

ABSTRACTS OF SIKH STUDIES

(Vol VI, Issue 3)

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EDITORIAL

'VOTE 2004'

General elections to the Lok Sabha is a routine exercise undertaken every five years to elect new MPs and a new government at the Centre in India. That way, the vote 2004 was no different from earlier elections. But its result has a significance which must be grasped. The NDA government was a conglomeration of about two dozen parties with diverse and even conflicting ideologies. Bajpai had succeeded in keeping them together ostensibly on a common minimum programme. But the real force that bound them was the lust for power and lucre that go with it. So the constituents scrupulously avoided matters to precipitate.

The alliance was sure of completing its full term of five years in office. It was equally confident of winning the next term also, so much so that they even advanced the poll normally scheduled for September 2004.

The BJP leading the alliance started its campaign far ahead of any other party. Apart from the now familiar *rath yatra*, they raised new slogans of 'India Shining' and 'Feel Good' to create an atmosphere of victory and optimism favourable for the party. Hundreds of *crores* were spent from public funds to overwhelm the people in India as well as abroad. Narendra Modi was flaunted as a hero, and Gujarat model was projected to dazzle the unwary. Bajpai as an incomparable leader was the trump card. The other parties in the alliance had little choice and toed the BJP line, afraid that BJP alone might get majority in the Parliament. Congress was the only party that could offer some resistance. That too was a divided house, and could not decide until very late who would be their leader. Sonia Gandhi should have been the obvious choice, but her non-Indian origin was played against her

and blown out of proportion by the BJP, to make sure that she was written off.

This was the scenario when India went to polls on the 10th May, 2004. BJP had hoped to come out as the majority party alone. The other alliance partners also believed that BJP would be atleast the single-largest party in the Parliament, and hoped to join as partners in an NDA government. As far as Sikhs are concerned, thanks to S Parkash Singh Badal, the SAD had committed unconditional support to BJP for all times. He is credited with the view that BJP and Akalis are not partners in alliance, but that they are one, in spite of the fact that this friendship or union has not solved any of the long standing issues like Chandigarh, Punjabi-speaking areas left out of Punjab, release of Sikh prisoners held in jail for almost 20 years without trial, status of Punjabi language in Punjab and the neighbouring states, etc. Protests and remonstrations of other Sikh parties or groups against the policy of putting all the eggs in the BJP basket were of no avail.

Then look at the result ! The Indian voter vindicated the faith in its traditional wisdom, and belied all opinion polls and speculations of political pundits. The BJP was virtually routed and lost its status even as the single largest party, to the Congress in the Parliament, with only 139 seats in a house of 544. In the state assembly elections too, its supporter TDP was ousted in Andhra Pradesh. Even in Gujarat under its hero Narendra Modi, it suffered serious setback.

The electorate has rejected the BJP fascist agenda. It has castigated the party for the massacre of Muslims in Gujarat and suppression of minorities elsewhere. It has not approved of its saffronisation programme under Murli Manohar Joshi. And remember, majority of voters are Hindus. So the vote against BJP is from Hindu majority as well as non-Hindu minorities.

From the election results marked by BJP setback and Congress resurgence; several clear lessons emerge. Some of these are :

- 1) Indian voter judges a party/govt on its performance, not pious platitudes or vacuous propaganda.
- 2) India is a multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-ethnic society. Only a secular agenda can appeal to the general mass of voters. Communal politics, and mad acts like Operation Blue Star or demolition of Babri Masjid are bound to boomerang on the

perpetrators in the long run.

- 3) The days of a single party rule at the Centre are gone. Coalition culture has replaced it. This should be welcome, since despicable acts like army attack on Darbar Sahib and demolition of Babri Masjid are possible in a single party rule only, which often tends to fall in the hands of a dictator. While these two shameful events occurred during Congress rule, Congress alone is not in the dock. BJP leaders openly endorsed Indira Gandhi's action. In fact, Bajpai is on record having said that Operation Blue Star should have been done much earlier. In the case of Babri Masjid also, the actual demolition work was done by volunteers of the Sangh Parivar, while the Congress Government connived or looked the other way.
- 4) In a coalition, regional parties have a greater role to play. This should be welcomed, since in a single all India party rule, regional interests are the first casualty.
- 5) Minorities should forge a united front and support only such coalition partners, as are genuinely secular, in the interest of their own survival and security.
- 6) Congress was declared by Sikhs as Enemy no. 1 after the Operation Blue Star. And rightly so, since what Indira Gandhi, its President and Prime Minister did to Sikhs, is unforgivable. She suffered for it also. At the same time we should remember that not all Congress men were happy over what she had done. There were many in the party even at that time who expressed their disgust. Sardar Swaran Singh who had been negotiating a settlement between the Akalis and the Government, was one of them. Today most of the Congressmen are apologetic and regret the horrendous happenings. Even Sonia Gandhi, the current President of the Congress Party openly said about the Blue Star, that it should not have happened. It is a pity that she stopped at that. She should have tendered an unqualified apology, which would have enhanced her stature. Anyway, that is for her to decide. The point is that no party could be branded an enemy for all times to come. If it changes its stand, and makes an approach for reconciliation and making amends, it should not be spurned, because in politics there are no perennial friends or foes. By selecting Dr Manmohan Singh for the Prime Minister's office, the

Congress President has demonstrated that she is not against Sikhs as such. Her gesture should not be derided. Rather it should be appraised in proper perspective. This is a situation which should not be frittered away. Dr Manmohan Singh is a practising Sikh with sound administrative credentials, and with him at the helm, the country is in competent hands. So are the minorities. It has happened only because he was in the Congress. Had he been in any other party, his nomination to this position would be unthinkable. We should avail of this opportunity to solve our lingering problems. Staying in the BJP band wagon and opposing Dr Manmohan Singh will not lead us anywhere, except towards wilderness.

- 7) The most important lesson of the 2004 poll is that if the Akalis are united, they can win all seats in the Punjab. The example of Ropar Parliamentary constituency is very typical. The Akalis won with 3,47,361 votes in 2004. In 1999 the Akali votes were higher, 3,67,623. But still they lost, because they were divided. It is necessary, therefore, to keep the Akali flock together. This responsibility squarely rests on the leader of the major Akali Dal. So far, however, the policy has been to bank on outside support, ignoring tried hands faithful to the Panth.
- 8) It is necessary to have right alliance partners. Although the Akalis won in Punjab, in spite of the wave against BJP in other states, we are forced to sit with the opposition. We lost the war although we won the battle. Such a victory is of no avail. Somehow, we have been repeatedly selecting wrong partners, and consistently missing all opportunities that came our way to settle our problems. While masses have always been faithful to the Panth, leadership has failed them most of the times.
- 9) Time has come when Sikh intellectuals should shed their indifference and do some serious thinking about the future of our community, its survival and an honourable place for it nationally and internationally. The Institute of Sikh Studies is spearheading a campaign to set up an apex body of the Sikhs to make major decisions about the future role of Sikhs. The move deserves full support, and every Sikh, particularly the intellectuals, should lend their full weight to it.

MODERN DIFFICULTIES OF SIKHISM*

PRINCIPAL TEJA SINGH

CONCERNING PANTHIC ORGANISATION

The present is a time of revival; and, as during the time of their fall Sikhs had completely forgotten themselves, they have now to rediscover practically all their institutions. They are availing themselves of the tradition, imperfectly preserved in the army, or at the *takhts*, which are the traditional seats of religious authority at Amritsar, Anandpur, Patna, and Nanded (Deccan), or as recorded in the *Rahatnamas* and other historical literature; but the material available is very scanty and there is great scope for the use of imagination in reconstructing the past tradition. There being a great lack of education among the Sikhs, their imagination is not always used to the best advantage in the work of reconstruction, and there being no one central body to give unity and coherence to their religious decisions, there are appearing among certain impatient reformers some very strange and anomalous customs and institutions quite alien to the liberal spirit of the Khalsa. But the mass of the intelligent leaders are wisely checking themselves from any hasty reform of the doctrine, and are very busy in promoting mass education and temple reform, and in trying to secure a central representative body for all Sikhs. They have made great strides in education and their progress in this direction, if it were unchecked by the Educational Department, would be very rapid. As a result of strong agitation, carried on with unprecedented sacrifice, they have obtained control over most of the historical Gurdwaras, or temples, and have secured a law to help them to obtain control over

* *Essays in Sikhism*, Languages Department Punjab.

the remaining ones, whose possession is yet disputed. To exercise this control, they have been provided with a central assembly, freely, elected with the vote of every adult Sikh, man and woman. The right of vote accorded to women is likely to produce most far-reaching results, as this gives them a share in the deliberations of the highest association of the community in charge of the temples and the ritual. This association, however, has only a limited scope of work, and cannot guide and control all the activities of the Panth. And the Sikhs are in several minds as to whether they should have another association, wielding a higher and more comprehensive authority, or they should content themselves with the one already obtained for the control of Gurdwaras.

The question of having a supreme Panthic body is most important. At the death of the last Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, when the Sikhs got spiritual home rule and, wielding the power and authority of the Panth, became masters of their own destiny, they had to dispense with the personal leadership of one man. It was inevitable that, for the exercise of corporate authority, they should create for themselves a central body, but somehow it has not been possible for them up to this day to succeed in providing themselves with this most elementary necessity. In the beginning, when they were left to themselves, they loosely followed the Greek method of the direct participation of every individual in the counsels of the Panth, and for this purpose had yearly or half-yearly gatherings of the *Sarbat Khalsa* (the whole people) at the Akal Takht. When persecutions became rife, however, these meetings were impossible, and the authority came to rest solely in the Akal Takht. During the rule of the *Missals* the numbers of the *Sarbat Khalsa* became unwieldy and it was necessary to have some system of representation; but the general ignorance and the newly-acquired lust for power had corrupted the democratic genius of the people, and there appeared on the scene a man of supreme influence in the person of Ranjit Singh, whose ambition was to give the Sikhs an empire similar in power and dignity to that of the Moguls and whose imperialism did not encourage him to think along the lines of representative institutions. During his time no central association or parliament was possible. The people in the meanwhile had lost all hold on the first principles of Sikhism, what to say of its Institutions, and, when their rule was supplanted by the British, they were too degenerate and broken-hearted

to think of representative assemblies. With the coming of education and a knowledge of Western institutions, the Sikhs too began to form *divans*, or associations, to take in hand the work of education and social and religious reforms. Owing, however, to the instinctive self-assertion of the Sikhs and to the lack of a wholesale awakening among them, which could be possible only with mass education, no one association was able to take the central place among them. The Singh Sabha movement started in 1873 slowly caught the mind of the Sikhs and their joint suffering of the six years (1921-26), however, has welded them together as nothing else did before, and in the matter of religion they have learnt to obey one central body. The new law of temples has given them, for the first time in their history, an association representative of their whole community; but, as I have said before, it cannot take the place of the central body, which should wield the *whole* authority of the Panth.

Should they have a separate body for this purpose ? There is some difficulty in achieving this. The main point at issue is whether politics should or should not be included in the scope of its work. In order to make this difficulty of the Sikhs organisation clear it is necessary to throw some light on its relation with the State. Guru Gobind Singh at a time of peace had exhorted his Sikhs to recognise the house of Babar as supreme in worldly power, just as they recognised the house of Guru Nanak as supreme in religion. (*Vichitra Natak*, XIII. 9). Yet, owing to certain unfortunate developments in history, the constitution of the Panth does not contemplate the acceptance of superiority of any earthly power outside its pale. During the last 300 years, during which their institutions have grown and developed, the Sikhs have seldom had any chance to work in co-operation with any government other than their own. Either they have been in conflict with the ruling powers or they have been ruling themselves.¹ It is only since 1849 that they have had occasion to serve under a friendly government. But then they had no political status of their own, nor have they been fully self-conscious. It is only quite recently that they have witnessed the growth of their institutions to their full stature, and with it has come the old conflict. The Sikhs must boldly face the fact that their organisation, if revived strictly on its original lines, must clash with the government of the land, or, for that matter, with any

other organisation that is not Sikh. For each Sikh, having personal relations with the Panth as Guru must in all cases give his first obedience to it. Therefore, whenever there is difference with any body other than the Panth, there is no possibility of compromising the Panth, as it would be lowering the flag of Guru Gobind Singh. This gives strength and makes the Sikhs unbending under the stress of greatest suffering; but it also obliges them to be uncompromising whenever their collective will expressed in *gurmatta* form is opposed to another will. This is all right in religion, which admits of no conscious compromises with outsiders, because there we have no deal with doctrines and dogmas which are exclusive and fixed; but in politics or other worldly matters, where things are not absolutely sectarian but have to be shared in common with others. and where the co-operation of other communities is essential, an uncompromising attitude does not always succeed and has often to be modified to suit the conveniences and prejudices of others. But a *gurmatta* is a *gurmatta*, and having once received the sanction of the Guru Panth admits of no give-and-take from any non-Sikh power. This was exemplified during the Akali agitation, when the Sikh leaders could not hold any direct communication with the Government on the question of the Gurdwara Bill, because a *gurmatta*, to the effect that unless prisoners were released first no talk was to be held with the Government stood in their way. This created differences because most of the leaders were convinced of the futility of the resolution and therefore in the end, after much suffering, they had to resort to indirect negotiations with the Government. Hence most of the compromises made with the Government were secretly entered into by the leaders but kept veiled from the eyes of the general public, to escape from the stigma of lowering the prestige of the *gurmatta*. This is responsible for the present split between the Sikh masses, who following the old spirit, are uncompromising, and their more intelligent leaders, who see reason in making compromise for the Panth, when necessary, even when the letter of the *gurmattas* stands in their way.

The best way out of the difficulty would be to modify the constitution in the light of the present circumstances, to confine the *gurmatta* only to those matters which are strictly religious and to separate from them the political matters, for which were *mattas* or resolutions

carrying more earthly prestige should be passed. Two main circumstances justify this change. In the first place, our political outlook has changed radically since the days when the foundations of the Panth were laid. In those days the Khalsa was completely independent : God above and the Panth below, with no earthly power to intervene. Now even the most free-minded Sikh is in favour of the British connection, or at least in favour of *swaraj*, which means the rule not of the Sikhs alone, but of all Indians – Hindu, Muslim, Christian *and* Sikh. In those days the country could belong to one party only, either Hindu or Sikh or Muslim: but now patriotism has changed its meaning, and has come to include love for the rights of other communities besides our own. Many questions which were supposed to belong exclusively to the Sikh community are now of equal concern to other communities as well, and have therefore passed out of the jurisdiction of the Panth. The question of the Punjabi language, for example, which the Sikhs had made a particular concern of their own, must now pass on to some society representing the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. There was a time when, on a complaint being received from a Brahmin that his wife had been taken away by the Nawab of Kasur, the *Missals* gathered at once at the Akal Takht, espoused the cause of the afflicted husband, and sent out an expedition to avenge the wrong and restore the bride. If such a case occurred now it would have to be handed over to the police; that is, the authority of a separate power other than that of the Panth must be recognised to deal with it. Many troubles are destined to arise between the Government and the Sikhs unless this distinction is recognised, and the sooner the better. The leaders of Sikh thought owe it as a duty to their community to disillusion the masses and lay before them clearly the definite change that has been brought about in their political conceptions, and the consequent necessity of recognising a change in the ideas of their Panthic organisation.

CONCERNING SECTS

The belief of the Sikhs that “there shall be one Guru, one Word and only one Interpretation”² does not allow them — at least theoretically — to have any sects among them. Sects arise in those religions where no arrangement is made to secure the permanency of

Guruship. When the founder dies leaving nothing behind but his Word, he begins to be interpreted differently by his followers, and in the course of time sects arise as a result of these differences. In Sikhism, however, a peculiar arrangement was made by which no differences were to be allowed in doctrine or its interpretation. The Guru was always one, and always alive. This was not possible physically. So it was designed that with the change of the Guru the spirit should not change. 'The spirit was the same, and so was the method, the Master merely changed his body' (*Var Satta*). As long as the Gurus were personally present they did not allow any change in the doctrine, nor did they allow any new centres to be formed within the pale of Sikhism. Whenever anybody tried to found a schism, he and his followers were thrown out. That was the fate of the Minas, Dhirmalias, Ramraiya, etc. After the death of Guru Gobind Singh the whole Sikh community, as a collective unit, was invested with the authority of the Guru, and was to guide itself in the light of the Word incorporated in the Holy Granth. It meant that the Word for the guidance of the community was the same as before, only its interpreter had changed his body. Instead of being one person he had assumed the shape of a corporate body, called the Panth.

Owing to certain historical causes this principle of Panthic Guruship has had no chance of working effectively, with the result that many sects have arisen in Sikhism, and the Sikhs do not know what to do with them. If after Guru Gobind Singh the Sikhs had instituted a central assembly to exercise the right of personal guidance in the name of the Guru, there would have been no differences in interpretation, and no sects would have been formed round those interpretations. But there being no central authority to check, control, unite or coordinate, there have arisen certain orders of preachers or missionaries who in the course of time have assumed the form of sects. Such are the Udasis, Nirmalas, Sewapanthis, Namdharis, Nirankaris, etc.

What is to be done with them? If the Sikhs exercise their collective authority in the name of the Panth as Guru, they cannot tolerate the existence of separate centres, having their own Gurus and their own interpretations of the doctrine. If, on the other hand, they allow the schisms to continue unchecked, their own authority, their own principle

of Panthic Guruship is undermined, and they can make no progress with uncertain or divided doctrine.

In my view the remedy is not to throw out all those who differ from the Singh Sabha form of Sikhism, but to tolerate their differences for some time until we are able to remove the cause which has given rise to these sects. We should give a definite shape to the principal of Panthic Guruship, which has been so long kept in abeyance. Let us recognise one body as the central authority for the whole community. Is it to be the SGPC or the Chief Khalsa Diwan ? If no agreement is possible on any one of these, then a separate body should be created to assume the accredited position of the Guru Panth, which alone can claim the allegiance of the whole community. Many of the existing sects will not be able to reconcile themselves to the rule of the SGPC, which as custodian of temples may have given them a cause of difference. Even the reformed sections of the community may find some differences with the SGPC which, cannot be expected to be as zealous for effecting reforms in the ritual as the reformers would like it to be. The Committee should therefore be a mere custodian of temples and should not be burdened with the additional work of deciding the questions of doctrine for the Panth. If it is invested with the sanctity of the Guru Panth, it becomes too powerful to care for any criticism of its work as manager of temples and their property. It should not be deprived of the sense of responsibility to some authority outside its own constitution. This authority should be of an independent body, which should derive its power, not from the wealth of Gurdwaras or influence with the Government, or any association with politics but from the confidence placed their by the community through its accredited representatives.

This body should not concern itself with the failings or differences of the so-called sects, except when these failings take the form of positive desecration of Guru Granth Sahib or anything else that is sacred. Let the Sikh principles be integrated through preaching, constant co-operation through liason bodies like the All-Sects Conference, and mutual love and toleration. The central body, above mentioned, should publish a book of Sikh doctrines, well-authenticated with quotations from Sikh Scriptures and history. It should also prepare a standard history of the Sikhs from Guru Nanak down to the present day. These publications and the preaching

based on them will level down all differences which justify the existence of sects, and then “there shall be one Guru, one Word and only one Interpretation,” as designed by the Guru.

CONCERNING NEW NEEDS OF MISSIONARY WORK

The standardisation of the Sikh doctrine is necessary not only for unifying the different Sikh elements, but also for organising missionary work beyond the borders of the Punjab. In fact no serious attempt has been made, since the days of the Gurus, to spread their message outside the Punjab. All sporadic attempts made to establish connections with Bombay and Malabar have come to nothing. The cause may be that the bodies responsible for these campaigns were not very serious in undertaking the work. Or it may be that their engagements in other spheres, or rivalries with other local associations did not allow their best men to leave the Punjab. The failure in the case of Malabar has a special significance. About five hundred men and women from that region were converted to Sikhism, and were baptised at the Akal Takht with the ceremony conducted in English. They were sent away to their province with the good wishes of the whole Panth, but in a short time almost all of them went back to their old faith. The reason was that they could not be provided with any spiritual outfit, such as the daily prayers done in their own tongue. No Gurdwara was provided. But even if one had been built for them, what programme could they have followed in it? Which Scripture was to be installed therein? What music, what prayer?

Here is the crux of the matter. As long as Sikhism had to deal with people whose language was akin to Punjabi or Hindi, it had all possibilities of advance. But as soon as it came in contact with people who could not be approached in the original language of the Sikh Scripture, the attempt failed, because those responsible for the missionary work were not yet certain whether they could use translations in place of the original. This is the problem. Can Malayalam, or for that matter any other language, serve the purpose of the Guru's Word? If Sikhism is to go to America or England, which language is to be used by the new converts, English or Punjabi? They will have to recite prayers individually, and approach God in their own tongue. How can their prayer be realistic if they offer it in the original Punjabi or Hindi?

But, the difficulty is : Will the translation of the Guru's Word convey to them its whole content ? Can the whole community, especially those who live in the Punjab, accept the translation with the same faith and reverence as they have been showing to the original? Will not different renderings create confusion in the Sikh world ?

The answer to these pertinent questions depends on what our conception is of the 'inspiration' of the Word. Does the inspiration apply to the letter or to the meaning ? If we believe in the verbal inspiration of the Guru's Word, then it is impossible to take translations as of equal efficacy with the original. But if we think that the idea lying behind the Word is sacred, then translations can be allowed. From this point of view, the divine Idea which the Guru shares with God is immortal; and the clothing of the Idea, which the Guru has in common with humanity, is mortal, changeable and liable to grow strange and obsolete in a few lifetimes. 'For the immortal puts on mortality when great conceptions are clothed in the only garment ever possible — in terms whose import and associations are fixed by the form and pressure of an inexorably passing time.' Sikhism is for all time, and so is the Guru's utterance; but the language in which it is couched will become dead even to us Panjabis in a few generations. What shall we do then ? We shall have to translate it. Then why should we not allow it to reach distant people in their own language ?

The Guru himself believed in making translations. Guru Arjun, while preparing Guru Granth Sahib as the scripture of Sikhs, laid down an injunction for his followers that they were to translate the Holy Volume into Indian and foreign languages so that it might spread over the whole world as oil spreads over water.³

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- 1 Even Maharaja Ranjit Singh sometimes found himself in every awkward situations when the Akalis wanted to assert the law of the Panth against him. But he knew how to get over these difficulties by humouring the Akalis and keeping up the forms of the Panthic law.
- 2 Guru Amar Das in *Var Sorath*
- 3 *Suraj Prakash*, Ras III

WHAT DOES GURU NANAK MEAN TO THE SIKHS AND NON-SIKHS?

N MUTHU MOHAN*

Pondering upon the Sadbhavana Meet dedicated to the Guru Nanak Dev's Birth Day celebrations at this world-famous coal township of Dhanbad I decided to speak on the topic 'What does Guru Nanak Mean to the Sikhs and the non-Sikhs ?'

I took up this topic due to so many reasons. One among them is keeping in mind the learned and worthy gathering in Dhanbad that is comprised of Sikhs and non-Sikhs, businessmen and industrialists, administrators and intellectuals, political leaders and state officials of this renowned township – Dhanbad.

Once I decided to speak upon the topic, 'What does Guru Nanak Mean to the Sikhs and the non-Sikhs ?', another question came up to my mind, namely, Who am I to speak on Guru Nanak ? Am I going to speak on Guru Nanak as a Sikh or as a non-Sikh ? Well, I am not a Sikh. You can make out very easily from my external appearance that I do not have a *kesbdhari* look, I am obviously a dark black Tamilian, a Madrasi, from the southern most part of the country. Thus, I am a non-Sikh. However, I am a person who at least have 15 years of experience of learning and teaching Guru Nanak, conducting a post-graduate Diploma course in Madurai Kamaraj University on Sikhism, a paper in M A Philosophy and Religion on Sikhism, another paper on Sikhism in M.Phil Comparative Religion, guiding at least 5 research scholars for their Ph D in Guru Nanak studies. Our department conducts annual seminars and symposiums, national and regional, with very learned scholars from Punjab and Delhi as well as our own. Our department also organizes translations from the Holy Scripture of the

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Sikhs, Guru Granth Sahib and keeps publishing books in the regional languages of the South. In the university campus, people often call me Muthu Mohan Singh. I can say with all humility that the best of my time I have spent in Guru Nanak studies in Madurai Kamaraj University. Consequently, I feel that I may not be a bad choice to speak on the topic 'What does Guru Nanak Mean to the Sikhs and non-Sikhs ?' I thank the organizers of this meet, particularly Sardar R.S.Chahal of J.K.Diesels and Sardar Harcharan Singh Broka, General Secretary of the Central Gurdwara, Dhanbad for inviting me to this very prestigious meet in Dhanbad. I was pleased to learn from the organizers of this meet that the function is an annual feature and it has achieved a kind of uniqueness that it has gone a long way in maintaining and strengthening religious harmony and integration in the coal fields of Dhanbad.

As a South Indian, I have a personal satisfaction to attend the present inter-religious meet in Dhanbad, because I know that the Jharkhand region is one of the most ancient lands of South Asia where the proud people of Mundas inhabited from the very old days of known history of India and Bhagvan Birsa Munda, whose birth anniversary you have celebrated a few days before, had blessed this land.

Now let me start with the question, What does Guru Nanak mean to the Sikhs? Guru Nanak means to the Sikhs so many things, almost everything. It may be retelling the entire history of the Sikhs. I would prefer to be very brief in this regard.

It was Guru Nanak who gave the Sikhs an identity, made them into a community with distinct features, offered the Sikhs a history, proposed them a religiosity and created in them a Sikh character. In brief, Guru Nanak gave the Sikhs an appearance, a history and a spirit, a spirit in no way conservative, a spirit in no way sectarian, a spirit in no way passive. We know from the recent and modern history that the Sikhs were predominantly an agricultural people, hailing from the richest agricultural lands of this country. Sociologists would say that the agricultural people are usually conservative, ritualistic, closed and passive. This assumption may be true about the peasants in general, may be about the peasants of south India and possibly of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. But the wonder that was done by Guru Nanak and other Gurus in Punjab is that they turned the otherwise passive peasants of

Punjab into the most dynamic and modern entrepreneurs. There is a saying that goes with the name of Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Master of the Sikhs that he desired to transform the sparrows into eagles. The Sikh Gurus really did this historical metamorphosis. The Sikhs are found active, hard working, generous and pious wherever they go and settle, whether it is California or Canada, Malaysia or Australia, Dhanbad or Coimbatore.

There is a tradition in recent Indian History writing that the freedom movement of India started from East India, from the Bengali intellectuals, that the modern renaissance of India began from Raja Ram Mohan Ray, Kesab Chandra Sen, Vidya Sagar and from the Tagore family. Well, please understand that I have nothing against the Bengali intellectual initiatives that they opened up the Indian heritage to the Europeans to see. However, it is equally true that the Freedom Movement and Mass Indian Renaissance started from the North West India, particularly from Punjab. Many of us may not know the Namdhari Movement that was started by the Sikhs who raised first the Swadeshi boycott of European goods and services and hoisted the flag of anti British struggles. Then again the Singh Sabha movement and Gurdwara Reform movement mobilized *lakhs* of people for democratic reforms in the worship places and in society. The Ghadar Party and the Kamagata Maru episode electrified the people all around India and inspired them for consecutive waves of freedom struggles all over the country. It was these movements which could finally give us a Shahid Bhagat Singh who became the symbol of dynamism and sacrifice in the freedom movement of India. In the post-independent India too the dynamism of the Sikhs had helped them to transform their land into the wonderland of Green revolution and White revolution.

How fine it would be if India equaled Punjab in development, Indians equaled the Sikhs in dynamism and mobility ! The Sikhs rightfully owe this spirit of development, dynamism and mobility to their beloved Gurus.

