

ABSTRACTS OF SIKH STUDIES

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Editorial

FROM THE GUEST EDITOR

As I was in the process of compiling this quarterly of the *Abstracts Sikh Studies*, a part of the Panjab was simultaneously being visited by the fury of floods bringing devastation to the standing crops, cattle-wealth and the households. The unprecedented suffering has also brought the resilience and the fightback spirit of the people of Panjab to the fore — a proud heritage of this part of India. The Institute of Sikh Studies stands in solidarity with all those who suffered in the wake of these calamitous circumstances.

I have purposely restricted this issue to the writings in English, though, a couple of scholarly articles were also received in Panjabi. They have been preserved to be included in the proposed Annual Special Number to be brought out by the IOSS.

There has been an encouraging response from the contributors to the present issue. Many scholars have responded to my earnest request by sending their valuable articles for this number. The articles present a wide range of different aspects of Sikh studies. Prof Dhawan has contributed an insightful write-up on the raging controversy arising out of the error-ridden edition of *Mahan Kosh* brought out by the Punjabi University Patiala. It brings the role and responsibilities of our state institutions of higher learning under critical examination.

The great soldiery attributes of Banda Bahadur as the leader of men have been depicted by Gen R.S. Sujana by bringing forth his genius of command as first military general of the Sikhs. Prof Karamjit Kaur Malhotra and Prof Sheena Paal have jointly worked on two works of fiction -- one each in Panjabi and Hindi. These books, authored respectively by Bhai Vir Singh and Shardha Ram Phillauri, weave among their stories, an emergence of Sikh reform movements and

Hindu social awakening in the backdrop of the recently established colonial rule in the second half of the 19th century Panjab.

An elaborate interview of a very senior Sikh civil servant by a US based scholar brings forth the fact as to how far a Sikh officer, imbued in the moral and spiritual values of Guru Granth, can make positive difference in the discharge of his administrative duties. Prof Sukhdev Singh Sohal touches upon a least discussed phase which marks the changes that emerge following the establishment of colonial rule.

Two articles of archival value have been reproduced for the benefit of the students of Sikh religion. Among the two, the first one of Sri Aurobindo, examines the problems occurring during the study of Veda. He winnows the wheat from the chaff to distinguish the essential from the inessential in his commentary on this great scriptural Text. The Veda being a recurring reference in Guru Granth, the views of Aurobindo can help clear the Sikh perspective about it.

Decades ago Sirdar Kapur Singh wrote this article to establish the much debated facts relating to the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur. It was meant to convey a message to scholars and writers of Sikh history to show more sensitivity and understanding while dealing with facts and events relating to the Sikh Gurus.

Prof Kulwant Singh continues his passion for translating selected Sikh writings with his usual fervour and competence. The Book Review by Manpreet Kaur, presently a young researcher of history at Panjab University, is valuable and refreshing.

In the end I welcome the faith reposed by the IOSS which entrusted the editorial responsibility of this issue to me. The inspiration and guidance of Gen R.S. Sujlana, the President of the Institute, was always a privilege for me to avail of.

PUNJABI UNIVERSITY'S PUNJABI VERSION OF MAHAN KOSH

Amarjit Singh Dhawan¹

Amarjit Singh Dhawan is an accomplished scholar of Sanskrit and Hindi. He was foremost among the team of persons who approached the High Court and pointed out the grave errors and distortions committed in the revised version of Mahan Kosh published by Punjabi University Patiala. This article is a summing up of the whole story.

Gurushabadratanakar **MAHAN KOSH**, the unique and most authentic reference book of its kind in Punjabi was compiled, on the lines of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, with sedulous labour of 28 years, by Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha. Its first edition was published in four volumes, by the then Patiala Darbar, in the year 1930. The Language Department (the Bhasha Vibhag), Punjab converted the first edition into a single volume, with four columns on each page, and published this second edition in 1960. The entries comprising the modifications in and additions to Mahan Kosh, prepared by the compiler himself, were added as an appendix to this second edition. After some years, the Bhasha Vibhag brought out its third edition with three columns on each page and reprinted it from time to time.

Now the Punjabi University, Patiala, has published the English and the Punjabi versions of Mahan Kosh, in four volumes each, and the first volume of its Hindi version. But these three versions are replete with countless errors and some facts have also been distorted therein. In this write-up we shall examine a few pages of the university's Punjabi version of Mahan Kosh.

The entries for modifications and additions, contained in the 132-page appendix to the Bhasha Vibhag's Punjabi version of Mahan Kosh, have been adjusted in this Punjabi version. But, while doing so,

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the requisite caution has not been exercised and this has resulted into a very large number of errors of various types. For instance, on page 16, the independent entry for ‘ਉੱਤਰਾਰਣੀ’ [uttarāraṇī] has been made the meaning no. 2 of the entry for ‘ਉੱਤਰਾਯਣ’ [uttarāyaṇa]. But these two words do not have even the remotest connection between them. It may be mentioned here that whereas ‘ਉੱਤਰਾਯਣ’ [uttarāyaṇa] is a combination of the words ‘ਉੱਤਰ’ [uttar] ‘ਅਯਣ’ [ayaṇa], ‘ਉੱਤਰਾਰਣੀ’ [uttarāraṇī] is a combination of ‘ਉੱਤਰ’ [uttar] and ‘ਅਰਣੀ’ [araṇī]. Now, as a noun, the Sanskrit word ‘ਉੱਤਰ’ [uttara] means ‘the north direction’ and ‘ਅਯਣ’ [ayana] means ‘movement’. However, in the present context ‘ਅਯਣ’ [ayana] means ‘the apparent movement of the sun towards north and south’. Thus, ‘ਉੱਤਰਾਯਣ’ [uttarāyaṇa] means ‘the apparent northward progress of the sun, from the tropic of Capricorn to the tropic of Cancer, which is completed in a period of six months.’ As an adjective, ‘ਉੱਤਰ’ [uttara] means, ‘upper’. It is the antonym of ‘ਅਧਰ’ [adhara], which means, ‘lower’. ‘ਅਰਣੀ’ [araṇī] is the name of a kind of a gadget (made of two pieces of the wood of the tree ਅਰਣੀ = Premna Spinosa), used for kindling the sacrificial fire. Thus, ‘ਉੱਤਰਾਰਣੀ’ [uttarāraṇī] is the name of the upper piece of this gadget, the tapered end of which was inserted into a hole made in the lower piece, called ‘ਅਧਰਾਰਣੀ’ [adharāraṇī, i.e. the lower araṇī]. Fire was kindled by the frictional heat produced by vigorous churning motion of the upper piece. Obviously, by jumbling these two unrelated words in this entry, their meanings have been grossly misinterpreted. Similarly, on page 129, the headword ‘ਅਨਹਤ’ [anahata] has been replaced with the headword ‘ਅਨਸ਼ੂਰ’ [anaṣavara]. But the explanation of the word ‘ਅਨਹਤ’ [anahata], and not that of ‘ਅਨਸ਼ੂਰ’ [anaṣavara], has been given in that entry. The Sanskrit word ‘ਅਨਾਹਤ=ਅਨ+ਆਹਤ’ [anāhata=ana+āhata] means ‘(produced) without impaction or percussion’. And, the word ‘ਅਨਸ਼ੂਰ=ਅ+ਨਸ਼ੂਰ’ [anaṣvara=a+naṣvara] means, ‘that which

is not destructible or perishable, i.e. indestructible or imperishable”. Here also two unrelated words have been mixed up and thereby exposed to gross misinterpretation.

This Punjabi version of the Mahan Kosh is replete with errors of punctuation, serial numbers, and of spellings of Punjabi, English, Hindi/Sanskrit and Urdu words. Spellings of some of the headwords are also wrong. For example, on page 48, by replacing the ‘ੰ’ [tippī], over the letter ‘ਦ’ [daddā], with ‘ਰ’ [r] the headword ‘ਓਦੂ’ [odūm] has been made ‘ਓਦੂ’ [ਓਰਦੂ ordū]. Similarly, on page 239, the headword ‘ਆਮੂਈਸਰਾਸਤ੍ਰ’ [āmūīsārāsatra] has been spelt as ‘ਆਮੂਈਸਰਾਸੁ’ [āmūīsārāsta] and, on page 661, ‘ਕਉਲਾਸਣਿ’ [kaulāsani] has been spelled as ‘ਕਉਲਾਸਿਣ’ [kaulāsina]. The two shalokas, reproduced from the “Tattvabodh”, in footnotes on pages 251 and 261 contain 10 spelling mistakes.

In the entry for ‘ਅਭੂਤਕ’ [abhūtaka], on page 166, a quotation from chapter 16 of ਗੁਰਵਿਲਾਸ ਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹੀ ਦਸਵੀਂ [Gurvīlāsa Pāṭṣāhī Dasvīn] has been reproduced as, “ਆਛੇ ਆਠ ਅਭੂਤਕ ਜੋਈ, ਯਾਬਿ ਸਿਰਦੈਂ ਅਨਦਯੁਨ ਹੋਈ.” [ācho āṭha abhūtaka joī, yābi sirdain anadayuna hoī]. But the hand-written note on the blank page facing page 218 of the copy of the Mahan Kosh revised by Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha reads as, “ਆਛੇ ਆਠ ਅਭੂਤਕ ਜੋਈ ਯਾ ਬਿਧਿ ਰਟੈਂ ਅਨਦ ਜੁਤ ਹੋਈ॥” [āche āṭha abhūtaka joī, yā bidhi raṭain anada juta hoī]. Thus, by replacing the word ‘ਆਛੇ’ [āche] with ‘ਆਛੇ’ [ācho] and using three meaningless words “ਯਾਬਿ ਸਿਰਦੈਂ ਅਨਦਯੁਨ” [yābi sirdain anadayuna], the readers have been completely baffled.

After comparison with the copy of the Mahan Kosh revised by Bhai Kahan Singh, 162 errors have been encountered in the Gurbani quotes used in the entries beginning with the letters ‘ਓ’ [ūrā] and ‘ਅ’ [airā] of this (i.e. university’s) Punjabi version of Mahan Kosh. Words have been changed at 16 places and deleted from 3 places. 64 combined words have been split and 3 separate words have been joined together. The references of 11 quotes have been improperly given. The ਔਂਕੜ (ōṅkara) has been wrongly inserted at 13 places and it has been deleted from 6 places. The ਸਿਹਾਰੀ (sihārī) has been added

at 7 places and deleted from one place. At one place the ਸਿਹਾਰੀ (sihārī) has been used instead of ਲਾਂ (lān), and ਲਾਂ (lān) has been replaced with ਦੁਲਾਂਵਾਂ (dulānvān) at two places. The punctuation marks used by Bhai Kahan Singh have been deleted or changed at 22 places. The meaning no. 1 of the entry for ਉਤ (uta) has been deleted. The entry for ਆਪੀਨੈ ਆਪੁ (āpīnē āpu), appearing on page 236, is not there in the original version of Mahan Kosh.

In 2017, the SGPC had got investigated, by a committee of experts, the matter of errors in this Punjabi version of Mahan Kosh. That committee *inter alia* had written in their report (prepared in Punjabi), ‘...adoption of an un-academic and irresponsible approach and meddling with it without proper knowledge, many types of mistakes have been committed by the Punjabi University during the process of re-publication of Mahan Kosh. Therefore, there is an immediate necessity to stop this republished, mutilated version of Mahan Kosh from reaching the hands of the students and the scholars’.

