate spark in the minds of Sikhs.

Bhai Lachhman Singh of Dharowal, Tehsil Nanakana Sahib, Distt Shekhupura, was a land holder, and a deeply devoted *amritdhari* Sikh. He used to go to villages around his native place for preaching the Sikh way of life as and when he was free from his agricultural responsibilities. On 20th Feb, 1921, he, with about 200 Gursikhs, reached Nanakana Sahib to to rid the shrine of the corrupt Mahant. They had pledged to remain non-violent in all situations, even when they knew that Mahant had enlisted the services of a large number of armed and bad characters and convicts. According to historians, when Bhai Lachhman Singh went to Tarn Taran to attend the Bhog Ceremony of martyrs, who laid down their lives to liberate that Gurdwara from unscrupulous elements on 26th January, 1921, he narrated misdeeds of Mahant Narain Das at Janamsthan and pledged that he would offer

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his head to free the shrine of Nanakana Sahib, and prayed before Sat Guru:

“Today, I, an insignificant *sevak*, offer my head to liberate Janamasthan from the clutches of the immoral Mahant. O Satguru, bestow me the courage and strength to achieve this object”.

Mahant's misdeeds had compelled the whole Panth to take remedial steps. The British Government was at his back. On 23.1.1921, Bhai Lachhman Singh went to Amritsar to consult senior Sikh leaders. One Sher Singh, a servant of Mahant was sitting near Bhai Lachhman Singh in the same compartment of the train. He was listening to the resolve of Bhai Sahib and conveyed to Mahant that Sikhs had decided to achieve martyrdom to oust him and his hirelings. Mahant went to Lahore and met Mr King, Commissioner of Lahore Division, apprised him of the situation and requested that a Police Chowki may be set up at the site of the Shrine. Mr King told him that he had vast resources and should be capable of dealing with the situation himself. The Mahant had enlisted about 300 hirelings besides a large number of servants, and equipped them with firearms and other weapons to meet the situation.

Central Sikh leadership at Amritsar had decided to meet at Nanakana Sahib on 3rd, 4th, 5th March, 1921, and hold a Panthic gathering. Bhai Lachhman Singh, however, received intelligence that the Mahant had decided to wipe out the entire Sikh leadership at this gathering. He, therefore, decided that Gurdwara should be liberated before these dates. He and Kartar Singh Jhabbar, a brave leader of the area met at Gurdwara Sacha Sauda and decided to lead a *Jatha* on the morning of 19th Feb, 1921. He was advised by Master Tara Singh and Teja Singh Samundari to heed the leadership's advice, but he had his own schedule.

Before departure, he told his wife, Bibi Inder Kaur that he was going to Janamasthan to achieve martyrdom and that she should reconcile to the situation. Bibi insisted on accompanying the *Jatha*, and her two other friends Bibi Ranjit Kaur and a teacher of Kanya Pathshala, Bibi Mahender Kaur, went with the *Shabidi Jatha*. All of them met at his house and after offering *Ardas*, and taking *bukumnama* from the Guru Granth Sahib, started with the spirit :

"*Maron ta har key dvar*"

After travelling the whole night, they reached Chander Kot in the morning, about 5 miles from Nanakana Sahib. Bhai Lachhman Singh reminded the *Jatha* of the great *Shahid* of Khalsa Panth, Baba Deep Singh, and drew a line for those who wished to save their lives, but everybody jumped the line saying that they had pledged to liberate the Janamasthan and that they could not betray and be false to their prayer. They were again asked to remain non-violent even against extreme provocation to achieve their noble objective. At this place, blessings of Guru Nanak were solicited, by offering *Ardas*. Bhai Tehl Singh of Tarn Taran asked the three ladies to go back to their village. Bhai Lachhman Singh addressed his wife: "Inder Kaur, we were destined to live together thus far. Now you go after paying obeisance at Gurdwara Tambu Sahib and pray that we should stand firm in our resolve. Bibi touched his feet and with bowed head and tearful eyes glanced towards her husband for the last time. Bhai Tehl Singh took out Rs 18/- from his pocket and handed over to her saying that an *akband path* may be arranged with this amount.

Bhai Lachhman Singh asked three of his *Jatha* to go and see if doors of Darshini Deodi were open and, if so, they should loudly announce:-

"Ticket window is open. Come and get into the train".

As soon as they heard this, they ran towards Darshini Deodi. Here they handed over *kirpans* and spears to one person to take these back. It was 5:45 AM. Bhai Lachhman Singh sent 5 Sikhs to each of the 5 gates and others squatted at Barandari. Thakur Dass, was reciting *Sukhmani Sahib*. He was asked to move and Bhai Lachhman Singh took his seat behind Guru Granth Sahib. At Sunrise, Mahant Narain Dass who was fully drunk and was on horseback, and Rehana, a local convict, started firing indiscriminately. Many Sikhs fell down, injured/killed. One Sant Ram, a *sadh*, was also hit and killed. Sikhs were particularly indignant at Rehana's ruthless firing. Mahant in an inebriated state and a pistol in hand was prowling among peaceful gathering and addressing thus:-

"Today no *Sikhra* should remain alive; clear this place from the curse of Akalis, root and branch."

Some hirelings and cohorts started throwing bricks at the Sikhs.

Bhai Tehl Singh of Tarn Taran was hit on his head and killed. Some Sikhs went inside *choukhandi*, and doors were closed. One boy, Darbara Singh (12 years), son of Tehl Singh was concealed in an almirah. Sikhs were being hit with gun shots, bricks and acid bulbs. Whole *parikarma* was splattered with blood of the saint-soldiers who were being butchered, because they offered peaceful protest for sanctity of the shrine, built in the memory of apostle of peace and harmony. Mahant's men started collecting legs, arms and other parts of bodies and threw them on five heaps. As pre-planned, tins of kerosene oil were poured on these heaps and set on fire. It was literally a scene of barbarism in its cruelest form.

Mahant issued new orders: "Only 5-6 Sikhs corpses may be retained. Bodies of *sadhs* who were killed by their own men may also be kept. We will say that Akalis have killed them."

The group of murderers then proceeded to Darbar Sahib and tried to break the door. They drilled a hole through which bullets were fired which killed some Sikhs. This dastardly deed was done by hoodlums and hirelings of the Mahant. At last, they broke open the door. Kaka Darbara Singh (12 years) was alarmed and started crying. Goondas took him to the Mahant and asked what to do with the boy. Mahant said, "He is a Sikh and when he grows up he will become Akali. Send him to where his father has gone". The brave son of a brave father, he himself said that he wanted to be martyred like his father. Thus, this noble son of Guru Gobind Singh was thrown in the burning heap of corpses. After committing this crime, they proceeded towards Bhai Lachhman Singh who had received several shots and was bleeding profusely. He was caught from his sacred hair and dragged out. He was uttering, "*Wahaguru, Wahaguru*". But, they hung him upside down on a *jand* tree, behind *choukhandi*, poured kerosene oil and set him on fire. This tree reminds even today of the horrible torture perpetrated by Mahant who posed himself as custodian of Nanakana Sahib. He had much to lose, i.e., a vast *jagir* of 760 square of fertile land besides huge offerings of the devotees. His corruption and low mentality had become widely known.

Bhai Dalip Singh, a friend of the Mahant on learning about the massacre, ran to the Gurdwara with his colleague Bhai Waryam Singh,

and saw Mahant on his horse, firing ruthlessly. He asked him what he was doing? At this Mahant fired at him saying, "Your end was destined at my hands. You also go with your Akalis". Waryam Singh ran to protect Bhai Dilip Singh, but next bullet was aimed at him. While still alive, they were dragged to a *bhatti* of potters. Both Sikhs joined their palms upwards, as if they were offering last respect to Baba Nanak.

A message was sent to Dy Commissioner (Mr Curry) who was camping at Mangtanwala, about 11 miles from Nanakana Sahib. He rushed to the place with some District Officials and visited the scene. Mahant's hoodlums started complaining:

"Sahib ji, Akalis have killed *sadhs*".

He could have arrested the Mahant and his henchmen, but he remained insensitive. At about 8:00 PM, 200 army troops reached Nanakana Sahib in a special train in which Mr King, Commissioner, I G Police, S B Mahtab Singh, Govt Advocate and some Sikh dignitaries including Sardar Amar Singh, Editor, *Sher-e-Punjab*, reached. The Gurdwara was handed over to the Army. Next day, the Mahant and some of his *sadhs* and 26 Pathans were arrested and taken to Lahore Central Jail. All trains to Nanakana Sahib were cancelled, but in spite of this about forty thousand Sikhs reached Nanakana Sahib. Panthic leaders, Master Tara Singh, Sardar Harbans Singh Attari, Prof Jodh Singh and Sardar Teja Singh Samundari reached there. Sardar Kartar Singh Jhabbar demanded that Gurdwara Janamasthan be handed over to the Sikhs immediately, otherwise, it would be occupied by force. He also cautioned that Sikhs could not remain nonviolent. English rulers threatened to use sten guns, but situation was getting out of control. Sardar Mehtab Singh asked the DC to act calmly so that the situation may not deteriorate. At last, the Gurdwara was handed over to the Sikhs.

On 22-2-1921, what they saw was horrible. Amongst them were children, sisters, brothers, wives, parents and friends of the martyred Sikhs. The whole compound was splattered with blood, a place sanctified by Guru Nanak's feet who had, throughout his life, spread the message of love and tolerance. The Governor Punjab (Maclagan) also visited. He simply said "Justice will be done". Mr Curry was transferred and S Hardit Singh Malik posted as DC

Panthic leaders planned the last rites of martyrs. Bhai Takhat

Singh (Ferozepur) and Bhai Hira Singh, the legendary *ragi*, were selected for this purpose. *Angeetha* about 20 feet long and 8 feet high was prepared to cremate limbs and bodies of *shahid* Sikhs. Prof Jodh Singh performed the *ardas*. Thousands of Sikhs from all parts of Punjab assembled and uttered, "*maron ta har ke dwar*". With tearful eyes, they bade fairwell to their *shahid* brothers .

Mahatma Gandhi reached Nanakana Sahib on 3.3.1921 with Lala Lajpat Rai and Ali Brothers. All of them walked from railway station to the Gurdwara. After paying obeisance to Granth Sahib they saw half burnt Jand tree, blood splattered *parikarma* and broken doors. Gandhi *ji* could not hold his tears and said that this *saka* was worse than Jallianwala Bagh. Then British rulers had attacked peaceful men and now Indians, aided and abetted by the British, committed this crime.

Sikhs who achieved martyrdom were bound by the pledge to remain nonviolent, otherwise they could easily destroy the entire clan of murderers. In fact, this *saka* was not accidental. It was planned to teach a lesson to the Sikhs, so that they would desist from future participation in India's independence struggle. Did Sikhs stop to run in the vanguard of struggle for independence after this brutal massacre? Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad and Dr Pattabhi Sitaramya, Congress presidents wrote that Sikh's participation was 80% of the those executed or imprisoned though they were merely 1½% of the total population of India. This struggle became a model for future struggles, and they showed to the entire world that they could suffer death and face oppression for a cause dear to them.

1. Guru Nanak had said that, "dying is the privilege of brave men, provided they die for a cause acceptable to God".
2. Kabir *ji* said "*Kabir jis marney te jag dare, mere man anand. Marne hi te paiye puran paramanand.*"
(“Oh Kabir ! Death which the whole world fears has a joy for me. It is by dying that the perfect bliss is attained.)

Bhai Lachhman Singh and about 200 Gursikhs will continue to inspire men of all times, will be cherished as martyrs and will ever be remembered with love, faith and veneration.

SIKHS' CONTRIBUTION IN NATIONAL INTEGRATION AND COMMUNAL HARMONY

JASWANT SINGH*

Recently, I participated in a National Seminar on National Integration and Communal Harmony, and was surprised that none of the celebrated speakers mentioned anything about the sterling role Sikhism has played in this vital direction. Hence my motivation to share with you these thoughts.

A country is a geographical concept, State a political concept and Nation a cultural concept. People make the nation, in fact, people are the nation. Mainly there are three criteria for the people to constitute a nation : a) those people who regard the country as their motherland; b) common sharing of history; c) shared value system. Culture is nothing but value system – standards to judge good from evil. According to Ernest Renan, a French author of twentieth century – a nation is a soul, a spiritual principle – two things which are really one. The Nation, like the individual, is the fruit of a long past sport in toil, sacrifice and devotion. The most salient feature of our culture is respect for plurality, diversity and inclusivity.

Harmony presupposes plurality. In a monolithic society, the question of harmony does not arise. But we are a pluralistic society with different faiths, beliefs, languages and food habits in harmony. This sense presupposes tolerance. Our different beliefs with mutual tolerance keep us in harmony. But once a set of people decide to bring all others to their path by fair or foul means, the so-called compulsive conscription, due to their superior material / muscle power, disharmony or discord is bound to take place. That is what is happening on the borders of our country. Let us look inwards, our exclusivist

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ideology of the majority is creating problems for the minorities, putting a dark spot on our nation. To feel inter-related or integrated is a psychological reality. It has to be cultivated.

We boast of a civilization which is 5000 years old. Some of the divisive factors may be inherent in the history, geography and culture of our country, but there are forces, which accentuate these causes:

- a) Religious fundamentalism;
- b) Linguistic Parochialism;
- c) Regionalism, exacerbated by unequal development in different regions of the country, Bihar / Punjab and Haryana;
- d) Old caste system, e.g., *Dalits* / *Khatri*s, *Jats* / non-*Jats*.

The euphoria of independence was short-lived, as the partition of the country brought in its wake senseless killings of Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims across the newly created borders. As a school-going child, I was a sufferer and witness to stabbing and firing when we migrated from Pakistan to India. Our train was halted at Mughal Sarai near Lahore for three hours with a constant threat of being butchered. A godly hand saved us. On reaching Amritsar we learnt that Sikhs and Hindus had stopped two trains full of Muslims for a similar fate. However, sanity prevailed on both sides. There were residual issues like demarcation of boundaries, equitable sharing of water resources, and control over Kashmir. The last problem lingers on as an international issue even after 57 turbulent years. Five hundred and sixty two (562) independent princely states were given the option to join Pakistan or India. Hyderabad (population about 14 million) and Junagarh (population 5,45,000) had to be annexed with India after 'police action' and promise of privileges to the rulers. Hindu Maharaja Hari Singh of predominantly Muslim Jammu and Kashmir state remained uncommitted till armed tribesmen and regular troops from Pakistan infiltrated his domain inducing him to sign the Instrument of Accession to India on Oct 27, 1947. Pakistan refused to accept its legality and fought wars in 1965, 1971 and 1999. Till today it is a source of friction.

SIKHS' ROLE IN NATIONAL INTEGRATION

Indian society was caste-ridden. The four water tight castes of Brahmin, Khatri, Vaish and Shudra were Manu's gift to the society

among Hindus, and there was hardly any social intermixing among them. Muslims were absolutely a humanity apart. At that time Guru Nanak appeared on the scene and galvanized Indian citizenry by the slogan of 'Oneness of God and Brotherhood of all mankind'. By associating with Bhai Mardana, a Muslim of the same village as his life long friend, he broke the religious barriers and traveled 39,000 miles throughout the world including Mecca, Jagannathpuri and Haridwar. He stayed with Bhai Lalo rather than Malik Bhago breaking the high/low barrier. The institution of *Sangat* and *Pangat* was a revolution in Indian social intermixing.

Now I come to Guru Arjun Dev. The foundation of Golden Temple, the most revered Sikh shrine, was laid by a Muslim Faqir Sain Mian Mir in December 1588.

The compilation of Guru Granth Sahib by Guru Arjun Dev and its installation in Harmandir Sahib on 1st September, 1604, deserves special deliberation. This eternal Guru of the Sikhs - nay the entire humanity, has some striking features.

The Granth contains, besides the writings of the Sikh Gurus, compositions of almost all the medieval Hindu Bhaktas, like Kabir, Ramanand, Ravidas, Surdas, Sain, Bhikhan from UP; Jaidev from Bengal; Namdev, Trilochan and Parmanand from Maharashtra; Pipa and Dhanna from Rajasthan; and Beni, then popular all over North India. The writings of four Muslims — Baba Farid, Bhikhan, Satta, Balwand are also incorporated in the Granth. Here is then national integration at its best.

By far, the largest portion of the Granth is composed in a mixed language, a mixture of western Hindi, Prakrit, Braj, Punjabi and the then current vocabulary of Persian and Arabic. So, not only in subject-matter, or religious affiliations of its authors, but also in language the Granth upholds the creed of integration as against exclusiveness. Oneness of God was Guru Nanak's cardinal principle :

God first created Light; all beings belong to nature.

Since from one Light is the whole world created – who is noble, who inferior ?¹

THE ABOLITION OF CONCEPT OF HIGH AND LOW

The contribution to Guru Granth Sahib came mainly from the

lower strata of society : Kabir (weaver) Nam Dev (calico printer) Dhanna (cultivator) Sadhna (butcher), Sain (barber), though Pipa was a king and Tirlochan a Brahmin :

The sinner, whom no one offers refuge
If he seeks Thy protection, then immaculate becomes he.²

ABOLITION OF UNTOUCHABILITY

From one clay has the Creator shaped innumerable forms :
Neither is the clay-vessel defective nor the Potter.³

EQUAL STATUS FOR WOMEN

Guru says in *Asa Di Var* :
Within a woman, the man is conceived and from a woman he is born.
With a woman he is betrothed and married.
With a woman man contracts friendship and
With a woman the system of propagation keeps on going.
When one's wife dies another lady is sought for.
It is through a woman that man restrains his passions.
Why call her bad, from whom are born the Kings ?⁴

The Guru elevated their status in a society which treated them as door-mats and raised them to the male's level. Now according to UN Charter also, their status has been brought at par with men. Our Gurus had the foresight five centuries back. Almost half of the world's adult population is made up of women. Their equal status and integration in the mainstream of life is not only economically, ethically, religiously desirable but essential for societal peace.

INTEGRATION OF INDIA/GLOBE

The present chaotic state of the world on the basis of rich and poor, high or low caste, religions, geography, political polarisation, requires healing, soothing, integrating teachings of the Holy Granth.

Save by Thy grace, the world in flames;
Save it at whatever portal it may be saved.⁵

Here is this integrating message from the Guru Granth :

All are called partners in Thy grace.
Thou art seen alien to none.⁶

The Bhagats came from all over the country. The language of the Granth is Hindi, Prakrit, Braj, Punjabi, Persian and Arabic. Here

is a practical demonstration of national integration. Our political disintegration on the basis of language, boundaries, castes, river waters and such other issues is the antithesis of the teachings of Guru Granth, which are very relevant today.

CONCEPT OF SEVA IS A GREAT INTEGRATING FACTOR

Concept of selfless service *ਤਨੁ, ਮਨੁ ਅਤੇ ਧਨੁ*, i.e., physical, mental and material service is well brought out in Guru Granth Sahib's teachings.

The earthquake in Gujarat highlighted all this type of service from the world around — Sikhs were in the fore-front. World Trade Centre holocaust in New York on 11th September, 2001, has brought out how Sikh taxi drivers ferried the victims to places of safety.

He, who performs Guru's service without desire for reward, attains the Lord.⁷

Let us go to Guru Tegh Bahadur. The greatest sacrifice for any human being is self-sacrifice. The Guru was martyred not for his own religion, but for human dignity or principles for safeguarding Kashmiri Pandits'/Hindus' rights to profess their own religion. Where else do you find a parallel in the world?

