

ABSTRACTS OF SIKH STUDIES

(Vol VII, Issue 1)

Dedicated to the Tricentennial of Martyrdom of Sahibzadas

Jan-March 2005 / 536-37 NS

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EDITORIAL

MARTYRS WITHOUT PARALLEL

It is 300 years since the four *Sahibzadas* and their grandmother, Mata Gujri became martyrs to the cause of the Panth, the humanity and the fundamental human right to choose and practise one's religion. While a grateful nation observes this solemn occasion with the reverence it deserves, the thought of the unique sacrifice sets into one's mind a train of reflections.

The circumstances under which Guru Gobind Singh vacated Anandpur, are too well known and need not be reproduced here. After the encounter with the chasing Mughal forces at the Sirsa river, the Guru's family separated in the darkness and the confusion that prevailed. The two elder *Sahibzadas*, Ajit Singh (17 years) and Jujhar Singh (15 years), reached Chamkaur Sahib with their Guru father, where they confronted the enemy in an improvised *garhi* and courted martyrdom in a daring hand-to-hand fight with the Mughal army, vastly superior in numbers and armaments, before the very eyes of the Guru. The younger *Sahibzadas*, Zorawar Singh (9 years) and Fateh Singh (7 years) along with their grandmother, Mata Gujri, were taken by Gangu to his village, and treacherously handed over to the hostile Mughal establishment at Sirhind. The Governor, Wazir Khan wanted to convert them to his own religion, Islam. When persuasion failed, he took recourse to torture to break their resistance and hurled all kinds of threats to instil fear in them. That too did not work, since in the Guru's house they had been brought up to be fearless, and even at that tender age their commitment to *Sikhi* was incredible. Mata Gujri, their grandmother, played her part and ensured that the infants stood firm. The result was that the *Sahibzadas* were bricked alive and executed to be 'the youngest martyrs' in world history.

The importance of this unique event has not been, and perhaps can never be adequately assessed. There have been thousands of martyrs in the world. But invariably they were grown-up men or women committed to some ideals after mature thought. But here is a case where the maturity of thought and commitment to ideal came at such a tender age. Obviously, this was acquired from the sacred and divine atmosphere that prevailed in the Guru's house.

The great sacrifice did not go in vain. In fact, the wall in which the two infant martyrs were sought to be bricked alive, proved to be the foundation of the Sikh rule. The news of the martyrdom filled the Guru's followers with rage, so that only a few years later, when Banda Singh Bahadur, commissioned by Guru Gobind Singh, arrived, the masses flocked around him, anxious to strike with whatever weapons they could lay their hands on. And soon, what appeared incredible, the seemingly invincible Mughal rule crumbled before the onslaught of the mass uprising; Sirhind, the citadel of tyranny was razed to the ground, and Wazir Khan as well as those who had been partners to the heinous crimes leading to the *Sabibzadas'* martyrdom, punished and liquidated. Khalsa rule under Banda Singh Bahadur was established in a large part of the Punjab, ending centuries of slavery. This was the direct result of the sacrifice of the *Sabibzadas*.

The contribution of Mata Gujri has not received due recognition. Some writers have thoughtlessly stated that she died of shock when she heard the news of the *Sabibzadas'* death. This is unfair to the great lady who was the wife of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the unique martyr who challenged the Mughal Empire and laid down his life in the cause of freedom of faith, for a religion he did not subscribe to; she was the mother who gave birth to, and brought up Guru Gobind Singh. Apparently, she looked after her grand-children also, and was in charge of them, when they fell into the hands of the Mughal enemy. Any other woman in her place would have succumbed to the pressure, threats and torture, and tried to save the children and accepted their conversion to Islam. It is her greatness that she not only stood firm herself, but also saw that the children, too, valued their faith more than their life. She suffered the torture along with her grandsons, which led to her martyrdom. In this way, she is 'the first woman' martyr in Sikh history.

Martyrdom, in the cause of the faith and righteousness, is the most visible feature of the religion launched by Guru Nanak. In fact, history of Sikhs is a series of accounts of martyrs who sacrificed their lives at the altar of their faith. Sikhs have always valued their faith or commitment to the Gurus more than their lives. Eighteenth century history of Sikhs offers an endless list of Sikh martyrs. Bhai Taru Singh was only one of the countless others who would have their scalp removed, rather than let his hair be cut. Like Bhai Mani Singh, a Sikh would prefer being cut to pieces limb-by-limb, but never desert the Guru or his faith. For decades, they stayed in jungles leaving their hearths and homes, and set up a record of endurance, continuing their struggle undaunted, with unshakeable faith in the ultimate victory of truth promised by the Guru. And that is what they achieved in the end.

While we remember the *Sahibzadas* and Mata Gujri ji on the occasion of the tricentennial of their martyrdom along with other martyrs we recall in our daily *ardas*, we must look carefully at the present state of affairs. Apostasy is rampant. Laxity in morals and religious discipline, internal as well as external, is only too glaring. We must pause to think and ask ourselves if a clean(?) shaven Sikh(?) can be a worthy successor to the martyrs referred to above, much less a son of the Guru, we are expected to be.

We must remember that it was only the practise of the Guru's *rahit maryada* and commitment to the Guru's word that enabled us to tide over all kinds of crises in our history, and led to ultimate victory and glory. Indifference will only lead to degeneration and dishonour.

Let us plan programmes to propagate the values of Sikhism and the way of life prescribed by the Gurus. Let the youth wake-up. Let the *Sahibzadas* be their role model. Let Mata Gujri ji be the role model of our sisters to bring up fearless children and committed Sikhs. Let the Guru be the role model for all of us.

Let the leaders do some thinking. They have a responsibility. They control the resources of the Panth, which should be used constructively. The Gurus gave us the message of a whole-life religion of brotherhood of mankind and fatherhood of One Loving God. Let us understand the message ourselves, teach it to our children and youth, and share it with the rest of the world in the interest of global peace

and prosperity. We all share this responsibility, individually as well collectively. Let us not leave the job to leaders alone. Every Sikh should act as a missionary with the a divine message. We can no longer afford to sit back and merely criticise the leaders. Unless we take some positive steps, all the long marches, processions, huge gatherings, seminars, *dhadi* and *kirtan darbars*, etc., we organised so enthusiastically, will have gone in vain.

□

*The Name alone is a stable wealth and all other
wealths come and go.*

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

*This Divine wealth is embedded in the soul and with
the soul it shall depart.*

*From the Perfect Guru, it is obtained. The apostates
receive it not in their lap.*

*Blessed are the traders, O Nanak, who, entering the
world, have earned the wealth of God's Name.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 511

ਏਕੋ ਨਿਹਚਲ ਨਾਮ ਧਨੁ ਹੋਰੁ ਧਨੁ ਆਵੈ ਜਾਇ ॥
ਇਸੁ ਧਨ ਕਉ ਤਸਕਰੁ ਜੋਹਿ ਨ ਸਕਈ ਨਾ ਓਚਕਾ ਲੈ ਜਾਇ ॥
ਇਹੁ ਹਰਿ ਧਨੁ ਜੀਐ ਸੇਤੀ ਰਵਿ ਰਹਿਆ ਜੀਐ ਨਾਲੇ ਜਾਇ ॥
ਪੂਰੇ ਗੁਰ ਤੇ ਪਾਈਐ ਮਨਮੁਖਿ ਪਲੈ ਨ ਪਾਇ ॥
ਧਨੁ ਵਾਪਾਰੀ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾ ਨਾਮ ਧਨੁ ਖਟਿਆ ਆਇ ॥

HUKAM VIS-À-VIS HAUMAI – THE GURU GRANTH PERSPECTIVE* –

SHASHI BALA**

Hukam (Divine Will) and *Haumai* (individual will), are cardinal concepts of *Guru Granth Sahib*, and both are apparently antagonistic to each other. There are frequent references in the holy scripture enunciating this fact that the realization of *bukam* leads to the elimination of ego.¹ On the one hand, there is one God who manifests Himself as Divine Will and, on the other hand, there is man, who is created by God. Man is endowed with a sense of individuation in accordance with his past deeds, but he is to obey the dictates of Divine Ordinance, for his final fulfilment. Man is, indeed, the centre of the universe, being assigned with superior status in the hierarchy of creation. Man has a dual nature, viz., shallower and profounder, either of which may become habitual². While the former consists of his natural endowments, i.e., sensations, instincts, ego, doubt and personal interests, the latter includes spiritual aspects, i.e., freedom of spirit and self-transcendence³. The ultimate end of human life is to transcend this duality to realize the oneness of reality, and this is possible only by reconciling the individual will with the Divine Will.

In this paper, an attempt has been made to analyze both concepts from the philosophical point of view to highlight first, the ontological as well as cosmological status of *bukam*, second, the nature of *haumai* as a psychological propensity, and third, how and in what way the realization of *bukam* leads to the elimination of *haumai* ?

* Paper read at the Prakash Utsav of Guru Granth Sahib seminar conducted on November 6-7, 2004 by Sikh Educational Society, at Guru Gobind Singh College, Sector 26, Chandigarh

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I. *Hukam* as an imperative or Divine Will is a theological concept, which was not prevalent in the ancient Indian tradition. *Hukam* is both subjective as well as objective, and is variously defined by different scholars. In the words of Dr Sher Singh, *hukam* stands for conative tendency of conscious-*chit* 'Brahman'. God as doer (*Kara*) is mere Will and not an audible sound. God is both transcendent and immanent, i.e., *Nirguna* or *Aphur* state which is the Unknowable Will and *Sarguna* or *Saphur* state which is Will or *hukam* and is the source of whole creation⁴. Generally, *hukam* is understood as operating in two ways, i.e., as an external law or command and as internal to self.

According to Dr Avtar Singh, *hukam* is not any external law applied to the self, but is integral to it.⁵ Speaking about the all-pervasive or universal aspects of *hukam*, he further says, "it is within self in the sense that the self has to realize it from within, but it is objective in the sense that it is the ideal which the self has to realize and as universal it transcends this particularity."⁶ However, *hukam* is defined as 'precisely our real being, the best in us, which is good and just and is approved by God or to say, it is God manifesting in us'.⁷ Referring to the internal aspect of *hukam*, Dr Jodh Singh defines it as "the analytical discriminatory wisdom lodged in every man".⁸

A vivid exposition of the all-pervasive nature of *hukam* is given in the beginning of *Japuji Sahib*, where a question is posed as 'how can one become *sachiar*? And how can one get rid of falsehood?'. The instant answer given is 'by abiding to the Divine Will which is inscribed within every person'.⁹ As a cosmological dynamic principle, *hukam* regulates the whole cosmos and manifests itself in multifarious ways. Nothing is beyond the purview of *hukam*, rather all cosmic processes such as the creation of all forms of species and their sustenance, variation in the status of creatures, occurrence of joy and pain, blissfulness and transmigration of individual soul, etc., are within *hukam*.¹⁰ The expanse of *hukam* is beyond limits and it encompasses not only this world but also the underworld sphere, regions and forms.¹¹ The all-comprehensive nature of *hukam* is explicitly defined in *Rag Maru* :

'Tis through the Lord's Will that one comes (into the world) or leaves this world.

Yea, it is through the Will that the world came into being;

*And the heaven and the earth and the underworld;
and He upholds the creation too through His Will.*

.....

*Yea, whosoever submits to the Will is robed at the Lord's Court, and him
the Lord causes to Meet with and Merge in His Truth.¹²*

Therefore, the origin, sustenance and dissolution of the cosmos is within the domain of *hukam*. Man's emergence in the world and his disappearance, his conception and process of taking birth takes place in accordance with the Divine Will.¹³ The evolvement of the world and the enjoyment of earthly things is possible only in Divine Will.¹⁴

Hukam is also portrayed in the form of theological determinism, which takes into account all the psycho-physical activities of man. Human life is transitory and death is an inevitable reality, nonetheless, the supreme aim of life is to reunite with the Ultimate Reality. However, man's subjection to death or mergence in truth is not in his hands, but is determined in accordance with Divine Will.¹⁵ All the spiritual, moral and cognitive pursuits of man's life occur in Divine Will, therefore, he has no power to choose for the attainment of liberation or degeneration into hell; involvement in worldly *maya* or devotion to God; realization of knowledge or remaining in ignorance.¹⁶ This all-pervasive *hukam* is also ineffable, inscrutable and beyond human comprehension and, therefore, cannot be described in words.¹⁷ None can define the limits of Divine Ordinance as well as the deeds of the Supreme Being which are beyond any account.¹⁸ However, the Sovereign God who gives commands and determines the way of life is Himself carefree.¹⁹

The question arises, how does *hukam* operate in man's life? There is no doubt that all happens in Divine Will, yet the operation of Divine Will is not arbitrary, but is in accordance with man's past deeds.²⁰ Man cannot obliterate the writ of eternity, because it is written by Divine Will and this cannot be erased by any human efforts. Man gathers only that whatever is written in his lot in accordance with past deeds. This process is a mystery for ordinary man, who, being in ignorance, always commits the error of assuming himself as the doer. Only the God-oriented person can realize it by the Divine Grace.²¹ Such enlightened person's enjoyment, equanimity, peace of mind, contemplation of Name, etc., all occur in Divine *hukam*.²²

II. *Haumai*, on the other hand, is ego, self-centeredness or self-assertion which leads to a sense of individuation by delimiting man's consciousness. Generally, it is held that ego is the product of man's interaction with the physical and social environment.²³ Man's physical structure, family, social values and other institutions are responsible for the formation of ego. If this type of attitude becomes confirmed, then, such a person finds greater security in his own capacities, his mental and intellectual efficiency and his worldly possessions. This type of behaviour creates in man a feeling of self-assertion and vanity, and always keeps him away from his real self.²⁴

The paradoxical nature of *haumai* is delineated in *Guru Granth Sahib*, stating the cause of its origin in *bukam* itself. *Haumai* originates in man in accordance with the Divine Will. Though *haumai* is a chronic malady, yet it has a remedy that lies in itself. Guru Angad has explicitly defined this nature of *haumai*:

The nature of Ego is that we act in Ego.

The bondage of Ego is that we are bound in the cycle of birth and death

How is Ego born? In which way is the release?

Yea, this is the Lord's Will that, in Ego one follows the Writ of habit.

Ego is a chronic malady: yet it is treatable,

If Lord be in Grace, one practices the word of the Guru.

*Says, 'Nanak' : 'Hear ye men, thus is this malady cured.'*²⁵

However, man's ego is the basis of his personality and it permeates throughout his life, regulates his behavior pattern and determines his conduct. This type of ego expresses itself in divergent ways, viz, in the form of individual ego and in the form of collective ego. The individual ego is reinforced due to one's status, power, possession, wealth, beauty, etc., and it alienates man from his higher self as well as from his fellow-beings. The Sikh Gurus have emphatically condemned this type of *haumai* which in its most subtle form appears in the performance of righteous deeds, acquisition of knowledge, religious ceremonies, rituals, possessions of wealth and of caste. This evil of ego grips the whole world and one can get rid of it only through the word of the Guru.²⁶

On the other hand, collective egoism may appear in the religious or sectarian form and is more formidable than the individual egoism.

It isolates one religious groups or sect from another and is the cause of all conflicts, disputes and multifarious social and political problems.

As a psychological propensity, *haumai* is the principle of ownership as well as of unification of mental states. It is dependent on intellect (*buddhi*) which produces mental states through which objects of mundane world can be perceived. Ego cannot perform its functioning in the absence of mental states. Hence, it creates co-ordination among the various mental states of an individual as well as it differentiates one individual from the other. The human body is the outward manifestation of ego. The birth of a person is due to the assumption of a new body, by the empirical ego, which survives bodily death. Hence, man's finitude is not due to his bodily existence, but it is due to ego.²⁷ Defining *haumai* as the cause of everything, Guru Amar Das says:

The human body itself is individuation; all creation manifests itself in individuation.

But individuation leads to utter darkness and so one knows not (the unitive experience).²⁸

Therefore, the world came into being through a sense of individuation (*haumai*) and it comes to grief, forsaking the Divine *Naam*.²⁹ Admittedly, *haumai* is a great and subtle psychological barrier between man and God. It works in man's life as a self-evident reality, contaminates all his deeds and serves as a stumbling block in the way of self-realization. Man visualizes the worldly objects with this ego-consciousness and thereby classifies them into categories and assumes the attitude of self-assertion. His reaction to certain situations, his acceptance, rejection and gratification of some values is regulated by this ego-formation, it also determines man's attitude of stability in his response to certain social issues, his stands and commitments, his own ideas, his relations and his values which differentiate him from others. In this way, man's self-identity as evolved and dependent on the stability of ego-consciousness may become impediment in the way of progress. If man is adamant to certain patterns of behaviour, they will serve as anchorage relative to which he visualizes his status, prestige and feels secure in the social scheme. Hence, he tries to protect and maintain the stability of these anchorages and would not allow any change and divergence in his strong commitments and if it

is there, that may create psychic disorder and tension.³⁰

Haumai, in this sense, is a great malady and it indicates to the maladjustment of an individual to his surroundings. Man's identification with the false self delimits his consciousness and creates fragmentary and narrow vision. This type of attitude is, therefore, the cause of all evils, such as, selfishness, hatred, vanity, jealousy, rigidity, and dogmatism and creates a feeling of self-centeredness, self-alienation, self-doubt and inner-emptiness. These mental ills found outward expression in three ways, viz., ambition for worldly possessions and accumulation by misappropriation, recognition or status and striving for power. Thus alienating himself from his inner self, such person finds security in mundane things which enhance his illusions and instigate him to exploit others. This type of nature of egoistic person is vividly portrayed in *Guru Granth Sahib*, where it is stated that no one can satiate the thirst of desire, just as the fire is not satiated with any quantity of firewood.³¹

III. Now the question arises, how does realization of *bukam* leads to the elimination of *haumai*? There are found two types of statements in the holy scripture, one stating the supremacy and all-pervasiveness of *bukam* and the other depicting man's ego-consciousness (*haumai*) expressing itself in the form of separate identity. It is, however, emphatically stated that by realizing, understanding and submitting to the Divine Will, one can transcend the ego-consciousness. There are frequent references to substantiate this fact, viz, *bukam pachanai*, *bukam bujhai*, *bukam maniai*, *bukam razai chalna*, *bukam samaie*, etc. The realization of *bukam*, indeed, is a sign of union with God.³² No type of wisdom at the cognitive level can excel the realization of *bukam*.³³

There is no denying the fact that man emerges in Divine Will, nonetheless, with his ego-consciousness, he may obey or disobey the Divine Will. This egoistic tendency of man is beautifully explained by W E Sangster as:

'...Within a tiny orbit, we can withstand even God. We cannot pluck the sun from the sky or extinguish the stars or stop the whirling planets, but we can turn our backs upon God, and live as though He were not there.'³⁴

A similar view is expressed by William James when he observes

that everything in nature and every creature is the working of God. The creature has no power to create anything or to change the course of events or the working of God, but he has the free will which he can use in ‘concurring with or resisting the working of God in nature.’³⁵

Hukam is an immanent principle and the emergence of all beings is within *hukam*, though all beings are not attuned to the *hukam*. The egoistic nature of man is a step towards man’s defiance of Divine Will and causes the individual soul’s duality from the Supreme Soul. So long as man’s consciousness is ego-centric, all his thoughts, feelings and actions are directed towards self-gratification for which he suffers, and when he realizes the Divine Will, he becomes blissful.³⁶ The self is taken as one whole and not as split into transcendent and empirical elements. Defining the nature of self, Prof Nirbhai Singh opines, ‘so far as the self is in the cocoon of egoity, his deeds are hypothetical imperatives, but once it realizes its true nature, he works for the sake of duty and habitually behaves as categorical imperative.’³⁷ Here all contradiction between ‘ought’ and ‘is’ is transcended by reconciliation of *haumai* with *hukam*. This reconciliation is possible by realizing and submitting to the Divine Will. Nevertheless, the submission does not mean passive surrender to the Divine Will, rather it is ‘a conscious recognition of duties as such, as well as their performance is in fact the realization of *hukam* in *raza*.’³⁸ It also points to the continuous volitional efforts of man to negate the individual will’s separate egoity vis-a-vis the Divine Will.

There is presence of divine in man, but what he needs to realize it is the consciousness of this divine presence. For this purpose, the integration of inward and outward nature is the preliminary condition. The stress ought to be on inward vigilance and outward efficiency in order to transform life in spiritual terms. The self of man has to go within it to know its divinity as well as to get outside of itself to realize its cosmic nature and finally it has to go beyond itself to have a living contact with the Supreme Being. When man’s individual will surrenders itself to the Divine Will through contemplation of the word of Guru, the divine preceptor, then the opposition disappears and there remains no dichotomy between the subject and the object. This type of realization or the oneness with Divine Will, is indeed cosmic consciousness which liberates man from the fluctuations of impulsive

life as well as from the limits of social injunctions and moral codes, and inculcates in him a spirit to participate in cosmic love.³⁹

A person with enlarged consciousness is a free moral agent and active in social life. His works are not motivated by any selfish desire but by the altruistic spirit. By his acts, he participates in the working of God, not under any moral obligation but spontaneously as functional expression of his evolved nature. By attuning to *bukam* (Divine Will), man attains spiritual enlightenment and such a person is denominated in the holy scripture as *jivan-mukta*, *gurmukh* or *brahmajñani* and this state is known as *sehaj-avastha*, *turiya avastha*, *param pad* and *amara-pad*.⁴⁰ This cosmic consciousness means realization of the inner unity and identity as well as intuitive perception of the inner truth of things and beings. This type of consciousness is not complete extinction of ego-consciousness, but rather it is the sublimation of ego-consciousness by transcendence and participation in the cosmic consciousness.

However, the philosophical implication of submission to Divine Will lies in the attainment of the spirit of equanimity or indifference to the joys and sorrows of life. Such God-oriented person serves others, contemplates and merges in *bukam*.⁴¹ Here one may ask, is it possible for man to obey or to disobey the Divine Will at his own initiative? It is clearly mentioned in the holy scripture that only those can submit to *bukam* on whom is bestowed Divine Grace.⁴² But Divine Grace is not arbitrary but is conferred on those on whom, the Writ is so inscribed due to their own deeds.⁴³

To recapitulate, the concept of *bukam* vis-a-vis *haumai* is expatiated from the metaphysical Will as from the psychological perspective in *Guru Granth Sahib*. To realize the *summum bonum* of life, i.e., non-duality between the individual will and the Divine Will, the prerequisite condition is to realize the nature of *haumai* as well as of *bukam* and thereby submission to the Divine Will. This type of submission or surrender does not lead to inner emptiness or to a state of nothingness, rather it strengthens the true self by emancipating man, from his finitude. Hence, the emphasis is not on complete extinction of ego, but it is on the sublimation of ego-consciousness and this can be attained by losing oneself in a higher goal than oneself or by transforming one's ego-centric pattern to God-centered pattern and thereby participating in universal or cosmic consciousness.

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10. ਹੁਕਮੀ ਹੋਵਨਿ ਆਕਾਰ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਨ ਕਹਿਆ ਜਾਈ ॥ ਹੁਕਮੀ ਹੋਵਨਿ ਜੀਅ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਮਿਲੈ ਵਡਿਆਈ ॥ , Ibid
11. ਪਾਤਾਲ ਪੁਰੀਆ ਲੋਅ ਆਕਾਰਾ ॥ ਤਿਸੁ ਵਿਚਿ ਵਚਤੈ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਕਰਾਰਾ ॥, Ibid., p. 1060-61
12. ਹੁਕਮੇ ਆਇਆ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਸਮਾਇਆ ॥ ਹੁਕਮੇ ਦੀਸੈ ਜਗਤੁ ਉਪਾਇਆ ॥..... ਮਾਨੈ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਸੁ ਦਰਗਹ ਪੈਝੈ ਸਾਚਿ ਮਿਲਾਇ ਸਮਾਇਦਾ ॥, Ibid., p. 1037 (tr) Dr. Gopal Singh, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Vol. 4, World Book Centre, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 989-90.
13. ਹੁਕਮੈ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਨਿੰਮਿਆ ਪਿਆਰੇ ਹੁਕਮੈ ਉਦਰ ਮਝਾਰਿ ॥ ਹੁਕਮੈ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਜੰਮਿਆ ਪਿਆਰੇ ਉਧਉ ਸਿਰ ਕੈ ਭਾਰਿ ॥ Ibid., p. 636
14. ਹੁਕਮੈ ਪਰਪੰਚ ਪਸਰਿਆ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਕਰੇ ਰਸ ਭੋਗ ਜੀਉ ॥ Ibid., p. 700
15. ਹੁਕਮੀ ਸਭੇ ਉਪਜਹਿ ਹੁਕਮੀ ਕਾਰ ਕਮਾਹਿ ॥ ਹੁਕਮੀ ਕਾਲੈ ਵਸਿ ਹੈ ਹੁਕਮੀ ਸਾਚਿ ਸਮਾਹਿ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਜੋ ਤਿਸੁ ਭਾਵੈ ਸੋ ਥੀਐ ਇਨਾ ਜੰਤਾ ਵਸਿ ਕਿਛੁ ਨਾਹਿ ॥ Ibid., p. 55
16. ਹੁਕਮੇ ਮੁਕਤੀ ਹੁਕਮੇ ਨਰਕਾ ॥ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਸੈਸਾਰੀ ਹੁਕਮੇ ਭਗਤਾ ॥ ਹੁਕਮੇ ਹੋਛਾ ਹੁਕਮੇ ਦਾਨਾ ਦੂਜਾ ਨਾਹੀ ਅਵਰੁ ਧੜਾ ॥ Ibid., p. 1081
17. ਹੁਕਮੁ ਨ ਕਹਿਆ ਜਾਈ ॥ Ibid., p. 1
18. ਹੁਕਮੁ ਨ ਜਾਪੀ ਕੇਤੜਾ ਕਹਿ ਨ ਸਕੀਜੈ ਕਾਰ ॥ Ibid., p. 1241
19. ਹੁਕਮੀ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਚਲਾਏ ਰਾਹੁ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਵਿਗਸੈ ਵੇਪਰਵਾਹੁ ॥, Ibid., p. 2
20. ਹੁਕਮਿ ਚਲਾਏ ਆਪਣੈ ਕਰਮੀ ਵਹੈ ਕਲਾਮ ॥, Ibid., p. 1241; ਪੂਰਬਿ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਕਿਉ ਮੋਟੀਐ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਲੇਖੁ ਰਜਾਇ ॥, Ibid., p. 59.
21. ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਹੁਕਮੇ ਆਵਦਾ ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਹੁਕਮੇ ਜਾਇ ॥ ਜੇ ਕੋ ਮੂਰਖੁ ਆਪਹੁ ਜਾਣੈ ਅੰਧਾ ਅੰਧੁ ਕਮਾਇ ॥

- ਨਾਨਕ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਕੋ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਬੁਝੈ ਜਿਸ ਨੇ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰੇ ਰਜਾਇ ॥ , Ibid., p. 556
22. Ibid., p. 962
23. *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, Vol. 14, Collier Macmillan Inc., London, 1968, p. 152
24. K G V, Durckheim, *The Way of Transformation* (tr by Ruth Lewinnek and P K Travers,) George Allen and Unwin London, 1971, p. 88.
25. ਹਉਮੈ ਏਹਾ ਜਾਤਿ ਹੈ ਹਉਮੈ ਕਰਮ ਕਮਾਹਿ ॥ ਹਉਮੈ ਏਈ ਬੰਧਨਾ ਫਿਰਿ ਫਿਰਿ ਜੋਨੀ ਪਾਹਿ ॥ ਹਉਮੈ ਕਿਥਹੁ ਉਪਜੈ ਕਿਤੁ ਸੰਜਮਿ ਇਹ ਜਾਇ ॥ ਹਉਮੈ ਏਹੋ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਹੈ ਪਇਐ ਕਿਰਤਿ ਫਿਰਾਹਿ ॥ ਹਉਮੈ ਦੀਰਘ ਰੋਗੁ ਹੈ ਦਾਰੂ ਭੀ ਇਸੁ ਮਾਹਿ ॥ Guru Granth Sahib, p 466 (tr. Dr Gopal Singh, op. cit., Vol 2, p. 460
26. ਐਸਾ ਗਰਬੁ ਬੁਰਾ ਸੰਸਾਰੈ ॥ ਜਿਸੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਮਿਲੈ ਤਿਸੁ ਗਰਬੁ ਨਿਵਾਰੈ ॥ , Ibid., p 224
27. N K Devaraja (ed.), *Indian Philosophy Today*, the Macmillan Company, New Delhi, 1975, pp 73-75
28. ਹਉਮੈ ਸਭੁ ਸਰੀਰੁ ਹੈ ਹਉਮੈ ਓਪਤਿ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਹਉਮੈ ਵਡਾ ਗੁਬਾਰੁ ਹੈ ਹਉਮੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਬੁਝਿ ਨ ਸਕੈ ਕੋਇ ॥ , Guru Granth Sahib, p. 560, (tr) Dr Gopal Singh, op. cit., p. 548
29. ਹਉਮੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਜਗੁ ਉਪਜੈ ਪੁਰਖਾ ਨਾਮਿ ਵਿਸਰਿਐ ਦੁਖੁ ਪਾਈ ॥ , Ibid, p. 946.
30. *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, Vol 14, pp. 153-158
31. Guru Granth Sahib, p. 672
32. ਪ੍ਰਭ ਮਿਲਣੈ ਕੀ ਏਹ ਨੀਸਾਣੀ ॥ ਮਨਿ ਇਕੋ ਸਚਾ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਪਛਾਣੀ ॥ Ibid., p. 106
33. ਹੁਕਮੁ ਪਛਾਣੈ ਖਸਮ ਕਾ ਦੂਜੀ ਅਵਰ ਸਿਆਣਪ ਕਾਇ ॥ Ibid, p. 991
34. *Christian Advocate*, March 6, 1952, p. 7
35. Quoted by Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1969, p. 191
36. ਜਬ ਲਗੁ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਨ ਬੁਝਤਾ ਤਬ ਹੀ ਲਉ ਦੁਖੀਆ ॥ ਗੁਰ ਮਿਲਿ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਪਛਾਣਿਆ ਤਬ ਹੀ ਤੇ ਸੁਖੀਆ ॥ Guru Granth Sahib, p. 400
37. Nirbhai Singh, *Philosophy of Sikhism*, Atlantic Publishers, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 227-28
38. Avtar Singh, op. cit, p. 130
39. Radhakamal Mukherjee, *The Way of Humanism*, Academic Books, New Delhi, 1968, p 80
40. Guru Granth Sahib, pp 359, 154, 227, 725
41. ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਮੰਨੇ ਸਹ ਕੇਰਾ ਹੁਕਮੇ ਹੀ ਸੁਖੁ ਪਾਏ ॥ ਹੁਕਮੇ ਸੇਵੇ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਅਰਾਧੇ ਹੁਕਮੇ ਸਮੈ ਸਮਾਏ ॥ Ibid, pp. 1422-23
42. ਹੁਕਮੁ ਭੀ ਤਿਨ੍ਹਾ ਮਨਾਇਸੀ ਜਿਨ੍ ਕਉ ਨਦਰਿ ਕਰੇਇ ॥ , Ibid., p. 510
43. ਨਾਨਕ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਤਿਨਾ ਮਨਾਇਸੀ ਭਾਈ ਜਿਨਾ ਧੁਰੇ ਕਮਾਇਆ ਨਾਉ ॥ Ibid, p. 1419

UNIVERSALISM IN GURU GRANTH SAHIB

TEJPAL SINGH*

Guru Granth Sahib is the holy Scripture of the Sikhs, but its appeal is to whole of the mankind. Its vision is splendid and vast, which focuses on the basic inherent characteristics of man: his ego, tensions, fears, frustrations, anxieties, prejudices, temptations and even aspirations. It prescribes a panacea for all the ills of man, both physical and mental. Its appeal is ecumenical; it is for everybody irrespective of caste, creed, religion, race, gender, region, etc. Guru Granth Sahib is a major repository of spiritual thought. It enshrines the richest spiritual experience of humanity. It has a vast humanitarian doctrine based on truth, compassion and social justice. It has the pursuit of excellence in its content and form. It eulogizes the vision of the cosmic order and exhortation to the higher values of life. It sings the hymns of the God-inspired men, who have expressed the Divine Word in a spirit of deep humility and compassion for humanity. It is the repository of the Divine Word (*Shabad, Nam, Logos*), which lifts man from his daily routine to the higher planes of spiritualism. Its appeal is twofold: it liberates man from his material bindings and gives him freedom, liberation (*Mukti, Moksha*). It serves as a remedial manual for the ills of mankind. It seeks a way out of his mundane, humdrum existence to a spiritual outlook.