Mahan Kosh was first published in the year 1930, in a letter-press, by meticulously arranging its matter letter by letter. Making innumerable errors of various types, while getting it reprinted in the same language during the years 2009-2015, with the help of several scholars and the computer, is a clear proof of extreme negligence and gross irresponsibility on the part of the university, which was established with the main objective of furthering the cause of Punjabi language.

In July 2017, the Punjabi University had constituted a committee of the experts to deliberate on the matter of errors in the said three versions of Mahan Kosh. Despite resistance by the two outside members, it was decided in the third meeting of the said committee, on 15.9.2018, that the first 10 pages each of the entries beginning with the Gurmukhi letters ‘ਓ’ [ūrā], ‘ਕ’ [kakkā] and ‘ਨ’ [nannā] from university’s Punjabi version of Mahan Kosh be got compared with those in its version revised by Bhai Kahan Singh. The reports of this comparison were discussed, on 13.11.2018, in the fourth meeting of the expert committee. According to the report, prepared by the writer of this piece, there were 397 errors in those 30 pages. There were 10 errors of alteration of words and names, six

errors of displacing words from their proper places, 8 of deletion/omission of words, 7 of insertion of additional/redundant words, 4 of serial numbers, 106 of splitting compound words and 13 of combining separate words. There were 125, 5, 4 and 7 errors of spellings of the Punjabi, Hind/Sanskrit, English and Urdu words respectively. Sixty one (61) errors were of punctuation marks. At 21 places, the footnote symbols (*, †, §, etc.), used in the original version, had been replaced with ^{1, 2, 3} etc. It will not be out of place to mention that in those 30 pages not even one page was found to be error-less. Hence, it may not be possible to find even 10 consecutive error-free pages in this Punjabi version of Mahan Kosh.

In the fifth meeting, on 20.03.2019, it was opined that the existing stock of the said three versions of Mahan Kosh be got pulped because they were teeming with errors. It was also argued that people are punished on the basis of failed samples and none of them has ever dared go to a court of law with the plea that he has been punished on the basis of a failed sample only, without rest of the stock having been tested. But, instead of recommending pulping of the stock of said three mutilated versions of Mahan Kosh, the decision was taken that errors in all the pages of the university's four-volume Punjabi version of Mahan Kosh be got marked by comparing it with the version of Mahan Kosh revised by Bhai Kahan Singh.

The reports of the comparison of the said two Punjabi versions of Mahan Kosh, were discussed, on 28.09.2020, in the seventh meeting of the expert-committee. The reports, inter alia, emphasized : 'some of the modifications made in the original edition are not clear at some places and have to be clarified with the help of the experts; some details from the original have been edited in the new version; the spellings of the Hindi and the Sanskrit words need to be discussed; the Urdu font needs to be made more distinct at some spots; foot-note symbols are not the same as used in the original edition; some matter has not been printed, and some words of the original version have not been included in the new edition, etc.' Having many words, head-words, and lines etc. been deleted and added, and many names and spellings been changed, the Mahan Kosh has been mutilated so much that it will be a mistake to call it a creation of Bhai Kahan Singh. Therefore, during the discussion on the errors, the members had opined: 'the errors in the Mahan Kosh, published by

the university, cannot be corrected manually; the additions, changes, errors etc, which have been noticed in the Mahan Kosh, published by the university, cannot be included in an appendix; it is absolutely imperative to keep intact the archival value of this Dictionary and, therefore, after having amended in accordance with the copy preserved in the rare section, it should be re-published.' It is absolutely clear that the members were unanimously against the preparation of an errata and were in favour of the re-pulication of the corrected version of Mahan Kosh. The role of the correctors had ended and thereafter the expert committee had to take decision about the disposal of the stock of the three versions of Mahan Kosh. But, in order to ignore the proper, prudent and objective opinion unanimously given by the members in that meeting no meeting of the expert committee was held despite the written requests made therefor.

On 09.12.2024, a meeting of representatives of various organizations, presided over by Hon'ble Speaker, Punjab Vidhan Sabha, was held in his chamber. After discussion on the matter of errors in the Mahan Kosh, published by the Punjabi University, it was decided that the university should send, within three weeks, the final report of the decision about the rectification or destruction of the stock of Mahan Kosh and the action taken thereon. Consequently, the university held meetings on 4.2.2025 and 4.4.2025. But, in order to reverse the unanimous opinion given by the members in the expert committee meeting on 28.9.2020, and to take a decision of their own choice, the university invited the co-ordinator of the university's Mahan Kosh project and also the persons (who had marked errors in the university's Punjabi version of Mahan Kosh after having compared it with the one revised by Bhai Kahan Singh) to participate in these meetings. But, both of these meetings and the decisions taken therein are tantamount to the contempt of court because the real expert committee is the one which was mentioned by the university's advocate in his statement hearing which the Hon'ble Punjab and Hariyana High Court had disposed of the petition filed against the Punjabi university for innumereble errors in the three versions of Mahan Kosh.

The three persons, including the project co-ordinator, who, in the meeting on 4.2.2025, were assigned the job of counting the errors marked in the Punjabi university's Punjabi version of Mahan Kosh,

presented their reports in the meeting held on 4.4.2025. The seasoned lexicographer, Prof. Om Prakash Vasishth's report revealed that there are more than 4,000 errors in the second volume of this four-volume Punjabi version and that there are 180 errors in the first 28 pages of the entries beginning with the letter 'ਚ'. Thus, there are more than 16,000 marked errors in this version and if the unmarked errors are taken to be 6 per page then their number comes to 15,000. Thuswise, there can be more than 31,000 errors in this edition. However, it may be mentioned here that, during the year 2018, 397 errors were found in 30 pages (i.e. 10 pages each of the entries beginning with the letters 'ਓ' *ūrā*, 'ਕ' *kakkā* and 'ਨ' *nannā*), randomly selected from the first three volumes of the university's Punjabi version of Mahan Kosh. It has come to light that there are 170 errors in the first 10 pages of the entries beginning with the letter 'ਚ'. Hence, the number of errors in this edition comes to $(397+170=567 \div 40=14.175 \times 2490=)$ 35295.

In stead of getting the missed errors marked, a smaller number of errors are being tom-tomed by ignoring the errors of commas, dots and full stops etc – and, this is being done despite the fact that, on page vi of this Punjabi version of Mahan Kosh, it has been claimed, that in order to keep the text unchanged to the extent of a dot and a comma, the version of Mahan Kosh lying in the university library had been recognised as original text and perused many times. This means that while comparing these two versions every discrepancy in the University's version of Mahan Kosh must be marked and none of them be ignored.

In the meeting about Mahan Kosh, presided over by Hon'ble Speaker, Punjab Vidhan Sabha, on 06.05.2025, the participants wanted that the Mahan Kosh, published by the Punjabi University be destroyed. The Hon'ble Speaker desired that, in view of the minutes of this meeting, the university should hold a meeting of the expert committee and send, within three weeks, the final report of the decision thereof. Consequently, the 8th meeting of the expert committee was held on 4.6.2025, in which the proposed appendix containing the errata for the said Punjabi version was presented. It was argued that the stock of the three versions of Mahan Kosh be destroyed immediately because these cannot be sold, and therefore, no purpose will be served by preserving them. Moreover, the expenditure incurred for their upkeep and storage will be a constant source of

addition to the financial loss already incurred on account of having not exercised the requisite caution in preparing and publishing the said versions of Mahan Kosh. This deliberate wastage of money cannot be justified on any count. No one had a logical argument to counter it. But, even then it was decided that the appendix shall not be used and the sale of the Mahan Kosh shall remain completely closed. It is really strange that such a decision has been taken despite the fact that the university has been facing financial stridency for the last some years. It may be mentioned that in the meetings of the expert committee delaying tactics have been adopted for avoiding the decision about the destruction of the stock of the three versions of Mahan Kosh and response to the letters written on this subject has also been studiously evaded.

In the meeting about Mahan Kosh, presided over by Hon'ble Speaker, Punjab Vidhan Sabha, on 05.08.2025, the Hon'ble Speaker took a serious notice and felt that had there been some minor errors in the Mahan Kosh, published by the Punjabi university, then the scholars would not have been there in that meeting; it is their unanimous decision that the Mahan Kosh be destroyed. He also felt that the Punjabi University had misused the funds by not using them for the purpose they were allocated for them. The recommendations made in the meetings held by the Vidhan Sabha had not been taken seriously by the Punjabi university. They had not taken any concrete action in the matter and thus had wasted the precious time of all the participants. The participants agreed that, when the decision had been taken not to sell the publication and not to utilize the errata as an appendix thereto, there was no justification of preserving its stock. After discussion it was decided that the Mahan Kosh, published by the Punjabi university be destroyed without any further delay and disciplinary action be taken on priority basis against the Head of the Development of Punjabi Department for having misled the committee. It was also decided that responsibility of the persons connected with the publication of Mahan Kosh, be fixed, the loss of the Government money be recovered from them and that proper action be taken against those who had changed their suggestions previously given in this connection.

On 27.08.2025 the Punjabi University, tried to dispose of the copies of the three error-ridden versions of Mahan Kosh in an

environment-friendly manner by drenching and burying them in a large pit dug near the horticulture area of the university. As the said volumes contained many quotations from Gurbani, the students considered an act of desecration and started a forceful agitation. Taking note of the mounting tension, the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee intervened in the matter; the said tomes were taken to Shri Goindwal Sahib and insinerated there.

From the above account it is quite evident that though Mahan Kosh is a unique tome of its kind, the Punjabi university is not interested in making error-free even the Punjabi version of this prestigious publication of theirs. This fact is also worth consideration that even after ninety-five years after its first edition, no other authentic reference tome of this kind, matching it or better than it, could be published in Punjabi. For the preservation of the authenticity of this heritage reference work, it is imperative that some organization concerned with the development of the Punjabi language, the medieval Punjabi literature or the propagation of Sikh thought, should immediately take into their hands the job of republication of an error-free version of Mahan Kosh because the year 2030 shall be its centenary year.

BANDA SINGH BAHADUR – THE FIRST GENERAL OF THE SIKHS –

LT GEN R.S. SUJLANA*

Banda Bahadur is regarded as a valiant Sikh hero to lead the first successful struggle against the Mughal imperial authority. Lt Gen R.S. Sujlana has observed the persona of the Sikh hero from the military standpoint. For him he was 'the first General of the Sikhs – The Generalissimo'. His military contribution has been evaluated and presented by the author, who himself is a top ranking retired army general. The readers will be benefitted to see the great hero Banda Singh Bahadur in an entirely different perspective.

– Editor

BANDA'S TRAITS AND MILITARY LEADERSHIP

Banda was a versatile perfectionist; he passed through varied professions, mastered each and imbibed traits to his persona from them; he was respected for his knowledge, piety, and miraculous powers. Besides, he was also much feared, not a soul dared to disobey an order, the wealthy and well-bred came out to welcome, no one dared to remonstrate. As a hunter he developed phenomenal skills in archery, swordsman, and stamina in horsemanship which enabled him to ride tirelessly for days on end. As a recluse or *bairagi*, he imbibed the art of mesmerism, magic, disguise, knowledge of medicinal plants and could survive without food or water for prolonged periods. Living among the ascetic warriors for nearly two decades he evidently imbibed small-scale warfare¹ and its judicious implementation there; this helped him to prove to be an outstanding military mind and a visionary administrator. No setback affected him, his perseverance remained

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unshakeable. His was an incomparable wholesome personality.