I also think of the relevance of Guru Nanak and the Sikh Gurus when I look at the inter-religious situation that is prevailing in India today. We should agree that the present religious situation in India is not all right. In the very recent past, religious sectarianism is in

ascendance all over India. The people are not at all comfortable with the religious conflicts and clashes that are cropping up every day in various sensitive regions of the country. Vested interests are instigating people for religious conflicts. Our Industry, business, education and finally our entire culture are affected by these happenings. It is interesting to take note what Guru Nanak was preaching and practising in this regard. After all, we should understand that Guru Nanak lived and preached in a region where the most intensive interactions between the Hindus and Muslims occurred in Indian History. Punjab region during the period of Guru Nanak was thickly populated with Muslims and Hindus. Guru Nanak had friendship and following with both Muslims and Hindus. Guru Nanak had a very big attachment and passion to Bhagat Kabir and Baba Farid, equally he had love and affection to Ramananda and Bhagat Ravidas. Not only that, Guru Nanak took up four great *udasi yatras* all over India and beyond India, went and met the different communities of people inhabiting this vast land, stretched his hands broadly towards various religious worships and ways of living of people. He visited Buddhgaya and Banares, Poori and Rameshwaram, Kashmir and Tibet, Mecca and Bhagdad. They were all inter-religious pilgrimages stretching to the entire breadth and length of the known world then. The variety and diversity of religions and ways of life Guru Nanak encountered during his journeys form the core of the religiosity the Guru has proposed and have found registered in the hymns of Guru Granth Sahib. Guru Nanak founded a religion with inter-religious spirituality as its foundation. He called his God with Hindu and Islamic names although the God is nameless and formless. Guru Nanak describes his God with Sanskrit and Arabic appellations. Guru Nanak mingled with the Nath Yogis and Sufis alike, learnt and debated with them. Guru Nanak called his God religionless (*adbaram*) or beyond religions. He declared that there was no Hindu and there was no Mussalman, but only one Humanity. He called every people to keep searching and thinking of that One God who is the ultimate Truth. Guru Nanak asked the Hindus to be true Hindus and the Muslims to be devout Muslims. He reasoned no scope for quarrel when both are religiously pious and devoted to their Gods. There cannot be any conflict between people if every one is in the spiritual search.

God is incomprehensible and God's designs too are unknown to humans. So Guru Nanak says that don't arrogate with your limited knowledge of God and don't claim that your religion is the monopoly possessor of all knowledge of God. Humans must recognize and reiterate that God truly is great. The humans must develop true humility before God. Humility is the path to reach anything divine. Guru Nanak simplified religiosity and made it close to the immediate and basic needs of the believing people. Guru Nanak refused to accept ritualism in place of religiosity and called to intensify their religiosity in terms of inner purity and ethical acts. Every act in society is a spiritual act if it is just and ethical. Every act in society is pleasing to God if it is just and ethical. Guru Nanak spiritualized the secular realm in the sense that our secular activities must assume ethical and communitarian meaning. Guru Nanak spiritualized the secular realm when the secular life was dominated by power thirst and overwhelming corruption. The spiritualization undertaken by Guru Nanak was an antidote to the evils of secular life.

However, Guru Nanak neither asserts that the world is worthless to live. Humans have to accept that the world created by God and the life offered to humans is a precious gift that must be lived ethically and actively. It is true that there is a lot of corruption and evils in the earthly life. There is pride of power, status and wealth that makes earthly life horrible and despotic. However, it is the duty of the people to encounter the evil and construct a pious life on earth. The spiritually minded people should not defy the temporal life and seek *mukti* or *moksha* in secluded *ashrams*. Guru Nanak was not happy with the individual ascetics who declared that the life was worthless and preferred to go aloof to achieve spiritual solace. The Guru called the people to work honestly, earn their bread and share the wealth with the needy. Guru Nanak wanted a mass awakening, a mass ethical awakening, a voluntary commitment to honest labor and make earth the place of justice and peace. He named the earth as the *Dharamsala*. I sometimes wonder how many of our ancient literatures speak about honest labor, an honest and unexploitative labor. It is a question about our culture how much work ethics we have. It is a question about our culture how much we disown the unearned privileges offered to us by birth or status or power. We must pick up such moments from our

history and culture, and then only we can inculcate a new morality. After all, social change and progress cannot be achieved just by enacting legislation and ordinances. On the other hand, there needs unconstrained and willful participation of people in the process of social and ethical reconstruction. No body's right should be curtailed and transgressed. Not with coercion you can achieve development. People's awareness and commitment have to be mobilized for development. Guru Nanak addressed to this people's energy and consciousness. He represented a new culture. The rulers must have belief in the potentialities of the people. The rulers must inculcate democracy among people. Not with orders you can mobilize the people. Only the voluntary commitment of the people can achieve wonders.

According to Guru Nanak, the entire world is the realm of God. God is all the where in the world, God is immanent in the world, the world that has the imprints of God is sacred, the world is rooted in God, God is the ultimate seed of this temporal life. Life is a beautiful garden, God has a personal interest in its well being. The humans must cooperate with God to make it worthy to live. The humans cannot say that they have no responsibility to the evils or corruption of life. Every one is accountable. And every one must assume the responsibility to change the things too. Sikhism offers the human model of *sant-sipahi*, saint-soldier, a person who is adorned with spiritual qualities and soldierly capabilities to target and accomplish the ends. He or she must be an enlightened person, enlightened socially and spiritually.

Guru Nanak addressed at least to two important problems of our society that they had to be examined with all care. One is the age-old system of casteism that had eroded the moral fibers of Indian society. We do not know for sure how it originated and what was the purpose it served in history. However, we are sure that the caste system has outlived its times and that it has become the greatest disintegrating factor in Indian history. The caste system has built unsurpassable economic and cultural barriers among our people and it hampers any free communication among our people. Unfortunately, some of the religious writings in this land have justified and safeguarded the system by rendering cunning arguments for its prevalence. Even today there are vested interests in this country who give all kind of

justification to this ugly system. Guru Nanak outrightly denounced that any writing that justifies caste system cannot be a religious writing. He declared that he had nothing to do with the upper castes and volunteered himself to be the lowest of the low. He rejected to wear the sacred thread meant for the so-called twice-born and thus preferred to remain all along in his life an only "once-born sudra." It was a revolutionary act he performed symbolically to be always with the marginalized people of this land. Bhai Gurdas, the saintly elder of the Sikh tradition and the one who lived during the lifetimes of so many Gurus sees the greatest merit of Guru Nanak in blending the four *varnas* into one. The tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh abolished the caste appellations of his Sikhs and asked them to have the common name of Singh and Kaur for the males and females, respectively. Every Sikh Guru called their followers to cook and share the same food. The *langar* practice was created in the gurdwaras to abolish the food taboos existing in the caste culture and to give reality to a non-caste communicative culture. The people share the food and become one in blood. The Sikh Gurus made the oppressed people of that region to overcome their mental and physical inertia caused by years of caste slavery and imbibed into them the ideal of fearlessness (*nirbhai*) by weaponizing them. All these and other acts in terms of abolition of caste system have living significance even today. India has not overcome this problem of casteism. We are going to think and fight this great shame of our culture, may be, for many more years. Guru Nanak shall render the moral inspiration in the struggle against casteism.

The second issue Guru Nanak encountered intensively is the problem of political power manipulating the religious sentiments of the common masses. Guru Nanak was categorically against such a practice. Some of the Moghul rulers of those days who projected themselves as the active defenders of their religion brought havoc to people of other religions and to the common masses. The religious leaders became not only moot spectators of such a development, but also blessed the political rulers in their atrocities. Guru Nanak spoke and acted against this type of alliance between religion and politics. The Guru countered it with another type of alliance between religion and politics that was religion mobilizing the common masses to fight

out the despotism of the political rule. Religion is justified as a mass ideology when it energizes the people in the struggle for justice, and religion loses all legitimacy when it plays devastation against people and serves the interests of the ruling classes. It is a clear partisan standpoint one finds in the teachings of Guru Nanak and other worthy Sikh Gurus.

I am sure that Guru Nanak is alive very much even today when we face problems similar to those of the period of the Guru. The actors and the victims might have changed, but the total situation has vital resemblances. The inter-religious scenario and the corruption and power orientedness of the secular realm demand inspiring personalities like Guru Nanak Dev. At least we have to take lessons from the teachings of Guru Nanak. That may help us enormously to mend our reality and make our life meaningful. Once Poet Iqbal mentioned that Lord Buddha and Guru Nanak were the tallest personalities India had ever produced. It is true. India needs inspiration from the compassion of Lord Buddha and from the dynamism and commitment of Guru Nanak Dev.

□

*I am a sacrifice to all the names ascribed to You.
I place my head at the feet of all those human beings.
(Who utter Your holy name).*

– GGS, p. 1168

ਸਿਰੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਲੋਕਾ ਪਾਵ ਹੈ ॥
ਬਲਿਹਾਰੀ ਜਾਉ ਜੇਤੇ ਤੇਰੇ ਨਾਵ ਹੈ ॥

THE SIKH GURUS, THE SIKHS AND THE KHALSA

HARDEV SINGH*

This article is based on excerpts from the *Spirit of the Sikh* written by Professor Puran Singh in 1920's and published by Punjabi University, Patiala in two volumes during 1982. Puran Singh was a great scientist, mystic poet, and a visionary and interpreter of the Sikh cultural consciousness. This article reflects the personal views of the great Sikh scholar which seem to be relevant for understanding Sikhism in view of the recent controversy created by RSS.

THE SIKH GURUS

As usual, the world is too inert, too late, to welcome its prophets who bring an altogether new message. So it has been with the Sikh Gurus. The Hindus just condescended with a superior air to say that the Sikhs are of them – 'born out of them'. Culturally and academically and even racially this was not wrong, but inspirationally, it was an attempt to thwart all the potentialities of the Guru's universal message.

After Buddha, it was Guru Nanak who for the first time championed the cause of the masses in caste-ridden India. The rich aristocracy and the degraded priests of Hindus and Muslims did not listen to the Guru, but the oppressed people followed him with joy. He made a whole people throb with love and life. For more than a century and a half, his message was secretly flaming in the bosom of the people when the genius of Guru Gobind Singh gave them the eternal shape of the Disciples, the Khalsa.¹

Guru Gobind Singh is the Guru of the modern times. Assuredly, the slaves of India have not understood him so far and are not capable of understanding his genius. The shadow of his large personality falls

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far away above the head of centuries, and the so-called best intellectuals of India, when they spread out their mind to understand the Guru, get bruised by mere thorns and give him up as something not as spiritual as Guru Nanak. If they cannot see Guru Gobind Singh as the highest, brightest culmination of Guru Nanak, assuredly they do not understand that King of revolution of religious thought, the great Guru Nanak.

The world of thought has yet to understand the Ten Gurus in the splendour of their thought which has been misunderstood due to the Brahminical language they had to employ to express themselves and to the Brahminical environment which always has been inimical to the true progress of man.²

Guru Granth of the Sikhs is the most authentic account of the Guru's soul. It is a pity that some Sikh enthusiasts and half-baked scholars, perverted by the thought of the age, have tampered with the meanings they themselves wish to give it. But the authentic word of Guru Granth can never be lost to the world. And as the Bible is translated into different languages, so Guru Granth will have to be put by poets of different nations into their own language direct from their own souls. Life alone can translate life.³

The Guru Granth is the history of the Sikh soul, and its translation is to come through the great figure of the social reconstruction of human society as the Khalsa, where shall reign love, and not hatred. It is society founded on the highest verity of love of man, inspired by the inspiration of God-like men who symbolize truth as personalities of love, grace and mercy; such personalities are images of the personalities in the unseen. Giving ourselves in infinite self-sacrifice in the name of God, washing away the selfishness of man in the supreme love of the Guru, is the simple, but extremely difficult path of discipleship. Without the Word of the Guru, and the ideal, the Khalsa, which stands for the sovereign society, there is no key to the heart of Guru Nanak and his anthems for the liberation of man. The destruction by the Guru of the Brahminical citadels of superstition (as in Guru Nanak's *Asa-Ki-Var* or in the great *Kabits* and *Savayyas* of the Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh, or in the *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas, the great exponent of Sikh ideals), is symbolic of the destruction of all lies on which human society might be wrongly founded and misguided. Guru Nanak is universal, but he is mostly the Prophet of the future. Freedom of the human mind and soul is the Guru's passion.⁴

The Guru did not eschew politics. In fact he made the liberation of the people the cause of the assertion of his heroism; but surely, if the Sikh lives on the surface only, like the Englishman, for mere politics, votes and such inanities, one straying from the Guru's path forthwith becomes a traitor to his cause. All freedom is but a spiritual tradition of the life of the Khalsa: if the Khalsa spirit is dead, all freedom fails. The Khalsa is the son of the Guru who brings everywhere his Heaven and its delectable freedoms.⁵

The following words were addressed by Guru Gobind Singh to the Sikhs at Nanded on the day of his departure from this world; "I have entrusted you to the Immortal God. Ever remain under His protection, and trust none besides. Wherever there are five Sikhs assembled who abide by the Guru's teachings, know, that I am in the midst of them. He who serveth them shall obtain the reward thereof — the fulfillment of all his heart's desires".

"Read the history of your Gurus from the time of Guru Nanak. Henceforth, the Guru shall be the Khalsa and the Khalsa the Guru. I have infused my mental and bodily spirit into the Granth Sahib and the Khalsa.."

Then uttering "*Wahoguru ji Ka Khalsa, Wahoguru ji Ki Fateh*", he circumambulated the sacred volume and said, "O Beloved Khalsa, let him who desireth to behold me, behold the Granth Sahib. Obey the Granth Sahib. It is the visible body of the Guru, and let him who desireth to meet me diligently search its hymns. And lastly keep my kitchen ever open and receive offerings for its maintenance".

THE SIKH PEOPLE

The Sikh people, unlike other people of India, are a race of straight-forward men of action, whose simple minds, informed of the Eternal by the Guru, shrinks from the idle speculation of the Brahminical mind, and also shrinks from the too theological law of the Muslim, and lives the simple, austere life of incessant labour that characterises the tiller of soil everywhere. They have an inventive genius and love the practical pursuits of life — agriculture, tool-making and engineering. They are, as a people, fond of colonisation. Given opportunities and modern education, this nation has potentialities of progress which no other set of people in India possesses in so

remarkable a degree.⁶

Four hundred years ago, the inhabitants of the Punjab were all slaves. The invaders that came by the Khyber pass, destroyed by the sword all Indian hopes of ever becoming a self-governing nation. What could the invaders have achieved, if the will to die for freedom were there in the soul of India?

Out of the downtrodden, oppressed, lifeless slaves of the Punjab, Guru Gobind Singh moulded a nation which has in it the potentialities of a progressive nation of men. In the whole of India, the Sikh nation is the brightest spot still which has an inexhaustible will to die for the love of its ideals. When they are called upon, the Sikhs seek death as moths seek light. Guru Gobind Singh cut the moorings of this nation from its racial past, and a nation wholly modern in spirit and mind sprang up out of the Guru's mind, with a highly inspiring and most deeply reactive tradition and history of its own.

The Sikh was made to be a feast-giver on the roadside, to spend as the day ended, all he earned daily: and it is his self degeneration, if he accumulates and thinks of the morrow. The thought of the morrow for a Sikh is irreligious. To a true Sikh, death is better than security earned with dishonesty. His giving away of his labour and love is like the lamp distributing light, like the rose distributing its fragrance. A Sikh's spontaneous and natural function of life is such; otherwise he is not a true Sikh.

The culture created by the Guru is in one word, the all-mind divine culture. The Sikh, like the Guru, like sunlight and air and water, belongs to all: he is culture-embodied, love-incarnate, sweet fragrance of humanity that kindles dead souls. Men are very rare and the Sikh still more so.

If you wish to know the Sikh, love him. There is a gleam under the stack of hay, such as Moses beheld at Sinai. The Sikh body politic is a heap of immense matter in which still scintillates the spirit. The hair of the Sikh distinguishes him and his unique love. In Brahminical India, the spirit itself would have died without those who have worn this rather unkempt exterior. And those of Brahminical India who might desire life, and having got the life spark to maintain it, have similarly to isolate themselves.⁷

Religious fanaticism was that the Guru never allowed to enter

his court. Religious superstition was eradicated from the very blood of the Sikh. The Guru cleaned with his sword the darkness that clung and clings still to the endless philosophical hair splitting of the Hindu and the Jain. The liberation of the human mind was the first and foremost thought of the Guru. He liberated man from the slavery of the Devas, the Vedas, and put him to work.⁸

If the Sikh, as he was born, had ever been afforded opportunities of spiritual isolation from the rest of world, to develop his powers of self-realisation, and his instincts of art and agriculture and colonisation, his would have been by now, one of the best societies of divinely inspired labourers, of saints living by the sweat of their brow.

But Brahminism was there to engulf it from within. His political temper, the result of his complete mental liberation and his passionate love of liberty pitched him against the Moghuls from the time of its birth. Out of the jaws of death, if the Khasla has still come out, there is much hope for it yet. All is not yet lost.

THE KHALSA IDEAL - STATE AND DEMOCRACY

The Khalsa is the ideal future international state of man; it is an absolute monarchy of the kingdom of heaven for each and every man, the absolute democracy, distribution of bread and raiment of the kingdom of labour on this earth – all in one. It is democracy of feeling all on this physical plane of life, where most misery is due to man's callousness to man. It is brotherhood of the souls where intensity of feeling burns out all differences.⁹

In the realms of the soul, each is to have his own measure of the Guru's joy and sorrow and love and feeling and spiritual delight, according to his individual capacity. This will constitute the measure of the real aristocracy of each one's genius; but bread and raiment, the barest necessities of the physical body shall, in this kingdom of love for the Guru, never be denied to any one. If the Guru's ideal state, or even an approach to it, is ever made by man, no one will thenceforward die of hunger or go naked. Death cannot be prevented, innate differences cannot be destroyed; but physical privation will be prevented here on this earth by man himself. Let mountains be high, flowers small and grass low, but all shall be clothed with the beauty of God and fed with His abundance. The true vindication of the Khalsa

commonwealth and its ideals as announced by Guru Gobind Singh, have yet to appear in terms of the practice of those ideals by those having faith in the Guru. The modern world is, however, busy evolving its version of the Guru's Khalsa state out of social chaos. This much be said at once, that the Khalsa is more than a mere republic of votes of little men who must be influenced to give votes. It is more than the Soviet, which aims at the change of political environment and law, to bring the Heaven of equal distribution on earth because without the transmutation of the animal substance of man, of selfishness into sympathy, there can be no true socialism.

The Guru Khalsa state is based on the essential goodness of humanity, which longs to share the mystery and secret of the Creator, and longs to love the Beautiful one living in His creation. The Guru thus admits man to an inner kingdom of the soul, where each and every person receives such abundance of pleasure and the beauty of His Love, that selfishness dies of itself. Inspiration to the higher life drives out the lower. Each one, according to his worth and capacity to contain, has enough of the inner rapture of the beauty of God in him, so that he lives quite happy and contented without interfering in anyone's affairs or robbing any of his rightful freedom to increase his own pleasure. This endless self-sacrifice in utter gladness of a new realization is the sign and symptom of the true *Naam* culture of the Guru. No one can be man of truly human society, who has not obtained this divine spark which puts the self at rest, which thereby imbibes a nobility from God to leave everything along and gaze at Him with unending rapture and renunciation. Man need to be truly and inwardly a divine aristocrat to be truly democratic in this world..

In the constitution of the Khalsa commonwealth¹⁰, the greatest act of genius of Guru Gobind Singh was when he transferred the divine sovereignty vested in him to the God-inspired people, the Khalsa. When speaking of the people, the Guru speaks of the people whose personality is transmuted into the divine personality of selfless being. As the chemist talks of pure elements just as they occur in nature, the Guru refers to the 'Pure' of the Cosmic Spirit and not as they are found with their blind animal instincts. In this one act lies our history and the future history of human progress. At Chamkaur when all was lost, he made His Five Disciples representative of the Guru,

and gave them his insignia of Guruship and saluted them. The constitution of the Khalsa was thus built on the heartshrines of humanity inspired with love of God, on the God-consciousness of Disciples, and not on law-books. Guru Gobind Singh would have died fighting on the battlefield even, as a while before, his two young sons had obtained the glory of martyrdom. But these 'Five Enthroned' asked him to go from the scene, and to do for the Khalsa, what only he, Guru Gobind Singh, could do. So, he went, herein the Guru's benign submission to the will of the Khalsa was complete and unconditional. To obey, to continue to live instead of fighting and dying, even in that great personal affliction of having seen his sons and his dear disciple soldiers dying before him, overwhelmed by odds, yet to go and live for them, as bidden by them, is the supreme self-sacrifice of God for man, out of whose red flames of blood is born this Khalsa with the mysterious destiny.

In the Khalsa constitution, the people inspired by the natural goodness of humanity, by the spontaneous Divinity of God, by the Guru's mystic presence in all beings, are made supreme. They are the embodiment of Law and Justice fulfilled for ever in the love of Man. This state has but the Guru as Personal God. In this state, the Khalsa, the law of man's natural goodness is the only law.¹¹

Guru Gobind Singh was neither a Caesar nor an Aurangzeb. He was the true king of the people and a comrade of the people, in the truest representative spirit. Guru Gobind Singh founded the true democracy of the people in which there were no dead votes or votes won by mental persuasion or interested coercion. Democracy was a feeling in the bosom of the Khalsa and it gave an organic cohesion to the people who founded both society and state on the law of love, on Justice and Truth, not an impersonal system of the will of the blinded mob-representation by sympathy and not by dead votes. The Khalsa-State is an Ideal; Sikhs may die, it does not. It is immortal.¹²

GENESIS OF HINDU-SIKH DIVIDE

It might seem that owing to the hostility of an environment, and the not unoften deliberate attempts of the Hindu society to obliterate the Sikh ideals, Sikhs tend to deny any relationship with Hindu society. The Sikh may deny him or not, the Hindu has already denied the Sikh.

The great Hindu culture and its innate influence on Sikh culture, however, cannot be denied. It would be to deny one's parentage. Such denials add nothing to the stature of the Sikh. All that is lofty and noble must be and is fully reflected in the soul of Sikhism, for matter of that, not Hindu culture alone, but all human culture itself. The Sikh is rather spiritualistic in his consciousness than metaphysical.¹³

The songs of the Ten Gurus and the lives of unparalleled martyrdom have created a new race-emotion in the Punjab; the Sikhs are a new nation in its inspiration and its remarkable cohesion of the masses. The brief Sikh history and tradition inspire the Punjab peasants as no manner of religious fervour did before, which goes to show that the Sikh has a tradition and culture of his own which the Hindu has been unwilling to receive, though he wishes at times to pat him on the back as a kind of off-spring. It is unfair of the Hindus to condemn the Sikhs for their attempts to cut themselves away from the mass of Hindudom. They make it a grievance that the Sikhs wish to make their church stand apart.¹⁴

In view of the political solidarity of India it is mischievous for any one to suggest that we are not of the Hindu and not equally of the Muslims. It is mischievous to multiply the point of difference with the Hindu which are not fundamental.¹⁵

The Gurus have shown to Hindus the way to freedom of mind and soul and also to political freedom. The Hindus, out of the spirit of vain intellectual pride have withheld themselves from the resurgence that Sikhism would bring. For the Hindus, the way to survival and freedom is the Guru's way. Unless they accept Guru Granth as their new *Gita*, the old scriptures and the stories from *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* can no longer inspire new life into the mass of people whose backbone has been crushed by systematic metaphysical and theological burdens. Political slavery has been the result of their metaphysical mentality.¹⁶

The Hindus in the Punjab have much to answer for. They find more in *Bhagavat Gita* and the old *Vedas* than in Guru Granth. They love Hindi more than their mother-tongue. They relate themselves to the bards of *Vedas* more than the Gurus.¹⁷

The Hindus failed Guru Gobind Singh; but Guru Gobind Singh has not failed them. They have not understood him; he understood

them. As they have grown so apathetic, almost antagonistic to the message of the Gurus, it is essential that the basic unique character of Sikh culture should now be expressed¹⁸.

PHYSICS OF SPIRITUALITY

In the scheme of human progress there is such a thing as the physics of spirituality; the Hindu has ignored it, the Western races have realized it¹⁹. Because of their comprehensive vision, the Khalsa shall have the spiritual and temporal sovereignty and all shall submit to it, soon or late. Only those shall be saved, who gather under this flag. The Hindus, so far, have not seen the significance of the Guru's creation, the Khalsa. Great Hindu philosophers like Tilak, Aurobindo and Tagore are reinterpreting the Gita and the Upanishads in order to come abreast with modern Western thought and scientific conclusions. But they do not see that more than four hundred years ago, their own country-men, the Sikh Gurus, actually worked all these modern tendencies into the constitution of the mind and society of this unhappy land, by creating the Khalsa. Their lives gave birth to a new country in this old one, and peopled it with a new race, with a universal religion of faith in man, and fired it with the spiritual passion for progress. Out of the Gurus came a daring, colonising race, lovers of land and agriculture, ready to start a new page of life at every turn. And of all the older texts the Sikh texts alone need not be tortured to come abreast with modern developments: they have woven the philosophy of the ancient scriptures in an organic whole. The Sikh life is the vindication of natural manhood and womanhood.

Some modern typical Hindus are trying to interpret *Upanishads* and the *Gita* in modern modes. But such attempts are against the traditional faith that has gathered round these books. And, however easily they may be interpreted in the modern modes, they have never shown the great reactivity that is attributed to them. In the past the teaching of the *Gita* has never been harnessed to action nor the *Upanishads* to love of the people. There has been no phenomenon of transmutation of personality by a higher Being's personal touch on any large scale, as in Sikh history. The *Upanishads* are examples of mental splendor, unique and truly glorious. But without Buddhism and now without Sikhism in India, and without the modern spirit of

the West, which lives and works and attains to knowledge by the experimental method, which is, as I term it, 'physics of spirituality', the *Upanishads* and *Bhagavat Gita* could never have been so interpreted. On the other hand, from close and devoted study of the Guru's hymns, I assert that many revolutionary tendencies are found in the Sikh thought, song and life. No texts need be turned upside down for it. It was atrocious not to have seen this, and to have ignored Sikh history, from the main features of the hostility of the racial environment in which Sikhism took its birth. The Sikh believes in one great culture of man which is yet to come. There is more future and past in Sikhism while there is all the emphasis on the past in Hinduism.²⁰

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A VISION OF THE 21ST CENTURY

GURDIP SINGH*

A philosophical, holistic and prudent vision of the future is an essential munition for any scholar who wishes to attempt a cognitive forecast regarding the emerging social order during the 21st Century. Dr. J S Ahluwalia has very appropriately included “A Vision of the 21st Century (A Post-Modernist Perspective)” as the first Chapter in his book *The Doctrine and Dynamics of Sikhism*. The argument contained in this Chapter have been taken up herein for starting a wider dialogue among such thinkers who are conscious of the potential of Sikhism in the global context. I, for one, hold a firm conviction that Sikhism is destined to play a major role (not withstanding the current atrophy of the Sikh institutions) in the inevitable reconstitution of the global social order.

The subject matter of the said Chapter on “A Vision of the 21st Century (A Post-Modernist Perspective)”, covering first nine pages of the said book can be divided into three components:

- a. A catalog of the extant realities (mentioned at the commencement of the Chapter) threatening survival of the planet and views on corrective strategies (at page 7) for protection of the planet as motivated by “attitudinal change towards nature, treating it in organismic, holistic, ‘network-bond’, with man.”
- b. Spheres of ‘reason’ and ‘spirit’ covered at pages 3 to 6.
- c. Thoughts on the future shape of society and civilization vis-à-vis nation-states at pages 8 and 9.

The referral issues of (a) above (not withstanding their totality or precedence) are rather factual and undoubtedly deserve urgent solutions. These are not discussed further in this paper.

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Coming to the spheres of 'reason' and 'spirit', referred to under (b) above. The gist of arguments in the said Chapter pertaining to 'reason' are that:

- a. "reason reigned supreme in nature, history and society during the first half of the 20th century." Also, as one of the basic postulates of modern Western Civilization "reason was considered as the only valid way of knowing (material reality)."
- b. "the mighty reason felt helpless before the obduracy, the indeterminacy of a tiny, micro particle, a sub-atomic entity...The micro particle seem to have a defiant mind of its own – the mind that Descartes had chopped off from the matter."
- c. "reason faced an impasse." Which also led to "impasse faced by modern Western Civilization on the eve of 21st Century."
- d. Consequently, instead of regress from the 'reason' it meant "going to the supra-rational spirit."