Guru Gobind Singh fought fourteen battles against tyrant rulers and won most of them. These were not against Muslims or Hindus, but against tyranny and treachery. He had devout Muslim followers. Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan, carried him on a palanquin as *Uch Da Pir*, Pir Budhu Shah's two sons and five hundred *murids* died fighting valiantly along with Guru's army.

Now I come to Banda Bahadur's army which included a lot of Muslims who fought against tyrant Muslim Wazir Khan and other battles along with Sikh soldiers. He never desecrated mosques, and treated Muslim women with dignity and honour. Coming to Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the distinguished Sikh monarch, he ruled extended Punjab for forty years as a secular king (1799-1839) with Sikh, Dogra, Muslim ministers and all his subjects with equal benevolence and munificence.

BHAI KANAHAYIA JI CONCEPT

Let us come closer still. In the national and international disasters like the Gujarat earthquake, 9/11 World Trade Centre of America's

holocaust, Sikh drivers ferrying the victims to safety / medical center is praiseworthy. In very recent Tsunami calamity, Sikhs miniscule minority sending wagon / truckloads of relief material to the victims is a loud testimony of this community's integrating philosophy and liberal national outlook.

SIKHS CONTRIBUTION TO INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE

	Total Hindustani killed	Sikhs	percentage
1. Hanged	121	93	76%
2. Life Prisoners	2646	2197	81%
3. Holocaust of Jallianwala Bagh	1300	799	61%
4. Bajbaj Ghat	113	67	60%
5. Kuka Movement	91	91	100%
Total	4171	3247	76%

It will be interesting to know that the Sikhs who form 2% of India's population contributed 76% to the galaxy of Indian martyrs in the freedom movement.

Let us take a leaf from Gurus' lives, teachings and be a pillar of strength for national integration and communal harmony.

~ ~ ~

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ਏਕ ਨੂਰ ਤੇ ਸਭ ਜਗੁ ਓਪਜਿਆ ਕੌਨ ਭਲੇ ਕੇ ਮੰਦੇ ॥ (ਪੰਨਾ 1349-50)
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PUNJAB RIVER WATERS
– UNLAWFUL AND UNJUST DISTRIBUTIONS –

MEWA SINGH*

The problem of Punjab river waters has been made complicated by its distribution to other non-riparian states in the last few decades. These states had no legal or valid claim to these waters, which were to be exclusively used for Punjab lands in accordance with riparian law. The state of Punjab and its legislature have got the exclusive jurisdiction over Punjab river waters under the provisions of Constitution of India. Punjab has no surplus river water to spare, as it does not meet even its own needs. The total annual flow of all the three rivers of Punjab is 32.5 MAF, while its need is 52.5 MAF. The distribution of Punjab river waters to other states has left the river waters for only twenty five per cent of Punjab lands. The remaining seventy five per cent are irrigated by tube wells. There are about a million tube wells in the state. It has resulted in over exploitation of the underground water, lowering its level too much. If this process continues at this rate, it may become impossible to pump out the underground water in the near future. Even now the centrifugal pumps have become unworkable, and are being replaced by submersible pumps at very high cost, which the farmers cannot afford. Experts point out that the water at the lower table may be saline and unfit for agriculture. It would cause serious problem even for the availability of drinking water in Punjab. Bulk of Punjab lands would become semi-deserts, unfit for agriculture. It is time now to let Punjab river waters be exclusively used for Punjab lands, so that the people of Punjab may be able to improve their ruined economy. It can never be in the national interest to reduce Punjab lands to desert and to ruin its

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economy. No doubt, the lands of other states need waters for irrigation, but it should not be at the cost of Punjab, particularly when other states have no legal claim to it. The Government of India, with the vast resources at its command, should tap other resources in this regard, like canalizing the Ghagar river waters and the Yamuna river, etc, to which these states may have valid claim. The distribution of Punjab river waters to these states is unlawful, unjust and unconstitutional.

Constitution of India separates the powers of the union and the states. India is a union of states as defined in Article 1 of the Constitution. Schedule VII of the Constitution gives the state list, and the subject of river waters is included in it at entry 17. Article 246 of the Constitution lays down that the states have the exclusive jurisdiction over the subjects enumerated in the state list, while union has exclusive jurisdiction over the subjects of the union list. Punjab river waters are thus under the control of Punjab state and its legislature, exclusively. Govt of India and Parliament having no jurisdiction over it. The distribution of Punjab river waters by the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi obviously violates these constitutional provisions and is, as such, unconstitutional and void, having no binding effect.

Similarly the sections 78 to 80 of Punjab Reorganization Act I and section 14 of Inter State River Waters Disputes Act 1956 are unconstitutional, as the Parliament has no jurisdiction over Punjab river waters. These unconstitutional provisions do not confer any legal powers on Govt of India to intervene in Punjab river waters. The Eradi tribunal set up under section 14 of the Inter State River Waters Disputes Act automatically becomes illegal when this section is held unconstitutional. This Act can have no application to Punjab river waters, being not inter-state rivers as these flow in the Punjab territories, and not in any other state to which these waters have been distributed.

Punjab has the exclusive right to Punjab river waters on the basis of riparian law. The other states to which these waters have been distributed are non-riparian, having no valid claim to it. The riparian law is based upon justice and equity, having international acceptance. It has been approved by the United Nations. In India it has been

followed in all other states, Punjab being the only exception. On the reorganization of Madras state, some of its areas were allocated to Tamilnadu, Andhrapardesh and Karnataka. The rivers of the erstwhile Madras state, namely, Krishna, Godawari, and Mahanadi did not flow in the reorganised Tamilnadu state, and so it was not given the waters of those rivers, since it ceased to be a riparian state. The case of Haryana is idenictical, as it ceased to be riparian state. Punjab rivers do not flow in Haryana territories, and so it is not entitled to waters of Punjab rivers. Rajasthan state made an application in the tribunal to claim waters of Narbada river, which had been set up in the dispute between Maharashtra and other riparian states, which was rejected, as it was not a riparian state and not entitled to the waters of that river. Rajasthan is a non-riparian state for Punjab rivers also, and is thus not entitled to the waters of these rivers. Similarly, Delhi is not riparian state for Punjab rivers and as such not entitled to waters of these rivers. Thus, none of these states has any right to Punjab river waters.

There is no lawful agreement for the distribution of Punjab river waters to other states. The essential ingredients of an agreement are consideration of agreement, free consent of parties, and competency of the parties to enter in to agreement. In the so-called agreements to distribute Punjab river waters, none of these ingredients are present, viz-a-viz, neither consideration, nor free consent and nor competency of the parties to the agreement. The provisions of Indian Contract Act specifically lay down that the agreement or contract which is without consideration or without free consent (as the consent having been taken under undue influence or the parties being not competent to enter into agreement) is null and void and of no binding effect. In the case of agreements by states, there are further requirements laid down in Article 299 of Constitution of India, that it must be in accordance with the procedure prescribed therein and in the name of the Governors of the states. None of these constitutional procedures have been followed in these so-called agreements. In fact, these cannot be called lawful as agreements, at all.

The 1955 distribution of Punjab river waters was made by recording in the proceedings of the meeting of deputy secretaries, held in the irrigation department at Dehli, that Punjab can spare 8 MAF waters for Rajasthan, but Punjab needs will be met first, and

that this arrangement will be reviewed from time to time. Deputy Secretaries are not even heads of the departments and had no powers to take such a decision. For lack of consideration, free consent, or competency, it is null and void.

The 1976 distribution of Punjab river waters, was an award of the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi vide which Rajasthan was allocated 8.6 MAF, Haryana 3.5 MAF, Delhi 0.2 MAF and Punjab 3.5 MAF out of 15.8 MAF which was declared as surplus, though there was no surplus water, and this entire water was much less than the needs of Punjab. The Prime Minister had no power and jurisdiction to distribute Punjab river waters. There was no consideration, no free consent and no competency. It was null and void. Punjab Govt challenged it in Supreme court as illegal and void, but Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister, got the case withdrawn from Punjab Chief Minister Darbara Singh under political pressure to withdraw the case or resign; he preferred to retain his post.

The 1981, distribution of Punjab river waters was also made by Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi with an imaginary increase in surplus waters to 17.17 MAF. The allocations of Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi remained the same, but that of Punjab was increased to 4.2 MAF: while J&K was added in the list with allocation of 0.65 MAF waters. This time it was got signed from the Chief Ministers of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan. The same strategy was employed to get the signatures of Chief Minister Punjab, Darbara Singh, to sign or resign. There are witnesses in this regard besides the press statement of Darbara Singh himself. This so-called agreement is also null and void in the absence of consideration, free consent, or competency for agreement and non compliance of Article 299 of the Constitution, besides lack of decision of the council of ministers, and approval of state legislature. The Chief Minister has no authority to give away state property without consideration. The state Govt cannot do it, as it is only a mere custodian to manage it for the benefit of the people of the state. The river waters are most valuable state asset and the Chief Minister or the state Govt and even the state legislature have no powers to give it without consideration. These institutions are elected by the people of the state for the best management of its affairs in the best interests of the state and its people. And they are

duty-bound to discharge their bonafide duties for the benefit of the people of the state; if they waste any state property or give it away to anyone without consideration, for their vested interests, even to retain political power or to get monetary gains or for any other reason whatsoever, it would be null and void. The construction of SYL canal was also a part of this so-called agreement. It does not confer any benefit on the state or its people. Can it ever be in the interest of state and its people to waste thousands and thousands of acres of land belonging to thousands of land owners to construct a canal to take Punjab river waters to Haryana without any consideration and make the remaining Punjab land semi-desert and unfit for agriculture? No land for such a purpose could even be acquired under the Land Acquisition Act, being not for public purpose, rather anti-public purpose.

Punjab state and its people were not allowed to get the judicial verdict in these unlawful and unjust distributions of Punjab river waters. The case filed in the Supreme Court by Punjab state was got withdrawn by Indira Gandhi by putting undue pressure on the Congress Chief Minister Darbara Singh. The cases filed in Punjab High Court against 1981 distribution were fixed for hearing by Chief Justice S S Sandhwalia for Nov 15, 1983, by the Bench to be presided over by him, but he was transferred a day earlier to Patna High Court. Those cases were transferred to Supreme Court on Nov 18, 1983 on the oral request of the Attorney General, and have not been fixed for hearing as yet in the last over two decades. Supreme Court rather, on the application of Haryana state directed the Govt of India on June 4, 2004 to get the SYL canal constructed through its agency, as Punjab Govt had not constructed it as per the agreement. Govt of India authorized Central Public Works Department to construct the canal.

Punjab Legislature, in a special session in July 12, 2004 enacted the Punjab Termination of Agreements Act 2004, terminating 1981 Agreement and all other agreements relating to Punjab river waters unanimously. It exhibited unity in the matter of Punjab river waters that these waters must be exclusively for Punjab, as it can no longer afford to give it to any other state. Punjab legislature has the jurisdiction to enact such law, the river waters being under its exclusive powers being the subject of state list. It is perfectly legal and

constitutional. However Govt of India made a Presidential reference to Supreme Court to seek its advice as to whether it is constitutional and its effect on Supreme Court directions on SYL canal, etc. Supreme Court will now give its judicial verdict on the matter.

This problem has to be solved by Govt of India, who created and complicated it. Courage, honesty and the farsighted statesmanship are needed. Two very sensitive issues are involved in it, which should never be over-looked. One is the basic feature of the Constitution; the division of powers between union and states, as enumerated in the Union and State lists. Govt of India should no longer intervene in state list to maintain cordial relations with states and neither oblige one state at the cost of the other nor transgress over the lawful rights of a state and its people. The wrong done in the case of Punjab river waters, needs to be undone. The other is that there should be no communal tinge or feeling to the problem. Sikhs feel and openly express it that perhaps Punjab river waters have been distributed to other states without any claim, to ruin their economy and to oblige others at their cost. The cause of this feeling is the continuous conflict between the Sikhs and Govt of India after independence, centre refusing to implement the pre-independence agreements, refusing the reorganization of Punjab on linguistic basis, making the capital of Punjab, Chandigarh, as union territory at the time of reorganization, taking the Punjab Dams, power houses, river headworks out of its control, besides the Sikh agitations over the emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi, and for Sikh and Punjab rights. Sikhs are the victims of Punjab river waters distribution to other states, as mainly they are the owners of the Punjab lands and are dependant on agriculture, whose lands are likely to become semi-deserts and unfit for agriculture resulting in the ruin of their economy. These sensitive issues, if not resolved with honesty of purpose, may cause serious problems as to peace, unity and integrity of the country.

It must be ensured that river waters do not create conflicts between one state and another, and between the states and the Union. This aim can only be achieved by honoring the constitutional dictums, legal norms, justice and lawful rights. Punjab river waters are exclusively for Punjab lands, and cannot be spared for any other state.

‘FREE SPEECH AND THE SARDARJI JOKE’

– A REJOINDER –

KHARAK SINGH*

The Hindustan Times, Chandigarh, dated 27th February, 2005 carried an article by Shri Vir Sanghvi under the above title. The author asserted his right to ridicule a whole community under freedom of speech. He tells, ‘any Sikh who finds Sardar ji jokes offensive not to go to see the film. For, just because some Sikh is offended by a Sardarji joke, it does not follow that the rest of us lose the right to enjoy the jokes’. With equal bluntness the Christians are asked ‘to stay at home, avoid seeing the film and cling to their naivete. They have no right to deny *me* the opportunity to see the film’. Readers should please note that the esteemed paper appears to endorse this policy. For, it did not agree to publish the Rejoinder reproduced below.

– Editor

In his article under the above title, Mr Sanghvi has raised the issue of Free Speech, which, he appears to believe, is not subject to any limitation. If Sikhs protest against a Sardarji joke in a movie, or Christians object to Jesus not being shown in good light, it irritates him, since it violates his fundamental right to ‘freedom of speech’. If the Board of film Censor refuses to certify such a film, it is an act of ‘eternal shame’. Likewise, it is argued that the Minorities Commission, referred to as ‘ludicrous avatar’, has lost its right to interfere, since it failed to utter ‘one word of condemnation against Narendra Modi when Muslims were being massacred in the streets of Gurjarat.’

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The above attitude reflects a gross indifference towards the feelings of minorities, and the disregard for their sensitivities almost amounts to contempt. Arrogance could hardly go farther. Our only hope is that this attitude is not shared by saner elements among the majority community. The minorities will certainly not accept his verdict. If Mr Sanghvi expects that they will hail his views, the naivete is on his side, rather than that of the minorities.

The learned author of the article has obviously missed some vital points. For example, he makes no distinction between humour and ridicule. A healthy joke is one that is enjoyed by all. One laughs *with* others, not *at* others. Sikhs enjoy humour and jokes as much as, if not better than others. But when they are shown as an object of ridicule, they must protest. And in case the kind of attitudes shown by Chauvinists of the majority community persists, the protest can assume serious proportions, which should be avoided by all responsible persons.

Another distinction that cannot be ignored is the one between an individual and a whole community. It is the latter which the minorities in general and Sikhs in particular, will not tolerate. This demands caution on the part of the press as well as responsible leaders of public opinion.

What is offensive and what is not offensive to a minority, has to be decided by members of the minority community themselves. Mr Sanghvi and his ilk can spare themselves the trouble of advising them.

Mr Sanghvi carries a strange notion of free speech. No freedom can be absolute. It has to be exercised within limits of decency. Otherwise, there would be no need for legislation on defamation or libel, which is nothing but irresponsible exercise of freedom of speech. What we should be preaching, is restraint and gentlemanly decent behavior, which promotes goodwill and does not vitiate the already tense atmosphere.

The advocates of Free Speech need to be reminded that a protest is a legitimate extension of this right, and that it should not irritate them.

Reference to the joke in *Sabd* appears necessary. Mr Sanghvi argues that 'Aishwarya dissolves into helpless giggles at the very mention of Sardarji'. That shows that indulgence in such jokes is widespread. Mr Sanghvi himself concedes that 'we have all told Sardarji

jokes at some time or the other'. Is this situation not fraught with unpleasant consequences ? Can it be allowed to continue indefinitely?

Incidentally, the remark that 'Aishwarya giggles incessantly, no matter whether you ask her what the time is or tell her a joke' also deserves comments. Dictionary meaning of 'giggle' is to *laugh with repeated short catches of breath*. Aishwarya was adjudged as the most beautiful woman of the world not merely on basis of her looks, but also other qualities of mind and heart that make the personality of a perfect woman. To say that she giggles when asked what the time is, is certainly not a compliment to the great young lady. And in no case can it be offered as defence of the joke.

In the end let me repeat that Sikhs value the freedom of speech. Let us not damage its cause through unscrupulous use. The freedom certainly does not cover a right to ridicule a whole community.

□

*If I were to study thousands of learned books
And understand all their import;
If I were to write with an ocean of ink
And with the speed of the wind;
I would still be unable, O God,
to estimate Your value
Or say how great is Your name !*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 15

ਨਾਨਕ ਕਾਗਦ ਲਖ ਮਣਾ ਪੜਿ ਪੜਿ ਕੀਚੈ ਭਾਉ ॥
ਮਸੂ ਤੋਟਿ ਨ ਆਵਈ ਲੇਖਣਿ ਪਉਣੁ ਚਲਾਉ ॥
ਭੀ ਤੇਰੀ ਕੀਮਤਿ ਨਾ ਪਵੈ ਹਉ ਕੇਵਡੁ ਆਖਾ ਨਾਉ ॥

MCLEOD & FENECH AS SCHOLARS ON SIKHISM AND MARTYRDOM*

SANGAT SINGH**

Falsehood gets dissipated, O Nanak,
And, truth ultimately prevails.

– Guru Nanak Ramkali Var, 13.2 SGGS, p. 953

Here is another genre of McLeodian literature. It seeks to follow the precepts laid down by Louis Emanuel Fenech's mentor and guide, W H McLeod.

I

Before going into Fenech's enunciations, it will be of interest to briefly highlight his guide McLeod's inspirations and formulations that have gone into his makeup to emerge as the guru of the anti-Sikh school of thought, out to denigrate and demolish Sikh values and concepts. In building up his school of thought, McLeod, like Trumpp in the 19th century, was assisted by Brahminical forces: these, at the time, were involved in suppressing the Sikhs and their aspirations, revolving around their demand for linguistic re-organisation of Punjab.

The process started shortly after January 1961 Nehru-Tara Singh standoff at Bhavnagar, when Nehru hurled threats to liquidate the small Sikh community in India, as Greeks had, once, done to Melians around 410 BC. Tara Singh's discomfiture led Partap Singh Kairon, then Punjab's Chief Minister and a willing Nehruvian tool in Punjab, to, firstly, play upon the supremacy of distinct Jat culture, vis-à-vis,

* This paper was read over at a seminar organized in May 2000 at Los Angeles, CA, USA

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non-Jats among the Sikhs; secondly, develop contacts with the small group of foreign Christian scholars at Baring Union Christian College, Batala, working on Sikh studies and to motivate them to serve the cause of Hindu chauvinists; and, thirdly, work upon Jat Sikh lecturers in History Department of Punjab University, Chandigarh to pursue studies on Sikh historiography in a partisan manner, and collaborate with the Christian scholars as required.