Banda was a sagacious military leader – brave, impetuous, fearless, very intuitive; his determination never faltered. As a military leader he is credited with worthy victories and survived against overwhelming odds for six long years, a remarkable feat. The circumstances were extraneous and difficult, but he defied the might of possibly the mightiest empire on earth at that time and destroyed the myth of invincibility of the Mughals. His forbearance, patience and firm resolve gave him the potency to fulfill his vow to Guru Gobind Singh; he fought for the Sikh Cause till his last breath. He relentlessly targeted the cruelty of the Imperial authorities and misdemeanors of the Hill Rajas, but also forgave with a large heart.²

‘Flames of fire come out of his Banners and Rockets, and his followers Seldom receive wounds of sword or spears.’ – Kamwar Khan

SKILLED ADMINISTRATOR

As an administrator he made far reaching changes in governance, socio-religious liberty, and economic advancements for the betterment of the underprivileged, as Irvine wrote, ‘it led to a complete and striking reversal of the previous customs in the caste-ridden land.’ Banda went on to abolish the hated Zamindari system, which was sheer inhuman exploitation of the peasant farmers. Peasant proprietorship made a beginning; the tillers became the owners. This was a futuristic reform in favour of the cultivators; to put an end to their never-ending oppression, this blossomed fully during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

The change emancipated the peasant and down-trodden, but created economic interests which were divergent from the political interests.³ This alienated the *zamindars and zamindaris* across the board; Rajput, Afghans, Jats of Haryana and Western UP (like Churaman Jat of Agra Suba) and the urban Khatri traders. Fearing loss of their control and status, the *zamindars* to suit their convenience, stepped over to the Mughal camp. The fallouts cut both ways; on one hand, it ‘enabled the Mughals to mobilise these interests, as they did in Farrukh Siyar’s reign, in their bid to suppress the (Sikh) movement,’⁴ but on the other, it weakened the hold of Imperial authorities over many zamindars, who created their own space of influence. Many ‘Zamindars of Punjab

threw off their allegiance and refused to pay revenue,' instead exploited the non-Sikh local peasants, 'the oppressed Ryots... mostly Jats, became disgusted, and joined the Sikhs.'⁴The latter influx due to this policy was unexpected, it was a major gain for Banda!

MOTIVATOR PAR EXCELLENCE

His personality was so infectious, that his mere appearance was motivation enough, it inspired the men and swayed them to unheard levels of courage and commitment; simple peasants turned into ferocious fighters. As Bulleh Shah writes 'Those in tatters are now the nobles. While the nobility goes begging!' To Banda indeed goes the credit to rouse the dormant Sikhs, to teach them offensive warfare which enabled them to carry forward the revolutionary spirit of the Panth. He generated a groundswell which incited all, including the Hindus and Muslims to follow him, 'mutual loyalty between the men and Banda was absolute, not one man shied away from any sacrifice to achieve the aim. Yes, he made mistakes but then to err is human. His was an unmatched contribution in making of the future Sikh soldier, to him goes the honour to be the first 'Military General of the Khalsa Forces'!

Banda was an enigma for the Mughals; his valour and cool headedness were appreciated even by the enemy. He often succeeded in gaining the psychological upper hand; he first offered a peaceful settlement to avoid spilling blood, but if this was not accepted, he attacked fiercely and remorselessly. Realising the disastrous consequences, his opponents often preferred to surrender, 'the (hill) Chiefs (who) with a few exceptions were reconciled through leniency and generosity and, also through whenever it was necessary, tough, and ruthless measures.'⁷The Hill Rajas took advantage of his presence, it gave them heart not to pay their tributes to the Mughal authority but remained untrustworthy. By end 1714 CE, their real character surfaced when Banda stood isolated, they refused to support him, and even looked for an opportunity to hand him over to the Mughals.

DHARMA AND MORALITY

Banda led a pure life; his morality was spotless, he followed the *Rahit* of the Khalsa in letter and spirit. He religiously stuck to the *dharma* of Guru Gobind Singh, his advice to his followers was emphatic,

‘Do not practice sin, adharm and injustice. Raise up true Sikhs and smite those who do un-Sikh like acts.’⁸ He never faltered on the injunction of the Guru and ensured absolute devotion to the cause. A secularist at heart, all enjoyed full religious freedom under him, he never allowed the honour of women to be touched. He did marry twice as per all records, but that did not lessen his desire to mission accomplishment at any stage. The Persian and Muslim writers prejudiced against anything non-Islamic were most unfair to Banda. In defeat Mughal History distorted most facts, their scorn and profane invectives were especially directed at Banda Bahadur, ‘every act of cruelty, which their fertile mind imagination could invent, has been ascribed to him.’⁹ Thornton, a known historian has also placed this in perspective, ‘a Mohammedan writer is not to be implicitly trusted upon this point,’ on ground, ‘the Mausoleum of Ahmed Shah (Al Sirhindi, a renowned for being an religious extremist and anti-Sikh at Sirhind), the most magnificent of all such buildings, still stands as it did before the battle, and is I think, sufficient evidence of the exaggeration in Latif’s statement.’¹⁰

MILITARY CONTRIBUTION OF BANDA

INCULCATING THE OFFENSIVE SPIRIT

Convinced that purely defensive measures would not regain the lost glory of the Khalsa, Banda set to move them into the realms of offensive warfare, by following a structured transgression. His fighting force comprised peasants, an irregular collection of men, with little or no military training, ill armed with just swords, knives, or similar handheld gear including agricultural tools. Their opposition was formidable, the Imperial Mughal Army, a professional regular force, coherent in its organisation, well-armed, backed by tested administration. Warfare would be asymmetric in every facet, he roused the peasantry, what they lacked in wherewithal, they made up with zealous dedication to their faith and mission. He pushed his men to peak physical condition, to be skilled masters in close combat, and be highly mobile on horse and foot. He built their confidence, motivated and stirred them to push ahead relentlessly. They learnt to live off the land and fight with limited resources, and guided them onto the path of conquest.

NECESSITY OF INTELLIGENCE

The importance of gaining information and intelligence of his opponents was prioritised for which dependable sources were created. By all indications, his intelligence network functioned through the Hindu mendicants, (*Bairagis and sanyasis*) with whom he had had a long association and the local population whom he had fully won over. Such was the effectiveness that on 28 Oct 1711 CE the emperor, issued an order that anyone communicating the news of the imperial camp outside should instantly be put to death. Hindu mendicants were debarred from entering the Imperial camp. On 18 Jan 1712 CE, one Balan Bairagi of the office of the wazir was accused and imprisoned for spying for the Sikhs.¹¹ The local population willingly provided administrative support, especially the trading community, who fulfilled his need for food and finance. Mostly of the Lobana community, they were ready to take up arms for action under Banda's leadership, were fully on his side.¹² Besides finance and food, the roving grain trading community risked guiding the Sikhs through the jungles, 'on 4 July 1715 CE, the *banjaras* carried weapons along with grain to Sikh hide outs.'¹³

ART OF GUERILLA WARFARE

With a formidable opposition like the Mughals, Banda developed his own brand of offensive guerilla warfare, which remained his basic concept throughout. Mission accomplishment warranted unstinted support of the local people, this he ensured to start with. First, he trained the men, then battle-inoculated them out under live fire, thereby to confirm their motivation, confidence, willingness to sacrifice and make them aware of their own worth. Surprise remained an inherent factor, evasiveness ensured survival and made the enemy feel helpless against an omnipresent opposition. Skirmishes were kept short and sharp, it was hit, run and hit in a repeated cycle. Banda had that rare sixth sense to appreciate the tide turning against him in battle, he immediately broke contact and slipped away to fight another day. These lessons the Sikhs carried with them to execute successfully through the difficult decades of the 18th Century.

Banda set the pace for the Sikhs to develop as skilled horsemen and foot soldiers, capable of rapid movements, appearing suddenly and unexpectedly to catch the enemy unawares. To overcome the disadvantages of weaponry and numbers, Banda developed the knack

of 'deception, feign, retreat, attack and attack again.' With time and experience, especially during the Misl period the Sikhs further refined and mastered this tactic. It was sharpened and developed into their famous and deadly maneuver of 'Two and a Half strikes' (*Dhai Phat*)! It was a norm for the Sikh horsemen to remain on the saddle over long distances, even the foot soldiers could cover 20-25 miles at a fast pace to exploit the gains made by the cavalry. It was this training to the horsemen which later blossomed into the irregular Sikh cavalry (*Ghorchurras*) which became the main stay of the Sikh fighting force through the 18th Century. Even Ranjit Singh maintained the irregular cavalry which proved their worth in the Anglo -Sikh Wars.

BEGINNINGS OF SIEGE WARFARE

During early 18th Century the countryside was covered with a mix of small forts mostly with mud walls, only exceptions had strong walls. In the beginning the emphasis was to move with impetuosity and force a breach in the walls or batter open a gate. This was the form employed during his initial advance northwards, the Sikhs captured seven to nine forts using this tactic, but casualties were heavy. With time, they gained the art of siege warfare and reduction of forts. Skill was generated to prepare batteries, creep forward, crossing moats and finally blasting open breaches through the wall. At Jalalabad in the Jamuna-Ganga Doab, they adopted moveable wooden screens, or mantles, mounted on ordinary cartwheels. These they brought close to the walls, and from their shelter showered bullets and arrows on the besieged. They also 'had scaling ladders with them when they tried to take Jalalabad.'¹⁴

Most of these petty strongholds were surrounded with dense undergrowth; to overcome this obstacle and achieve surprise, they adapted the art of tunneling through the undergrowth by using carpenters and axe men. The obstacle was turned into an advantage! The men tasked to mine the fort walls silently crept through the tunnel to reach close to the moat or at times, even next to the fort wall itself. Here they surfaced silently by night to mine and blast the wall. The fighting force followed closely, to exploit the gap created by the blast and charged into the fort. Where moats had to be crossed, empty sandbags were carried, these were filled up, dumped to make the moat negotiable and facilitate assault, 'we find this mentioned as part of

the Sikh equipment when they advanced in 1710 CE against the town of Rahun (Rahon) in the Jalandhar duabab (doab); *a juwalah- bae pur aṛ reg, barae murchal bastan* -and sandbags full of sand to make batteries.¹⁵ Where required, a counter temporary wall (of tree trunks and clay) with a few openings was erected to surround a fortresses, such a move unnerved the defenders giving them a feeling of getting trapped. A somewhat similar plan was resorted to by Abdus-Samad Khan when he invested Bandah (Banda), the Sikh, in Gurdaspur.¹⁶

MISSION ACCOMPLISHMENT

A little comparison to the other great guerrilla fighter Shivaji will highlight the difficulties under which Banda fought and succeeded. Shivaji had the advantages of large local support; he was blessed with the massive salient of Western Ghats where strong forts were sited atop dominating heights which were difficult to reduce or bypass. The forts could be well stocked with ammunition, food, and grain, this enabled them to outlast the besiegers, with the added advantage to make good their escape if or when required. Banda on the other hand had no such advantage, in the plains of Punjab there were no safe sanctuaries, the advantage was fully with the well-trained Mughal cavalry and elephants. The local population was largely Muslims, of the others, large percentage were hesitant to render support to avoid the wrath of the Mughals, escape and evasion was thus very difficult. Shivaji had the advantage of always having a firm base where rest and relief was possible, for Banda had to risk creating one. A static position in the plains was at the mercy of Mughals, thus opportunity for a breather and to recoup was rarely available, the going was always tough. Banda took up a static position thrice; twice at Lohgarh from where he managed to escape, but the third time at Gurdas Nangal, he was trapped to fight his last battle.