The above considerations of 'reason', in the aforementioned Chapter, are developed further which then lead to "quest for a new dynamic, creative principle in the sense of spirit" and then 'spirit' is defined in terms of "is" and "is-not." This new conception of 'spirit' is described as "spirit involves what has come to be known as 'systems thinking'." And the 'systems thinking' elaboration is concluded with "system thinking is epistemology of spirit, which, in turn, is the ontology of systems thinking."

Descartes is quoted for chopping the mind from the matter and he is further associated with influencing modern Western Civilization by the statement "The starting point, the basic postulate, of modern Western Civilization, following Descartes...." It is at the commencement of 21st Century that the fusion of 'reason', with 'spirit', is expressed in terms of "supra-rational spirit."

The impact of these base statements, derived from the Chapter under discussion, is that during the first half of the 20th century 'reason' had realized an overwhelming domain comparative to the influence of 'spirit' in the field of social thought. This can best be considered as a linear argument and a point of departure for single factor analysis. It would not validate a balanced assertion of the relatedness of 'reason' and 'spirit'.

Dr Ahluwalia in the subsequent Chapters of the book has, in his unique style, apportioned logical space to the essence of ‘reason’ and ‘spirit’ for illuminating the ideals of Sikhism. However, suggesting ‘impasse’ for ‘reason’ OR Western Civilization and a new conception of ‘spirit’ *at the commencement of 21st Century* would be conveying a partial view.

The energies of ‘reason’ as well as ‘spirit’ have perennially influenced the growth of human consciousness and progress of societies. A *consciousness* that must be ascribed attributes of transcendence and can not be restricted by mere empiricity or limiting conditionalities. And human consciousness is a sublime manifestation of the highest form. Guru Nanak says, “*Sabhi surati mili surati kamai; Sabha kimati mili kimati pai; Kabanu na jai teri tilu vadiai.*” (SGGS, page 349)

Both the concepts of ‘reason’ and ‘spirit’ have an abiding inter-relatedness without regard to any historical standpoint. These concepts are dynamic in nature and depending on the expanse of the creativity and genius of the subject mind, the consciousness cannot but be diachronic. The social consciousness of man in pursuit of ‘truth’ and correspondence of social norms has been, and continue to be, influenced by ‘reason’ and ‘spirit’ as the twin progenitors. The Greek thought had been amalgam of *logos* – meaning : “Word” rational, logical, or scientific thought AND *mythos* – meaning : knowledge gained through silence and intuitive insight which gives meaning to life but is beyond rational origins. The objective of Plato’s *idos* (essence of things) is representative of “true reality beyond the reality we perceive with our senses”. There has always been essential dualism – not in a competing mode – but of complementarity where one supplies the deficiency of the other in evolution of a cognitive equilibrium for the governing concepts and norms of the society as a whole.

The said Chapter includes one-word references, contextual to ‘spirit’ (is-not), by quoting the “version of Plutonic Idea, Aristotelian Form, Spinoza’s Substance, Hegelian *Geist* or Bergsonian *Duree*.” These one-word references are rather incomplete in sense. For the sake of relative signification, therefore, it would be best to draw on the thoughts of few giant thinkers - for their views on ‘reason’ OR ‘spirit’ as well as ‘reason’ AND ‘spirit’. As such, for this specific purpose, I have mainly

relied on KW Thompson's analytical evaluation of "men of large and capacious thought."

Undeniably there have been individual master thinkers who have stressed polemical views. Descartes is a logical example because for him "reason was independent of sense and experience." Generations of scholars have not been in a position to ignore his 'scientific method' crystallized in his book *Discourse on Method*. Arnold J Toynbee, in his book *Civilization on Trial*, comments "With one exception, we can have absolute knowledge of nothing. The exception was stated by Descartes....I think, therefore I am....My thoughts encompass divinity, there divinity is." Toynbee further adds, "The divinity that my thoughts encompass is associated with the order that arises out of chaos....As we expand our knowledge of this realm, we....see it in terms of one sublime order that awaits full realization."

However, in all fairness it must be said that Descartes is not the only exception. There have been other thinkers who have expressed similar thought. Diderot, a scientist wrote that the "very idea of Rousseau disturbs my work as if I have a damned soul at my side." And Rousseau had opined that "science takes away all pieties and faith."

On the other hand, composite views have been expressed by many renowned authors. Thomas Aquinas, in his book *Summa Contra Gentiles: Of the Relation of Human Reason to the First Truth of Faith*, speaks of "two-fold source of truth, one attained by rational inquiry and the other transcending all reason." Morris Cohen writes, "The essential fact is that the environment of every human being and the context of every human act contain human and non-human elements inextricably intertwined. Only as we realize that the events of human history include both mind and matter as polar components can we escape the grosser errors of those who would spin the world out of ideas and those who look to earth, air, fire and water to explain all human phenomena." W F Hegel is succinctly categorical. "The Absolute is both Thought and Will. Both reason and spirit pass through phases of affirmation, destruction, and reconstruction. The heart of the dialectical method, then, is a process of affirmation (thesis), negation (anti-thesis) and synthesis. With the attainment of synthesis, we arrive at a new thesis or affirmation. All concepts are dialectically

related.” This argument can be concluded with Pascal’s dictum, “The last function of reason is to recognize that there are infinity of things which surpass it”.

The subject matter referred to under (c) above is of enormous pragmatic concern to Sikhism. I unreservedly support the views of “a radical paradigm shift” for “a new value-oriented civilization” as expressed by Dr Ahluwalia. Furthermore, I would like to add to this viewpoint, especially from the angle of the potential of Sikhism, by reproducing extracts from another of my article written to highlight the institutionalized value of the World Sikh Council.

“Samuel P Huntington, in his book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Re-Making of World Order*, expressed the opinion that apart from broad theory of ‘challenger’ civilization or competing civilizations asserting on the global scene for dominance – there could be NEW development of a civilization attractive and appealing enough to act as an ethical way of life for humanity to adopt. Arnold J Toynbee has prophesized evolution of ‘Universal Empire’. Towards such an establishment, Toynbee also gives prominence to religion (though particularizing Christianity) for its influence on related movements. E H Carr, a political realist and renowned scholar of international relations (late 20th Century), expressed the necessity of a new international order which would be established not merely by constitutional design but by a common effort for a world-wide quest for social justice. Many other giant thinkers express views on normative world order based on moral consensus and hierarchy of values for the well-being of the ultimate society. These great thinkers who have accepted the necessity and possibility of ‘World government’ with the essential support of the world community have also delved into relations between society, community and institutions realizing that institutions do transform human behaviour. The normative world order, apart from civic legalistic code and institutional influences, stress universality of a religious morality and a cultural uniformity.

At this critical juncture of transition of social norms in the evolving world order the teachings of our Gurus are truly relevant. The prophetic worldview of Guru Nanak for moral foundations of society, which would provide civilizing ideas in ordering political power for the service of humanity is now being reflected in the thoughts of

modern thinkers. As such, the Sikh way of life for truthful living and universal concerns for humanity based on social justice and *sarbat da bhala* demand not only a pro-active international participation, but also to provide a catalyst for the growth of NEW Civilization. The precepts of Sikh Gurus are compelling covenants for the sentient Sikhs to formulate functional and an institutionalized approach for impacting the value-based civilization amongst the community of nations.”

Notwithstanding ‘the defiant mind’ of a particle or for that matter ‘defiant thought’ of some authors, a segregated polarity of ideas would be antithetical to universe of thought. Harmony in inter-relatedness of concepts and corresponding attitudes of society, as a whole, must remain objective. In the end, ‘change’ and ‘continuity’ must form the guiding principles of human creativity in evolving civilization for a global society.

□

*Religion consists
Neither in abiding at tombs and cremation grounds,
Nor in going into a pseudo trance.
It lies neither in wandering over lands and regions
Nor in bathing at the places of pilgrimage.
The way to True religion
Is found by dwelling in God,
And abiding undefiled
In the midst of worldly defilements.*

– GGS, p. 730

ਜੋਗੁ ਨ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਮੜੀ ਮਸਾਣੀ ਜੋਗੁ ਨ ਤਾੜੀ ਲਾਈਐ ॥
ਜੋਗੁ ਨ ਦੇਸਿ ਦਿਸੰਤਰਿ ਭਵਿਐ ਜੋਗੁ ਨ ਤੀਰਥਿ ਨਾਈਐ ॥
ਅੰਜਨ ਮਾਹਿ ਨਿਰੰਜਨਿ ਰਹੀਐ ਜੋਗੁ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਇਵ ਪਾਈਐ ॥

JUNE 1984 ATTACK ON GOLDEN TEMPLE*

Some quotes from investigative and media reports pertaining to the June 1984 attack on the Golden Temple are attached below:

“The whole of Punjab and especially the Golden Temple Complex, was turned into a murderous mouse trap from where people could neither escape nor could they seek succor of any kind. The way the dead bodies were disposed off adds to the suspicions regarding the number and nature of the casualties...The bodies of the victims of military operation in Punjab were unceremoniously destroyed without any attempt to identify them and hand them over to their relatives. So even the courtesy and honor customarily shown to the dead soldiers of the enemy was not shown to our dead countrymen, since those killing them were our own soldiers. Because the government had decided to exterminate these victims physically they ceased to exist as persons deserving any honor of human dignity. We lack even the civility of the British imperialists, who after the Jalianwala blood bath instituted the Hunter Commission to make a thorough enquiry into the events. The government, after the operation, on the other hand, did every thing in its power to cover up the excesses of the army action. The most disturbing thing about the entire operation was that a whole mass of men, women, and children were ordered to be killed merely on the suspicion that some terrorists were operating from the Golden Temple and other gurdwaras. There had been no judicial verdict of guilt against definite individuals who had been taking shelter in the Golden Temple.” (CKC Reddy, *et al*, *Army Action in Punjab: Prelude & Aftermath*, New Delhi: Samata Era Publication, 1984, pp. 46-48)

* *Courtesy : Contributed by World Sikh Council, American Region, email <contact@worldsikhcouncil.org>*

“An undeclared, unilateral ruthless war – against hundred of innocent defenceless men and women in far-away tiny villages of Punjab from where their voices do not reach the rest of India. In the name of curbing terrorism, unabashed state terrorism has been unleashed on the Sikhs branding them as criminals, arbitrary arrests and McCarthy style witch-hunt, sadistic torture...shooting down of young men in false encounters are common occurrences; even village women are not spared, they are being harassed and beaten up, dishonored and taken away to Police Stations or to unknown destinations. The eye witnesses witnessed the use of gas by the Army, the pile of dead bodies on the ‘Parikarma,’ the arrival of tanks which some of them thought were the ambulances, the hovering of helicopter at night, throwing their search light on targets which were bombed, the wanton destruction of the Akal Takht (the Eternal Throne), the Research Library and the Museum. Today, it is the State itself which openly indulges not only in murder and assault but also in inhuman torture, molestation of women...and false encounters leading to gruesome death. Our visit was almost like lifting the corner of a veil to discover a face - an amazing face full of conflicting emotions, suffering yet defiant, anguished yet challenging, tortured yet proud.” (Judge V M Tarkunde, *et al*, *Oppression in Punjab: Report to the Nation*, New Delhi: Citizens for Democracy, 1985, pp. 8-10, 18-19)

“The pattern in each village appears to be the same. The Army moves in during the early evening, cordons a village, and announces over loudspeakers that everyone must come out. All males between the ages of 15 and 35 are trussed and blindfolded, then taken away. Thousands have disappeared in the Punjab since the Army Operation began. The government has provided no lists of names; families don’t know if sons and husbands are arrested, underground or dead.” (Mary Anne Weaver, *The Christian Science Monitor*, October 15, 1984)

“On the strength of constitutional features, India claims to be the largest functional democracy in the world where wide-spread human rights abuses, systematic persecution of estranged communities and suppression of political dissent cannot occur. However, the experiences of the Sikhs in Punjab show that as a demonised community targeted for abuse by the authorities, they had no protection

from the leaders of the supposedly independent institutions, including the judiciary, either in shielding their fundamental rights against imminent violations or in obtaining acknowledgement and legal restitution of wrongs. Freedom of discourse remained an empty promise which even the higher judiciary joined the chorus to turn the page and obliterate the victims' memory on the grounds that a public discussion and scrutiny focusing on past abuses and the role of institutions would undermine the interests of peace and social order.” (Ram Narayan Kumar, *et al*, *Reduced to Ashes* (Volume One), Asia Forum for Human Rights, Kathmandu, Nepal, May 2003, pp. 75)

□

*Call everyone high,
As none seems low.
For, God, the Only Potter, has fashioned
all vessels alike;
And His light alone is manifest
In all the three worlds.*

– GGS, p. 62

ਸਭੁ ਕੋ ਉਚਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਨੀਚੁ ਨ ਦੀਸੈ ਕੋਇ ॥
ਇਕਨੈ ਭਾਂਡੇ ਸਾਜੀਐ ਇਕੁ ਚਾਨਣੁ ਤਿਹੁ ਲੋਇ ॥

LATEST EXERCISE IN DISTORTION

– DORIS R JAKOBESH'S* EUROCENRIC RESEARCH –

S S SODHI** & J S MANN***

In this article we will attempt to expose pathological motivation, and dehumanizing anti-Sikh research done by Doris Jakobsh (Instructor in Religion, Renison College, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Canada, phone: 1-519-885-1211 ext. 3497). Jakobsh under Dr Harjot Oberoi, Department of Anthropology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

We are concentrating of two major documents:

- a. *Gender Issues in Sikh Studies, Hermeneutics of Affirmation or Hermeneutics of Suspicion* written by Doris Jakobsh when she was a doctoral student in the Department of Asian Studies, University of British Columbia, Vancouver in 1993-2000. This invited article was part of an international conference hosted by Dr Pashaura Singh at the University of Michigan, USA in 1994. Later on, Pashaura Singh and N Gerald Barrier edited a book based on the said conference entitled *The Transmission of Sikh Heritage in the Diaspora* published by Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 2/6 Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110002. Pashaura Singh claims that this book was “Prepared under the auspices of the Sikh Studies Program, University of Michigan, USA.”
- b. *Relocating Gender in Sikh History, Transformation, Meaning and Identity* by Doris R Jakobsh, Oxford University Press, YMCA Library Building, Jai Singh Road, New Delhi 110 001. This book is a revised version of Dr Jakobsh’s Ph D thesis which she finished in

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1999 as a graduate student in the Department of Asian Studies, University of British Columbia. Dr Harjot Oberoi, who was removed from the University of British Columbia Sikh chair for his anti-Sikh research and sent to teach Anthropology was her supervisor. We do not know at this point in time who were on her thesis committee and her external examiner or whether an ethics committee was set up to review her thesis proposal (SSHRC guidelines, 1991).

After carefully reading the above-mentioned sources we can safely conclude that:

1. Doris Jakobsh is an Eurocentric anti-Sikh, self-appointed researcher who wants to bring “correctness” to the Gender Issues in Sikh History using:
 - a) Western Feministic Paradigm
 - b) She wants to look at Sikh Gurus and their religion as reflected in Guru Granth Sahib as Marx looked at various European religions.
 - c) She wants to use empiricist, logical-positive-objective European methods to evaluate mystic writings of the Sikh Gurus.
 - d) Her motivation appears to be repression-projection mechanism. It means whatever she has been made to repress as a female growing up in North America, she wants to displace and project to Sikh ethos. She claims that it will help her in reducing contradictions in her otherwise ‘meaningless’ life!!
 - e) She is a North American female scholar “in a hurry” and has done excellent “role dance” from 1993-2000 around anti-Sikh paradigms developed by Dr McLeod, Grewal, Hans, Gurrinder Mann, Pashaura Singh, Fenech and her supervisor H Oberoi.
 - f) In her pathological desire to fit with the “Culture of the Fitters” of Sikh religion and to form an “ugly gestalt”, she even has shamelessly attempted to demolish the best Khalsacentric work done on Sikh females by Dr Nikky-Gurinder Kaur Singh documentation in her book entitled *The Feminine Principle in the Sikh Vision of the Transcendent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

- g) Jakobsh feels she has the right to make Sikh female “sociological respectable” by imposing rational efficiency of logical positivism. In the process, if she has to trample over the sacred writing of the Sikhs in Guru Granth Sahib, so it be!
- h) She is willing to “denature the Eastern Supernature” even though her “Doors of Perception” may be still tinted with coloured glass of western upbringing!!
- i) She is willing to violate all norms of SSHRC, 1991 set by Canadian Council as long as she can land a lecturership at Renison College, University of Waterloo.

A summary of Jakobsh’s writing is provided for the benefit of the readers. They can make up their own mind about her research. Doris claims:

1. That Guru Nanak’s use of ‘*mata*’ as wisdom, beauty, clarity, Guru Gobind Singh’s use of ‘Durga’ not as a Goddess but a figure of myth and literature and Bhai Vir Singh’s use of Sundari and Rani Raj Kaur as wise and saintly Sikh female role models was a “lip service.”
2. In spite of the use of female imagery in Sikh Scripture by many Gurus, one can find misogynistic (anti-female) statements in Guru Granth Sahib.
3. Sikh Gurus, even though they identified with the female worldview by producing (feminine *bani*—*Mehala* I, II, III, IV, V, IX) yet did not understand whether in fact “their poetic utterances were feminine.”
4. She agrees with Harjot Oberoi that Sikh Scripture is male dominated because it uses such terminology as *Akal Purakh*, *Karta Purakh*. The devotee is allegorically depicted as bride yearning for Male God in the form of a bridegroom. She considers this aspect of Guru Granth Sahib as misogynistic (anti-female), androcentric and patriarchal.
5. Even though Guru Granth Sahib is replete with images of mother, bride and many metaphors of feminine roles, yet it still reflects men’s perception of and stereotypes about women’s ideal behaviour. In Sikh Scriptures women are told how to regulate their private life by Sikh Gurus who were all males. The Scriptures provided tools of control for what the “ideal is to be and to do!”

6. The celebration of motherhood in Sikh Scriptures where she lives with dignity and upon whom depends creation and nurturing is false. Jakobsh thinks that Guru Nanak often quoted Shabad (AG 473)

*Of woman are we born, of woman conceived,
To woman engaged, to woman married,
It is through woman that order is maintained
Then why call her inferior from whom
All great ones are born?
Woman is born of woman:
Nam is born but of woman.*

According to Doris, Nanak is ambivalent and uses women only as procreators especially valued if they produce (*rajans*). Doris further feels that Guru Granth Sahib's view of female is one-sided and promotes subjugation and self-abnegation to the male master hidden in the form of a male Guru.

7. Jakobsh thinks that we should stop calling the language of *Adi Granth* allegorical (See AG 371, AG 483, AG 31, AG 41, AG 182, AG 796, AG 639) but reflection of social reality of women depicted by male Gurus. She does not agree with Dr. Nikky Singh "that *sabads* of Guru Granth Sahib symbolically depict duality of body and mind, which not only splits one part of the self from the other but also has an in-built mechanism that degrades the one and exalts the other is negated."
8. Doris thinks that the language of Guru Granth Sahib has a "hidden agenda for women." To become better human beings you have to become obedient, subservient, sensual, compliant, faithful and devoted wives and mothers.
9. According to Dr Jakobsh we should apply *Research of Suspicion* to Guru Granth Sahib. We should negate whatever is written, break the mask and reach a new Western feminine worldview of affirmation of Sikh Female through McLeodian paradigms. This research of suspicion will bring out sexist, patriarchal attitudes and practices as depicted and promoted in Guru Granth Sahib.
10. Doris is upset that Sikh Gurus ended up fighting with the Mughals rather than removing social evils of the society and emancipating women. She feels that it produced incongruity between Sikh precepts and practice in Guru period of Sikh history.

11. Doris Jakobsh claims that Dr Nikky Singh is wrong when she claims that Guru Nanak received his divine revelation independently and Guru Nanak was a 'Master' himself and did not follow Kabir or his Bhagti Paradigm.
12. Doris thinks that McLeod's SANT synthesis with regards to the origins of Sikhism is valid. Guru Nanak, the Founder of Sikhism absorbed many SANT ideals from a variety of resources including Kabir. In other words, Guru Nanak was a 'Sant Nanak' of Bhagti movement. Dadu Dayal and Guru Nanak were definitely influenced by KABIR.
13. Because Guru Gobind Singh spent a good deal of his formative years in the Sivalik Hills, the area where the Durga Cult prevailed, he incorporated the Durga Myth in his poetry to please the Jat Sikhs who were Durga worshippers. (Please note that McLeod thinks that Guru Gobind borrowed the Five K's from Jat Sikhs.) In doing so, Guru Gobind Singh overruled the writings of Guru Granth Sahib (AG 874) where females are negatively perceived but worship of Great Mother is forbidden and Sat Guru is inadvertently assumed as Male.
14. Jakobsh claims that Guru Gobind Singh became a Durga worshipper as he was afraid of the Female Goddess. Durga myth helped Guru Gobind Singh mediate contradictions in Sikh worldview. *Adi Granth* has shaped "One God" (*Ek Onkar*) psyche of the Sanatanic Sikh; therefore, Guru Gobind Singh brought in Durga to satisfy the yearning for the feminine images of the Khalsa Sikhs. No wonder *Dasam Granth* of Durga Myth was very popular with Sikhs in the early nineteenth century. (I do not think Doris has read *Chritro Pakhyaan*—Tales of Male-Female Tricky Deceptions from *Dasam Granth* translated by Pritpal Singh Bindra!)
15. She agrees with the interpretation of Dr Oberoi regarding 19th century Sikhism of Sanatan Sikhs which had nature worship, witchcraft, spirit and spirit possession, miracle saints, and goddess worship along with devotion to Sikh Gurus. She is sad that this "enchanted universe" of Panjab was destroyed by Singh Sabha leaders trained in Western ideology with linear worldview (At least she admits that that Western ideology produces linear worldview!).
16. Doris is very upset that in the poems of Bhai Vir Singh *Mere*

Saian Jio (O, My Beloved) and *Rani Raj Kaur*, it is always a female in search of the divine and the Beloved is always a Male. (Perhaps she would like to see a male searching for a female or a female searching for a male or a male searching for a male!!)

17. In relocating gender in Sikh History, Doris is applying Dr Oberoi's *Paradigm of Construction of Religious Boundaries* (1994) to explain the worldview of Sikh women during the Guru period and Singh Sabha movement period. For Guru period, she uses *Adi Granth* and comes up with the following degrading observations about *Adi Granth* which the Sikhs consider Sacred and their Living Guru.

ABOUT GURU NANAK

- a. Nanak states in *Gurubani* that the ideal woman produces sons, especially Rajas.
- b. By supporting Rajas, Guru Nanak gave his support to the dominant social and political order of his time.
- c. Guru Nanak associated women with Maya and barrier to the attainment of emancipation.
- d. Guru Nanak used women to explain bad behaviours of men.
- e. Guru Nanak grieved over the rape of women during the Babur invasion, but is silent about *sati* and female infanticide.
- f. Guru Nanak belonged to the upper echelons of society, so it could be construed that his silence about *sati* and female infanticide was an approval.
- g. Guru Nanak seemed content to leave the prevailing system in place in his Shabads.
- h. When Guru Nanak addressed the Divine through the feminine voice (Bani) it accepted that God was a male, use of bride and bridegrooms analogy also signifies that Guru Nanak's Sat Guru was a male.
- i. Guru Nanak perceived his married life as a burden, an obstacle that needed to be overcome. In other words, Guru Nanak was not a happy householder.
- j. Guru Nanak lived squarely within the patriarchal framework surrounding him. He did not criticize the society he lived in regarding the status of women.
- k. Guru Ram Das' *sabads* contained feminine imagery of palpable

reality. He expressed love for the divine in utterly 'profane' language (P. 32 RG 1 SH).

- l. While appointing *masands*, the Fourth Guru excluded women.
- m. Guru Arjun kept fine horses and wore rich clothes. Doris also hints that Mata Ganga, Guru's wife may have done *Niyoga* with Baba Buddha who was eighty-five years old to produce the Sixth Guru. Guru Arjun came to be known as *Sacha Padishah* because of his high living! Doris agrees with McLeod and Gurinder Mann that Guru Arjun was executed by Mughals as he was a threat to the state and hence he is not a Sikh Martyr. [At least there was 'no taunt' of Fenech (1996).] During Guru Arjun's and Guru Hargobind's time, the role of Sikh women was restricted.
- n. The role played by Mata Jito, Mata Sahib Devi and Mata Sundri at the time of creation of the Khalsa is not clear. All they did was to bring *patashas* to sweeten the *Amrit*. Whether Khalsa was given Five K's in April 1699 is debatable.
- o. While writing *Chritro Pakhyaan* for *Dasam Granth*, Guru Gobind Singh depicted women as seducers. According to Doris, "*Chritro Pakhyaan* should be used for the construction of gender during the time of the tenth Guru." These stories were written by Guru Gobind Singh as a warning to the Khalsa order. The *Rabit-Namas* also degraded women. The Warrior-Saint ideal for the Sikh male was detrimental to the status of the Sikh female.
- p. Mai Bhago being dressed in male attire and becoming a bodyguard of Guru Gobind Singh was a suppression of her femaleness. Creation of Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh devalued the Sikh females who were not included in the order.
- q. In Jat Sikhs, Britishers saw a reflection of themselves; hence started promoting Martial Race Concept. Khalsa Sikhs represented British ideals of masculinity and hence was not good for Sikh female image. British aroused in the Sikhs, their religious impulse to produce in them the martial spirits which they used to control India. So it was politics of similarity between the Sikhs and the Britishers. (She does not know that two thousand Sikh Freedom Fighters were hanged during British Raj 1849-1947.)
- r. The British support the practice of KAREWA for Jat widows curtailed the desire for power and liberty in Sikh widows.

- s. The hyper masculinity of Sikh males was appreciated by the British masters who cut Maharani Jindan to size because she was a muscular woman.
- t. Sikhs in Maharaja Ranjit Singh's court did not honour their women and indulged in homosexual practices. Sikh women did not fit the "Victorian notion of frailty of women" because they were sturdy and looked tough.
- u. Britishers colonized India because Indians have depraved attitudes towards women. Christian missionaries (men and women) were invited to teach Sikh males the manners. That is why British administration supported conversion of Panjabis to Christianity. Christian missionaries and Singh Sabha movement liberated Sikhs from magic practices of DAINS and OJHAS.
- v. Guru Ram Singh was exiled to Burma because he preached open sexual morality among his Kuka adherents. "Kuka women were loose" and they did that to find a place in the male-oriented society of Kukas, followers of Guru Ram Singh.
- w. Highly developed gender ideology of Arya Samaj affected Singh Sabha movement which in turn started defining the role of Sikh women. Singh Sabha was not an original movement. Singh Sabha leaders turned to fastidious interpretations of Sikh scriptures as a basis of their reforms and shaped a new Sikh female on the basis of models provided by Bh. Vir Singh.
- x. As compared to Panjabi Sikh males, Bengali men were effeminate and only suitable for civil service and not for military service, which is a "man's" job.
- y. If the parents married through *Anand Karaj* ceremony, their children were called *haramzadas*.
- z. The Sikh female middle name *Kaur* came from Rajput term *Kanwar* (Prince). This middle name for the females was taken to Rajputize their identity.

After reading *Relocating Gender in Sikh History* by Doris Jakobsh, one is amazed to see how mystified a Theology graduate (1992) from Harvard University can become while working under Eurocentric Supervisor with linear and myopic vision. She talks about the role dances Sikh females had to do to define their identity, yet forgets about how many times she talks about the insightful paradigms of McLeod,

“Enchanted Universe” of Oberoi to seek male supervisor’s convergence for a piece of paper (Ph D) which took her seven years to get.

CONCLUSION

The statements collected in this paper show that Doris Jakobsh is an Eurocentric Feminist Sikh researcher who wants to bring “correctness” to the Sikh History. She wants to use logical-positivistic methods by using object-subject duality. The “role dancing,” repression and projection of nine years of graduate work closed her mind to universal consciousness and deep mystical saintliness preached and practiced by Sikh Gurus who were operating under very difficult and oppressive times.