Guru Granth Sahib contains the exuberances of the highly divine poets of their spiritual experiences in the languages of common people, who were debarred from the access to the pantheons, because of religious bigotry. It gives a new hope to the socially outcaste. The mission of the Gurus was to raise the mankind from sin and crime to the ethical values.

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The basic ideology enshrined in its fundamental creed (*Mul Mantra*) is absolute monotheism; which says:

Ek Onkar Sat Nam Gurparsad

Guru Granth Sahib, p 1

He is the Sole Supreme Being; of eternal manifestation;
Creator, immanent reality, without fear,
without rancour; timeless form, un-incarnated,
self-Existent, by the grace of the holy Preceptor.

The monotheistic meanings of the fundamental creed are crystal-clear. It is an epitome of Guru Granth Sahib. It conceptualises the main doctrines of Sikhism, as it asserts that God is without rancour. It differs from Christianity:

“You should not bow down to them or worship them: for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of their fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my Commandments.”

Exodus 20:4 *The Holy Bible*
New International Version,

Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1988, p 55

But Guru Granth Sahib says that God is all love and He forgives the sinners:

ਹਰਿ ਜਨ ਰਾਖੇ ਗੁਰ ਗੋਵਿੰਦ ॥

ਕੰਠਿ ਲਾਇ ਅਵਗੁਣ ਸਭਿ ਮੇਟੇ ਦਇਆਲ ਪੁਰਖ ਬਖਸੰਦ ॥

The Divine Master His servants has succoured

The Master compassionate, forgiving, to His bosom

Has clasped them,

And all their sufferings effaced.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 681

Guru Granth Sahib says that every one has been created by God, all men are from one Creator, whole of the universe is cast from one dye, let there should be no delusions about it, the Creator is in the creation and the creation is in the Creator. God is immanent:

ਅਵਲਿ ਅਲਹ ਨੂਰੁ ਉਪਾਇਆ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਕੇ ਸਭ ਬੰਦੇ ॥

ਏਕ ਨੂਰ ਤੇ ਸਭੁ ਜਗੁ ਉਪਜਿਆ ਕਉਨ ਭਲੇ ਕੇ ਮੰਦੇ ॥

ਲੋਗਾ ਭਰਮਿ ਨ ਭੂਲਹੁ ਭਾਈ ॥ ਖਾਲਿਕੁ ਖਲਕ ਖਲਕ ਮਹਿ ਖਾਲਿਕੁ ਪੂਰਿ ਰਹਿਓ ਸੂਬ ਠਾਂਈ ॥

God created Light, all people have been created by Him.

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

O' ! Be not lost in illusion.

The Creator is in the creation; in the creation abides the Creator,
Pervasive everywhere.

– Guru Granth Sahib, pp 1349-50

God is our Father and we are His children:

ਏਕੁ ਪਿਤਾ ਏਕਸ ਕੇ ਹਮ ਬਾਰਿਕ ਤੂ ਮੇਰਾ ਗੁਰ ਹਾਈ ॥

The One God is our only Father,

We are all children of that One Father.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 611

Guru Granth Sahib preaches ecumenism that all belong to the Divine Commonwealth, none is debarred from it;

ਸਭੇ ਸਾਝੀਵਾਲ ਸਦਾਇਨਿ ਤੂੰ ਕਿਸੈ ਨ ਦਿਸਹਿ ਬਾਹਰਾ ਜੀਉ ॥

In Thee are all sharers; to none dost Thou appear alien.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 97

Guru Granth Sahib publicizes harmonious living and good neighbourly relationships:

ਨਾ ਕੋ ਮੇਰਾ ਦੁਸਮਨੁ ਰਹਿਆ ਨ ਹਮ ਕਿਸ ਕੇ ਬੈਰਾਈ ॥

ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਪਸਾਰੁ ਪਸਾਰਿਓ ਭੀਤਰਿ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਤੇ ਸੋਝੀ ਪਾਈ ॥

ਸਭੁ ਕੋ ਮੀਤੁ ਹਮ ਆਪਨ ਕੀਨਾ ਹਮ ਸਭਨਾ ਕੇ ਸਾਜਨ ॥

Neither is anyone my foe, nor I am enemy of anyone,

He himself rivulates in all His Creation

Of this from the holy Preceptor have we got realization.

All have I made my loving friends; friend of all am I grown.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 671

ਨਾ ਕੋ ਬੈਰੀ ਨਹੀ ਬਿਗਾਨਾ ਸਗਲ ਸੰਗਿ ਹਮ ਕਉ ਬਨਿ ਆਈ ॥

None is our foe nor anyone is a stranger —

With all are we in accord.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 1299

Guru Granth Sahib projects the idea of a good state, a welfare state where human rights are preserved and everyone enjoys the fruit of freedom:

ਹੁਣਿ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਹੋਆ ਮਿਹਰਵਾਣ ਦਾ ॥ ਪੈ ਕੋਇ ਨ ਕਿਸੈ ਰਵਾਣਦਾ ॥

ਸਭ ਸੁਖਾਲੀ ਵੁਠੀਆ ਇਹੁ ਹੋਆ ਹਲੇਮੀ ਰਾਜੁ ਜੀਉ ॥

Now is the gracious Lord's ordinance promulgated:

None to another shall cause hurt,

All mankind now in peace shall abide—
Gentle shall the governance be.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 74

Guru Granth Sahib advises to serve mankind. Altruism is one of the basic tenets preached by Guru Granth Sahib:

ਵਿਚਿ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਸੇਵ ਕਮਾਈਐ ॥ ਤਾ ਦਰਗਹ ਬੈਸਣੁ ਪਾਈਐ ॥

By devotion in this world,

Shall ye get a place at the Divine Portal.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 26

Guru Granth Sahib visualizes an ideal state where everybody is free, all are equal, none is harassed, no body can repress others, there is no economic exploitation, there is no political repression and there is no social injustice. It is a Utopian state. It is based on utilitarianism. Bhagat Ravidas says:

ਬੇਗਮ ਪੁਰਾ ਸਹਰ ਕੋ ਨਾਉ ॥ ਦੁਖੁ ਅੰਦੋਹੁ ਨਹੀ ਤਿਹਿ ਠਾਉ ॥

The City Joyful is the name of that city—

Suffering and sorrow abide not there.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 345

Governments are tyrant. They violate the Human Rights. They exploit their citizens:

ਰਾਜੇ ਸੀਹ ਮੁਕਦਮ ਕੁਤੇ ॥ ਜਾਇ ਜਗਾਇਨ੍ ਬੈਠੇ ਸੁਤੇ ॥

Rulers are turned beasts of prey, their officers hounds;

None do they allow in peace to rest.

The subordinates wound the people with their claws:

You dogs! Lick on the blood and marrow of the poor.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 1288

Governments start wars to win others. Wars cause great bloodshed; but Guru Granth Sahib condemns such attitude and suggests to enter into direct dialogue with the opponents:

ਹੋਇ ਇਕਤ੍ਰ ਮਿਲਹੁ ਮੇਰੇ ਭਾਈ ਦੁਬਿਧਾ ਦੂਰਿ ਕਰਹੁ ਲਿਵ ਲਾਇ ॥

Brethren! All in union meet,

And by devotion to God cast off duality.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 1185

We should communicate with one another and resolve our differences with dialogue instead of fighting. We should adopt the policy of detente:

ਜਬ ਲਗੁ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਰਹੀਐ ਨਾਨਕ ਕਿਛੁ ਸੁਣੀਐ ਕਿਛੁ ਕਹੀਐ ॥

As long as we live in this world
We should try to communicate with others,
And listen to them also.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 661

Aggressors, like Babar, are condemned in *Babarvani*, it is said:

ਪਾਪ ਕੀ ਜੰਵ ਲੈ ਕਾਬਲਹੁ ਧਾਇਆ ਜੋਰੀ ਮੰਗੈ ਦਾਨੁ ਵੇ ਲਾਲੇ ॥

Babar with the wedding-party of sin from Kabul rushed down,
And forcibly demanded surrender of Indian womanhood.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 722

The rulers show off their power and repression; but their days are numbered:

ਕੋਊ ਹਰਿ ਸਮਾਨਿ ਨਹੀ ਰਾਜਾ ॥ ਏ ਭੂਪਤਿ ਸਭ ਦਿਵਸ ਚਾਰਿ ਕੇ ਝੁਠੇ ਕਰਤ ਦਿਵਾਜਾ ॥

No king is great as God:

These monarchs, lasting few days, make false ostentation.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 856

Guru Granth Sahib preaches egalitarianism. Castes and classes are obliterated and a classless society is established:

ਖੜੀ ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣ ਸੂਦ ਵੈਸ ਉਪਦੇਸੁ ਚਹੁ ਵਰਨਾ ਕਉ ਸਾਝਾ ॥

There is one common spiritual message for all Khatris, Brahmins,
Sudras and Vaishas.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 747

Indians were divided into Hindu and Muslim religions. Unfortunately, they did not see eye to eye but were always at others throat. Guru Granth Sahib advises its adherents to rise above this divide:

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

We neither are Hindus nor Musalmans;

Our body and life is Allah-Rama's.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 1136

This world is not a purgatory for sinners. On seeing the miserable condition of humanity in this world, Guru Granth Sahib encourages man to live a full life and be in high spirits (optimistic *Charhdi Kala*). It is a complete metamorphosis:

ਮਿਹਰਵਾਨੁ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਮਿਹਰਵਾਨੁ ॥ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਮੇਰਾ ਮਿਹਰਵਾਨੁ ॥

ਜੀਅ ਸਗਲ ਕਉ ਦੇਇ ਦਾਨੁ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥ ਤੂ ਕਾਹੇ ਡੋਲਹਿ ਪ੍ਰਾਣੀਆ ਤੁਧੁ ਰਾਖੈਗਾ ਸਿਰਜਣਹਾਰੁ ॥

ਜਿਨਿ ਪੈਦਾਇਸਿ ਤੂ ਕੀਆ ਸੋਈ ਦੇਇ ਆਧਾਰੁ ॥

The Lord is ever gracious.

On all creation boons He confers.
Thou creature of God! Why fall into suspense?
The creator shall, preserve Thee.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 724

Guru Granth Sahib confers that man's life is supreme on this planet. No other form of life can be compatible with human life:

ਅਵਰ ਜੋਨਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਪਨਿਹਾਰੀ ॥ ਇਸੁ ਧਰਤੀ ਮਹਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਸਿਕਦਾਰੀ ॥

O' man other species work for you.

On the earth is thy dominance established.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 374

If a man adopts a lifestyle as proposed by the Sat Guru, he can achieve liberation living a full life:

ਨਾਨਕ ਸਤਿਗੁਰਿ ਭੋਟਿਐ ਪੂਰੀ ਹੋਵੈ ਜੁਗਤਿ ॥

ਹਸੰਦਿਆ ਖੇਲੰਦਿਆ ਪੈਨੰਦਿਆ ਖਾਵੰਦਿਆ ਵਿਚੇ ਹੋਵੈ ਮੁਕਤਿ ॥

Saith Nanak: By listening to the Master is the true device of living perfected.

In a life of smiling, playfulness, enjoyment of wear and food,
Is attained liberation.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 522

Guru Granth Sahib rejects an ascetic life of fasting and self-infliction, i.e., *Hath Yoga*.

Guru Granth Sahib dispels every kind of illusion, and unravels the Supreme Reality. It liberates the mind from every kind of delusion, religious and social bondages. It gives a man his much sought after freedom:

ਫੂਟੇ ਆਂਡਾ ਭਰਮ ਕਾ ਮਨਹਿ ਭਇਓ ਪਰਗਾਸੁ ॥

ਕਾਟੀ ਬੇਰੀ ਪਗਹ ਤੇ ਗੁਰਿ ਕੀਨੀ ਬੰਦਿ ਖਲਾਸੁ ॥

ਆਵਣ ਜਾਣੁ ਰਹਿਓ ॥ ਤਪਤ ਕੜਾਹਾ ਬੁਝਿ ਗਇਆ ਗੁਰਿ ਸੀਤਲ ਨਾਮੁ ਦੀਓ ॥

Shattered is doubt's egg-shell, and the mind illumined:

The Master, cutting off fetters from our feet, from

Bonds has freed us.

Now is my transmigration ended.

Cooled is the boiling cauldron, as the Master the cooling

Naam has granted.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 1002

Guru Granth Sahib censures every kind of genocide, violence, holocaust, terrorism, nuclear wars, which are hanging on the heads of

humanity like a sword of Damocles cf. *Babarvani*. 9/11, Belsan, genocide in Sudan, Iraq war, Bali and Jakarta bombings are some incidents in which thousands of innocents have perished. There seems to be no end of such incidents. God save us!

Guru Granth Sahib has a universal application for mankind. At the end of Guru Granth Sahib, its compiler, Guru Arjun Dev Ji visualizes its universal aspect in a metaphor of Salver and heavenly food:

ਬਾਲ ਵਿਚਿ ਤਿੰਨਿ ਵਸਤੂ ਪਈਓ ਸਤੁ ਸੰਤੋਖੁ ਵੀਚਾਰੇ ॥
ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਨਾਮੁ ਠਾਕੁਰ ਕਾ ਪਇਓ ਜਿਸ ਕਾ ਸਭਸੁ ਅਧਾਰੇ ॥
ਜੇ ਕੋ ਖਾਵੈ ਜੇ ਕੋ ਭੁੰਚੈ ਤਿਸ ਕਾ ਹੋਇ ਉਧਾਰੇ ॥

In this *Salver gurbani* are lying three virtues — truth, content and contemplation.

Also lying in it is Lord's ambrosial *Naam*, Sustenance of all existence.

Whoever partakes of it, consumes it,
Saved shall be.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 1429

Acknowledgement:

English version of *gurbani* is based on the translation rendered by Professor Gurbachan Singh Talib, which is thankfully acknowledged.

–Author

□

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

Address bravo ! bravo ! to Him who gives sustenance to all.

Nanak, with the words bravo ! bravo ! praise the one Lord, whom the True Guru has revealed unto me.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 514

ਵਾਹੁ ਵਾਹੁ ਤਿਸ ਨੋ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਿ ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਰਹਿਆ ਸਮਾਇ ॥

ਵਾਹੁ ਵਾਹੁ ਤਿਸ ਨੋ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਿ ਦੇਦਾ ਰਿਜਕੁ ਸਬਾਹਿ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਵਾਹੁ ਵਾਹੁ ਇਕੋ ਕਰਿ ਸਾਲਾਹੀਐ ਜਿ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਦੀਆ ਦਿਖਾਇ ॥

GURU GRANTH SAHIB : SIMPLE AND SECULAR

KULBIR KAUR*

This holy book of the Sikhs is unique in many respects. The Guru Granth, a part of every Sikh's life, is the only scripture in the world which incorporates and sanctifies the writings of people, outside its own faith.

The Granth Sahib contains hymns not just of the Sikh Gurus, but also of *bhagats* and saints like Jaidev, Farid, Namdev, Kabir, Ravidas, Mira, Surdas and many others, each from a different religion, caste and part of the country. Many names for God, having their origin in different faiths, have been used with equal sanctity in *Gurbani*. Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikhs faith, preached that God belongs to the whole humanity. No prophet or community can claim an exclusive right over Him. *Gurbani* says, "...the same Lord is the Father of everyone and resides in every heart."

The Granth is of 1430 pages. It is written wholly in verse. The hymns of the Gurus and saints are not arranged in the holy book according to their authors, but according to thirty-one *ragas*. Interestingly, though the written character throughout the Granth is in Gurmukhi script, the language used is understood in the central and upper India, with a liberal sprinkling of words and phrases from Persian, Arabic, Hindi and other Indian languages. These compositions are devotional hymns and prayers to the Almighty, propounding the philosophy of love and devotion.

The Granth Sahib, compiled by the fifth Guru, Guru Arjun Dev, was installed in the Golden Temple in 1604 AD with Baba Budha as the head priest. The Granth is the only scripture the original manuscript of which is still available and is kept at Gurdwara Shish Mahal in

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Kartarpur (Jalandhar).

The Granth Sahib is usually kept in every gurdwara in the congregational hall and must be present on every social and religious function. On special occasions, it is read non-stop from cover to cover by a number of readers. This takes two days and nights and is known as *akhand path*, that is, unbroken recitation.

The eternal status of Guru Granth Sahib is derived from the declaration of Guru Gobind Singh, the last Sikh Guru, in 1708 AD when he breathed his last. When the Sikhs asked him, "Who their Guru would be in future" the Guru said, "The God's word as enshrined in the *Adi Granth* will be the eternal and the spiritual Guru, and the secular Guru will be the Guru Khalsa Panth." Guru Gobind Singh brought to an end the line of personal Gurus and declared the Holy Word as 'Guru' after him. The most important concept in the Granth is, in fact, the Word or the *Shabad*. The Guru is not the mortal human body, but the spirit within that is *Shabad*, the true Guru. The word enshrined in the Holy scripture was always revered by the Gurus as well as by their disciples as of Divine origin. The Almighty is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, and it is believed that salvation cannot be attained without grace, faith and good deed.

The basic belief of the faith is recorded in the very beginning of the scripture as an invocation. It starts with (*ik Oangkar*), that is, there is only one God. The Sikhs, thus, are strict monotheists. They believe God to be the cause of the whole creation. God loves all, irrespective of a person's colour, class, caste or creed. Not surprisingly, the prayer of a Sikh always ends with : *Nanak naam chardi kala, Tere bhane sarbat da bhala*.

Thus, the Granth Sahib, the eternal Guru of the Sikhs, with its secular character and simplicity, is a true symbol of universal brotherhood and unification, for, it has nothing sectarian in its form or spirit.

400TH ANNIVERSARY OF GURU GRANTH SAHIB

GURMUKH SINGH SANDHU*

Worship Guru the Lord; Love him with body and mind.

– Guru Arjun Dev (Nanak V)

The sacred scripture was first known as *Pothi Sahib* from 1604 AD, and as Guru Granth Sahib from 1708 AD onwards. Shortly before his passing away on October 7, 1708, Guru Gobind Singh (Nanak X) brought to an end the line of Gurus in person and declared “Granth Sahib” (the word/*sabad*) as his successor Guru, and ‘Guru’ of the Sikh Panth forever.

400 years ago, *Adi Granth*, was installed in Harimandir Sahib, Amritsar in 1604 by Guru Arjun Dev; 400th Anniversary of this holy scripture falls on 1st September, 2004. The Sikhs all over the world are celebrating this occasion with devotion, gaiety and piety.

The ‘Guru’ in Sikhism is the Saviour, the Prophet, the true Enlightener: who is as perfect as God Himself. The Guru communicates his ideas through the *sabad*. It is the basic Sikh doctrine that the Guru and the *sabad* are identical in all respects. Guru Ram Das (Nanak IV) in *Raga Nat Narain* (Guru Granth Sahib, p. 982) says: “The Word is the Guru, and the Guru is the Word, and in the Word is the essence of ambrosia.”¹

Guru Granth Sahib is one of the world’s latest scriptures, the old scriptures include the Torah, Zend Avasta, Bible, the Koran (West Asian Religions), the Vedas, Tripitakas or three Baskets, the Tattvarthasutra (Jain teachings) (South Asian religions) and the Chinese religion Confucianism, has its own basic text, the Analects, etc.

Most great world teachers of faith and wisdom have not left any record of their own compositions, and we only know about their teachings

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1 ਬਾਣੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੁਰੂ ਹੈ ਬਾਣੀ, ਵਿਚਿ ਬਾਣੀ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਸਾਰੇ ॥ (ਪੰਨਾ ੯੮੨)

through tradition or writings of their followers. The holy book *Torah* was composed and written by the followers of the Jewish faith. Confucius (551-479 BC) was founder of the Chinese religion Confucianism. The basic text of this religion, the *Analects*, was compiled taking two generations by his disciples after his death. We know about the teachings of Socrates (469-399 BC) through the writings of his disciples Plato, and Xenophen. Lord Jesus Christ (4 BC-30AD) did not reduce his doctrines to writing himself. His mother-tongue was a Syrian dialect mixed with Hebrew, and his teachings were oral. The *Gospels* were written by Mathew, Mark, Luke and John after the martyrdom of Jesus Christ in about 50 AD and 150 AD. Hazrat Muhammad Sahib (570-632 AD) was founder of Islam. The collection of divine messages was completed during the caliphate of Hazrat Umar Farooq (634-644 AD), the second Caliph, and the authorized version was established during the Caliphate of Hazrat Usman Ghani Zoomurain (644-656 AD). The chapters of the holy *Qoran* were written by the adherents and the followers of Prophet Muhammad. Lord Buddha (563-483 BC) did not compose or write his teachings himself. His discourses were compiled later into three collections, viz, *Vinaya Pitaka*, *Sutra Pitaka* and *Abhidharma Pitaka* by his learned followers. All the three *Pitakas* (*Tripitaka*) were written in 100 BC in Ceylon. The “Tattvarthasutra” was composed and written by adherents and followers of Jain faith.

But in the case of Sikh sacred scripture, it was written by thirty five *banikars* (Six Gurus, fifteen Bhagats/Muslim Sufi Saints, eleven Bhattas and three other persons of devotion), and compiled by Guru Arjun Dev. The compilation of sacred writings and compositions or hymns of six Gurus (Nanak Dev, Angad Dev, Amar Das, Ram Das, Arjun Dev and Teg Bahadur) are preserved and these are always fresh. We know at first hand what they taught and preached.

According to C P Rama Swami Aiyer, the Sikh scripture is the only book in the world where the teachings of other wise men are given, side by side with those of the Gurus. Dr S Radhakrishnan says, “We find in the *Adi Granth*, a wide range of mystical emotions, intimate expressions of the personal realization of God and rapturous hymns of divine love.”

Besides the compositions of the previous Gurus, and his own, Guru Arjun also included in the holy scripture, some hymns of those saints who believed in the unity of God and brotherhood of man.

The holy book was named *Pothi Sahib* and ceremonially installed

in Harimandir Sahib, Amritsar on 16 August, 1604 (Julian). Baba Buddha (1506-1631) was appointed the first *Granthi* by the Guru.

There are two main editions of the *Adi-Granth*. One is that edited by Guru Arjun Dev in 1604 AD at Amritsar, and the second edition is that re-edited by Guru Gobind Singh (Nanak X) in 1706 AD at Damdama Sahib, District Bathinda (Punjab) adding 115 hymns of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur (Nanak IX) at the appropriate places. This re-edited edition is known as *Damdami Bir*.

Guru Gobind Singh breathed his last on the night of October 6-7, 1708 at Nanded (Maharashtra State). Shortly before his passing away, the Guru bowed his head before the sacred scripture 'Granth Sahib' and declared, "It is Guru Eternal for the Sikhs". The personal Guruship was thus ended. The succession was now passed on to Guru Granth in perpetuity. The Guru addressed the gathering of the Sikhs and declared on this occasion that after him the Granth Sahib (the word/*sabad*) would be the Guru of the Sikh Panth. Since then the sacred book is addressed as Guru Granth Sahib, i.e., the visible spirit of the Gurus. He further declared, "Own Sri Granth Sahib in my place. He whosoever acknowledges it, will obtain his due reward. The Guru will bless him. Know this as the truth."

Guru Granth Sahib is written in Gurmukhi script. The main language of this sacred book is Punjabi, containing elements of languages like Arabic, Sanskrit, Persian, Sindhi, Lehndi, Dakhni, Bengali and Marathi.

Guru Granth Sahib has been translated into Indian and foreign languages. The complete English version has been published by Dr Gopal Singh, Sardar Manmohan Singh, Prof Gurbachan Singh Talib. Some selected hymns from Guru Granth Sahib have been translated by Max Arther Macauliffe, Tarlochan Singh, Khushwant Singh, Jarnail Singh, Jodh Singh, etc. This work has also been published by UNESCO under the direction of Dr S Radhakrishnan.

Puran Singh, the great Sikh scholar says : "Guru Granth is the scripture of all nations, for it is the lyric of divine love, and all the people of the earth subsist on such glowing lyrical prayer. Guru Granth is but one song, one idea and one life."

LET'S DELVE DEEPER

SUMIT KAUR*

Born in a Christian family, I abandoned Christianity as a teenager, thinking there was nothing in it that I could use in my day-to-day living. People used to ask, "Why, don't you believe in God?" and I used to answer, "Yes, I do, very much believe in God, but not in Christianity."

When I encountered *Sikhi*, reading *Japuji*, it was love at first sight, as I had found a useful tool to deal with my day-to-day living. Later, when I found out that even Sikh scholars fought to get *Sikhi* accepted among the world's religions, I wondered what was so great about that. I was certainly not looking for a new religion. The one, into which I was born, believes in virgin birth, another in the inferiority of women, yet one in the inequality of human beings, and finally, one in the coming of a new saviour. Why and how on earth should and could *Sikhi* fit in among such religions? I think it is underestimating *Sikhi*.

Below are some views (in *italics*) of some Sikh scholars expressed in a recent issue of a leading magazine. Their references have been deliberately omitted, because the purpose of this article is not to criticise anyone or start a controversy, but to use the occasion to delve deeper into the philosophy propounded by the Gurus and understand its relative status vis-à-vis the other world religions.

WHAT A FIT !

"The Guru Granth incorporates all the features to keep it alongside the world's greatest scriptures."

"Such is the Guru Granth, the sacred book of the Sikhs, that it takes its place alongside the world's greatest scriptures, the Vedas, the Zind-Avesta, the Bible and the Quran."

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Is this all that can be said about Guru Granth Sahib on the 400th anniversary of its installation?

Guru Granth Sahib does not just fit alongside other scriptures, it is light-years ahead of them, because of the fact that it is for the whole of humanity. Other scriptures are exclusive for the followers of their own faith, who regard others as infidels.

TRUE TO THE ESSENCE?

Guru Nanak most certainly did not, “...urge members of the two main religious beliefs in India, the Hindus and the Muslims, to be true to their own faiths and practise their faith’s essence rather than being exploitative.”

For, if a Hindu shall be true to the essence of his faith, he will have to practise the caste system, which in itself is highly exploitative. And, a Muslim would have to consider women inferior and all non-Muslims as infidels, which is equally exploitative. How then could the Guru have urged the two communities to be true to their own faith? The Guru, on the contrary, has described his concept of a Hindu and a Muslim in Guru Granth Sahib. And that has got nothing to do with the philosophy of Hinduism or Islam:

“Make compassion the cotton, contentment the yarn;
 Continence the knot and purity the twist;
 Such is the true sacred thread of the self.
 Thou Brahmin-priest! put this on me, shouldst thou have it.
 This thread neither snaps nor is soiled;
 Neither burnt nor lost.
 Saith Nanak: Blessed are the beings that around their neck put this.”¹

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 471

“Five are the Muslim prayers; five their appointed hours,
 Five their names.
 These be the true prayers:
 Truthfulness is the first, legitimate earning the second;
 The third, prayer to God for universal weal.
 The fourth is sincerity of heart and mind;
 The fifth, laudation of God.

Recite the *kalima* of noble acting —
 Thus may one be called Mussalman.
 Saith Nanak: Of all hypocrites, ignoble is the end.”²²

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 141

Here, the Guru refers to the *janeu*, *namaḥ* and *kalima* as metaphors, to bring home his point to Hindus and Muslims as to how one can become a good human being. Many such rituals and also many other activities, such as, ploughing a field, making wine, etc., have too been similarly used. For example :

“Put in the molasses of enlightenment,
 the *mabua* flowers of meditation,
 And the bark of good deeds.
 On the oven of devotion set these to boil;
 with the wet cloth of love cool these –
 Thus distil *amrita*-elixir.”²³

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 360

Surely, the Guru is not explaining how to make wine or recommending its use/manufacture. Similarly, the *janeu*, *namaḥ* and other religious rituals are not being advocated.

I think, Guru Nanak’s teachings are glaringly clear. If you shall be true to his teachings of brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God, then you cannot subscribe to either the Hindu philosophy or the Islamic philosophy.

SYNTHESIS? DISTILLATE?