Banda aroused in the Sikhs national awakening, a 'never die' spirit, mental perseverance to resist tyranny and oppression! Banda stirred the Sikhs to indomitable courage, dogged tenacity, and invincible spirit, accompanied by religious zeal they made up for the continuous shortage of resources. He brought to the fore the tremendous fighting qualities of the Sikhs, roused their enthusiasm and willing sacrifice. It was a conflict between two unequal opposing

forces; it was always asymmetric warfare against the well-trained Mughals backed with superior and abundant resources; horse-based heavy troops, elephants supported by a huge arsenal of guns.

RAISING THE FLAG OF THE SIKH NATION

To Banda goes the credit of creating the first Independent Sikh State complete with the Sikh flag, a royal seal, coins (which carried the inscription in praise of the Gurus, '*Deg- Tegh-0-Fateh Nusrat-I-Bedirang, Yafet Az, Nanak Guru Gobind Singh*- Provisions of arms, cauldron and victory, blessings unrestrained. Generosity of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh), and administrative system, he laid the foundation of the Sikh Empire in 1710 CE. It was his selfless devotion for the independence of his people whereby an area of over 25000 square miles stretching from Karnal to Lahore, stood liberated, albeit for a short time. He showed the beacon of how a small size well-motivated army can defeat a far larger one, a 'growing emphasis on *Dharmyudh* as a war against the Mughal state can be traced clearly to the years of Banda Singh's rebellion.¹⁷

In the History of the world, 'he should not rank less than Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, Nadir Shah, Ahmed Shah Abdali, or Napoleon Bonaparte. He was the first empire-builder for the Sikhs and a great national hero for the Hindus, a scourge for the tyrants, but a man of compassion and generosity for the Muslims who supported his political cause, not his religion.'¹⁸ Like his master, Guru Gobind Singh, he never turned his struggle to become a communal strife, even after the emperor had passed a royal edict to kill the Sikhs where ever they were found (*Nanak Pras tan ra har ja kih ba-yaband ba-qatl rasanand*). His was a struggle against the tyranny of the Mughals (particularly their cruel leadership at all levels) and not against the religion of the Mughals. He openly proclaimed so.¹⁹

HONOUR IN DEATH

Fully aware of the finality of his life, when the time came for his martyrdom, he sat on the altar without flinching, without any remorse, bearing every measure of physical and psychological cruelty, but he met his end with unflinching devotion to God. Major personality traits of Banda stand out in what is recorded as his last conversation. The

author has very subtly selected his words to provide a veneer over the credit that the writer wanted to give to Banda. Itimad- Ud- Daulah Muhammad Amin khan at the time of their meeting asked that doomed rebel, now due to be killed:

‘Your present demeanor exhibits signs of wisdom and a sense of justice. How were you led to such ways that you did not consider the consequences of your deeds?’

Banda replied, ‘In all religions and communities, whenever disobedience and defiance (of God), in excess of all limits, begins to be displayed by man, the embodiment of rebellion, the true avenger (God) then appoints someone as cruel as I, to impose penalty on man for his sins, so that he may become the means for affecting retribution on that community for its misdeeds. Afterwards for the punishment for his (the retributor’s) deeds, he bestows victory over him to a man of authority like you, so that he too obtains punishment for his deeds in this world, as we and you are now witnessing!’²⁰ This conversation subtly highlights some well-known traits of Banda; his wisdom and justice, his conviction to blame the Mughals for their barbarity, his duty as an avenger of God to deliver the deserving punishment on the Mughals. What’s striking is that he never once mentioned any wrong done by any of his followers, the buck really stopped with Banda!

A LEGACY TO FOLLOW

Banda remained relentless and unforgiving in pursuit of his aim. The gruesome death of Banda again left the Sikhs leaderless, but he left a legacy for the struggle to continue, so well summed by Payne, ‘The mission of Guru Gobind Singh had not failed, scattered, and disorganised, without a leader, without square yard of land they could call their own, the Sikhs were never nearer to nationality at this time than they had ever been. Hardship and persecution had served only to strengthen their attachment to their faith, and to draw them into yet closer unity. They now regarded themselves as a distinct people. They believed in their destiny as foretold by Guru Gobind Singh and one determination from which they never swerved was to struggle unceasingly for the triumph of the Khalsa.’²¹

The years that followed Banda saw severe and harrowing persecution of the Sikhs, but they unfailingly resolved to carry forward

the legacy that Banda had given them, the Khalsa proved that they were down but not out! Banda the Brave, but still better Banda the Upright One!

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1. Gommans Jos, Mughal Warfare, p.48; Bhai Gurdas, in Varan, 10 -1, confirms such groupings, 'The ascetics organised themselves into groups and gave a name like Giri, Puri, Bharti etc. They became prouder of their sect and fell away from the true name (Sanyasi das nav Dhan (i) Sach nav vin(u) nav Ganaia), It is well recorded, that during the late 17th Century, the sadhus had integrated into religious orders (Bhai Gurdas confirms this) each of which formed their own 'akharas' or regiments, and gained prominence as mixed groups of mercenaries and bandits and operated along the border areas of the Punjab.'; Dhavan Purnima, When Sparrows Became Hawks p.75; These Bairagis, Sadhus, Ghazis and other peasant groups were battle worthy men and were a distinct part of the long existing warrior tradition in the Indian subcontinent. Akin to mercenaries, they provided services on payment to local zamindars, rich merchants as also to the Mughal Imperial Army, 'such salaried service provided its peasant soldiers with a livelihood, the patronage of important men, and higher status than that of most other peasants.'; Surinder Singh, Discovering Banda Bahadur, p.209, 'It is a fact that, 'Hindu ascetic warriors used certain military strategy even when their strength was much less than the armies against whom they fought. The guerrilla trait of rapid attack- retreat-reattack had been used by them since ages. Their strikes were lightening like, they mostly took the opponent by surprise, often by night. During the misl period this strategy developed into the famed '*Dhai Phat*' i.e., two and a half strikes. Banda effectively combined this strategy with the Sikh faith and its spirit of sacrifice; Surinder Singh, Discovering Banda Bahadur, p. 384, For two decades (1688 to 1708 CE) Banda's life remains shrouded, he possibly spent these years, 'with Bairagis and Ascetic warriors, picked up the essentials of ascetic life, viz, mental training and self-control, control of diet and learnt the art of battle strategy, in particularly of fighting with a small force against a much larger one.' Banda must have acquired many warrior skills from them, otherwise for him to be a successful military leader and turn raw peasants into skilled fighters cannot stand scrutiny.
2. Rattan Singh Bhangu, Sri Guru Panth Prakash (Gurmukhi and English translation, IOSS, by Professor Kulwant Singh) p.245. In Episode 41, he

writes, 'He occupied, but did not ransack the city of Sirhind, for which he had to repent later (*Chaupai*)...while Banda preserved the city of Sirhind, He collected a ransom from its residents. While the Hindus were given various positions in administration (*Sortha*).'

3. Ganda Singh, Life of Banda Singh Bahadur, pp. 237-258
4. Alam Muzaffar, The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India, p. 147
5. McGregor WLH, History of the Sikhs, 1, p.114
6. Grewal JS and Irfan Habib, Sikh History from Persian Sources, p.161, 'After the slaying of Wazir Khan, he laid down, that of the Hindus and Muslims, whoever became enrolled among his Sikhs, should be one body and take meal together so that the distinction in honour between the lowly and the well-born was entirely removed.'
7. Alam Muzaffar, The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India, p. 169
8. Ganda Singh, Banda Singh Bahadur, p.252, quoting Pothi, p.292a; Malhotra KK, Bansavalinama and Mahima Prakash: Two Independent Accounts of Banda Singh in the 18th Century, notes that, 'Chhibber highlights Banda's concern for justice. But the Panth of the Guru took to evil things. Banda Singh proclaimed loudly that they should desist from doing evil deeds. He was found guilty and blown by a gun. Banda made it clear that Guru Gobind Singh had told him that the foremost duty of a ruler was to do justice. The Sikhs of the Guru should shun pap (sin), adharm (unethical conduct), and anniya (injustice). They should destroy the wicked as the Guru had enjoined. He had given raj to the Sikhs. No misconduct of any kind would be tolerated. Chhibber lays emphasis on the justice of Banda in obedience to the order of Guru Gobind Singh.
9. *ibid*, p.237.
10. Teja Singh-Ganda Singh, A short History of the Sikhs, p.83; Narang GC, Transformation of Sikhism, p.103, fn. 1, para 2
11. Alam Muzaffar, The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India, p.153
12. Alam Muzaffar, The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India, p.151; Grewal JS, Guru Gobind Singh- Master of the White Hawk, p.211
13. Alam Muzaffar, The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India, p.162
14. Irvine William, Army of the Indian Mughals, p.278/282
15. *Ibid*, p.278
16. *Ibid*, p.279
17. Grewal JS, Guru Gobind Singh- Master of the White Hawk, p.19; Malhotra KK, Bansavalinama and Mahima Prakash: Two Independent Accounts of Banda Singh in the 18th Century, p.59. Chhibber and Bhalla wrote independently, but they agree on some basic points: Guru Gobind Singh's meeting with Banda; submission of Banda to Guru Gobind

Singh; the assignment given to him by the Guru; establishment of Sikh rule and administration; and downfall of Banda and his associates. It may be added that these basic points find support in the earlier sources like the Amarnama of Dhadhi Nathmal, the seal and the coins of the time of Banda Singh, his extant Hukamnamas, and the Persian accounts of the early decades of the eighteenth century.

