

FOREWORD

Bhai Rup Chand was blessed by Guru Hargobind. The blessings continue, so that generation after generation, the family has produced stalwarts committed to the service of the Panth. Bhai Ardaman Singh, the author of this book, was amongst its most eminent scions. Like his illustrious father, Bhai Arjan Singh, who was a household name among Sikhs of his time, Bhai Ardaman Singh was always in the centre-stage of *Panthic* affairs, particularly in times of crisis. Nothing happened in the royal families of Phulkian States without his blessings. He was an eminent scholar, and not many understood the spirit of the religion of the Gurus as he did. Besides study of Sikh scripture and Sikh history, he had the advantage of modern education. His frequent travels abroad brought him in contact with other schools of religious thoughts, which further sharpened his understanding of religion. Because of his stature and scholarship, he was a much sought after figure in social, political, as well as religious circles. He expressed his views freely and frankly on all aspects of Sikh religion, and as a responsible intellectual, took care to keep a record of them. That is how we get the material for the present book, which deals with as many as 40 topics covering almost every major aspect of Sikh religion.

The thoughts included in this book were expressed at different times on different occasions, and were not intended to be chapters of one book. Each chapter stands independently on its own. In all chapters, however, the views expressed reflect the author's understanding of *gurmat*. To retain the freshness and flavour of expression, little editing has been done in the text as received. Bhai Sahib has written his own preface. However, an

introduction and a biographical note on him by Bhai Ashok Singh and S Sadhu Singh Deol respectively, have been added for the benefit of readers.

We are grateful to his illustrious son, Bhai Ashok Singh, who carefully preserved the record and has now agreed to part with this treasure for the benefit of scholars as well as the general public.

Bhai Ashok Singh is the present incumbent of the exalted position of Bhai Sahib of Bagrian. This honour was formally conferred upon him in 1995, by the Jathedar Sahib of Sri Akal Takht, after consultations with the heads of the erstwhile Phulkian States through the Maharaja of Patiala, and following a resolution passed by the SGPC, Amritsar. Like his ancestors, he is carrying the great tradition of his family forward with great vigour and commitment. We have already seen him in the centre-stage of Sikh affairs.

Bhai Ashok Singh is well-known in Sikh circles for his scholarship, friendly disposition, pleasant manners, and helpful nature. No wonder, he was entrusted by the Jathedar Sahib of Sri Akal Takht with the mission of forging unity among the various factions of Akalis, pulling in different directions in 1994. His contribution at that juncture was indeed historic. Besides his commitments at Bagrian, he is the Vice-President of the Academy of Sikh Religion and Culture, Patiala, a member of the Governing Council of the Khalsa College, Amritsar, the Sikh Education Society, the Chief Khalsa Diwan, the Council of Sikh Affairs, and Guru Harkishan Public School, and the Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh.

An ardent advocate of Sikh identity, Bhai Ashok Singh is a firm believer of a great future for the Khalsa Panth. The present book is a gift for realisation of that goal.

In the end, I must express my sincere appreciation for Sardar Sadhu Singh Deol, but for whose keen interest in the book and active inputs, this book could not have seen the light of the day in time.

*959, Phase IV, SAS Nagar
August 18, 1999*

Kharak Singh