Jawaharlal Nehru was quite shaken, firstly, by the Chinese onslaught in October 1962 crippling him both in body and mind, and then by the publication of Alistair Lamb's *India's China War* (OUP, 1963) the following year. This quite placed him in the dock. That buttressed Nehru administration's realisation of importance of the role of intellectuals in shaping human destiny. The result was Government of India's promoting a host of literary works. For instance, the Ministry of External Affairs oversaw publication of a number of books to project and articulate a particular viewpoint. I would not like to go into the manner in which a work countering Alistair Lamb's devastating thesis was got prepared and printed. There were three-four other works enunciating India's stand on various aspects of Kashmir question, a host of other works on neighbouring countries, including this writer's *Pakistan's Foreign Policy* (written in four months in 1967) (Bombay, London, New York, Asia Publishing House, 1970) This made an independent enunciation of Pakistan's India centeredness in external relations, vis-à-vis, President Mohamad Ayub Khan's *Friends Not Masters*, (OUP, 1967). Besides people inside the government, the authors included leading scholars from universities and institutes, senior journalists/editors of newspapers, who were paid handsomely for their exertion. However, the employees of the Ministry including this writer got nothing extra.

It was in this melee that the Union Home Ministry discretely worked upon the contacts developed with three-four white scholars at Baring Union Christian College, Batala. They were a success in penetrating this group consisting of W H McLeod, Gerald Barrier, Jurgensmeyer, and John C B Webster, despite the fact that the college then was headed by Dr C H Loehlin, who, in the words of Dr Trilochan

Singh, “served as the noblest bridge-builder between Sikhs and Christians”. (Trilochan Singh, *Earnest Trump & McLeod as Scholars of Sikh History, Religion & Culture*, Chandigarh, 1994, p.321)

Of the scholars with whom contact was established at Batala, a choice had to be made giving one primacy in the scheme of things. W H McLeod emerged quite on the top, because he was more unscrupulous and anti-Sikh, the qualities that were needed to pursue the given task. I shall come to that shortly.

The task before McLeod could be spelled out in terms of known pan-Hinduism’s aspirations to absorb Sikhism, vis-à-vis, independent existence of Sikhism. Obviously, the guidelines were:

“Here we are, the Hindu race, whose vitality, whose life principle, whose very soul, as it were is in religion... I think that it is Vedanta, and Vedanta alone that can become the Universal religion of man, and no other is fitted for the role. Excepting our own, almost all the other great religions in the world are inevitably connected with the life or lives of one or more of their founders. All their theories, their teachings, their doctrines and their ethics are built around the life of a personal founder from whom they get their sanction, their authority and their power, and, strangely enough, upon the historicity of the founder’s life is built, as it were, all the fabric of such religions. If there is one blow dealt to the historicity of that life... if that rock of historicity is shaken and shattered, the whole building tumbles down, broken absolutely, never to regain its lost status.”

– Swami Vivekananda, *Works*, vol III, p 177

“Even Guru Nanak never said that he was not a Hindu nor did any other Guru. It cannot be said that Sikhism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism are separate religions. All these four faiths and their offshoots are one. Hinduism is an ocean into which all the rivers run. It can absorb Islam and Christianity and all other religions and only then can it become the ocean.”

– M K Gandhi, December 1947,
Collected Works, (CW) Vol 90, p 177

“I read your Granth Sahib. But I do not do so to please you. Nor

shall I seek your permission to do so. But the Guru has not said anywhere that you must grow beards, carry *kirpan* and so on.”

M K Gandhi, January 1948,
Collected Works, Vol 90, p 470

These were to be supplemented by writings of Swami Dayananda and Arya Samaj, of earlier Christian Missionaries like Ernest Trumpp and others, Minas, Handalis and Brahminical infiltrators' writings on Sikhism - an immense treasure house of destructive and subversive writings on Sikhism. McLeod apparently accepted these assignments.

In short, McLeod's brief was to, one, strike at the roots of Sikhism by distorting Sikh scriptures, history and traditions; and, two, contend that Sikhism falls within the framework of Hinduism to conform to M K Gandhi's evil designs towards Sikhism, and pan-Hindu aspirations. The tenor of the whole gamut of McLeodian literature, including the people of his school of thought, is to be seen in that light. It was a command performance. Pursuant to that, McLeod had to be unscrupulous and intellectually dishonest in use of his material. A sample of the extent to which he could fall follows.

Dr C H Loehlin, Principal, Baring Union Christian College, Batala, Punjab, read a paper, "A Western Looks at the Kartarpuri Granth", at the very first session of Punjab History Conference, organised by Punjabi University, Patiala, November 12-14, 1965. He was one of the three observers entrusted in a court case to examine the *Kartarpuri Granth* in 1946. The other two were, Dr J C Archer of Yale University, USA, and Bhai Jodh Singh of Khalsa College, Amritsar. Dr Loehlin incorporated his observations and those of Dr Archer in his three-and-a-half page observations. Bhai Jodh Singh's two-and-a-half page observations followed immediately after that. (A note on *Kartarpuri Granth*, Punjab History Conference, 1965)

Dr Loehlin on retirement settled at La Mesa, California, USA, and sent the manuscript of his Doctorate thesis written in 1957, *The Granth of Guru Govind Singh and Khalsa Brotherhood*, (Lucknow, 1971), for publication to Lucknow Publishing House, Lucknow. He obviously, entrusted his lieutenants in Batala to do the proofreading. It was at this stage, according to Dr Trilochan Singh, that McLeod and his

collaborators who added as appendix I, Loehlin's paper, said to have been read at Punjab History Conference in 1965. But this was not a clean affair. Firstly, as may be seen, he gave it a new title, "The Need for Textual and Historical Criticism". Thereafter follows the actual title of Loehlin's paper, with f.n.1 superscribed over it, and it reads, "A paper read at the Punjab History Conference and published in the Proceedings, 1966".

A few observations need to be made here. One, though published in 1966, the proceedings relate to year 1965 when the paper was actually presented; two, the footnote gives the impression that appendix was nothing but a faithful reproduction of the paper presented by Loehlin at the Punjab History Conference in 1965, but that was not the case; three, McLeod and his collaborators drop last few lines, but add four more pages to it to give it teeth. In the additional material, firstly, they quote from Giani Partap Singh's writings in *Gian Amrit*, January 1966 issue (This is probably why McLeod gives the year of Loehlin's paper as 1966, instead of 1965). Then follow some telling observations of "Drs J S Grewal and S S Bal, of Punjab University History Department", the two collaborators, from their joint work, *Guru Gobind Singh* published by Punjab University, Chandigarh, 1967, casting aspersions on what happened at the Baisakhi of 1699, giving McLeod a vaster brief than the life of Guru Nanak, of which he was seized already.

Though McLeod puts off the paper read by Loehlin from 1965 to 1966, that does not explain, how Loehlin could have used a writing published in 1967 in his paper. Dr Trilochan Singh's enquiries made at La Mesa, California, revealed that Loehlin never wrote that appendix. Dr Trilochan Singh had family relationship with Loehlin family. As a matter of fact the footnote, "A paper read at Punjab History Conference and published in the Proceedings, 1966," itself was suspect, superfluous, and not needed, if it were put in there by Loehlin himself.

To add a full-fledged appendix or to incorporate additions to another's writings, is simply criminal, to say the least, by any standards of law, behaviour or morality. Also, collaboration between McLeod and J S Grewal and Dr S S Bal started at least by mid-1960s if not

earlier, and that McLeod had pawned himself to Hindu chauvinists much before he published his first work on Sikhism, *Guru Nanak's Biography*, in 1968.

INDIAN COLLABORATORS

Now, we may look into how Dr J S Grewal, a prime collaborator has sought to cover up this aspect of intellectual dishonesty of the main actor, McLeod. In his *Contesting Interpretations of the Sikh Tradition*, (Delhi, 1998, p 109), Grewal says, "Loehlin's Appendix on 'the need for Textual and Historical Criticism reproduces the short paper he had presented to the Punjab History Conference in 1965". Readers may have a look at Appendix I for the actual short paper and Appendix II for Loehlin's alleged Appendix. It is simply surprising after publication of Dr Trilochan Singh's work exposing the hypocrisy of McLeod and his collaborators or proteges, Dr Grewal still thinks that the people have not seen the short paper and the appendix together, to compare and note down the distortions and discrepancies, and that the two are not the same. Again, despite Dr Trilochan Singh's work, which Grewal quotes, he ignores Loehlin's work, *Christian Attitude to the Sikhs* (Edinburg, 1966), from the canvas of his discussion of Loehlin's works, (or even in the bibliography), because the facts stated therein were inconvenient and glaring.

Shri P K Nijhawan, a leading journalist, who has had the opportunity to get closer to the Indian Intelligence including the powerful RAW (Research and Analysis Wing) setup, tells us that the appointment in post 1984 era of Dr S S Bal as Vice Chancellor of Guru Nanak Dev University and of Dr J S Grewal (who earlier rose to be Vice Chancellor of GNDU) as Director of the prestigious Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Simla, was because of RAW's recommendation (Cf P K Nijhawan, *Suppression of Intellectual Dissidence and How left-Nebrwians Destroyed Punjab*. (Delhi, 1997, pp 80-81, and ad passim)

Dr J.S. Grewal and Dr S.S. Bal, two clean shaven members of History Department, Punjab University, Chandigarh, donned long hair, with one of them suppressing his cigarette smoking, and both of them

were appointed Professors in Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, and Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, respectively, while McLeod must have got his returns in other terms. A long-lasting association was established and they kept one another in harness. Indira Gandhi's splitting up the Congress party, and running the Union Government with the help of Left Front including Communists, made a lot of dubious scholars to don leftist/pseudo leftist mantle and occupy Chairs in Indian Universities with Government patronage.

Will it be farfetched to say that McLeod's position now was that of Dr Faustus, who, in dictionary terms, sold his conscience for material gains? The intelligence allover make payment in cash, without taking receipts. Even in case where payment was made in my presence, it is difficult to prove anything: it would be a case of one affidavit against another. To say that McLeod was an independent scholar pursuing his scholasticism objectively will be a traversery of truth.

Before proceeding further, one may cite here a couple of other glaring instances of McLeod's intellectual dishonesty. Quoting Bhai Gurdas' *Var 26, Pauri 24*, (in his *The Sikhs*, p 93 and *Who Is A Sikh*, p 23-24), he purposely drops one of the eight lines besides mistranslation, to deliberately distort its meanings, in the process seeking to achieve his objectives of denigrating the image of Guru Hargobind. Besides, he completely ignores *Pauri 34* of the same *Var 26*, emphasising oneness of spirit of Guru Nanak and Guru Hargobind, as it strikes at his very theme.

One's attention may also be drawn to McLeod's imagination running riot at a single couplet in Rag Ramkali (*The Evolution of Sikh Community*, pp 76-78) and his weaving of demeaning postulates despite the fact that he was in possession of Bhai Jodh Singh's clear assertion that the couplet stood as it was in *Kartarpuri Bir*: "Dr Jodh Singh assures us that there has been no obliteration at this point", continued McLeod (p. 178). Nonetheless, he still regards issue as open. He completely ignores Prof. Sahib Singh's work, *Ad Bir Bare*, (Amritsar, 1970), giving a rational explanation regarding *Kartarpuri Bir* vis-à-vis *Bano Bir*, as that does not suit him. Even his one time collaborator, J.S. Grewal concedes that, "It is also clear from the research done so far that the authenticity

of the Sikh scripture is beyond any doubt” (*Contesting Interpretations* p. 305) The point is that there was absolutely no need for him to raise this point at all.

McLeod’s basic mischief in denying the originality for Guru Nanak’s thought and starting a *nirmal panth*, a sovereign entity, by its own right, stands apart. He denies the very import of Guru Nanak’s revelation as one would deny Lord Buddha’s revelation or that of Christ. To begin with, I repeat here what I stated in *The Sikhs In History* (New Delhi 1999) pp14-19:

“Guru Nanak during the process of revelation gained new vistas of cosmic consciousness that divine light permeates the entire universe and it’s the only source of light in all human beings. Universal brotherhood of humankind and common heritage shorn of any limiting angularities, formed an essential part of the revelation. The issues that agitated the minds of the people were naturally the divisions within Hinduism and Islam, and relevance of God as a factor in social interaction as between various sectors of society.

“Basically, the issues impinged on social responsibility. These were beyond the pale of any school of the Hindu thought. Neither the *Vedas*, the *Shastras*, and *Smritis*, nor the various religious teachers and law-givers – none of them – laid down social responsibility on anyone, much less a section of the society, to ameliorate the socio-political condition of the people. Rather by laying emphasis on asceticism and world-withdrawing doctrines that caused withdrawal from productive work and dependence on alms for sustenance, the Hindu socio-religious orders had become parasitic and irresponsible. Even the *Bhaktas* who were critical of the caste system and repudiated essentials of Vaishnavism, advocated individual *moksha*, deliverance. They were not for acceptance of social responsibility. None of them, in consonance with Hindu thought, raised his voice against the prevalent political oppression, despite some of them including Kabir and Namdev facing personal persecution at the hands of the rulers...

“It was reserved for Guru Nanak to charter a new order by an

inter-mixture in equal measure of religious, social and political responsibility into a composite whole, encompassing both spiritual and temporal spheres.

“Throughout his discourses in the sub-continent and beyond, Guru Nanak did not quote Hindu scriptures as an authority for what he was saying. He was relying on the revelation, his personal experience of the Lord. That was an overriding authority for the views he formulated and the course of action he adopted.

“He repudiated all the essentials of Hinduism...

“What, however, set apart Guru Nanak’s mission was his comments on, or delving into, the political situation. He called for social responsibility in public administration and introduction of the concept of a welfare state.”

McLeod ignores all that. He says he must resort to “assumptions and conjectures”. That helps him to present a distorted and demeaning image of Sikhs Gurus and Sikhism. “To start with”, in the words of Dr Trilochan Singh, “Hew McLeod attributes special meaning and definitions to two key words, ‘*Saint*’, and ‘*Bhaktas*’ which are not accepted by any existing Sanskrit or Hindi dictionary, nor are these definitions accepted by any learned scholar, eastern or western, of Kabir and his contemporaries or of other eminent medieval Saints.” So what? McLeod is born *avataar* to lend new meanings to Hindi lexicography !

Another point that needs attention is McLeod’s treatment of *Jats*, the first assignment given to him by Partap Singh Kairon, then Punjab’s Chief Minister. It is another matter that he did so three decades later. McLeod concedes that Bhai Gurdas mentions prominently of caste names of early Sikhs from Guru Nanak Dev down to his own times, of Guru Hargobind (*The Evolution of the Sikh Community*, pp 51-52), and according to Dr Trilochan Singh, they constituted hardly five percent of them. McLeod also says, “It seems clear from Bhai Gurdas’s evidence that *Khatri* leadership within the early *panth* must have extended well beyond the actual time of the Gurus.” Even when Khalsa was manifested in 1699 only one *Jat*, and that too from Hastinapur in UP, offered himself to be one of the Five Beloved Ones.

The preponderance of *Jats* in Punjab comes only after 1750s, and

McLeod duly takes notice of that. He, however, deliberately makes two cardinal mistakes. One, he says maliciously, "This is widely regarded as a great pity, even within Sikh society where the numerically preponderant *Jat* community bewail the fact that there was never a single *Jat* Guru." (pp 87-88). This issue has been raised by him, for the first time, out of extraneous considerations. Two, Ranjit Singh who seemingly got "total ascendancy" in Punjab was not a *Jat* but a *Sansis*, and it was only that class of *Sansis* that was admitted into *Jat* class, whereas other *Sansis* continued to be enumerated as criminal tribes under the British.

Now look at his tradition of Khalsa which he says, borrowed heavily from the *Jats*' cultural pattern. He says, "Uncut hair was a *Jat* custom which was evidently observed by Hindu and Muslim *Jats* as well as by Sikh *Jats*." Further that, "With these two symbols may be paired the comb and the bangle, respectively. "Of the breech", he continues, "it seems safe to assume that this symbol must also relate in some way to the same situation." (McLeod, p 52)

On *Jats*, McLeod is not supported even by his once collaborator J S Grewal, who says that McLeod's views that *Jat* cultural pattern provided ingredients of Khalsa code was untenable. It was "contrary to historical facts" and "McLeod's assumption that *Jats* wore uncut hair remained unsupported by evidence." One wishes these were so. But it seems that McLeod must have been under the influence of *bhang*, hemp, when he wrote atleast this paragraph, if not the entire book. Again, when he says that Khalsa "slate must be wiped clean", he only reflected what (Mahatma) M.K. Gandhi once said, "the Guru has not said anywhere that you must grow beards, carry *kirpan* and so on." McLeod was obviously following the brief held for him.

One can say that the *Evolution of the Sikh Community* published after 1994 when the Indian state gained ascendancy over the Sikh youth in making them discard *keshas*, hair, in a way reflected an extraneous situation, and came quite handy to the Indian setup.

It is these asinine qualities that form McLeod's postulates and perverse presentation of Sikh ethos and tradition. Some one else shall be presenting a detailed analysis of McLeodian shenanigans.

These, however, help to show McLeod in real colours, of his being an organised campaigner, a committed advocate, rather an instrument, and not a dispassionate scholar of Sikhism.

It is another matter that McLeodian school of thought has successfully penetrated the North American University system, and his proteges man the chairs on Sikh Studies created with Sikh money to defeat the very Sikh purposes. For that, one has to look into other causes, like Christian efforts to overwhelm the Sikh immigrant community in the West. Another was Government of India's hostility to the institution of Sikh Chairs in the West to scuttle Sikh revivalism in the diaspora. The disclosures made in *The Sikhs in History*, (NY, 1995, Chapter 11, p.152), about Indira Gandhi's exertions to change the character of the Sikh Chair in Vancouver University from Sikh History to Punjabi language, and placement there of Harjot Oberoi, who was quite alien to that language, made Vancouver University to remove Oberoi from the Chair. It, however, caused no positive gain to the Sikhs as the character of the Chair was reduced to a phantom of its earlier self. That sort of thing had earlier happened to the Sikh Chair at Toronto. That raises the question, what sort of multiculturalism is Canada promoting? And, why do the North American Universities find fit only McLeodian scholars to man the Sikh Chairs?

It is this background that helps to understand McLeodian persistence to distort Sikhism, its religion, history, scripture, cultural ethos and tradition. It is an about, multifaceted, widespread attack. All sorts of hostile forces have joined together to deliver, what they regard, final blows to the young faith. These include people of diverse hues back home – the votaries of Hindutava, the pseudo-leftists placed at position of vantage, for instance in Government of India setup NCERT (National Council for Educational Research & Training) (which gets written school text books), time servers and opportunist in Indian setup, who have taken a vow not to look at a fact straight, not to interpret any event in its true sense, but to falsify, misrepresent and pervert Sikh studies.

Punjab and Haryana High Court's orders to NCERT to withdraw

their highly tendentious and demeaning writings on Sikh Gurus in Text Books for XI & XII classes, speak for themselves.

S Daljit Singh, Prof Jagjit Singh and Justice Gurdev Singh in 1986, and Dr Trilochan Singh eight years later, have gone into great depths to analyse the irrationality of McLeod and his methodology. Justice Gurdev Singh attributes extraneous motives in McLeod's designs to undermine Sikh tradition. Dr Trilochan Singh talks of "logic of state terrorism and unrelenting despotism of anti-Punjab and anti-Sikh Delhi rulers" in having surrogate intellectuals in whose hands "truth suffers in more ways than one."

McLeod has excelled himself in inventing, fabricating, mutilating, falsifying, distorting and tampering with facts. He has lost all hope of getting Christ's benediction on the Day of Judgment. If he now contends that he is not a missionary, not a Christian, and not even an atheist, one should accept that at face value. For, McLeod by enunciating all these falsifications now falls within the framework of Hinduism, with mumbo-jumbo doctrines. He emerges as an agent of Hindu fundamentalism as enunciated by, (Mahatma) M K Gandhi. Keeping in view how the intelligence agencies allover work, I leave it to McLeod to spell out how he was compensated. The quantum of damages done to the Sikh cause, and also for the work done under his supervision by his proteges has been tremendous. This possibly accounts for his publishing thin, lean, volumes rehashing his arguments, attacking the basics of Sikhism, over the years and showing his importance.