18. Gupta HR, History of the Sikhs, 2, p.236; Gopal Singh, A History of the Sikh People, p.354.
19. Ganda Singh, Development of Sikh Thought up to the 18th Century, p.34, *'We have on record a proclamation issued by Banda in April, 1711, within four and a half months of the royal edict, saying, 'I do not oppose the Muslims.' Accordingly, says the Mughal news-letter of April 26, 1711, 'for any Muslim who approaches him, he fixes a daily allowance and wages and looks after him. He has permitted them to read Khutba and Namaz, with the result that five thousand Muslims gathered round him. Having entered this friendship, they are free to shout their call and say their prayers in the army of the wretched (Sikhs), quoting, Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla (Jaipur Records); Ruqat-I- Amin- u-Daulah, No.3; Dastur-ul-Insha, 6a.*
20. Grewal JS, Sikh History from Persian Sources, p.159, quoting Muntakhabu 'l Lubab; quoting Siyar-ul- Mutakherin, p.403. Malhotra KK, Bansavalinama and Mahima Prakash: Two Independent Accounts of Banda Singh in the 18th Century, writes somewhat similarly, 'Many of the Sikhs were killed suffered for their ill-deeds. Chhibber quotes Guru Nanak on the punishment for becoming oblivious of God. He who does evil after attaining raj is a great fool. Significantly, Chhibber explains the situation in terms of reward and punishment (for himself and his Sikhs). Many Sikhs were captured and taken to Delhi, with 700 cartloads of Sikh heads. Towers were constructed of their heads of the Sikh prisoners in Delhi five were killed in the Chandni Chowk every day. They gave their heads for their faith. He said that I received what I had sown, and 'you will also reap what you sow'. Banda Sahib gave his head and preserved his faith. The true Sikhs of the Guru lost their heads in steadfast loyalty to their faith. The Sikhs tasted the fruit of their sins along with Banda Sahib but the 'Turks' too suffered for doing injustice to the Sikhs and lost their rule.
21. Payne CH, A short History of the Sikhs, p.47

TWO EARLIEST NOVELS IN THE COLONIAL PUNJAB: *BHAGYAVATI* AND *SUNDARI*

KARAMJIT K. MALHOTRA* & SHEENA PALL**

*The last quarter of 19th century witnessed the revival movements among Hindus and Sikhs, albeit, for different reasons. The common feature of both the movements were the changes occurring with the advent of colonial rule in the Punjab. It shuffled the social and political milieu giving rise to various forms of literature. The two novels – Bhai Vir Singh's **Sundari** and Sharda Ram Phillour's **Bhagyawati** – address the respective concerns of both the religious communities. Two reputed scholars – Prof Karamjit Kaur Malhotra and Dr Sheena Pall observe, interpret and analyse the entire phenomena through the study of these two works of fiction. The article is valuable in understanding the finer nuances of the two Singh Sabhas and the awakening among the Hindu society. – Editor*

Historians and scholars of literature have taken interest in the connection between literature and historical reality.¹ This paper proposes to analyse *Bhagyavati* (1877), the first Hindi novel, and *Sundari* (1898), the first Punjabi novel, both written in the Punjab, in comparative perspective. The novel as a genre had emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century in India. The protagonists of both the novels are women though the authors are not. The novels are realistic in intention; didactic in nature and are used as a vehicle for conveying a moral message. The position of women in society was an important concern of the late nineteenth century novelists and the social reformers

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and pamphleteers. Generally, a woman's identity was defined in terms of her relationship with men, as a daughter, as a wife, and as a mother. Interestingly, selection of women as protagonists made the focus sharper on both 'social conformity and change'. *Bhagyavati* and *Sundari* also embody the authors' direct or indirect responses to the colonial situation.

The Punjab was annexed by the British in 1849. Several socio-religious movements arising out of contact between the West and the Indian people emerged during the late nineteenth century. The most notable movements of reform among the Hindus of the Punjab were the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj (founded respectively in Calcutta and Bombay, and the branches established at Lahore respectively in 1863 and 1877), while Sanatan Dharam as a movement took shape in response to them. To effect reform in Sikh religion and practices, the Singh Sabhas began to emerge in the 1870s. This was also the period of the rise, among others, of the Muslim Anjumans. All were responding to colonial presence, and all were concerned with continuities and change, especially with a view to adjustments in the new situation. However, the nature and extent of change varied in accordance with the vision of the past, present and future in each case.² The authors of the two novels taken up in the present paper were the leading ideologues respectively of the Sanatan Dharam and Singh Sabha movements. Both belonged to the Punjab, but one wrote in Hindi and the other in Punjabi. We may begin with *Bhagyavati* which was published first.

I

The author of *Bhagyavati*, Pandit Shraddha Ram of Phillaur (1837-1881), is regarded as one of the earliest socio-religious reformers within the rubric of Sanatan Dharm.³ His father, Pandit Jaidayalu was a hereditary priest of the Bhandari Khatri of Phillaur. Apart from Sanskrit, Shraddha Ram learnt Persian, Urdu, and Punjabi. He also learnt classical music from his father. At the age of nineteen, he started reciting parts of the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, and the *Bhagvata Purana* in public. He studied the Upanishads and the Vedas at Rishikesh. He ascribed divine authority to the Puranas and the Dharamashastras as well as the Vedas. Their sanction was considered sacrosanct for all

rituals and beliefs, and for social order. Shraddha Ram found employment with Reverend J. Newton of the American Presbyterian Mission in Ludhiana, and translated Christian tracts and books from Hindi into Urdu and Punjabi. On request from the missionaries, he taught them basic Hindi and Punjabi. After he returned to Phillaur, he wrote books commissioned by the British officials.

For the propagation of his ideas, Shraddha Ram Phillauri adopted the missionary mode of street preaching. He delivered public lectures, gave religious sermons combined with the singing of hymns, and held debates in cities and towns of the Punjab. Together with Munshi Yamuna Prasad, he set up a 'Hindu School' in Ludhiana in 1867-68 to teach both Sanskrit and Persian. He organized a 'Hindu Sabha' for the propagation of Sanatan Dharm. He also founded 'Hindu Dharm Prakashik Sabha' in Ludhiana to publish religious literature on Hinduism.⁴ The printing press as the new means of communication appealed to him.

Shraddha Ram published numerous works in Punjabi, Urdu and Hindi. Commissioned by the British administrators he wrote *Sikhan de Raj di Vithya* in Punjabi in 1865. Most of his works were published in the 1870s: *Dharm Kasauti* in Urdu in 1874, *Satya Dharm Mukta wali* in Urdu in 1875, *Dharm Raksha* in Urdu in 1876, *Dharm Samvad* in Urdu in 1876, *Punjabi Bat Cheet* in Punjabi in 1876 and *Bhagyavati* in Hindi in 1877. The dates of several other works are not known: the *Bijmantra*, *Satyamritprava* and the *Ramlakamdbenu*. His Hindi work, *Shitoupdesh*, was published posthumously in 1886.⁵

II

The author's avowed objective in writing *Bhagyavati* is to instruct women as house-holders with regard to familial and social relations, customs, rituals, and ethics. The woman protagonist of the novel, Bhagyavati, is educated at home and married off. In one situation when she is wrongly suspected of theft; she is asked by her in-laws to leave the house and live on her own. She overcomes all difficulties by her innovative ideas; she stitches socks and embroiders silk sheets to be sold in the market to become financially sound in a few years. She returns to the house when her in-laws are in need. She gives birth to a

daughter and a son. She deals with different situations and problems both at home and in the course of her journey to Kashi (Benaras) with the family. The bearing of her education becomes evident in her sensible handling of difficult situations. There are several characters in the novel but besides herself, only her father, Pandit Umadutt, is the medium of the author's message.⁶ Much of the novel project ideas related to the education of women and their ideal role in the joint family, with a few suggestions for social reform here and there. As a social document this work provides insights into empirical realities of the time, including attitude towards colonial presence in the Punjab. For us, the basic significance of *Bhagyavati* lies in its socio-cultural documentation, underpinned by the author's ideology.

There is a general emphasis on education in the novel. An ugly but educated person is respected by all. It projects several ideas regarding woman's education. A girl remains physically occupied and her mind does not dwell on 'impure' thoughts if she is pursuing education. Bhagyavati studied Hindi, Sanskrit and basic arithmetic. She also studied *Sabastranam Gita*, *Bhasa Vyakaran*, *Rajupath*, *Hitopadesh*, *Atamchikitsa*, *Paksadhni Pothi*, *Sabitya Shastra*, *Kanoon ki Pothi* and poetics. Her mother taught her how to cook, sew and stitch perfectly. She was educated at home, but the idea of sending girls to an all-girls school, where Hindi and Sanskrit are taught, is also put forth by the writer. Education enables Bhagyavati to run the household in an efficient and practical manner, and she gains the ability to tackle different kinds of situations, both inside and outside the home. Although she is educated in traditional knowledge, she is aware of law and combines for the scriptures with rationality.⁷

Bhagyavati uses rational arguments against charms and amulets for the protection of her new-born son and herself from the evil eye, evil spirits and ghosts. She says that her new-born is best protected by his parents who would fulfil all his needs. In fact, no charms were brought for her daughter and yet she was healthy and safe without such 'protection'. Bhagyavati goes on to add that these charms hurt the tender children; only medicine could cure them. On Bhagyavati's advice, her father-in-law agrees to take medicine from a doctor, setting aside the idea of pollution during ailment. At the birth of her daughter,

Bhagyavati comforts her husband, saying that God does not differentiate between a boy and a girl: they have similar bodily needs, are dear to the parents alike till the age of ten to fifteen, and both become distant after marriage as they get involved with their own families. It may be added that the claims of alchemy (*rasayan*) are rejected totally in this work.⁸

Pandit Umadutt, Bhagyavati's father, recommends extending the age of marriage for boys to eighteen years. According to him, boys at a younger age are immature and without a developed sexual urge. Married at this young age they remain indifferent to the wife, which is not conducive to a happy marriage. He proposes also to extend the age of girls for marriage to eleven years. The evils of early marriage are pointed out in terms of the young woman going astray in the absence of her husband. Marriage at the ripe age results in procreation and the child becomes the focus of the mother's emotions; there is no risk of her becoming involved with someone in the absence of her husband.⁹ The author makes an attempt to persuade people to put an end to some popular practices related to marriage. Pandit Umadutt expresses his disapproval of popular marriage customs as opposed to the Shastras.¹⁰

Bhagyavati advises the family members to discard certain funeral rituals because they are not sanctioned by 'the Shastras'. For example, on the death of a very old person the family members of the deceased sing and dance in the funeral procession. At home, however, the women in mourning cry loudly and beat their breasts. Mourning is observed for ten days; female members of the family wear unwashed clothes. Solemn behaviour is maintained for a year after the death. During this period women of the neighbourhood visit the house of the deceased to express condolence on festivals like Holi and Diwali.¹¹ Understandably, the Brahmans played no part in these practices.

With reference to the deplorable condition of widows, or the widows being sexually exploited, the idea of widow remarriage is supported on the argument that if a male cannot control his sexual urge and needs a spouse, how can a woman be expected to do without a spouse?¹² Men and women have their natural physical urges which can be given legitimate expression through the institution of marriage. In short, the widows should be allowed to remarry, like the widowers.

However, widow remarriage is advocated not to uphold human rights but in the interest of moral life: marriage is expected to curb the widow's tendency to resort to illicit sexual relationships.