“To respect a philosophy is correct but to synthesise this in one’s own is an entirely unique matter. The verses by bhagats have been treated at par with Gurbani and respected too in the same manner.”

“The Guru Granth Sahib is the distillate of the teachings of the great spiritualists of India belonging to different religious traditions and coming from different parts of India.”

If the Guru was so impressed with the earlier Indian traditions, how come his life and teachings were totally contrary to these? And as for the inclusion of the writings of *bhagats* in Guru Granth Sahib, it was only the writings of *bhagats* and other poets that tallied with the

Guru's life-affirming philosophy that were included.

Sardar Daljeet Singh rebutted such statements years ago – a) that Sikhism is a synthesis of other religions and b) that it is a distillate of other spiritualists, after he had studied the earlier Indian traditions and other world religions. I reproduce below some of his conclusions for the benefit of readers as well as scholars:

“We have already described the chief tenets and trends of Indian mysticism and those of Guru Nanak's religion. On almost every essential issue Guru Nanak's answers to the mystic and the human problems are generally contrary to those given by the earlier systems. The then existing religious movements had been running in a direction exactly opposite to the one in which Guru Nanak wanted his religious stream to flow. The system of the Gurus and the Indian religions lay down contrasted goals for man.”⁴

“The Radical Bhakti saints had, to an extent, weaned away the people from ritualism and formalism of the earlier systems. But being Quietists themselves, they never thought of a change in the direction of the spiritual stream as vital to their mysticism. Because of their mystic experience and the logic of their religious system, the Gurus took up the colossal task of completely reversing the direction of the religious life and of diverting all spiritual energies for the enrichment of human affairs.”⁵

“A broad survey of the world's religions reveals that the essential elements of the Guru's system were nowhere to be found in the contemporary religious life and scene. Much less was there any visible trace of them in the Indian background. It comprised systems that were quite opposed in their outlook, approach and religious thesis.”⁶

NOT CRITICAL ? NOT NEGATION ?

Guru Nanak advises the people to “build a mosque of mercy and kindness instead of cruelty, have a prayer-mat made of faith, earn their bread through toil and sweat, treat that as the holy Koran, stay away from evil deeds, live contented lives, observe fasts and thus evolve into a true Muslim”. Not only this, he states that rather than gazing towards Mecca, they should “do good deeds, consider truth as their vendor, kindness as their prayer and all this as the reciting of namaḡ :

God would certainly acknowledge those prayers.”

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 140

An author *inter alia* refers to the above hymn and comments :
“Verses of the Bani show four dialogues relating to Islam. The first is associated with the recitation and technique of namaṡ. The second one preaches on observance of fast and rightful earning. The third dialogue deals with the qazis and how they should conduct themselves, recite all five namaṡ correctly. The fourth verse stresses on the proper preaching, by religious leaders. All these dialogues are not at all critical of the philosophy of Islam, but rather they enjoin the followers as to what norms and values should be adopted and what kind of qualities their leaders should possess. It is clear that all these dialogues point towards the general public. These are not related to leaders but with the actions of religious leaders and their followers.”

How can the author come to the above-mentioned conclusion ?
 Guru Nanak is describing to the Muslims how to be a good human being, and that has got nothing to do with ‘recitation and technique of namaṡ’, or ‘with the preaching and observance of fast’.

The very fact that Guru Nanak started a new faith is reflective of the fact that he was critical of whatever he observed around him.

“There is but one God,
 By the True Guru’s grace, He is obtained.
 No one should be proud of his caste.
 He alone is Brahmin, who knows his Lord.
 O stupid fool, be thou not proud of thy caste.
 From this pride many sins well up.”⁷

– Guru Granth Sahib, pp 1127-28

The same author also observes :

“The point worth noting here is that none of the composers (in Guru Granth Sahib) has negated the basic philosophy of any religion.”

But as per the Guru :

“Whatever the *pandits* and the *mullahs* have written,
 That I have rejected, and have accepted but nothing.”⁸

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 1159

I have already quoted Sardar Daljeet Singh for writing that there is no trace of the essential elements of the Guru's system to be found in the contemporary religious life and the scene of those times. Much less was there any visible trace of them in the Indian background, which means that he negated all the old systems and took people in the direction of the Universal Truth.

“The body is the paper, the mind's tendencies the Divine decree on it recorded.

Man ignorant, reads not the writ recorded on his head.

The three decrees under mentioned at the Divine Court are writ:

Behold, the base coin is of little use.

Saith Nanak: Should it contain genuine silver,

All shall pronounce it genuine.

The Muslim judge utters falsehood and eats filth;

The Brahmin guilty of slaughter of humanity, makes show of pious bathing;

The yogi, blind of insight, knows not the true praxis.

The devices of all three ruin mankind.

The true yogi the true praxis understands,

And by the Master's grace the Sole Lord realizes.

the true *qazı* turns his mind away from *maya*,

And by the Master's grace dies while living.

The true Brahmin is one who the Supreme Being contemplates.

Liberates himself, to others brings liberation.

Truly wise is one who washes his heart of impurity;

The true Muslim one who washes off his impurity.

Such of the learned alone are approved of by God,

As bear on the forehead mark of Divine commendation.”⁹⁹

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 662

If a Brahmin shall liberate others he will have to cease to be a Hindu, for, according to Hinduism, he is not supposed to be even in the same room with the so-called lower castes. How then can he liberate others while remaining a Hindu? A good human being, according to Guru Nanak, is one who lives truthfully, is honest, fights injustice, and has compassion for the whole of humanity.

A TOOL FOR LIVING

I still wonder what makes Sikh scholars want to fit *Sikhi* among some of the world's earlier outdated systems of religious thought. An ocean does not fit into a pitcher.

Had Sikhs stayed out of this race and, on the contrary, insisted that *Sikhi* does not belong to the category of the world's other religions, they would probably have had no problems in France today. *Sikhi* is not a religion in the traditional sense, but a unique will to live life according to the Universal Truth/His Will.

Sikhi is there for everybody to pick up and live. And I am sure that there are people around the world who live *Sikhi* (or close to it) without ever having heard about it. Considering all equal, they are helpful and content, and remember God at all times. They do not formally belong to the Sikh religion. However, they simply live *Sikhi*.

Sikhi is the Universal Truth, which is within every human being; it is up to every individual to discover it for himself/herself. And here *Sikhi* is a useful tool; it takes you away from the stinking fountains of ritual religion to the ocean of Universal Truth.

Christians, Hindus, Muslims and Jews are all welcome to inculcate the values of *Sikhi* and finally find a way out for emancipation of the world afflicted with strife and hatred due to clash of religious denominations. I think that is what Guru Nanak meant when he said, "there is no Hindu, there is no Muslim", decrying false pretensions of religions. Guru Arjun leaves no doubt about it :

"I observe neither the fasting nor the ritual of the Ramadan month:
Him I serve who at the last shall save.

The Lord of the universe of the Hindus and Allah to me are one:
From Hindus and Muhammadans have I broken free.

I perform neither Kaaba pilgrimage nor at bathing spots worship:
One sole Lord I serve, and no other.

I perform neither the Hindu worship nor *namaṡ*:
To the sole formless Lord in my heart I bow.

We neither are Hindus nor Musalmans:

Our body and life is Allah-Rama's"¹⁰

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 1136

Sikhi is a way out for this religion-torn world, because it is a tool for living life in accordance with the Universal Truth.

SEEKING AN ANSWER

Reading *Gurbani*, I thought that the Guru had liberated me, but as per the advice of such Sikh scholars as quoted above, I should remain true to the essence of Christianity, my earlier faith by birth.

Should I, therefore, continue believing in 'virgin birth' and that 'only Jesus can save me'?

~ ~ ~

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1. ਦਇਆ ਕਪਾਹ ਸੰਤੋਖੁ ਸੂਤੁ ਜਤੁ ਗੰਢੀ ਸਤੁ ਵਟੁ ॥ ਏਹੁ ਜਨੇਊ ਜੀਅ ਕਾ ਹਈ ਤ ਪਾਡੇ ਘਤੁ ॥ ਨਾ ਏਹੁ ਤੁਟੈ ਨ ਮਲੁ ਲਗੈ ਨਾ ਏਹੁ ਜਲੈ ਨ ਜਾਇ ॥ ਧੰਨੁ ਸੁ ਮਾਣਸ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਜੋ ਗਲਿ ਚਲੇ ਪਾਇ ॥
2. ਪੰਜਿ ਨਿਵਾਜਾ ਵਖਤ ਪੰਜਿ ਪੰਜਾ ਪੰਜੇ ਨਾਉ ॥ ਪਹਿਲਾ ਸਚੁ ਹਲਾਲ ਦੁਇ ਤੀਜਾ ਖੈਰ ਖੁਦਾਇ ॥ ਚਉਥੀ ਨੀਅਤਿ ਰਾਸਿ ਮਨੁ ਪੰਜਵੀ ਸਿਫਤਿ ਸਨਾਇ ॥ ਕਰਣੀ ਕਲਮਾ ਆਖਿ ਕੈ ਤਾ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਣੁ ਸਦਾਇ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਜੇਤੇ ਕੂੜਿਆਰ ਕੂੜੈ ਕੂੜੀ ਪਾਇ ॥
3. ਗੁੜੁ ਕਰਿ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਧਿਆਨੁ ਕਰਿ ਧਾਵੈ ਕਰਿ ਕਰਣੀ ਕਸੁ ਪਾਈਐ ॥ ਭਾਠੀ ਭਵਨੁ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਕਾ ਪੋਚਾ ਇਤੁ ਰਸਿ ਅਮਿਉ ਚੁਆਈਐ ॥
4. Daljeet Singh, *Sikhism: A Comparative Study of Its Theology and Mysticism*, Third Edition, January 1998, page 332-3.
5. Ibid., page 334.
6. Ibid., page 335.
7. ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥ ਜਾਤਿ ਕਾ ਗਰਬੁ ਨ ਕਰੀਅਹੁ ਕੋਈ ॥ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਬਿੰਦੇ ਸੋ ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣੁ ਹੋਈ ॥ ੧ ॥ ਜਾਤਿ ਕਾ ਗਰਬੁ ਨ ਕਰਿ ਮੂਰਖ ਗਵਾਰਾ ॥ ਇਸੁ ਗਰਬ ਤੇ ਚਲਹਿ ਬਹੁਤੁ ਵਿਕਾਰਾ ॥
8. ਪੰਡਿਤ ਮੁਲਾਂ ਜੋ ਲਿਖਿ ਦੀਆ ॥ ਛਾਡਿ ਚਲੇ ਹਮ ਕਛੁ ਨ ਲੀਆ ॥
9. ਕਾਇਆ ਕਾਗਦੁ ਮਨੁ ਪਰਵਾਣਾ ॥ ਸਿਰ ਕੇ ਲੇਖ ਨ ਪੜੈ ਇਆਣਾ ॥ ਦਰਗਹ ਘੜੀਅਹਿ ਤੀਨੇ ਲੇਖ ॥ ਖੋਟਾ ਕਾਮਿ ਨ ਆਵੈ ਵੇਖੁ ॥ ੧ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਜੇ ਵਿਚਿ ਰੁਪਾ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਖਰਾ ਖਰਾ ਆਖੈ ਸਭੁ ਕੋਇ ॥ ੧ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥ ਕਾਦੀ ਕੂੜੁ ਬੋਲਿ ਮਲੁ ਖਾਇ ॥ ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣੁ ਨਾਵੈ ਜੀਆ ਘਾਇ ॥ ਜੋਗੀ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਨ ਜਾਣੈ ਅੰਧੁ ॥ ਤੀਨੇ ਓਜਾਤੇ ਕਾ ਬੰਧੁ ॥ ੨ ॥ ਸੋ ਜੋਗੀ ਜੋ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਪਛਾਣੈ ॥ ਗੁਰ ਪਰਸਾਦੀ ਏਕੋ ਜਾਣੈ ॥ ਕਾਜੀ ਸੋ ਜੋ ਉਲਟੀ ਕਰੈ ॥ ਗੁਰ ਪਰਸਾਦੀ ਜੀਵਤੁ ਮਰੈ ॥ ਸੋ ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣੁ ਜੋ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਬੀਚਾਰੈ ॥ ਆਪਿ ਤਰੈ ਸਗਲੇ ਕੁਲ ਤਾਰੈ ॥ ੩ ॥ ਦਾਨਸਬੰਦੁ ਸੋਈ ਦਿਲਿ ਧੋਵੈ ॥ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਣੁ ਸੋਈ ਮਲੁ ਖੋਵੈ ॥ ਪੜਿਆ ਬੂਝੈ ਸੋ ਪਰਵਾਣੁ ॥ ਜਿਸੁ ਸਿਰਿ ਦਰਗਹ ਕਾ ਨੀਸਾਣੁ ॥
10. ਵਰਤ ਨ ਰਹਉ ਨ ਮਹ ਰਮਦਾਨਾ ॥ ਤਿਸੁ ਸੇਵੀ ਜੋ ਰਖੈ ਨਿਦਾਨਾ ॥ ਏਕੁ ਗੁਸਾਈ ਅਲਹੁ ਮੇਰਾ ॥ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਤੁਰਕ ਦੁਹਾਂ ਨੇਬੇਰਾ ॥ ਹਜ ਕਾਬੈ ਜਾਉ ਨ ਤੀਰਥ ਪੂਜਾ ॥ ਏਕੋ ਸੇਵੀ ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਦੂਜਾ ॥ ਪੂਜਾ ਕਰਉ ਨ ਨਿਵਾਜ ਗੁਜਾਰਉ ॥ ਏਕ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਲੇ ਰਿਦੈ ਨਮਸਕਾਰਉ ॥ ਨਾ ਹਮ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਨ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ॥ ਅਲਹ ਰਾਮ ਕੇ ਪਿੰਡੁ ਪਰਾਨ ॥

Note : *Gurbani* quotes are from English translation of Guru Granth Sahib by Gurbachan Singh Talib.

BANDA SINGH BAHADUR – A COMPARATIVE STUDY* –

LT COL GULCHARAN SINGH

Banda Singh Bahadur in the north and Shivaji in the south, both thwarted the Mughal might and fought for the establishment of independent states in their respective regions — they both fought for territorial gains. But, whereas the exploits of Shivaji have been highlighted, so much so that even the centenary of his ascension to *gaddi* has been celebrated on national level, Banda Singh Bahadur, it is a pity, has been completely ignored by his countrymen. Let us carry out a comparative study of the two great men of their times.

Banda Singh Bahadur, who took over the leadership of the Sikhs after the death of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru of the Sikhs, was a thin man of medium height, with brownish hair. He was of strong physique and had shining eyes. He was intelligent, fearless and active from his very childhood. He was a man of such an impressive personality that even the worst of his enemies like Imad-ud-Daula Muhammad Amir Khan praised him for “so much of acuteness in his features and so much of nobility in his conduct.” He was a good marksman and an expert rider; proficient in archery and in the wielding of sword. He became proficient in whatever profession he adopted. He was a keen *shikari*; as a *bairagi* he was expert in mesmerism, and knew the medicinal uses of the various plants. He was a *jadoogar* feared by the people, and good at fighting — those days even *bairagis* were good fighters. On embracing Sikhism, he became a staunch *Amritdhari* follower of the tenth Guru and followed the teachings of the Gurus in theory and practice. He lived a pure and a simple life.

Under him, the number of Sikhs increased; he even initiated a

* Courtesy : *The Punjab Past and Present*, April 1982 issue

number of Muslims and brought them into the new faith. Nawab Amin-ud-Daula writes in the third *ruqa* of his *Dastur-ul-Insba Ruqaat-i-Amin-ud-Daula* thus :

“Many Hindus and Musalmans... adopted their faith and rituals. And their chief (Banda Singh) captivated the hearts of Musalmans; whosoever came in contact with him, he addressed him with the title of *Singh*. Accordingly, Dindar Khan, a powerful ruler of the neighbourhood, was named Dindar Singh, and Mir Nasir-ud-Din, a news-writer of Sirhind, became Mir Nasir Singh. In the same way, a large number of Musalmans abandoned Islam and adopted the misguided path of Sikhism.”¹

Under Banda Singh, the Sikhs became more organised, more formidable and numerous; they also gained plenty of experience in fighting. Within three or four months, he collected around him from four to five thousand pony-riders and seven to eight thousand motley footmen. This number increased daily till it reached the figure of eighteen to nineteen thousand men under arms.² He taught them how to fight and conquer. Like Xanthippes,³ Banda Singh Bahadur as “one man and one brain laid low the forces that had seemed invincible,” and restored confidence in his troops. The result was that territory between Lahore and Panipat lay practically prostrate under his feet. He fought against a number of Mughal *Faujdar*s and humbled them all.

Although a Sikh, he had to fight against the Mughals for whom, of course, he was an ‘unbeliever’, ‘a dog’ and an ‘impostor’, a ‘rebel of the government’, but he was not a religious fanatic. He never converted the fighting into a religious war. He had proclaimed that “we do not oppose Muslims and we do not oppose Islam. We only oppose tyranny, and we only oppose usurpation of the political power which belongs to the people and not to the privileged individuals or to Mughals.”⁴ As a result of his secular policy, both in theory and practice, Banda Singh had about five thousand Muslims in his army; he looked after them, fixed their wages and allowances, and permitted them to read *kebutba* and *namaz*. They were free to say their prayers in their own fashion. Testifying this, a royal news-writer, reported to Aurangzeb; on 28th April, 1711, as under:

“The wretched Nanak-worshipper had his camp in the town of Kalanaur upto the 19th instant. During the period, he promised

and proclaimed: 'I do not oppress the Muslims.' Accordingly, for any Muslim who approaches him, he fixes a daily allowance and wages and looks after him. He has permitted them to read *kebutba* and *namaḥ*. As such, five thousand Muslims have gathered around him. Having entered into his friendship, they are free to shout their call and say prayers in the army of the wretched Sikhs."⁵

This speaks for Banda Singh's liberal-mindedness; and that too in spite of the fact that the Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah, who had ascended the Delhi throne with the help of the Sikhs, had on 10th December, 1710, issued an Imperial Ordinance to the effect that "Every Sikh, wherever he is found, wherever he is seen, should be put to death without any hesitation and without any further thought."

To create awe and fear in the minds of the Mughal authorities, Banda Singh did devastate their towns and cities, such as Samana and Sirhind; he did loot the nobles' property but then distributed it all among his followers, keeping nothing for himself. He was a selfless servant of the *Panth*. He accumulated no riches and built no palaces for himself. Whatever territory he captured was in the name of the Khalsa fraternity and was not considered to be his personal domains. Although a terror for the Mughal administration, and no Mughal commander dared face him, but for ordinary people he was a *Kalkei Avtar* or *Mehdi*.

It is strange that when his influence was felt upto Panipat, he did not try to go for Delhi. Most probably he was not strong enough for such a venture, nor did he want the wrath of the whole of the Mughal Empire to fall upon him.

He was a man of valour, cool in the face of death, a strong believer in his own faith. At the time of his execution, when given a choice between Islam and death, he opted for the latter.

He was the champion of the downtrodden, irrespective of whether they were Sikhs, Muslims or Hindus. He abolished landlordism and, in the words of Prof Anil Chandra Bannerjee, gave "a socio-economic direction."⁶ This also resulted in many more becoming Sikhs. He never harmed a woman or a child.

As compared to the Mughal hordes, his force was never superior to them numerically, nor had it the munitions of war in plenty. Where the Mughal forces were armed with *ḡamburaks*, *raihkalis* and light and

heavy guns, the Sikhs had spears, swords, *ramjange*, and so on. Surprisingly, with such a small quantity of munitions and so small a number of men, the Sikhs defied such a mighty empire for so long! They were hardy, had no supply problems and, the most important, they had a cause to fight for: being members of a new organisation, they fought with great zeal. They were fearless and possessed offensive spirit as compared to the soft and easy-going Mughal soldiers.

Banda Singh Bahadur employed guerilla type of warfare, called in Panjabi *Dhai Phatt* (two and a half strokes). So long as he followed these tactics he was successful. He had no supply problems, no fear of his administrative tail being cut off. But when besieged in the Nangal Garhi (near Gurdaspur), he became static, lost mobility, was deprived of reinforcements and supplies. Under the circumstances, he had to surrender.

The terrain and the circumstances, compared to the Marathas under Shivaji in the South, were not favourable to Banda Singh. The Marathas were, writes Tara Chand, “a compact people; geography favoured them, protecting them from easy reach of the Bahamani or the Mughal rulers.”⁷ The *Ghats* offered them safe retreats, and also provided them with vantage points for the construction of forts, which, in turn, dominated the surrounding areas.⁸ Western *Ghats* formed a screen in front of Konkan, an area which served the Marathas as an “excellent base” for organising their operations. “The *Ghats*,” writes Sarkar, “with their countless forts and intricate pathways, were the most suitable place for launching expeditions from, being equally convenient for surprising the Mughals and evading their strong outposts.”⁹ Because of the terrain being mountainous, and with numerous, naturally strong forts, and the Mughals with insufficient troops unable to besiege all of them, the country, unlike the Indo-Gangetic plains, “could not be conquered and annexed by one cavalry dash or even one year’s campaign.”¹⁰

The Marathas had an opening towards the sea running along the Western *Ghats*. Where this provided them with mobility, it also provided them an opening to contact the foreign powers. As such, they had once come to “an understanding with their Portuguese neighbours for mutual aid against the Mughals”¹¹ The Portuguese even provided safe refuge to the wives and children of the Marathas, when

the enemy descended into the eastern belt of Konkan. No such advantages were available to Banda Singh.

The maltreatment at the hands of Aurangzeb had antagonised both the Bijapur and Golconda rulers; this helped Shivaji to receive military aid from both the States. Also, the Mughal engagement with these States gave Shivaji a free hand for the period. Another advantage Shivaji had was in the population of the area being predominantly Hindu, with one third of it being Maharashtrian.¹² Whereas in the Panjab, the Muslims were in a majority. Panjab being a link between Delhi and Central Asia from where fresh blood flowed into India, was well garrisoned by the Mughals. The Ghats being far off did not interfere with the Mughals' Lines of communication. And as for the Hindus in the Panjab, Banda Singh received no help from them. During Banda Singh's times, no Rajput or Dogra arose against the Mughals. On the contrary, they supported the Mughals in subduing Banda Singh and the Sikhs.

In spite of the hardships, Banda Singh Bahadur neither offered himself for service under Aurangzeb, nor did he give any consideration to the terms offered to him. On the other hand, it is a historical fact that Shivaji had offered his services to the Mughal Emperor. For example, in 1657, when Aurangzeb was engaged in the war with Bijapore, "Shivaji entered into correspondence with him, and professed himself a devoted servant of Delhi."¹³ Again, when Aurangzeb succeeded in obtaining the Delhi throne, Shivaji "sent an envoy to Delhi to express his deep regret for what had occurred, and his attachment to the throne."¹⁴ In 1666, Shivaji "joined the Imperial army with 2,000 horsemen and 8,000 foot, and marched against Beejapore,"¹⁵ There was also a time, when Shivaji sought and accepted the terms offered to him by Aurangzeb through Raja Jai Singh with whom, when in difficulty, Shivaji had pleaded thus :

"By reason of my late unwise and disloyal acts, I have not the face to wait on the Emperor, I shall depute my son to be His Majesty's servant and slave, and he will be created a Commander of five thousand with a suitable *jagir*... As for me sinner, exempt me from holding any *mansab* or serving in the Mughal army. But whenever in your wars in the *Deccan*, I am given any military duty, I shall promptly perform it."¹⁶

Bribe or any other kind of enticement have had no effect on

Banda Singh, whereas the Marathas had surrendered most of their forts through bribery by the Mughals.

Banda Singh Bahadur never acted treacherously against the enemies whereas Shivaji's conquests, writes Sarkar, were "the result of deliberate murder and organised treachery."¹⁷ For example, Shivaji had Chandra Rao More and his brother Surya Rao killed by Raghunath Ballal Korde, who had gone to Javli to negotiate engagement of Rao's daughter with Shivaji (October 1655). According to some authorities, Shivaji had once told Raghunath Ballal Korde that "unless Chandra Rao More is killed, the kingdom cannot be gained."¹⁸ Shivaji kept many wives and a number of concubines also. This cannot be said of Banda Singh.

Banda Singh Bahadur established the first independent sovereign state with its own coins and seal. Although short-lived, he put the Sikhs on the path to subsequently establish their rule. The immediate effect, however, was that the Mughal might did not remain unchallenged; the bogey of its formidableness was shattered by both the Marathas and Sikhs.

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REFERENCES & NOTES

1. *The Panjab Past and Present*, October 1975, p. 466.
2. Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab-ul-Lubab*, reproduced in *The History of India*, Elliot and Dowson, Vol. vii, p. 414.
3. Xanthippes was a Spartan general who in a year's service with Carthage had done wonders – had destroyed a Roman Army and captured Regulus. (*The Ancient World*, T R Glover, p. 164)
4. *Ruqaat-i-Amin-ud-Daula*, *Dastur-ul-Insha*, Imperial Daily Diaries quoted.
5. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mualla*, reproduced in *The Panjab Past and Present*, October 1970, p. 228.
6. *The Sikh Review*, April 1972.
7. Tara Chand, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, p. 102.
8. "The whole of the *Ghats* and neighbouring mountains often terminate towards the top in a wall of smooth rock, the highest points of which, as well as detached portions in insulated hills, form natural fortresses, where the only labour required is to get

access to the level space, which generally lies on the summit. Various princes at different times have cut flights of steps or winding roads up the rock, fortified the entrance with a succession of gateways, and erected towers to command the approaches; and thus studded the whole of the region about the *Ghats* and their branches with forts.” (Elphinstone’s *History*, 6th ed., p. 615; Duff, i,7; *Bombay Gazetteer*, xviii, Part I, pp. xix and 16)

9. J N Sarkar, *Aurangzib*, Vol. V, p. 153.
10. J N Sarkar, *Shivaji and His Times*, p. 5; “It is undeniable he hath taken and maintains against the Moguls *sixty* odd strong Hills. But the cause is, the Moguls are unacquainted with, and their bodies unfit for such barren and uneasy places; so that they rather chose to desert than defend them : Whereby it is sufficiently evident *Sevagi* is unable in the plain to do anything but rob, spoil, and return with all the speed imaginable: And on that account it is Aurangzeb calls him his ‘Mountain–Rat.’ with which the greatest system of Monarchy in the World, though continued by an uninterrupted Descent of Imperial Ancestry, have ever been infested, finding it more hard to fight with Mountains than men.” (Fryer, p. 171, quoted in the *Travels* by Bernier, p 198, fn I)
11. J N Sarkar, *Aurangzib*, v,144.
12. “This was in all likelihood their proportionate population in the past also.” (Tara Chand. p. 102.)
13. J C Marshman, *The History of India*, Vol I, p 154.
14. *Ibid.*, I, p. 155.
15. *Ibid.*, I, pp. 160-161.
16. J N Sarkar, *Shivaji and His Times*, 124; Shivaji’s brother Vyankoji supported the Mughals. (*Ibid.*, 129,)
17. *Ibid.*, 43; J N Sarkar, *Aurangzib*, IV, p. 30,
18. J N Sarkar, *Shivaji and His Times*, p. 42.

PLACE OF LOHGARH IN THE INITIAL SIKH STATE (1710-1714)

SURINDER SINGH*

Guru Gobind Singh, while in the Deccan in 1707, realised that his negotiations with Bahadur Shah, the Mughal emperor were not fructifying due to the hostility of the Mughal Court. He also realised that hindrance might also be placed in his way in case he chose to move his camp back to Punjab. Guru Gobind Singh selected Banda Singh Bahadur, earlier a *bairagi* with *tantric* powers, to go to Punjab accompanied with five advisers and some soldiers duly authorised with *Hukamnamas* (Guru's instructions to the Sikhs to join Banda Singh Bahadur) to pursue his mission. Ganda Singh and Hari Ram Gupta have assumed that a farewell darbar was held in Nanded by the Guru in which Banda was declared the commander of Sikh forces and was given a flag and a drum besides Guru's own weapons, without any contemporary evidence. This seems highly improbable, since such a function could have certainly not gone unnoticed by the Mughal camp and would have led to necessary steps to forestall the move. Banda and his men moved out in September 1708 quietly, and taking a circuitous route, to avoid detection by Mughal spy system, reached Punjab in late 1709, whereas the distance of 1600 kms could have been in normal circumstances covered in 3 months in easy stages of about ten miles a day.

Banda Singh Bahadur arrived in Narnaul and started contacting the Sikhs in the Malwa, Majha and Doaba through letters and Guru's *Hukamnamas*. Banda Singh Bahadur became aware of the massacre of Satnamis men, women and children under Aurangzeb's orders virtually wiping them out of existence, and it greatly distressed him.

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From October 1709 till May 1710, Banda Singh Bahadur suppressed the dacoits of Narnaul and made his place amongst the local residents. He looted the treasury at Bhiwani and distributed it amongst his followers, occupied Hissar, and attacked the government treasury at Sonapur. He seized the government treasury at Kaithal. Next, he attacked and subdued Samana, the hometown of the executioner of Guru Tegh Bahadur, and the administration thereof was given to Fateh Singh. Important towns/large villages occupied by Muslim Ranghars, viz., Kunjpura, Ghuram, Thasha Darula, Shahabad Markanda, Sadhaura were subdued. Samana and Sadhaura were the two large cities with forts and large number of soldiers held by *zamindars* in their militia. Another serious battle was that of Ropar against Khizar Khan and his Afghan and Ranghar associates. Sikhs got some timely help from men who came from north-east and defeated the Mughal and Afghan allies next morning. Banda Singh Bahadur then moved to Banur and also subdued Malerkotla. In order to arrange financial resources for his movement, he, in principle, robbed the robbers.

His next major fight was with Wazir Khan, the Faujdar of Sirhind, who was the guiding spirit of the Mughal and allied forces against Guru Gobind Singh in the battle of Anandpur in 1704 and the execution of the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh. The battle of Sirhind was fought on 12th May, 1710 in the fields of Chappar Chirri, twenty miles short of Sirhind. The battle for Sirhind city was fought and won on 14th May, 1710. Wazir Khan was killed along with hundreds of his officers and troops. The province of Sirhind yielding annual revenue of 52 lakhs was the largest area with 28 *parganas*. Baz Singh was made the governor with Ali Singh as his deputy. Banda Singh Bahadur subdued Morinda; visited Kiratpur, Anandpur and Amritsar; defeated the Governor of Lahore; and thereafter moved back to Shivalik hills to consolidate his territories.