McLeod's storehouse of lies is getting exposed and his falsifications are increasingly getting dissipated. One of McLeod's associates in Delhi told me that though McLeod, in his words, one of great scholars of Sikhism, cannot enter a Sikh shrine. This is so because of the hostility he evokes from the Sikh community, for there is quite an odium attached to his name. He is lucky, for there is no Ayatollah Khomeini among the Sikhs. His caricature and demeaning references to Sikh Gurus and Sikh scriptures are in no way less blasphemous than what Salman Rushdie in *Satanic Verses* did to the Prophet, his wives, and the holy *Qoran*.

II

Fenech's thesis *Playing the Game of Love : The Sikh Tradition of Martyrdom* opens with a 500 word abstract of 3 paragraphs which seek to present the theme in "context of the past ten years" from operation "Blue Star" in June 1984 "and the subsequent anti-Sikh pogrom". This was followed by a sustained campaign of Sikh genocide at the hands of "an intractable merciless foe" which reminded the people of the situation in the 18th century. Then Fenech makes the startling statement attributing it to 'popular history' (wherefrom he gets this stupid 'popular history' he does not disclose, neither do any contemporary sources disclose this so-called popular history) that people in 18th century saved themselves "by renouncing their faith and external insignia with which it is associated", to say that contemporaries could adopt "a similar alternative to ensure one's continued survival".

He qualifies it in the next paragraph by saying that, "This is, however, one alternative which the majority of eighteenth century Sikhs had never chosen." He implies that some of them discarded "the external insignia", and throughout his thesis, or the works of McLeodian scholars, there is nothing from contemporary or near contemporary history to give that meaning or that sort of reporting. McLeod himself quotes the case of a boy, among Banda Singh Bahadur's group of prisoners, who disowned his mother and kissed the scaffold. The Mughal persecution slowed down the process of Khalsaisation of the Sikhs but no Khalsa in 18th century renounced his faith or external insignia. Let McLeod and his cronies interpret out clearly whether the Sikhs did or did not renounce their faith! There can be no midway in the two propositions.

My first reaction in reading this was to use for the author a much stronger expression. But since it is generally advisable to keep the literary criticism in somewhat restrained language, I will prefer to term him a McLeodian puppy, shorn of his brain-power, the need to use his brain. I, however, would make it a soft one. Even Kabir in *Adi Granth* says, "We are puppies in Thy mansion. We speak to Thee with

our mouths wide open”. The difference is that whereas Kabir talks of puppies speaking to God, Fenech does not speak to even Lord Christ for munificence, but to McLeod, obviously, for worldly gains. I would prefer to call them yuppies – young urban professionals out to seek McLeod’s munificence for material gains.

It is in this view that Fenech proceeds to examine the Sikh tradition of martyrdom to belittle, if not demolish, in his own style the whole concept and achievements of the Sikh martyrs, often contradicting himself, not knowing what stand to take.

III

Fenech starts his first chapter, *Introduction*, with two grievous misstatements. Firstly, the opening sentence is preposterous. It reads, “To many contemporary Sikhs and non-Sikhs the concept of martyrdom or *Sahadat* also *Shahidi* is fundamental to Sikhism and represents an exceptionally important institution.” The question immediately arises, who are these “many Sikhs”(?), and “non-Sikhs”(?) and, what is “fundamental to Sikhism”? To all Sikhs *nam-simran*, meditating the name of God, is fundamental to Sikhism. The only non-Sikhs who could give that much importance to *Shahadat* or *Shahidi* could be agents of Indian intelligence set-up, or its various branches, who had masterminded the militancy movement in Indira Gandhi’s second term as India’s Prime Minister, or these could be McLeodian yuppies and people belonging to his school of thought in North America. With this type of misstatements, which could only be result of briefing by Indian intelligence set-up, McLeodian stalwart proceeds to build up his thesis.

Secondly, in the very second sentence of chapter three, this yuppy proceeds to contradict what he wrote in the very first sentence of chapter one. He proceeds to say, “Of course, even a cursory glance at popular Sikh accounts will invalidate this claim,” by Mona Kang that “one can say that Sikh history is the history of martyrs.” He continues, rightly, that, “At any stage in the diachronic development there was far more to Sikhism than martyrs and martyrdom,” The point is, that this McLeodian stalwart is not sure as to what is the real position-the

concept of martyrdom or not? Since mutual contradictions form part of McLeodian style and the brief given by him, neither McLeod nor his yuppy is bothered about that, so long he gets his degree and is established as a McLeodian scholar.

This raises another concomitant, important, question as to why do the universities like that of Toronto give doctorate on such stupid works which have neither head nor tail to stand upon? Why should the universities like that of Toronto pawn themselves to scholars like Hew McLeod, specially when “Canada talks of multi-culturalism?” Another question that comes up is whether the University of Toronto is a captive organization, or does it have a poor standard like some of the universities in India. Someone shall have to address himself to these questions. I shall have to come to some of them later.

Coming back to Fenech’s first chapter. In the second paragraph, Fenech garbles the basic facts of Sikh history and attributes victory of Panth “to Ranjit Singh’s capture of Lahore in 1799”, bypassing the Sikh’s capture of Lahore in 1765, striking their coins, and establishing their rule over Punjab under the Sikh Misls. This indicates that Fenech’s understanding of Sikh history is partial, flawed and imperfect.

Thereafter, Fenech struggles to discuss why the Sikhs used the Arabic word *Shahadat* (martyrdom) or *Shahid* (martyr). He concedes that such a term does not exist in Hindu lexicon. He brings in the Hindu concept of animal sacrifice which is miles away from the Arabic concept of *Shahadat*, or rather has no relevance at all. He maliciously fights shy of accepting G S Talib’s contention that Sikhism’s adopting the term *Shahid* was with a view “to chalkout a line of orientation for itself away from Brahminical orthodoxy and other religious side as rooted in Hinduism”, and “to buttress non-Hindu identity”. That strikes at the roots of his guide McLeod’s basic precepts and the brief given to him to prove Guru Nanak only within the Hindu framework. Fenech, therefore, has nothing but to fall for Harjot Oberoi’s contention that all aspects of pre-colonial Sikh thinking was rooted in “Indic cultural thinking,” to exclude the impact of Islam on the current Indian thinking. But Fenech continues to be confused, not knowing whether to term the Sikhs, he is dealing with, as martyrs or otherwise. Though

for the Sikhs of Gurdwara reform movement and others, perforce, he has to use the term martyrs, he is in lookout for terms to denigrate them, to keep himself in tune with his guide, McLeod.

IV

For the next four chapters, II to VI, Fenech confines himself to the main subject of Sikh martyrs.

The second chapter *Sikh Martyr Tradition : The Tradition and its Transmission* opens with a Dhadi's narration in June 1990 at Gurdwara Rakab Ganj, New Delhi. That gives Fenech the handle to say that similar presentation is made all over Punjab. "These provide an interpretation of Sikh history that pits dauntless courage against vile deception, truth and justice against tyranny and oppression, courage, defence, endurance, fearlessness, loyalty, altruism, and martyrdom—these are the traditions within Sikhism which are today sung in the *Dhadi* tradition." Then, Fenech makes a startling statement: "Within the present discussion the concern is not with history as it actually happened, but with history as it is popularly understood by the vast majority of Sikhs today" Though he does not spell out, he means that there is a vast difference between the two. Also, Fenech is not interested in deciphering the true history, but the spurious one, inspired by Brahminical infiltrators, as seen by McLeod and his school of thought. To them, "popular history" also comes from "comic books". He quotes *Dhadis* to say that the Sikh soldiers, who fell in two world wars, or Indo-Pakistan wars, were martyrs. In that context, he cites Sikh jingle about Mir Mannu's atrocities in 18th century, belittling misfortunes, as also Baba Dip Singh's sacrifice, that a Sikh continues fighting even after being decapitated.

The meaning of all these narrations is served by Fenech's terming ordinary Punjabi dacoits being acclaimed as martyrs! Similarly, he terms "Bhagat Singh" and Udham Singh both of whom were executed as political terrorist." Fenech does not know that even (Mahatma) M.K. Gandhi, whose name is universally mentioned for nonviolence, was at one time proclaimed by the British government as an extremist and a revolutionary, and could have earned that very approbation given to

Bhagat Singh or Udham Singh. He would certainly have been acclaimed as a martyr from Indian viewpoint even if India had continued as a British Colony for another fifty years !

Fenech thereafter narrates Sikh *Ardas* rejoicing martyrdoms, but maliciously observers that these were “intended to magnify the heroism of those who stoically died these deaths.” Fenech brings in “popular art” and “bazar poster” as a means to depict 18th century Sikh martyrs, especially Baba Dip Singh. He is aware of the work of S. Kirpal Singh who drew various paintings, including that of Bhai Mani Singh, in 1950s, showing “Khalsa fearlessness, bravery, loyalty, and endurance.” This was motivated by an oral tradition, which did influence Bhagat Lakshman Singh’s work, *The Sikh Martyrs*, published as early as 1923. He mentions numerous works since published to draw two conclusions. One, “such interpretations have gained a much firmer foothold since the events of 1984,” and, two, “an attempt albeit an unconscious one, at *charhdi kala*, to uplift and inspire Sikhs and non-Sikhs in this current time of crises” Both those conclusions to Fenech seem farfetched and irrelevant. Similarly, his mention about “Sanatan Singh Sabha of Lahore” seems inapt while his talk of “the descendants of the Gurus,” enjoining Sikhs to view the Panth as simply “one among the many panths which make up the Hindu mosaic”, to say the least is a highly stupid interpretation imposed upon the author by the Indian intelligence set-up. His talk of baptismal water (*amrit*) prepared by the double-edged sword (*Khanda*), at initiation ceremony (*pahul*), “believed to have originated with the tenth Guru” is highly suspect and demeaning to Fenech himself. The attempt to misinterpret is quite glaring.

V

As stated earlier, the first paragraph of chapter III, “Popular Sikh Martyr Tradition: Theology and Personnel”, contradicts the opening lines of Chapter I of the thesis.

The second para of chapter III starts with the author’s conducting a series of interviews near Batala in 1980s before coming to the howler, and one of the most stupid statements made in the thesis. “According to the interviews, the struggles the Panth underwent and the persecution to which its members were subjected since the seventeenth

century was much more important than the birth of either Guru Nanak or Guru Gobind Singh, and even more significant than the foundation of the Khalsa.” If there was no Guru Nanak, or Guru Gobind Singh, or the foundation of the Khalsa, what was the need for any struggle or persecution? This one statement was more “; than sufficient for the Toronto University, if it is not a *putri-pathshala* or a captive organization of McLeod, to refuse Fenech doctorate degree. This is one of the most stupid statements made in the thesis.

Fenech chooses to hang his examination of the Sikh Gurus (about 50 pages) and the post Guru period (another 10 pages) on these interviews. He goes on to mention that 35 percent of those interviewed mentioned the persecution and martyrdom of Guru Arjun or Guru Tegh Bahadur as the most important event of Sikh history. It is in this process that he on the one hand rebuts WH McLeod and J.S. Grewal that Guru Nanak “left his posterity theology and not a description of his period” as “the interpretation of political condition in vast majority of texts endures,” and on the other, supports Grewal’s thesis about minimising the strength of the Gurus ‘moral fibre’, because of his moderate language. He talks of Guru Nanak’s courage and heroism in Babur Vani and possession of “defiance, resistance, courage and fearlessness.” He looks to tradition to supply interpretation which scripture itself cannot supply.

Fenech looks at heroic traditions in Sikhism -the destruction of tyranny as Will of God,’ and the role of *Gurmukh* who is attuned to *bukam*, as an instrument of God’. The *Gurmukh* suffers physically but not spiritually. He is fearless.

Fenech is now seized of McLeodian view and says that despite Singh Sabha, “a plurality of, what he calls ‘tradition’ and as such interpretation, not necessarily of Khalsa, does exist as “we can never really know what Guru Nanak was thinking as he says his *shabads* out to posterity.” In this contest, he mentions *Nirmalas* and *Udasi* Sikhs as against the Khalsa Sikhs. Fenech brings in the relevance of events of 1984 to interpret the text. He quotes Prof. J.S. Grewal’s *Guru Nanak in History* to say that hymns of Guru Nanak do not advocate “rebellion” but only “revolt”. This is frankly beating about the bush as both the

words have same dictionary meaning. His bringing in Bhai Gurdas, and Guru Nanak's advocacy of living a life "with honour, justice and self-respect", do not mean anything different.

He concedes that the successors of Guru Nanak, viz., Guru Angad (including Bhai Gurdas, or *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*) to Guru Gobind Singh reflect "the same courage, defiance and fearlessness." He gives political meaning to the institution of 'masand', which could as well be against Brahminism (which he does not specify because of special relationship in 1984) as against the local administration.

Fenech now comes to the fifth Guru who is the first martyr and raises the impertinent question, Why did he agree to undergo martyrdom? Why not Guru Nanak or his three successors? He again quotes "tradition" and "the vast majority of their texts" which could very well mean the Mina tradition that was available only to Guru Arjun, Niranjarias or Brahminic infiltrators' tradition, or even McLeod and his collaborator's tradition. Also involved in the process was the basic issue, what constituted the basic essentials of Sikhism under Guru Nanak and his successors. Akbar dealt with Brahmins' false charges directly.

Fenech talks of "a tolerant emperor, Jahangir" that could be possibly true of Jahangir's later administration, but not the early years. He also talks of Chandu Shah, Prithi Chand and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, but completely avoids Brahmins as a factor, or Dr. Ganda Singh's research into Guru Arjun's martyrdom, conducted much before Fenech or his rmentor McLeod conducted research. Again, Fenech does not talk of *Tuzak-i-Jahangiri*, definite historical work, but only 'tradition' which gives him much leeway.

Wherefrom he got 'tradition', making Emperor Jahangir to "include within the sacred Sikh scripture hymns in honour of Prophet Muhammad," especially in violation of what he wrote in *Tuzak-i-Jahangiri*, or the "scorching heat of July" in place of May for Guru Arjun's martyrdom, one is bewildered to know. Here he quotes 'tradition' four-five times in a couple of pages, and says that the Guru finally "died" in River Ravi, without using the word 'martyred' or 'martyrdom', he had used earlier.

In connection with the last days of Guru Arjun or the early ones of Guru Hargobind, Fenech talks of “Jat castes”, the “militant nature of Jats” without any authority or justification. McLeod’s own work *The Evolution of the Sikh Community*, 1995, containing some untenable doctrines about the Jats, had not yet been published, and it does not find mention in the bibliography. Obviously, Fenech went by direction of his guide, McLeod, whom he could not refuse, though as stated earlier, Dr. Trilochan Singh, would have us believe that *Jats* at the time constituted hardly five per cent of the Sikh congregation.

Guru Hargobind’s battles were fought only around 1634-35; therefore, the question of “highway men and robbers” joining Guru’s army at that earlier stage of Akal Takht, Lohgarh Fort or introduction of Dhad (martial) instrument, i.e. all before 1611, does not arise. The author mistakes Guru Hargobind’s construction of a mosque at Hargobindpura with the one at Kiratpur. All the way through Fenech goes on talking about ‘tradition’, ‘tradition’ and ‘tradition’, as if the *Bhat Vehis* even did not make history, or he thought it inadvisable to consult them.

Fenech now talks of martyrdom of the ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur as if the fifth Guru, who was earlier martyred, was not a Guru. He garbles the account. He gives reference to Guru Tegh Bahadur’s compositions, without understandings their meaning. He mentions Guru Tegh Bahadur’s month long incarceration at Delhi in 1665, but does not elaborate on the only discussion he had with Aurangzeb. He, thereafter, immediately brings in the Kashmiri Brahmin’s delegation at Makhawal, though it was after another decade that that happened. Then follows the garbled version of Guru Tegh Bahadur’s martyrdom.

The author brings in the peroration which later formed part of Bachitar Natak on the significance of Guru Tegh Bahadur’s martyrdom as a unique act, performed for the sake of religious liberty and freedom of conscience. Fenech unnecessarily busies himself in time devoted to one Guru against another, without going into the import of what he said. However, Fenech is conscious that all the Sikh Gurus are “manifestation of the one divine light.” The word ‘tradition’ occurs several times without his conceding that Guru Gobind Singh’s writings

do institute a different history .

Without bringing in Guru Gobind Singh's 24 years of life, 1675-1698, the author straightway brings in the manifestation of Khalsa in 1699. He does not mention that *Sehajdhari* Sikhs did exist at that time. The author follows the Singh Sabha rendering of the Sikh history. He is not sure about the 'death' of Guru Gobind Singh at the hands of the Pathan assassin.

Fenech contradicts himself grievously when he attributes to 'tradition'; one does not know from where, Guru Gobind Singh's finding 'feeble hearted' Sikhs, who read only *Adi Granth*. That probably gives the origin of *Dasam Granth*. But the composition compiled by Bhai Mani Singh does not get that title. Fenech also brings up the compositions about the battle of Bhangani and other battles entered by Guru Gobind Singh during the decade 1689-99, with Hindu hill rajas, but he fights shy of the word 'Hindu' for obvious reasons. Though Guru Gobind Singh does write *Zafarnama* to Aurangzeb, 'tradition' tells Fenech that it "was apparently written" for the Mughal Emperor. Fenech obviously makes a fool of himself when he realises that 'tradition' may here be close to history when he talks of *dharm-yudh*. It was at this *dharm-yudh* that the battle of Chamkaur was fought and Guru Gobind Singh, in the very first Gurmatta was asked to make good his escape. In the post Guru Gobind Singh era, Fenech mentions Banda Bahadur apart from Baz Singh, Bhai Tara Singh, Bota Singh, Garja Singh, Mehtab Singh, Sewa Singh, Gurbakhsh Singh and Baba Ram Singh Bedi – all in one paragraph. It is a Persian Chronicler, a Muslim who gives first information about a young Sikh boy who disowned his mother to kiss the scaffold.

Then in the next paragraph follow Bhai Mani Singh, Taru Singh, Subeg Singh and Shahbaz Singh, the young boys, going upto Gurdwara reforms movement He mentions Sikh prayer of thanks at *Vada Ghallughara, big holocaust*.

Fenech, now comes to the end of this chapter with a narration of "enormously popular" Baba "Dip Singh." In 1757, he vowed to fight Jahandar Khan to Amritsar. At Tarn Taran, the fight was fierce and though he quotes Khushwant Singh's *A History of the Sikhs* to say that

Dip Singh was wounded, he quotes tradition to say that his head was actually severed from body. At the instance of a Sikh, Baba Dip Singh picked up the severed head and fought till the Gurdwara Shahidan at Amritsar when he was said to have thrown his head within Darbar Sahib.

Fenech attributes this to 'jat bravery' apart from "resistance to tyranny, protection of Gurdwaras, the stress on fulfilling a vow taken before the eternal Guru, sacrifice, and martyrdom." Actually, to talk of 'Jat bravery', is to belittle Baba Dip Singh's contribution; he was foremost a Gurmukh and a Gursikh.

To Fenech, malignantly, Baba Dip Singh is of use not for his supreme sacrifice for a secular, Punjabi cause, but -his unnatural death, in order not to manifest himself into "harmful *bhut* or spirits." He is not bothered about the factual account given by Khuswant Singh but a certain 'tradition' of which he is enamoured. He mischievously builds up a full fledged chapter on that.