The patriarchal joint family is looked upon as an essential social institution, with its built-in restrictions on its female members. Yet, a married woman can play an important role in keeping the joint family intact. Her place is with her husband in the home and no other role is visualized for her. As mentioned earlier, Bhagyavati is told to leave home when her actions appear to cause a rift among the members of the family. She comes back without rancour. Rather, she requests her brothers-in-law to rejoin the family as in old age parents need their children most. In her parental home also she persuades her brother to come back to live with their parents.¹³

Bhagyavati is projected as an ideal wife who not only promotes unity within the joint family, but also cares for domestic economy. To improve the disorganised state of the household, Bhagyavati suggests that the daughters-in-law should start doing the daily chores. She believes that total dependence on servants was bad; they took advantage of the situation and fleeced the household. Bhagyavati distributes the household work among the daughters-in-law in a systematic manner. She herself starts keeping account of every paisa spent in the home.¹⁴

However, Bhagyavati lives under several constraints both in her natal family and the joint family. As a daughter she is not allowed to work in her parent's home and the food cooked by her is not eaten by her father. After she gets married, she is not expected to approach her parents for help of any kind, let alone complain against her in-laws. She goes out of the home alone only when it is absolutely necessary and that too in a palanquin (*palki*). When she is made to leave her husband's home she has no money or help. Here, the idea of a woman earning money is projected, but she works from within the home. A daughter-in-law is not supposed to speak to her father-in-law, or utter the names of the family members. Nor can she speak to outsiders who come to the house. She visits her parents rarely, but in their house she has the liberty to speak to outsiders and even go out.¹⁵

In the social order, maximum notice is taken of the Brahmans

and their superior position in the society. The author quotes the *Gita* to say that the Brahmans are supreme (*sbresth*); therefore, the people should follow them. The Brahmans being intelligent would not adopt anything blindly. They have the authority to approve or condemn a particular change. Hence, all reform should come through them. They are expected to take the lead in introducing change in social matters like extending the age of marriage for males and females and discarding certain rituals and practices connected with marriage without the sanction of the Shastras.¹⁶ Furthermore, one should never keep a Brahman's money. Two Brahman characters in the novel enjoy the patronage of the rulers of Kasi and Jaipur. Bhagyavati's father-in-law takes food and water only from the hands of a Brahman. The position of untouchables in society is reflected in the abusive term *chamar ka jana* for a servant. It may be added that the other terms of abuse used by the Brahman characters in the novel are *malechch*, *kasai ki jani*, *kanjar*, *chubra*, *bharua*, and *churail*.¹⁷

In *Bhagyavati*, the sanction of Sanatan Dharm (eternal/traditional religion) remains a vital concern; sacred scriptures are invoked repeatedly in support of both conservative values and rejection of some practices. Belief in incarnations (*avatars*) is evident as there are several references to Ram and Krishan as well as Vishnu, Brahma and Rudra. One can express love and devotion towards God and earn religious merit by going on a pilgrimage. Rituals to be performed at a pilgrimage are holy dip in the Ganges and *sandhya tarpan*. The important religious centres mentioned in this connection are Hardwar, Kurukshetra, Prayag, Mathura, Vrindavan, Ayodhya and Kashi. Significantly, the author also says that the worship of God consists of singing hymns in His praise in congregation (*satsang*).¹⁸

Scriptural authority is used by the author to criticize some of the existing practices claiming religious sanctity. Bhagyavati denounces the ascetics who amass wealth, because a true ascetic should be consumed by the love of God and needs only basic necessities for survival. She quotes the *Gita* according to which the true devotee of God is neither happy nor sad, is not affected by good or bad circumstances, and has no desires.¹⁹ When her in-laws turn against her and want to throw her out of the house, Bhagyavati gets strength

from a *sloka* of the *Gita* to the effect that a wise person should be free from fear, anger and passion, and maintain equipoise in both happiness and sorrow.²⁰ The teaching of the *Gita* can thus serve as a source of inspiration for women as well as men. She quotes a *sloka* 'from the Shastras' to say that wearing saffron clothes, carrying a human skull, shaving the head, maintaining matted or braided hair, smearing the body with ashes, wearing torn clothes, remaining naked, conducting fasts, and holding *sabhas* to recite verses from the Vedas and the Puranas— all these are merely the means of filling one's stomach.²¹ However, as mentioned above, the ritual dip in the Ganges and *sandhya tarpan* are the sources of merit.²² The author talks about a large variety of *sadhvas* and religious institutions at Hardwar.²³

Furthermore, human beings can attain to *mukti* only through God's grace which cannot be bought with money, nor by leaving home and wandering far and wide. It is attained through belief in One God who is omnipresent, omnipotent, all pervading, and creator of all, through loving devotion to God to the exclusion of concern for persons or riches, and through an attitude of genuine detachment. Pursuit of these ideals purifies the inner self and leads to *mukti*.²⁴ That an old widowed woman could attain *mukti* is suggested by Bhagyavati who tells her mother-in-law that there is no need for her to go to sacred centres like Mathura, Vrindavan and Ayodhya. She could pursue *bhakti* by singing hymns in praise of God in congregation (*satsang*); she could give charity while living in her home and attain to *mukti* with God's grace. The members of her family too would get the meritorious opportunity to serve her.²⁵

Finally, the author of *Bhagyavati* leaves the general impression of appreciation for British rule. The British administrators are assumed to be above bribery and corruption. They function efficiently and impose no unnecessary restrictions on their subjects. British rule in the present is extolled especially in contrast with Muslim rule in the past. According to Pandit Umadutt, the practice of early marriage did not exist in the Hindu society before the establishment of Muslim rule. The Muslims used to abduct beautiful girls, but they spared married women. Consequently, the Hindus began to get their daughters married off at the age of nine or ten. Now that the Hindus are the

subjects of the British, under their benign rule, there is no molestation of Hindu women.²⁶

Furthermore, Bhagyavati praises the British for the eradication of small pox which used to claim the lives of numerous children. She appreciates the use of vaccination as a preventive measure. Extolling the wisdom of the British, she states that no other rulers worked for the welfare of their subjects.²⁷ Enumerating the benefits of western medical system, Bhagyavati says that its medicines are readymade and taken at fixed times. Even if they did not improve the condition of the patient, they did not have an adverse effect. The western doctors received education in medical schools under able instructors, passed examinations and only then treated patients. Therefore, they are reliable. The author hastens to add that even though the Indian medical texts (*Chikitsa* Shastras) were excellent and Indian medicines suited Indian people the best, the *vaid*s in India make no effort to acquire formal training under the instruction of able *gurus* before they start treating patients. The people are duped by quacks.²⁸

Finally, the purpose, form and content of Bhagyavati is similar to the novels produced by the Christian missionaries. The association of the author with the missionaries was probably responsible for this. The narrative moves slowly and is disjointed. There is hardly any plot. This is understandable because its purpose is not to relate an interesting story but to project a social message. Like some other novels, the motifs of journey and robbery are used in *Bhagyavati*, though only to create situations to convey lessons. The important characters play stereotyped social roles.

It may be mentioned that under the influence of the missionaries, and in response to the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj, Pandit Shraddha Ram suggests some socio-religious reforms. On the positive side are recommended a comprehensive, albeit traditional, education for girls, a slightly higher age of marriage for both girls and boys, remarriage of widows, and that elderly widows should strive for liberation by staying at home, worshipping One God and singing hymns in His praise in congregation. On the negative side, the author disapproves of those customs related to marriage and death which do not have the approval of the Shastras.

In short, though professedly didactic, the novel reflects the socio-cultural life in north India, related largely to rituals, customs, and popular practices connected with birth, marriage and death, diseases, health, and the beliefs upheld by Brahmanical Hinduism. The author takes incidental notice also of physical and man-made environment, features of the British administration, and professions and occupations of his day. A variety of household goods, clothes and jewelry are also mentioned.

III

A leading protagonist of the Singh Sabha movement, Bhai Vir Singh was born at Amritsar on 5 December 1872. His paternal family traced its ancestry to Kaura Mal, the *divan* of the Mughal governor of Lahore (Punjab) in mid-eighteenth century. Bhai Vir Singh's grandfather Bhai Kahn Singh was a *vaid* and a scholar, and his father, Charan Singh, was a medical practitioner. Also a poet and a writer, he became an active member of the local Singh Sabha. Bhai Vir Singh's mother, Uttam Kaur, was a devout and compassionate Sikh. Bhai Vir Singh received his early education in Sikh literature from his maternal grandfather Bhai Hazara Singh, an eminent Sikh scholar. Bhai Vir Singh did his matriculation from the Church Mission School in 1891. He was offered a job in government service which he declined.²⁹

By the time Bhai Vir Singh began writing, over hundred Singh Sabhas had come into existence. He whole-heartedly shared their concerns and worked for the propagation of the teachings of the Gurus, distinctiveness of the Sikh faith, espousal of social equality, promotion of Punjabi language and literature, promotion of education, and uplift of women. He was as much concerned about right beliefs as about the right practices in accordance with Guru Granth Sahib. Thus, he was an ideologue, litterateur and social reformer rolled into one. Bhai Vir Singh's productive career spanned over six decades.

In November 1891, jointly with Wazir Singh, Bhai Vir Singh established a printing press at Amritsar, called the Wazir Hind Press. A regular publication programme started in 1893 with the issue of the monthly *Nirguniara* which incorporated religious tracts written by Bhai Vir Singh. In 1894, he established the Khalsa Tract Society at Amritsar in collaboration with Bhai Koer Singh, which adopted the *Nirguniara*

as its official organ. It is worth mentioning that 1300 tracts were issued under its aegis. On 17 November 1899, Bhai Vir Singh started the *Khalsa Samachar* to project the important concerns of the Singh Sabha reformers. His contribution to the Sikh faith and Sikh history is evident from the works he edited: *Sikhan di Bhagatmala* (1912), *Prachin Panth Prakash* (1914), *Puratan Janamsakhi* (1926), *Suraj Prakash* in 14 volumes (1934), *Sankhya Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji*, published posthumously and covering nearly half of Guru Granth Sahib. He also produced poetry, epic, drama, biographies and novels.³⁰

Bhai Vir Singh was barely 26 when he wrote his first novel, *Sundari*, in 1898. Incidentally, one of his objectives in launching the *Khalsa Samachar* soon after the publication of *Sundari* was to reinforce its ideological message on a regular basis. His other three novels were *Bijai Singh* (1899), *Satwant Kaur* (part one came out in 1900 and part two in 1927), and *Baba Naudh Singh* (1921).³¹ Generally characterized as historical romances, each of his novels has narration, description and dialogue in good measure. Metaphors and picturesque descriptions of nature abound. Despite being frankly didactic in nature, stories move by sudden twists and turns which keep the reader's interest alive.

IV

The first three novels, written as tracts,³² are set in the middle decades of the eighteenth century in the Punjab which is popularly regarded as a heroic age (the fourth novel, incidentally, is situated in the colonial period). Elaborating on the eighteenth-century Bhai Vir Singh underlines the faith of the Khalsa (hereafter Sikhs). It enabled them to suffer untold miseries and make willing sacrifices in the course of their political struggle against the Mughal administrators and Afghan invaders. The author weaves Sikh tradition in his narratives to account for the high morale and ultimate victory of the Sikhs. In bravery, courage and adventure their characters are broadly analogous.³³ According to Harbans Singh, 'there is a uniform note of affirmation and continuity in all the three'.³⁴

Stating his objectives of writing *Sundari*, Bhai Vir Singh says that by reading and listening about their glorious past the Sikhs would hopefully become steadfast in their faith; pursue spiritual and worldly

concerns properly; shun evil practices; strengthen their religion; love their high moral principles; become united and treat other communities with equanimity (*ik ras jan*), neither with hostility nor with excessive love (*moh*). Rather, Sikhs should follow the Guru's teaching that all human beings should be regarded as one (*manas ki jaat sabbe eko pahichanbe*).³⁵ Through this attempt at regeneration of the Sikh people, Bhai Vir Singh also aims at developing novel as an important *genre* of Punjabi literature.

Moreover, Bhai Vir Singh is consciously responding to the criticism of the Sikh Gurus by the Arya Samaj leaders, claims of the Sanatani Hindus that Sikhs are Hindu,³⁶ and the propaganda of the Christian missionaries about the superiority of their faith. He is also concerned about the important issues of the absence of Panthic control over the historic Gurdwaras and presence of idols in the Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple). He addresses the feeling of up-rootedness experienced by the Sikhs in the present. Thus, through *Sundari*, Bhai Vir Singh wishes to generate pride in the Sikhs of his day in their history and religion. He presents models of ideal Sikhs for emulation in the present.