Almost all historians dealing with Sikh history, especially the period of Banda Singh Bahadur, have stated that after Banda Singh Bahadur had subdued the Suba Sirhind and the nearby territories, he set up his headquarters at Lohgarh, a small fortress in the Lohgarh Haripur reserve forest area, very close to the plains of the present-day Haryana. He is stated to have made Lohgarh the capital of the nascent

Sikh state and issued Sikh coinage from there. Author has examined the site of Lohgarh and surrounding areas for over a decade and has come to the conclusion that Lohgarh could not be made the capital of any State, howsoever small it may be, as the same does not fulfil the requirements of a State administering a large area. The numismatic evidence also shows that Lohgarh was not the capital city and, in fact, it gives a picture of what a capital city of a Khalsa State should be. This paper is an attempt to establish that Banda Singh Bahadur had no time to establish a capital of the Khalsa State since all of his time was taken in continuous fight with the Mughal forces and in administering the recovered territories.

Banda Singh Bahadur had built a large mud fort at Sadhaura. It was the city of Pir Buddhu Shah, who had helped Guru Gobind Singh during the battle of Bhangani against Raja of Garhwal and his associate hill rajas. He was punished by Wazir Khan for helping the Guru and his entire family was butchered, and today not a single grave of Pir or of any of his family members is traceable. The mud fort was built by digging out the earth which became the wall all around, and the trench so dug was filled with water. It was the simplest method of raising a fortification in 3 to 4 months. Four pucca turrets, about 30 to 40 ft high, were raised at suitable corners to keep a watch on enemy armies coming to attack. One such turret is still standing in the fort area. The main garrison was stationed at Sadhaura, where two serious battles were fought with Mughal imperial armies in December 1710 and February to October 1713, without any major losses.

Banda Singh Bahadur had the vision that his ill-equipped followers could not fight an open war with fully equipped Mughal armies with artillery, cavalry and trained infantry, far superior in number and material resources. Banda Singh Bahadur seemed to have carried out a military strategy in early 1710 to make maximum use of natural resources, besides the elements of surprise attack and the fierce bravery of his faithful followers. He located the small Garhi or fortress that was raised by Mukhlis Khan and named Mukhlispur on the spur of small hill which had two running streams on both sides for availability of water and some protection from enemies. It was used for stay in summer or for hunt of wild animals by Mughal nobility. Banda Singh Bahadur was a great defence strategist of his time, which aspect has

unfortunately not been examined by his historians. The larger section of his army was stationed at Sadhaura where sufficient food and ammunition were stored. Lesser part of his army was stationed at Lohgarh. The ruins of the Lohgarh fortress cover only about an acre of area, and only a few hundred soldiers could have been accommodated therein. On another close-by hill was a small structure, where Banda Singh Bahadur used to stay with a small number of followers. It has been recorded by contemporary historians as a white fortress. It seems that the same must have been on the lines of a small fortress, say 30 ft x 30 ft at the Dera of Bandai Khalsa (the descendants of Banda Singh Bahadur and their followers) near Riasi, Jammu. Banda used to stay there, keep a watch on Mughal forces spread in the valley below. He had even a *nagara* placed on another hillock facing the open area and as and when movement of approaching enemy forces was noticed, *nagara* was beaten to give advance warning of the arrival of enemy forces. Whereas Lohgarh is about 500 to 700 ft higher than the river bed, the second fortress is another 600 to 800 ft higher than Lohgarh. The distance between the two fortresses is about a kilo metre as the crow flies. Yet there is a natural phenomenon that when one speaks loudly facing from one fort to the other, the voice is very clearly audible to the persons in the other fort. It was in this manner that Banda Singh Bahadur used to give orders to his forces in the fort and surrounding areas.

Families were kept a little in the interior of the forest area, and foundations of the destroyed building are available in a clearance in the forest close to a perennial water channel. About fifty obstacles (a few feet high walls) were erected on various paths leading to the fort, behind which Sikh soldiers were positioned to stall the enemy forces. There are also two villages inside the forest about 7 kms away from the fort, both called Lohgarh in revenue records and the Survey of India maps. It is not known whether these were staging camps for the retreating Sikh forces or these villages were set up before or after early 18th century.

Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh fought defensive battles only, and none to defeat enemies and acquire territories. Banda Singh Bahadur, however, entered the new phase of offensive warfare of subduing enemies and acquiring lost as well as fresh territories. He

evolved certain tactics which were later perfected by Sikhs during the Misl period, to the best advantage of the Sikh army against better equipped and better trained Mughal and Afghan forces.

The Sikh armies during Guru-period and the next half century were not paid any salary. They were the faithful devotees who volunteered to fight for the faith. It was only in the later quarter century that the Sikh *sardars* would distribute the loot amongst their followers after the battles. The Gurus had breathed a death-defying courage in their followers that the belief in ultimate victory was an article of faith with them.

The military tactics of Banda Singh Bahadur had some unique features. Its main feature was *Dhai Phat* - two and a half injuries. In this they developed a system to hit the enemy hard enough to kill, run away to a nearby location to put the enemy off-guard and then turn back and hit him again; again run away and come back to hit again, thus exasperating the enemy and then melt away.

Qazi Noor Mohammad, who fought against the Sikhs along with Ahmad Shah Abdali, writes that the art of war as followed by the Sikhs was to face the enemy like a hero and then get back safely out of action. Forster says that their mode of attack was different from that of any other cavalry in Asia. In those days, retreat meant rout and dispersal meant defeat, but the Sikhs successfully dispersed to operate again and return to renew the attack. This strategy was superior to the Parthian volley by which the retreating Parthians used to halt, turn back and fire the last volley and then run away. In this system, they had an advantage of being very lightly equipped and the short horses of Punjab were so well trained that from a gallop they would suddenly stop, the rider would fire from the musket, and run away. These horses could march 50 to 100 miles a day. The art of use of musket while on horseback was so greatly perfected by the Sikhs that it was universally praised, even by their enemies. Noor Mohammad states that although there are many musketeers, but nobody can excel Sikhs in its use.

Bahadur Shah defeated and killed his only surviving brother Kam Bakhsh in early 1709 and moved towards the north. In Rajasthan, certain Rajput princes had rebelled. While he was busy subduing them, he received reports about the Sikh rebellion in Punjab. He hastily

closed the Rajput front and moved with his armies to crush the Sikh movement. Such was the Sikh scare that emperor did not enter his capital at Delhi and with forced marches reached the outskirts of Sonapat in October 1710, and from there marched on Sadhaura. Although the Mughal army was almost a lakh strong under various commanders, the Sikhs rushed upon the approaching Mughal army, headed by Rustumdil Khan. Khafi Khan states that the Sikhs in their *faqir* dress struck terror in royal troops. The number of dead and dying of the imperialists was so large that, for a time, it seemed that they were losing ground.

The Sikhs fought with the Mughal forces for a few days, and thereafter joined their companions at Lohgarh by a night march. The imperial army under Bahadur Shah encamped on the bank of Som (presently called Lohgarh *choe*). On 10th December, the Lohgarh hill was surrounded with 60,000 imperial troops reinforced by an equal number of plunderers and other militia, etc. The two armies fought an inconclusive battle for one day. Banda Singh Bahadur, realising the strength of his troops being a minor fraction of the vast number of imperial troops and armies of various governors, etc., moved out with his men into interior of the Shivalik hills, where the Mughal armies were not prepared to pursue them. It was a universal belief with the Mughal forces that Banda Singh Bahadur possessed occult powers, of which Mughal forces were greatly scared. Next day, when the Mughal forces moved closer to the fortress, there were no activities of the Sikhs. There were about a dozen dying Sikhs left in the fort who were made prisoners. Bahadur Shah, greatly disheartened over the failure to arrest Banda Singh Bahadur, dead or alive, pulled out his men. He did not make another consolidated effort to confront Banda Singh Bahadur and remained in Hoshiarpur and Lahore rather in an unbalanced state of mind and breathed his last in February, 1712.

Banda Singh Bahadur was least dejected by the retreat, as it was part of his military strategy. He started reorganising his forces. He also started subduing the hill rajas who had opposed Guru Gobind Singh. After subduing the hill chiefs, he subdued Bahrampur, Batala, Gurdaspur and other smaller principalities in the nearby districts of Panjab. He also reoccupied Lohgarh, Sadhaura, Sirhind and the surrounding territories. During the tenure of Jahandar Khan (Feb 1712

-Feb 1713) as the Mughal emperor, the imperial commanders maintained investment of Sadhaura and Lohgarh for several months, but could not gain any success. Jahandar Khan was defeated and murdered by Farrukh Siyar in February 1713, who became the next Mughal emperor.

Farrukh Siyar sent two of his best generals, Abdul Samad Khan and Zain-ud-Din Ahmad Khan, with all the supporting units, and a siege of Sadhaura was laid by them in April 1713. According to Khafi Khan, Sikhs, over and over again, showed the greatest daring and made nocturnal attacks upon the imperial forces. The enemy also exhibited great courage and daring. Banda Singh Bahadur held his ground for six months. When he ran short of supplies of grain and fodder, Banda Singh Bahadur ordered his forces to move to Lohgarh (the distance between Sadhaura and Lohgarh is only ten miles). The area, this time, was greatly infested by many *Zimidari* militia to thwart the joining of Sikhs at Lohgarh. The desperate Khalsa, however, made such a determined sally that they were able to successfully cut through the enemy forces without much loss of life.

Samad Khan and Zain-ud-Din moved after them and camped around Lohgarh. Banda Singh Bahadur on the arrival of his forces from Sadhaura, gave a short and swift battle and moved on into the forest as he had done in 1711. And the emperor, when informed thereof on 8th October, 1713 was greatly distressed. Charles Thayer describes those wars in the words, "that guerrillas never win wars, but their enemies often lose them". The entire Sikh struggle upto 1765 was based on the principle of tiring out the mighty armies and, thereafter, occupying and governing the country.

Thus, Lohgarh played a decisive role in the safe withdrawal of Sikh troops without any serious loss on two major occasions, when they were no longer in a position to face the imperial forces greatly outnumbering them in manpower and ammunition and other resources. But for the well-planned strategy of Banda Singh Bahadur to create a secure staging camp at Lohgarh, the Sikh army would have been finished including their leaders in no time as had been the practice with Islamic armies invading Indian subcontinent and as it happened in 1716 at Gurdasnangal.

Historians have repeatedly stated that Banda Singh Bahadur

selected Lohgarh as the capital of nascent Sikh state. William Irvine states that at Lohgarh, Banda tried to assume something of a regal state and made it his capital. Ganda Singh states that with the establishment of his hold on a sizeable territory, Banda Singh assumed regal State. He fixed the fort of Mukhlisipur as his capital and a base depot for his future military operations. Karam Singh stated that Banda Bahadur set up his capital at Lohgarh. Hari Ram Gupta states that Banda Bahadur established his headquarters at Mukhlisipur. Its fort stood on hill top with water channels flowing on both sides. The fort was repaired and put in a state of defence. The name of Mukhlisipur was changed to Lohgarh and it became capital of the first Sikh state. Muzzafar Alam states that by the end of 1708 after Banda had established his seat at Lohgarh, he was virtually a king and called Sacha Badshah. J S Grewal says that Banda Singh Bahadur adopted Mukhlisipur imperial fort, now given the name of Lohgarh, as its capital and struck a new coin in the name of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. Other historians, viz., Sohan Singh, Raj Pal Singh, Gopal Singh, Gurbax Singh, G S Deol, Khushwant Singh, Patwant Singh, and others have uniformly stated that Banda Singh Bahadur set up his capital at Lohgarh from where he issued the first Sikh coin and administered the territories.

The examination of the Lohgarh site, about 40 kms from Naraingarh, about 18 kms from Sadhaura, and also 18 kms from Gopal Mochan, clearly shows that the same could not have been a capital city of a State, howsoever small it may have been. As mentioned earlier, the fort is very small covering hardly an acre or so. There have been no level grounds or sufficient ruins of buildings, necessary for infrastructure of a State even in those times. There are no roads connecting it with nearby cities. It is not a trade route. In fact, no capital as such was fixed by the Sikhs in their long drawn struggle and the first capital of the Sikh state was Lahore after its capture in 1765 onwards.

Author has been visiting the site of Lohgarh for the last 10 years and has come to the conclusion that the Lohgarh fort area cannot provide for a capital city. All around was the jungle, which is still a part of the reserve forest. Across the Lohgarh *choe*, a village of Bhagwanpur came up much later. Lohgarh was selected by Banda

Singh Bahadur as a masterstroke of war strategy, which helped him twice to escape from the wrath of imperial armies set to catch him alive or dead. The only big town in his occupation was Sirhind, which was deemed by the Sikhs as an accursed city. The question of making Sirhind the capital of the Khalsa state could not arise, which had even otherwise no secure natural features to protect against a major attack. The coin issued by Banda Singh Bahadur states on its reverse the requirement essential for the capital city of the Khalsa state: “*z̤arb ba aman-al-dahar, masawarat sbahr z̤inat, al takebt Khalsa mubarak bakb*”, meaning minted at the place of perfect peace, picture of a beautiful city where the auspicious throne of the Khalsa is to be located. It is not known from where the coins for the years 1710-1712 were got minted for want of any contemporary evidence. All the time of Banda Singh Bahadur was taken in fighting with the imperial Mughal armies, securing territories, setting up his administration, losing those territories and regaining them again and so on and so forth, and he does not seem to have had any time to set up the capital city or so designate an existing one.

The entire period was a period of struggle under exceptionally heavy odds, against the strength of the imperial Mughal armies and those of the local governors and even Rajput princes. The Mughals and later on Afghans could not afford to lose Punjab which was the link between their roots in central Asia and the Indian empire. Their powerful armies could not stand against the death-defying courage and the spirit of sacrifice of strategy. We only get some elementary information about the administrative structure he had set up for the initial Sikh state. Recently, the SGPC (Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee), Amritsar have decided to set up a memorial of Banda Singh Bahadur at Lohgarh.

BHAI TAKHAT SINGH – A LIVING MARTYR

GURCHARAN SINGH*

Bhai Takhat Singh was the pioneer dedicated to women's education; on account of his untiring efforts in setting up educational institutions at Ferozepur, the Panth gave him the title 'Living Martyr'. This brief account of his life is based on the book by Col Dalvinder Singh and published by the Sikh Missionary College, Ludhiana, titled: "ਲਾਸਾਨੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਮਿਸ਼ਨਰੀ, ਭਾਈ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਭਾਈ ਤਖਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਾ ਸ਼ਹੀਦ".

Bhai Sahib's seniors were associated with Karor Singhia Misl and were devoted Sikhs. His father, Bhai Deva Singh, was a soldier in Maharaja Ranjit Singh's army and participated in the first and second Anglo-Sikh wars. He used to don Nihang's dress. In 1952-53, he settled down in Bhairawal in Distt Ferozepur, and later took up a job under an English contractor, Mr Court. He and his wife, Bibi Chand Kaur, had true Sikh character, loved the company of *sadhus* and saints, and were respected in the Sikh community.

Bhai Takhat Singh was born in 1862 in Ferozepur. He too acquired family traits at home, learnt Gurmukhi, *gurbani path* of Guru Granth Sahib, and studied history books, including *Panth Parkash* by Bhai Rattan Singh Bhangu. He did not get much formal education. except some Urdu and Arithmetic. He grew up with a good physique and was respected as *Bhai Ji* because of his good recitation of *gurbani* and his knowledge of Sikhism. By 1887, he had read almost all books available in Ferozepur libraries and was called *Giani Ji*. His dress was simple, a *khadi choga* and *kachhebra*. Because of his association with knowledgeable people and experience of speaking on stage, his understanding and wisdom had grown beyond his formal education. He was aspiring for higher education. During those days, he came in

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contact with Professor Gurmukh Singh who helped him in getting admission in Oriental College, Lahore and a scholarship. He used to live with Giani Ditt Singh. These were the two personalities known later for their great contribution in the reformist movements of Singh Sabha. Giani Ditt Singh was a professor in the Oriental College. He became a role-model for Bhai Takhat Singh and, under his inspiration, he took up the mission of women's education as goal of his life.

At this time, he was a young man of 22-23 years only and, therefore, to enter the field of women's education was no easy task for him. First, he started a boys' school with four pupils with the help of some advocates and other learned persons in 1890. The premises were shifted to a Dharamsala building and gradually the strength of the students rose to 100 and later to 150.

Then he thought of starting his mission of women's/girls' education. Hot debates were held on the subject as people were not prepared to send their girls to schools. Gradually, it got started when the daughter of Sadhu Bhagwan Das, who knew Punjabi and Hindi, was available for teaching girl students. After taking *Amrit* and with a new name, Harman Kaur, she was made head of the girls' school. Debates continued as young Takhat Singh was a bachelor. A solution was found. Some well-wishers approached Sadhu Bhagwan Das for the marriage of Harnam Kaur with Takhat Singh. He readily agreed, and in 1891 this problem was solved. In November end, 1892, a school was started in a room in the house of Sodhi Partap Singh. Later, foundation was laid for a Dharamsala for the school.

In the meantime, his mentor Bhai Ditt Singh died under great financial/social stress. As there were lots of controversies from the opposing traditional groups to his newspaper, *Khalsa Akhbar*, this deeply affected Bhai Takhat Singh.

Fed up with all this, he severed his connection with Singh Sabha, and started to run the Vidyalaya (school) himself. There was opposition at every step and financial problems galore, but he didn't give up. By his excellent choice of persons, ideas from other similar schools, national and international, and sticking to high standards of discipline, the reputation of the school got established. Cooking, serving, *path*, *kirtan* and *ardas* were all performed by the girls themselves. A library was set up in the name of Gyani Ditt Singh which was used by scholars

like Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha, Karam Singh Historian, Babu Teja Singh Bhasaur, Sardul Singh Caveeshar, etc. Gradually, support from the community started pouring in, and on 30.3.1904 foundation stone for a boarding house was laid. In December 1905, Maharaja Nabha visited and the aims of Vidyalya were reviewed. Teaching of English, aid to poor girls, and a large boarding house were planned. In July 1906, teaching of English was started.

This year Bhai Sahib got one shock after the other. His supporter Sodhi Balwant Singh, advocate Bishan Singh and later his wife, Bibi Harnam Kaur, expired. The death of the latter was a specially great loss, because it also affected management of the girl students. Fortunately, another competent lady, Bibi Agya Kaur, was found fit to perform that role. She was married to Bhai Sahib in 1907 against traditional caste barriers, and Bhai Sahib stuck to Sikh principles. In 1910, 9th and 10th classes were started and by 1911 the activities included:

1. Dharam Parchar in the state.
2. Girls' School and Hostel
3. Boys' School and Hostel
4. Bhai Ditt Singh Library

With increasing students and commitment of help to other schools, lack of funds was acutely felt again. Seeing this, Bhai Sahib undertook a tour abroad in February 1911 towards China, Japan, Thailand, and Malaya to get help from Sikhs settled in these countries. Charge of the Vidyalya was given to Master Vir Singh with whom Bhai Sahib was in constant touch through his frequent and long letters, getting feed back and giving instructions in great detail.

When he returned after collecting Rs 50,000/-, his target, a large impressive school building, was achieved. Because of his dedication, hardwork and high aims, his reputation spread all around and the *Panth* gave him the title *Zinda Shabeed*. In 1916, on the Emperor's birthday, the Government conferred on him the title *Kaiser-e-Hind* in recognition of his services in the field of education of girls.

In 1914, there were 250 girl students which later rose to 500 because of his continued vigorous efforts. The boarders included unmarried women, married, widows and orphan girls. In 1915, Lt Governor of Punjab visited and appreciated the classes on training of teachers and the crafts by the girls. In 1931, the Chief Khalsa Diwan, in their souvenir published on their Silver Jubilee, greatly appreciated

the achievements of Bhai Takhat Singh and Bibi Agya Kaur.

The school was running well, when it received another severe blow in the sudden death of Bibi Agya Kaur, which broke his heart. Work had increased and Bhai Sahib was working without rest. The *ashram* ran into a debt of Rs 10,000 in his last days. In early December, he got fever and high blood pressure for a few days and on 18th December, 1937 at the age of 75, he breathed his last.

After him, the charge of the school went to his daughters, Pritam Kaur and Gurbakhsh Kaur and his son, Gurbakhsh Singh. Arrangements continued working well. But some self-centred persons started a maligning campaign through pamphlets, letters and memoranda to the government and in the gurdwaras. Gradually, grants from various sources stopped and the *ashram* ran into serious trouble. But extreme hard work put it again on rails. After marriage of his sisters, Gurbakhsh Singh took over full charge of the *ashram* and brought it back to its old glory.

The focused dedication to girls'/women's education had earned Bhai Sahib the famed title *Zinda Shabeed*. The other aspects of his personality can be judged from the fact that he had organised a *pracharak* cell including *inter alia* Sant Teja Singh, Pandit Inderjit Singh Chakarvarty, Bhai Ladha Singh *Raagi* (later of Faridkot fame). They preached and performed *kirtan* at various places on important *purbs* and helped in propagation of Sikhism in true spirit.

Bhai Sahib was sought after for participation in Sikh educational conferences where invariably he performed the inaugural *ardas*.

He had set up a press, and published journals, *Fauji* and *Punjabi Bhain* for a long time, which greatly contributed to the propagation of Sikh way of life and women's uplift. He set up a rich and remarkable library which had rare books on Sikh history, *gurbani* translation, biographies, *rahitnamas*, etc., which were used by contemporary scholars.

What moved him was his Sikh heritage acquired from his worthy parents. His zest and focused attention to his mission, extreme hard work, discipline, and his cooperative attitude without ego or enmity towards anybody, helped him to achieve such a lofty mission against so many odds throughout his life. The success of the mission proved that he was a rare missionary in Sikh circles and will be remembered as such for all times.

THEIR NAMES LIVETH FOR EVERMORE

BHUPINDER SINGH*

The Lahore and Meerut Divisions followed by Secunderabad Cavalry were engaged in the Western Front (France-Belgium) during World War I. Many of these soldiers were Sikhs. In the first battle of Ieper (22nd October, 1914) a platoon of Dogra Sikhs died fighting to the last man, and Jemadar Kapur Singh kept fighting until everyone else was out of action except for one wounded sepoy. As he did not want to surrender, he committed suicide with his last bullet.

After the bloody battle of Neuve Chapelle, France (10th to 13th March, 1915) the Sikh Regiments had lost eighty percent of their men and three regiments stood at only sixteen percent of its original strength. A Sikh soldier wrote to his uncle in Jalandhar (Punjab), “Thousands and hundreds of thousands of soldiers have lost their lives. If you go on the fields of battle you will see corpses piled upon corpses so that there is no place to put hand or foot. Men have died from the stench. No one has any hope of survival, for back to Punjab will go only those who have lost a leg or an arm or an eye. The whole world has been brought to destruction.”

On October 7, 1927, the Secretary of State for India, Earl of Birkenhead, unveiled the noble Memorial which has been erected by the Imperial War Graves Commission at Neuve-Chapelle in France to the memory of all Indian soldiers who fell on the Western Front in the Great War of 1914-1918. This monument was designed by Sir Herbert Baker who is well known to India as one of the creators of modern Delhi. By doing so, in a special sense, too, it marks the gratitude of the great French nation, which was defended from German invasion by the supreme sacrifices of the British Indian Army in France. It

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marks the gratitude of the French people who built it on their soil. For the ceremony, special units including Sikhs who engaged in the actual war were brought from India with Maharaja of Kapurthala as a special guest.

Speaking on the occasion in French, Marshal Foch of the French Army who signed the Armistice document at 05:05 hours on 11th November, 1918, with Matthias Erzberger, the leader of the German delegation and one of the new German leaders, stated frankly, "The Indian Troops were thus among the first to show the way to a victorious offensive. It is only right that a Memorial should perpetuate the glorious memory of officers, non-commissioned officers and men of the British Indian Army at the very spot where later on a general attack by the Allied troops was to bring the decisive victory in sight."

Turning to the British Indian Contingent, he bade them, "Return to your home in the distant, sun bathed East and proclaim how your countrymen drenched with their blood the cold northern land of France and Flanders, how they delivered it by their ardent spirit from the firm grip of a determined enemy; tell all India that we shall watch their graves with the devotion due to all our dead. We will cherish above all the memory of their example. They showed us the way, they made the first steps towards the final victory."

These historical words of the French Marshal are even true today as this Memorial is best maintained in all respect and is accorded the highest historical status and is kept clean and well decorated. A Sikh delegation from Holland, USA and Dubai including Sardar Dr Gurdit Singh and Sardar Dr Jaideep Singh from University of California, Sardar Hardial Singh (Dubai) and the author visited this Memorial on 6th April 1998, during our official delegation visit of Ieper.

ONLINE MEMORIAL: THEIR NAMES LIVETH FOR EVERMORE

On the pillar are written the words, 'God Is One, His Is The Victory', and from the *Qu'ran* and the *Bhagwad Gita* and *ik onkar siri Wahguru ji ke fateh* is written in Gurmukhi. The names of 4,746 soldiers who died are written on the round wall of this memorial. Most of them are Sikh soldiers. There is a list available from the Database of The Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Mr Jeremy Gee, OBE of CWGC, was right when he wrote me back about the "important role Sikhs played in the First World War"

in one of his letters dated 2nd December, 1997. Eight soldiers from World War II (1939-45) who were cremated are also commemorated on the walls of this memorial.

There are 151 different cemeteries-burial places in the whole of France where these soldiers have been cremated and buried with full religious respect and honor. Engraved on the graves of Sikh soldiers is *Ik Oankar Siri Waheguru ji Ke Fateh Sanskare Gaye* in Gurmukhi. Sepoy number, full name, name of the regiment, and date of death are all printed in block letters in English. These *samadhs* of the Sikhs can be found across Europe. They are well maintained, cleaned, and decorated by Commonwealth War Grave Commission throughout Europe.

Similarly, most Hindu soldiers are Gorkhas, and engraved on their graves in Hindi are the words, *Oom Bhagwattee Nammo*. Rest of the particulars are the same. In the same way, our Muslim brothers have the holy words from *Qur'an* written on their graves.

It should be noted here that to commemorate 300 years of the founding of the Khalsa during the Celebration of Peace at Ieper (Flanders), jointly organised by the Mayor of Ieper and the European Sikh Community, a monument was unveiled by *panj piaras* and this monument has the same script on it and two Khalsa *Khandas* were added to that. Besides many distinguished guests from many countries and the Belgium Government, Sardar Inder Singh Jammu, then Mayor of Barking & Dagenham, Sardar Tarsem Singh Bhogal, the Mayor of Woolwich, Janab Abdul Karim Sheikh, then Mayor of New Ham were also present.

In these 151 burial places, there are 3,359 graves of identified soldiers and 390 graves of unidentified soldiers. Mazargues War Cemetery in Marseilles has 1,002 graves. Some of the other cemeteries are La Chapelle British and Indian - Peronne, Somme (320), Meerut Military, St Martun - Boulogne (313), St Sever Extension - Rouven (271), Lillers Communal - Pas de Calais (153), Rue du Bacquerot No 1 Military - Laventie (144) and Hargicourt British Cemetery – Aisne. There are cemeteries that have a lone Sikh soldier or a small number of soldiers buried or cremated.

MEMORIALS

There are 4 memorials where British Indian soldiers have been commemorated. Neuve-Chapelle Memorial has 4,746 names. The village

of Neuve-Chapelle is some 5 kilometres north of La Bassee and 20 kilometres south-west of Lille. The memorial is 800 metres south-west of the village on the east side of the road from La Bassee to Estaires.

The Memorial is a circular enclosure in the foreground of which is a column nearly 15 metres high, recalling the pillars of Asoka, surmounted by a Lotus capital, the Star of India and the Imperial Crown. On either side of the column two carved tigers guard this temple of the dead. The column and the tigers are supported by a podium, on the near side of which is carved "INDIA 1914-1918", while on the far-side are the Battle Honours of Indian units on the Western Front.

From the ends of the podium a pierced stone railing extends half-way round the circle, and the ends of the semicircle are marked by two small domed *chhatris*, roughly East and West. The far semicircle is enclosed by a solid wall on which are carved the names of over 4,700 soldiers of the Indian Army. Also engraved on the Memorial is the following inscription:

To the honour of the Army of India which fought in France and Belgium, 1914-1918, and in perpetual remembrance of those of their dead whose Names are here recorded and who have no known grave.

In 1964 a special bronze panel was added to this memorial in honor of 210 unidentified servicemen of undivided India who died during the 1914-1918 war, whose graves are at the Zehrendorf Indian Cemetery in East Germany. The following inscription is also engraved on the panel of the Neuve-Chapelle (Zehrendorf Cem) Memorial:

In honoured memory of these men who died in captivity and were buried at Zehrendorf near Berlin.

Also to be found at this site is the Neuve-Chapelle 1939-1945 Cremation Memorial. In 1964 the remains of eight Indian soldiers (including two unidentified) were exhumed from Sarrebourg French Military Cemetery Extension and cremated. The names of the six identified soldiers are engraved on panels at the Neuve-Chapelle Memorial, together with the following inscription:

1939 -1945 in honour of these soldiers who died in captivity in North-West Europe and whose mortal remains were committed to fire.

The other three noteworthy memorials are:

Neuve-Chapelle (Zehrendorf Indian Cemetery) Memorial: 206

Arras Flying Services Memorial: 6 Le Touret Memorial: 1

Now, From the Database of The Commonwealth War Graves Commission it can easily be concluded that the total casualties in World War I of British Indian Forces commemorated in France are,

Total of Commemorations on Memorial:	4959
Total from the Cemeteries (Identified):	3359
Total from the Cemeteries (unidentified):	390
Final total: 8708 – 390 (Unidentified) =	8318

(The unidentified have been commemorated on the memorial)

According to CWGC record in Belgium:

Burials and Cremations in Cemeteries =	76
Total Commemorations on Memorials =	417
Unidentified =	Nil
Total in Belgium =	493

France = 8318 + Belgium = 493.

Thus, Total = 8811

But the story of exact figure of casualties of British Indian forces on the Western Front does not end up here. There are many loopholes and thoroughly historical research is needed to fix the exact number of casualties. Most of the casualties are from Punjab and the Government of Punjab (India) and Government of Punjab (Pakistan) can play an important role in this research work. Mr Dominiek Dendooven from the Documentary Center of In Flanders Fields Museum, Ieper (Belgium) wrote his account to me, in view of some historical facts that the Documentary Center has preserved.