VI

The objective of Chapter 4, "The Indian Environment: Roles in an Enchanted Universe", is simply to denigrate whatever even in the name of 'tradition', he has said earlier.

The author starts with four entries in Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha's, *Mahan Kosh*, on term *Shahid* 'evidence' 'testimony' 'witness' *jihad* or *dharmyudh* in Punjabi - the last one especially meant for members of *Shahid* misl. Then he mischievously adds, does Islamic term testimony signify 'testimony in a court of law'. This only reflects his *bujat*, an immodest mind, because his objective seems to be to fill the bulk of over 30 pages of the thesis. We may confine ourselves mainly to Sikh issues.

He gives Bhai Kahn Singh's application of the word *Shahid* in a very broad sense, and also, to be on the safe side, contends that Macauliffes Six Volume, *The Sikh Religion*, was as much a work of Kahn Singh. For that there was no need.

He now brings in Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom, that the Guru according to what he terms, later Sikh historiography, "died for the benefit of a community other than his own, the Hindu community of

Kashmir”. Then follows the author’s description of it as “a powerful myth”, one firmly lodged by Tat Khalsa discourse. This, according to him is not borne out by earlier written evidence. Then he quotes “Guru Gobind Singh’s peroration that Guru Tegh Bahadur died for protection of sacred thread and frontal mark of theirs i.e., the Hindus; he reflects his intellectual dishonesty by disputing as if the “sacred thread and frontal mark, were not recognised as religious emblems by the Sikhs ‘as by the Hindus’”. He goes on to say that even this understanding of Guru Gobind Singh could only be attributed to Khalsa. He quotes Oberoi about Sanatan Sikhs, a product of 19th century, who could be as comfortable in Haridwar or Amritsar. He also brings in Brahminical infiltrators of 18th century to say unfaithfully that Guru Gobind sacrificed 125,000 Sikhs to the goddess. He even brings in the support of Nirmala Sikh Scholar, Bhai Santokh Singh. The point is that he brings in all sorts of hostile writings which should have been rejected without a second thought. Fenech concedes that Guru Tegh Bahadur died as a martyr that he died for his own community. He does not mention that even Hindus don’t dispute Guru Tegh Bahadur’s martyrdom for their cause.

The author now brings in one Ghazi Mian whose head was severed from his body, a man of *karamat* or miraculous power. His shrine was revered both by Hindus and Muslims. There was also one Baba Chuda, a Bhandari Khatri, who too was a headless martyr at Batala, during Nadir Shah’s invasions. He makes mention of numerous others. Some were malevolent, others not. He would like to indicate that “the status of martyr was awarded to far more people than our Sikh sources indicate.” Some of them did appear as the malevolent ghosts “known in Punjabi folk called *birs* (heroes), *bhuts*, *prets* and *churels*”. He wants to suggest that “Indian martyrs were indeed both figures of universal powers and a variety of malevolent ghosts”. He also brings in *Sau Sakbian*.

The whole objective of his exercise becomes clear when he mentions of Baba Dip Singh, and prayer to him to “grant the wishes of all those who propitiate him.” Propitiating a *bir* (hero) is one thing, a *bhut* quite another. How could the Sikhs ask Guru Gobind Singh about the sacrifice, a Sikh makes half a century later? Fenech is not interested

in that. Nor is he interested in separating grain from the chaff, or the fact from the fiction or superstition.

VII

The fifth chapter “The Game of Love: The Singh Sabha and the Rhetoric of Martyrdom”, hangs around the public execution of a Sikh in the first decade of 20th century for murdering some Muslims. Such happenings were every day occurrence in that period and need not have held him. But he spends full eight of the total 60 pages over the story of one Lachman Singh, which could have involved a Muslim, a Hindu, a Christian or even a *gora* like Fenech himself. The fact that he does that, not only shows the non-serious character of Fenech, a fanatic, out to sensalise what should have been a serious study. Whether the Charter of Toronto University permits grant of Doctorate degree for such non-serious studies is another shameful matter to be examined, by the people of Canada itself.

At the fag end of the story comes his observation that the people instead of ‘giving a “chapter on Sikhism itself” should instead include, “*gurmat* as a sub heading within the chapter devoted to Hinduism”. This shows him in real colours of, to borrow from the Chinese languages, being a running dog of Hindu chauvinism.

It is surprising that people like Fenech learnt only during last two decades, i.e., 1960s or 1970s, what the convening of first Singh Sabha in 1873 meant. This only shows Fenech’s closed mind as to what really happened till even 1925, the 5th and 6th Chapter of his thesis. It seems he was either held in stupor or was only gesticulating what he read about the period. By 1879 when the main body of Singh Sabha under Prof. Gurmukh Singh arose, Fenech quotes Oberoi to say that there were a series of such identities viz. Sahajdhari, Khalsa, Nirmala, Nirankari, Udasi, Sewapanthis, Namdhari, Dewana and many others. The main body of Tat Khalsa included Prof. Gurmukh Singh, Giani Ditt Singh, S. Amar Singh of Bhadaur, Bhai Jawahar Singh, Giani Mayya Singh, Bhai Vir Singh, S. Wazir Singh, Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid, S. Karam Singh Historian, Mr. M.A. Macauliffe, Bhai Jodh Singh, Bhagat Lakshman Singh and Principal Teja Singh. Fenech, from Harjot Oberoi

to also his mentor McLeod, is simply rueing.

Through aggressive tactics such as ‘eradication campaign, problems and the reconstitution of the sacred outlined in what Oberoi refers to as ‘the manual of rites de passage’ linked with the armies of social change, communication and commercialisation activity – Oberoi maintains that ‘Tat Khalsa thinking gained ascendancy displacing to a great extent the Sanatan Sikh discourse which had previously dominated Sikh imagination.

It became obvious to Oberoi as also his mentor McLeod that Tat Khalsa, the original Khalsa spirit that was overwhelmed by the forces of Brahminism for over a century since 1750s was overcome by the original forces. They should have chosen to write a dated account. But that was not to be. The Hindu chauvinists came into power in 1947, and thereafter seemingly hired the services of time servers to cause subservience and subversion. Hence the need to review this yellow literature produced in Mina style.

The Hindu-Sikhs of 19th Century did worship Guga Pir or Sakhi Sarwar but only till their enlightenment. Similarly, Pashaura Singh must understand that Jat Sikhs in Punjab made a big incursion into Sikhism only after 1750s and not earlier, and martial tradition of Jats, of which he talks, could have an impact only thereafter. Sainapati (1711) was well aware of the young Khalsa and its potentialities to lay down life.

It was only with the *Gurbilas* and some of the *Rabit Namas*, heavily infiltrated by Brahamins, that infiltration starts in late 18th century. Koer Singh (1751), Kesar Singh Chhibber (1769) and Bhai Sukha Singh, and Bhai Santokh Singh (1844) contributed heterodox elements with whose writings about the goddess, the Tat Khalsa would violently disagree. Even Fenech justifies Bhai Vir Singh’s editing of Rattan Singh Bhangu’s manuscript about the “infamous incidents regarding Guru Gobind Singh’s veneration of the Goddess Chandi”. For Bhai Vir Singh, the Khalsa identity is paramount and is inherent to the theme of Sikh martyrdom. It was the heroic image of the soldier that was applied to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Sikh soldier.

Fenech now recalls the heroic deeds of Khalsa army recorded by George Forster (1798), Colonel John Malcolm shortly afterwards (1810),

and ultimately Joseph Davy Cunningham (1849), after eight years of labour among the Sikhs. And, what he wrote about say, Bhai Taru Singh closely resembled Rattan Singh Bhangu's *Gurpanth Parkash*, though he was not aware of it. It also means that oral tradition of which both Cunningham and Bhangu spoke, was extant during the 19th century. Herein lies the importance of Gianis, *Kathakars* and *Dhadis*.

Fenech, however, attributes to Harjot Oberoi the insightful note that one man can rarely change the course of history, but without Ditt Singh the (Lahore Singh) Sabha might have been rather a different body. Further that, in the words of Fenech Ditt Singh felt that "the observance of caste, idolatry, priesthood, the veneration of gurus apart from the Guru Granth Sahib, and the worship of popular saints were characteristics against which the Sikh Gurus had often spoken." All these were designed to make the Khalsa once again assume the form it had possessed during its golden age, i.e., 1708-1765. Fenech talks of 'Muslims persecution' during the period, but he has soft corner for 'Hindu chicanery' of which he make no mention, whatsoever.

Ditt Singh was aware of the wholesale extermination the Panth faced in 18th century, and the present danger of 19th century. The Sikhs were, however, now well placed before the "Arya Samaj and its Charismatic leaders. Another enemy they faced was arrogance and ignorance of the contemporary Sikhs. Tat Khalsa, of course, had to use martyr legend which predated Singh Sabha tradition and reinforced a strong commitment to faith in *Adi Granth* that emphasized the Tat Khalsa spirit.

According to Ditt Singh it was baptismal water that become a potent elixir to make Khalsa overcome extreme hardship. He, therefore, compared the contemporary Sikhs to the past 18th century. The most important to Ditt Singh's martyrologies was obviously the uncut hair (*kes*) as signified in Bhai Taru Singh's martyrdom. He sought to instill in them dignity, to adopt Tat Khalsa standards. It was this rhetoric and the numerous handouts etc. that kept the Sikh tradition alive.

The Khalsa Tract Society founded by Bhai Vir Singh in 1893 followed with numerous publications. According to N G Barrier, by 1911 a million copies issued by various organisations had been made

available, After Giani Ditt Singh's death in 1901, the Chief Khalsa Dewan (founded 1902) played a prominent role in bringing together various Singh Sabhas. The Khalsa Samachar and the Khalsa Advocate, played a prominent role. Then followed the All India Sikh Educational Conference from 1907. Only those could be called Sikhs who emulated their ancestors. Petrie's report of 1911 is to be seen in this light.

The reports continue to mention of good work done by Master Tara Singh, Prof Teja Singh, Sant Teja Singh, Bhai Takht Singh and others, on the powers of *amrit* and *katha* to inspire Khalsaisation of the Sikhs. It was this that institutionalized the Sikh spirit 'shorn of Hindu influence'. Fenech must know that became not the dominant but an inherent feature in Tat Khalsa interpretation of the Sikh tradition, and it was this spirit that liberated the Sikh Gurdwaras from the enemy.

VIII

The thesis now comes to its last chapter "Playing the Game: The Movement For Gurdwara Reform, 1920-25". Harjot Oberoi's work *The Construction of Religious Boundaries, Culture, Identity and Diversity in Sikh Tradition*, (Delhi, 1994), too comes to a close at this very juncture. Why? The answer is obvious. By 1925, the Sikh identity had been completely established, shorn of fulminations by malcontents like M.K. Gandhi, the so-called father of the nation, and others. The attempts of people like Fenech come to a close as their effort to impose Hindu multi-culturation, like the scenario in 19th century comes to a close. It is another matter that it restarted in post-1947 era with Hinduism's regaining its pristine glory.

It is quite remarkable that Harjot Oberoi provides the first paragraph of his *gur-bhai's* last chapter as there is an identity of outlook between the followers of McLeod. It was not only the powerful rhetoric of martyrdom as suggested by Fenech but the Tat Khalsa's rhetoric of the Sikhs and Sikhism that came to be seen the only interpretation of the Sikh tradition. It also must be stated here unlike Fenech and his guru McLeod, that the Hindus who were an essential part of these efforts to mix up the Sikh identity, were essential part of this Sikh

victory to liberate themselves and their shrines from the Hindu stranglehold. They were the ones who ultimately said that they were nothing but Hindus first and last and did not subscribe to the Sikh ideals, notwithstanding the onslaught launched by the supreme Hindu leader, M.K. Gandhi, who went to the extent of calling Guru Gobind Singh 'a misguided patriot.' Also that, Hindus were not holding the levers of power, as came to happen in post- 1947 era.

Fenech is not right to say that "it underscored the Akali debt to the Tat Khalsa", or that "Tat Khalsa is in fact indebted to the Akalis." As a matter of fact both are the same, synonyms. Apart from the 18th and 19th century works of Brahminical infiltrators, it was only McLeodian group of scholars and their collaborators, who have been disputing this, with ulterior motives.

Fenech is right that 1920-25 episode is a watershed in Sikh history, as significant (if not more so) as the initial reform impulse.. The readers, however, need not pay much attention to Fenech's laying overemphasis on martyrdom rhetoric or the case of Lachhman Singh executed in 1909, who only provides a minor link in the vast story of pristine purity of Sikh doctrine as enunciated by Guru Nanak-Guru Gobind Singh. The failure of Babbar Akalis in 1922, who alluded to Bhai Mani Singh, was a case in point. They were not representatives of the Sikh masses.

Fenech is right that the Singh Sabha's desire that these sacred places must remain undefiled, was at the roots of Tat Khalsa efforts to control them. Tat Khalsa was right that idols had no place in Sikh hierarchy. Fenech need not lament that the Sikhs had died to rid the temples of all things considered un-Sikh. It was Government's benign attitude to the Mahants, (despite Act XX of 1863) which prohibited British interference in Indian shrines, that was at the root of the problem. It was not long, in the first decade of 20th century that Singh Sabha began to be considered as the sole authority in Sikh matters. On an affair concerning successor to Bhai Harnam Singh, Head Granthi, Darbar Sahib, who died of natural causes, appeal was made to all the classes of the Sikhs and not simply to Jat Sikhs as Fenech mischievously would make out. It was all classess of Sikhs that in post 1920 era

provided manpower as Akali volunteers, and not simply the Jat community, as Fenech again, improperly would make out. Readers must take into consideration that for the Gurdwara Reform Movement all classes of Sikhs, urban or rural, played their role and any reference to any section of them by Fenech or McLeod, or any of his other collaborators is born out of malice. Another thing to be noted is that non-violence in the Gurdwara Reform Movement was basically because of the Sikh ethos and not because of Gandhi whose movement for *swaraj* within one year cut such a sorry figure. Again, though Congress did help the Sikhs, the same cannot be said of Gandhi despite Fenech mentioning of the same.

The constitution of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) on 15 November 1920, was a momentous affair. The Shiromani Akali Dal with Sarmukh Singh as Jathedar to coordinate the activities of scattered Jathas in January 1921 followed suit. The Central Sikh League was soon eclipsed. The SGPC consisted of men who possessed critical knowledge of Sikhism and Sikh history, men who were imbued with *nam*, and followed a path “sharper than a sword and straighter than a hair”. Khalsa form was rigidly enforced. The Gurdwara Reform Movement has been narrated reasonably well with few exceptions of unnecessarily playing on jats among the Sikhs or over-emphasis on militancy which were uncalled for.

Though Fenech uses the word ‘reformers’ for the people running the 1920 movement, he obviously means revivalists-suffering, standing true to and dying. He concludes the last chapter saying. “The Tat Khalsa message truly penetrated into the very heart of the Punjab due in large part to the martyrdom” -instead it would be much better to say, the Sikh and Sikhism’s idiom.

IX

The author’s concluding summary, obviously relates to martyrdom, because thesis is on martyrdom. It, however, in the words of Fenech, underwent a considerable reduction of meaning in view of “Singh Sabha’s emphasis on the *Adi Granth* as the litmus test of all contemporary Sikh tradition.” Further that, it was Tat Khalsa’s victory

of “their interpretation of Sikh history and religion scaling its hegemony for years to come.”

Few questions that need immediate answer by the people of North America are: How is it that Toronto University serves as a captive to McLeodian scholarship and candidates with whatever thesis do find acceptance for Doctorate degree there? What sort of multi-culturalism does Canada promote? Why have the Toronto and Vancouver Universities practically done away with Chairs on Sikh Studies? Why do only McLeodian scholars find placing in North America? Obviously the purpose for which all those Chairs were created and the money collected has failed, and put to misuse.

Mention may now be made of two new chairs on Sikh Studies created recently.

The chair named after the mother of S. Narinder Singh Kapani, in California, has been occupied by a McLeodian scholar. The other is a Chair named after the father of S. Didar Singh Dhaliwal in Wisconsin. His father was a subedar in the British Indian army. It is debatable that the mother of Kapani, a simple lady from Pothohar, learned and deeply conscious of her Sikh origin and ethos would be happy at the signals of a chair named after her but occupied by an anti-Sikh, a follower of McLeodian school of thought. How would father of S. Darshan Singh Dhaliwal react to a chair named after him but likely to be occupied by a McLeodian protegee or collaborator? Obviously not easily: his father, trained in Sikh ethos in the British Indian Army is likely to have his own mental framework.

Is there now need for some more stupid Sikhs (I am using the term in the same spirit as S. Kapur Singh, formerly ICS, who used the term in one of his papers released at Vancouver did) to create a chair after one of his parents or consorts? That would be a worst contribution to their ancestors or consorts receiving painful signals from McLeodian scholars holding the chair.

I think it would be much better that such efforts should instead be spent on creating specific scholarships for doing research work under known scholars, who have correct understanding of Sikhism. Another feature would be their making useful contribution at high school level,

apart from *gurmat prachar camps*.

What the Tat Khalsa gained in 1925, it lost so badly in post-1947, because of its inapt leadership. The Sikhs who gained in Third Sikh War, 1920-25, by overcoming the pitfalls of 1849 loss of power, lost the fourth Sikh's War, 1975-1994 so badly, that it is having its repercussions to day, and shall continue to do so hereafter.

For a proper appreciation of the current post-1947 situation, we shall have to look towards another paper.

□

*The Guru is as a river perennially full of holy water
By bathing in which,
Man is rid of the impurity of his foul understanding.
The perfect holy bath lies, therefore,
In meeting the True Guru
Who then turns man's beast-and-goblin nature
Into that of the angelic beings.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1329

ਗੁਰੂ ਦਰੀਆਉ ਸਦਾ ਜਲੁ ਨਿਰਮਲੁ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਦੁਰਮਤਿ ਮੈਲੁ ਹਰੈ ॥
ਸਤਿਗੁਰਿ ਪਾਇਐ ਪੂਰਾ ਨਾਵਣੁ ਪਸੂ ਪਰੇਤਹੁ ਦੇਵ ਕਰੈ ॥

THE CAT IS OUT OF THE BAG

JARNAIL SINGH*

Reading editorial ‘Bani and Bana’ in *Sikh Bulletin* of February 2005 has been a personal disappointment for me. There is a little bit of history behind it. About three years back when I was looking for a contact to buy books by S Gurbakhsh Singh, a friend directed me towards Hardev Singh Shergill. I bought the books and along with the books he also sent me some free literature including audio tapes by Veer Bhupinder Singh. He also started sending me the monthly *Sikh Bulletin*. I was impressed by all this and really felt that this organization was doing a very good job for Sikhism. I wrote a small article *SSI a Step in the Right Direction* which was published in the *Sikh Bulletin* of November 2003. The central idea of my writeup was the absence of communication between the Sikhs and the World. During the times of our Gurus there was a constant dialogue with the world at large. But nowadays the Sikhs talk and preach to their fellow Sikhs only. The need of the day is to listen to the world as Sikhs and speak Sikhism to the world. I felt as if this organization was going to fill this gap. That is why this editorial was a sort of personal disappointment for me.