To begin with an outline of *Sundari*, the first of its 17 chapters (*kaand*) is based on a folk song which alludes to the oppression of the Mughal administrators in the eighteenth century and the abduction of a Hindu girl by one of them. According to the folk song, a beautiful (*sunder, sobni*) girl was abducted by a Mughal while her husband was away. She helplessly entreated the proverbial messenger, the crow, to inform her father; he came and offered a huge amount for her release, but the abductor would not let such a beautiful girl go. Then she entreated the crow to go to her (younger) brother and his offer of large sums was also rejected by the Mughal. Finally, she asked the crow to go to her husband who was confident that with the offer of jewels and a lot of money he would easily secure his wife's release. When this too was turned down, she asked her father, brother and husband to leave, assuring them that she would rather burn herself than have the Mughal's food or water or lose her honour. On hearing this, her father fell on the ground, brother fainted, but her husband laughed and said he would get another wife! After they left, she sent her abductor on the ruse of getting water, made a pyre of the cooking wood, lit it and sat on it.

Just then her (elder) brother reached there (and rescued her).³⁷

In the novel, the girl's name is Surasti, born in a wealthy Hindu family. On the day of her departure to her husband's home (*muklaawa*), this beautiful girl is abducted by a local Mughal administrator (Nawab). When her valiant brother Balwant Singh brings her back to her parent's home, they refuse to keep her out of fear of the Nawab's wrath. Her brother, who had become Sikh and joined a band (*jatha*) of the Khalsa warriors, then decides to take her along. In the jungle, they are overtaken by her abductor and wounded and imprisoned. When the leader of Balwant Singh's band, Sardar Sham Singh, gets the news that they are to be forcibly converted to Islam and Surasti to be married to the Nawab, they are rescued in a sudden and swift action. Surasti is then asked by Sham Singh what would she like to do. She categorically replies that she would not return to her husband who had forsaken his duty of protecting her. Nor would she remarry and adopt the *grihastha dharma*. She would rather offer her life to her faith and serve her brothers in the *jatha*.

After receiving the baptism of the double-edged sword (*amrit*), Surasti is renamed Sunder Kaur and affectionately called Sundari. She is respected and loved as a younger sister by the members of the band. She looks after the common kitchen (*langar*) and accompanies them to the battlefield where she takes care of the wounded, often without discrimination of friend and foe. She is a deeply religious person and spends her spare time in remembering God. Sundari is full of compassion. Her acts of welfare of others (*par-upkar*) occasionally land her into trouble. She gets abducted by the Mughal Nawab again and again who becomes intent on marrying her, now with her consent. But she providentially manages to escape, or is rescued by her brother and his associates. However, she receives a serious wound inflicted by a wounded Afghan soldier whom she had tried to give succour. The Nawab chances to spot the wounded Sundari and has her taken to his mansion and treated. When she feels a little better, her band uses a stratagem to bring her back, but she cannot recover. An unbroken recital (*akband path*) of Guru Granth Sahib is organised by her associates at her request. She listens to it while lying down. After its conclusion, she addresses the men and women of the *jatha* in a moving manner and passes away, with her head bowed over the scripture.³⁸

Historically, the story of *Sundari* is placed in the 1740s, with a couple of years before and after. It covers the tenure of three Mughal governors of the Punjab: Zakariya Khan, Yahiya Khan (briefly also of his brother Shah Nawaz), and Muin-ul Mulk (Mir Mannu). Apart from oral tradition, it is said to be based mainly on Ratan Singh Bhangu's *Panth Prakash* and Giani Gian Singh's *Tawarikh Khalsa*. It depicts the grit and determination of the Sikhs in the course of their protracted struggle against the Mughal administrators. There is a long description of the repression of the Sikhs by Lakhpat Rai (on behalf of Yahiya Khan) and barbarities suffered by the Sikh men, women and children. Here, Bhai Vir Singh digresses to give a detailed account of the *chhoti ghallughara* (1746), or the massacre of the Sikhs by Lakhpat Rai. There are references also to the construction of Ram Rauni (1748) and role of Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Mir Mannu's measures against the Sikhs, and Ahmad Shah Abdali's two invasions. A special mention is made of Diwan Kaura Mal's role as an administrator, conqueror and, above all, sympathiser of the Khalsa. Then, there are stray references to (Nawab) Kapur Singh, Hari Singh, Jassa Singh (Ahluwalia) and Ala Singh of Patiala. The well-known martyrs like Bhai Mani Singh, Sukha Singh and Deep Singh also figure in the novel.

The terms Mughal and '*turk*' are used interchangeably, apparently for the Muslims associated with the administration. Occasionally, the term *malechh* (impure), another stereotype, is used by some characters in the novel. The author refers to the weakening power of the Mughal emperors, underlines the lack of stability due to quick change of governors at Lahore, and highlights the terror and repression unleashed by the local administrators. Common people were forcibly converted, women were abducted, Brahmans were obliged to carry the palanquin of the Mulla, and the *darogha* had to be bribed. The administrators collected revenues but did not protect the subjects, let alone provide justice. The Mughal and Afghan soldiers are characterised as treacherous and bigoted: one abducting Sundari who nursed him to health, and the other, a gravely wounded Afghan, attacking her because she was a 'Singhni' even though she had given him water.

Bhai Vir Singh goes out of his way to praise Kaura Mal who was not only sympathetic to the Khalsa, but who actually guided them and

sent information, money and rations in times of need. He was considered a 'Khulasa' or 'Sahajdhari' Sikh and the Khalsa called him 'Mitha' (sweet, opposed to bitter or '*kaura*') Mal and regarded his contribution as a bloodless victory. Kaura Mal cleansed the sacred tank of Harmandir Sahib (filled in by Lakhpat Rai) at his own expense. After the conquest of Multan by Kaura Mal he was given the title of 'Maharaja' by Mir Mannu.³⁹ Significantly, Kaura Mal did not want the 'foreigner' (*badeshi*) Pathan, Ahmad Shah Abdali, to find roots in this land. Therefore, Kaura Mal persuaded Mir Mannu to take the help of the Sikhs against the Afghan invaders. Kaura Mal died fighting against the Afghans in 1752. Bhai Vir Singh says that he kept the Sikhs safe from Mir Mannu as the 'tongue between teeth' (*dandaan vikhe jeebh*).⁴⁰ Thus, Kaura Mal is presented as rendering crucial help to the Sikh struggle against the Mughals and Afghans. It is pertinent to recall that Kaura Mal was the author's ancestor.

However, projection and propagation of Sikh faith seems to be the primary concern of the novel. There are references to Guru Granth Sahib as the basic source of Sikh ideology and ethics. Belief in One God, with no room for empty rituals (*fokat karam*) is emphasized. Sundari's *jatha* carries a copy of Guru Granth Sahib and its daily worship (*prakash*) is done presumably when not in warfare or transit. Sundari spends her spare time reading the Granth Sahib, reciting the *Japu Ji* and the *Shabad Hazare*, and meditating on God's Name (*nam simran*). The recitation (*path*) of the scripture before sleep and the *Ardaas* and *Aarti* also figure in the life in the jungle. When possible, the *jatha* partakes of the sacred food and the community meal (*langar*). There is reference also to the *mahaprashaad*. The Harmandir Sahib is the premier sacred space of the Sikhs, and bathing (*ishnan*) in the sacred tank is a source of merit. In spite of the trying times, the Sikh men, women and children visit the Darbar Sahib on the Gurpurab and other occasions. A widow braved Mughal repression to have the *darshan* of the Harmandir Sahib. Furthermore, Sikh faith is open to all, though Bhai Vir Singh refers to the conversion of Hindus alone. The novel lays emphasis on the transformative impact of the initiation of the double-edged sword on both men and women. At the time of her initiation, Sundari is called the daughter of Guru Gobind Singh and Mata Sahib Devi. Later on, Sundari is also compared to Mai Bhago.

The willing sacrifice of the Sikhs for their faith and values is underlined.⁴¹

Certain ethical values are built into the Sikh ideology. At the individual level welfare of others (*par-upkar*) emerges as the dominant ethical concern in the novel. Sundari attends to the wounded irrespective of their faith and the side to which they belong. Her humanistic concern and deep compassion are regarded as springing from her faith. A Sikh is instructed to remember God's Name and act in a detached manner (*nirlep*). (Right) action (*karni*) but not wealth (*dhan*) is important in life. Sundari's request to her brethren that some money should be sent to the Nawab towards the expenses incurred by him for her treatment suggests that a Sikh should discharge her/his debt before death. Sundari entreats each one of them to treat his wife with respect (*satkar*) and as an equal (*sathi*). They should not look at other women with lust. Killing one's daughter is mentioned as a punishable act. Despair, or ending one's life out of despair, is disapproved. Sundari admonishes a Hindu Khatri whose wife had been abducted, from killing himself out of helplessness; optimism underlies faith in God which makes committing suicide a sin. Dying for a cause, on the other hand, is construed as martyrdom.⁴²

At another level, as warriors, the Sikhs are instructed not to harm women and children. Foraging is considered inappropriate; the Sikhs should pay for food and fodder. When in power they should not regard any Sikh as inferior. Nor should they discriminate between Hindus and Muslims, nor between castes. It is also emphasized that their enmity is against the oppressive rulers and not against Muslims *per se*.⁴³ Justice and protection of all the subjects, including poor Muslims, is the duty of the ruler. He should not oppress anyone in the name of religion.

Turning to social relations in the novel, there are indications of hostility between Muslim villagers and Sikhs and of the Hindu villagers favouring the Sikhs. By and large, however, there is peaceful coexistence in villages, with a general consideration for one another's religious sensibilities. The Muslim women who come to plead (through a boy of 14) for the release of their men, get food cooked for the *jatha* by the Hindu women of their village. In another situation, the Nawab places Sundari on a Rajput soldier's horse; has her treated by a Brahman *vaid*

and attended by a Hindu woman. However, the Khatri and Brahmans of the village of the abducted Khatri woman (later Dharam Kaur) refuse to have her back into the Hindu fold, because their time honoured tradition does not allow. Their argument is that: Hindu *dharm*a is like a weak thread (*kachaa dhaaga*) which breaks quickly. Thus, even though she merely ate the food of the 'turk', she becomes a fruit fallen from the tree which cannot be put back! Sardar Sham Singh gets angry over this response and orders preparation of the sacred food (*karah parshad*) and its distribution among Brahmans. Interestingly, at Sundari's suggestion, husband of the woman first gives a gold coin (*muhar*), each to the Brahmans, also touching their feet, followed by his wife distributing the *parshad*. Opportunism and meekness of the Brahmans become evident when they all accept the sacred food from the 'fallen' Khatri woman and leave after giving blessings to the couple. However, the Khatri and his wife now decide to reject the Hindu fold. They plead with the Sardar to let them become Sikhs and join the *jatha*, also putting all their wealth at its disposal.⁴⁴

Bhai Vir Singh typecasts the Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus respectively as brave, oppressive and submissive. The Hindu Khatri and his wife are initially meek and helpless, but they become confident and resourceful after taking *amrit* and joining Sundari's *jatha* as Dharam Singh and Dharam Kaur. For fear of the Mughal abductor's wrath, Sundari's family prefers not to have her back, but her brother Balwant Singh becomes a tough and dedicated warrior after taking *amrit*. A Hindu is depicted as soft as butter, and a Khalsa Sikh as hard as stone. Among other social categories that figure in the novel is a Mulla who decrees that Balwant Singh should either be killed or converted to Islam; the Bania trader who stealthily carries rations for the Khalsa when they are besieged by Lakhpat Rai; the Chuhra who executes a tyrannical Mughal administrator at the behest of Sardar Sham Singh; and the outcaste or working (*kamin*) women who can do anything for money. When the Nawab entreats Sundari to agree to marry him, he says that he is not a rustic (*jatt ganwaar*) but a poet (*shaayar*).⁴⁵

The novel highlights the mutual relations between men and women in the Sikh Panth. Just before her death Sundari addresses the men present that they should not regard their wives as inferiors (*nich*); they should not be treated harshly. Further, in the Shastras women are

treated as the Shudras, but Guru Granth Sahib treats them with respect and appreciation. Like men, the women have the right to remember God's Name and strive for liberation. The Sikh Gurus praise women. The tenth Guru entitles them to take initiation of the double-edged sword. Rather, his mother puts sugar (*pataashas*) into the *amrit* being prepared. Sundari exhorts her brethren to respect their wives, maintain purity in the Panth, and have the same consideration for women as they have for her. In other words, they should be treated as equal and with respect. Addressing to the Sikh women, she says that the Sikh Panth would be strong so long as they remain pure in their faith and loyal towards their husbands. If out of love for their children women turn away from the injunctions of Guru Gobind Singh, worship 'others', and adopt the forbidden practices, they would be akin to the Shudras. Their children would become jackals and the women themselves would be condemned, losing respect in society.⁴⁶

The character of Sundari is a class apart. She combines in herself the qualities of religiosity, purity, modesty, compassion and service generally associated with women, along with fearlessness, endurance, courage and bravery commonly considered manly virtues. Bhai Vir Singh seems to regard commitment to Sikh faith as the core virtue which Sundari has in ample measure. In fact, with her total dedication to Sikh faith which is projected as the foundation of these qualities, Sundari is intended to become the model for the Sikh women (probably also the Sikh men) of Bhai Vir Singh's day.