“In 14 months the Indian Corps had lost 34,252 men (dead, wounded, ill, or prisoners of war) on the Western Front. I also found the figure of 7,700 sepoys who died, but that is even far below your estimation, based on the figures of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

“And I am 100 % sure that you underestimate the number of casualties: you make the total from the commemorations on Memorial + identified in cemeteries + unidentified in cemeteries, but I am sure there are many more Indian casualties whose names were never recorded and who are by consequence not commemorated. I think this is due to the battle circumstances and perhaps poor administration. I give you some examples:

“The losses of the 57th Wilde’s Rifles and the 129th Baluchis were great during the last two days of October 1914 (during the 1st battle of Ieper). The Wilde’s Rifles lost 300 out of 750, the Baluchis had 240 men killed, wounded or taken as POWs.

The Menin Gate in Ieper has the name of 15 casualties from the 47 Sikh Regiment, while on 27th April, 1915 (during the 2nd Battle of Ieper), out of 444 men 348 did not come back. They are nowhere else commemorated. Between 24th April and 1st May, 1915, the Lahore Division had lost 3,889 men, or 30 % of the troops it had employed.”

The total war dead (493) of Indian forces commemorated in Belgium by CWGC Memorial database is far less than the actual casualties figure. Dr Sukhdev Singh, Head of Bio-Chemistry at Guru Nanak University in Amritsar found this information most valuable and commended the work. Universities of Punjab can undertake this project and motivate a student for a Ph D on this subject to research it further. I am sure, on being requested, the Documentary Center at the In Flanders Fields Museum in Ieper can provide these students with maximum guidance and cooperation. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission is also very helpful.

I shall close my article with these historical remarks of Lt General Sir James Wilcox, Commander of the British Indian Corps:

“It was the dark days of 1914 when our men had to face mortars, hand grenades, high explosive shells for which they themselves were not provided. They could reply only with their valour, their rifles and two machine guns per batallion. And yet they did it.”

~ ~ ~

NOTES

A large number of Sikh soldiers are buried in the following cemeteries :

Gorre British and Indian Cemetery -Pas de Calais

Hargicourt British Cemetery -Aisne

La Chapelette British and Indian Cemetery, Peronne -Somme

Lillers Communal Cemetery -Pas de Calais

Mazargues War Cemetery, Marseilles -Bouches du Rhone

Meerut Military Cemetery, St. Martin- Les Boulogne -Pas de Calais

Merville Communal Cemetery -Nord

Rue du Bacquerot No.1 Military Cemetery, Laventie -Pas de Calais

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WORLD HERITAGE STATUS FOR GOLDEN TEMPLE – ITS BENEFITS –

GURMIT SINGH*

Although the idea of starting an international movement for protecting cultural properties in the world emerged after World War-I, it gained momentum after 1965. White House Conference in Washington D C in 1965 called for a World Heritage Trust to stimulate international cooperation to protect ‘the world’s superb natural and scenic areas and historic properties for the present and the future of the entire world citizenry’. In 1968 the World Conservation Union, i.e., the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), also developed somewhat similar proposals for its members. These proposals were presented to the United Nations Conference on Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972. The final shape to the idea was given by the Unesco World Heritage Convention held in Paris from October 17 to November 21, 1972. It noticed that sites of cultural and natural heritage around the world which are of outstanding value to humanity, need to be identified and preserved. Therefore, they called for collective assistance, which *although not taking the place of action by the State concerned, will serve as an efficient complement thereto.*

The aforesaid words in italics used in the convention make it clear that the international community is not to interfere with the existing system of management approved by a State for management and control of the heritage site. For example, if the Golden Temple Complex is granted world heritage status, the international community will not interfere with the functioning of the Shiromni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) which is a statutory body under the

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Sikh Gurdwaras Act 1925 and controls and manages the shrine. The provisions of the World Heritage Convention are meant to complement the action of the State concerned to protect the heritage site by providing additional economic, scientific and technological resources. This fact stands further clarified in Article 4 of the Convention adopted by the General House of the UNESCO (United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization) on 16th November, 1972 (hereinafter referred as Convention) which reads as under:-

Article 4

“Each State Party to this Convention recognizes that the duty of ensuring the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to the future generations of the cultural and natural heritage referred to in Articles I and 2 and situated on its territory, belongs primarily to that State. It will do all it can to this end, to the utmost of its own resources and where appropriate, with any international assistance and cooperation, in particular, financial, artistic, scientific and technical, which it may be able to obtain.”

Under Section 41 of the Sikh Gurdwaras Act, the management and control of Sikh Gurdwaras vests in the SGPC and the Convention does not provide for any interference by the Government. Section 144 of the Sikh Gurdwaras Act clearly provides that Government is not to interfere with Gurdwaras except as provided by this (Sikh Gurdwaras Act) or any other Act. Section 144 of the Gurdwaras Act reads as under:-

“144: Government not to interfere with Gurdwaras except as provided by this Act or any other Act:-

“Save as provided in this or any other Act, it shall not be lawful for the (State) Government or for any executive officer of the (State) Government in his official capacity to undertake or assume the Superintendence of any land or other property granted for the support of, or otherwise belonging to, any notified Sikh Gurdwara, to take any part in the management or appropriation of any endowment made for its maintenance, or to nominate or appoint any office holder of, or to be concerned in any way with, such Gurdwara.”

The use of the words ‘executive’ and ‘State’ in the aforesaid provision leaves a lot of scope for the Government interference, particularly by the Central Government. Recently issued Gazette notifications by Home Secretary and Deputy Home Secretary as instructions for election are also the examples. Further in the aforesaid provision the words ‘Or any other Act’ leave open, scope for interference by Government. For example, certain provisions w.r.t. administration and management of Gurdwaras were added through Punjab State Reorganisation Act. This backdoor opening has been made, because under the Nehru-Tara Singh Pact no amendment in the Sikh Gurdwaras Act can be made except with the consent of the SGPC. Sikh leadership and SGPC must strengthen their legal cells and keep a close watch on all the legislations and raise their voice of protest against the aforesaid words in Section 144 to get these words deleted.

International Community takes due notice of the way the property selected for World Heritage Status is managed. The criteria for selection lays down in clause (vi) that “equally important is the authenticity of the property and the way it is protected and managed.” Golden Temple satisfies, besides other criteria for selection, the criteria for cultural heritage mentioned in earlier part of clause (vi) which reads:-

“(vi) be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas or with beliefs, or with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance (a criterion used only in exceptional circumstances, and together with other criteria)”.

Golden Temple is closely associated with literary work of universal significance, because in 1604 when the construction of the building was completed, the editing of Guru Granth Sahib, the holy scripture of the Sikhs, was also completed and its bound, hand-written copy was displayed for public here. Moreover, its portion *Sukhmani Sahib*, i.e., Psalm of Peace, was composed by Guru Arjun Dev, while sitting on the banks of the Ramsar *sarovar* (tank).

The Golden Temple’s site also represents important change over a span of time in the landscape. The site selected by the Gurus, had a natural slant from North-East towards South West. On account of this natural slant, rain water of adjoining villages used to pass from

near this site. As water level was high, therefore, there was a green beautiful forest which had jungle trees, the samples of which are preserved till today in the surrounding passage, i.e., *Parikarma* for example, *dukh bhanjni beri*, *lachi beri* and *Babé Budhé ji di beri*. The soil was ideal for the manufacture of strong small bricks used in the construction of the original building. These bricks are known as Nanak Shahi bricks. Thus the Golden Temple was constructed in 1604 A.D. at a site which was surrounded by forests, water pond and fruit trees, where, people of that period believed, resided the angels. This also marks the change in human values because today it is an important commercial town, which is inhabited by shrewd traders and industrialists. The Golden Temple represents a masterpiece of human creative genius, because architecturally, when we have an integrated look at it from the Darshni Deorhi and the causeway alongwith the beautiful tank, it looks as if the Golden Temple is floating on a pool of nectar.

Punjab has a rich cultural tradition of living in harmony with nature, and the Golden Temple and its surrounding areas bear a testimony to this fact. The Harike wetland, not far away from Amritsar, is a sanctuary for migratory birds and needs international assistance to be developed as a wintering spot for wildlife enthusiasts. The intermingling of cultural and natural heritage is also the objective of the Unesco's world heritage project.

According to another legend, Guru Amar Das had found *Amar Bute* (a shrub) from the banks of this tank which had the medicinal quality of curing skin ailments. The international assistance may be able to identify and rediscover that shrub and help in its cultivation in the surrounding *galiara*. Identification and preservation of the diverse native flora and fauna of the area falls within the scope of the terms of the Convention. The area of Amritsar provides a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition which has disappeared or is fast disappearing and which needs Conservation.

There is also another popular myth about the medicinal qualities of the tank in which Golden Temple is located. Rajni, the daughter of Rai Duni Chand, a Revenue Collector of Patti (District Amritsar), brought her leper husband here and he was cured after having a bath in the pond.

Thus there is no doubt that the site of the Golden Temple satisfies the test criteria for selection of a World Heritage Site. The next

question that needs to be attended to is, what benefits will accrue to the Sikh people, when the Golden Temple Complex is declared a World Heritage Site. The terms of the treaty on this subject, contains certain provisions which are of great advantage to the Sikh people.

Apparently, one great benefit will be to preserve and conserve this site in perpetuity. Protecting the endangered World Heritage Site is the responsibility of the International Community, and if there is a threat to its existence, as at the time of Operation Blue Star, the World Heritage Committee, which works under UNESCO, a wing of the UNO, can be alerted - by individuals, non - government Organizations (NGO's) or other groups – about possible dangers to the property. If the threat is justified, and the problem is serious enough, the property will be placed on the List of World Heritage in Danger. This list is designed to call the World's attention to natural or human-made conditions which threaten the characteristics for which the property was originally inscribed on the World Heritage List. Endangered properties on this list are entitled to particular attention of the international community, and in case of emergency or in urgent cases such as outbreak of war, the committee will make the listing itself without receiving intimation or request from anyone else. In such a situation like war, the UNO can send international armed forces under its command to save the site.

In this respect, Article 6(3) of the treaty (Convention) needs attention which reads as under:-

“Each State Party to this Convention undertakes not to take any deliberate measures which might damage directly or indirectly the cultural and natural heritage referred to in Articles 1 and 2 situated on the territory of other States Parties to this Convention”.

This clause when read with other clauses contained in Article 6 makes it clear that International Community can act to interfere in a situation like Indo-Pak War or operation Blue Star. These earlier clauses of Article 6 read as under:-

Article 6

1. Whilst fully respecting the sovereignty of the States on whose territory the cultural and natural heritage mentioned in Articles 1 and 2 is situated, and without prejudice to property right provided by

national legislation, the States Parties to this Convention recognize that such heritage constitutes a world heritage for whose protection it is the duty of the international community as a whole to cooperate.

2. The States Parties undertake, in accordance with the provisions of this Convention, to give their help in the identification, protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage referred to in paragraphs 2 and 4 of Article 11 if the States on whose territory it is situated so request.”

Para 1 of Article 6 makes it clear that although it is duty of the international community to protect and preserve World Heritage Site, the property rights of any body under the national statute will not be adversely affected. Thus, as under the Sikh Gurdwaras Act, the property of the Gurdwaras vests in the SGPC, its right to manage the property of the Golden Temple will not be affected.

Another advantage will be that Sikh youth will get another opening for professional training and employment in international sphere. The Golden Temple is decorated in such a manner that no other building can be compared to its grandeur. Its interior is beautified and ornamented with floral designs, either painted or embossed in metal, which demands special skill and techniques in harmonious cutting of brass, gilded copper, cutting of clay with pieces of mirror in different sizes and shapes, and encrusted precious stones employed here also requires special training and skill. Further, the frescoes executed on the walls of the Golden Temple are also unique. From the point of view of technique, these frescoes herald altogether a new era in this branch of painting. There are about 300 different designs on the walls of the Golden Temple which viewed from a distance, look like a hung Persian carpet. The *naqqashs* (painters) had coined their own terminology to distinguish between various designs, but with passage of time, there are a few artists who are well versed in these techniques and arts. Frescoes need special paints and a specific mixing proportion which is known to very few artists.

Article 11 clause 7 of the convent casts a duty on the committee formed by international community for the purpose of preservation of World Heritage Sites to encourage and co-ordinate the studies and research needed for the preservation of endangered World Heritage Sites.

Further, the income of the SGPC will also go up manifold to

enable it to carry on missionary activities and manage the Golden Temple Complex more efficiently by providing more facilities for the visitors coming for pilgrimage. Article 17 of the convent casts a duty on the Government to encourage and facilitate donations by public and private foundations and associations. With these donations, the SGPC can set up regional centres for the training of the staff and specialists for conservation of the site. This will create more avenues for employment of Sikh youth. Article 24 of the convent provides for international assistance on a large scale preceded by detailed scientific, economic and technical studies.

Yet another benefit will be that the SGPC will get opportunity to participate in deliberations of international level. Article 10 clause 2 of the convent reads :

“The Committee may at any time invite public or private organizations or individuals to participate in its meetings for consultation on particular problems.

3. The Committee may create such consultative bodies as it deems necessary for the performance of its functions.

This may prove to be first step towards the fulfillment of Sikh demand for observer status at the UNO which was granted to Palestine, for example.

Perhaps, even Punjab Government can benefit from this international convent. Article 34 of the convent reads as under:-

Article 34

The following provisions shall apply to those states parties to this convention which have a federal or non-unitary constitutional system :

- a. With regard to the provisions of this convention the implementation of which comes under the legal jurisdiction of the federal or central legislative power, the obligations of the federal or central government shall be the same as for those States Parties which are not federal States.

Further, Article 32 of the convention reads as under:-

Article 32

1. This convention shall be open to accession by all States not

members of the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization which are invited by the General Conference of the Organization to accede to it.

Above all, the grant of World Heritage Status will promote tourism in the State of Punjab and a large number of foreign tourists will start visiting Amritsar. This will boost the economy of the State. The information campaign by the UNESCO about Golden Temple and Sikh traditions and Sikh people will help remove the bias against the Sikhs which was witnessed in U.S.A. after the Nine-Eleven occurrence. The international Community will get well informed about Sikhs and recognize their separate identity.

Grant of World Heritage Status will also have its impact on Indo-Pak relations. Both India as well as Pakistan are signatories to the UNESCO World Heritage Convention and Article 6(3) of the convention prohibits States from taking any deliberate measures which might damage directly or indirectly the cultural and natural heritage situated on the territory of other States Parties to this convention. It implies that both India and Pakistan, in case of war cannot bombard Amritsar and its surrounding areas. This will enable victims of war to seek asylum in the premises of the Golden Temple Complex. Moreover, it will help creation of a safety zone in the border areas of Punjab, and heavy industry can be established in this zone. Till date, Punjab has been denied heavy industry in Public Sector by Government of India on the ground that Punjab is a border State, not safe for heavy industrial investment.

Protection of the cultural and Natural Heritage being the duty of the international community as well, under Article 4 of the convention, the United Nations Organization can take joint armed action to safeguard the site and preserve it for eternity for the future generations by acting under Article 11(4) of convention. A move can be started at a later stage, to make Punjab a nuclear free zone.

Further, the grant of World Heritage Status will help in preparing a well documented history of the Golden Temple under Article 11(2) of the convention which will be published by the UNESCO.

Involvement of international Community in the Sikh affairs have many advantages as no government can afford to ignore world opinion. Let us hope the Status is conferred at the earliest.

WHO IS A SIKH ?

MEWA SINGH*

According to the Sikh *Rehit Maryada*, one who believes in Sikh religion and in no other religion, who believes in one God, ten Sikh Gurus and Guru Granth Sahib and their teachings, has faith in *amrit* and practises the Sikh code of conduct as prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh, is a Sikh. Some of those who want to dilute Sikh identity to suit their propaganda, say that Sikhism is a part of Hinduism. They question the condition of initiation by *amrit*, because it is nowhere mentioned so in Guru Granth Sahib. Such matters, which relate to organization of the Sikh religion, are not supposed to be mentioned in Guru Granth Sahib, which contains the spiritual aspects of *Naam*. It also contains the divine hymns of several saints who were born as Muslims, Hindus or as low caste. Sikh religion was founded by Guru Nanak Dev and developed by his nine successors, and Guru Gobind Singh completed its final phase. He made two very important and fundamental divine declarations in that process for Sikhs.

One, he prescribed the Sikh initiation through *amrit* ceremony, five Sikh emblems and the Sikh code of conduct on Vaisakhi of 1699. He himself prepared *amrit* and administered it to the *panj pyaras*, the first five Sikhs who offered themselves for it. He gave the authority to them to administer *amrit* to other Sikhs in that very manner. He himself also got *amrit* from the *panj pyaras*. He directed all the Sikhs present there to get the *amrit* at that time. History records that over twenty thousand Sikhs got the Sikh initiation, *amrit*. Guru Gobind Singh issued *bukamnamb* to all the Sikhs to keep the five Sikh emblems and to strictly follow Sikh code of conduct as prescribed by him. He made it very clear in his divine proclamations that there can be no

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exemption to it, being mandatory for all the Sikhs. One who declares him to be a Sikh is bound to follow the injunctions of Guru Gobind Singh, including the Sikh initiation and Sikh code of conduct prescribed by him.

The other was to ordain the Sikhs to accept Guru Granth Sahib, the divine spirit of Sikh Gurus, as Guru for all times to come. Sikhs were told to get the divine wisdom from its divine proclamations. Every Sikh and even others admit that Guru Granth Sahib is the Guru of the Sikhs and there is no controversy over it.

It is obvious that the requisite qualifications are the same for all Sikhs. There are no classifications or categories in Sikhs, one is either a Sikh or not. However, due to the lack of correct understanding of Sikh initiation, Sikh emblems, Sikh code of conduct and Sikh historical perspectives, the self-made classifications have been propagated as *Amritdhari* Sikhs, *Keshdhari* Sikhs, *Sehajdhari* Sikhs and Khalsa Sikhs. These classifications have no recognition in Sikhism as the Sikh conduct is mandatory for all Sikhs without any exemption. There can be no personal choice or discretion in the mandatory dictums of a religion.

Every religion has got its own form of initiation, emblems and code of conduct to be binding on its followers, besides its own ideology, doctrines and religious practices. Every one is free to follow the religion, which he prefers; once he decides to follow a certain religion, he has to obey the dictums of that religion. He/she has no right to change or interpret any of the dictums to his/her personal views, as it may misrepresent that religion and disturb its uniformity and consistency. This is what is going to happen to Sikh religion if this self-created classifications or categories are not stopped. Some Sikhs, particularly Sikh youth, are drifting away from Sikh code of conduct and Sikh way of life because of such confusion. So much so that some Sikhs, who do not get Sikh initiation and do not observe Sikh code of conduct, have gone to the extent of asserting that these requirements to be a Sikh should be abrogated. The reason they give is that majority of the Sikhs do not comply with it. Sikh emblems and Sikh code of conduct, prescribed by tenth Guru, are a part of Sikh religion. No Sikh has any right to change it. Sikhs are rather duty-bound to follow it. Scholars of Sikh religion have held these to be essential for Sikhs. Suffice it to quote British scholar, Jeans Culler :

“Eliminate your symbols, my dear Singh, and watch the Khalsa

crumble. Take off the turban, shave the beard, cut the hairs, throw aside the *kara*, I can tell you truthfully the result would be embarrassing as well as disastrous. These five symbols had held the Sikhs in united brotherhood, they serve to make the devotee a Sikh and act as a Sikh. They endow him courage to accomplish feats, which otherwise would be impossible for an average man. To make a long story short, the five symbols have a psychological bearing on the man who wears them. They are manifestation of Guru, the Eternal.”

Prof Puran Singh, eminent Sikh scholar, remarked :

“It is very strange that when a Sikh is initiated, he feels new life has come to him as if the Guru still lives and sends in one glance a wave of life and inspiration.”

British eminent historian, J D Cunningham commented :

“It was on the basic principles of Guru Nanak, that Guru Gobind Singh formed such a nation, which elevated every one politically and religiously after doing away with class system.”

It is an historical fact that as long as Sikhs accepted initiation and Sikh code of conduct, they were always victorious and even established their sovereign state after wiping out the Mughals and Afghans in a prolonged struggle of about a century. But when they ignored it, they could not get their ordinary demands conceded. Sikhs have to follow all the dictums of their religion and become true Sikhs inwardly and outwardly without any reservations.

Sikh religion believes in Fatherhood of God, brotherhood of mankind and truthful living. Sikh way of life is obeying the will of God, and praying for His grace to unite with Him. Truth, *Naam* and pious deeds are the divine message of Sikhism to convert human mind from selfish narrow egoistic tendencies to God-tuned activities in all socio-political affairs. Divine knowledge is to be obtained from the teachings of Guru Granth Sahib. It is not the end of the matter, as these are to be acted upon in the practical Sikh way of life. It automatically leads to truthful living, which is, in fact, the way of God.

The message of Sikhism is that human race is one, without any distinctions; there should be no discrimination against any person on any ground whatsoever. The religions, faiths, systems, which created divisions and discriminations in mankind were outrightly rejected in

Sikhism and effective steps were taken to establish equality among all human beings. Sikhism teaches love between man and man, and the selfless service to humanity. The eminent scholars of world religions and history have appreciated it.

Max Arther Macauliffe, British eminent scholar, author of *The Sikh Religion* :

“It would be difficult to point to a religion of greater originality or to a more comprehensive ethical system than Sikh religion. The Sikh Scriptures contain sublime truths, the study of which cannot but elevate the reader spiritually, morally and socially. There is no tinge of sectarianism in them. They teach the highest and purest principles that serve to bind the man to man and inspire the believer with an ambition to serve his fellowmen, to sacrifice all and to die for their sake.”

John Clark Archer, the eminent British scholar:

“Sikhism, indeed itself reveals something of what in the last analysis religion is. It is an independent and conspicuous order of its own. The world today needs its message of peace and love”

Who is to deliver such a message? Only the Sikhs, the followers of Sikh religion, who are rather duty-bound to bring it to the notice of the world. The teachings of their religion are considered by some scholars to be the religion of the present age capable of solving the problems of the modern man. However, the Sikhs will themselves have to get the full understanding of their religion and act upon it. They will have to also ensure it for their younger Sikh generation. It is a matter of credit for the Sikhs that after their migration to several countries, they kept their faith in Sikh religion and felt proud to be called Sikhs. Though some of them could not observe Sikh code of conduct strictly, they constructed Sikh gurdwaras in the areas of their residence.

There can be no difficulty for them to strictly adhere to Sikh code of conduct under right guidance and inspiration with polite persuasion. The real problem is of the younger generation, who have no opportunity to study Sikh religion, Sikh history and Punjabi language in which Sikh Scriptures have been written. Sikh gurdwaras can be utilized for this purpose to set up Sunday schools for teaching Sikh heritage. All the members and visitors of each gurdwara should be persuaded to bring their children to attend such schools. Independent

schools, colleges and universities can be set up by Sikhs, wherever required and possible in the times to come. The knowledge of the Sikh heritage is a must for the Sikh youth who are residing in foreign countries to enable them to respect the Sikh code of conduct and Sikh way of life. It is the solemn duty of Sikhs to ensure that Sikh youth are provided such knowledge.

In the Punjab and other states in India, Sikh colleges and Schools have been set up, but most of them are no more Sikh-oriented. It is one of the reasons for Sikh students to drift away from Sikh code of conduct. These Sikh educational institutions must be made Sikh-oriented to serve the purpose for which these were set up. The preaching of Sikhism is to be taken up with honesty of purpose to bring all the Sikhs in Sikh code of conduct.

Sikhs are now spread all over the world. It is expected that they would bring to the notice of the world the higher values of Sikhism. It is an appropriate time, as the world peace stands disturbed and moral and ethical values stand ignored. The teachings of Sikhism, and its message of co-existence love, and peace, has the potential to set it right. It would enhance the prestige of Sikhs in the world, as remarked by the eminent British scholar, Max Arthur Macauliffe, who resigned the high post of Divisional Judge in Punjab to author the prestigious book, *The Sikh Religion*.

“All the persons of discrimination acquainted with Sikhs, set a high value on them, but it appears that a knowledge throughout the world of the excellence of their religion would enhance even the present regard with which they are entertained. Not less important will be the result of Sikh teachings on the minds of religious Europe and America. Already the Khalsa has achieved a worldwide renown in the matter of bravery. In the matter of religion too the name of Khalsa will shine resplendently when the glorious deeds of their ancestors in the moral and religious world are made known far and wide.”

What greater pride can there be for the Sikhs to practise their religion and preach it throughout the world, and, thereby, make the Sikh youth proud of it?

SOCIAL MOVEMENT, ETHNIC IDENTITY AND STATE

A CASE STUDY OF SIKH MOVEMENT FOR SWORD AND TURBAN

M S AHLUWALIA*

The purpose of this brief paper is to examine the impact of the religious symbols among the minorities verses the State laws with special reference to the identity crisis among the Sikh minority over the issue of sword (*kirpan*) and turban (*dastar*) - the two most distinguishing symbols of the Sikh religion. Effort has been made to examine the issue raised quite often, especially in our own times, as to why the Sikhs are undergoing **an** 'identity crisis' and are feeling uncomfortable in their own country.

ETHNIC IDENTITY

Ethnic identity has been defined as 'one's sense of belonging to an ethnic group and part of one's thinking, perception, feelings, and becoming that is due to ethnic group membership'. As against this, the situational ethnicity is defined as 'the extent to which ethnicity becomes significant depends on an individual's perception of a particular situation; the opportunities / resources and constraints which exist within and outside his ethnic community and the variability and flexibility of social boundaries between ethnic groups'. One dictionary defines 'identity' as 'essential or practical sameness'. This definition rules out homogeneity. One has to look for some shared traits of belief or practice which distinguished Sikhs from others around. Since 'identity' acquires meaning only in relation to others, diversity within the Khalsa Panth itself remains rather irrelevant for distinct identity.¹

The Indian model of national integration, in theory at least, strives for unity-in-diversity, a model in which the religious, linguistic, ethnic

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and other identities are not dissolved and liquidated into conformist oneness, but are allowed to retain their petal-like distinctiveness, flowering in the integrated pattern of the national mainstream. In theory, therefore, the Indian model of national integration is pluralistic, with no religious, linguistic or ethnic minority to face identity crises. This system has both strength and resilience to contain any tensions. But a system should not only 'contain' but also 'resolve' the tensions, such as in case of the Sikh identity.

The Sikhs have, over a period of time, established a distinct identity by virtue of historical acts of their Sikh ancestors. Many persons, not aware of the Sikh religion and Sikh history, miss the important fact that the eighteenth century was the testing time for the Sikh identity and their religion. For, to be known as *Nanakpanthi*, as Sikh or Singh was to risk being hunted out, tortured and finally killed. Those who successfully survived that test were the Sikhs, who later came to rule over Punjab.

While scholars may question who is a Sikh, Sikhs themselves are not confused about their identity or their heritage. The degree to which they live a Sikh lifestyle determines the measure of their identity. Sikhs may disagree among themselves about who is fully Sikh, but when comparing themselves to other faiths, Sikhs form clear boundaries of self differentiation in contrast to the neighbouring faiths.

Returning to the historical record of the Sikh community, let us recall Guru Nanak's rejection and criticism of the ritualistic behaviour, whether by Hindus, Muslims or Yogis that runs counter to his own standard of authentic devotion. The new Sikh community founded by Guru Nanak began to emerge as an island in the midst of a Hindu sea. The Sikh code of conduct (*Rahit Maryada*) as given in *Rahitnama* of Bhai Chaupa Singh and Bhai Daya Singh² make the position of Sikh identity vis-i-vis Hinduism and Islam, clear. The Sikhs were first referred to as *Nanakpanthis*: those who followed the way of Nanak. The early beginning of the Sikh community showed signs of a communal identity centered on the Guruship of Nanak. A shared identity among the Sikhs became increasingly distinct as time passed. The first five Gurus intended separate, but not exclusive development of Sikh identity. The sixth Guru, Hargobind created the *Akal Takht* as a political forum and recruited a standing army to resist the tyranny

of the State authority.

FIVE K'S OF THE SIKH IDENTITY

Guru Gobind Singh marked the identity of the Sikhs as distinct from Hindus and Muslims by creating the Khalsa with five external signs (five K's) of identity. Along with the Khalsa came the universal name 'Singh' and 'Kaur' for Sikh men and women, respectively, and a new greeting : *Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh*. The introduction of the *Amrit* ceremony with the double-edged sword was unmistakably unique as was the Khalsa with their recognizable presence. The shore between Hindus and the Khalsa was now clearly defined.

Each Sikh wears the hair and beard as Guru Gobind Singh, wore them. The Guru declared:

Jab lag rahe Khalsa naira, tab lag tej dia mai sara.

Jab eh gahain bipran ki riti, main na karo in ki partit.

(So long as the Khalsa retains its identity, I will bestow on them full glory. But the moment they adopt Brahminical ways, I will not trust them.)

This happened almost three hundred years ago and, in the interval between then and now, a distinct Sikh identity has never disappeared despite efforts to eliminate it at various levels – official, non-official and individual.

The five K's of the *Khalsa* Sikhs, formalized by Guru Gobind Singh, on the Baisakhi of 1699, became a part of the Sikh way of life, and have become more than "articles of faith." Difficult times fell on the Khalsa after Guru Gobind Singh's demise. For about seventy years, the Sikhs carried a price on their heads. Living on horseback and surviving day-to-day, a Sikh lived with the sword as his companion and protector as per the guidelines given at the time of the initiation of the Khalsa. Guru Gobind Singh gave the training and the blessings to use the sword only as a means of protecting the weak and the helpless. In the *Zafarnama*, the Guru said to Aurangzeb:

Chun kar az hama hilate dar guzasht

Halal ast burdan ba shamsbeer dast

(Only when all other efforts of reconciliation fail, is it righteous to wield the sword.)

The Guru proved to the world that sword, when taken up for a righteous cause, cuts through the forces of tyranny and injustice.

5 K's are a common denominator binding the Sikhs together into a brotherhood of people striving to reach the same religious or political objectives. The symbols also serve the purpose of a uniform, which history has shown, is the basic element for infusing the spirit of oneness of purpose in an army.