Coming back to the editorial, let us try to capture the ‘logic’ running through its lines. The learned editor starts with an attempt to find out the meanings of Punjabi words *bani* and *bana*. After perusing the pages of English – Punjabi dictionary for meanings of these words, the author discards all the meanings given in the dictionary, and discovers with his magic band that *bana* means 5 *kakkar*s (*ਕੈ*)¹. Because this is the only meaning that fits in the theory he has in his mind. However, only a couple of lines later he contradicts himself when he

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says that in fact *bana* means only hair covered with turban and not the 5 *ks*. Some of the statements or judgments made by the learned editor are also worth noting. He says that “to such a person that in fact is the only definition of a Sikh” What is the definition of a Sikh? He is silent about it. And the word “only” prompts me to ask; are there more than one definitions of a Sikh? He has avoided finding an answer to these questions, as a logical answer will for sure contradict his thesis. The learned editor further avers that *bana* gives license to religious and political leaders of Sikhs to be corrupt. No doubt majority of Sikh leaders (and scholars as well, why to pick leaders only) are corrupt, but to say that *bana* (which according to him means 5 *ks*) gives them a license to be corrupt, is stooping even below the level of yellow journalism. There are heaps of corrupt people who call themselves Sikhs but do not adorn 5 *ks*. There are heaps of non-Sikh political and religious leaders who are corrupt from head to toe. Who or what gives them the license? Or would he classify them as unlicensed corrupt people? Every corrupt person tries to conceal himself. But that does not mean that cover he hides under is a cause of his/her corruption. It is even more disappointing when this thesis comes from the editor of a journal discussing serious philosophical issues. In fact the 5 *ks* gives the world a license and a right to question a person who adorns them as to why he does not follow the tenets of Sikhism. This right has been exercised in the pages of *Sikh Bulletin* on hundreds of times. Using this license, many people have criticized Mr Badal for performing rituals like *bavan*.

The learned editor now turns his microscope on to the words *patit* or apostate. Once again his logic is weird. He finds that an apostate means a person who has forsaken his religion. However, he is upset that for Sikhs a person is apostate if he cuts his hair. Obviously, in his opinion, for Sikhs, cutting of hair should not amount to forsaking of religion. He does not bother to justify his stand with any logic, and closes the thread by saying that character has been reduced to insignificance. In what way are keeping of hair and character related? Are they mutually exclusive or inclusive? Or are these two separate things altogether? He conveniently shifts his focus in order to avoid finding an answer to these questions. This technique is often used by many *kathakars* in our gurdwaras. Instead of discussing a subject in

detail, they shift the focus of their talk to a popular theme to win their point. No one in this world will deny the significance of character. Both character and appearance have their own separate roles to play in the life of an individual. Emphasis on one does not necessarily mean abandoning the other.

The learned editor now comes to his point. He starts with a reference to the WSC held in Sydney in September 2004. I had the opportunity to attend this conference on its opening day. There were about 50-60 people present on that day including the organizers, government officials and invitees from other religions. I would like to mention one thing about this conference, before we go further into the discussion about the editorial. S Hardev Singh Shergill said in his answer to one of the questions that in Sikhism there is no place for priests. But before the start of the proceedings for the day, a priest from a local gurdwara was specially called to perform *ardaas* or prayer. And he left immediately after the prayer. The non-Sikh attendees must have gone with the impression that in Sikhism they need a priest to say their prayer. It would have been better if S Hardev Singh or any one from the attendees would have come forward to say the prayer. In short, we are sending conflicting signals to the world. This is the crux of the problem. This is also one of the main reasons behind this confusion about the five *ks*. We are giving conflicting gestures to our kids and to the world at large. This editorial is doing exactly the same thing. In Sikhism there is no place for priests, because every Sikh is supposed to be a priest. How many of us are ready to perform the duties of a priest, if need be?

Coming back to the topic, S Hardev Singh Shergill refers to the questions about the definition of a Sikh put to him by some attendees during this conference. He refers to the definition given in the Sikh *Rehat Maryada*. Astonishingly, he interprets this definition as being silent about the uncut hair. The definition, as quoted by him, reads like this: "Any human being who faithfully believes in one immortal being; the ten Gurus, from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh; the Guru Granth Sahib; the utterances and teachings of the ten Gurus and the baptism bequeathed by the tenth Guru, and who does not owe allegiance to any other religion is a Sikh". What S Hardev Singh is saying here is that teachings of our all the Gurus and the *amrit*

initiation bequeathed by the tenth Guru, does not mean keeping unshorn hair. I can only say that this is not only deliberate distortion but a mischievous remark to confuse the readers. It will be pertinent here to share with you one question put to me in one of the discussions, on the internet regarding unshorn hair. I was asked to show a single line from *Jap Ji Sahib* wherein Guru Nanak has asked his followers to keep unshorn hair. I was told that since *Jap Ji* is the quintessence of Guru Granth Sahib, we must find these instructions in it. My answer to this question was very simple. Every line of *Jap Ji* asks us to follow the teachings of the Guru in total. This is exactly what S Hardev Singh is refusing to do here. If he has a mind to follow the Guru's teachings in totality, he will definitely find a mention of uncut hair.

Now S Hardev Singh starts listing his reasons for liberating diaspora Sikhs from the clutches of *bana* (which should be read as 5 *ks* as per his definition). To summarize his points:

- S Bawa Singh from Australia has given some literature about Sikhism to a student. The student and her brother are impressed by the philosophy of Sikhism, but are scared to adorn the 5 *ks* especially the hair and the sword.
- Claudia G S Martin from Brazil says that her country is ripe for conversion to Sikhism. But the traditional Sikhism with saffronised *Amritdharis* carrying long *kirpans* have no chance to succeed there.
- Garon Lee, a young student corresponds about Sikhism with Mr Hardev Singh Shergill. He has done enough study of our faith and discovers that our *Rebat Maryada* is full of rituals.

It is apparent that all these points are baseless. I know Bawa Singh here in Australia. In one of the meetings, he said that he is a Sikh of Guru Nanak and has nothing to do with Guru Gobind Singh. How can you expect a person with this opinion to be able to convince a student about the significance of unshorn hair? S Hardev Singh has picked up a line that suits him from the article by Ms Claudia. Ms Claudia in her article has repeatedly emphasized the need for *gatka* training. At the very outset of her article she admits that she was “drawn to Sikhism by the fascinating code of conduct marked by indelible symbols – the so called 5 *kakkars*”. Obviously, she did not mean discarding of 5 *ks* in the quote picked by the editor. Similarly, the queries arising in the mind of Mr Garon Lee do not substantiate

the point that S Hardev Singh is making. His query about *Anand Karaj* is due to his lack of understanding of Punjabi culture. *Anand Karaj* has nothing to do with the marriage being arranged or consensual. Also, the *Rehat* does not ask us to remember the physical existence of our Gurus. Instead it requires us to follow their utterances and teachings.

S Hardev Singh Shergill puts forward his thesis that Sikhism should evolve out of the restrictions of five *ks*, especially the hair. In his opinion this is a need of the diaspora Sikhs. In his opinion, it is very hard for the children born and bred overseas to keep their hair unshorn. He quotes Kabir to support his thesis.

Kabir preet ik sio kiye aan dubida jaye.

Bhanvein lambe kes kar bhav bharrar mudaey.

Guru Granth Sahib, p 1365

(Kabir, the duality vanishes, when you are in love with one supreme God. It does not matter whether you have long hair or are clean shaven.)

We often read in the pages of *Sikh Bulletin* that the so-called *kathakars* are misquoting and misinterpreting *gurbani*. This is exactly what he has done here. The long hair refer to the *jattas* (tangled locks) kept by some sects in India. Similarly, some sects were shaving their heads. Kabir is telling both of them that neither the unkempt hair nor the shaving of hair is of any help at the end of the day. What matters is your firm belief and love for the one immortal being. This is what will lead to riddance from duality. Now to use this verse from Kabir as something that negates the importance of 5 *ks* is absolutely wrong, and amounts to deliberate distortion of the meaning of *gurbani*. Both the sects were running away from the ordinary life style. Remember, Guru has not only given us uncut hair but also a comb to keep them neat and tidy. As a friend has said in these lines, Kabir hammers home the “futility of renunciation as a means of achieving eternal bliss. Sikhism is a life-affirming philosophy and the uncut hair symbolize this positive view towards life. The uncut hair (as opposed to the shaven head) and the comb (as opposed to unkempt hair) symbolize the ‘permanent renunciation of renunciation’.”

Moreover, none of our Gurus have said that by keeping long hair you can attain spiritual progress. Unshorn hair is like the dress

code of a student in a school and they are not meant to help the student to be smarter in his studies. It was none else what Guru Gobind Singh, who institutionalized the concept of five *kes*, said that keeping long hair does not help to gain spiritually.

Kes dhare na mile har pyare – *Swaya* no 10, *Akaal Ustat*

If you use fuel meant for airplanes to drive a car, it won't work. Would you conclude that that fuel is useless? This is what S Hardev Singh is doing here. Unshorn hair are not meant to help you gather signals of spirituality. This is what Kabir is saying. He forgets that Kabir has also said that

Kabir man mundia nabee kes mundaye kanye.

Jo kichh kia so man kia munda mund ajanye.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 1369

Kabir when you have not shaved the mind, why did you shave your head ? Mind commits all actions, but you shaved your head without any reason.

And Kabir has also given his verdict that only those who are committed to a code, fight to win, all others run away from the battle field.

Daghe hoe so ran meh jujhe bin daghe bhag jai

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 970

This has been true throughout the history of mankind. And it will remain true for all times to come.

I agree with S Hardev Singh Shergill that it will be hard for the parents to make their kids keep unshorn hair. But it has always been hard to be a Sikh. And it will always be hard to be a Sikh. I take it that way. However, he is wrong when he is equating five *kes* with dress or *bana*. Five *kes* fits in dresses from all cultures. The first five persons (the five beloved ones) to adorn these *kes* were all from different cultures. They came from Sialkot, Dwarka, Bidar, Jagannath Puri, and Hastinapur. All these places are miles apart from each other and have their own unique culture. So the argument that five *kes* are only suitable for Punjabi dress and culture, is baseless.

Another argument given by S Hardev Singh Shergill is that if a person is exposed to *bani*, the desire for *bana* or five *kes* will come by itself. This is totally wrong proposition, and he himself has contradicted it by giving an example of Macauliffe. It is interesting to note the way

he has used this example. In his opinion, Mr Macauliffe gave up his promising career to pursue his study of Sikhism. Even though he studied Sikhism for such a long time, he did not convert to Sikhism. Similarly, many others who studied and praised Sikh Scriptures, did not convert to Sikhism. What are the reasons? He does not bother to investigate. Instead he concludes that the Sikhs have denied them the experience of *gurbani*. How and when, he does not bother to investigate. But at the same time he hopes that if a person is exposed to *gurbani*, he might have the desire for five *ks* as well. In fact he is working on a flawed thesis. There is no cause and effect relationship between the appearance of a Sikh and the experience of *gurbani*. Both have their own separate roles to play in the spiritual progress of a Sikh.

At the end, S Hardev Singh Shergill concludes that it is time that Sikhs residing outside India should liberate themselves from the restrictions of 5 *ks*. He perceives this as something immediately required to take Sikhism on to the twenty first century. We have seen above that this perception is based on illogical thinking and misunderstanding of basic concepts of Sikhism. It is extremely unfortunate that this comes from an organization established for spread of Sikhism and is named after the glorious Singh Sabha movement. It is coming from an organization that accepts donation under the name Khalsa Tricentennial Foundation. One can safely assume that it was established on the occasion of three hundred years of the advent of Khalsa. That is the day when Guru Gobind Singh blessed his Sikhs with five *ks*. This comes from an organization that has one of its objectives to “promote Sikh way of life in accordance with the teachings given in *gurbani* incorporated into the *Aad Guru Granth Sahib* and by Sikh *Rebat Maryada* (code of conduct) laid down by Sri Akal Takhat Sahib as an institution.”

It is not time to disassociate or delink *Sikhi* from five *ks*. Sikhism will never be Sikhism then. Five *ks* are the face of Sikhism as conceived and authorised by our great Gurus. It is also surprising that this advice is given to the diaspora Sikhs only. Why not this advice to Sikhs in Punjab? Are we having different brand of Sikhism in different countries?

A Sikh is a Sikh only if he/she is a Sikh. And a Sikh is not a Sikh if he/she discriminates between a Sikh and a non-Sikh. That in nutshell

is what the five *ks* stand for. I know there are people roaming about in this world looking like Sikhs but doing all sorts of things which do not behave a Sikh. This in fact is the real problem. This is what we should disassociate ourselves from. This is what we should expose. Sikhism is virtually under seizure of these people. All our gurdwaras including SGPC are being controlled by them. We cannot fight and win these people by abandoning the five *ks*. If we do so, the ordinary Sikh has no choice but to go to these people. The ordinary Sikh believes (and rightly so) that the instructions of his/her Guru are immutable. Guru never makes an error.

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NOTES

- 1 The five articles of faith in Sikhism starting with Punjabi letter “K”. *Kesh* (hair), *Kanga* (comb), *Kara* (iron wrist bracelet), *Kachh* (underwear) and *Kirpan* (the sword).

□

*One single sun runs through all seasons,
And their various parts and aspects.
God is likewise One
And permeates through all.
Many are the forms and aspects
In which He manifests Himself.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 357

ਸੂਰਜੁ ਏਕੋ ਰੁਤਿ ਅਨੇਕ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਕਰਤੇ ਕੇ ਕੇਤੇ ਵੇਸ ॥

THE DIFFERENCE*

I got up early one morning
and rushed right into the day;
I had so much to accomplish
that I didn't have time to pray.

Problems just tumbled about me,
and heavier came each task
“Why doesn't God help me ?” I wondered
He answered, “You didn't ask.”

I wanted to see joy and beauty,
but the day toiled on, gray and bleak;
I wondered why God didn't show me.
He said, “But you didn't seek.”

I tried to come into God's presence;
I used all my keys at the lock.
God gently and lovingly chided,
“My child, You didn't knock.”

I woke up early this morning,
and paused before entering the day;
I had so much to accomplish
that I had to take time to pray.

□

* Sent by Baldeesh Singh Khaira <bskhaira@telus.net>

REVIEWS

THE OTHER SIKHS – A VIEW FROM EASTERN INDIA –

A REVIEW BY JASWANT SINGH*

Author : Himadri Banerjee

*Publisher : Manohar Publishers & Distributors 4753/23, Ansari Road, Daryaganj,
New Delhi*

Pages : 279; Price : Rs 550/-

Himadri Banerjee is Guru Nanak Professor of Indian History, Jadavpur University, Kolkata. His in-depth and intense interest in Sikhs and Punjab is evident from his earlier book, *Agrarian Society of the Punjab* and the other volume, *The Khalsa and the Punjab Studies in Sikh History* edited by him. The present book is the first of the two volumes. *The Other Sikhs – A View From Eastern India*. Very few non-historian Sikh scholars in and outside the Punjab are aware of such a work from the Eastern India. In fact there are three books woven into this volume. To catalogue all the authors, poets, essayists and lecturers will be an uphill task, so that only an overall view is being attempted.

After a comprehensive introduction about religious intolerance, the rapprochement between the two communities as 'healing touch', the agony of the Operation Blue Star, Singh Sabha Reformers establishing Sikh identity including *Anand Karaj* as Sikh marriage, Gurdwara reforms, formation of the Akali Dal, the author takes up his main theme of Assamese, Oriya and Bengali Sikh studies in their regional languages. He emphasises that the Brahmos in Bengal and Orissa were the earliest to be interested in Sikhism. During the last 3 decades of the twentieth century, emergence of separate Sikh identity as in *Ham Hindu Nabi* by Bhai Kahn Singh, added a further dimension

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to the studies.

ASSAMESE STUDIES

Punjab and Assam are the two Indian states, besides Jammu and Kashmir, which are 'storm centres'. Buranji literature preserves Assam identity but contains few references about Punjab and Sikh history. Assamese literature mentions Guru Nanak's visit to Kamrup along with Mardana. The story of Nur Shah through her magic spell converting Mardana into sheep and Guru bringing him back to human form is mentioned. Banikanta Kakati, Lakshminath Bezbarua, Harichandra Bhattacharya, Shashikanta Gogoi, Dhaniram Datta, Phula Singh Chhetri (an Assamese Sikh) are among the Assamese authors covered in the survey. The last author 'provided a distinct regional flavour to Assamese Sikh studies. *Jayanti*, a literary magazine, evaluates Maharaja Ranjit Singh as a 'Nationalist hero' whereas an anonymous writer holds him responsible for the 'fall of empire'. *Arunodoi* published from Sibsagar by American Baptist Mission, has a special link with Sikh studies. Gurdwara reforms movement by the Akalis, resignation of Maharaja Ripudaman Singh, ruler of Nabha, and a few Sikhs ready to die to protect the integrity of Assam, find mention. There is a rumour that a Sikh Battalion courted death fighting for the Ahom king to defend the freedom of Assam. Bezbarua had high regard for Guru Nanak, but was critical of Ranjit Singh! Assamese Sikhs keep *kesb* and wear turban with some modification. Sikhs have married Assamese girls, and are absorbed in that milieu. While returning from Assam as a Captain in 1960, my Taxi driver Inder Singh told me in chaste Punjabi that he had married an Assamese girl, and had settled there for more than two decades.

ORIIA SIKHS

The author starts with history. Guru Nanak in his eastern Udasi came to Puri, and composed his famous *shabad*, *Gagan mai thal* in Dhanasri *raag*. He passed through Cuttack, where Dantan Sahib Gurdwara is situated. There is also a locality called Guru Nanak Dihi. Guru Nanak lives in Oriya folk tradition also. In the seventeenth century, Sikhs came to Patna as traders, and later the city became a pilgrimage center as birth place of Guru Gobind Singh. Harimandir here is one of the five *takhts*. 'Na Anka', the famine, decimated one

third of Cuttack division. Sikh studies in Orissa were mostly pioneered by Brahma Samaj in Puri. People like Madhusudan Rao, found similarity in Guru Nanak and Brahma preachings. *Sevak*, a weekly, published three successive articles on Guru Nanak. Fakirmohan Senapati covered Sikh history of 250 years from Guru Nanak to Banda Bahadur. In his poem *Saptarshi* he quotes the Guru extensively. But Brahmos never got genuinely interested in Khalsas' message of military resistance. In their literary journal *Satyabadi* and newspaper *Samaj*, they compared Oriya's freedom movement with the Sikhs' Gurdwara reform movement. Chandramani Das' *Nanak* is Guru's Oriya biography in book form. Naba Kishore's poem about Guru Gobind Singh, projects him as a soul of generosity. Lingaraj Mishra's book *Guru Gobinda Singha* eulogizes his life, though Chintamani Acharya had a different mindset. Ghosal's book conveyed a lesson from the way the Sikhs marched towards freedom from a political morass. The author salutes Sikhs for their love of freedom and martyrdom. Siva Prasad Das' *Sikh Prakash* is mentioned as extensive history of Sikhs from Guru Nanak to the Second Sikh war. He shows blatant loyalty to the British. Oriya press like *Samaj* and *Utkal Dipika* aroused the sentiments of Oriyas in favour of Akali agitation against bloody turn at Nankana Sahib, Guru ka Bagh, Jaito and such other places. Sikh studies in Orissa spread over a large area like Cuttack, Baripada, Balasore Berhanpore and Sambalpur. However, the small number of Oriya Sikhs was a handicap in bringing out authentic Oriya books on Sikhism except *Sikh Prakash*, a commendable book. This was compensated by Oriya press coverage in the wake of non-cooperation movement and Akali agitation in the 20th century.