The concept of ethnic research, social sensitivity and responsibility, introspection and retrospection, positive disintegration and dissonance, essence and wholism, not approaching the subject of ethnic study with a prestored paradigm, doing retrospection to ascertain if the interpretations of her findings are causing psychic or spiritual discomfort to the people who belong to the culture under study, looking for the wholistic reality rather than detached reality, looking for the essence of the culture and not imposing false proposition of one culture to understand the other, seeking total immersion in the culture before rushing to study it, cleansing the doors of perception through introspection, examining the psychodynamics of motivation to do study in a particular culture, not using freedom of expression as crutch to generate hurtful knowledge, not using oppressive assumptions, obliterating subjective objective duality, declaring who she is and her motivations through insightful discovery were sadly missing in Dr Jakobsh writings. She was a prisoner of paradigms.

What bothered the present authors the most is that such a half baked, insensitive, prisoner of eurocentric feministic paradigms and racist instructor who has not shown intellectual honesty, academic humility and sensitivity is teaching religion in Renison college, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Canada. It must be very frightening for ethnic males (Jews, Chinese, East Indian Sikhs, Bengalis, Catholics) to take courses in religion (spiritual) from Doris of Renison college.

AN UNACADEMIC ADVICE

BALDEV SINGH*

If I can remember correctly from the days when I was a Ph D student at an American university in the 1960s, academic freedom means total freedom of thought – freedom to express, freedom to write, freedom to read and freedom to pursue any research interest. Censorship of literature in any form or manner is an anathema to academicians. There were the protests and uproar in the West over the banning of Salman Rushdie’s book “*Satanic Verses*” in Muslim countries. So I could not believe my eyes when I saw the advice by Professor Cole and Professor Barrier to the Internet “Sikh Diaspora Discussion Group” — editorialized in *Understanding Sikhism Research Journal*¹ and repeated in *Sikh Vira*² by Professor Devinder Singh Chahal.

During the discussion when somebody recommended the books of Trilochan Singh and Gurdev Singh about their comments on Professor McLeod, Professor Cole remarked, “I wouldn’t recommend the books by Trilochan Singh or Gurdev Singh. They are vitriolic rather than academic. But the main point I wish to make is read McLeod for yourself. Don’t accept the judgement of others – such is the proper approach.”

At the same time Professor Barrier added, “Hew McLeod deals very specifically with these and other allegations in his autobiography, *Discovering the Sikh*. South Asia Books will have the non-India distribution to the book — an orderly review of facts, misinformation, specific networks of Sikhs who published conference proceedings and individual papers, primarily in the 1980s and early 1990s. I will circulate information on the volume when it appears in September. Those who want to follow the charges and more than adequate rebuttals by McLeod probably should wait until definitive and systematic work is

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out and then compare the items referred on the Sikh Diaspora Forum that allegedly undermine his research and question his motive.”

I wholeheartedly agree with Cole that there is no place for caustic and unprofessional language or personal attacks in discussions or debates over controversial research works. I have not read Trilochan Singh or Gurdev Singh, so I am not in a position to comment on their works. However, I wish that Professor Cole had published or presented a critique of Trilochan Singh and Gurdev Singh's works to the “Sikh Diaspora Discussion Group” so that we could learn how to conduct academic appraisal of controversial works. Alas! He has done the same thing to Trilochan Singh and Gurdev Singh of which he accuses them of doing to McLeod. Whereas Trilochan Singh and Gudev Singh have put forth their views about McLeod in writing for every one to see, Cole has denigrated Trilochan Singh and Gurdev Singh's works in few sentences without pointing out what is wrong with their works. Moreover, he expressed his views to a select group of people. This is nothing less than sheer gossip people indulge in to malign others. Furthermore, Cole's remarks raise two important questions — first, if people like Cole who is actively involved in Sikh studies can't understand what is wrong with McLeod's works then why does he think that lay Sikhs can evaluate McLeod's works properly? Second, if he thinks that lay Sikhs should draw their own conclusions from McLeod's works then why should not they draw their own conclusions from Trilochan Singh and Gurdev Singh's works?

Professor Barrier wants the Sikhs to hold back their judgement about McLeod's works until his next book “*Discovering the Sikhs*” is published. Haven't Sikhs waited long enough for McLeod's answers to the controversies his writings have raised? His first work “*Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*” was published in 1968. As soon as this work was published, it became a hot topic of discussion among Sikhs. McLeod's bold but unsupported assumptions, interpretations, conjectures, inferences and conclusions were challenged. Instead of answering his critics, he kept producing more controversial works. He kept saying, “I am a skeptic historian and my job is to ask questions and create doubts. It is for the Sikhs, to answer those questions and remove doubts.” However, when his work was subjected to an in-depth scrutiny, he took it as a personal attack on him. Instead of responding to the criticism of his work in a professional manner —

through publications or defending his work at conferences and seminars, he started attacking his critics through decoys – his students and supporters. While McLeod remained silent, his supporters have been plying their trade as scholars propagating McLeod’s baseless assumptions^{3, 4} and theories⁵ about Sikhism.

Research work often generates controversies, more so in humanities than in hard sciences. However, the controversies are generally resolved in a professional and timely manner. When someone’s work is challenged, one either provides more evidence and solid reasoning in defense of one’s work or agrees with the critics. Sometimes the issue remains unresolved, as both sides are unable to convince each other. Sometimes during the course of research studies one discovers the errors in earlier published work. In such a case, the erroneous work is retracted. This does not cast any aspersion on one’s scholarship rather it enhances one’s credibility and integrity as a scholar.

So why didn’t McLeod respond to his critics for more than three decades? One possible explanation is that his work is indefensible, he has no proof or logical explanation in defense of his views!

Although McLeod, his students and his supporters never miss the opportunity to dismiss Sikh traditions, they don’t have any qualms in accepting and vigorously supporting even the most absurd and ridiculous tradition when it suits their purpose. For instance, the “Borrowing Theory” – Guru Arjun Dev’s alleged borrowing of Goindwal *Pothis* from Baba Mohan for the compilation of *Adi (Aad) Granth*. Recently, Professor Pritam Singh⁶ has admitted in the *Abstracts of Sikh Studies* that his earlier research on Ahiyapur *Pothi* (manuscript) also known as *Goindwal Wali Pothi* or *Goindwal Pothi* was in error.

“The pick of Western scholars, interested in Sikh Studies, including, I am told, my old friend, the venerable Dr. W H McLeod, has rallied round Dr Gurinder Singh Mann, the author of *The Goindwal Pothis: The earliest Extant Source of The Sikh Canon* (1996).... As I look back, it becomes clear that Professor Sahib Singh had already thrown a spanner into the prevalent theory by persistently claiming that Guru Arjun Dev had compiled the *Adi Granth* on the basis of an inherited corpus containing the works of his predecessors and others.... The professor also dismissed, as pure concoction, the whole story in which Guru Arjun Dev was shown as composing and singing an eulogy in honor of Baba Mohan and receiving, as reward, the Goindwal MSS,

on loan. The “Mohan hymn” according to the Professor’s interpretation is a paean adoring the great Lord Himself... I may say, in all humility, that my study of the contents of the *Abiyapur Potbi* confirms, though indirectly, Professor Sahib Singh’s thesis and negates some of the major, if not all the conclusions, of Dr Gurinder Mann and Giani Gurdit Singh. In a nutshell, my finding is that the *Adi Granth* and the *Abiyapur Potbi* are two parallel recensions of *Gurbani* and *Bhagat-Bani* with the *Adi Granth* serving as the scripture of the Sikh mainstream and the *Abiyapur Potbi* intended to be the official sacred book of the faction set up by Mohan and his son.”

Moreover, M S Ahluwalia and B S Dhillon⁷ have also reported their findings on MS # 1245 in the same issue of *Abstracts of Sikh Studies*. “MS # 1245 is a rich repository of extra-canonical writings (total 48) that have been attributed to the Sikh Gurus. On examining the Mina commentaries on works of Guru Nanak, we observe that their text is full of extra-canonical verses and stanzas...Either the scholars are not aware of all these writings of extra-canonical nature, or they shun the discussion over them.”

However, Pashaura Singh maintains that MS # 1245 is an earlier draft of *Adi Granth*⁸.

The publications of Pritam Singh and Ahluwalia and Dhillon raise two questions. First, aren’t McLeod, Mann and Pashaura Singh obligated academically to respond to the findings of Pritam Singh and Ahluwalia and Dhillon? Second, what advice would Cole and Barrier give to McLeod, Mann and Pashaura Singh? What advice would they give to the universities, which accepted the theses of Pashaura Singh and Gurinder Singh Mann for the award of Ph D degrees? What advice would they give to the universities, which hired Pashaura Singh and Gurinder Singh Mann to teach Sikhism? What advice would they give to those who have been projecting and promoting McLeod as the world’s foremost authority on Sikhism?

Though McLeod’s writings and Pashaura Singh’s thesis have received more than enough attention and scrutiny, McLeod’s academic ethics and what he did to Pashaura Singh have gone unnoticed. I think Pashaura Singh has been exploited and victimized by McLeod. A research supervisor/advisor is not only concerned with success of the research projects of his/her students but also in their future well being. A research advisor instills in his/her students the ethics which are

very essential for the integrity and credibility of a scholar. A research advisor fights his/her academic battles himself/herself without involving the students. A research advisor protects the student against any harm that may impinge on a student's integrity and credibility. However, McLeod did the opposite. Instead of responding to his critics in an academic manner, he criticized them through Pashaura Singh.

“Since then much of the energy of Sikh scholars has been devoted to proving the authenticity of the *Kartarpuri Bir* or recension. A great deal of this energy is directed these days at the writings of W H McLeod, who has been raising questions about *Adi Granth* and making a plea for sustained campaign of textual analysis to establish a sure and certain text. Although McLeod combines sensitivity with meticulous care in his analysis of Sikh documents, his arguments on Sikh scriptures have been received with caution within the Sikh community. It is a conspicuous feature of the modern Panth to perceive critical scholarship as an attack on the Sikh faith. That is perhaps why the organized response offered by a group of Sikh scholars (of whom the most notable include retired civil servants of the Government of India and doctors of medicine, as well as academics) appear to be so defensive that one can easily sense a feeling of insecurity in their approach. It appears to be a new phenomenon linked with the post-1984 events.”

The defense of McLeod's scholarship by Pashaura Singh in his thesis puts a question mark on his objectivity and academic integrity. Perhaps, it was this paragraph more than the contents of the thesis, which drew the attention of so many critics! There is no need to comment further on this thesis as enough has been written about its quality and contents.

Perhaps, it was Pashaura Singh's idea to add this paragraph as sometime students do things to please their supervisors, which they regret later on. But still it was McLeod's responsibility to advise Pashaura Singh to take this paragraph out. Besides, instead of defending his thesis in an academic manner – through publications or presentation at conferences, Pashaura Singh chose the easy way out. He went to the clergy at Amritsar to rehabilitate his academic reputation. It is inconceivable that he didn't consult McLeod before he decided to prostrate before the clergy. Pashaura Singh's academic credibility and integrity was further damaged by this action.

Probably, Pashaura Singh has not realized as yet what McLeod did to him, as he has not stopped talking about his ill-treatment by

Sikh scholars and the clergy and defending McLeod against his critics.

“My unpublished thesis, filed at the University of Toronto library, was copied without my knowledge or authorization and circulated throughout the world. This led to a series of denunciations in letters and reviews in Sikh community newspapers, which accused me of committing blasphemy... This has created a climate of anxiety for scholars of Sikh tradition as their work is being reviewed by the highest religious authority for the Sikhs in a politically charged atmosphere. There have been charges of blasphemy in public gatherings against some scholars, notably Piar Singh, Amarjit Singh Grewal and Pashaura Singh. In fact, these scholars have been compelled to endure a determined and venomous campaign. It has been argued by a group of traditional Sikh scholars that they have challenged the revealed character of the Sikh scripture and threatened its canonical status. How can we understand this phenomenon of charged religious reaction to academic scholarship? What is the future of Sikh Studies in view of the current situation? In order to find answers to these questions we need to address the following issues: the concept of revelation versus textual analysis, religious fundamentalism-cum-political manipulation, and academic freedom versus religious authority... W H McLeod, the leading Western scholar of Sikhism explains this development as a reassertion of tradition over critical understanding of Sikh history... In this context, W H McLeod aptly notes: It is not the sacred scripture as a Book which served to differentiate ‘liberal’ and ‘conservative’ Sikhs, but rather the meaning of the scripture... The question of what is the “correct meaning” of the scripture and who is entitled to know it raises the further problem of religious authority among Sikhs. There are indeed certain members of the Panth who subscribe to ardent beliefs with regard to scriptures and the Sikh tradition in a literalist way... They try to manipulate the institution of the Akal Takhat and Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (the supreme within the Panth), and they have been able to exercise considerable control over the Sikh press. The majority of other Sikh scholars who understand the aims of academic scholarship have retreated into the closet. Their silence has indeed contributed to the present climate of intolerance and suppression of inquiry that has made honest scholarly judgements dangerous. Here, it is instructive to note that several of the more vocal critics lead (or at least led) lives

which do not exactly correspond with criticism which they are making of academic scholars working in the area of Sikh Studies. Commenting on the life styles of three prominent critics for instance, W. H. McLeod argues that “one critic had grown his beard only after the [anti-academic] campaign was initiated and reverted to shaving; another allowed his children to cut hair; a third had previously held views which made it very difficult to term him a fundamentalist.” He further argues that religious fundamentalism is not a “deeply-held belief” among these critics, although this label has been used frequently as a convenient tool to understand the recent scholarly controversy.... The Acting-Jathedar, Manjit Singh, agreed to certain points of my explanation at the time of my first appearance before the “Cherished Five” (*Panj Singh Sahiban*) alone in a special room. In our closed-door meeting, for instance, he remarked “It is not a matter of words or letters, rather the *bani* is divinely inspired (*akbran di gal nabin, bani tan dbur ki hai*)”. He accepted that the change in language did not create any problem with respect to the status of the revealed nature of the *bani*. It is, however, an entirely different matter that he totally changed his stance later on and aligned himself with the Chandigarh-group of scholars (who had raised the storm over my doctoral thesis) in the so-called “open debate” at the Akal Takhat Office. However, I would not like to appear too self-referential in this article. The detailed account of my story will appear in another work in which I will provide a lengthy treatment of the complex situation that led me to be called to the Akal Takhat.”¹⁰

I would like to suggest the sponsors of the Chair of Sikh and Punjab Studies at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, to look at the return on their investment – the above quoted publication by Pashaura Singh. I would also urge scholars of Sikh Studies to evaluate the scholarly worth of this article.

After studying several of McLeod’s works carefully I get the impression that McLeod came to Batala (Punjab) with a preconceived agenda. He came to tell the Sikhs “forget what your scriptures say, forget what your traditions say, forget what historians and theologians say and forget what others like McAulliffe and Cunnigham say – I will tell you what does Sikhism and Sikh mean?” For instance, commenting on the language of AGGS he says, “McAuliffe must bear most of the responsibility for the misleading impression that the language of the Adi Granth is unusually difficult.”¹¹ First of all McLeod has used the

incorrect name for the current Sikh scripture throughout his writings. He calls it *Adi Granth* whereas it is generally called *Guru Granth Sahib*, a shorter version of “*Aad Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji*.”¹²

Second, people who have studied AGGS seriously would agree with McAuliffe not with McLeod about the complexity of the language of AGGS. In McLeod’s works there are very few reference to AGGS except “*Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*” wherein he has misinterpreted many verses in order to distort Guru Nanak’s teachings.¹³ For instance, he has interpreted “*karmi aavai kpra nadri moks duar* (ਕਰਮੀ ਆਵੈ ਕਪੜਾ ਨਦਰੀ ਮੋਖੁ ਦੁਆਰੁ)” as: *karma* determines the nature of our birth (lit. cloth), but it is through grace that the door of salvation is found.¹⁴ He has made three mistakes in the interpretation of this verse. First, he has taken a single verse from a stanza of seven verses, which are interconnected. Second, *karmi* (ਕਰਮੀ) is not derived from *karam* (Punjabi) or *karma* (Sanskrit) meaning actions, it is derived from *karam* (Persian) meaning kindness or favor. Third, though *kpra* (ਕਪੜਾ) has been used as a metaphor for human body in AGGS, in this verse it means cloth or clothing, a metaphor for “*God’s love*.” Moreover, there are numerous verses in AGGS in the form of questions and answers. Lack of attention and understanding could result in misinterpretation of such verses.

The examination of the stanza reveals that the first two verses describe the greatness of God. God’s bounty is unlimited and whatever we possess is God’s gift. The third and fourth verses are questions: then what should we do or offer to God to win God’s love? The fifth and sixth verses are answers to the third and fourth verses: if we meditate on God constantly then God will love us resulting in union with God. In this stanza there is no mention of past or future life. *Karm* (actions) are described in the fifth verse. Guru Nanak rejected all the essentials of Hinduism and the moral authorities of Hindu scripture.^{15, 16, 17} He rejected *karma*, reincarnation, transmigration and the Hindu concept of salvation (*moks*).^{3,4}

Contrary to McLeod, almost a century ago, MacAuliffe interpreted this verse accurately.¹⁸

swcw swihbu swcunwie BwikAw Bwau Apwru]
 AwKihmVgih dyih dyih dwiq kry dqrnu]
 Byir ik AgY rKIAY ijqu idsy ddrwru]
 mR0 ikbolxubolIAY ijqu suixDry ipAwru]

Am̄in̄P̄q̄v̄yl̄w̄s̄c̄ūn̄w̄āv̄īf̄Āw̄ēl̄v̄īōw̄n̄ū]
 km̄l̄ Āw̄Ȳ k̄p̄W̄n̄d̄r̄Ī m̄k̄ū d̄ūĀw̄ū]
 n̄w̄k̄ēȳȲ j̄w̄k̄ĪĀȲ s̄B̄ūĀw̄ȳ s̄īc̄Āw̄ū]

AGGS, Jap 4, p. 2.

“True is the Lord, true is His name; it is uttered with endless love. People pray and beg, ‘Give us, give us’; the Giver giveth His gifts. Then what can we offer Him whereby His court may be seen? What words shall we utter with our lips, on hearing which He may love us?

At the ambrosial hour of morning meditate on true Name and God’s greatness.

The Kind One will give us a robe of honour, and by His favour we shall reach the gate of salvation.

Nanak, we shall thus know that God is altogether true.”

Professor Sahib Singh has also interpreted this verse the same way as Macauliffe has done:

(This way) the Gracious One gives a scarf of (meditating on His greatness). (The wall of falsehood) is eliminated by His kindness and the door of salvation is opened to the devotee. (ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ) ਪ੍ਰਭੂ ਦੀ ਮਿਹਰ ਨਾਲ ‘ਸਿਫਤ’-ਰੂਪ ਪਟੋਲਾ ਮਿਲਦਾ ਹੈ, ਉਸਦੀ ਕਿਰਪਾ-ਦ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟੀ ਨਾਲ ‘ਕੂੜ ਦੀ ਪਾਲ’ ਤੋਂ ਖਲਾਸੀ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਹੈ ਤੇ ਰੱਬ ਦਾ ਦਰ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੋ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ।¹⁹

Both, MacAuliffe and Sahib Singh have interpreted *kapra* (ਕਪੜਾ) as cloth. However, due to cultural differences one calls it a robe of honor and the other calls it a scarf of love. Both robe and scarf are metaphor for God’s love.

Moreover, Pashaura Singh has cited the interpretation of this verse by Giani Badan Singh²⁰ as follows:

“(ਨਦਰੀ) ਹਰੀ ਕੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਦ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟੀ ਸੇ (ਕਪੜਾ) ਭਗਤੀ ਰੂਪ ਸਿਰਪਾਉ ਮਿਲਤਾ ਹੈ ਐਰ ਤਿਸ ਸੇ ਮੋਖ ਕਾ ਦਵਾਰਾ ਗਯਾਨ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੋਤਾ ਹੈ।

Through the Lord’s gracious glance one achieves the robe of honor in the form of loving devotion (*bhakti*), by means of which one reaches the door to liberation in the form of knowledge.”

Commenting on McLeod’s interpretation of this verse, Pashaura Singh points out: “Here there is no mention of the role of the past actions (*karmi*) in the interpretation of this line from *Japji*. Rather, the emphasis is placed on the dual function of divine grace which paves the way for the loving devotion in the first place and then for the knowledge of the door to liberation.”

However, Cole interprets this verse the same way as McLeod :
 “Good actions may result in a human form, but liberation comes only from God’s grace.”²¹

But in the same article he has interpreted *kapra* (ਕਪੜਾ) differently. He has explained the fourth verse of the stanza below correctly by interpreting *kapra* (ਕਪੜਾ) as cloth:

God bestowed on me the robe of honoring Him and singing His praise.

The meaning of *kapra* (ਕਪੜਾ) as cloth becomes abundantly clear from Guru Nanak’s use of this word in his discussions with *yogis*.

ਹਉ ਢਾਢੀ ਵੇਕਾਰੁ ਕਾਰੈ ਲਾਇਆ॥
 ਰਾਤਿ ਦਿਹੈ ਕੈ ਵਾਰੁ ਪੁਰਹੁ ਫੁਰਮਾਇਆ॥
 ਢਾਢੀ ਸਚੈ ਮਹਲਿ ਖਸਮਿ ਬੁਲਾਇਆ॥
 ਸਚੀ ਸਿਫਤਿ ਸਾਲਾਹ ਕਪੜਾ ਪਾਇਆ॥

AGGS, M 1, p 150.

*“I was an unemployed minstrel (dhadi),
 But the Master gave me an occupation.
 The Master ordered me to sing Its praises day and night.
 It called me to Its abode of Truth.
 And honored me with a robe (kapra paya, ਕਪੜਾ ਪਾਇਆ),
 Of ‘propagating Its true glory.’”*

In several other places in the AGGS, *kapr* (ਕਪੜ, ਕਪੜਿ, ਕਪੜੁ) has been used for clothes. Thus using the correct meaning of *karmi* (ਕਰਮੀ) and *kapra* (ਕਪੜਾ) the verse “*karmi aavai kapra nadri mokh duar* (ਕਰਮੀ ਆਵੈ ਕਪੜਾ ਨਦਰੀ ਮੋਖੁ ਦੁਆਰੁ)” should be translated as:

“(Then the Bounteous One) will reward us with Its love and by Its grace the door of salvation will open for us.”

The interpretation of a verse discussed above clearly supports McAuliffe’s views regarding the complexity of the language of AGGS.

It should be noted that “Sikhs and Sikhism” is dedicated to Jerry Barrier: teacher, scholar, bookseller and friend.

Conclusion

Professors, Cole and Barrier’s advice is misdirected. Had Professor McLeod dealt with the controversies raised by his writings in a professional and timely manner, there might not have been any controversy today and he would have earned the respect due to a scholar. Alas! Instead, of answering his critics through publications or

defending his work at conferences and seminars, he chose to attack his critics through his students and friends. Professors, Cole and Barrier have ignored this point.

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- 11 McLeod, W. H. *The Sikh Scriptures* in *Sikhs and Sikhism*, 1999. P 69.
- 12 Guru Arjan Dev compiled the Sikh Scripture by incorporating the compositions of his predecessors, his own and that of *Bhagats* and Sufis and the resulting codex is called *Adi Granth* (ਆਦਿ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ). It is also known as *Pothi* (sacred text) and *Kartarpuri Bir* (sacred text of Kartarpur) as it is in the possession of a Sodhi family of Kartarpur. *Bir* means *Jilad* — binding of a book. Since the *Adi Granth* was a bound manuscript, it acquired the name *Adi Bir*. Later on Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru, added the composition of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru, to the compositions

of Adi Granth and the resulting sacred text was (is) called *Damdami Bir*, as according to Sikh tradition it was prepared at Damdama. The current Sikh Scripture is a copy of *Dadami Bir*. The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), which manages the historical Gurdwaras in Punjab, Haryana and Himacchal Pardesh, and Sikh-religious affairs, is also responsible for the printing and distribution of the current Sikh Scripture and it has named it as “Adi Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji (ਆਦਿ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀ).” In literature it is referred as Guru Granth Sahib or Guru Granth or Granth or Sikh Scripture or even Sikh Bible. However, quite often people not only call it Adi Granth but also pronounce it as Adee Granth (ਆਦੀ ਗਰੰਥ), erroneously. From the time of Gurus, the Punjabi language has undergone evolutionary change in pronunciation. For example the vowel, *ī* (*sibari*) of ਆਦਿ (Adi) in modern pronunciation is de-emphasized and Awid (Adi) is pronounced as ਆਦ (Aad). In Adi, *i* denotes *ī* (*sibari*). In my writings I use the name, Aad Guru Granth Sahib, as Aad (ਆਦਿ) which means (eternal or first in preference) is very important to distinguish it from other Granths or Guru Granth. Recently, some malicious people have started calling Dasam Granth as Guru Granth. I have dropped Sri (Mr.) and Ji (yes, Sir) as the use of Sri before Guru and Ji after Sahib is redundant.

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MY SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY TO ELVEDEN

HARDEV SINGH*

During September 2003, I accepted an invitation from Dr Bernard King, Vice Chancellor of Abertay University at Dundee in Scotland to deliver some lectures. We met in 1979 when he was a visiting scientist at Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. Bernard had told me that Scots are more like Punjabi Sikh Jats in their behaviour and temperament. I visited universities at Dundee, St Andrews and Edinburg. The countryside was extremely fascinating with its hills and glens. Almost every village has a golf course in Scotland as the game had its origin there. After spending one week in Scotland, I returned to greater London for my return flight to Delhi.

My host Gundip Singh Gill, a senior Design Manager with Imagination Technologies, picked me up from Milton-Kynes and we drove to Elveden as I was keen to visit the village where Maharaja Duleep Singh spent his life after he was deported to England. Gundip was not sure about its location but he opened a website on Maharaja Duleep Singh on his laptop and discovered all information about the site alongwith a roadmap to Elveden. It made me sentimental while reading an entry on the website about the blind mother (Rani Jindan) meeting his son Duleep after thirteen and a half years in Calcutta and felt shocked to discover the loss of his Sikh identity.

Elveden falls on route A-11, a few miles away from Cambridge city. It was a bright sunny day and Gundip took his wife Hardeep and baby daughter Reet along for a sight-seeing tour of the countryside. By lunch time, we entered Elveden Estate and made enquiries about Maharaja Duleep Singh's palace. Fortunately, we met someone from his butler's family who guided us to the Elveden's church. Inside the church cemetery, we spotted three grave stones marking the burial place of Maharaja Duleep Singh, Maharani Bamba and their son

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Edward Duleep Singh. After paying our homage to the last Maharaja of Kingdom, we took a stroll in the park of Elveden Estate. We were told that it belongs to a Lord, head of the Guinness family, and that visitors are not allowed inside the Elveden Hall, the original residence of Maharaja Duleep Singh. We took some photographs of the imposing palace from a distance. The total area of Elveden Estate is estimated to be 17,000 acres and it was purchased by the Maharaja in 1863. He completely rebuilt Elveden Hall in 1874 in oriental royal style. Elveden boasted of one of the finest shooting estates in Europe and Maharaja organized royal hunting parties at Elveden. At present, it serves as a holiday village with a restaurant and a camping site. A war memorial to World War heroes is erected on the road leading to Elveden.

Our guide advised us to visit Thetford and its Ancient House Museum to know more about Maharaja Duleep Singh and his family. Prince Frederick Duleep Singh, son of the last Maharaja of the Punjab, purchased this house in 1921 in Thetford, three miles from Elveden, and donated his art collection to this museum. He was art historian with an MA degree in History from Cambridge University. To our delight, we found an album containing family photographs of the Maharaja, a copy of the Bible donated by Lord Dalhousie on his adopting Christianity and some other artefacts of the royal family. A pretty young damsel of the village served as the museum curator. We purchased some photographs and a book by Christy Campbell, *The Maharaja's Box*. We walked down the ancient streets of Thetford in memory of Maharaja Duleep Singh and the lost glory of the Sikh Empire.