In the history of the world we find that the sword has been unleashed either to assert religious superiority and claims of conversion or to satisfy the lust for gold and power. But in case of Guru Gobind Singh, the sword was employed not with domineering motive, but with a noble and humanistic mission to stem the formidable tide of tyranny.

It is important to note that throughout the history, no Sikh community, group or individual has ever used the *kirpan* for aggression or for conversion. Never in the annals of Sikh history have they been aggressors for forcing conversions. It has, of course, been used as a symbol for self-protection and self-preservation.³ Although *kirpan* may be related to violence, it is worthwhile to consider that violence or non-violence do not lie in the object of the *kirpan*, but lies within us, in our own mind. Some look at *kirpan* as uncivilized. They forget that for the Khalsa, the *kirpan* is not an object left behind in time, but a symbol of positive expression of Guru's grace, always living with us. The deeper spiritual meaning of the *kirpan* is that it is symbolic of the triumph of transcendental knowledge over ignorance and darkness. The sword in the mind, cuts at the roots of ignorance, evil and worldly attachment and destroys these utterly. As an emblem of power and self-respect, the sword has been given the foremost place in the Sikh prayer (*Ardas*).

SIKH IDENTITY AND THE STATE

No discussion on the subject of Sikh identity can be complete without dealing with the relationship of Sikh religion with the State. The term 'secular' in the Preamble of Indian Constitution, read with Article 30 on freedom of religion does not mean just that government may not show favouritism to only one religion but may respect all equally, rather it means that government must be neutral in matter of

religion, neither aiding nor hindering any religious faith. It means that a person may be religious in any way he or she wants without government interference. Freedom means that not only may a person believe as he or she chooses, but that such beliefs must be put into action. This sums up the question of Sikh identity. This is all that the Sikhs want from the government – no interference, no hindrance, only neutrality. A truly ‘secular’ state should be prepared to face the harsh reality of the Sikh religious symbols and have courage to uphold the true character of their religious symbols and beliefs.

However, the recent unfortunate and tragic developments in our country hold out a crucial lesson from our failures for maintaining peaceful co-existence in our pluralistic society. The problem of the alienation of the minority communities, especially the Sikhs, should be taken not only as emotional crisis of our political pluralism but as an urgent national issue which may well determine the country’s immediate and long-term future.

Unfortunately, due to impact of western civilization and the accentuation of communal differences, the Sikh symbols are being criticized. Their identity has been under attack at the hands of the Brahminical supremacy, and at times supported by the State, it has come to grips with the Sikhs. There are two approaches to the problem, one emotional and the other factual or rational. Emotional representation is normally sustained by tradition, which in turn is dependent upon past history. However, the factual and rational approach can only answer all the questions of the Sikh identity. It is pertinent to mention here that the commitment written by some advocates of Hindutva, in the presence of Sardar Tarlochan Singh, Chairman, National Commission for Minorities, in January 2001 about independent character of Sikhism, is not worth the paper written on, because the majority can change its option at any time when they feel the need to launch next operations.⁴

Surely, religion, because of its sectarian part cannot be brought in to influence the political affairs of the State. But the common part of the *Dharma* is not irrelevant to such State affairs also and should not be thrown away as an unwanted commodity. Indian political philosophers like Chanakya, also stressed the need of *Dharma* in politics. Maxim Six of *Chanakya Niti Shastra* reads: “The king should

rule by *Dharma* and protect his subjects.” Written constitutions of various countries do provide certain moral principles in some suitable form. For instance, Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution of India provide for giving equal opportunities to all citizens irrespective of religion, race, caste, sex, etc., and Article 17 specifically abolishes untouchability. But for enforcing of such provisions the only weapon the State has, is that of force, police or military force. That force is perfectly justified in politics and it is very essential to maintain law and order. But this weapon is not an adequate one. Along with that the weapon of *Dharma* is most essential.

Strangely, even in the twenty-first century, the Sikhs have been facing several issues with regard to their identity both in India and abroad. However, it is pertinent to mention here that some of the western countries have been quick to respect the sword and turban of the Sikhs as essential religious symbols. The British attitude towards the Sikh identity during the colonial as well as post-colonial period was that of appreciation of turban and exemption to the wearing of helmet in case of the Sikhs. When the issue was raised in the House of Lords and the British Parliament, it was approved in both the Houses. One of the members declared:

“There is absolutely no doubt whatsoever, that the wearing of the turban is an essential part of the Sikh religion. The ten Gurus, the founders of the religion and the architects of it all wore the turbans themselves. In the Holy Book, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, the Fifth Guru instructs his followers: Keep the God-given form intact with a turban on your head. I might have quoted many similar injunctions by the other Gurus, particularly the Tenth, etc. Also we ought to be guided in matters concerning other faiths by the members of the faiths themselves. When in the case of the Sikhs we find a whole religious community united in its strength of feeling on a given issue, it would seem to be foolish to question their judgment.”⁵

In contemporary India, there has been a debate on non-violence vs terrorism. The issue has been discussed particularly relating to political demands made by the Sikh minority during the post-independence period. A host of literature has appeared on the Sikh minority demands, political, economic and religious.⁶ This of course is beyond the scope of the present paper, which is primarily related

to the issue of the Sikh identity.

For some years past, there have, even in the academic field, been politically oriented writings, some open, some oblique, attacking the identity of Sikhism as an independent religion. The argument of national unity is often used as a dangerous trap. One, however, forgets that the nation is only a political entity and not a God-given permanent creation. The boundaries keep changing, and an enduring unity amongst people, particularly the minorities in the Indian context, can never be achieved by guns and use of force. The Sikh ideal, however, is love and sacrifice. No one taught us better than the ninth Guru, whose sacrifice is absolute and unparalleled. Religious freedom is a birth-right of every man. The Sikhs have lived by this as is well known from the numerous examples during the historical times. It is far more important to respect the separate identity of the Sikhs and peaceful co-existence of the different communities, rather than to be ready to destroy human life in the name of nation's unity.

To sum up, even in the twenty-first century the Sikhs have been facing problems with regards to their identity.

However, one thing is clear. There has to be no re-fixation or redefining of Sikh identity, which is permanent, unalterable and too well laid by the Sikh Gurus, Sikh tradition and Sikh history.

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1. J S Grewal, *Historical Perspectives on Sikh Identity*, (Patiala, 1997), p. 29
2. According to Bhai Chaupa Singh's *Rabatnama* : "A Sikh of the Guru should not wear the Hindu sacred thread or *tilak*. He should not perform *mundan sanskars*. He should give the tithes as charity in the name of the Guru only. A Sikh should not live by profession of priest. He should remain detached from Hindu and Muslim creed. (*Khalsa Hindu Mussalman se nyara rabe*). Cited in Tarlochan Singh, *The Sikh Review*, December. 1979. p. 30
3. In our colonial history itself, there was a *Morcha* in 1922-23 called the *Kirpan Morcha*. It was a campaign started by the Sikhs to assert their right to keep and carry a *kirpan*, which had been denied under the Indian Arms Act (XI) of 1878. The result was that

even today the Sikhs enjoy the freedom to carry *kirpans* in India at least, without any worry, except in air crafts and in the Legislative Assembly, where a full size *kirpan* can not be carried. In this context it may be worthwhile to mention that laws in some western countries, including USA uphold the right to carry a gun without a license. But some states in USA do not allow the carrying of a *kirpan* more than three inches in length. Is it that gun is less destructive than a *kirpan*? Only American mind can solve this riddle.

4. Sangat Singh, "Sikhism in the 21st Century", *The Sikh Review*, Calcutta, December, 2002. pp. 45-46. Many well-informed Sikhs will share the concern of Sangat Singh, when for example, some fanatical group tries to establish the Sikh wing of RSS, when RSS chief declares in Amritsar that 'all Sikhs are Hindus' or more recently, when the Sikh identity became victim of hate crimes in America.
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6. A host of literature on the Punjab problem have appeared in our own times. Some of the important ones are :  
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Harji Malik, *Punjab: The Fatal Miscalculation* (New Delhi, 1985), K S Brar (Lt Gen), *Operation Blue Star : The True Story* (New Delhi, 1993).

7. Traditionally, the Sikh turban was worn in three different colours, the Akali blue, white and black, a later addition being *kesri*. However, today the turban is worn in any colour to match set of clothes and is normally of three types of material: voile, *rubia* and *mulmul* and the length varies from five to seven odd meters, depending upon the style in which it is worn. The case of a Rajput turban is different. The Rajasthan Emporia in Delhi sells nine yard long turbans from Jodhpur in 'tie and dye' type at a price as much as Rs. 1,000/-. The lower-priced turbans (such as *lebrria*, *mothra* and *chundri*) are hand-printed in typical Rajasthani colours (red, maroon and mustard), which one can see being worn by the Rajasthanis, especially on social occasions.

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*They age not, die not and fall not into hell, only if they meditate on God's Name.*

*They who utter God's Name, wither not and, O Nanak, nor do they suffer pain.*

*They who take the Name, look beauteous and reap the fruit of happiness.*

*They who accept the Name, win the life game.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 438

ਤਿਨ੍ ਜਰਾ ਨ ਮਰਣਾ ਨਰਕਿ ਨ ਪਰਣਾ ਜੋ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਵੈ ॥  
 ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਕਰਹਿ ਸਿ ਸੂਕਹਿ ਨਾਹੀ ਨਾਨਕ ਪੀੜ ਨ ਖਾਹਿ ਜੀਉ ॥  
 ਨਾਮੁ ਲੈਨਿ ਸਿ ਸੋਹਹਿ ਤਿਨ੍ ਸੁਖ ਫਲ ਹੋਵਹਿ ਮਾਨਹਿ ਸੇ ਜਿਣਿ ਜਾਹਿ ਜੀਉ ॥

## SIKHS AND CENSUS 2001

JASWANT SINGH\*

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Out of India's population of 102.8 crore, an overwhelming 80.5 per cent are Hindus (82.7 crore). Muslims, the largest minority community, form 13.4% (13.8 crore), Christians 2.9 crore and Sikhs 1.9 crore. There is a dramatically low male / female ratio, among the Sikhs in Punjab with only 893 women for 1000 men. Sikhs record lowest growth rate in Chandigarh from 65, 472 (1971) to 1,45,175 (2001), whereas Hindu population rose from 1,84,395 (1971) to 7,07,978 (2001). I will not go into growth rates of other communities in the City Beautiful.

We will not go into Buddhists' population. From school days, we used to chant the song *Hind, Muslim, Sikh, Isai, hum bain sare bhai bhai* – Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, we are all brothers. This also showed relative religious preponderance. Sikhs have dropped a step below. Their numbers are shockingly lowest in Sikh baby girls, being 786 for 1000 boys in the age of 0-6 years. Clearly, Sikh parents are snuffing out the girl child before birth - foeticide or soon after delivery - infanticide.

While lamenting Sikhs' fall in growth rate from 24.3 per cent to 18.2 per cent in the years 1991 to 2001, and highlighting the rising rate of Muslims – 34.5 per cent to 36 per cent, the soothing voices comfort us by citing Sikhs' high literacy rate 92% males, 88.5% females compared to 64.1 % males and 56.2% females in Hindus at Chandigarh.

After going through this jargon of statistics, I will address myself to the causes and remedial measures. Social and behavioural corrections take a long time for tangible results, that too with only diligence and determination. Newspapers cite the Sikhs' decline in

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numbers due to various causes, like Infertility, Migration of Sikhs overseas, Female foeticide, Non-declaration as Sikhs in census, Economic affluence, and State of Education among the Sikhs.

### **INFERTILITY**

As a practising urologist, I am not aware of any Sikhs' predilection to infertility, medically or biologically. Yes, gone are the days when Britishers promoted large families especially sons for rural Punjabis, mostly Sikhs, to enroll them in the Armed Forces to fight for them and win their wars. As a motivation, they would give a *murraba* of land to those who produced a dozen children. Soon after independence, the emphasis is on small families of two children only. If Sikhs are confining to one child norm, or no girls norm, it is their conscious decision, not infertility.

### **MIGRATION OF SIKHS OVERSEAS**

In my discussion with learned Sikh friends, I find evidence of definite migration to greener pastures in USA, Canada, Britain, Australia. I admire the adventurous Sikh youth who venture out to those lands for better living and better emoluments. Our Gurus ordained *kirat karo* as the first cardinal tenet, *Naam japo* and *wand chhako* were next on the ladder. But such numbers are too low to imbalance the census figures. In any case, this trend will continue and should continue for the affluence of the community.

### **FEMALE FOETICIDE**

Now I come to the main heart-rending facts and figures. It is common knowledge that sex determination and female infanticide are not too infrequent in Punjab. Although, there is no empirical evidence, this could be one of the reasons of the fall in the female/male sex ratio. This is not only illegal, it is also irreligious, and requires concerted social, governmental, and religious institutions' coordinated efforts to reverse the trend. Behavioral changes in society take long time to take place. Male:female ratio in the Sikhs is 1000:846 and for girls in the age group 0-6 yrs, it is 786 which means we start with a very low number of surviving baby girls. This trend has to be stemmed and reversed as it has cancer-like consequences for the Sikh community.

### **NON-DECLARATION AS SIKHS IN CENSUS**

Firstly, I find it difficult to digest this statement, as even shaven, rural, illiterate Sikhs do not hesitate to declare themselves Sikhs. I find even depraved, smoking Sikhs, also call themselves Sikhs. Those in proper *saroop* will never fail to assert their religious affiliation. Yes, sometimes the enumerators might, out of ignorance or mischief, do so. It will be worthwhile to warn all before the census through demonstrations to get their particulars filled in properly. Some frightened or disgruntled Sikhs may be declaring as non-Sikhs; they can all be counselled.

### **ECONOMIC AFFLUENCE, EDUCATIONAL SUPREMACY**

Sikhs are a hardworking, enterprising community. Whether in India or abroad, they have created a niche for themselves in their country of origin or adoption. To have a small family of one or two children may be their conscious decision, which can be revised. One child, I am told will lead to negative growth, two will maintain status quo, and three will be an upward trend. So, those who can afford should have 3 children per couple. As an educated Indian, I need not be misunderstood. This minority community of Sikhs need not disappear in thick clouds of majority.

### **STATE OF EDUCATION**

Figures of literacy rate of Sikh community of Chandigarh is a silver lining. Male / female literacy rate is 92 percent / 88.5 percent, whereas corresponding figures for Hindus are 80.5 percent / 74.2 percent, and those for Muslims are 64.1 percent and 56.3 percent. Let us, however, not gloat over this number game. In the rural Punjab, the homeland of Sikh community, literacy is much lower, and with this poor background, you will hardly find enough Sikh Generals, IAS/IPS officers in the years to come. Let the community take this information as a wake-up call.

A *talisma* of community surge upwards is education and upliftment of Sikh women. Guru Nanak in *Assa Di War* asks, “*so kyon manda akhiye jit jamme rajan*” – why call them (women) inferior who give birth to kings. By educating them, you improve the entire family, the children, the atmosphere and community at large. Educated women will not

succumb to the temptation/coercion of female foeticide/infanticide and will in turn bring up girls at par with boys.

The census 2001 is a timely jolt to the Sikh community. Democracy is a number game. Indian secularism is unparalleled in the whole world wherein a 82.7 crore Hindu majority country, a Muslim is a President (13.8 crore) a Sikh a Prime Minister (1.9 crore), and a Christian a Congress President (2.4 crore). Yet, when it comes to economic, administrative and social matters, the community number forms the bedrock. A sooth-sayer like Khushwant Singh has prophesied that in this millennium, sooner or later, Sikhs will be reduced to rarity, a subject of history. I have no such fears. Sikhs have deep roots irrigated with the blood of martyrs, nurtured with infinite blessings of the Gurus and sustained by the hardy enterprising, risk taking Sikhs. Survival is no problem. However, let us read the writing on the census wall with wide open eyes.

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*He who has none to call his own, that Lord is of him.*

*The Lord understands the condition of all the hearts.*

*He knows all the things.*

*O Lord, save the defaulters. This is Nanak's earnest supplication.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 410

ਜਿਸ ਕਾ ਨਾਹਿ ਕੋਇ ਹਾਂ ॥ ਤਿਸ ਕਾ ਪ੍ਰਭੂ ਸੋਇ ਹਾਂ ॥

ਅੰਤਰਗਤਿ ਬੁਝੈ ਹਾਂ ॥ ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਤਿਸੁ ਸੁਝੈ ਹਾਂ ॥

ਪਤਿਤ ਉਧਾਰਿ ਲੇਹੁ ਹਾਂ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਅਰਦਾਸਿ ਏਹੁ ਮੇਰੇ ਮਨਾ ॥

## NEED FOR SIKHS' OWN MEDIA

M S CHAWLA\*

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For decades, indeed for as long as India has been a nation, the powerful electronic media has served as the mouthpiece of government. It is the chief custodian of “truth” – or at least, the official version of the events. Following the first week of June 1984, every Sikh living abroad wondered about the catastrophe that gripped the entire India. But the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s government was working hard to produce and distribute a video for the western countries (especially for Indian immigrants living abroad) whose logo read “this video tape shows the actual truth about why and what happened in the Golden Temple, Amritsar during that fatal first week of June.”

A colleague of mine, working in the same office as I was in, came to me, within days (just few days) of the attack on the Golden Temple, Amritsar and 38 other Sikh Gurdwaras throughout Punjab, and presented me a copy of a video tape. When I asked him, “Where did you get this tape?” He replied that the Embassy of India in Washington, DC, gave him that tape to be distributed to the Sikhs. That means that Government of India had planned much in advance of the attack to flood the news media in India (owned and controlled by the Government) and the rest of the world with a propaganda labeling Sikhs in the Golden Temple, as terrorists and justifying the killings of thousands of innocent men, women and children.

Sikhs living abroad were shocked to know about the production of such a tape and its distribution within a few days of the attack on the GOLDEN TEMPLE. One could have marveled at the efficiency of the then Indian Government and its embassies for such a quick production and distribution, when contrasted with the usual inefficiency

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of the Indian establishment. However, some critical viewers realized that it was not the dramatic improvement in the government efficiency, but rather a clever attempt at extension of anti-Sikh propaganda war that Mrs Gandhi had initiated in the eighties.

The video production and the speed with which it was distributed to the international circle, continue to stick in Sikh psyche even today. It portrayed Sikhs as terrorists to justify the attack on the temple. Later, during the same year, the genocide and its news coverage by the Government-controlled media confirmed the worst fears of Sikhs. In retrospect, one wonders what India would have looked today, had its Government, instead of launching a very expensive propaganda war, simply investigated both of the June '84 and November '84 incidents and punished the guilty.

It became obvious to the Sikh scholars that Indian leadership was on a dangerous course of propagating falsehood. To stay in power, the Indian leaders blatantly committed horrific acts of murder towards its bravest people. They ignored Sikhs' contributions during the Indian independence struggle, and later for the defense of India against Pakistan and China.

For foreign reporters trying to grab these sensational tragedies of 1984, the Indian government was the most visible gatekeeper, making it impossible to approve journalist visas for foreign correspondents. Thus, during 1984, Indian leaders were free to broadcast made-up stories through the government-controlled Radio and TV. Consequently, all foreign news organizations were left with no choice, but to take the twisted news of local government-controlled media and rebroadcast over their own networks abroad. It was much later that the foreign newspapers knew only the partial truth about 'India's Unknown Holocaust.'

Mrs Indira Gandhi supported her campaign for the 1984 genocide through state-controlled media. They say that when she saw Sikhs upholding the rule of law during her dictatorial rule following the Emergency in 1970's, she got it into her head that Sikhs constituted a threat to her dynastic rule. So, she decided to engineer support for genocide of Sikhs by propagating false stories through state-controlled media.

One of Mrs Gandhi's first acts in pursuit of the upcoming attack

on the golden temple was to seek active support of both the print and the electronic media. Reportedly, the Information and Broadcasting Minister, H K L Bhagat had called editors of Delhi newspapers individually, one month before Mrs Gandhi's attack on the golden temple, seeking their full support. The All India Radio and TV overplayed Sikh demonstrations and their 'threat to the unity of India', without trying to investigate as to who were behind it.

Since India's electronic media is state controlled, the western world has had no access to the actual truth even after 20 years of those grave tragedies. The main aim of 1984 attack on Sikhs was to cow down the spirit of Sikhs and Sikhism, by resorting to attacks on their life and property. So far they have been unsuccessful in cowing down the Sikh spirit. But they did succeed in maligning Sikhs by the use of media (newspapers, radio and TV), and Sikh leadership failed to respond, since they did not own or operate any newspaper, radio or TV.

Had Sikhs had their own English language prominent newspaper in India and/or Radio or TV network like ZTV or TV ASIA, etc., outside India, they could have responded effectively to the Indian propaganda in India and abroad. Even after 20 years, Sikhs do not spend or support any media outlet. Instead Sikhs are spending lot of money on gurdwaras, on infighting in courts and for personal glorification by spending on University chairs, Sikh Art Exhibitions, etc.

We, on our own with our own resources started small weekly Radio and TV programs in Washington, DC area (the most powerful city in the world) since 1988 and are continuing till now. But our small effort cannot be that effective as a nationwide or worldwide TV network could be. In addition to spending Sikh resources on constructing gurdwara buildings, etc., we should spend money on the most effective medium of TV in India, UK, and the USA.

## WHO CAN THROW THE FIRST STONE?\*

SUMIT KAUR\*\*

---

My *compulsion* is ego,  
With a *slur on my forehead*,  
But *traitorous to the Panth*, I am not.

I am *in a dilemma*,  
But my *loyalty* is with God,  
The only King.

I do not *need the company of the evil*,  
Nor do I *make friendship with the bad*.  
Because, who can tell, who is good and who evil?

Am I *subservient* to you?  
I thought we were all brothers and sisters,  
Belonging to the one and same family,

Tell *sinful* me,  
Who is an *apostate* and, who not,  
Who is not *sinful*?

My *dwelling* is not *destroyed*,  
But tell *apostate* me,  
Who can be a true sacrifice to Him?

I do *bow at the Guru's feet*,  
Seeking His forgiveness.  
And He takes me lovingly in His arms.

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NO LOVE, NO GOD — NO COMPASSION, NO LOVE

\* Thoughts on reading *O Apostate Sikh!* by Harinder Singh Kukreja, AOSS April-June 2004, page 90. The words in italics are from the said poem.

\*\* Danish convert since reading *Japuji* in 1983.

## ABSTRACTS

### MARTYRDOM IN SIKHISM WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE SAHIBZADAS

AN ABSTRACT BY KHARAK SINGH\*

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The Institute of Sikh Studies (IOSS) organized a Seminar on the 13-14<sup>th</sup> November, 2004 on the theme *Martyrdom in Sikhism with particular reference to the Sahibzadas*, at Chandigarh in which a large galaxy of top scholars of Sikhism participated. The timing of the seminar as well as the selection of the theme could not be more appropriate. For, we are in the midst of the year which is being observed as the tercentenary of the martyrdom of the four *Sahibzadas* of Guru Gobind Singh, and the Panth, the world over, is paying homage to the matchless sacrifices of the Guru and his four sons and their martyrdom in the cause of righteousness. The theme is important not only because martyrdom is an integral part of the body of Sikh doctrines and because accounts of martyrs dominate the Sikh history, but also because some known adversaries of Sikh religion have raised some motivated questions on the status of Sikh martyrs, which demand a studied response. Moreover, just as Sikhs have been making history, but have seldom paused to record it, same holds true of the doctrine of martyrdom. While we are proud of the endless series of Sikh martyrs, we have failed to record details of their brave deeds and to study the lofty principles that inspired them to make the supreme sacrifices. The present seminar should, therefore, be considered a welcome step in the direction of making up this deficiency. The present volume is a compilation of the papers presented by the Scholars or a record of

their deliberations.

The Seminar was inaugurated by Singh Sahib Giani Trilochan Singh, Jathedar, Takht Sri Kesgarh Sahib, Anandpur Sahib. In his inspiring address delivered in chaste and flawless Punjabi, he said that Sikh martyrs were heroes, who, as defined by Kabir, are those who fight for the cause of the weak or their faith, and suffer getting cut limb-by-limb, but never flee the battlefield<sup>1</sup>. Quoting Bhai Gurdas<sup>2</sup>, who said that among myriad other qualities, a martyr possess unlimited patience, complete faith in God and freedom from superstition and fear. A martyr is never afraid of death. Rather, he looks forward to it, considering it as his right in a noble cause.<sup>3</sup> Referring to the high spiritual status of a martyr and obviously with Guru Arjun in his mind, Singh Sahib said that a martyr has no ill will even for his enemies, who inflict suffering and death on him. Even when seated on a hot plate, the amartyr sung:

Put away from my mind is envy of others ...  
None now is our foe nor a stranger  
With all are we in accord.<sup>4</sup>

Dr Kirpal Singh who delivered the Keynote Address set the trend of discussion. Dealing with etymology of the word 'martyr', he explained:

"Martyr is a Greek word, which means witness. Its translation *shahid* is of Arabic and Persian origin which also, according to the Steinga's Persian-English dictionary means witness or martyr. A martyr is considered to stand 'witness' to truth. The *shahid* is one who, by the supreme sacrifice for his faith, bears witness to its truth. A martyr is generally defined as one who chooses to suffer death rather than renounce his or her faith. The term 'martyrdom' is not identical with death. Persons die of various causes on which they have no control or from which they have no escape. Martyrdom, on the other hand, is offering one's life for some noble principle knowingly and deliberately."

He made a brief reference to the concept of martyrdom in Christianity and Islam :

"In Christianity, physical death is not essential to martyrdom. As Saint Jerome states, 'It is not only the shedding of blood that is accounted as a confession. The spotless service of a devout mind is itself a daily martyrdom.' Saint Thomas Aquinas (1274) a theologian,

too, considers that on physical plane, “Martyrdom consists in the right endurance of suffering unjustly inflicted.”

Recalling the Muslim tradition, he said :

“In the Muslim tradition there had been several celebrated martyrs among the prophet’s descendants and followers. The most important was Imam Hussain, son of Caliph Ali and grandson of Prophet Mohammad (son of his daughter, Zohra). He was killed in a battle and was buried at Karbla. The cause of conflict was that he refused to acknowledge Yazid as lawful Khalifa. Among the Sufi saints there had been a number of martyrs who were tortured to death because of their so-called unorthodox actions. Shams Tabriz was sentenced to be flayed alive in 1247 CE, because he raised a dead person to life, which was considered disobedience to God. Mansoor Hallaj (Shaikh Hussain Halley), was another celebrated martyr who was sentenced to death for proclaiming ‘Anul Haq’, viz., ‘I am God’ by the Khalifa of Baghdad in 919 AD.<sup>8</sup> Like so many other terms, viz.,”

With this brief background, Dr Kirpal Singh dealt in detail with the concept of martyrdom in Sikhism. He said that like so many other words, the term *shahid* had come to India from Semitic culture.

In Sikhism, a *shahid* enjoys a unique status. The high value placed on martyrdom in the Sikh faith is evident from the fact that all Sikhs remember their innumerable martyr, in daily *ardas*.

Dr Kirpal Singh asserted that martyrdom was basic to the Sikh faith. Guru Nanak’s call leaves no doubt about it :

Should thou seek to engage in the game of love,  
step into my street with thy head on thy palm.  
While on to this stepping  
ungrudgingly sacrifice your head.<sup>5</sup>

He reproduced numerous other quotations in which Sikhs earnestly seek to sacrifice their lives in the noble cause expounded by their Gurus.

Dr Kirpal Singh also recalled the series of martyrdoms which started with the martyrdom of Guru Arjun. He pointed out :

“It is perhaps unique in the world history that one family should have given so many martyrs. The family of Guru Ram Das, the fourth Sikh Guru has provided a number of martyrs to guide and inspire the people. His son, Guru Arjun, was the first martyr among the Sikh

Gurus. Guru Arjun's grandson, Guru Tegh Bahadur fell martyr to religious fanaticism of Aurangzeb. He laid down his life for the freedom of faith of the Hindus.

“Guru Tegh Bahadur's grandsons, Sahibzadas Ajit Singh, Jujhar Singh, Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh, also become martyrs. The former two grandsons fell in the battle of Chamkaur, and the latter two were bricked alive in a wall at Sirhind and subsequently killed. Guru Gobind Singh attained martyrdom while in Nanded.”

Inspired by the examples of the Gurus, Sikhs shed the fear of death and never hesitated to sacrifice their lives in the defence of their faith and the defenceless. Examples recounted in the keynote address are Baba Banda Singh Bahadur and his 700 companions, Bhai Mani Singh, Bhai Taru Singh, Baba Tara Singh Vani, martyrs of the two *Ghallugharas*, Baba Deep Singh and numerous other *shahids* who died defending the holy Harmandir Sahib in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The ranks of Sikh martyrs continued to swell during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century as well. Particular mention was made of Bhai Lachhman Singh and his *jatha* of 200 Sikhs to Sri Nankana Sahib, who courted martyrdom in the struggle to free the shrines of the Sikhs at Nankana Sahib in 1921.

Dr Dharam Singh agreed that the term *shahid* came to India with the advent of Islam. That does not, however, mean that there were no martyrs in India during the earlier period. He argues :

“When the Aryans invaded India, the Dravidians might have given them a good fight, and many on both sides might have fallen fighting. The Aryans who soon dominated the Indus Valley civilization and propagated the Vedas as the fountain of an emerging civilization, might have felt that their fight was for a cause, and the truth of that cause they were strongly committed to. The same would have been the case with the Dravidians. However, in ancient Indian tradition there was no particular or specific word to refer to one who fought and died for a cause, or for certain values. Even in the *Bhagavad Gita* such a death has been eulogized, but still there is no word to denote a *shahid*. Also, in the Indian religious tradition, we find a significant role for divine intervention in a fight between Good and Evil. In this fight, the evil and the evildoer meet their end, but in place of the person who fought and died for the sake of Good the credit invariably goes to divine

power.

“During this while, the followers of non-Vedic indigenous faiths, the Jains and the Buddhists, were persecuted at places. No doubt, these different traditions soon forged unifying ties by connecting their respective deities into relationships. This created amongst them a spirit of accommodation and tolerance. Still many might have suffered privation, and even death, for their commitment to a righteous cause during the Aryan struggle for supremacy. But in all such struggles, there was always supposed divine intervention on behalf of the Good, thus minimizing the significance of human suffering and sacrifice, and giving credit for everything to the divine. That is perhaps why there has been no Indian equivalent word for *shahid* or *shahadat*.”