STUDIES IN BENGAL

The author devotes two elaborate chapters about Bengalis and Sikh studies. He is confining to the first 250 years, i.e., Guru period out of 500 years of Sikh history. Bengali Brahmos pioneered the work. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, drawing similarity between Brahmos and Guru Nanak, drafted his famous book *Sketch of the Sikhs*. His narration covers Gurdwara Badi Sikh *sangat* in Calcutta, "Alakh Niranjana" salutation, Sikh *shabads* being sung at Brahmos meetings, as also Guru Nanak's views against idolatry and casteism. Akshay Kumar Datta

wrote the first article about Guru Nanak. Bhai Mahendra Nath also wrote Guru Nanak's biography - *Nanak Prakash* on the basis of *Bala Janamsakhi*. Going through the versions of Ritendra Nath, Krishna Kumar Mitra and Rajni Kanta, we come over to Rabindranath Tagore. He explains *Khara Sauda* as a "foundation of a great concept and spiritual power." Tagore was the pioneer in introducing Bengali children to Sikh culture. Sarat Kumar Roy, Rajendralal Arya's articles, Amodini Ghosh, Krishna Chandra Chakrabarty and Nityanand Goswami have written poems about Guru Nanak. 'Baba Nanak was a Muslim Faqir', writes Haq S Omed Ali, and Ali Ahmed Ali Eslambadi emphasised that Guru Nanak did *namaṣ* and was respectful to Islam. Swami Vivekananda calls Guru Gobind Singh great political leader and spiritual organizer for Sikhs but aligns him as one of the Hindu race.

Rabindranath Tagore in a span of quarter century wrote a number of essays and poems about Guru Gobind Singh. All these works except one show a respectful attitude. However, in a preface to *Sikh Guru or Sikh Jati*, he wrote "finale of Sikh history was very tragic and tenth Guru bore the lion's share of the responsibility for that." By pointing an accusing finger at Guru Gobind Singh, poet's image in Sikh psyche suffered a great dip. Even Himadri Banerjee does not justify this change in the views of Tagore, keeping in mind the voice of protest by Punjab's oppressed rural peasantry. "So to criticize him (Guru Gobind Singh) for the communal discord in eastern India in the first decade of twentieth century is perhaps an incorrect historical formulation." Rabindranath's digs no doubt hurt Sikh intellectuals in distant Punjab, rues the author. *Jatras, Guru Gobinda* in five acts by Haranath Bose, *Sikher Katha* a five-act play by Jatindranath Samadar, also criticized Guru Gobind Singh. It appears these Bengalis did not approve of Guru's Khalsa army taking up the arms for stemming Mughals' oppression and wanted Gandhi's non-violence stance. Behold ! Subhash Chander Bose, another Bengali, did adopt armed struggle for country's independence. Tinkari Banerjee presented in *Guru Gobinda Singha*, Guru's life with references from *Suraj Parkash* and *Dasam Granth*. Banerjee Basant Kumar calls the Guru 'a spirit of protest against oppression, a religious preacher, a creator of martial race'. It is well nigh impossible to even enumerate the Bengali authors of Sikh study. *Japji Sahib's* Bengali translation in 1900 AD shows

Bengalis' early interest, including one by Jatindra Mohan Chatterjee who in old age embraced Sikhism. *Sukhmani Sabib*, *Adi Granth*, *Dasam Granth* have all been studied by Bengalis. In fact in 1873, Tagore after his sacred thread ceremony along with his father Debendranath went to the Golden Temple, Amritsar, and stayed there for a month. Haranchandra Chakladar's translation of *Adi Granth* is a landmark achievement. Brahmos were the pioneers of Sikh studies. They appreciated the spirit of martyrdom and self-sacrifice. However, Tagore's criticism of Guru Gobind Singh gave rise to bitter reaction in Punjab, understandably. His article '*Sikh Swadhinata*' glorified Banda Bahadur's Sikh tradition of martyrdom. The poem *Bandibir* immortalised this hero. Valour of young Nehal Singh, who at the time of execution thunders, "I am a Sikh" is highlighted by Tagore in his poem. Valour of Mani Singh, Mehtab Singh, Haqiqat Rai and Taru Singh is brought out. Bhai Mani Singh's martyrdom in a biography *Sikher Balidan* by Kumudini Bose is remarkable. Prinsep's stance against Maharaja Ranjit Singh is mentioned. Lepil Griffins' *Ranjit Singh* mentions the treaty of Amritsar (1809). Maharaja bashers are also mentioned in passing. Even Tagore obliquely blames Maharaja for Sikh decline.

Also included are Manmohan Bose's drama *Duleen* and, Kaliprasanna's novel *Samrat O Sater Shap* which discusses Maharani Jindan.

In fact the two chapters on studies in Bengal are full of dramas, essays and poems about Sikhs, concentrating on their love for martyrdom. I really marvel at author's in-depth and analytical study. I spent many midnight hours to go through this illuminating, educating and entertaining book. Lesser price of the book will encourage larger readership.

SRI GURU PANTH PARKASH

A REVIEW BY HARDEV SINGH*

Author : Rattan Singh Bhangu

Publisher : Singh Brothers, Bazar Mai Sewan, Amritsar, 2004

Pages : 448; Price : Rs 275/-

Rattan Singh Bhangu, the author of *Panth Parkash*, was the grandson of famous Sikh warrior, Sardar Mehtab Singh Mirankotia, who killed Massa Ranghar in the holy precincts of Golden Temple, to liberate it from the sacrilege created by the marauder. This is considered to be an authentic source of Sikh history after the Guru period pertaining to the most crucial phase of the Sikh struggle during the eighteenth century. The author was persuaded by Captain Murray of the British army to compile the history of Sikh struggle leading to establishment of Khalsa Raj. The author started the work on this project in 1809 and completed it in 1841. It is based on interviews, family history and the information collected by the British and French officers about Punjab. *Panth Parkash* is basically an oral history text of the Sikh struggle during the 18th Century.

Rattan Singh Bhangu had no training in historiography, and there were no written accounts available regarding Sikh History. So he faced a formidable task to complete his project. The text was written in old Punjabi verse. Bhai Veer Singh, the great Sikh savant, got it printed in Vazier Hind Press, Amritsar in 1914. Balwant Singh Dhillon, the Editor of the present volume has done an excellent job by comparing the old hand-written manuscript of *Panth Parkash* with printed edition of Bhai Veer Singh. The edited version contains footnotes to explain the discrepancies of the old printed editions and the textual material. Singh

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Brothers have taken pains to publish and print it in the book form.

Panth Parkash is an epic tale of Sikh struggle. It starts abruptly with the exit of French presence in and around Delhi, the fall of Marhatta empire and the onslaught of the British empire in northern India. British officers were baffled to know the rise of Sikh empire in Punjab, and hence they were keen to explore the Sikh religion and culture. Thus, a dialogue starts between Captain Murray and the author, who was persuaded to write an account of the Sikh struggle.

The author traces the history of Sikh Gurus briefly and explains the need for creation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh. Surprisingly, Bhangu is trapped by Hindu mythology and he considers Guru Nanak as an *avatar* of Raja Janak, the father of Sita! In the same vein, he narrates the story of Chandi *puja* by Guru Gobind Singh to create the Khalsa. On the Baisakhi day of 1699, 5000 Sikhs were baptised into the Khalsa fold. Bhangu gives a vivid picture of the baptised Sikhs, called Nihangs, who were soldiers of the *Akal Purakh*. They were moving armies of the Khalsa, took ration from the Sikh women and, if need be, looted the village folk and collected the tax.

Panth Parkash is the only source of historical account of Banda and the establishment of Sikh rule in the Punjab. The revolution started with the victories of Banda Singh Bahadur was short-lived, as he lost support of Mata Sundri and a faction of the Sikhs, known as Tat Khalsa. In fact, Sikh historians have not done justice to the role played by Banda in liberating Punjab and creating an egalitarian society based on Sikh principles. It was a nascent Khalsa democracy which could not survive even for a decade. The crucial phase of Sikh struggle leading to the consolidation of power in the form of Sikh confederacies (Misals) in Punjab forms the core of *Panth Parkash*. The Sikh were fighting against the Mughals, Abdalis and Durranis to liberate Punjab. They left their homes and hearths, and were hiding in the jungles. It was a fight for survival. Golden Temple (Harimandir) was blown up to destroy the Sikh center of inspiration and spiritual power.

It is fascinating to read the sterling role played by Nawab Kapoor Singh Virk and Jassa Singh Ahluwalia in guiding the Sikh affairs. The Sikh holocausts known as *Chhota* and *Vadda Ghalugharas* are described by Rattan Singh Bhangu. The internecine quarrels among Sikh confederacies also find some mention. Baghel Singh conquered Delhi

and established Sikh gurdwaras. It was a high tide of Sikh power. The author gives a fair account of Marhattas, Rohillas and their association with Sikh Sardars. Most of these conflicts ended in loot, plunder or conspiracies. It was a period when Mughal empire lost its vitality and the British East Indian Company advanced as a sovereign power to establish its rule over India. The role of cis-Satluj Sikh states to checkmate the progress of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and siding with the British does not find a mention. The author has failed to mention the current affairs of Khalsa Raj established by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The formation of Phulkia states and the role played by Ala Singh in Sikh affairs, however, do find a mention in *Panth Parkash*. It will be appropriate if this original source of Sikh history is translated into English.

□

*God is so merciful that
He bestows virtue on the repenting non-virtuous
And increases blessedness on the striving virtuous.
But I cannot think of any one
Who can do Him any good in return.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 2

ਨਾਨਕ ਨਿਰਗੁਣਿ ਗੁਣੁ ਕਰੇ ਗੁਣਵੰਤਿਆ ਗੁਣੁ ਦੇ ॥
ਤੇਹਾ ਕੋਇ ਨ ਸੁਝਈ ਜਿ ਤਿਸੁ ਗੁਣੁ ਕੋਇ ਕਰੇ ॥

CONNECTING THE DOTS IN SIKH HISTORY

A REVIEW BY BHUPINDER SINGH MAHAL*

Author : Harbans Singh Noor

Publisher : Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh

Pages 127; Price Rs 150/-

Different writers may assess and describe the same key event from different angles, depending on how they translate available historical records in their own mind's eye. On occasions, new facts may surface that change the historical dynamics. History, therefore, may not always reveal the full panoramic view of certain events.

The author singles out crucial turning points in Sikh history that, his research shows, were not satisfactorily explained, and hence their import not fully understood.

Not that information or evidence was not available to other writers, but that these sources may have escaped their notice, or they were not referred to, or lacked proper interpretation or simply passed over. He delves into historical documents and other sources to shed new light on these events. His vantage point provides an intriguing perspective on some key incidents. Not surprisingly, he paints a picture slightly different from that taught in history classes.

The author first hit on the idea of 'dot' from the findings of the 9/11 inquiry which concluded that had FBI been able to connect the critical information lying strewn in the files of various intelligence agencies, each file a dot, they may have prevented the attack.

The 'dot' in the title, therefore, represents fresh data that either adds a new dimension to, or subtracts an untenable element from, current memory. For this reason, the book is not a primer. Only the

* #6, Golfview Cr, Dundas, Ontario L9H 6V7, Canada

knowledgeable reader is in a position to weigh up the merits of the modified perspective. However, there are chapters offering no new perspective (e.g, Chapter 4 – “*End of the Masand System and the Birth of Khalsa*” – and as such dot-less).

Writer’s prose is crisp and distinct. He expresses his thoughts and arguments with economy. There are publishing oversights, such as, presenting the appendixes as chapters rather than as addendums or supplements and the odd printing mistake.

In his otherwise excellent introduction, Dr Kharak Singh mistakenly views the book as an anthology; and, therefore, incorrectly concludes that the book “is not a systematic account of any particular period of Sikh history”. Rather, the book is an abstract of events that the author believes were chronicled on the bases of incomplete data.

Born in a devout Sikh family, septuagenarian Sardar Harbans Singh Noor graduated from Punjab University of Lahore in 1943, choosing to make a career in journalism. He retired in 1984, after serving 26 years as Cultural Affairs Specialist with the United States Information Service, in New Delhi, to devote his life in the cause of Sikhism. He resides in Baltimore (USA).

The author begins his quest by a fairly grim portrayal of Europe during Guru Nanak’s life. He describes an ecclesiastical Europe under the religious dominion of a corrupt papacy. The author blames Pope Sixtus IV for “establishing the Spanish Inquisition” that was intended to purify Spain and Portugal from heretics.

In reality it was the devout Isabella, a Castillion, and Ferdinand, an Aragonese, who executed the Inquisition in order to wipe out the Jewish and Muslim religions from their domain. Pope Sixtus agreed to issue a papal bull only under threat of withdrawal by Ferdinand of the Spanish garrisons from Sicily.

Most of the author’s “ethnic cleansing” and hounding of witches was confined to some territories within Spain, which was not yet a single state, but an amalgamation of reigns, and Portugal. These two regions do not a Europe make.

Rather, Europe was emerging from the dark days of Middle Ages into an era known as the Renaissance that witnessed the introduction of print technology, flourishing of artistic, social, scientific, and political thought, and discovery of sea routes between all continents.

The anecdote about the young Brahmin Yodhan who was executed on the judgement of the *Ulema*, in 1499, for his advocacy of sameness of religions - “*Religion of the Musalman is true and so also is that of the Hindus*” - may have so troubled Nanak that, on emerging from the river after three missing days, he uttered the revelatory words “*Na ko Hindu, na ko Musalman*”. This incident is the first of the connecting ‘dots’.

The author refutes the version of a few notable events in the life of Guru Gobind Singh as given by some historians.

He challenges the prevailing view reporting the despatch of a squad of soldiers by Guru *ji* to help Bahadur Shah in his campaign for succession. According to the writer the 200-300 strong Sikh cavalry would have made no difference to Bahadur Shah as he “deployed 152,000 horsemen and 178,000 foot soldiers” at the battleground of Jajau. He further questions, though unjustifiably, if ever there was an intermediary. He is referred to Dr Gopal Singh’s chapter on Guru Gobind Singh, in particular the footnote that asserts, “This intermediary is said to have been Bhai Nand Lal (who was at one time) employed as *Mir Munshi* with Prince Muazzam”.

Guru Gobind Singh’s complaints against (a) Wazir Khan for the brutal killing of his infant sons, and (b) Imperial armies “joining (the hill Rajahs) without any justification” in forcing him to vacate the fort at Anandpur, fell on deaf ears of the emperor. Because Bahadur Shah was beholden to Wazir Khan for the latter’s help during the war of succession and a donation of 8 lakhs rupees to the imperial treasury. As reward Wazir Khan’s status was elevated, affording him “exempt(ion) from any conditions and obligations to the state”.

Sada Kaur lived a colourful history. On the death of Kanahiya *misl* chieftain Jai Singh, she inherited the bulk of the *misl*. She continued to maintain her own army even during her relationship as a mother-in-law to Ranjit Singh. She led her forces, in 1799, alongside that of Ranjit Singh to capture Lahore, then a remnant of the Bhangian *misl* headed by Sardar Chet Singh.

Her power and influence on Ranjit Singh vacillated inversely to her daughter giving an heir. She flirted with the idea of an alliance with the British to unseat Ranjit Singh. She is described as “the most remarkable woman in the history of Punjab”; instead, some will point

to her notoriety. Her behaviour was typical of *misl* leader mentality, in order to compete for regional hegemony or to exact vengeance from a confederate.

Author makes an erroneous claim that, "At the time of accession to the throne of his father, Ranjit Singh, was only 10 years old". No kingdom had yet been established. At the time (1790) Lahore was under Bhangian *misl* rule. Sohan Singh Seetal, in his study of the *misl* period, writes, "Maharaja Ranjit Singh confiscated the entire territory of the (Naqaiian) *misl*, in 1810, and bestowed these territories upon Prince Kharak Singh as a *jagir*".

The author makes a persuasive case about the fate of the Princes of the realm. He makes a good case for the murder of Prince Nau Nihal Singh; and punctures the myth of it being an accident. He provides a fairly compelling evidence suggesting that the young Prince Duleep Singh was brainwashed to embrace the Christian faith by his tutor Bhajun Lal, a Brahmin who had converted to Christianity, and his guardian, Dr John Spencer Login, a man imbued with missionary zeal.

The author includes a homage paid by Qazi Nur Muhammad in his *Jangnamah* (1765), that draws a quintessential portrait of the Sikh soldier as a noble warrior contrary to the scornfully inimical images ('dogs') promoted during Durrani's *jihad* against the Sikhs.

His narrative of the 1857 mutiny is enthralling. He discounts the notion of Sikh betrayal that resulted in its failure. Instead, he blames Sikh Rajahs and *Poorbias*, the duplicitous traitors who sided with the British.

The book is the product of painstaking research. The author has sifted through a wide range of historical documents to build a case intended to modify our current thinking on some key turning points in Sikh history. His book will be a valuable addition in one's collection.

ON SIKH IDENTITY

A REVIEW BY KARTAR SINGH*

Author : Birendra Kaur

Publisher : Singh Brothers, Amritsar

Pages : 128; Price : Rs 50/-

The Sikhs as a people are in a pitiable plight today. There is hardly anything alright with them. Their history is in shambles; a sheaf of hearsay stories that do not stand scientific scrutiny, a large volume of it. Their tradition is losing its grip on the new generations, one after the other. Their faith, one of the most modern and most scientific religions in the world, is getting more and more unrevealed. Their way of life is becoming out-of-fashion. Their art lies uncared for. Their music is neglected. Their literature has narrowed itself to the confines of a truncated *Suba* divided and subdivided time and again. They can no more claim heroes like Banda Singh Bahadur and Bhagat Singh, scholars of the eminence of Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha and Bhai Vir Singh, freedom fighters of the grit of Baba Kharak Singh and Master Tara Singh, poets like Puran Singh and artists like Amrita Shergill.

A welcome opportunity came their way in the celebration of the tercentenary of the Khalsa. They could realign themselves. It has gone utter waste in drum beating. Crores of rupees have been washed down the drain. The Sikh people are where they were.

However, it has stirred some souls here and there to have a close look at the dismal scenario to find out where we have gone wrong. Dr Birendra Kaur's volume of essays, *On Sikh Identity*, is one such valiant endeavour. I welcome it, more because it comes from a generation

* MP, I am dropping 'Duggal' at least in this instance out of consideration for the author's berating of surnames; P-7, Hauz Khas Enclave, New Delhi - 110 016

given to the dilemma to be or not to be.

Daughter of Dr Kharak Singh, a Sikh scholar of undisputed credentials, the young author has the advantage of speaking in the idiom of the Sikh youth of today. She relentlessly touches the raw nerves and soothens them with the paste of truth and plain-speak. And when it comes from a person who saw the light of the day about a decade after India became independent, it carries conviction.

There is hardly a live issue relating to the Sikh faith and the Sikh way of life today which has escaped her scrutiny. Every topic she takes up, whether it is Sikh religion, Sikh tradition, Sikh identity, Gurdwara legislation, or Operation Bluestar, she brings fresh thinking to bear upon it and supports her argument with the impeccable candour of a student of science.

A no non-sense writer, her convictions are revealed in stray observations. To quote only two :

“The reason that Sikhs often cut a sorry figure today is that the majority of us are Sikhs by birth only. We are actually doing more harm than good to Sikhism. Sikhism is not a faith that you can lay claim to by birth. It is a faith that requires commitment and conversion by choice.”

“No doubt, the *bukamnama* on *langar* was a hasty decision. Wisdom is not in issuing the right verdict; it is in achieving the right goal.”