The greatest attraction of our tour was an equestrian statue of Maharaja Duleep Singh, erected on Butten Island in Thetford by the Sikhs of United Kingdom during Khalsa ter-centenary celebrations in 1999. It has become a tourist attraction for the Sikhs visiting Elveden. We left Elveden as the sun was going down the horizon. I recalled to my mind the great British Empire where the sun was not supposed to set. I support the sentiments of Sardar Tarlochan Singh, Chairman of Minority Commission in India, that Maharaja Duleep Singh's last remains should be brought to Punjab and given a Sikh burial, as he died as an initiated Sikh and not a Christian in 1893. He took up cudgels to liberate India from the slavery of British Empire, but he failed in his sacred mission due to his misfortunes.

TURBAN : SIKH GLORY

JASWANT SINGH*

DEFINITION

In the *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism* 'Turban' word is derived from ancient Persian word *dulband* through the Turkish *tarbusb*. It is turban in English, *taband* in French, *turbande* in German, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese, *kulband* in Dutch, *tulipan* in Romanian, *sarband* in Iranian. *Imla, saafa, shamla, cheera, dumala, dastar, dastara* are some oriental words for turban. Turban was an integral part of robes of kings and emperors of Malaysia. Sardar Mahima Singh was the first person who went to Malaysian Parliament with turban on, in 1960. In Egypt it is called *payar*. *Pagri* which is used for *dastar* might have been derived from *payar*. During my recent visit to Egypt, most of the middle aged and elderly Egyptian Muslims were wearing turbans.

HISTORY

Its mention has been found in the *Old Testament*, in Egyptian, Turkish and Indian texts. In the 2nd BC *Sanchi Stupas*, turban is depicted in medallions. All the Sikh Gurus tied turbans on their heads. Guru Gobind Singh at the time of creation of the Khalsa on 29th March, 1699 ordained that it was a must for a Sikh to tie turban and cover the hair at all times. Thus it became integral to Sikhs existence.

It is mentioned in Guru Granth Sahib:

ਨਾਪਾਕ ਪਾਕੁ ਕਰਿ ਹਦੂਰਿ ਹਦੀਸਾ

ਸਾਬਤ ਸੂਰਤਿ ਦਸਤਾਰ ਸਿਰਾ ॥

Guru Granth Sahib, p.1084

Make pure that is impure. Deem thou the Lord's presence thy counsel.

Let the complete body be the turban on thy head.

It will be interesting to know that not only the Sikhs, but other

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religions also all the world over have been according great respect and sanctity to it. Even women have been covering their heads with scarves or *dupattas*. During my recent visit to Lebanon and Egypt, I found all Muslim women covering their heads with scarves up to hair line keeping their faces exposed. In fact, more religious women covered themselves with black *burqua* all over. I asked a Muslim lady doctor, a pediatrician at Dubai airport as to why she was wearing *burqa*? She confided, "it was more of a family compulsion and tradition that she was honouring." Instructions in this respect are stricter while entering a mosque or going for Haj. My daughter had to wear a *burqa* keeping her face bare while visiting the Grand Mosque in Saidon, Lebanon. Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of England in her 1997 visit to India and Pakistan had to cover her hat-covered-head with *dupatta* while entering a Mosque in Pakistan. Iranian poet Sheikh Saadi considers turban a symbol of morality and character, and gives considerable respect to it in his verses. Among Sikhs, there is a religious ceremony *dastarbandi*. When a boy attains the age of 10 years or so, he ties a turban first time after prayer or *ardas* before Guru Granth Sahib. Unfortunately among some educated affluent Sikh families, this ceremony is dying down due to ignorance. Let us rejuvenate this custom. It makes a world of difference if a young boy is turbaned or without it.

AGITATIONS FOR TURBANS

Sikh troops fought both the World Wars with turbans on as a part of the uniform.

- a) In England in 1972, an Act was promulgated wherein anybody riding a two-wheeler, motor cycle or scooter, was required to wear a steel helmet. Sikhs agitated against it. The British parliament had night long discussions in 1975, 1976. Mr Sydney Bidwell an MP from Southall constituency with Sikh majority, pleaded the Sikhs case successfully. Lord Avebury also pleaded forcefully. Sir Winston Churchill, while paying rich tributes to Sikhs as loyal, brave soldiers who came to the help of Britishers when they needed it most in both World Wars, vociferously pleaded for the Sikhs' sacred and inalienable right to wear a turban at all times including two wheeler driving. This is well documented in Bidwell's book *turban victory*.

- b) During World War I, on 4th June, 1915 1st Battalion of the Sikh Regiment went to Galipoly (Turkey) for an encounter. Out of 10 officers and 700 men, by the evening only 2 officers and 70 men were left alive, the rest laid down their lives in the battle. They fought with the turbans on. Churchill highlighted their sacrifices in the parliament. I was fortunately Regimental Medical Officer as a Captain of this Galipoli Battalion in 1960-61. Sikhs were exempted from wearing steel helmets.
- c) Legions function in Canada and turban :
 Sardar Pritam Singh Johal was in the British 8th Army in North Africa, he participated in several battles. Once along with other equally decorated Sikh soldiers he went to attend a function in Royal Canadian Legions Hall, Vancouver, to honour the comrades who had laid down their lives in the battlefield. They were stopped as they were all wearing turbans, and as per the Canadian custom they had to be bare head. They left in protest. This incident took a strong ethical connotation. McMullen, a white Canadian citizen published a letter in a Toronto newspaper calling Sikhs as exceptional men to be allowed to attend legions function with turbans on. Authorities lifted all the restrictions.
 Prime Minister of Canada Rt Honourable Jean Chretien visited Harmandir Sahib on 25th October, 2003. Mr Herb Dhaliwal, a senior Sikh Minister in his cabinet, presented him a steel *Kara* and called him Jean Singh Chretien. Sardar Gurbax Singh Malhi has been elected to Canadian parliament for the third time consecutively as a turbaned and bearded Sikh. Canadian government has allowed turbaned Sikhs to serve in the police.
- d) French Government's ban on turbans and headscarves:
 French government has enacted a ban on tying turbans for men and head scarves for women in schools and work places. This act is awaiting Presidential sanction. There has been a storm of protests both by Sikh and Muslim men and women, in the streets of France and the world over. Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh, in its general body meeting passed a resolution condemning this act and strongly asked the French Govt to revoke it. History records that Sikh soldiers with turbans fought both

World Wars wherein 83055 Sikhs perished, besides 109045 wounded, defending their country. We hope wiser counsel will prevail, and this will be the minimum act of gratitude to let Sikhs maintain their cardinal tenets including turbans.

TYPES AND STYLE OF TURBANS

Practically there are as many styles of tying and colours of turbans as the number of Sikhs, but broadly, these can be classified as : a matching turban, a contrasting colour, *bandhni* with a splash of colours, *Mothra*, *Chundri*, *Lebriya*, a *lehariya* in which pattern makes waves (I am fond of *lehariya* and possess a large number of colours), the African style with flat folds. Sikhs patterns mostly come from Rajputs of Rajasthan where turbans represent specific caste and sub castes. However, in Sikhs, there are no such hard and fast rules, but usually Jats do not wear patterns and tie just plain turbans. Usually elderly tie white, which is also the political colour of Congress. Akalis sport royal blue or saffron. Princely states had distinctive colors of their own, e.g., Patialashahi Turbans. Black colour was specific colour for protest during British *raj* and Baba Kharak Singh was jailed for five year (1922-27) as he protested against Nanakana Sahib killings, he wore black turban, till the British relented. In horrendous eighties, saffron became a colour of protest. Turban material is usually of three types -*voile*, *rubia* and *malmul*.

ITS STATUS IN THE PAST

For Sikhs, the turban has all along been integral to their religion, ethics, culture. It has been an honour in society. Exchanging turbans means cementing friendship — Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Maratha Scindia Rao Holker exchanged turbans. On the contrary, placing turban at somebody's feet means total submission. Its significance is further highlighted by Nand Lal Nurpuri's song during freedom struggle, ਪੱਗੜੀ ਸੰਭਾਲ ਜੱਟਾ ਪੱਗੜੀ ਸੰਭਾਲ ਓਏ! 'Oh jat take care of your turban'. This song electrified the nation. Guru Gobind Singh used to hold turban tying competitions and gave expensive prizes to the winners at Paonta - the place is still known as Dastar Ghat.

TURBAN'S SIGNIFICANCE TODAY

Turban is interrelated with full fledged *Sikhi Sarup* i.e. full grown

hair and beard. Its presence on Sikhs' head is synonymous with survival of Sikhism which is *sine qua non* of life, pulsating virile Sikh identity. During my recent visit to Lebanon and Egypt, I was surprised; there was no turbaned Sikh in both the countries. I was a curiosity and novelty. Christians, mostly French and Muslims both in Lebanon and Egypt were keen to meet me and talk to me primarily because of my appearance, *Lehariya* turban and meticulous dress. School children took group photographs with me amidst them. Some more knowledgeable people called me aloud, 'Indian', 'Maharaja', 'Amitabh Bachchan's country'. Such is the elegance of turban. I am aghast at Sikh boys, even college students tying a *patka* or wearing county cap to cover their heads.. I see even elderly Sikhs wearing caps in the morning walk. It is mentioned in Rahitnama, ਸਿੱਖ ਹੋ ਕੇ ਟੋਪੀ ਪੈਹਰੇ ਸਾਤ ਜਨਮ ਕੁਸ਼ਟੀ ਹੋਏ ਮਰੇ ॥ These youth must be persuaded to tie beautiful turbans and those growing up must be taught the art of tying turban at the age of 10 years or so. This is primarily the bounden duty of the fathers, but I know of a near relative of mine, where father was so busy the mother performed this duty for both the sons. It may be fine for cricketers like Harbhajan Singh to don a *patka* while playing but to adopt it as a style even for advertisements for banks is not befitting, as Sikh children consider him a role model and model should be perfect on and off the field.

REVIVAL

Turban tying training classes can be organized in gurdwaras. In Khalsa schools and colleges, competitions be held on important Sikh festivals and prizes be distributed.

There is a wonderful recent trend where handsome turbaned Sikh youth are participating in modeling, walking on the ramp. A spirited Sikh organization 'Launchers' has taken up this holy task of revival of turban to its pristine and martial glory

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ARHATIYAS & RURAL SUICIDES JHUMBA AND BEYOND

INDERJIT SINGH JAIJEE*

On October 29, the press reported that a resident of Jhumba village in Bathinda district was about to auction his land to clear a debt to arhatiyas and another resident, pressured by *arhatiyas* for repayment of a debt of Rs 5.15 *lakh*, had committed suicide. The *arhatiyas* involved were reported to have acquired 68 acres from Jhumba farmers through fraudulent loans.

It is no secret that village land is rapidly passing from the hands of the farmers to the *arhatiyas*. Men whose forefathers tilled the same fields for generations are now forced to sell their land, often to settle "debts" that may be illegal, entirely fraudulent or even non-existent. To the farming families of Punjab, land is livelihood... and more than that, it is life itself. Hundreds of cases can be cited from the recent past wherein debt-trapped farmers, reduced to penury and threatened with the loss of their land, have committed suicide. Their number is rising at an alarming rate.

LACK OF INSTITUTIONAL FINANCE

Apart from the low minimum sale price (MSP) offered to the farmers, rural suicides are, in the main, the direct result of the accumulated burden of usurious interest exacted by the arhatiyas year after year. Only about 20 per cent of village credit needs in Punjab are met by institutional finance. The balance 80 per cent is furnished by *arhatiyas* and moneylenders. Until recently their interest rates ranged between 40 and 80 per cent. Only since 2002 has the *arhatiya* lending rate dropped to 28 per cent. In comparison, the interest levied by regulated financial institutions was 16 to 18 per cent.

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FAILURE TO APPLY THE LAW

In addition to the high interest rate of non-institutional loaning, it is the fraudulent dealing of the *arhatiyas* that must be exposed and punished. Even for the pettiest loan, the farmer is compelled to sign a blank pro-note. The most common malpractice is the failure of *arhatiyas* to supply their debtors with the mandatory semi-annual itemised account of repayments received and amount outstanding. Under law, either of these failures is sufficient to render the loan illegal. In case after case, the *arhatiyas* make exaggerated demands and the farmers, ignorant of their legal rights and having signed blank pro-notes, are unable to resist. All farmer-arhtiya loan-related transactions must be put under the scanner and the Income Tax Department must also demand to see *arhatiyas'* accounts.

GOVERNMENT INDIFFERENCE TO SUICIDES BY FARMERS / LABOURERS

Rural Punjab in particular, because of its very high agro involvement, and rural India, generally, is facing an unprecedented catastrophe and farmers are committing suicides by the thousands. The situation is deteriorating by the day. Unless immediate and sweeping steps are taken, rural India is heading for a total collapse. The Government's failure to recognise this ground situation is not only pathetic, it may even be deliberate.

The Movement Against State Repression (MASR) has sent about 200 documented cases of debt-related suicide, supported by affidavits from the village panchayats, to the state government. These 200 cases are all from just two blocks, namely, Lehra and Andana of Punjab's Sangrur district, and all these cases date after April 1, 2001. Punjab's previous Akali Government had promised to pay compensation to suicide victims' next of kin. (The compensation was limited to suicides committed after March 31, 2001.) From MASR's list of 200 cases, the state's magistracy investigated first 29 cases and accepted 26 as resulting from suicides due to economic hardship. Thus 90 per cent of the cases reported were genuine. A recent study by the Agro-Economic Research Center (AERC) of Punjab Agricultural University and accepted by the Bangalore-based Agriculture Development and Rural Transformation Unit has found that 86 per cent of the farmers in

Punjab are committing suicide due to burden of debt. If 200 people commit suicide from just two out of Punjab's 138 blocks within a period of two years (figures inconclusive) one does not have to stretch one's imagination to realize how many debt-related suicides are taking place in rural Punjab annually. *Times News Network* dated May 26, 2003 quoted the Union Agriculture Minister, saying that the State of Punjab has not even informed the Center about debt-related rural suicides in the state so far.

The present Congress Government has now declined to give compensation even to the kin of the admitted 26 debt related suicides on the plea that it has no money. The government cites two reasons for refusing compensation, apart from claiming lack of funds: first, that the debtor has misutilised some of the loan for consumption purposes rather than agricultural production. Most of the so-called 'consumption purposes' are a matter of survival. The second reason cited is that, in some cases, the debtors were addicted to alcohol. In the case of alcoholism, the tax structure instituted by the Central Government makes state governments wholly dependent on Excise Tax revenue; therefore, the state government does everything to promote alcohol consumption. Liquor vends are approved for almost every village lane.

IMPORTANT RECENT STEPS

Kisan Cards

In 2001, the RBI announced its credit card scheme for farmers and promised that cards would be issued to all farmers within three years. Up to the end of 2003 only a small fraction of farmers have received these cards. For this delay, the state government is responsible. Institutional finance to the rural sector must be stepped up and issuance of Kisan Cards, (which will decrease dependence on moneylenders) must be expedited.

Village Post Office Banking

The government is also experimenting with creating bank branches at rural post offices, thus reducing the number of handling agencies thereby enabling further reduction of interest and taking credit facilities to the farmers' doorsteps. Tamilnadu has been selected for the pilot project... this move is well appreciated but in the fitness of things this experiment had deserved to be carried out in Punjab and

Haryana – areas that are the epicenter of rural suicides.

Crop Insurance

For the past 50 years, farmers have been promised crop insurance. Only last year, however, has the Union Ministry of Agriculture taken up crop insurance on experimental basis in one district each of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. Punjab has rightly criticised this scheme as it fails to provide adequate compensation to the farmer for his loss. His loss is assessed not individually but is based on the average loss of a larger area, the block.

Loan Waiver

Taken aback by the rising spiral of rural suicides and the clamour for waiver of loans, the Union Finance Minister in the Budget speech of 2002-03 offered waiver, not of loans per se but on interest on loans against non-performing assets, not exceeding Rs 50,000 for farmers and Rs 50 *lakh* for commerce and industry; the offer pertained to loans advanced up to March, 1998. On further representations to the RBI from the agriculture sector, the RBI, in a surprising move, generously increased the Rs 50,000 (a meagre amount) to Rs 10 *crore* for both industrial and agricultural sectors, applicable to all non-performing assets up to March 2000. From the huge jump in the quantum of loan eligible for interest waiver (Rs 50,000 to RB 10 cr) it is obvious that the RBI was primarily interested in benefiting commerce and industry, By including agriculture loans, which are rarely more than RB 5 lakh it was attempting to cloak this interest and make it appear as providing equal opportunity to all sectors

After Independence, through successive land ceiling laws (last being in 1971) rural land holding was limited to 17.5 standard acres. On the other hand, urban land holding and income are exempt from ceiling. The ceiling laws have brought down 94 per cent of land holdings in Punjab to less than five acres. It appears that the government planners had decided to limit the upward mobility to the towns-people where most of the upper castes reside. Mahatama Gandhi had said that India lives in villages, and that development must begin from the villages.

Srinath Rampal, former Commonwealth Secretary General, speaking on *Global Peace and Multilateralism: Challenge and Role for India* at a Rotary seminar in New Delhi in mid November, cited the advice of the political analyst Keenan, given 50 years ago: "The USA has 50

per cent of the world's wealth but only 6.3 per cent of its population. Our job is to maintain this position of disparity." The Indian ruling class applies this dictum to its own situation and consistently works to maintain their advantage vis-à-vis the oppressed who are overwhelmingly rural. This sums up the position of the government vis-à-vis industrial/urban property and agriculture. Former Prime Minister Deve Gowda has rightly asked the government how much of the nation's wealth has been pumped into developing the rural sector as compared to industry and the urban sector.

MAIN CAUSES OF FARMER DISTRESS AND REMEDIAL MEASURES:

Ceiling on agricultural land – but not on urban property or income:

Do away with land ceiling with a proviso that only bonafide farmers of the state can buy agricultural land (a practice adopted by some states).

Diversion of river waters and hydro-electricity to non-riparian and non basin states:

Result: dependence on costly thermal power generated tubewell irrigation, depletion of water table and frequent digging of tube wells, salinity due to subsoil water, etc.

(Punjab's river water was diverted to Rajasthan for free on the premise that Punjab had ample ground water resources that it could utilize. *Tribune News Service*, dated January 14, 2003 quoted Co-ordinator for Minister of Environment P V: Sridharan as saying that out of 138 blocks of Punjab. Divided to assess groundwater level situation in Punjab, 84 have been declared as dark, as they have exploited their groundwater, 16 are grey blocks and only 38 are white, leaving scope for further utilization. Punjab should now demand reversion of Punjab's river water supply to Rajasthan)

Unfavourable price structure:

Unrealistically low minimum support prices (MSP) and high input costs
Relate minimum support price to the market price index till such time as farmers are able to match import price.

High rate of interest:

Institutional finance was 14 to 18 per cent but covered only 20 per cent of the rural demand the balance non-institutional loan

carried an interest rate 28 to 60 per cent.

The interest rate has since been brought to 12 per cent and the government has now made a further reduction to 9 per cent to farmers but the maximum that the farmer can borrow is a paltry Rs 50,000. While interest on housing loans (for much larger amounts) has dropped to between 8.5 and 6 per cent, interest on agricultural loans in excess of Rs 50,000 is fixed at 12 per cent. Housing may be essential but surely food production is even more so. Bankers know that farmers are excellent credit risks for the simple reason that they cannot take a loan and disappear; they have nowhere else to go. After India's banking sector was opened to private and international banks, these banks have shown how interest can be brought down. Nationalized banks making agricultural loans should learn from them. Bring down interest to between 5 and 7 per cent as is seen in developed countries and make this interest applicable to all agricultural loans.

No direct subsidies to farmers :

Provide subsidies directly to the farmers.

According to the Union Minister for Agriculture, Som Nath, "the total volume of subsidies available to farmers in India is just 10% which is peanuts compared to what is available to the agriculturally and industrially advanced countries - 60% of the farmers received no subsidies in any form". The share of agriculture in Five Year, Eight & Ninth Plans was Rs.367 Crores and 801 Crores respectively. For industry it was a Rs.3608 & 2765 Crores.

Lack of crop insurance cover :

A viable insurance cover must be provided.

All the above factors are beyond the control of the farmers and the government is directly responsible for the pauperization of rural sector. As Punjab has the highest involvement in agro activity, it has suffered the most.

WHAT CAN BE DONE ?

1. Upward revision in the land ceiling.
2. Direct subsidies to farmers.
3. MSP be related to cost index.
4. Complete waiver of institutional loans.

5. Set up Debt Re-conciliation Boards for non-institutional loans.
6. Open Trade with Pakistan – e.g., Wheat is priced in India at Rs 670 but sells in Pakistan Punjab at Rs 1260.
7. Devolution of power to the States at par with what the provinces enjoyed under British India. This will allow timely and meaningful correctives.

WHAT MUST BE DONE IMMEDIATELY

1. Institutional loan: Waive all agricultural Institutional loans: In 1997 agricultural loans stood at Rs. 5,700 crore. Today it is assessed to be around 15,000 crore. Of this 15,000 crore about 80% is non-institutional. And 20% (Rs.3,000 crore) is institutional loan. It is not asking for too much to bailout the farmers of Punjab who contribute 60% to the national grain procurement kitty.
2. Non-institutional loan (*arhatiyas* and moneylenders) : Set up Debt Reconciliation Boards.

In the beginning of the 20th century, Punjab's agricultural debt problem had become acute. Petty farmers who could not repay their loans lost their land to moneylenders. At that time, the Punjab government set up a number of inquiry commissions and brought in a number of acts to save the farmers. As a consequence of these acts, Debt Conciliation Boards were established to bring about amicable settlement between debtors and creditors. Usurious loans were outlawed and so was alienation of agricultural land. The Punjab Government is urged to set up such debt reconciliation boards now to save farmers from dispossession.

□

*Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay:
Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;
A breath can make them, as a breath has made;
but a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When Once destroyed can never be supplied.*

Oliver Goldsmith in *The Deserted Village*

INTERNATIONAL SIKH CONFEDERATION (PROPOSED SIKH APEX BODY)

KHARAK SINGH

Readers might recall that the Institute of Sikh Studies (IOSS) at the end of its Annual Seminar on Nov 16, 2003, passed a resolution which *inter alia* reads as follows :

“This gathering of Sikhs has noted with great concern that the Panth is passing through a crisis marked by disunity, challenges to Sikh identity and established institutions like the Akal Takht Sahib and SGPC, spate of apostasy, existence of schisms old and new, and unnecessary controversies created to divide and weaken the Panth.

“In order to deal with these problems, to carry the divine message of the Gurus worldwide and to lead the Panth to its destined glory in the service of mankind, it is imperative to invoke the Gurus’ doctrine of *Guru Granth – Guru Panth*, which gives this responsibility to take decisions in the light of teachings of the Gurus with complete faith in *sabad* as Guru.

“This gathering feels that in the situation that prevails today, it is necessary to have a central body of the Sikhs with global representation whose deliberations will guide and assist the entire Sikh community.”

The resolution also called upon the SGPC ‘to take the required initiative for creating an apex body, which includes representatives of all major *panthic* organisations and Sikhs from across the world, with itself as nucleus under the patronage of Akal Takht Sahib.” Sardar Gurcharan Singh Tohra, the then SGPC President, addressed this seminar, blessed the idea and assured that the SGPC would welcome

the move, provided it does not hurt the existing *Panthic* institutions.

In order to initiate action on the resolution, the IOSS convened a meeting on the 21st February, 2004 at Chandigarh, which was attended by representatives of a large number of Sikh organisations including the following, besides the IOSS and a number of Sikh intellectuals :

- Kendri Singh Sabha, Chandigarh,
- Sikh Education Society, Chandigarh
- Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle, Ludhiana
- The Sikh Missionary College, Ludhiana
- Sikh Core Group, Chandigarh,
- Guru Nanak Trust, Washington, DC,
- Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Managing Committee, New Delhi
- Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar
- Academy of Sikh Religion and Culture, Patiala,
- Gurdwaras Coordination Committee, Mohali
- Gurdwaras Coordination Committee, Chandigarh
- Vanjara Trust, Chandigarh
- Gurmat Parsar Sewa Society, Chandigarh
- Sikh Nari Manch, Chandigarh

This meeting unanimously endorsed the resolution and set up the following action committee :

- Giani Harinder Singh, President Kendri Singh Sabha.
- Brig (Retd) Gurdip Singh, Convenor, Sikh Core Group, Chandigarh
- Dr Rajinder Singh Bajwa, Guru Nanak Trust, Washington, DC
- Principal Ram Singh, Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle, Ludhiana
- S Amrinder Singh, Member, SGPC
- Col Rajender Singh, President, Gurdwara Sector 34, Chandigarh
- S Angrez Singh, President, Pind Bachao Committee, Chandigarh
- General Kartar Singh Gill, IOSS
- Dr Gurcharan Singh Kalkat, IOSS
- Dr Kharak Singh, IOSS

It was felt that a constitution of the proposed apex body should

be drafted and for this purpose the following Committee was appointed:

- Gen Kartar Singh
- Dr G S Kalkat
- Dr Kharak Singh

This Committee held a number of sittings and with valuable assistance from S Gurdev Singh, President, IOSS, Gen Jaswant Singh, Brig. (Retd) Gurdip Singh, prepared a draft which was discussed in a meeting of the representatives of the organisations listed above on the 13th June, 2004. In addition, Principals of some Sikh educational institutions like Dr Inderjit Singh from Phagwara and senior retired army officers, Gen S S Randhawa and Gen M S Kandal also attended. The draft as adopted in this meeting, is reproduced below, in order to elicit opinion, comments, or suggestions for improvement :

The name of the Sikh Apex Body proposed in the draft is International Sikh Confederation (ISC). The aims and objectives proposed are fairly comprehensive. Care has been taken in the Constitution that no existing panthic organisation is supplanted or its authority diluted. The SGPC, the Akali Dals and other organisations will continue to function as heretofore. The ISC will reflect the collective thinking of the Panth, and all existing or future organisations of the Panth are expected to move together in the direction pointed out by the ISC and work for achievement of the common goals in a coordinated manner.

It is hoped that all Sikhs the world over, individually as well as through gurdwara management committees or other organisations, will lend fullest support to this proposal, so that the ISC starts functioning at the earliest. The Sikh diaspora is expected to play a very active role in this effort, since it is the only way, their concerns can be voiced.

The IOSS will continue to coordinate the effort. This task is priority no. 1 on its agenda. After the successful conclusion of the campaign of *Nanakshahi* Calendar, the Institute is concentrating on this item. Let us ensure that a solid beginning is made during the current year when we observe centennaries of three major events in Sikh history, and that in the next couple of years, the ISC becomes an established fact. This is the only way to give practical shape to the doctrine of Guru Granth – Guru Panth, the Guru gave us in his limitless benevolence.

PROPOSED DRAFT OF THE CONSTITUTION OF ISC

NAME

1. The Apex Body shall be known as the International Sikh Confederation (ISC).

REGISTERED OFFICE

2. It's Registered Office shall be located at Chandigarh. This may well be shifted to Amritsar in due course. Subsequently, there may be various regional offices as the Organisation expands.

AIM

3. To provide guidance and direction in the Sikh community's march towards its ordained mission to spread the effulgent message of the Gurus and to ensure a rightful place for the community, nationally as well as internationally.

OBJECTIVES

4. The ISC will reflect the status of Guru Panth, and in due course, will decide its own functions. However, it must *inter alia*, encompass the following :-
 - a) To share the ideology of the Guru Granth Sahib with all humanity for evolving a harmonious social order.
 - b) To articulate short- and long-term goals of the Panth.
 - c) To advance the cause of the Sikh community in national and international forums.
 - d) To articulate and express the views on behalf of the Sikh community in the above forums, and thus to represent the Panth in all domestic and international spheres.
 - e) To co-ordinate activities of various Sikh organisations.
 - f) To help resolve and work towards settlement of all

philosophical and other issues affecting the Panth as a whole.