Referring to the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur, he says he made the supreme sacrifice for the sake of another faith he himself did not share, and thus raised the concept to new height setting a unique example in history. He says :

“Thus, Guru Tegh Bahadur took up cudgels on behalf of the hapless Hindus on his own; it was more for redeeming freedom of faith for people irrespective of the religious tradition they belonged to. In the Indian history and folklore, he has always been remembered as the protector of the Hindu faith – a unique example of its kind in the history of mankind. Interestingly, there are several Sikh scriptural hymns criticizing *janen* and *tilak* which the Brahminical class had begun to consider an end in themselves, thus giving precedence to form over the spirit of religion, but the Guru stood for freedom of belief and practice for everyone. The religious history of mankind provides no second example of a spiritual leader laying down his life for the people belonging to a religious tradition other than his own. Second, the Sikh Gurus had nothing against Islam as such, and the Sikh scripture unequivocally states that the scriptures of neither the Indian nor Semitic religions can be called false, rather false are those who do not reflect on them. Had the contemporary political situation in India been the other way round, Guru Tegh Bahadur would surely have made the same sacrifice for the sake of Muslims.”

Dr Hakam Singh compares the concept of martyrdom in different religions. “Buddhism neither believes in heaven and hell, nor does it profess violence (it believes in *ahimsa*), therefore, the idea of martyrdom

in any form is completely absent in this faith. 'In Hinduism also the concept of martyrdom seems to be absent. Sanskrits, the language of the ancient Vedic (Hindu) religion does not even have a word equivalent or close (in meaning) to martyrdom. Swami Ram Tirath thinks that in Hinduism human life was considered as a gift from God, and, therefore, too sacred to be glorified when sacrificed for any human endeavour.

"In Judaism the interpretation of the concept of martyrdom seems to be somewhat different from other Semitic faiths. It simply means 'standing up to the principles of faith, even when one has to face hardships and oppression. The famous episode of 'Masada' where all Jews preferred to commit suicide rather than boldly fight the enemy in the battlefield, amply illustrates this point.

"The inception of Christianity came as a result of death, by torture of Jesus Christ. This event is considered by the followers of this faith as the highest act of martyrdom. Christianity is thus predicated around the concept of triumphing over death as Jesus did. Under such circumstances it stands to reason why the concept of dying for one's religion would be given so much importance. Thus, by fourth century (CE) the idea of dying for Jesus Christ had morphed into the idea of martyrdom in which dying for one's faith was considered not just a duty (because it was emulating Jesus) but an honor and a privilege.

"This simplistic explanation, however, ignores one important psychological reason for exaltation of such a death to such a high level. Among Christians it is a firm belief that Jesus sacrificed his life to wash off the sins committed by humanity through Adam. Thus he is responsible for interceding between God and the faithful (atonement). All a believer has to do is to confirm faith in Jesus, and he shall have a seat reserved for him in heaven. Psychologically, it introduces a guilt complex (all Christians are indebted to Jesus for what he did and what he will do for them in the hereafter) which is the driving force for Christians to emulate Jesus Christ and embrace martyrdom.

"With the beginning of Islam came the Arabic word *shabada* or *shahadat* which is conceptually similar to the word martyrdom, but has even broader meaning. It means to see, to witness, to testify or to become a role model. This word is inseparably associated with the

Islamic concept of *jehad* or holy struggle. A *shahid* (*shabeed*) is, therefore, a person who in struggle (*jehad*) witnesses the truth, and stands by it firmly to the extent that not only he testifies to it verbally, but is prepared to fight for the truth and, if necessary, give up his life and thus become a role model for others.”

In essence, according to Islam, martyrdom applies only when it is preceded by *jehad* which is an inclusive struggle for the truth (the way the truth is interpreted in this faith). A person involved in *jehad* (a *mujahid*) always dies the death of a martyr even if he does not fall on the battlefield, as long as he stays loyal to the truth and stays ready to fight for and defend the truth at all costs.

“Promise of reward for martyrdom in Islam is more specific, including, *inter alia*,

1. Forgiveness with the first drop of his spilt blood.
2. A guaranteed place in paradise with a celestial crown on his head.
3. Availability of seventy two virgins.
4. Authority to intercede for seventy two of his relatives.”

Dr Hakam Singh concludes :

“Sikhism: Sikhism elevated the concept of martyrdom to new heights when Guru Nanak, the first prophet said:

Should you have an urge to play the game of love,  
step into my lane with your head placed on your palm.  
Once embarked on this path,  
Hesitate not to sacrifice your head.<sup>5</sup>

Guru Nanak did not offer any rewards or enticements for playing the game of love even at the cost of one’s life. Also, there is no guilt complex among Sikhs because none of the Sikh Gurus gave any promise of intercession for any one who expressed unconditional full faith in Sikhism. Whatever one sows, so does he reap.<sup>6</sup>

Also:

‘(in this age of Kali) One gets retribution for what one does.  
No one gets caught in anyone else’s place’.<sup>7</sup>

“Furthermore, Sikhism does not believe in sinful birth of human beings. Love for God and Guru, or staying steadfastly on the path that leads to the Supreme Reality, is something that is beyond the idea of any rewards corresponding to attainment of paradise full of virgins.

“Sikh history is full of examples where all kinds of worldly rewards

and even promises of paradise (after death) were offered but the Sikh martyrs summarily rejected them for the sake of love for their Guru and God.”

Sardar Bhagwant Singh Dalawari explained the philosophic basis martyrdom in *gurbani* and referred to the glorious heritage in contrast to the present degeneration. He laments :

“The *shenanigans* of our so-called political leaders, *jathedars*, and even intellectuals, have now proved to be our undoing. Not only have we become victims of material degeneration and personal pelf and illegal and immoral pursuits, but we have also thrown up leaders who are willing to sell themselves, sell the *panth*, for the sake of ministerships, illegal gratifications and other temptations. So, the concept of martyrdom or even righteousness has been forgotten. Ordinary Sikhs, too, have become paraders of ostentatious living, black money, 5-star culture with total alienation from the Guru’s word and Guru’s way of life, and our *Sikhi* is now only the external display of ill-gotten wealth, dubious grandeur and dishonest practices. The rot has been strengthened by Babas of *deras*, whom even our political leaders pay obeisance, and who benefit from their nefarious activities. *Jathedars* have become political tools of their political masters in the SGPC or DSGMC, members of whom have come to occupy seats of power by bribery, corruption and winning the voters. Where is then the question of martyrdom and selfless sacrifice?”

He concluded his paper with the following observations :

“Firstly, the concept of Martyrdom is to be analysed with righteousness as the base for living. And the strength is to come from commitment to honesty, truth and faith in God.

Secondly, the selflessness has to be the hallmark, in all circumstances, when a Sikh lays down his life for a cause.

Thirdly, no circulation or a hankering for recognition is taken into consideration.

Fourthly, the credit for all kinds of sacrifice and the ultimate willingness to die, has to be part of a training to be uncompromising in defiance of tyranny, and

Fifthly, no temptation, no one-upmanship, no chicanery and no hoodwinking should deflect a Sikh whose commitment to righteousness is total and irrevocable.”

Sardar Gajinder Singh explained that the idea of sacrifices is distinct from the principle of martyrdom, *shabadat*. He says :

“The idea of sacrifice is distinct from the principle of martyrdom, *shabadat*. The ritual of sacrifice is an ancient act of religiosity, which has been present in a different context in the Indian thought, but in its present form, it was mooted by Guru Nanak. Till then, the Indian thrust was on sacrifice as an invocation. The rationale of sacrifice was personal. The brave man dashed out to fight and die to become *amar*, an immortal. The woman committed *satti* as a sacred duty of her widowed state to gain benefits in her next incarnation. One sacrificed his body in a religious frenzy, because he expected thereby to gain spiritually. The *satta* and the *tantric* invoking the black powers of *Sakti* offered, as a sacrifice, the innocent child or adult, luring him to the venue of sacrifice for attaining personal gains in the present life as well as in future. These practices which are still part of the curriculum of many sects, were rejected outright by the Guru as of no avail in gaining spiritual or physical strength or mundane benefits.”

He also pointed out that in Sikh history martyrs were not confined to martial classes. In fact, response came equally from backward classes. Guru Gobind Singh also did not make any distinction between his sons and other Sikhs in this respect.

Dr Gurnam Kaur says that concept of martyrdom is present in the *bani* revealed through our Gurus, and that love is its source. She makes the following points :

- a) Love of God leads to love of His creation.
- b) Total submission to His Will is the way of love.
- c) A person is free to choose this faith of love. There is no compulsion.
- d) The choice is based as reasoning and contemplation.

She holds the view that all sacrifices made by Sikh martyrs were inspired by Love.

The article by Maj Gen Jaswant Singh, Brig Hardit Singh, Dr Rupinderjit Kaur, Prof Prithipal Singh Kapur, Sardar Nanak Singh Nishtar are indeed very thought provoking. With extensive quotations from *gurbani*, it is shown that the concept of martyrdom is deeply rooted in the basic philosophy of Sikhism. They also refer to prominent

Sikh martyrs in Sikh History. Nishtar says that motivation for martyrdom was provided by Guru Nanak, but it took 239 years for him and his successors to prepare the society for living with dignity through a whole-life philosophy. Rupinderjit Kaur pleads that those who died in the Blue-star attack and the Delhi massacre in 1984 should be considered martyrs.

Sardar Harbans Singh Noor's article is devoted to Baba Deep Singh. As a background, he narrates the unsettled conditions in Punjab during that period, and the circumstances in which Baba Deep Singh courted martyrdom in the struggle for liberation of Sri Harmandir Sahib at Amritsar.

Article by Dr Sukhdial Singh, Dr Harchand Singh Sirhindi, Dr Dharam Singh, Prof Hardev Singh Virk, Brig Hardit Singh and Dr Darshan Singh adorn the Punjabi Section. Dr Sukhdial Singh argued that emphasis on the need for documentary evidence in the history of revolutionary movements, was clearly misplaced, since then in authority were never let the truth come out, unless it is in their favour. In the circumstances, tradition is the only reliable source, so that brief hold by people cannot be wrong.

Dr Harchand Singh Sirhindi shows that it was the martyrdom of the Sahibzadas that laid the foundation of the Sikh rule in Punjab.

Dr Dharam Singh stresses the importance of *Vars* in Sikh history, and deals critically with the *var*, *Char Sahibzadé* by Sohan Singh Ghukewalia, a popular *dhadi* of the early twentieth century. He composed his own *vars*, in which he lists the established facts about Sikh martyrs or those who participated in the Sikh struggle during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Dr Dharam Singh pleads that all such literature should be compiled and preserved.

Prof Hardev Singh Virk distinguishes sacrifice from martyrdom. The former was prevalent in tribal cultures as well as in followers of higher religions like Judaism, Islam and Christianity. Sacrifice of animals to please a deity or for particular personal boons, is still common. Sacrifice of human beings was also practised, and is still not uncommon among *satta*, *tantrics* and certain other cults. As against this, martyrdom is inspired by a desire to uphold a principle and for common good of humanity. The Gurus provided this model through personal example.

Sikhs hold martyrs in highest esteem. They are in fact believed to

have conquered death and attained eternal life. It is perhaps the first time when a seminar has been held on the vital theme of martyrdom. It is gratifying that so many top scholars committed to Sikh studies responded to the call of the IOSS and contributed the papers published in this volume, which throw a flood of light on the subject. It is hoped that readers will greatly benefit from the views expressed by the learned scholars. We are also hoping that these articles will lead to further discussion with focus on the special features that mark the concept of martyrdom in Sikhism and distinguish it from earlier faiths.

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*The Lord held me by the arm, I gained sublime understanding,  
and I, his slave, clung to Guru's feet.*

*He, who has good destiny written on his face and forehead  
ponders and reflects on the Lord Master.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 447

ਪ੍ਰਭਿ ਬਾਂਹ ਪਕਰਾਈ ਉਤਮ ਮਤਿ ਪਾਈ ਗੁਰ ਚਰਣੀ ਜਨੁ ਲਾਗਾ ॥  
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## REVIEWS

### HISTORY OF THE SIKHS AND THEIR RELIGION VOL I (THE GURU PERIOD)

A REVIEW BY PRITHIPAL SINGH\*

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*Editors : Kirpal Singh and Kharak Singh*

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Sikhism has received casual treatment from most scholars. Most of them describe this dynamic faith as an off-shoot of Bhakti Movement; the Hindu renaissance of Middle Ages. But it need not be difficult for any scholar to perceive that Guru Nanak repudiated the very fundamentals of Bhakti, adoration of incarnations of God, renunciation, and contempt for women and family life. He vehemently denounced the caste system so as to shake it from its roots. He stood for a purposive life. That is why, some historians have tried to look towards Sikhism as some kind of synthesis between Hindu Bhakti and Islamic Sufism, not knowing full well that Guru Nanak declared without any inhibition "My God neither finds mention in the Vedas nor in the Semitic texts." With vast information, having since become available on Sikhism, it is not necessary to take serious note of those who described the rise of Sikhism and creation of the Khalsa as Hindu challenge to the might of Islam in India.

Despite this general approach to the study of Sikhism, we do come across scholars like J D Cunningham who have not failed to identify the fundamentals of Sikhism, as distinct from Hinduism and Islam, their failings in comprehending facts while delineating the lives of the great Sikh Gurus notwithstanding.

With the emergence of a few Sikh scholars in the early twentieth

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century who adopted scientific methodology, we come across two parallel streams of scholars studying Sikhism from different standpoints. The European scholars led by Trumpp (who translated some portions of the *Adi Granth* and two *Janam Sakhis*), repudiated Sikh tradition as source of history. On the other hand, the Sikh scholars kept the scriptural sources into focus. Later, Macauliffe and a few others accepted the validity of tradition in the study of religious history. Others deliberately stood aside to bring forth such studies on Sikhism as lacked objectivity, remaining oblivious of the contribution of religion towards the growth of human civilization. They failed to notice that Guru Nanak appeared on the horizon, when religious strife and socio-moral degradation had destabilized not only the human life but also the beliefs and practices of principal religions. Guru Nanak's positivist approach to human life in its totality and role of religion as a vehicle of human existence was taken as a challenge by those who sought to perpetuate the decadent socio-religious systems. It is in this light that we have to view the wholehearted acceptance of Sikhism by the people inhabiting that region of India which had remained the seat of the sophisticated urban Indus Valley civilization and their ruthless persecution and denigration by status quoists.

The development of historiography as a distinct discipline sought to change the entire approach to the study of religious histories. Insistence on empirical evidence and turning back on the study of tradition remain its major forte. Sikhism came under the strict scrutiny of the scholars following this methodology because of its young age – only five hundred years or so. In the process, no attention was paid to historical awareness or scanty knowledge on Sikhism available to the people who gave the earliest accounts of the Sikh Gurus and their teachings. No doubt, intensive study of the life and doctrines propounded by the Sikh Gurus was called for, but it has to be kept in mind that more emphasis on methodology could not bring forth any objective study of a faith, the preceptors of which had the privilege of looking at the experience of earlier religious denominations.

With such a state of Sikh studies, it was necessary to present an integrated account of the development of Sikhism and history of the Sikhs; that could be called fusion of tradition and modern historical

methodology. A former president of the SGPC, late Sardar Gurcharan Singh Tohra who remained ever responsive to constructive suggestions of intellectuals, sponsored a five-volume project for such a study. The book under review edited by Dr Kirpal Singh and Dr Kharak Singh is the first volume of the proposed set which includes contributions from nine scholars. The editors have made the scheme as well as approach amply clear in the Preface and the Introduction. Dr Kirpal Singh has cogently brought out the importance of tradition in the writings of religious histories, and asserts, "Tradition is one of the basic sources of history". He justifies this assertion by giving analysis of the approach adopted by early Sikh historians like Santokh Singh and Giani Gian Singh. An example of the scrutiny/analysis of Sikh tradition is also provided by giving a detailed account of the methodology adopted by Karam Singh 'Historian', a pioneer Sikh historiographer. Dr Kharak Singh advocates an intensive and holistic study of Sikh history and religion keeping in view the Sikh doctrine and tradition.

The first hundred pages of the book have been justifiably devoted to the life, time, teachings and an assessment of the work of Guru Nanak. While the historical portion presents a graphic picture of the conditions of the age of Nanak and his life story, the inclusion of a separate chapter on Guru Nanak's works and teachings is most welcome, since most of the earlier attempts ignore this aspect. However, the basic postulates of the Guru's message deserve more space, and could be brought out more prominently and with greater clarity. Statements such as "To de-institutionalize the concept of *Varn ashram* that had tainted the Indian society, Guru Nanak evolved the concept of *Sangat*, a congregation of God-oriented people without distinction of creed and caste, wedded to the sacred *Naam* and filled with humility, that Guru Nanak hailed as man's greatest virtue," might relegate these postulates to a secondary place.

It is heartening to note that this book pays full attention to the contribution of each of the Gurus to the development of Sikhism. Dalbir Singh Dhillon's article on Guru Hargobind is based on reliable contemporary Persian sources, and appropriately puts focus on the fanatic policies of Shahjahan that led to the conflict between the Guru and the Mughals. Thereafter, we find 150 pages contributed by an

accomplished scholar, S S Gandhi. His study of four Gurus in these pages appears to be an extension of the work that he already has to his credit. A unique feature of this book is exclusive chapters on Guru Granth, the *Udasis*, *Nirmalas*, *Sewa Panthis*, Eminent Sikhs of the Guru period, principal sources of the Guru period, besides an exhaustive bibliography. All in all, the book remains a welcome addition to the existing available literature on the Sikh Gurus. Having been issued under the seal of the SGPC, the book will be treated as authentic account of the origin and development of Sikh religion.

□

*In Lord's fear wind and breeze ever blow.*  
*In Lord's fear flow lacs of rivers.*  
*In Lord's fear fire is forced to perform labour.*  
*In Lord's fear the earth is trampled under burden.*  
*In Lord's fear the cloud moves head-long.*  
*In Lord's fear Dharamraj (Righteous Judge) stands at His door.*  
*In Lord's fear is restrained the sun and in Lord's fear the moon*  
*They travel myriads of miles without an end.*  
*In Lord's fear are the men of miracles, enlightened ones,*  
*the demigods and the Yogis.*  
*In Lord's fear is stretched the sky.*  
*In Lord's fear the warriors and the very powerful heroes.*  
*In Lord's fear multitudes come and go.*  
*The Lord has written the writ of His fear on the heads of all.*  
*Nanak, the True Formless Lord alone is fearless.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 464

ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਪਵਣੁ ਵਹੈ ਸਦਵਾਉ ॥ ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਚਲਹਿ ਲਖ ਦਰੀਆਉ ॥  
 ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਅਗਨਿ ਕਢੈ ਵੇਗਾਰਿ ॥ ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਧਰਤੀ ਦਬੀ ਭਾਰਿ ॥  
 ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਇੰਦੁ ਫਿਰੈ ਸਿਰ ਭਾਰਿ ॥ ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਰਾਜਾ ਧਰਮੁ ਦੁਆਰੁ ॥  
 ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਸੂਰਜੁ ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਚੰਦੁ ॥ ਕੋਹ ਕਰੋੜੀ ਚਲਤ ਨ ਅੰਤੁ ॥  
 ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਸਿਧ ਬੁਧ ਸੁਰ ਨਾਥ ॥ ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਆਡਾਣੇ ਆਕਾਸ ॥  
 ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਜੋਧ ਮਹਾਬਲ ਸੂਰ ॥ ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਆਵਹਿ ਜਾਵਹਿ ਪੂਰ ॥  
 ਸਗਲਿਆ ਭਉ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਸਿਰਿ ਲੇਖੁ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰੁ ਸਚੁ ਏਕੁ ॥

## MACHHIWARA

A REVIEW BY HARDEV SINGH\*

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*Meditations of Guru Gobind Singh*

*Authors : Danielle Gill & Harjit Singh Gill*

*Publisher : Harman Publishing House, New Delhi (2004)*

*Pages : 253; Price : Rs 800/-*

For those who are not familiar with the Sikh History, the title of the book may look strange, if not absurd. However, for every Sikh, young and old, 'Machhiwara' is a household word which puts him/her in direct communion with the Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh. So authors are justified in choosing this title for their masterpiece. There is no introduction or preface to the book, and there is hardly any need for this ritual. Both the authors are well established in the field of modern linguistics: Madam Danielle Gill, who has rendered *Jaap Sahib* into French has a doctorate from the University of Paris and Harjeet Singh Gill is a scholar of international repute in the field of linguistics. He was instrumental in setting up a School of Anthropological Linguistics in Punjabi University, Patiala and is currently Emeritus Professor of Semiotics in JNU, New Delhi.

Dr Harjeet Gill has more than a dozen books to his credit and his masterpiece on 'Baba Nanak' is a unique contribution to Sikh literature. He is a master craftsman in translating the Guru's word. One sociologist friend of mine remarked, "Harjeet Gill has put himself in the garb of Mardana, while writing on Baba Nanak."

Guru Gobind Singh left Anandpur, fought a pitched battle at Chamkaur and reached Machhiwara on the bidding of his 'Five Beloved' Khalsa, when there was no hope of survival against heavy odds. The book is written in free verse and its opening stanza focuses on the

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concept of saint-soldier introduced by the Guru to usher in a revolution in Indian society:

“In the wilderness of Machhiwara  
 The saint of Patna, the soldier of Anandpur,  
 The son of Tegh Bahadur, was meditating  
 On the destiny of men and martyrs.  
 He reflected upon the revolutions  
 Which were destined to fail  
 Which had no beginning, no end.

The author uses a forceful narrative to describe the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur for the sake of Hindu Dharma, for freedom and dignity of Indian people. The young Guru Gobind had no options. The revolution started by Guru Nanak for social and cultural transformation of Indian society, was brought to a climax by Guru Gobind Singh by creating the Khalsa. The author stresses the use of ‘sword of truth’ as a necessary construct (pages 9-10):

When the tyrant was too arrogant,  
 To listen to the wisdom of the sages,  
 When love and generosity were brushed aside,  
 When the tyrant believed only in his tyranny,  
 It was the time to raise the sword of truth,  
 The sword of absolute purity and sublimity,  
 It was the time to administer the baptism of the sword.

The author takes a detour at page 11 and narrates the events related to Sikh Gurus, viz., travels of Guru Nanak, establishment of Harimandir by Guru Ram Das, preparation of the *Adi Granth* by saint-scholar Guru Arjun, creation of Akal Takhat by Guru Hargobind and the concept of *miri* and *piri*. Regarding compilation of *Adi Granth*, the author elucidates its role in the following stanza:

The *Adi Granth*, continued to be the main guide,  
 In spiritual and social conduct,  
 The civil society was based on the principles of  
 Truth and justice,  
 On the hymns of love and generosity,  
 The brotherhood of humanity.

The author has correlated the creation of Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh with the ideals of Guru Nanak conceptualized in the *Adi Granth*.

As Puran Singh writes somewhere, "The sword of Guru Nanak was unsheathed by Guru Gobind Singh". The author also conveys a similar message (page 49):

The baptism of the sword was also the baptism of love.  
 Guru Nanak had said, if you are ever engaged in love,  
 If you yearn for the union of hearts,  
 Come to my path, my abode, with your head on your hand,  
 If you ever take a step in this direction,  
 You must sacrifice every fibre of your being.

And again on page 56, the author brings into focus the 'baptism of the sword' by Guru Gobind Singh:

The baptism of the sword, by the sword,  
 Was a new beginning,  
 A new effort to infuse the spirit  
 Of dignity, of honour, of sacrifice,  
 What was the sense of living like fossils,  
 Like the living dead.

Dr Gill has not created any distrust or distortion in his narrative when he describes the events at Anandpur for creation of 'Five Beloveds' (*panj pyaré* in common parlance). The martyrdom of young sons of Guru Gobind Singh is described in most poignant terms. The revolution created by the 'baptism of the sword', writing of *Zafarnamah* to Aurangzeb as epistle of victory, and the mission of the Khalsa, are vividly narrated by the author. Guru Gobind Singh was a saint-soldier and a scholar-poet well versed in Persian and Sanskrit. All the scholarly works and poetic fancies of the Guru find a mention in the *Machhivara*.

The second part of the book is devoted to *Jaap Sahib*, its English translation by Harjeet Gill followed by its rendering into French by Danielle Gill, his wife. Both the translations are in simple language and correspond to the original text in a perfect manner. Perhaps, it is the first rendering of *Jaap* into a foreign language other than English. Since I have working knowledge in both French and English, I enjoyed every stanza of *Jaap* in *Machhivara*.

The review process will not be complete, if some discrepancies are not pointed out in the text. On page 16, the author gives free verse translation of Guru Nanak's composition in *Raga Maru Solhe'* describing Guru's vision on cosmology, under the title of *Sri Rag* which

is not correct. On page 75, the author mentions that Guru Gobind Singh addressed his *Zafarnamah* to Aurangzeb from Machhiwara. In fact, it was written and addressed from Dina Kangar at a later stage. On page 93, *panth parchar karke* should be read as *Karbe*. The word ‘ascender’ (pp 46 and 108) should be replaced by ‘asunder’.

On the whole, *Machhiwara* sums up beautifully the meditations of Guru Gobind Singh on the epistemological conceptualizations of Harimandir, *Adi Granth*, Akal Takhat and the ‘Baptism of the Sword’ in the historical progression, as claimed by the author on the blurb of the book. The book *Machhiwara* will prove to be an anchor for Sikh youth of diaspora who want to explore heritage of Sikh culture in search of their roots. I congratulate the authors for transcreating the spatial and temporal entity of *Machhiwara* wilderness into a transcendental reality in the form of meditations of Guru Gobind Singh.

□

*Whatever the Lord does, that he deems good  
such is the devotional service that he perform.  
To deem friends and enemies all as the same,  
is an index of the way to meet God.  
The Omnipresent Lord is filling all the places,  
so I go not anywhere else.  
The Lord is in every heart and within all the places.  
I am immersed in His love and dyed with His love.  
When the World-Cherisher becomes kind and compassionate,  
then, the man arrives at the abode of the Fearless One.*  
– Guru Granth Sahib, p 496

ਜੋ ਕਿਛੁ ਕੀਓ ਸੋਈ ਭਲ ਮਾਨੈ ਐਸੀ ਭਗਤਿ ਕਮਾਨੀ ॥  
ਮਿਤ੍ਰ ਸਤੁ ਸਭ ਏਕ ਸਮਾਨੇ ਜੋਗ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਨੀਸਾਨੀ ॥  
ਪੂਰਨ ਪੂਰਿ ਰਹਿਓ ਸੁਖ ਥਾਈ ਆਨ ਨ ਕਤਹੂੰ ਜਾਤਾ ॥  
ਘਟ ਘਟ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਸਰਬ ਨਿਰੰਤਰਿ ਰੰਗਿ ਰਵਿਓ ਰੰਗਿ ਰਾਤਾ ॥  
ਭਏ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾਲ ਦਇਆਲ ਗੁਪਾਲਾ ਤਾ ਨਿਰਭੈ ਕੈ ਘਰਿ ਆਇਆ ॥

## KATHA KAHANI

A REVIEW BY JASWANT SINGH\*

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*Author : Dr Man Singh Nirankari, MBBS, FRCS (Edin) DO (London)*

*Printer : Azad Hind Store (2004)*

*Pages 314; Price : 250/-*

Dr Man Singh Nirankari is a world famous eye surgeon whose latest techniques especially in cataract surgery are path-breaking advances in restoring vision to those thousands threatened with blindness. In religious and spiritual fields also he has been restoring vision to wayfarers and stragglers seeking light. Having graduated in Medicine in 1937 from King Edward Medical College, Lahore, he passed his FRCS from Edinburgh and DO from London. Along with his professional advancement, he has carried on the religious torch of Nirankaris by publishing books, delivering speeches, organizing seminars and living a life of piety and truthfulness. The present book *Katha Kahani* is a true life story – his autobiography which is written with humility, humanism, welling up emotions. It comprises 27 chapters, I will confine myself to seven chapters as a window to his refreshing life story; the remaining chapters are equally interesting.

### **LIFE – A JOURNEY**

He has called this venture a *Safarnamah* after the famous Guru Gobind Singh's letter *Zafarnamah*. "When hair are black, mind is pearl white; when hair turn white, mind turns black," author writes. Mentioning about his family, he starts his lineage from Baba Sahib Dyal who was cotemporary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and from the family of Bhai Bhagwan Singh, a treasurer of Guru Gobind Singh. His father was Bhai Hara Singh and mother Maya Wanti. He was born

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on 8<sup>th</sup> December, 1911 in village Meki Dhok, Distt Cambelpur (Pakistan) and is fifth successor of Baba Dayal. He married Phul Ji, daughter of Sardar Sant Singh Lyallpuri, an Indian Ambassador to Ethiopia. He quotes a painful incident when on his elder brother Gurbakhsh Singh's demise, his sister-in-law (Bhabi) applied *tilak* to her son Gurdarshan Singh much against the decision of Dr Nirankari.

#### **ADMISSION TO MEDICAL COLLEGE**

Gives details of the admission to King Edward Medical College, Lahore with reservation of seats on religious denomination, his seat in dormitory of Broom hostel, his stylish new pair of shoes for a huge amount of eleven rupees, their establishing a Gurdwara in the College, his friendship with Dr Karam Singh Grewal (who was expert in playing *dholak* and later HOD, Orthopaedics), his coming in contact with Gurbakhsh Singh Preetlari. He is very generous with details.

#### **ENGAGEMENT AND MARRIAGE**

These are very thrilling moments in the life. He cherishes his engagement to Phul, a very pretty daughter of Sardar Sant Singh of Lyallpur, an advocate and famous MLA of Central Assembly. Dr Nirankari traveled with Sardar Sahib to Baramulla in his car, he liked the young handsome doctor, decided to marry his daughter to him. He describes 'the marriages are made in heaven'. He quotes a catchy poem eulogizing his intense liking for Phul Ji; reading it is believing. They got married on 17<sup>th</sup> November, 1942, at Lyallpur as per Sikh Maryada, Anand Karaj and are living happily thereafter. They have a son, Dr Varinder Singh settled in USA as a Professor in Ophthalmology in Maryland, besides two daughters, Aruna and Neelam.