Be that as it may, as I write these lines, I am reminded again and again that I was, perhaps, the last fellow-writer to have been asked to introduce this highly enlightening work. I would fail the learned author in more than one aspects in my personal life. And yet I must say that her arguments leave me convinced, that what she says is nearer the truth than my postulates and practices.

I welcome the new entrant in the gallery of meaningful writers on Sikh faith and the Sikh way of life.

NEWS & VIEWS

ANNUAL SEMINAR 2005

It has been decided to hold the annual seminar of the Institute Of Sikh Studies this year on 12th-13th November (*Katak* 29-30, 537 NS). The theme of the seminar is *Launching of the International Sikh Confederation*. The proposed constitution will be discussed and approved after considering the suggestions given by the speakers and those received by mail from the Sikh organisations and individual Sikh scholars from different countries. Many representatives of Sikh organisations from USA, Canada, UK, Singapore, etc., have agreed to participate in the seminar and formally sponsor the Confederation during the seminar.

All Sikhs committed to bring back the pristine glory of the Panth are cordially invited to join it so that the prestigious Organisation is set rolling during this seminar.

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INSTITUTE MEMBERS HONOURED

Dr Kharak Singh was given Jathedar Gurcharan Singh Tohra award instituted by Sikh Educational Society for meritorious services to Sikh Panth. The award carries Rs. 51, 000/- cash, a shawl and a citation.

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Prof Hardev Singh Virk, an active member of the Institute of Sikh Studies has been appointed as Advisor to National Committee for Promotion of Science in India by the Chairman, Atomic Energy.

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Maj Gen (Dr) Jaswant Singh, Secretary of the Institute of Sikh Studies participated in a National Seminar on *National Integration and Communal Harmony - Challenges and Action Plans* at Guru Jambheshwar University, Hissar and chaired the first Session.

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SEMINAR ON 21ST INTERNATIONAL PUNJABI CONFERENCE

The Punjabi University, Patiala organized the 21st International Punjabi Conference on March 10-12, 2005. Its second day afternoon session was presided over by Bhai Ashok Singh Bagrian, Vice-President, Institute of Sikh Studies.

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DR & MRS S S SODHI VISIT THE INSTITUTE

Dr S S Sodhi and his wife Satpal Kaur Sodhi visited the Institute of Sikh Studies on March 4, 2005. They were welcomed by the President, Sardar Gurdev Singh. Both of them addressed the members. During her teaching career, Mrs Sodhi, a great scholar, conducted workshops and in-service trainings for school teachers and administrators in Nova Scotia, Canada. She is invited to give presentations and addresses to important conferences. Unfortunately, she got a stroke in 2000 and lost her speech. She thought over it and accepted it as the will of God and as a blessing. A miracle happened, slowly she regained her speech. She wrote in 2003 a popular book, *Live Authentically and Just Be*; later she authored *The Message of Jap Ji*. She has now devoted her life in the service of humanity and to spreading the message of *gurbani*.

Dr Sodhi is already known to the readers for his articles exposing the intentional mis-representations of the Sikh heritage by the McLeod group. Dr Sodhi stated that IOSS has constantly taken sound positions on various issues concerning the Sikhs and the people looked to it to provide guidance and leadership for proper functioning of various Sikh institutions. Dr Sodhi further stated that he would not only marshal support for early organisation of the International Sikh Confederation abroad, but he, along with his associates in North America, would also come to Chandigarh in November 2005 to participate in the IOSS seminar that will deliberate on the subject of organisation of the International Sikh Confederation. He suggested that it is time to

establish a *Chair on Sikh Chairs* in the universities so that not only the public but also those who sponsor these chairs know the ulterior motives of this group and take necessary steps to stop the distortion of truth (regarding the Sikh Faith) done by these chairs. His suggestion was well taken by the members and it was agreed that till a formal mechanism to establish a Chair over Chairs is evolved, Dr Sodhi may oversee the publications of the various individuals outside India. If he feels some action is needed with respect to a particular publication, he may bring it to the notice of the IOSS and they will promptly take necessary action.

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SPEAKERS DEMYSTIFY GURU GRANTH SAHIB

Hyderabad, Jan 8. “The Guru Granth Sahib has a message for people hailing from all religions.” said speakers at a seminar on the *Guru Granth Sahib as an inter-faith guide*. Most of the speakers at the seminar laid stress on the message of universal brotherhood and peace in the Guru Granth Sahib.

Inaugurating the seminar, Justice Sardar Ali Khan, former chairman of the national commission for minorities, said that the holy book does not differentiate between religions and emphasises love and compassion. He said, “It provides solutions to most of the problems the world is facing. There is urgent need to imbibe its message.”

Pradesh Congress Committee President K Keshava Rao said, “People from other religions should read it at least once in their lifetime. (Courtesy : Deccan Chronicle, January 9, 2005)

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SEHAJ PATH MOVEMENT – A BIG DRAW

The Sikh *Rehat Maryada* states clearly that every Sikh, man, woman, boy and girl, should learn Gurmukhi to be able to read Guru Granth Sahib. It is desirable that every Sikh should carry on a continuous reading of the Guru Granth Sahib and complete a full reading in one or two months or over a longer period.

The recitation and understanding of *gurbani* is the best way of celebrating the quadricentennial of the first installation of Guru Granth Sahib, at Darbar Sahib, Amritsar. Therefore, Guru Gobind Singh Study

Circle initiated a massive *sehaj path* movement in connection with these celebrations of the first *parkash* of Guru Granth Sahib. It got immense response from youth all over the country, especially Punjab.

An overwhelming number of participants, 13,000 students, started their *sehaj path* all over Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Delhi and other states. So much so, that there was a shortage of *Sanchis* and *Shabdarth* with the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) and the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC). The SGPC helped the movement by supplying the *shabdarth* at half price.

Nearly 4000 students completed the first full reading of Guru Granth Sahib and participated in the examination. About 200 Hindu students and one Muslim girl also recited the full *sehaj path*. The ETC Punjabi Channel has recorded a full recitation of Guru Granth Sahib exclusively done by the students. A nine year old student of 4th class from Mohali recited the *sehaj path* which will be relayed by the channel.

Not the leaders but the *gursikhs*, who themselves do *sehaj path*, were invited to give away prizes to the winners of the *Sehaj Path* competition. It was decided that the students would be awarded prizes in their respective schools so that others may also be inspired to participate. It is also noteworthy that majority of the top prizes were won by the rural students. Mrs Simranjit Kaur of Guru Harkrishan school, village Nayagaon, tehsil Samana, District Patiala won a computer. In district Amritsar, Inderjit Kaur, a 12th standard student of Guru ki Beer, and Shamsher Singh, a tenth class student of Ghaseetpura, Taran Tarn won refrigerators. Similarly, in other districts students won refrigerators, TVs, Casios, etc. Other prizes included cycles, wristwatches, handbags, sewing machines, table lamps, electric irons, blenders, etc. Maximum participants were from district Patiala, followed by Ludhiana, Sangrur and Amritsar.

The impressions of the students who completed their *sehaj path* are marvellous. While many students mentioned that they got peace of mind by recitation, there were others who admitted that disputes and quarrels in their families lessened significantly. Many students informed that their fathers quitted drinking liquor and the abuse of drugs. When asked the reason, students replied that when they were reciting *sehaj path* at home, sometimes their fathers used to come home

drunk or with a liquor bottle, they felt ashamed watching us.

“Uncle ! Now only we have come to know that Guru Granth Sahib is for reading. Earlier, we thought only bowing to it is enough.”

“Now that I have completed one *path*, I wish to start another. I have found an aim of my life.”

“I got peace of my mind. My anger and stress have come down heavily.”

It was felt that the *sehaj path* is the cure-all of all ills. One daily gets novel spiritual food, hence, he/she (i) will not fall to apostasy; (ii) will be saved from drugs and other evils; (iii) shall not fall in the trap of so-called ‘saints’ and *deras*. Furthermore, *gurbani* is so cosmic that we get answers to all our doubts/problems.

Now on demand from students, it has been decided that the competition will continue till the year 2008 when the tercentenary of *gurgaddi purab* of Guru Granth Sahib will be celebrated. Interested participants can get a copy of *Sehaj Path* diary free of cost from Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle, Model Town Extension, Ludhiana - 141002 or can email their demand at renukass@hotmail.com or call on 09855 400 300. (Courtesy : E-mail report by Renuka Sarabjeet Singh <renukassingh@yahoo.co.in>)

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#### FRENCH BAN ON TURBAN

January 22, 2005. The IOSS has asked the French Ambassador in India to take up the matter of ban on turban, with his government in Paris. The letter written by the President of the Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh is reproduced below .:

To  
The H E Dominique Ghirard,  
Ambassador of France to India,  
New Delhi

Your Excellency,

You must be aware of the suffering of the Sikh minority in France and the anguish of the Sikh community across the globe, caused by

the recent French ban on wearing of turbans. Countless representations have been addressed to the French Govt with no results. This lack of response, and indifference to the feelings of the followers of a major world religion, adds to the widespread unrest and leads to resentment.

I enclose herewith a brief note 'Turban and the Sikhs', which without going into philosophical or historical details, explains that turban is an essential and indispensable part of the Sikhs' personality and religious discipline. It is not merely a symbol and is not optional.

The French people are known for their liberal approach. They gave the lead to the world in this respect through the famous French Revolution under the banner of 'Equality, Fraternity and Liberty', inspired by great thinkers and philosophers like Voltaire and Rousseau centuries back. We believe they will not fail to understand the depth of feelings of Sikhs and the grievous hurt caused to them by the ban on turbans, which tantamounts to encroachment on their liberty and the fundamental right to freedom of faith.

We request Your Excellency, therefore, to kindly take up the matter with your government to get the ban withdrawn. We trust, the French Govt will not like to miss this opportunity to win the goodwill of the Sikh people.

Gurdev Singh  
President

January 22, 2005

### **TURBAN AND THE SIKHS**

Turban is an integral part of the Sikh religious discipline and expression of the total Sikh spiritual philosophy. Sikh thought is uncompromisingly monotheistic believing in only One God who created the universe and looks after it with His benevolent Will. A Sikh is required to strictly follow His Will. This is the basic creed of Sikhism (ਹੁਕਮ ਰਜਾਈ ਚਲਣਾ).

The Guru explains that all living beings and their forms are the result of His Will or *hukam*. The human form has also been bestowed by God. Hair is a prominent feature of the human male. A Sikh respects it as a gift of God and does not tamper with it. He respects

it. Shaving is a violation of religious discipline.

Sikh religion is a whole-life religion. Asceticism or monasticism has no place in the Sikh way of life. The Guru prescribed a system aimed at balanced and full development of the individual as well as society. Thus, in Sikhism, religion is not isolated from worldly life, as in some other contemporary systems. It demands full interest in one's personal occupation, family life and social activities. It stresses the need for honest labour, hard work and sharing one's earning with others in need. It prescribes a conduct based on highest moral and ethical values, considering all human beings as children of One God, or a belief in the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of mankind.

The Sikh ideal is a saint-soldier. He is expected to be saintly in his dealings with his fellowmen. At the same time, he is expected to fight for the cause of the weak and for justice.

Because of whole-life nature of Sikh religion, and because he has to respect the human form given by the Creator, a Sikh has to look after his hair. Loose hair does not go with the requirements of a saint-soldier or a man engaged in worldly pursuits. Turban is, therefore, indispensable for a Sikh.

The complete human form has been referred to in the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh Scripture as the one with turban (ਸਾਬਤ ਸੂਰਤ ਦਸਤਾਰ ਸਿਰਾ) . Turban is thus not merely a symbol or headwear that can be replaced or dispensed with for a Sikh. It is an integral part of his personality.

Religion implies faith – faith in the Founder. Disciple imitates (emulates) him. The founders of the Sikh faith, the Ten Masters, all donned turban. How can their Sikhs do otherwise ?

Turban carries with it responsibilities of a good citizen committed to service of mankind regardless of religious denomination, nationality, color or race.

Ban on turban is an infringement on the freedom of faith and is violation of the fundamental rights of equality, liberty and fraternity, for which the French Revolution is remembered and which are so dear to the French.

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PUNJAB GOVERNMENT'S STATUS REPORT ON RURAL SUICIDES
MASR demands Waiver of Institutional Loans

Chandigarh, January 6, 2005. Sardar Inderjeet Singh Jaijee, Convenor, Movement Against State Repression, has asked the Punjab Government to conduct a survey into the conditions leading to continued suicide deaths of farmers, and to take suitable steps to ameliorate these conditions. A letter written by Sardar Inderjeet Singh Jaijee to the Chief Secretary, Punjab is reproduced below:

Dear Sardar Gill,

The Revenue Department has been investigating rural suicides for some time. Their initial report on 29 cases that I presented to the government established that all the cases were genuine suicides, of which 26 were due to debt and economic hardship. This indicated that more than 90 per cent were due to debt. This finding was supported by a survey conducted by the Panjab Agriculture University, Ludhiana, at the behest of the Central Government. The PAU survey blamed 86 per cent of rural suicides on economic hardship and debt. I am enclosing a list of 231 suicides that were committed after April 1, 2001 from the two blocks of Andana and Lehra. Apart from this, 18 suicides are under investigation and there are 21 cases of disappearances. Our data reflects only cases brought to our notice by our informants in some of the villages.

If full data for these two blocks were collected, there would be a minimum of 300 cases in three years. This represents approximately 50 suicide deaths per block per year. Punjab has 138 blocks and one must presume that distress is widely distributed throughout the state but, as the government report suggests, Malwa, Amritsar and Gurdaspur are more affected than other areas. The Punjab government's recently released Status Report on rural suicides sent to the Center mentions 2,116 suicide deaths since 1988. This is a gross under-reporting. We have verified record of 600 cases for this period from Andana and Lehra alone. The rural suicides per year for all of Punjab would far exceed 2,116 ...the number the government report gives for 16 years.

Last week our researcher initiated a survey in Dhun Dhaiwala village, Tarn Taran Subdivision. This brought out 18 cases of suicides

over the past decade in this very small village. The cause is again economic distress and indebtedness. We enclose the data for your perusal. This village is in Majha and it is a safe bet that a similar level of rural suicide will be found no matter which corner of the state one probes. It points to an already far advanced agrarian crisis. Punjab is witnessing the total collapse of its rural economy and the state has nothing to substitute for agriculture as a livelihood for the bulk of its people.

The farmer is being dispossessed of his land at an alarming rate. Without land he is forced into share-cropping or agricultural labour. An investigation into the dispossession of Punjab's traditional agrarian class is required. More than a decade ago, the state's economic statistical abstract placed land holding of 94 per cent of the farmers at less than four acres. Updated findings would place holdings more in the range of one to two acres. For years, rural economists at agriculture universities in Punjab and Haryana have been saying that given the price structure, holdings below 14 acres are not economically viable. Movement Against State Repression's (MASR) investigations have found that in addition to farmers, other village residents who commit suicide are agricultural labourers and those dependent on income generated by agriculture.

For the past ten years MASR has been reporting its findings to the state and central government; we have no interest in either exaggerating the number or minimizing it.

It is important for the state government to immediately begin recording and investigating rural suicides for all Punjab's 12,500 villages and we hope you will initiate this process. This would be the first step in efforts to prevent the disappearance of the farmer and the traditional village community from the state. We have learnt that the task of investigating debt-related rural suicides was transferred from the Revenue Department to the Agriculture Department. While the Agriculture Department is familiar with farm economy and institutional credit, it is not familiar with landless labour, the workings of non-institutional finance and factors underlying dispossession of farmland. Make investigation of rural suicides dating back to 1988 the responsibility of the village

panchayats. Let them submit the information to the state government within one month. This information should then be verified by the Revenue Department. The Revenue Department or PAU, or a professional agency should be entrusted with the job of conducting a survey to determine the exact position on land holdings, rural income and extent of indebtedness.

Meanwhile, I we hope you will pay earnest attention to a suggestion that, as is done in Himachal Pradesh and some other states, Punjab restricts sale of agriculture land exclusively to bona fide agriculturalists of the state and agricultural land be protected against alienation.

Credible agencies estimate current rural indebtedness in Punjab at Rs 25,000 to 30,000 crore (2002-03). Farmers are going in loss year after year and have no income with which to repay debts. The situation is so grave that it requires total waiver of repayment of institutional loans. The state government must establish debt conciliation boards at sub-divisional level to examine legality of non-institutional debts and settle dues as was done by the Punjab Government in the 1930's. Enforce the principle of *dam-dopat* and the law regarding presentation of accurate semi-annual accounts to the debtor.

Inderjit Singh Jaijee, Convenor
Movement Against State Repression
1501, Sector 36-D , Chandigarh
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## Letters To Editor

### ALL FOR IT

Dear Editor,

We are very pleased to learn about your decision to proceed to form an Organisation representing the Sikhs of the globe. Your pamphlet *International Sikh Confederation (Sikh Apex Body) its need and proposed Constitution* provides very well thought out proposal for this organization. Sikh Professional Association of Canada will circulate this document among its members and also pass on



this information to other Sikh organisations and individuals for their consideration and input about the scope and constitution of this important institutional development for the world Sikh community. You have our full and considered support to evolve and form this Organisation.

Tarsem Singh Purewal  
President, Sikh Professional Association  
Canada

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**ON A REVIEW BY DR HARDEV SINGH OF *IN THE WITCHES CAULDRON***

Dear Editor

The learned critic has reviewed my above book in the Issue of January-March, 2005 of your esteemed journal. I would like to state, to set the record straight, as under:

In the critical appreciation of the chapter entitled “Fabricating Myths”, he has made the following comments:

“His thesis that the concept of *panch* (elected five) is borrowed by Guru Nanak from the Greeks during his sojourn in Iraq seems to be a fig of his imagination.... My forays into the history of science convinced me that Greeks believed in the four element theory and Indians promoted the five-element theory (*panch tatva*) of the universe.”

I had nowhere discussed the *panch tatva* theory compared to the Greek four element theory in the said chapter of my book. My analysis was regarding strong objection and criticism by Guru Nanak against the prevailing autocratic rule of corrupt officialdom and royalty in India and the outspoken comments made fearlessly by Guru Nanak and the succeeding Masters, for which three of them paid the price with their lives. Sikh Gurus envisaged a Society free of crime, dishonesty, bribes and tyranny. They sang of *halemi raj* and selected texts to include in the Guru Granth Sahib on *Begum Pura*. Travelling extensively in the Middle East and staying at Baghdad, an important centre of learning in those times, Guru Nanak could not have remained unimpressed by the current controversies there among the Judaic, Christian and Muslim religions

and the popularity of the Greek philosophy. It is but natural that Guru Nanak seems to have been highly impressed with the Spartan culture and Platonic concept of Philosopher-Ruler. Plato's works including the *Republic* were already translated into Arabic and other languages popular in the Middle East, about the desirability of clean government and society.

Nevertheless, it has no relation with the *panch tatva*, theory of Indian philosophy. In passing, it may be mentioned that in the Vedic literature, an important school was founded by *Brihaspati*, who propagated the four-element theory, based on sensory perception, which his descendents abandoned under pressure of other Vedic schools and scholars.

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IF LEADERS DON'T LEAD

Dear Editor,

I read with great interest the book *Guru Granth-Guru Panth*. This seminar addressed the issues that are the need of the time. I believe there are many committed and dedicated Sikh scholars who have the vision to guide Sikh *Kaum* in right direction. First effort should be to involve Sri Akal Takht Sahib and SGPC. In case the Sikh scholars do not get proper response, they should take the lead themselves. I live in Vancouver, Canada and I am close to my retirement from Senior Management in the Bank. I will appreciate receiving update on progress made since the November 2003 seminar.

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