- g) To deal with problems of existing or potential schisms in the Panth.
- h) To rebut academic and other attacks on Sikh religion, culture, tradition and history.
- i) To promote education and economic development of the Sikh community.
- j) To promote research and publication of literature on Sikh religion, tradition, culture and history.
- k) To take vigorous and sustained measures to promote Punjabi language.
- l) To initiate and help promote national and international effort, for humanitarian causes in pursuance of the basic Sikh tenet of *Sarbat da Bhala* (well being for all).

ACCOMPLISHMENT OF AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

5. To fulfill the above Aims and Objectives, the ISC may :
 - a) Establish and manage institutions of higher learning and research in various disciplines including Sikh religion, social studies, medicine, engineering, information technology and other disciplines, as required.
 - b) Establish trusts, endowments, chairs in universities and institutions of learning.
 - c) Set up and manage Press with a view to publishing books, pamphlets, periodicals, newspapers / magazines / journals in Indian /International languages.
 - d) Appeal for, solicit, accept, receive and / or collect, acquire, or dispose of movable and immovable property / assets.
 - e) Accept money, special subscriptions, donations, grants, endowment funds, gifts, bequests and / or services from any legitimate source.
 - f) Make rules, bye-laws, and lay down procedures and conventions to facilitate smooth functioning of the Organisation, and
 - g) Take any other steps considered necessary for achieving the objectives of the Federation.

ELIGIBILITY FOR MEMBERSHIP

6. The following shall be eligible to be enrolled as members of the Federation :
 - a) Sikh Gurdwaras notified under any lawful statute.
 - b) Other Sikh Gurdwaras registered and managed by Sikh *sangat*.
 - c) Sikh institutions / trusts / societies / associations or other bodies (registered / incorporated / notified) engaged in the protection and promotion of Sikh interests.
 - d) Eminent Sikh individuals with known contribution to the cause of Sikhism.
7. The membership shall be by invitation / application. The decision of the Executive Committee in the matter of approval or non-approval in this respect shall be final.
8. The gurdwaras / institutions / trusts / societies / associations and other bodies on becoming members, shall be represented in the ISC by a duly authorised representative of the concerned entity.

QUALIFICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

9. To become a member of the ISC in any category, or to represent a member organisation, the person concerned should be a Sikh who:
 - a) has full faith in the Ten Gurus, Sri Guru Granth Sahib and Sikh *rahit maryada*, and does not believe in any other religion;
 - b) is not less than 21 years of age;
 - c) has filled the prescribed application form, and paid the prescribed subscription;
- 9a. Members of the Executive Committee shall compulsorily be *Amritdhari* Sikhs, with education equivalent to a degree from a recognised university.

DISQUALIFICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

10. No person shall be entitled to become or continue as a member of the ISC if he or she :
 - a) has been convicted of any offence involving moral turpitude;
 - b) becomes an apostate, i.e., *patit*;
 - c) has been declared by a competent authority to be insane or insolvent;
 - d) is considered by the Executive Committee not a fit person

- to become, or continue to be a member of the ISC for any reason whatsoever;
- e) fails to pay the membership fee in time, as prescribed;

MEMBERSHIP

11. Will be of the following categories :

- a) Permanent membership
 b) Associate membership (less voting rights)
 c) Life membership

11a. Members shall pay *annual* membership fee at the following rates :

Category	Indian Per Annum	Others Per Annum
- Sikh Gurdwaras (annual income over Rs 200,000/-) Registered /incorporated/ notified Sikh institutions / trusts / societies / associations, etc.	Rs 15,000/-	\$1000
- Sikh Gurdwaras (Income over Rs 100,000/-)	Rs 7500/-	\$500
- Sikh Gurdwaras (Income over Rs 50,000/-)	Rs 3750/-	\$250
- Sikh Gurdwaras (Income less then Rs 50,000/-)	Rs 2000/-	\$150
Individuals		
- Permanent membership	Rs. 1000/-	\$100
- Associate membership	Rs. 500/-	\$50
- Life membership	Rs. 500,000/-	\$50,000

12 Membership fee may be reviewed from time to time by the Executive Committee.

REGISTER OF MEMBERS

13. A Register of all members containing names, permanent address, telephone / fax nos. and e-mail address will be maintained and updated regularly. Names of Governing Council and Executive Committee members along with office staff will be maintained separately.

GOVERNING COUNCIL

14. The Governing Council of the ISC shall consist of 200 members to be drawn from various categories as shown in the appendix, and shall meet at least once in two years. However an extraordinary meeting of the Governing Council may be called earlier if

- approved by the Executive Committee.
15. Election to the Governing Council will be held every four years by secret ballot. These will be conducted by the Executive Committee who shall appoint an Election Commissioner three months before the due date. Comprehensive orders for the preparation and conduct of elections will be issued by the Executive Committee.
 16. Takht Jathedar Sahiban will be Permanent Invitees to the Governing Council. In deference to their exalted status in the Panth, they will not be involved in the voting process. Each one of them may preside over the meetings by rotation.

GENERAL BODY

- 17 All primary members of the ISC will be members of the General Body. Meeting of the General Body will be held at least once every 4 (four) years. The Governing Council may request the Jathedar Sahib Akal Takht to chair the General Body meeting.

MANAGEMENT OF THE ISC

- 18 The affairs of the ISC shall be managed by the Executive Committee duly aided by five Advisory Councils comprised of professionals from various disciplines as indicated in the Appendix.
- 19 Each Advisory Council will consist of five working members and will be headed by a nominee of the Executive Committee. The council may co-opt additional experts for advice where required.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- 20 Will consist of 25 members. Constitution of this committee will initially be as follows :

a) Institutional Representatives	12
b) Eminent Individuals	08
c) Heads of Advisory Councils	05
Total	25

(all of the members of a, b and c should be *amritdhari* Sikhs)

A Presidium of five members (*panj pyaras*) elected from (a) and (b) will chair meetings which will be presided over by one member of the Presidium by rotation at each successive meeting.

ELECTION TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- 21 Election to the Executive Committee will be as follows :
- a) By secret ballot in the Governing Council meeting held every 2 years
 - b) For continuity, only 7 members (4 from Institutions and 3 individuals) will be newly elected every 2 years.
 - c) Heads of Advisory Councils will be nominated by the Presidium in consultation with the Executive Committee. Suitable Bye-laws in this regard will be framed by the Presidium in consultation with the Advisory Council concerned.

FUNCTIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- 22 The Executive Committee shall exercise all powers and perform all such functions, as the ISC is authorised to exercise. Bye-laws in this regard will be formulated by the Executive Committee and got approved by the Governing Council at its first meeting. Any further revision/addition to bye-laws will need the express approval of the Executive Committee by two thirds majority of the members present and voting, in a meeting called with a notice of three months and with agenda duly notified. Two readings will be required in two successive meetings before an amendment is adopted.

OFFICE BEARERS

- 23 The Executive Committee will be solely responsible for running the day-to-day affairs of the ISC. As already stated, a Presidium of five members will perform these functions collectively.
- 24 The Executive Committee shall organise a Secretariat. They shall frame bye-laws in this regard and appoint a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to assist them. This organisation is expected to be evolved over time with the required office staff to assist them and to implement decisions of the Presidium / Executive Committee.

TENURE OF MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- 25 As already stated in para 20(b), the tenure of twenty Executive Committee members (less Heads of five advisory councils) will be six years. However, two seven member groups (four

Institutional and three Individuals) of the first Governing Council will perforce have two-year and four-year tenure, respectively. Decision in this regard will be by lot or as otherwise decided by the Executive Committee.

- 26 Advisory Council Heads will have a fixed tenure of three years. Anyone nominated in place of a member between elections will have truncated tenure, i.e., remaining period.

PRESIDIUM

- 27 The Presidium will consist of five (5) members duly elected from within the Executive Committee (para 20a & 20b). Their tenure will be four years after which three members will be replaced by election from within the newly elected EC. Two membership will continue for another two years and be replaced by electing two new members. This process of replacing members every two years will be continuous.
- 28 A Secretariat headed by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will function under the direct control of the Presidium. It is desirable that the CEO be a highly experienced and an outstanding administrator, who is well versed in Sikh religion and its affairs. He should preferably be based permanently at ISC Headquarters to devote full time to his duties. His tenure may be for three years with a maximum of one extension.
- 29 The CEO will function directly under the Presidium that may delegate special powers to him from time to time.
- 30 Decisions made by the Presidium (*panj piaras*) will be considered as final. There will be no appeal beyond their decision.

ADVISORY COUNCILS

- 31 These will be five in number initially; one each for religious affairs; education and social affairs; economic affairs; press, publication and IT; and lastly, international and legal affairs. Members of the Councils will be selected experts who need not be members of the ISC. Their Heads will be nominated by the Presidium and they will function directly under the Presidium. All major decisions of the ISC will ordinarily be based on the advice of the Advisory Council(s) concerned.

- 32 Bye-laws for these Councils will be framed by the Executive Committee.
- 33 Heads of Councils may employ professionals as and when required for specific projects in consultation with the Presidium.

QUORUM

- 34 The quorum for the Governing Council will be 25% of the total membership, and for the Executive Committee meetings, it will be 13 members of the Committee.

NOTICE FOR MEETINGS

- 35 For Governing Council meetings not less than three months notice shall be given from the time of despatch of the last letter.
- 36 For Executive Committee meetings not less than 15 days notice shall be given from the time of despatch of the last letter. Emergency meeting may, however, be called at short notice by the Presidium.
- 37 All such notices will be issued by the CEO under direction of the Presidium.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

- 38 Punjabi in Gurmukhi Script and English in Roman Script shall be the official languages of the ISC.

DISPUTES AND DIFFERENCES

- 39 Any controversial issues shall be referred to the Executive Committee which may obtain the advice of the concerned Advisory Council and resolve the issue(s). If required they may refer sensitive issues to the Presidium for a decision which will be treated as final.

AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

- 40 Any amendment to the Constitution which is proposed under signatures of at least five members of ISC may be circulated to members of the Executive Committee at least three months before a decision is taken by 2/3rd majority in the Committee. It shall again be discussed and passed as a second reading in the subsequent meeting.

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**INTERNATIONAL SIKH CONFEDERATION**  
(Organisational Chart)

GENERAL HOUSE (ALL PRIMARY MEMBERS)

← Registered Institutions and Eminent Individuals →

GOVERNING COUNCIL (200 MEMBERS)

|                   |                           |               |              |               |                        |
|-------------------|---------------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|------------------------|
| Diaspora*<br>(45) | Sikh Institutions<br>(50) | Takhts<br>(5) | SGPC<br>(60) | DSGMC<br>(10) | Indian States†<br>(30) |
|-------------------|---------------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|------------------------|

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (25 MEMBERS)  
(with secretariat)

|                                       |                    |                                 |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| Institutional Representatives<br>(12) | Generalists<br>(8) | Heads, Advisory Councils<br>(5) |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|

FIVE ADVISORY COUNCILS  
(5 members each)

|                                        |                               |                      |                     |                                  |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Press, IT, PR, Publications<br>Affairs | Educaiton & Social<br>Affairs | Religious<br>Affairs | Economic<br>Affairs | International & Legal<br>Affairs |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|

\* USA - 7; Canada - 7; Europe - 10; Middle East - 3; Africa - 3; South Asia - 5; South East Asia - 5; Others - 5

† Punjab, Haryana, HP region - 8; Delhi region - 8; Calcutta region - 7; Bombay region - 7

## ABSTRACTS

### GURU GRANTH – GURU PANTH

AN ABSTRACT BY KHARAK SINGH

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The Institute Of Sikh Studies (IOSS) organised a seminar on the November 15-16, 2003 on the theme ‘Guru Granth – Guru Panth’. This twin doctrine was selected for discussion, because it has played a very crucial role in the past history of the Panth, and is not only relevant today, but is indispensable for dealing with the critical situation through which the Panth is passing and to meet the numerous challenges facing it.

While the holy Granth Sahib was anointed the Guru Eternal of the Sikhs by Guru Gobind Singh, he also delegated his authority to the Corporate body of his Sikhs or the Panth to take decisions on all Panthic affairs. Bhai Kahn Singh explains this twin doctrine as follows:

*“Khalsa is the body of the Guru, and the bani (Guru Granth Sahib) his soul. The Panth conducting its spiritual and temporal affairs in the spirit of the bani also assumes the form of the Guru. Independent of the bani, however, the Khalsa is not entitled to this status”.\**

“ਖਾਲਸਾ ਗੁਰੂ ਕੀ ਦੇਹ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਬਾਣੀ (ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ) ਆਤਮਾ ਹੈ, ਬਾਣੀ ਦੇ ਆਧਾਰ ਵਿਹਾਰ ਪਰਮਾਰਥ ਸਿੱਧ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਲਾ ਪੰਥ ਪੂਰਣ ਗੁਰੂ ਰੂਪ ਹੈ। ਬਾਣੀ ਤੋਂ ਸਵਤੰਤਰ ਹੋ ਕੇ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਗੁਰ ਪਦਵੀ ਦਾ ਅਧਿਕਾਰੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ।\*“

Followed strictly, this doctrine assumes strict observance of the teachings of the Gurus, and entrusts leadership of the Panth to the

best brains or the noblest Sikhs selected by the Panth. The Gurus, particularly the Tenth Lord, had been training the Sikhs to assume this responsibility, which was earlier discharged by the Gurus themselves in their lifetime. Sikhs were thus expected to create a supreme Panthic body for this purpose. Due to historical reasons, however, this could not be done, since immediately after the demise of Guru Gobind Singh, Sikhs underwent a prolonged phase of persecution and virtually faced extinction. The doctrine, however, stood the Panth in good stead whenever invoked. Examples are the decisions of the 'Sarbat Khalsa' during the early period and those of the representatives of the *misls* during the *misl* period, which led to the dominance of the Khalsa in the Sikh homeland in northern India, where they were being hounded out earlier.

With the advent of Ranjit Singh with his imperial ambitions, the decision was given a go by, which eventually caused the fall of his empire. The lesson is clear : The Panth flourished when the doctrine of *Guru Granth - Guru Panth* was followed, and suffered when it was ignored.

Unfortunately, no serious effort has been made to give a practical shape to the doctrine upto this day. Consequently, while problems have continued to accumulate, no solution is in sight. These problems have to be settled at Panthic level, but we have no agency which represents the entire Panth, and whose decision would be acceptable to and binding on all sections of the Panth.

### **THE PRESENT SITUATION**

The Panth is passing through a critical period, and faces numerous problems. Although the Shiromani Akali Dal (B) is a partner in the National Democratic Alliance government at the Centre, the glow of freedom the Sikhs have struggled for, is nowhere visible. The infamous Blue Star Operation and the repression that followed continue to cast their painful shadows on the Sikh psyche. The Panth is divided into several political parties as well as religious sects.

There is no unanimity on the long-term political goals of the Sikhs. While some sections demand a sovereign independent state, others prefer autonomy within the Indian Union. The SAD has favoured the Anandpur Sahib Resolution of 1973 subsequently

modified in 1978. The Hindu majority, however, considers it secessionist, and is in no mood to concede the demand.

There are challenges to Sikh identity, and concerted efforts are afoot to treat the Sikhs as a sect of Hindus. The Rashtriya Sikh Sangat wing of the BJP is busily engaged in confusing the Sikhs on this issue.

Then there is the problem of *apostasy*, particularly among the Sikh youth. Under the influence of the West and the TV culture, alarmingly large numbers of Sikhs have dropped the most visible and essential requirement of Sikhism – the unshorn hair.

The Sikhs outside Punjab as well as Sikh diaspora outside India have their own peculiar problems. Besides, there are millions of tribal Sikhs like Vanjaras, Sikligars, Lobanas, Tharus, etc., known as Nanakpanthis, who are living in utter neglect and abject poverty in several states of India, notably Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, etc. They have received no attention from the Panth, and are vulnerable to influence of missionaries of other faiths.

To the list of problems must be added the recent controversies over *Dasam Granth*, All India Sikh Gurdwaras Act, Sikh Personal Law, seating arrangements in *langar*, the authority of the Takht *jathedars*, etc.

Little organised effort has been made by the Sikh leadership to carry the message of the Gurus in its pristine form. Clever individuals taking advantage of this situation, have established their *deras* where they preach their own cult in the garb of Sikh religion among the credulous Sikh masses not only in India, but also abroad. This leads to erosion of Sikh values, and weakens the Panth. Each *dera* is a potential Schism and a challenge to mainstream Sikhism.

We are convinced that the only way to deal with and to get out of the present dismal situation is the creation of an apex body or a central supreme authority of the Sikhs. The IOSS has expressed this opinion earlier also. In order, however, to give a concrete shape to the idea and to invite a detailed discussion and to solicit considered views, this theme was selected for the Annual Seminar of the Institute held in November 2003.

The announcement received an enthusiastic response. As many

as sixteen top scholars of the Panth presented their papers before a distinguished audience, over 300 strong. In the *Keynote Address*, Dr Kharak Singh explained the rationale behind the doctrine of Guru Granth - Guru Panth and its theological and historical background. He drew the attention of the audience to the current situation of the Panth marked by controversies, Schisms, mounting number of *deras*, internal dissensions and external attacks, neglect of Sikh diaspora as well as weaker sections, rapidly spreading apostasy, etc. What is more worrisome is the fact that while *deras* have become more active in preaching their cults and dividing the Panth, there is hardly any organised effort on the part of mainstream Sikhs to meet the challenge. None of the existing organisations or institutions of the Panth feels responsible or competent to deal with the situation in its totality. He pleaded that it could be handled only through an apex body of the Panth representing all sections of the Sikhs living in all parts of the globe, and having competence as well as authority to make and enforce decisions. This body would function as the Guru Panth, and guide the Sikhs on the advice of technical advisory committees on religious affairs, education, health, economic affairs, diaspora, etc., manned by top scholars in respective areas. The authority of Sri Akal Takht would prove to be a great blessing in carrying out the programmes of this body.

The *Keynote Address* suggested that the SGPC being the most representative body of the Sikhs, should take the required initiative for creation of an Apex Body. It was also made clear that the proposed Guru Panth would not replace any of the existing institutions which would continue to function as hitherto. The new Body would determine the direction in which the Panth should move, and ensure coordination among various organisations of the Panth.

The idea was endorsed by practically all speakers and participants. It was felt that the step was already overdue, and brooks no further delay. In fact, it is mandatory in view of the doctrine of Guru Granth – Guru Panth.

Dealing with historical perspective, Dr Kirpal Singh, the well known historian, said that the doctrine of Guru Panth and Guru Granth was inherent in the teachings of Guru Nanak. For, according to Bhai Gurdas, he had said, “Without *gurbani* and *sangat*, there was no

other refuge.” He explained that *Gurbani* implies Guru Granth, while *sangat* refers to Panth.

Dr Muthu Mohan identified three stages in the process of achieving the Sikh ideals, namely :

1. The making of the *gurmukh*
2. The making of the *sangat*
3. The making of the Khalsa

He also drew attention to two aspects regarding the importance of Guru Panth as comparative moments in the context of the known histories of the world religions :

1. The Gurus did not stop by proposing religious and normative values addressed to the individual. Addressing the individual and transforming the individual psyche is a tested method in the history of religions. This was the usual way followed during the medieval period. However, Sikhism goes beyond this routine.
2. Another religious routine in vogue in the medieval period was instituting the order of priesthood to carry out the religious message. The Sikh Gurus did not use this option either. They entrusted this responsibility to their Sikhs. Both these facts underline the significance the Gurus attached to the Guru Panth. Maybe, Guru Panth is not a finished concept, but it is a Long March towards perfection, not in an idealistic sense, but in terms of going through the real problems the Panth encounters at every historical juncture.

On the making of the Khalsa he says :

“The *sangat* develops into the Khalsa, that is the history of Sikhism during the Guru-period. This has a remarkable significance in the history of Sikhism. In order to understand the true meaning of the making of the Khalsa, one has to compare the Khalsa with the institutions of priesthood, on the one hand, as well as with the institution of monkhood, on the other hand. In Indian context, we know that the priesthood is typically associated with the Brahminic ideology and later with the temple culture, and the monkhood is mostly associated with the Buddhists and the Tantric Siddhas. Historically, the institution of priesthood had proved to be reactionary and bureaucratic whereas the institution of

monkhood had miserably failed in its mission of following the middle path and slipped into thorough asceticism.

“Sikhism strikes a new path. With the historical experience of the decadence of priesthood (*masands*) from within and without (Brahmin *purohitas*), Sikhism steps into organizing the new mode of collectivity. The Gurus decide to empower the people, a mode although difficult, but truly democratic.”

Sardar Gurdev Singh reproduces an anthology of the homage paid by eminent non-Sikh scholars about the Guru Granth Sahib, and brings out the values preached in Guru Granth Sahib, that characterise the Panth. He suggests a programme of action on the part of the Panth, which lays emphasis on education of people, activities aimed at healthy understanding and useful cooperation among people of different religions, and active role in organising inter-faith seminars and conclaves. And, to perform these functions, he believes that formation of a global association or an apex body of the Sikhs is essential.

Harjinder Singh deplored that many a Sikh these days worship Guru Granth Sahib as an idol. He stresses that ‘it is the teachings that are to be venerated, and this is done by practising these teachings.’ He refers to existence of *jatbebandis*, *taksals* and *deras*, and pointed out that these days if you stand for the one *jatha*, the Guru’s *jatha*, and try to follow the simple teachings of Guru Granth Sahib, you will find yourself in a minority. And for this he blamed the Sikh intellectuals. For, we do not speak out and hence are not heard. He criticised the present-day working of the gurdwaras and the election system which produced leaders of ‘*kursi golak* type’. He mentioned some development which would bring about a UK Sarbat Khalsa. He expects similar development elsewhere, which will ultimately lead to the creation of a similar body to handle the affairs of the global Sikh community.

Dr Birendra Kaur built a strong case for the need to create an apex body of the Panth, and felt that there was no other way to deal with the endless chain of problems facing the community today, or likely to arise in the future. She saw no difficulty in listing the roles to be assigned to this body. The real challenge is how to create it. It is not easy to find suitable persons to be entrusted with the required

responsibility and authority. She discussed merits as well as limitations of the methods of selection and election, and recognised the problem involved in securing a consensus in the Panth.

She strongly pleaded, however, that a beginning must be made and the Panth must resume the responsibility that devolves on it under the doctrine of Guru Granth – Guru Panth. The existing representative bodies like the SGPC and the DSGMC etc could be the foundation for building a structure to represent the entire global Sikh community by adding suitable number of nominated members. She further envisaged setting up of separate departments to deal with different subjects / needs of the Panth. She concluded :

“The Apex Body should take birth now, in or in spite of the present scenario; it will grow / evolve with time. Let us make a beginning, and pray for *Wahguru's* blessings on His Panth. Unless we stand united, through a single common organisation of the Panth, how can we share the Guru's message with the rest of humanity ?”

Sardar Gajinder Singh extensively referred to events in Guru Gobind Singh's life history to show that the Panth was instructed by the Guru to look for spiritual guidance from Guru Granth only, and to collectively act as Guru Panth where each participant should rise to the high standard of knowledge of Gurus' message. He also stressed the need for honesty, sincerity and selfless service of the community to restore the glory of the Guru Panth.

Dr Gurmeet Singh stated that there was no ambiguity about the Granth Sahib being the Guru. For the Guru Panth, however, he preferred to use the expression 'Guru in Panth'. His argument is that Guru has to be perfect, which no human being can be, and that the Sikh belief refuses to recognise any personal Guru after Guru Gobind Singh. He defines Panth as an assembly of those Sikh holy men who are committed to the code of conduct, and have attuned themselves to the Will of God. He then proceeds to examine what should be the role and form of the proposed body, and suggests a modified form of Sarbat Khalsa to suit the present conditions, and creation of necessary infrastructure. He thinks that initially for a period of 5 years, only specialised institutes of studies be created to carry out research on Sikh affairs in the disciplines of Constitutional Studies, International



Relations, Military Studies, Planning, World Religion, Sikh Psyche, Modern Sikh History, Sikh Economy, Sikh Heritage, Sikh Migration, Sikh Martial Arts and Environmental Studies. He stressed that the first step for establishing the 'Guru in Panth' should be finding out individual Sikh brains attuned to the will of the Gurus who should comprise the inner circle to work out strategies for future struggle.

Brig Hardit Singh recalled that during the Guru-period both the spiritual and temporal powers were vested in the Gurus. Guru Gobind Singh, however, bifurcated the authority, vesting *Piri* in Guru Granth Sahib, and *Miri* in the Guru Panth, with the proviso that the Guru Granth, being divine light, is supreme. He argued that this concept implies an International Sikh Apex Body under the aegis of Sri Akal Takht to consider current affairs and to take timely action to deal with the situation.

Gen Jaswant Singh highlighted the need for special attention to the status of women and the weaker sections of Sikhs among the tasks to be undertaken by the proposed apex body. He deplored the prevailing trafficking in women and widespread evil of female foeticide, which should be stopped through education and stern institutional measures. For weaker sections like the Vanjaras, Sikligars, Lobanas, etc., he suggested a number of measures to improve their economic conditions.

Dr Sarjit Singh, quoting extensively from the Guru Granth Sahib, showed that it contained the divine message revealed through our Gurus. He regretted that somehow, Sikhs have failed to communicate with the people around them, who speak different languages and are incapable of learning Punjabi. On the Guru Panth, he said that the relationship between the Guru Granth and the Guru Panth became fully effective with the maturity of the Khalsa, and its ability to understand and obey the commands of Guru Granth Sahib. The Guru Granth, however, remains supreme and in control of all matters related to Sikhism. "The moment we move away from this proposition, the Panth may appear to be a jumble of arrogant and obnoxious persons who will tamper with anything called Sikhism with impurity."

Dr Harnam Singh Shan, quoting Bhai Nand Lal, Bhai Gurdas, Bhai Santokh Singh, Bhai Prehlad Singh, etc, showed that the Khalsa Panth enjoyed the Guru's authority in making and carrying out Panthic

decisions taken strictly in accordance with the teachings enshrined in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Prof Prabhjot Kaur, and Dr Sarabjot Kaur endorsed this view and stressed that the Panth could flourish only if it remained subservient to Guru Granth Sahib.

Kartar Singh Goshti argued that formalisation of the Guru Panth is the only solution to the problems Sikhs face today. He suggested that SGPC should convene a meeting of representatives of leading Panthic organisations, and select a *panchayan* of 5-10 members, which could be entrusted with this task.

The Participants took active part in discussions and expressed full support to the proposal for Guru Panth. The Seminar concluded with the unanimous adoption of the resolution reproduced below :

### **Resolution**

“This gathering of Sikhs has noted with great concern that the Panth is passing through a crisis marked by disunity, challenges to Sikh identity and established institutions like the Akal Takht Sahib and SGPC, spate of apostasy, existence of schisms old and new, and unnecessary controversies created to divide and weaken the Panth.

“In order to deal with these problems, to carry the divine message of the Gurus worldwide and to lead the Panth to its destined glory in the service of mankind, it is imperative to invoke the Gurus’ doctrine of *Guru Granth - Guru Panth*, which gives this responsibility to take decisions in the light of teachings of the Gurus with complete faith in *sabad* as Guru.

“This gathering feels that in the situation that prevails today, it is necessary to have a central body of the Sikhs with global representation whose deliberations will guide and assist the entire Sikh community.

“The Sikhs are fortunate in having Sri Akal Takht as the Supreme seat of authority and the SGPC as an elected body of the Sikhs representing Sikh majority areas. These institutions cannot be ignored, and should rather be strengthened. Any attempt to denigrate these institutions is condemned.

“This gathering, therefore, calls upon the SGPC to take the

required initiative for creating an Apex Body, which includes representatives of all major Panthic organisations and Sikhs from across the world, with itself as nucleus under the patronage of Akal Takht Sahib.

“This gathering also appeals to all Sikh organisations to cooperate in the discharge of this historic responsibility for the glory of the Panth and to achieve the goals of *sarbat da bhala*.”