#### **1947-1948 EVENTS – PARTITION DAYS**

He starts with the birth of his son, Varinder Singh on 5<sup>th</sup> Jan, 1947 in a maternity hospital, Lahore. He describes his transfer from Chakwal to Medical College, Amritsar. He mentions about the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi by Nathu Ram Godse. A description of Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel, Sardar Baldev Singh, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, Lord and Lady Mountbatten along with ambassadors from other countries sitting around Gandhi's funeral pyre is given. On his suggestion to the Chief Minister, Medical Colleges at Patiala

and Rohtak came into existence to cater for patients in the years to come. What a farsight! He also describes the establishment of Pingalwara at Amritsar.

### **1965 INDO-PAK WAR**

I was a young surgeon at Sialkot border during this war and can relish the description well. Dr Nirankari as Medical Superintendent of Medical College Hospitals with his friend Dr Karam Singh Grewal, a band of dedicated doctors, nurses and para medicals on 8-hourly duty round the clock did a really remarkable service to the wounded soldiers. They obtained full cooperation from Dr Hari Singh, Civil Surgeon, Amritsar, who organized Blood Donation Camps, ration services to the army in forward area by rural Punjabis. This was highly commended by Lal Bahadur Shastri, the Prime Minister of India. A heart-rending description of Darshan Singh Pheruman's fast unto death has been given. Dr Man Singh fulfilled his promise to the martyr by not force-feeding him when he became unconscious in the last stages of his fast.

### **WHAT DO MY FRIENDS SAY ABOUT ME?**

Dr Kulwant Singh Khokhar writes, "Dr Nirankari operates on the patient's eyes with rare ambidexterity, right eye with right hand and left with the left hand!"

Dr Daljit Singh has alluded to his human qualities, his thirst to teach new operative techniques and his extreme desire to promote his younger colleagues.

### **OF TRAVELS TO WESTERN COUNTRIES**

I will only mention in passing about his visit to Vatican City Church and audience given to him by Pope Paul. Dr Man Singh has a keen eye for dates and details, his description of Vatican City and its church takes readers to Vatican. I am skipping the visit to America including Maryland, where his son Dr Varinder Singh resides.

### **THE END**

It is a very spectacular finish with a poem charged with emotions and aspirations fulfilled.

Dr Man Singh Nirankari has penned down his memoirs – nay autobiography with a rare penchant for dates, details, descriptions,

dialogues and dexterity. His devotion to Sikhism wells up throughout his rich life as teacher, as eye surgeon, as hospital superintendent, as Principal, Medical College, as a friend of astute politicians, and as a theologian; it is worth emulating. Even for me the details are eye-opener, though I have been his student in medical college and his house surgeon in eye hospital.

Going through this autobiography *Katha Kahani*, reader is bound to become his ardent admirer. The book is well printed, well presented, worth owning and going through.

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*They, who are on intimate terms with the Lord,  
they remain satiated with the Name's perfect food.  
God's saints run short of nothing.  
They have plenty to eat, spend, enjoy and give.  
He whose Master is the Unfathomable Lord of the world,  
how long can any one stand up to him.  
Whom serve the eighteen miraculous powers.  
For a moment's glance cling thou to His Feet.  
He, unto whom Thou showest Thy mercy, O my Lord,  
Says Nanak, he feels not deficiency of anything.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 390

ਠਾਕੁਰ ਸਿਉ ਜਾ ਕੀ ਬਨਿ ਆਈ ॥ ਭੋਜਨ ਪੂਰਨ ਰਹੇ ਅਘਾਈ ॥  
ਕਛੂ ਨ ਥੋਰਾ ਹਰਿ ਭਗਤਨ ਕਉ ॥ ਖਾਤ ਖਰਚਤ ਬਿਲਛੁਤ ਦੇਵਨ ਕਉ ॥  
ਜਾ ਕਾ ਧਨੀ ਅਗਮ ਗੁਸਾਈ ॥ ਮਾਨੁਖ ਕੀ ਕਹੁ ਕੇਤ ਚਲਾਈ ॥  
ਜਾ ਕੀ ਸੇਵਾ ਦਸ ਅਸਟ ਸਿਧਾਈ ॥ ਪਲਕ ਦਿਸਟਿ ਤਾ ਕੀ ਲਾਗਹੁ ਪਾਈ ॥  
ਜਾ ਕਉ ਦਇਆ ਕਰਹੁ ਮੇਰੇ ਸੁਆਮੀ ॥ ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਹੀ ਤਿਨ ਕਾਮੀ ॥

## IN THE WITCHES' CAULDRON

A REVIEW BY HARDEV SINGH

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*Author : Gajinder Singh*

*Publisher : Mrs Manbir G Singh, Mohali (2004)*

*Pages 180; Price : Rs 220/- (Paper Back), Rs 285/- (Deluxe)*

Gajinder Singh, the author of the book under review, has entered the realm of Sikh religious writings with the publication of his book *Lest We the Sikh Go Astray*, which was reviewed in *Abstracts Of Sikh Studies* (July-September, 2004). As claimed by the author, most of the essays listed in the contents have been published in the journals: *The Sikh Review* and the *Abstracts Of Sikh Studies*. The title of the book is picked up from the Shakespeare's celebrated play, *Macbeth*, and forms the last chapter of the book.

Reading across various essays listed in the book, one can form an opinion about the author and his approach to Sikh religion. Gajinder Singh served as a professional in a company and he adopts a rationalist approach to explain Gurbani. He rejects superstitions and criticizes ritualistic traditions, which have cropped up in Sikh religion. He quotes Gurbani *shabads* to hammer his point of view. He is also critical about the role of preachers, *sant babas* and so-called managers of Sikh religion, who are preaching Sikhism and Guru Nanak's revolutionary philosophy of religion in terms of outdated Hindu tradition and Brahminical approach, which was rejected by Guru Nanak.

In his first essay, *Fabricating Myths*, the author states: "Sikhs have no myths as the Guru denounced the sanctity of ancient texts. But the Sikhs went on to imitate other faiths by adopting or inventing myths to be at par with them! So, many *sant deras* and illiterate *bhais*

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love to infuse their sermons with tales from *puranas* and mythology.” And again in the same chapter (page 15), the author brings out Guru Nanak’s mission: “Guru Nanak’s struggle was not only against the fear-based Hindu rites and rituals, or against the highly formalistic creeds of Islam, Jainism, Naths and Yogis, etc., it was a deeper search for truth which was beyond the limits of the established faiths.”

Author seems to have been impressed by Greek philosophy. His hypothesis 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. Concept of *pancha* is certainly of Indian origin. My forays into the history of science convinced me that Greeks believed in the four-element theory and Indians promoted the five-element theory (*panchtat*) of the universe.

In *Conversing with God*, the author seems to be at his best in interpreting the message of Sikh Gurus (p 34 and p 39): “God is, thus, in Guru Nanak’s vision not nature alone, nor the force of energy manifest in *Maya*, the universe, but a definite entity, the creator who sits, contemplates and enjoys His handiwork”. “Each hymn in Guru Granth Sahib is a direct dialogue of common man with God. Sikhism does not hold a mediator as mandatory. It is straight linkage of man with God, as and when the Creator bestows Grace. Then, the *Guru-sabad* transforms into a living conversation, thus resolving the divine mystery.” At the end of the chapter (p 41), the author compares the different stages in the path of liberation advocated by all major religions of the world.

*Gurmat Culture* is a wonderful essay, which delineates the unique features of the Sikh value system and culture, distinct from the Hindu and Muslim religions. The author stresses the uniqueness of Sikh philosophy, Sikh music, architecture, and Sikh school of painting and above all, Sikh attitude towards life. The author gives a clarion call to the Sikh society to preserve and propagate the distinct *Gurmat* culture. He is rightly worried that Sikhs are not rallying to face the cultural deluge.

Most of the essays that follow illustrate the scholarship of the learned author in comparative religion, psychology, philosophy and current affairs. The central theme is the message of Guru Granth (p 100): “Guru Granth Sahib consists of contemplation of God’s name and contains sermons on truthful living. It is essential to form the habit of clean thinking and

truthfulness as the precondition for expectation of godliness.”

*Play of Emotions* is another wonderful essay which defines *Maya* in Sikh value system as distinct from the Hindu (*Vedantic*) concept of *Maya* (p 138): “The revolutionary solution posed by Guru Nanak is for the devotee to remain in the thick of the worldly engagements, of a happy family, peaceful neighborhood, honest profession, compassion and enlarging the sphere of his concern, to include one and all. *Maya* is dreadful to those who lack determination and conviction about the transitory nature of this creation of God.”

*Efficacy of Prayer* brings out the distinction in different forms of prayer. “In Hindu system, congregational prayer does not exist. In temples, each prays for his own requirements. Hinduism in any format is individualistic in nature and its practices did not impress Guru Nanak.” The Sikh prayer is congregational, seeks *sarbat da bhala* and a desire to remain in touch with the Primal Person (God). In the last essay, *In the Witches, Cauldron*, the author is highly critical of the Sikhs going astray from the *Gurmat* culture (p 174): “The Sikhs are increasingly observing *sharaad*-like rituals by holding *Akhand Paths* and lavish lunches to display their level of wealth and well-being. *Akhand Paths* of the Sikhs held for whatever purpose have replaced the earlier Vedic *mantras* and have no value or benefit when commercially held as rituals or with specific mundane aims.”

In the review process, I shall fail in my duty to evaluate the book critically, if I do not point out some glaring mistakes. On page 49, the author quotes a warning to Khalsa attributed to Guru Gobind Singh: *Jab tak khalsa rahay nayara*, which should read as *Jab lag Khalsa rahay nayara*. In the essay, *Wheels Within*, the concept of *Liv* and *Dhat* is interpreted correctly in the light of *Gurbani*, quoting appropriate *sabd*s. However, the figures (page 55) given to illustrate the concepts give the wrong impression, as *liv* and *dhat* are reciprocal in nature and not in direct proportion as shown by the author.

Another minor flaw is the rendering of *Gurbani* transliteration without using intonation marks. It would have facilitated the reading of *Gurbani* text correctly had the author adopted the internationally approved style of transliteration. On the whole, the book is a useful addition to the existing Sikh literature in the scientific age with an appeal to the younger Sikh generation.

## NEWS & VIEWS

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### – ANNUAL SEMINAR OF THE IOSS – MARTYRDOM IN SIKHISM WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE SAHIBZADAS

The annual seminar of the Institute of Sikh Studies (IOSS) was held on *Katak* 30 & *Maghar* 01, 536 NS (November 13-14, 2004) on the above noted theme. The seminar had an impressive start with solemn recitation of *sabad kirtan* by the boys of Kendri Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Vidya Kendar, Chandigarh.

Sardar Gurdev Singh, IAS (retd), President of the Institute welcomed the guests, distinguished speakers and the audience. He elaborated on the activities of the Institute and expressed his gratitude for the impressive response to the call of the IOSS.

The inaugural session was chaired by Singh Sahib Bhai Tirlochan Singh, Jathedar, Takht Sri Kesgarh Sahib who highlighted the philosophical context of the tradition of martyrdom in Sikhism. He said that selfless dedication to righteousness is the prime mover, the qualities of stoic indifference to the consequences is the theme of the Sikh tradition of martyrdom.

The Keynote Address was delivered by well-known historian, Dr Kirpal Singh and an active member of the IOSS. He said that the *shabeed* is one, who, by the supreme sacrifice for his faith and cause, bears witness to its truth. He further added that a 'martyr' is generally defined as one who chooses to suffer death, rather than renounce his or her faith.

Sardar Bhagwant Singh Dalawari, primarily aimed at shaking the

Sikh community from the materialistic pursuit of worldly pleasure by imbibing the ethos of martyrdom in its true spirit.

Sardar H S Noor, whose book on Sikh History, *Connecting the Dots in Sikh History*, was released, also shared his views on the theme. He dwelt upon the martyrdom of Baba Deep Singh in 1757. Dr Kharak Singh highlighted the subject matter of the book.

The other papers were presented by Dr Hakam Singh, Brig Hardit Singh, Sardar Gajinder Singh, Dr Dharam Singh, Dr Gurnam Kaur and Dr G S Nayyar.

The second session of the seminar was chaired by Dr Man Singh Nirankari.

The concluding session on the second day was chaired by Dr Jodh Singh of Punjabi University, Patiala. He said that Sikh heritage had been completely destroyed by those, who had been entrusted the responsibility to protect, and even the wall, in which younger *sahibzadas* were bricked alive, is nowhere to be seen.

At the concluding session of the seminar, the Institute released the proposed draft of the constitution of the International Sikh Confederation (ISC), seeking comments, suggestions and views on it from all concerned.

At the end, Bhai Ashok Singh, Vice-President of the IOSS appealed to the *Sikh Jagat* for financial help of the Institute for its research projects and other religious activities. He emphasized the need of Apex Body of the Sikhs in view of the limitations of the SGPC. He made it clear that new Apex Body would not be and should not be a competitive organization of the SGPC or any other Sikh institution.

IOSS has published the proceedings of the Seminar in the form of a book, an abstract of which appears elsewhere in this issue.

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#### SEMINARS ON GURU GRANTH SAHIB

The Sikh Educational Society organized a two-day International seminar on the 400th Parkash Utsav of Guru Granth Sahib on November 6-7, 2004 at Sri Guru Gobind Singh College, Chandigarh. Dr S P Singh, Vice-Chancellor, Guru Nanak Dev University presided over the seminar on November 6. Dr J S Grewal, ex- Vice-Chancellor,

Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar presented the Keynote Address. Sardar Gurdev Singh, President, IOSS also addressed the audience and presented his paper. On the second day, Dr P N Pathak, Vice-Chancellor, Punjab University presided over the seminar and Dr A R Kidwai, Governor, Haryana was the chief guest. Dr Kharak Singh, Editor, *Abstracts Of Sikh Studies* presented the Keynote Address.

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The Sikh National College, Banga (Distt Nawanshahr) organized a prestigious seminar on 400th Parkash Utsav of Guru Granth Sahib on December 6, 2004. Dr S P Singh, Vice-Chancellor, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar presided over this seminar. Sardar Charanjit Singh Atwal, Deputy Speaker, Lok Sabha was the chief guest, Sardar Gurdev Singh, Sardar Bharpur Singh, Secretary, SES and half a dozen other eminent scholars addressed the seminar

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The Department of Guru Nanak Studies, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar organized an International Seminar on “Guru Granth Sahib: Challenges and Response in the New Millennium” on December 9-11, 2004 at Amritsar. Prominent Scholars from across the globe attended this prestigious event. Dr Bhai Harbans Lal presided over the opening session. Prof S A Ali, Vice-Chancellor, Hamdard University, New Delhi delivered the Keynote Address on the opening day. Sardar Gurdev Singh, President, IOSS, chaired the first session after the opening session and Bhai Ashok Singh, Vice-President, IOSS presided over another session of the seminar on December 10, 2004. Another distinguished member of the IOSS, Dr Hardev Singh Virk, also presented his learned paper at the seminar on December 10, 2004.

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#### **SEMINAR ON BHAI KAHN SINGH NABHA**

The Sikh Educational Society organized an International seminar at Chandigarh on “Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha” on November 23, 2004. It was presided over by Sardar S S Boparai, Vice-Chancellor, Punjabi University, Patiala. Sardar S S Barnala, Governor, Tamilnadu, was the chief guest. Sardar Gurdev Singh also addressed the audience.

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### AUDIO CASSETTE 'MEHAL SIKHI DA' RELEASED

Amarjeet Singh, a city-based film producer, under the banner of his Company 'Creative Vision Films' has produced an audio cassette entitled *Mehal Sikhi Da* commemorating the tercentenary of the martyrdom of four *Sahibzadas* of Guru Gobind Singh *ji*. The audio cassette containing eight devotional songs, dedicated to the Sahibzadas, was released in a function organized and sponsored by the Institute of Sikh Studies.

The function was presided over by S Gurdev Singh, IAS (retd). Dr Kirpal Singh, Historian was the chief guest. Appreciating the efforts of Sardar Amarjeet Singh, the chief guest in his speech said that, in the recent times need of usage of electronic media while depicting the Sikh history has increased. He also spoke on the importance of the martyrdom of *Sahibzadas* in the world history.

During the function, Sardar Amarjeet Singh presented an audio demonstration by playing the cassette and explaining its sequence and other features. He said soon the video of this Cassette would also be on Air. A large number of visitors attended the function. Eminent scholars, media persons, and youngsters were among the audience.

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### A BUS TO NANKANA SAHIB

Mr M S Gill in his article for the press has suggested that flow of the visitors to pay homage to their holy places in India and Pakistan should be encouraged, rather than restricted by the two Governments. He wrote :

"It is good to see a sudden loosening of restrictions. Last week, some hundreds of Pakistani musicians and artists were in Jalandhar to celebrate a common heritage. An equal number were in Amritsar holding a seminar in Guru Nanak Dev University.

"In India, for the last many years, the national government has been spending about Rs 200 crores annually to send 80,000 odd Muslim brothers to Mecca, free, in comfort, by air. But I find it strange, and not understandable, that while dancers, poets, actors, judges, athletes, *et al* can cross borders easily now, those who wish to go to their Mecca in Nankana Sahib have to still, six decades after Partition, undergo

the same harassment and the same permissions for small numbers. Punjab papers showed last week people fighting to get into the *jathas* of 3,000 worshippers going to Pakistan for Guru Nanak's *janamdin*. Others protested publicly at the refusal of 750 visas by Pakistan. I also read of the Pakistan consulates in UK being difficult about giving visas to the visitors to Nankana Sahib.

“Pakistan will earn from this religious tourism, as we do when the Muslim come to Ajmer Sharif. Both governments should assist and not hinder visitors to their countries. (*Courtesy : Asian Age, New Delhi; November 27, 2004*)

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– NASA COMPETITION –

**RARE DISTINCTION WON BY THE STUDENTS OF THE
BUDHA DAL PUBLIC SCHOOL, PATIALA**

In the age group of 14-19, 18 students of the Budha Dal Public School and Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology in Patiala, have earned the distinction of becoming the first Indian team ever to qualify for the space settlement design competition at NASA.

One of the youngest member of the team, 14-year-old Mandeep Singh, said, “For the qualifying round of the competition, the team was required to design a space settlement in the earth’s orbit, which had to be provided with all basic life-supporting features like gravity, atmosphere, trees and farms.” The 18-member team included 11 students who are below 18 years with one of them being 14, two teacher-advisers and five associates.

“We just happened to surf the Net and stumbled across this contest. We decided to participate and sought help of our teacher, Prof Manee Kumar. Of the 26 teams that applied for this contest organised by American Institute of Aeronautical and Astronautics Designing, there were only eight teams that were finally shortlisted. And ours was the only team from a foreign country, all other seven teams being from the US”, recalls Aaina.

Before they left for USA, the US Ambassador to India, David C Mulford and his wife entertained the members of the team of Patiala students that won the space settlement design contest organised by NASA in New Delhi.

Aaina, who was chosen creative director of the project, gave the details of the project : “Assuming that in 2030, global warming will result in melting of ice and moon will become accessible to tourists, we envisaged a dome-shaped city on the moon with underground tunnels, residential complexes, agricultural areas and even a commercial complex.

Presenting a copy of the qualifying project to Mr Mulford, the team from Patiala had a wide-ranging interaction with him, covering a host of global issues. Commending the achievement of Team Force, the American envoy said the US viewed India as a “huge resource base of people working in the field of science and technology.”

According to Dr Maneek Kumar, Assistant Professor at Thapar Institute, the NASA authorities were highly impressed with their design for houses and trains for commuters. “There were some queries which the students answered quiet well.”

The team designed a space settlement project for 16,500 people in space on moon which is projected to be built in 2029. He said the students were engaged in a 43-hour competition and that they would also be participating in a final round of the project next year. “We hope to win again.”

On their return, Patiala citizens saluted its NASA Winners, at various felicitation ceremonies, which saw the children astride, an open jeep with scores of city children standing on the road at various points to meet and congratulate them for emerging victorious in a gruelling space design competition organised in Florida from July 16 to 19. (*Courtesy : Principal, Budha Dal Public School, Patiala*)

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#### **NEWFOUNDLAND SIKHS DEDICATE FIRST GURDWARA ON GURU GRANTH CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION**

Newfoundland Sikh Society held a two-day conference on Sri Guru Granth Sahib to celebrate the Quadricentennial of its compilation. On October 9-10, 2004, Sikh families from all over Newfoundland were joined by their friends from England, Ontario, Quebec, Texas, New York and Nova Scotia. Hindus, Jains, Muslims, Buddhists and other religious communities thronged to the first gurdwara on their islands and participated with great enthusiasm. Their

leaders paid homage to Guru Granth Sahib.

Andy Welch, Mayor of the City, brought greetings from the city officials. He welcomed the religious activities of the Sikh community and offered any help that may be needed to promote Sikh projects in the area. Law Enforcement officials and several academics from the local educational institutions welcomed the Sikh Society in their state. Members and guests enjoyed the *langar* on both days.

The Newfoundland Sikh Society represents around 25 Sikh families settled in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. It was founded nearly 30 years ago to promote religious and cultural activities among the Sikh population. Its popularity among its neighbours may be judged by the fact that close to 400 strong community participated in the celebration of the Gurdwara opening. (Courtesy : e-mail from Harbans Lal <japji@comcast.net>)

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#### **POLAND HAS EASTERN EUROPE'S FIRST GURDWARA**

Warsaw, Oct 29 : Eastern Europe's first gurdwara here is abuzz with activity with daily prayers on all days and community meals called *langar* every Sunday, attracting large numbers of Sikh devotees.

It was only earlier this year that the Polish government gave the Indian community permission to open a gurdwara, and the Sikh temple has already taken off in a big way.

It was a challenge for the small Sikh community, which consists of only a dozen families, to take the initiative and persuade other Indians, particularly the majority Sindhi community, to contribute funds to start a proper gurdwara. J J Singh, President of the Indian Association, had to make a few trips to Amritsar to get proper material and religious teachers. The Amritsar-based Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandak Committee responded by loaning four preachers to the gurdwara for two years. Warsaw has more than 1,000 people of Indian origin, many of whom have come from Dubai for their textile and electronic businesses.

Indian Ambassador, Anil Wadhwa expressed his satisfaction over the gurdwara's smooth working. "It has become a place for

the Indian community to celebrate their common festivals, apart from Sikh religious festivals known as *Gurpurabs*," Wadhwa told IANS. (*Courtesy: Indonesian News Service, Thailand*)

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#### **THAILAND SIKHS CELEBRATE 400TH PARKAASH DHARRA**

The Thailand Sikhs celebrated the 400th *Parkash Divas* of Guru Granth Sahib at national level, and in style with a gigantic *nagar kirtan* through the streets of Bangkok. This was attended by thousands of Sikhs from around Bangkok, and throughout Thailand. Co-incidentally, the 72nd birthday of the Thai Queen, Her Majesty Queen Srikat was also celebrated on the same day.

Sikhs in their thousands along with their Nishan Sahibs carried the Thai national flags as well through the busy streets of Bangkok. Sikhs in Thailand have always enjoyed very cordial relations with both the royal family, the Thai government, and the Thai society at large.

Late Seth Tarlok Singh was highly decorated by the Thai king, and, at his demise in New Delhi, the royal Thai family was represented by the Thai crown prince. Many other Sikhs have also been decorated by the Thai king and government.

Thai Sikh youth in Thailand serve in the national service with their turbans intact, from the times Sikhs first arrived in Thailand. There are about twenty seven gurdwaras, controlled by the Thailand Sri Guru Singh Sabhas, that dot the country. In addition to this, the Sri Guru Singh Sabha runs the Guru Nanak Hospital of about 150 beds close to the magnificent Gurdwara Singh Sabha, Bangkok. There is also an International Sikh School providing primary and secondary education, considered to be one of the top schools in the country, run by Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Thailand.

It is estimated there are about 1,00,000 Indians in Thailand of whom about 45,000 are Sikhs. (*Courtesy : e-mail from Sardar Ishwinder Singh <isc@glide.net.in>*)

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#### **GURDWARA BAGS UNESCO AWARD**

For the people of Lakhpat, Kutch, there is reason to celebrate.

The 400-year-old Sri Guru Nanak Durbar Gurdwara has bagged the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Conservation Award for the year 2004.

Nestled within the Lakhpat fort, the gurdwara is built at a place which, it is believed, Guru Nanak visited on his way to and from Mecca. Subsequently, the place served as a seat of the Udasi sect. The award comes as a gift for local residents, none a Sikh, who worked for the restoration.

The award comprises a scroll and a trophy that goes to Delhi-based Cultural Resources Conservation Initiative (CRCI) to restore the historic shrine, according to Gurmeet Rai, CRCI consultant. Conservation experts took up the restoration one-and-a-half years ago.

The Archaeological Survey of India, the State Department of Archaeology, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Volunteers supported the work which took about seven months to complete. CRCI then made the locals aware about the need to conserve the shrine, and trained them in repair works using traditional material and techniques. (*Courtesy : The Indian Express, September 10, 2004*)

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#### **DR H S VIRK ELECTED THE PRESIDENT OF IAPT**

Professor Hardev Singh Virk, member IOSS has been elected President of Indian Association of Physics Teachers (IAPT) for the term 2004-07, unanimously.

He has been offered visiting Professorship in Indian Institute of Science and Religion (IISR), Pune to work on Science - Sikh Religion dialogue, a topic on which he has published papers and a book.

He will act as a Resource Person on National committee set up by President of India to celebrate 2005 as World Year of Physics in India.

He has been invited to participate in an International project on global Perspectives in Science and Spirituality at University of Paris, France.

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## Letters to the Editor

### PASHAURA SINGH CALLS JAKOBSH'S BOOK A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO SIKH STUDIES

Dear Editor,

Pashaura Singh's review of Jakobsh's book appeared in the *Journal of Asian Studies*, May 2004. It must be noted that a chapter written by Jakobsh was also included in a book, which was edited by Dr Singh in 1994. It is interesting to note that even Dr Singh points to the following flaws in Dr Jakobsh's thesis which he ignored in 1994.

Dr Singh states that Doris' preoccupation with jargons does not let her understand Guru Granth Sahib's vocabulary, imagery and key themes. In other words, Dr Singh admits that this 'instant' scholar does not know the culture, language, and is making hurtful observations about our sacred scriptures.

According to Dr Singh, Doris uses partial hymns to draw wrong conclusions to fit them into a pre-existing paradigm of research. Dr Singh goes on to question the basis for the last chapter of her book as well as her use of 'Kaur' as nomenclature.

I have nothing but praise for Dr Singh's assertiveness in pointing out the half-baked, degrading anti-Sikh research, done by Jakobsh, while violating SSHRC 1991 norms.

It must be pointed out that Dr Singh did not point out Dr Jakobsh's treatment of Guru Nanak as a middle class *sant*, who believed that the ideal woman produces male kings and her misstatement that Guru Ram Das used profane language in Guru Granth Sahib.

Dr Singh, in spite of going through many of the above-mentioned denials, hides behind a notwithstanding clause. It is reproduced here for the benefit of your readers as well as for the record:

"Notwithstanding these criticisms, Jakobsh's book still stands out as a major contribution to Sikh studies and to the field of gender studies in general. It is written in an engaging style. It is likely to generate a lively debate within the Sikh community on the position of women in Sikhism. I strongly recommend it to both specialists and lay readers." Pashaura Singh, University of Michigan.

Regards,

SS Sodhi <ctihfx@eastlink.ca>

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SIKHS RESENT THE OUTRAGEOUS FEMINA REPORT

Femina printed in its issue dated December 1, 2004 a report attributed to one Kirat Kaur Chandok under the title *Fake Hair for Stupid Sardarnis*, who allegedly cut her hair and is looking for fake hair to conceal her shameful act and to deceive her parents. The report ends with the advice, 'Rebel young, really young, it will be written off as the whim of a child who doesn't know any better.' The report has caused widespread resentment among Sikhs and attracted strongly-worded protests, only one of which is being reproduced as a sample. The so-called Sardarni looking for fake hair is labelled as stupid. What about the Editors who publish such irresponsible reports? We hope the magazine will see reason sooner than later, and apologise for the outrage.

– Editor

Editor Femina,

How could you! How could a reputed magazine like *Femina* give space to such a heinous article which could hurt the feelings of such a pure and divine religion. Its really shocking.

Yes, I am talking about the article you printed in your December issue the Sikh women (*sardarnis*) and their hair. I am a young *sardarni* and a doctor by profession and I am quite proud about keeping my hair.

Sikhism as a religion has certain principles in which keeping hair is considered sacred as they are kept in the pure way as gifted by God. There is no such thing as being narrow- or broad-mindedness in this. Hair is an identity of a Sikh and if you don't keep it you have no right to call yourself a Sikh though there is no restriction on keeping your faith in the religion.

When you don't understand the religion which needs your heart and soul, you have no right to mislead the tender children and youngsters giving the advice to rebel.

Before writing anything else I would comment on what you elucidate about your thoughts regarding the religion :

You mean belief and faith have no part in today's society. That

means you consider Dr Manmohan Singh too to be narrow-minded that he stands in front of the whole world with his identity as a Sikh.

Also you mean the Sikh regiment fighting for Indians, safety at the front too are narrow-minded that despite the difficulties they maintain their identity. I am so sorry for them to give their lives for people like you, who have no respect for them.

Have you ever thought what impression would the college students carry. What if they start hurting young Sikh girls by taunting them. Who would be responsible for their trauma???

I know people have full democracy to think what they want, but atleast you should have been a bit sensible to select what is wrong and what is right.

You need to know and learn about the religion, and not to comment till then.

Your act has started a chain of rebellion against your magazine. You need to, in fact you have to apologize about this act in a proper way.

Dr Jaspreet Kaur

<jaspreet76in@yahoo.com>

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#### ELECTION OF THE IOSS

Sardar Gurdev Singh was unanimously elected President of the Institute of Sikh Studies for the year 2005 in the meeting of the general body held on December 28, 2004.

He nominated the following Executive Committee :

|                       |                 |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Bhai Ashok Singh      | Vice President  |
| Maj Gen Jaswant Singh | Secretary       |
| Bibi Baljit Kaur      | Joint Secretary |
| Sardar Sadhu Singh    | Treasurer       |
| Dr Gurcharan Singh    | Member          |
| Brig Hardit Singh     | Member          |

Dr Kharak Singh was nominated as the Editor of the *Abstracts of Sikh Studies*.