□

*Let your mind be washed in the pool of truth  
And become the abode of God.  
Make then, as leaf-offerings,  
Your devotion to please Him.  
Serve Him thereafter  
By dedicating to Him your life.  
You will then be able  
To enjoy your union with Him.*

GGs, p. 728

ਮਨੁ ਸੰਪਟੁ ਜਿਤੁ ਸਤ ਸਰਿ ਨਾਵਣੁ ਭਾਵਨੁ ਪਾਤੀ ਤ੍ਰਿਪਤਿ ਕਰੇ ॥  
ਪੂਜਾ ਪ੍ਰਾਣ ਸੇਵਕੁ ਜੇ ਸੇਵੇ ਇਨ੍ ਬਿਧਿ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਰਵਤੁ ਰਹੈ ॥

## REVIEWS

### DISCOVERING THE SIKHS AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A HISTORIAN

A REVIEW BY HARDEV SINGH\*

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*Author : W H McLeod*

*Publisher : Permanent Black, Delhi 920040*

*Price : Rs 550/-; Pages xii + 245*

The book *Discovering the Sikhs* has been divided into two parts — part I deals with biographical account of the author's life in New Zealand and Punjab, and part II contains his explanations in defence of the specific charges made against his writings. A full chapter is devoted to the Institute of Sikh Studies at Chandigarh and the role of Sikh scholars associated with it. Daljit Singh, Jagjit Singh, Kharak Singh Mann, Gurtej Singh and Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon find a special mention by the author. The author makes a bitter attack on the Institute (page 199): “Although the Institute of Sikh Studies may have genuinely believed that what they did was for the protection of the Panth, clearly it was dismally wrong. Victory for the Institute meant the defeat of sound teaching, honest inquiry, and the search for truth.”

Professor W H McLeod, the author was born in 1932 in New Zealand, had his schooling in Nelson College and obtained his Master's degree in History from Knox College in University of Otago. During his university days, the author had close connection with the Presbyterian Church and was a member of the Student Christian Movement. He became a divinity student in the Knox Theological College after completing his M A in History. Overseas Missions Committee recruited McLeod for missionary work in Punjab, and he joined Christian Boys Higher Secondary School in Kharar in 1958. It was during his sojourn in Punjab that the author became interested in

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the study of Sikh religion and Sikh history for his doctoral thesis and afterwards as a life-long mission. He learnt Punjabi in Gurmukhi script and acquired proficiency to read *Janamsakhis* and Sikh literature in original. He got his Ph D degree from University of London in 1965 and Clarendon Press published his thesis in 1968 under the revised title, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*.

In chapter 4, the author vividly describes his experiences in Punjab. He was a failure as a teacher of English in Kharar, "I decided that teaching English to Punjabi boys was not for me" (page 34). But in Baring Christian College (BCC), Batala, he was a popular and successful teacher of history even in Punjabi medium. During his interaction with students and staff at BCC, Batala, the author got a peep into the Sikh way of life in Punjab. On page 43, the author narrates his experiences, "In general the students proved to be very friendly and invited me out to their villages. These students were invariably Sikhs. These experiences taught me a great deal concerning their beliefs, their customs and the agricultural life of village Punjab." He spent 4 years in Batala out of his total sojourn of 11 years in Punjab. In addition to his teaching assignment he was fully absorbed in his research on Sikh religion, its history and culture. There is no mention of his missionary activities anywhere in this book for which he was recruited and dispatched to Punjab.

Professor W H McLeod has been a prolific writer of Sikhism and has published almost a dozen volumes. Some of his famous titles are : *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community*, *Early Sikh Tradition*, *Who is a Sikh*, *Sikhs of the Khalsa* and the title under review, *Discovering the Sikhs*. The author gives three reasons for his interest in Sikh studies (Chapter1, pages 3-6). He has been most controversial author on Sikhism after Ernest Trumpp. To make an analysis of his approach to Sikh studies, we must scrutinize the background material provided by the author himself. On page 21, he mentions, "I revelled in such questioning and in the overturning of old beliefs", as a member of Student Christian Movement. He was recruited as a missionary of Presbyterian Church, but he was not a believer ! The author calls himself an agnostic (atheist). That clearly shows the game plan of the author to secure a job in India on a false pretext, or we may call it a dishonesty of purpose. On page 47, the author mentions, "I never really believed in any religious system or

held any belief in God.” And further on page 48, “Sikhism believes in God (or *Wahguru*, or *Akal Purakh*). I do not believe, and my lack of belief lies behind all that I have written”.

Another prop used by the author to explain away criticism of his works on Sikhism is elaborated in chapter 8 (pages 129-131), "I am a western historian, trained in western methods of historical research and adhering to western notions of historiography. My primary objective has been to communicate an understanding of the Sikh people and their religion to educated western readers and who think in a western mode. This western understanding underlies all that I have ever written and no apology is offered for it." Applying the western method, the author lets loose a virulent attack on the sources of Sikh history and religion, namely, the *Janamsakhis*, *Rahitnamas* and *Varan Bhai Gurdas*.

In chapter 9, the author gives an overview of his books already published and draws support provided by Dr Ganda Singh in his editorial in *The Punjab Past and Present*. The author examines 124 *sakhis* and of these 87 were classified as possible, improbable, or impossible. This comprised such major anecdotes as Sajjan the Robber, the discourse with Siddhs on Mount Sumeru, Nanak's visit to Mecca, the meeting with the Emperor Babur, and Multan and the Jasmine petal. The author also rejects the historical evidence of Guru Nanak's visit to Ceylon and Baghdad. Bhai Gurdas, an eminent Sikh scholar and a contemporary of 3rd - 6th Gurus is considered to be one of the most authentic source on the Guru period and he mentions about Guru Nanak's visits to Mecca, Multan and Baghdad. The encounter with Siddhs is described by Guru Nanak in his composition *Siddh Gosht* in *Adi Guru Granth Sahib*. If we believe the contentious propositions of the author, it will be damaging for the Sikh faith. The author also challenges the authenticity of Kartarpuri Bir (*Adi Guru Granth Sahib*), originality of Guru Nanak and Sikh faith, and tries to create utter confusion in the minds of Sikh believers by his so-called western historical approach.

The Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh took up cudgels to demolish the McLeodian model of historiography which created a phobia amongst Indian and Western historians to find fault with the originality of Sikh faith. In chapter 11, the author tries to play down his critics, especially Daljeet Singh, Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon and Gurtej Singh. He writes (page 178) : "Gurtej Singh may represent the institution at its most influential, but assuredly the statements which

he produces are well off the mark". The comments of the author on *Planned Attack on Aad Sri Guru Granth Sahib* are noteworthy (page 183) : "The book is filled with absurdities and one can refuse to waste time answering it." But the author is vehement in his attack on the book *Ernest Trumpp and W H McLeod as scholars of Sikh History, Religion and Culture* by Dr Trilochan Singh. He writes (page 184), "At least those who read my books will surely have understood that Trilochan Singh makes claims that are simply not true. His manner was not at all appropriate for reasoned discussion and his book should accordingly be dismissed and set aside."

In chapter 12, the author laments his banishment from Toronto due to opposition by the local Sikhs and the Institute of Sikh Studies at Chandigarh which made a representation to the University of Toronto during 1990. On the part of the Institute, Kharak Singh Mann and Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon lead the attack. The author laments, "There are seven charges listed against me which I certainly do not accept." The author blames the Institute for banishment of Sikh Studies programme from University of Toronto (page 199).

The main text is followed by four appendices and a glossary of terms. The author tries to demolish the myth of Panja Sahib, i.e., palm mark on the boulder. What surprises me is the bold statement of the author in chapter 12 under the heading 'Regrets' (p. 210), "I do not regret the controversy that has arisen over my writings, at least not in the general sense." It is clear evidence / proof of the stubborn attitude adopted by the author and proves his arrogance.

I may close my review with some quotations from *The Spirit Born People* by Professor Puran Singh (pages 86-89) which are relevant to the academic / analytical approach adopted by most of the historians of Sikh religion. "History and biography are both lies, so far as these matters are concerned. Only fools concern themselves with what they call historical events. The greatest events are of the soul and they are revealed in one's own *surtā* (consciousness). Intellectual interpretations exhaust genius, it is self-spending of consciousness. Only a spiritual genius can write the authentic history of the Sikhs."

While reviewing the book *Discovery of the Sikhs*, I have discovered one of the most prolific, but controversial writers of Sikh history and religion.

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SIKHISM AND HISTORY

A REVIEW BY ISHWINDER SINGH*

Editors : Pashaura Singh & N Gerald Barrier

Publisher : Oxford University Press

Pages : 280; Price : Rs 595/-

This volume is a collection of papers presented at an international conference on Sikh Studies during September 27-29, 2001 at the University of Michigan. Two previous compilations of papers presented at earlier conferences in the same university have been published by Manohar Publishers. The current volume is prepared in honour of Prof W H McLeod and includes contributions by Pashaura Singh, N Gerald Barrier, Nikki-Gurinder Kaur Singh, Louis E Fenech, Robin Rinehart, Tony Ballantyne, Doris Jakobsh, Arthur Helweg and Darshan S Tatla. The contributors hold various positions in western universities and regard themselves as 'critical' and 'objective' commentators on Sikhs and Sikhism. However, critics often label their research as 'Eurocentric' and belonging to the 'revisionist' 'McLeodian' school of thought.

The book starts with a two-part introduction. The first one is an essay by Pashaura Singh on the contribution of Prof W H McLeod in the field of Sikh Studies. This essay contains a brief biography of McLeod, extracts from an earlier article by McLeod on 'Methodology and Belief' and a list of McLeod's publications. With McLeod's autobiography already out on sale, there is little that the reader will find new in the first part. Interestingly, Pashaura Singh reproduces a private communication between McLeod and himself as a proof that McLeod encouraged Singh to be his 'own person'. Predictably, Singh

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is all praise for McLeod's research and is quick to label criticism of McLeod's research as 'polemic'. The listing of McLeod's publications is likely to be of benefit to students and researchers of Sikhism. In part two of the introduction, N G Barrier neatly summarizes the themes of various papers contained in the book.

In the keynote speech, W H McLeod discusses some of the challenges he faced while researching the *Rahit*. His paper focuses on three issues – how Dr Jeevan Deol's discovery of MS 770 in the Guru Nanak Dev University library helped McLeod's research on the *Rahit*, the difficulties involved in translating some words found in the *Rahitnamas* and as to how the *Guru Kian Sakbian* hindered his research. McLeod also reiterates one of his favourite theories – that the *Rahit* of the Five Ks was not enjoined by Guru Gobind Singh, but was formulated later by the Singh Sabha scholars. McLeod has been at the task of researching the *Rahit* for about quarter of a century and the fruit of his labour – *Sikhs of the Khalsa* was released in 2003. Those who have read this book will find nothing that is new in the keynote speech.

In his response to the keynote address, Pashaura Singh tries to counter McLeod's theory on the Five Ks. However, his reasoning only ends up making matters worse. Singh informs us that Guru Gobind Singh gave the injunction to the Khalsa to wear 'five weapons'. At the time of annexation of Punjab in 1849, the British put a legal ban on carrying arms. Therefore, in order to meet his new situation the organizers of the Singh Sabha movement replaced the tradition of the 'five weapons' with that of the 'five religious symbols', known as the Five Ks. The *Kirpan* now no longer remained a weapon but was worn as a matter of religious conviction along with the long hair and was 'concealed' under the turban. To justify his theory, Singh gives the following poor apology – 'This is not surprising since every dynamic community is always involved in the process of re-definition and renewal in response to new historical situations'.

The weak footing on which the above theory stands would at once be evident to the discerning reader. The carrying of weapons was banned by the British under the Arms Act of 1878 and not in 1849. Writing in 1877 (i.e., before the ban on carrying weapons by the British), Ernest Trumpp clearly states that Sikhs are required to always

have with them five things all of which commence with the letter *Kakka*.

Compromise on the Sikh symbols is unacceptable to the Sikhs even today as would be amply evident from the protracted legal battles fought by the Sikhs all over the world for wearing their symbols. If compromise with the British authorities was the intent of the Singh Sabha leaders, then why was a *Hukumnama* issued from Akal Takht in 1913 stating that the minimum length of the Sikh *Kirpan* should be 12 inches and why did Sikhs enter into agitations to get the restriction on keeping *Kirpans* removed? In 1914, yielding to the pressure from the Sikhs, the British had to remove the restriction on keeping *Kirpans* by Sikhs.

One wonders how useful Pashaura Singh's research would be for the cause of Diaspora Sikhs? Every other day one hears of legal battles undertaken by Sikhs to fight for their right to wear the turban or *Kirpan*. If an 'expert witness' testifies that the Sikhs have already changed their religious symbols once because of the British ban on carrying weapons, wouldn't it strengthen the opposition's case? Wouldn't the authorities expect the 'dynamic' Sikhs to 'redefine and renew' their tradition in response to their new laws? What would happen to the case against the ban on wearing the turban in France? In the past, Pashaura Singh's 'expert testimony' in the Air Canada case ensured that Sikhs lost their right to wear the *Kirpan* on Air Canada flights.

Pashaura Singh's other contribution in the book is an essay on *Sikh Identity in the Light of History: A Dynamic Perspective*. This is essentially a rehash of McLeod's book *Who is a Sikh?* Singh is, however, careful to gloss over some of McLeod's controversial statements. It is only in the concluding section of the essay that Singh offers something original. In this section, Singh proposes to introduce a new term *Icbhadhari* into the Sikh lexicon. He informs us that 'the clean-shaven Sikhs do not like the term *Mona* as the designation of their status within the Panth'. In order to overcome this difficulty he has coined this new term. However, even this avowedly well meaning act by Singh seems to have misfired because the 'clean-shaven' Sikhs feel that by labeling them as *Icbhadhari*, Singh is likening them to a snake. Also, some of Singh's statistics in this section are widely off the mark. For example, his statement that 85-90% of the Sikhs are *Amritdhari*s/

Keshdharis reflects an ignorance of the ground realities.

Louis Fenech is currently working on a book on Bhai Nand Lal 'Goya'. The current volume contains a paper by him on *Bhai Nand Lal Goya and the Sikh Tradition* in which he shares with the readers his current line of research on the Persian poet. He explores why Nand Lal's Persian works remain unreported in *Rahit* literature, the value and limits of Persian in evolving Sikh tradition, Sufi influence and the changing attitude of Sikhs towards the Muslims. His research on the subject still seems to be in the preliminary stages, since even Fenech accepts that what is mostly offered in the paper is speculation.

Robin Rinehart's paper on *Strategies for Interpreting the Dasam Granth* is topical and quite interesting. Without taking any sides, the author aptly observes that in the current debate on the authorship of the *Dasam Granth* the same arguments are repeated *ad nauseum*, often without full consideration of the available evidence. The author feels that the existing evidence may not be sufficient to reach a conclusion on authorship that will satisfy everyone. She further adds that even if such evidence were to be found, it is quite likely that everyone would not accept the validity of such evidence and come to an agreement. In conclusion, the author suggests that scholars need to rethink the strategies that are being used in considering the text of the *Dasam Granth*. At the same time she reminds us that in the past the theological issues raised by the *Dasam Granth* had been deflected for the sake of maintaining unity in the *Panth*.

Doris Jakobsh's contribution to the current volume is a paper entitled *What is in a Name? : Circumscribing Sikh Female Nomenclature*. The main point pursued by her in this paper is that Guru Gobind Singh did not add 'Kaur' to the name of Sikh woman. Sikhs had been using it in a culturally significant manner since long and it was only in the Singh Sabha period that the appellation 'Kaur' as a specific Sikh symbol was for the first time sanctioned. This conclusion seems to have rattled Pashaura Singh as in an endnote he refers to Jakobsh's theory and remarks that the actual naming practice was there since pre-modern times, though the formulation of the convention may have come as the result of Singh Sabha reforms. As in the case of the Five Ks, Singh's comments once again end up marginalizing the contribution of Guru Gobind Singh.

N G Barrier is in familiar territory when he analyzes issues relating to the Akal Takht, SGPC, *Rahit Maryada* and Law in his paper on

Authority, Politics, and Contemporary Sikhism. Barrier explores as to how Sikhs have constantly struggled with balancing the need for consolidating traditions with the political task of expanding numbers and compromise. Even though the author tries to take the position of a detached observer, his sympathies are quite evident throughout.

Darshan S Tatla's essay entitled *Writing Prejudice: The image of Sikhs in Bharati Mukherjee's Writings* explores how non-Sikhs view the Sikh community and portray them in fiction and history. The essay is a balanced critique of the fictional and non-fictional writings of Bharati Mukherjee, Professor of Literature in University of California, Berkeley. By quoting portions from Mukherjee's writings, the author clearly brings out the distorted portrayal of Sikhs and Sikhism in her writings. Tatla shows how Mukherjee indulges in wholesale and crude generalizations in her books through which a religious tradition along with the majority of its followers are condemned.

After going through the book, the reader is left with mixed feelings. Some of the essays in the book are quite interesting and provide valuable information and insightful analysis. Pashaura Singh's contributions are quite disappointing considering his religious background. Some of his 'research' reminds the reader of George Santayana's observation that "History is a pack of lies about events that never happened, told by people who weren't there". On the whole one gets the feeling that the two and a half year delay in the publication of the conference proceedings has killed the book's novelty factor. This is because the contributors have repeated their points in other publications that were released since the conference was held. In light of the repetitive material, the book appears overpriced.

□

*Prays Nanak : May your Name, Your glory, O God !
Be ever in the ascendent !
May the whole humanity
Be blessed with peace and prosperity,
In Your will, by Your grace !*

– Sikh Prayer

**ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮ ਚੜ੍ਹਦੀ ਕਲਾ,
ਤੇਰੇ ਭਾਣੇ ਸਰਬਤ ਦਾ ਭਲਾ ।**

JANAMSAKHI TRADITION

A REVIEW BY KHARAK SINGH*

Author : Dr Kirpal Singh

Publisher : Singh Brothers, Amritsar

Pages : 254; Price : Rs. 395/-.

According to the author the *Janamsakhi Tradition* constitutes the following four *janamsakhis* :-

1. *Vilayatwali Janamsakhi* written in the first half of the 17th century. Bhai Vir Singh edited and published it under the name *Puratan Janamsakhi*.
2. *Janamsakhi Miharban* : Its author, Manohar Das Miharban, was the son of Guru Arjun Dev's elder brother, Prithi Chand. "Being a direct descendent of the Guru's family, he was conversant with the traditions of Guru Nanak."
3. *Janamsakhi by Bhai Bala* : It is claimed in the very beginning of the *janamsakhi*, that it was sponsored by Guru Angad Dev, and Bhai Bala is mentioned as companion of Guru Nanak during his travels. The claim has, however, been belied by overwhelming evidence unearthed by Karam Singh and other historians. Its author was a follower of Baba Hindal, and his motive in writing the *janamsakhi* was to extol Baba Hindal and to degrade Guru Nanak.
4. *Janamsakhi Bhai Mani Singh* : This *janamsakhi* is based on the exegesis of the first *var* of Bhai Gurdas and the then prevalent traditions about Guru Nanak.

After giving a brief description of the four constituents of the tradition, summarised above, Dr Kirpal Singh has critically examined

* Dr, Editor, *Abstracts of Sikh Studies*, Chandigarh

these *janamsakhis* to construct a biography of Guru Nanak on the basis of the anecdotes reported. This exercise covers two lengthy chapters, that account for the bulk of the volume. In this analysis, he has kept the following points before him to measure up to the modern historical methodology :-

- i) Critical examination of the extant *janamsakhi* traditions in order to decipher the earliest traditions and their affinity with historical events.
- ii) The shrines dedicated to the memory of Guru Nanak vis-à-vis their connection with *janamsakhi* tradition.
- iii) Land and sea routes of the 16th century.

Following Dr Trumpp, Dr Hew MacLeod adopted method of analytical study, and classified all *sakhis* in various categories as 'likely', 'not likely', 'probable' and 'not probable'. In this way, he rejected almost all the anecdotes on the plea that there is no record of Guru's travels to distant places, and came to the conclusion that '*Janamsakhis* are not reliable sources of information, and that they represent only 'Nanak of faith' and not 'Nanak of history'.

Dr Kirpal Singh argues that a method of historical analysis which does not take into account the contemporary conditions and travel routes, old memorials or Gurdwaras and tradition (written tradition in the form of *janamsakhis*) as well as oral tradition, cannot yield a right conclusion. He gives an example to illustrate this point :-

If we study the contemporary conditions we find that during the sixteenth century Punjab, a number of pilgrims went to Mecca every year from Multan, Pakpattan and Uchch (Bahawalpur state). One boat is preserved at Uchch wherein Guru Nanak and Makhdum of Uchch travelled together to Mecca. Bhai Gurdas, early sixteenth century writer who has recorded travels of Guru Nanak, has clearly mentioned that Mecca and Baghdad were visited by Guru Nanak. There is an inscription in Baghdad. Swami Anand Acharya wrote a poem on that inscription. Recently, the place has also been discovered where Guru Nanak sat. With such overwhelming evidence Guru Nanak's visit to Mecca and Baghdad cannot be denied.

The real problem with the western scholars is that they are not adept in Punjabi or *Gurbani*. Nor do they have time, patience and

perhaps competence to delve deep into every word of *Janamsakhi* and arrive at right conclusion. An example is given below:

- a) In *Puratan Janamsakhi* there is a mention of Sheikh Tatiar of Panipat. Guru Nanak met him. To a western scholar Sheikh Tatiar is not a Muslim name, hence the *Sakhi* would appear imaginary. But this is not the case. Sheikh Tatiar is Punjabi version of Sheikh Tahir which means 'Pure'. He was popularly known as Sheikh Tahir and his real name was Sheikh Idul Kabir. He was contemporary of Guru Nanak and one of the successors of Sheikh Sharafuddin of Panipat.

Dr Kirpal Singh upholds the importance of tradition as a valid source of information. Jan Vaserina the French scholar, he points out, has constructed the history of African tribes from their traditions. In case of Guru Nanak also, traditions should not be rejected merely for want of written evidence. Bhai Gurdas was the first to record the traditions of Guru Nanak. Though he was not the Guru's contemporary, he was closely associated with the house of the Gurus. One of the companions of Bhai Gurdas was Baba Buddha who had lived with Guru Nanak and seen how the legend of Guru Nanak had grown. Bhai Gurdas was nephew of Guru Amar Das, the third Sikh Guru, lived with Guru Ram Das, the 4th Sikh Guru, and was the scribe of Guru Arjun for writing the *Adi Granth*. He was, thus, an ideal man to record the tradition of Guru Nanak which he wrote in his first *var*.

The *Janamsakhi* writers, not satisfied with Bhai Gurdas' pithy account of Guru Nanak, expanded it and supported it effectively with verses of Guru Nanak at appropriate places. In a way, all *Janamsakhis* are explanation, elucidation and illustration of first *var* of Bhai Gurdas. Hence the *Janamsakhis* are reliable source of information.

As a result of his investigations Dr Kirpal Singh concludes, "Therefore, most of the anecdotes recorded in the *janamsakhis* fall within the orbit of history. In my opinion it will be fallacious to call them by any other name". He adds that "the *janamsakhis* shall ever remain the most important source of information on Guru Nanak."

Dr Kirpal Singh is an established historian, and ranks among the most eminent authorities of all times on Sikh history. His contribution is indeed outstanding in terms of quantity as well as quality. His work on the partition of Punjab is widely recognised. The present work on

Janamsakhis will also go down in Sikh historiography as a major landmark.

The contribution of the editor, Prof Prithipal Singh Kapoor also deserves generous appreciation. He is an eminent historian in his own right. Besides doing an excellent job of editing the volume, he has contributed a brilliant introduction, in which he endorses the conclusions drawn by the author. He says, "All in all, the *Janamsakhis* remain with us the most important as well as most voluminous source of information about Guru Nanak." He surveys the background of the *janamsakhis* and criticism of the so-called sceptical historians. After dealing with their objections, he puts them on the defensive and brings forth two questions :

- (a) Whether the only job of a 'sceptical historian' is to pursue the task in a negative fashion;
- (b) Whether methodology is the be all and end all of historical research. He adds : "McLeod's students, Pashaura Singh and Harjot Singh Oberoi follow him literally. The former applied McLeod's theory of evolution to the textual study of *Adi Granth*, and the latter looked at the transformation of *Sanatan* (literally ancient, essentially a word used in Brahminical terminology) Sikh tradition or what he calls 'pluralist tradition' into 'an orderly, pure singular form of Sikhism'. Harjot pursued his research at the Australian National University, but it carries the imprint of London University School of Oriental and African Studies methodology, as it was closely monitored by Hew McLeod. It is noteworthy that Harjot fails to identify and appreciate the first step with regard to demarcation of distinct 'religious boundaries' taken by the founder of Sikhism himself with the nomination of Guru Angad as his successor and his refusal to recognise the Hindu Pantheon in his religious scheme. On the other hand, he says, the process of demarcation of religious boundaries started with a "dramatic change that came about with the rise of the Khalsa in the eighteenth century; sections of the Sikh population now began to push for a distinct and separate religious culture." The fallacy of this statement shall be well understood if a reference is made to Mobid's observations in his *Dabistan-i-Maṣāhib* written in the seventeenth century. He says, "To be brief, Nanak's followers

scorn images. Their belief is that all the Gurus are Nanak as has been said above. They do not recite *mantras* of the Hindus and they do not pay respect to their idol temples. They do not count *avtars* for anything. They do not have any attachment to Sanskrit, which the Hindus call the language of angels." Also, a close study of the *Janamsakhis*, sufficiently reveals the anxiety of the compilers to lay stress on the distinct identity and superiority of Nanak's faith, and they frequently bring in the Hindu legendary accounts only to prove their hypothesis. However, the heretical versions like that of the Hindalis played havoc to denigrate the original *Janamsakhi* tradition. This emerging school of Sikh historiographers from the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University, should have taken these important factors into consideration before characterising all the *Janamsakhis* as hagiographies devoid of historical elements. No doubt Sikh history is only 500 years old, yet the critical or so to say the 'sceptical historian' equipped with modern methodology, needs to take into account, the earlier concepts of history as 'accumulation of records' and 'story telling', besides the dominance of Christian historiography that prevailed throughout the middle ages."

The book is indeed a most valuable contribution to knowledge of Sikh history and establishes the *Janamsakhis* as an indispensable source for any account of the life of Guru Nanak Dev.

□

*When one nurtures the Truth in the heart,
One becomes True;
And through Truth
May meet the True One.*

– GGS, p. 565-66

ਜਬ ਸਾਚ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਹੋਇ ਸਾਚਾ ਤਾਮਿ ਸਾਚਾ ਪਾਈਐ ॥

THE SIKHS IN CANADA
– MIGRATION, RACE, CLASS AND GENDER –

A REVIEW BY JASWANT SINGH*

Authors : Gurcharan Singh Basran & B Singh Bolaria

Publisher : Oxford University Press, New Delhi

Pages : 222; Price : Rs 495/-

Both these authors are Professors, Department of Sociology, University of Saskatchewan, Canada. The lucid book has 9 chapters, each almost a research thesis, intensely informative, at places hair raising, at places eulogizing. With incredible fortitude this vibrant Sikh community has boldly waded through trials, tribulations and humiliations of the early migrants, and created a niche for themselves in Canadian society now. It was quite a Herculean task to go through the finer details of early Sikh migrants and racial discrimination they faced. My aim will be to highlight chapter-wise the salient features of the book.

Sikhs, Sikhism and the Khalsa Panth : Historically, religions have played integrative as well as disintegrative role. Guru Nanak's religion believes in unity of God and brotherhood of all mankind. Guru Angad laid emphasis on Punjabi language and education; Guru Amar Das stressed equality through *langar*; Guru Ram Das founded Amritsar City; Guru Arjun Dev is known for building the Golden Temple and compilation of Guru Granth Sahib, Guru Hargobind is known for the concept of *Miri Piri*; the Seventh and Eighth Gurus followed the earlier Gurus and consolidated the Panth; Guru Tegh Bahadur faced both internal / external challenges and was martyred on 11th November, 1675 at Delhi and finally Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa on Baisakhi day in 1699. While dealing with Sikh identity, Sikhs personal / social conduct, the institution of *Panj Pyaras* has been highlighted.

* Maj Gen (Dr), AVSM, # 1801, Sector 33-D, Chandigarh

Sikh Religion, Language and Politics : Here they highlight the British 'divide and rule' policy, Canadian Sikh's anti-colonial politics, formation of Ghadar Party with Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna as its first President, Komagata Maru incident, when 376 passengers (340 Sikhs) were refused entry into Canada, the details of Anandpur Sahib Resolutions and details of Sikh martyrs in various freedom movements out of proportion to their 2% population.

Migration, Labour and Racism : International migration is discussed. They point out that immigrant and migrant workers receive the lowest wages. Exploitation of racial minority workers, circulation of workers and across national boundaries to reduce labour cost are highlighted. Their racialisation provides an excuse for exploitation. Racial inequality is shown as basic feature of Canadian society.

From India to Canada : Giving a graphic description of arrival of Sikhs to Canada, authors highlight the arrival of first Sikh Bakhshish Singh in 1904, Sant Teja Singh a student of law (1908). Forty Sikhs were working in Columbia River logging Company (1910) out of whom only one was turbaned. Sikh Gurdwara and religion played an important role in the lines of migrants comprising Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims and East Indians.

Colonization and Indian Labour : Authors emphasise that early Sikh workers were quite disadvantaged. They were insulted and ridiculed for their appearance and were not allowed to bring their wives. Gurdwara was the focal point of all Hindustani's religious, social and community activities.

Post War Immigrants : Immigrants from non-traditional sources have been elaborated. Recent immigrants are better educated, and are essential as labour force for Canada. Media has played an important role in shaping public opinion keeping a 'close watch on city Sikhs', and violence distinctly on non-Canadians. They have specially brought out violence against Sikhs after attack on World Trade Centre in September 2001 and shooting of Balbir Singh Sodhi in Arizona, lesser earnings of visible minorities than white workers, living difficulties of the visible minorities and such other disparities.

This book is a highly researched treatise about the Sikhs in Canada which gives a true glimpse into their initial handicaps, their perseverance, their hard work, their need as labour force, their earning inequality and their final triumph in creating a proud place in Canadian polity. It is informative and educative. A bigger print would have been a better option.

LEST WE THE SIKHS GO ASTRAY

A REVIEW BY GURBAKHS SINGH*

Author : Gajinder Singh

Publisher : Mrs Manbir G Singh

Pages: 168

Price : Rs 220/-; Deluxe : Rs 285/-

There have been lot of statements that Sikhs are losing their commitment to their faith. Seminars have been held on the rising apostasy to find ways to check it. Many articles in Sikh journals and newspapers have appeared drawing attention of the Sikh organisations, particularly the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee and the Khalsa schools/colleges, towards this important issue. In fact some writers believe that these institutions are responsible for the deteriorating situation, since they have not been performing their duties towards the youth.

Touched by this situation, S Gajinder Singh wrote some essays to caution the Sikhs, which were published in the *Abstracts of Sikh Studies*, Chandigarh and *The Sikh Review*, Kolkata. He wrote a few more essays to include some other major issues and put them together in the print book, *Lest we the Sikhs go astray*.

To stress the need of the faith for human beings, he has titled the preface, *Kartoot pasu ki manas jat*. It means that by ignoring faith, we human beings behave as animals.

This makes the purpose of the book very clear. The author says, "More than reading and contemplation, the Sikh is a practical 'doer'". He not only says it but sets traditions by acting on Gurus' set pattern.

* Dr, # 959, Phase IV, Mohali - 160 059

The Sikh maxim is : *karni* is more edifying than *kathni*.” All his opinions follow the directions of *gurbani*, “The authority of my formulations is the supreme Sikh scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, which is quoted with due references.”

Pointing to the common weaknesses observed among the members of the Sikh community, he quotes,

“*Daat pyari visria datar.*” Guru Granth Sahib, p. 676
(*To them*) *Give-aways are more precious than the Giver !*

To explain it, he mentions, “You would find Sikhs as the most impatient and restless community, to the extent of even going for illegal entry everywhere. In their ill-founded zeal to make money and reap riches, they get trapped, after investing their small holdings in a fatal bid to become economically well off in the unknown pastures, in imitation of wild stories and a few successes of those who left the shores of their mother country.” According to him, “with the dilution of the lessons taught by our Gurus, Sikhs stand denuded, to lose morally, spiritually and materially, as the Sikh spirit may vanish without their sincere contemplation of Guru’s Word and the traditions bestowed to them in more than 239 years of the Guru period.”

The author worries that our highest theological seats are mute spectators before this metamorphosis which is pulling the community towards the old rut of ancient faiths. The reader will agree with him that “None else is to blame for the present state of affairs, but the Sikhs’ own lack of total faith and non-adherence to the wisdom of the Gurus, which is sought to be replaced by puny intellectuals who can only see as far as their limited experience and vision carry them.” The book gives to Sikhs a timely warning about their lives, straying away from the high code of Sikh conduct.

The author notes that “A Sikh goes to battle only when it is the need of the hour, without anger, hatred, rancour, excitement, sense of racial superiority. The fact is, Sikhs do not come under the umbrella of the racist league of hereditary chosen people. It is the spiritual and moral change brought into being of their Faith, their Gurus’ guidance to make them superior, intelligent beings, without that vicious pride and repugnance of others.”

We Sikhs today must follow this *Gurmat* path to face the onslaught of ‘modernism’. All aspects of the Sikh philosophy have been covered

in a scholarly way from *Guru Nanak's Panth* to *Ever Ready Khalsa*, the last chapter of the book.

Sikh way of life has been described in the chapter, *Gaadi Rah - The Straight Path*. The discussions regarding *Karam Kand*, miracles, doctrine of grace, telling lies, transmigration, etc., reveal the thorough knowledge of *gurbani* of the writer. The discussion on the topics, *Sehjdhari*, modernity and Sikhism, personality development is very convincing.

The author deserves thanks from both the Sikhs and non-Sikhs for providing answers to the serious questions in their mind regarding Sikh faith and its relevance today. Further, it reminds Sikhs not to ignore the valuable directions to enjoy peace in their lives.

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ANNUAL SEMINAR

The Annual Seminar of the Institute of Sikh Studies will be held on the 13th & 14th November, 2004 at Chandigarh at its headquarters, Gurdwara Singh Sabha, Kanthala, Tribune Chowk, Chandigarh. The theme is :

Martyrdom in Sikhism

With Particular Reference to the Sahibzadas.

The seminar is dedicated to the 3rd Centenary of the martyrdom of Sahibzadas being observed during this year. The 13th November is also the martyrdom day of Baba Deep Singh.

All are cordially invited to attend. Scholars are requested to present papers on the subject, which should reach the Institute by the 1st October, 2004.

NEWS & VIEWS

INSTITUTE OF SIKH STUDIES (IOSS) ON SYL CANAL

“DO NOT PUT THE CART BEFORE THE HORSE”

After the general meeting held on the 7th June 2004, to discuss the recent Supreme Court decision on SYL Canal, the IOSS issued the following press note.

All residents of Punjab were indeed shocked to read the Supreme Court verdict on the digging and completion of the SYL Canal. We at the Institute of Sikh Studies feel confident that the Central Government will consider all aspects of the case, including availability and distribution of waters, riparian laws and denial of the constitutional rights of Punjab before it acts on this Supreme Court Judgement highly detrimental to Punjab.

The present order is the outcome of Haryana's suit regarding enforcement of an earlier order relating only to digging of a canal. This is a decree enforcing implementation of Central Government fiat termed as agreement which is void *ab initio*. Nothing is hidden from the present government as it has brilliant legal luminaries as advisers and ministers. All Indian, nay, international attention is now focussed on the political will of the United Progressive Alliance to act. We do not want thousands of *crores* of *rupees* dumped into the construction of a canal without deciding first what quantity of water, if any, will flow into it. We only say, “Do not put the cart before the horse”. Decide the Waters Issue before wasting precious money and mammoth national effort.

Punjab is just emerging out of a shattering militancy syndrome. Let all parties stop blaming each other to gain petty political mileage out of an issue that threatens the life and

livelihood of all Punjabis. Let us fight for our constitutional and legal rights unitedly on the legal and political fronts.

Assuredly constitutional right of Punjab over its river waters is unimpeachable and inviolable.

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IOSS CONDOLES THE DEATH OF SARDAR GURCHARAN SINGH TOHRA

Chandigarh, April 5. Sardar Gurdev Singh, President and all the members of the Institute of Sikh Studies expressed their deep anguish at the passing away of Jathedar Gurcharan Singh Tohra, President, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. He has been a crusader, philosopher and guide for the Sikh Panth. He fervently promoted the cause of education and made tremendous contribution towards national solidarity.

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DENIAL OF FREEDOM FIGHTER STATUS

Chandigarh, May 6. IOSS expressed deep concern and anguish over the reported denial of 'Freedom Fighter' status to Koma Gata Maru passengers and Kuka Martyrs of 1872 fame by the Union Home Ministry, while responding to PIL's filed by Sardar Malwinder Jit Singh Waraich in this regard before the High Court.

The members affirmed that sacrifices of Koma Gata Maru passengers and Kuka Martyrs were a landmark in the struggle for Indian Independence, and urged the government to revoke its decision.

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INTELLECTUALS DEMAND SGPC ELECTION MANIFESTO

A meeting of the Chanigarh Chapter of the Sikh Core Group attended by S G S Shergill, S Gurdev Singh, Brig Gurdip Singh, Dr Gurmit Singh, Maj Gen Jaswant Singh, Dr Kharak Singh, Dr Kirpal Singh and S Mohinder Singh was held to take stock of the run up to the SGPC elections.

The members welcomed the decision of holding the SGPC elections without any further postponement. The elections provide an opportunity for reconstituting the SGPC house with not only a new lease of tenure, but hopefully with exalted motivations.

The members were unanimous in expressing satisfaction that the

Jathedar Sri Akal Takhat Sahib has very appropriately and sagaciously issued the Code of Conduct to be followed for nominating the prospective candidates. This is a minimum commitment that must be expected from a Gursikh who volunteers himself in the service of the Panth through the forum of the august institution of the SGPC.

However, the purpose of the Code of Conduct will only be served if it is implemented in letter and spirit. As such an onerous responsibility falls on the High Priests to enforce the proposed measure without any relaxation. It was accordingly mooted in the meeting that as a measure of basic transparency a written declaration to that effect must be obtained from each contesting candidate. Failure to comply with the Code must then invite action from Sri Akal Takht Sahib.

Simultaneously, the members appealed to the voters in general for being very circumspect in exercising their right of voting, since the future functioning of the SGPC house – its quality and intensity - depends on their choice. They should vote for only such candidates as are committed to the Gurus' cause. Loyalty to the Panth should over-ride party and group considerations.

The members also wished to convey to those who are in the election fray to announce their manifesto or agenda on the basis of which their merit may be assessed by the voters judiciously and later, if elected, their performance be subjected to scrutiny.

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IOSS CONGRATULATES DR MANMOHAN SINGH

Chandigarh, May 22. The President and members of the Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh congratulated Dr Manmohan Singh on his appointment as Prime Minister of India. The resolution says, "It speaks of his infinite ability, honesty, integrity, global vision and financial wizardry. This is a proof of Sikhs being hardworking, and an achieving community. The Institute of Sikh Studies congratulates Dr Manmohan Singh and prays for his successful innings as Prime Minister."

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SIKH CORE GROUP CALLS FOR A UNITED STAND ON SYL CRISIS

A meeting of the Chandigarh Chapter of the Sikh Core Group, attended by S G S Shergill, S Gurdev Singh, Brig Gurdip Singh, Dr Gurmit

Singh, Maj Gen Jaswant Singh, Dr Kharak Singh, Dr Kirpal Singh and S Mohinder Singh, was held to review the situation arising from the latest decision given by the Supreme Court pertaining to the SYL Canal.

The members in one voice expressed shock and surprise over the verdict of the Supreme Court as any action that has the consequences of denuding the water resources of Punjab would lead to disastrous results. For want of adequate river water irrigation and over dependence on tubewell supply, the subsoil water has gone down to precariously low levels in major parts of the State. If the basic and rightful requirements of the State are ignored, it can only lead to widespread upheaval, because unwarranted depletion of river water would surely turn Punjab into Andhra type 'Killing Fields' .

Notwithstanding the legal options that the Punjab Govt would surely exercise, the members appeal to all political parties to eschew rhetoric of 'blame game', and realising the gravity of the situation, maintain solidarity in opposing the unjust and discriminatory pronouncements. It needs to be conclusively driven home to the 'powers that be' that **ANY** demand on the Punjab river waters is **FUNDAMENTALLY UNCONSTITUTIONAL**. Furthermore, that the future survival of the Punjab farmers is at stake.

In keeping with the above scenario it would be in the fitness of things to address this vital issue as a dominant topic, projecting a united stand, in the forthcoming Assembly Session.

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S GURDEV SINGH UNANIMOUSLY ELECTED PRESIDENT OF SES

Sardar Gurdev Singh, IAS (retd) has been unanimously elected President of Sikh Educational Society, which is one of the oldest Sikh bodies running various Educational Institutions. At present, the Educational Society runs Sri Guru Gobind Singh College, Chandigarh, Guru Gobind Singh College, Chandigarh, Guru Gobind Singh College for Women, Chandigarh, Guru Gobind Singh College of Pharmacy, Chandigarh, Guru Gobind Singh Collegiate Secondary School, Chandigarh, Sikh National College, Banga and Sikh National College, Qadian. All these institutions enjoy high reputation for academic excellence and outstanding achievements in sports. Jathedar Gurcharan Singh Tohra was the President of Sikh Educational Society for the last 9 years and Sardar Gurdev Singh was its Vice-President. Earlier to Jathedar Tohra, Sardar Ajit

Singh Sarhadi, Ex-Minister, NWF provinces and Sardar Kapur Singh, Ex-Finance Minister, Punjab had been Presidents of this Society, which has been providing educational facilities for more than 60 years.

The Institute of Sikh Studies congratulates Sardar Gurdev Singh for this honor and prays that he is institutional in providing excellent educational facilities from the above institutions.

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BSNL APOLOGISES FOR SARDARJI JOKE LINE

Chandigarh, June 1. It may be recalled that BSNL introduced a joke line on telephone 1250110, based in Ludhiana with effect from 12th December, 2003, on which 'Sardarji' jokes could be heard or recorded any time of the day. Most of the jokes were objectionable, and ridiculed the Sikhs, distorting their image. As soon as it came to our notice, we alerted the SGPC, and the Chief Khalsa Diwan, beside the Akal Takht Sahib through a letter dated January 28, 2004. This matter was taken up with the BSNL and the Govt of India. The Chief Khalsa Diwan served a legal notice on the BSNL as well as the Ministry concerned.

As a result of the prompt action on our part, the joke line was immediately discontinued. A letter of apology from the franchise holder of the BSNL follows : – Editor

April 30, 2004

Sir,

We are in receipt of your above referred notice addressed to the Secretary, Govt of India, Ministry of Communication, The CMD, BSNL and GM, BSNL, Ludhiana.

We have been offering the value added services to the basic subscribers of BSNL through the IVR platform as franchisee of BSNL. One of the service included joke line on 1250110. It allowed a caller to record jokes as well as listen to jokes left by others. It was reported to us that certain jokes regarding the Sikh community were found to be objectionable. On being informed of the same we had immediately removed such section of the jokes from the service and the same was confirmed to the General Manager, Ludhiana. We state that this occurrence was unintentional and sincerely apologise for the same.

It may not be out of place to mention here that we offer daily *Mukhwaak* from the Golden Temple, Amritsar over the same platform

on the number 1250 115. We further offer our services to you to use our platform to promote and propagate your teachings, knowledge and other objectives.

Please accept our sincere apologies once again and also give us a chance to promote the interests of your community from a simple to use phone platform.

Yours sincerely
G D Binani, Mg Director

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**MONTREAL DECLARES 1ST SEPT, 2004 AS  
A DAY IN HOMAGE**

The city council of Montreal (Canada) adopted the following motion in recognition of Montreal's Sikh community :

“Considering that the Sikh community was one of Montreal's pioneering communities, which contributed to the social, economical and cultural development of this city;

“Considering that the year 2004 marks the 400th Anniversary of the compilation of the Guru Granth Sahib, the Holy Bible of the Sikhs;

“Considering that this event will be celebrated all over the world on September 1, 2004;

“Considering that the Guru Granth is a symbol of religious, racial and regional tolerance because it contains the Scriptures of the Muslims, Hindus, high and low Castes Saints belonging to the different regions of India and Pakistan;

“Considering that in 1999, the Federal Government issued a postage stamp to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the arrival of Sikhs in Canada and their undeniable contribution to the advancement of this country;

“It is

Proposed by the Mayor of Montreal, Gerald Tremblay  
Seconded by the Leader of the Official Opposition, Pierre Bourque  
That City Council declares September 1, 2004, a day in homage of Montreal's Sikh community and in honour of the compilation of the Guru Granth Sahib.

Through this motion, the City of Montreal renews its commitment

towards its cultural communities of being an inclusive, just, fair and open city for Montrealers of all origins.” (*Courtesy : Bhai Harbans Lal <japji@comcast.net>*)

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### IOSS TO INTENSIFY RESEARCH

Chandigarh, June 7, 2004. In its monthly meeting held on 7th June, 2004 the IOSS decided to take up systematic research on Sikh history, *gurbani* and philosophy. It was decided to recruit qualified scholars for the purpose against suitable honorarium and to give them specific assignments to be completed in a specified period. A committee of the following was constituted to plan, guide and supervise the programme : Dr Kirpal Singh; Dr Hardev Singh; & Dr Kharak Singh (Convenor).

The above committee held its first meeting the 18th June, 2004 and decided to take up the following in a priority basis :

1. Translation of Persian sources of Sikh history into English, Punjabi.
2. Oral History
3. Study of controversial Sikh classics like Gurbilas.

The Institute need financial resources to carryout the programme. We appeal to Sikh individuals/organisations to support this programme liberally. With a donation of Rs. 1 *lakh* only, a project can be sponsored for one year, under which a scholar will be hired and paid a fellowship named after the donor. The report findings of the research will also be published in the name of the donor. With a one-time donation of Rs 10 *laks*, a fellowship can be established on a permanent basis. We hope Sikhs interested in promotion of Sikh religion will respond enthusiastically.

~ ~ ~

### US COURT ALLOWS SIKH POLICEMEN TO WEAR TURBAN

In a significant judgement, an US court has asked the New York Police Department to reinstate a Sikh traffic policeman, who quit after he was barred from wearing turban while on duty, and allowed him to wear the religious headgear.

Jasjit Singh Jaggi, a traffic officer, was ‘discriminated against based on his religious beliefs’ and should be reinstated, as well as allowed to

wear a turban and grow his beard, Administrative Law Judge Donna Merris ruled yesterday.

The judgement, which could be first step in allowing Sikhs and employees of other religions to wear their religious articles while at work, came in a case filed by Jaggi last year with the City Commission of Human Rights, accusing the NYPD of religious discrimination.

Jaggi filed the complaint on June 19, 2002 after he was informed by the department that he had to remove his turban and trim his beard or face severe consequences including removal from his job.

His efforts to convince the department by offering to wear a white turban, the same colour as the hat the city's traffic officers wear, with a badge on it was turned down.

Reacting to the judgement, the police department said it hoped to convince the human rights commission that every employee should wear an eight-point hat.

The department in its argument had said that sporting a religious headgear would hamper work. "He would not be recognised as a traffic agent and he could not put on a gas mask or an escape hood in an emergency," it had said. (*Courtesy : Indian Express, May 1, 2004*)

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### **DR KIRPAL SINGH HONORED**

(LIFE LONG DEDICATED WORK REWARDED)

Dr Kirpal Singh, most prominent scholar of Punjab History and Sikh History and former President of the IOSS was honored by Delhi Sikh Gurudwara Managing Committee in the distinguished gathering of elites in Guru Gobind Singh Bhawan, Gurdwara Rakab Ganj, New Delhi. He was presented with *saropa*, shawl, sword and a cheque of Rs 51,000/- with citation. "We as representative body of all Punjabis in general and Sikhs in particular fully appreciate your dedicated services in connection with history of Sikhs, Sikh Gurus which you have done as Professor, Sikh History Research Khalsa College, Amritsar as well as Professor and Head of Punjab Historical Studies Department, Punjabi University, Patiala. Your services in Sikh History and your efforts to preserve our heritage will be a light-house for the coming generations. You have delved deep in Sikh history research and brought to light the truth. We pray to God for your healthy life to continue your researches."

~ ~ ~

**BHAI ASHOK SINGH HONORED BY DSGMC**

At a *diman* held on 5th January, 2004 at Gurdwara Rakab Ganj Sahib, New Delhi to celebrate Guru Gobind Singh ji's birthday, Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee honored Bhai Ashok Singh Bagrian. he was bestowed with *sirpoo*, a shawl and a sword by the President Sardar Prahlad Singh and Akali Dal President Sardar Paramjit Singh Sarna for his services to the Panth.

On 7th January, 2004 Bhai Ashok Singh delivered inaugural address to the International Punjabi Seminar on '*Language, Literature and Culture in Guru Granth Sahib*'. The seminar was held under the Presidentship of Sardar Swaran Singh, Vice Chancellor of Punjabi University, Patiala.

On the 12th May, Bhai Ashok Singh was appointed Member of Gurmat Sangeet Committee by the Punjabi University, Patiala.

Bhai Ashok Singh is currently Vice-President of the IOSS, Chandigarh.

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JOURNEY'S END : MUGHAL BAHU TAKES A DIP AT GOLDEN TEMPLE

For a great grand daughter-in-law of Bahadur Shah Zafar, Sultana looks an oddity – no jewellery, just tattered clothes, tears in her eyes, and a request for forgiveness on her lips. As she came to the Golden Temple today, seeking forgiveness for Mughal atrocities of the past, she must have had the Golden Temple legend on her mind – all sins are washed away with a dip in the Golden Temple's holy waters.

It has taken Sultana nearly her entire life to reach the Golden Temple. Sultana, who came to India from Rangoon when she was just a year old, married a great grandson of Bahadur Shah Zafar, Mirza Bedar Bukht, back in 1965. She was 12 then, and knew virtually nothing about the battles that the Sikhs fought against the Mughals. Fifteen years ago, she saw some paintings in Howrah during an exhibition which depicted gory atrocities. Sikhs being decapitated, infants being pierced with swords by Mughals whom she saw as 'forefathers of my husband'. Burdened with guilt, and clear in her faith that Islam does not preach tyranny and atrocities upon the innocent, Begam wanted to seek forgiveness from not just the Sikh community, but the Almighty Himself. Poverty was an added stimulus, as she believed that it was "because of the sins of our ancestors that

they lost their kingdom and their descendants are living in a state of utter penury,” Her husband earns a paltry Rs 2-3 a day as a soothsayer, and used to sharpen knives by the roadside.

“I have been going to temples and mosques and now I have come here,” she said. “I took a holy dip in the *sarovar*, cried and rubbed my nose before the Guru Granth Sahib.” Witnessing the ritual was her grand daughter Roshan Ara.

Sultana also went to the Akal Takht and sought forgiveness. Akal Takht Jathedar, Joginder Singh Vedanti was not there; he is reported to have said that Sultana’s claims were yet to be verified.

Sultana said poverty did not let her educate her son who works as a kitchen hand while she herself runs a tea stall at Howrah. “None of my five daughters were married into rich families,” she said, adding, a flat that the state government gave her had also to be vacated as bad elements harassed her.

Interestingly, Sultana’s adopted brother is a Sikh, Parbant Singh Mehari, and is a reporter.

She was able to undertake this journey after getting an aid of Rs 50,000/- from Swami Chinrnayanand. “I did book-binding and pappad-rolling to clear off a debt of Rs 10,000/- incurred by my husband, who has been getting Rs 400 as pension since 1965 for being the direct heir of the last Mughal emperor. It’s still stuck at Rs 400, and has never been revised,” Sultana said. (*Courtesy : Indian Express, April 15, 2004*)

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LETTERS TO EDITOR

STANDARDISE PUNJABI FONT

Dear Sir

I was wondering if anybody is going to approach any court for the failure of Punjab Govt in standardizing Punjabi fonts. Lack of a standard font is severely hampering the exchange of ideas in Punjabi over the Internet as everybody cannot have all the 250+ varieties of Punjabi fonts.

Secondly, what is the use of an anniversary being celebrated by SGPC if Gurmukhi fonts are not standardised?

With regards,
Gurtej Singh, New Zealand
<gurtej@paradise.net.in>

GURMAT COLLEGE IN DOLDRUMS

Sir

Gurmat College, Patiala established in 1968 and affiliated to Punjabi University, Patiala is in doldrums now. Guru Nanak Foundation, New Delhi, is running the college.

During month of February, I happened to visit the College and address the students on the topic “ Science and Spirituality” in an interactive session. Most of the students are *amritdhari* and they participate in college Gurdwara sessions, as part of the curricula, both in the morning and evening.

Guru Nanak Foundation is running a public school on the college campus and earning huge profits but they have failed to invest their income to run the college. To my utter surprise, the post of Principal has been lying vacant for the last two years. At present, there is only one lecturer who is teaching both the M.A. classes and acting as Principal. I wonder why Guru Nanak foundation has such a callous attitude towards the Gurmat College, the only institution of its kind in India. The college has produced a galaxy of brilliant students who occupy Chairs in Sikh Studies in India and America. I appeal to SGPC/ DGPC and other Sikh organizations to intervene and take control of the college to put it on rails. What is the use of celebrating anniversaries if we cannot run the Gurmat College, which is one of the premier institutions of the Sikhs in India.

Sincerely

H S Virk

e-mail : virkhs@yahoo.com

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**SGPC SHOULD HAVE ITS OWN TV NETWORK**

Dear Editor,

Last year I took some books from you and the Sikh Missionary College Ludhiana and Guru Nanak's life and his *Japji* by Prof Prakash Singh from Singh Brothers, Amritsar and gave these books to our MP, Ms Fiona Taggart, member of parliament from Slough Berks to be distributed to the MPs in London, so that the attacks on the Sikhs could be stopped. Last month I sent books on Sikhism to nearly 22 Indian states for distribution amongst the MLAs, so that they know

something about Sikhism. Actually the SGPC in Amritsar should set up its own TV network to propogate Sikhism.

I have just finished reading *Sikhs in History* by a great Sikh scholar S Sangat Singh ji. All feel sorry for the decline of Sikhs' prestige and glory. These Sikh politicians have reduced a great Sikh people into helpless nation. May *Wabeguru ji* bless the great Sikh nation that always prays for *sarbat da bhala* to stand up and clear the rubbish. The nation needs those great Singhs like Prof Gurmukh Singh ji and Giani Dit Singh ji and the like to awaken the Sikh nation. Sardar ji you and a few others like you are doing a great service to the nation through literature, but we need our TV station and for this we all should put pressure on SGPC. May *Wabeguru ji* bless you with good health and happiness.

*Wabeguru ji ka Khalsa, Wabeguru ji ki Fateh.*

Atma Singh Brar, UK  
<atmabrar@yahoo.com>

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#### **'SCRAMBLE FOR PUNJAB WATERS'**

Dear Editor

I have gone through A Review by Dr Gurcharan Singh jee in respect of Book : *Scramble for Punjab Waters* written by Author S Gurdev Singh jee, IAS (Retd) and published by IOSS and noted that this issue has been handled without any legal jurisdiction. I don't know whether this book was also made available to Badal/Vajpayee Govt., earlier Governments in Punjab and at Centre as well as Supreme Court Judges! Now it is noted that Supreme Court has directed to complete SYL canal so that Haryana may continue to receive Punjab Water whereas Punjab lands have become a barren state.

Since Sikh farmers of Punjab are unable to get justice in India, is it not possible to approach The International Court of Justice at The Hague which is set up under the UN Charter? As SGPC has all the required resources, this aspect may kindly be examined. Alternatively, cultivation of different crops may be reduced to the minimum required to feed the Punjab population only.

Will all the thirteen Lok Sabha MP's and Rajya Sabha Members from Punjab resign and forgo their perks?

Gurmit Singh, Australia,  
<GurmitSingh@bigpond.com>

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