Addressing the Sikh women in the present, Bhai Vir Singh appeals to them to become true Sikhs like Sundari: 'O' gold laden Sikhnis with faces painted red, look at the plight and steadfastness of your *vadebri* (ancestor) Sundari'. Despite the great difficulties she encountered she did not forsake her faith. She put her life in peril but never compromised her good qualities. In moments of great trouble, she remained firm in Sikh faith. The author prefers the Sikh women to wear the 'thickly woven' clothes in place of 'flimsy garments'. He admonishes the Sikh women for sending their husbands and sons on the wrong path. The Sikh community (*qaum*) is losing because of the un-Sikh religious practices and drift of the Sikh women. The author goes on to give a long list of such undesirable practices. He tells the

Sikh women that after forsaking your God and the Gurus you are worshipping stones, trees, idols, graves, and *pirs*. Out of your ignorance of the Sikh faith, you drift towards other religions. You instruct your children also in other religions. Here, the author uses an interesting expression. He tells the Sikh women that their children would grow to be half-baked (*kachghatad*) like you: Sikh from the head, Brahman from the throat, and Muslim from below the stomach; the torso of mulberry and the legs of china berry! For you, *dharam* is forsaking the Guru's *amrit* and eating the leftovers of the sham *sadhus*. You make your sons turn away from *amrit* and in its place wear the sacred thread (*janju*) and *dhotis*. You observe the marriage and death rituals of others. You forsake the living God and give sweetmeats (*poore*) to snakes.⁴⁷

Moreover, continues the author, through loud ritualistic mourning (*siyapa*) you make your bodies and mind sick. In your greed for money you should not marry your daughters to non-Sikhs. They make fun of you even in *siyapa* and you still sit amongst them to be treated contemptuously, moving away from your own religion. Furthermore, by keeping untidy homes and wearing dirty clothes you make your husbands detest their homes; you make your sons and husbands travel by ship to distant lands and be pushed around; you scrape your homes to feed self-seeking people; and you weaken your intellect by incantations instead of reading Sri Guru Granth Sahib. By forsaking the One True Eternal God you pave the way to hell not only for yourselves but also for your husbands and sons. Bhai Vir Singh exhorts the Sikh women to get rid of the mixture of useless ideas and become pure Sikhs. Finally, they are asked to look at the enormous difficulties faced by Sundari and think of what all the initiated Sikh women (Singhnis) bore to preserve their faith. Therefore, in their own interest and that of their progeny they should become true Singhnis like Sundari: brave, virtuous and chaste, and make their sons true Singhs. Otherwise, for their husbands they would be like the *amar vel* (a thread-like twining parasitic weed around a plant) which dries up the plant and kills it eventually.

Bhai Vir Singh also addresses the Sikh men directly. His critique of the present is the obverse of the idealised Sikh past in the novel. In the eighteenth century, the Khalsa Panth is presented as brothers

solidly united: there were no animosities and factions. In times of need the leaders took decisions through Gurmata (collective decisions in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib), underpinned by the doctrines of Guru Granth and Guru Panth (Granth Sahib and the Panth as the Guru).⁴⁸ The author presents a contrast when he talks about his contemporary times. Referring probably to the ideological differences between the Lahore and the Amritsar Singh Sabhas at the time of writing *Sundari*,⁴⁹ he says that our disunity is the cause of our miseries. With a harmonious community life, the Sikhs could come out of the present morass and strengthen their faith. He laments that like other nations the Sikhs have not raised a memorial to their brave martyrs of the *chhota ghallughara*. Nor have they preserved their own history. Elsewhere, he expresses his deep concern about stone idols being worshipped in the Darbar Sahib at Amritsar.⁵⁰ By recalling the ideology of the Gurus and laying stress on the Sikh way of life, Bhai Vir Singh seems keen on underlining the distinctiveness of Sikh identity.⁵¹ Incidentally, in consonance with the objectives of the Singh Sabha movement, he avoids a direct reference to British rule, but there is seems to be no appreciation for it.

To conclude, Bhai Vir Singh interprets the political struggle of the Sikhs in the eighteenth century in the light of his contemporary concerns. He borrows the historical context and uses the medium of novel to project the Sikh ideology, its ethical concerns and the problems faced by the Sikhs in the present. Cumulatively, his novel makes up for loss of self-esteem under colonial rule. It is not historically accurate always but the author is careful about avoiding any anachronisms. The idealized picture of the past and his engaging style and graphic description, along with dramatic twists and turns, have contributed towards its continuing appeal among the Sikh men and women. It also remains a lasting contribution to Punjabi literature.

V

Bhagyavati and *Sundari* have some interesting similarities and significant differences, connected respectively with the broadly shared historical context of the authors and their ideologies and purposes. Both the novels are didactic in nature. Both respond to the Arya Samaj,

though in case of Shraddha Ram Phillauri the influence of Brahmo Samaj (established at Lahore in 1863) is palpable. Both were written in colonial Punjab but the locale of *Bhagyavati* is Benaras and that of *Sundari* is central Punjab. Both are centered on a particular woman and both aim at empowering women. Both underline religiosity, humility, virtuosity, grit, effort, and optimism of the two women. Both the women born in high caste and well to do Hindu families are beautiful, sober, stable, intelligent and skillful.

However, while the source of Bhagyavati's strength lies in her education, that of Sundari lies in her faith; she experiences transformation after taking the initiation of the double-edged sword. If Bhagyavati is adept in domestic economy and management, Sundari learned to wield a sword, ride a horse and nurse the wounded in the battlefield. She also provided food to her fighting band. Compassion, service (*seva*) and welfare of others (*parupkar*), are her important characteristics. Bhagyavati's life is confined to the family and household, but Sundari's field of action is the jungle, and her concerns are for the community and humanity at large. Bhagyavati does not protest against being turned out of the home by her in-laws and husband. Rather she calls herself slave and servant (*dasi* and *tablan*) of her in-laws and regards her husband as her lord (*swami pameshwar*). Sundari, however, refuses to go back to her husband who failed in his duty to protect her. She unequivocally rejects the *grihasth ashram* for herself in favour of a life dedicated to the Sikh faith. She asks the men in her *jatha* to regard the wife as a partner or companion (*saathi*) worthy of respect as enjoined in Guru Granth Sahib.

In fact, there are significant differences in the social vision of the two authors. Umadutt expresses a pronounced anti-Muslim sentiment in *Bhagyavati*, but *Sundari's* characters do not display any animus against those with whom they are engaged in a life and death struggle. Pandit Shraddha Ram unambiguously upholds the four-fold order and superiority of Brahmans who alone can initiate socio-religious reforms. Bhai Vir Singh, on the other hand, shows Brahmans as meek, greedy and hypocritical. When they refuse to take an abducted Hindu Khatri woman back into the fold saying that it is not permitted in their religion, they are obliged by the Sardar of the *jatha* to accept *karah parsad* from her hands. The two abducted women in *Sundari* are well regarded by

the *jatha*. Furthermore, *Bhagyavati* makes disparaging references to the outcastes and the lower sections of the society but Bhai Vir Singh does not use derogatory terms for them. Bhai Vir Singh's value of humanism, is in all probability, inspired by his deep faith in the teachings of the Gurus. Social issues are thus intertwined with the religious and the political in *Sundari*.

As a whole, both the novels try to preach in accordance with their authors' ideological positions. *Bhagyavati* attempts to preserve the traditional social order and the patriarchal family, with mild socio-religious reforms, but a pronounced emphasis on women's education, albeit of a traditional variety. *Sundari*, however, provides a vision in which women can play an important role in the regeneration of society, especially in the contemporary context. There is a marked appreciation of colonial rulers and western medicine in Pandit Shraddha Ram's work. Bhai Vir Singh chooses to ignore them though his indirect disapproval of the colonial situation is discernible.

Finally, in their own ways, the two novels proved to be influential. *Bhagyavati* became an essential item in the dowry of Hindu girls. *Sundari* was included in the curriculum of the Sikh Kanya Mahavidyala, and came to be looked upon with reverence as a *pothi* which inspired people to take initiation of the double-edged sword. Significantly, 'Nanak Chand' became (Master) 'Tara Singh' after reading *Sundari*.⁵²

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Notes

1. For example, Meenakshi Mukherjee, 'Reality and Realism: Indian Women as Protagonists in Four Nineteenth Century Novels', *Social Transformation and Creative Imagination*, ed., Sudhir Chandra, New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1984, pp. 201-29. See also Sudhir Chandra, 'Literature and the Colonial Connection', *ibid.*, pp. 145-99. J.S. Grewal, 'The Emergence of Punjabi Drama: A Cultural Response to Colonial Rule', *Journal of Regional History*, vol v, 1984, pp.115-55.
2. Kenneth W. Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India*, (The New Cambridge History of India, III.1), New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, (rpt.) 1999, first Indian edition in 1994, pp.95-114.
3. Pandit Shraddha Ram was the first outstanding protagonist of Sanatan Dharm movement in the Punjab. For him the sacred scriptures like the Vedas, the Puranas, and the epics were above human reasoning. The

Puranas sanctioned the worship of gods like Brahma, Vishnu, Shiv, Indra, Agni, the Sun and the Moon, the incarnations like Krishna and Rama and the religious rituals like idol worship, pilgrimages, fasts, Shraddh, Hom and Yagya. For Shraddha Ram the *varna* order and the notion of pollution were integral to Sanatan Dharm. The position of women largely remains traditional. Later protagonists of the Sanatan Dharm movement in the Punjab were Pandit Din Dayalu Sharma and Goswami Ganesh Dutt who established institutions and conducted activities for the promotion of Sanatan Dharm. Sheena Pall, 'The Sanatan Dharm Movement in the Colonial Punjab: Religious, Social and Political Dimensions', Chandigarh: Panjab University, 2009, pp. 288-97.

4. For life of Shraddha Ram, see Tulsi Deva, *Shraddha Prakash*, ed., Harmohinder Singh Bedi, (*Shraddha Ram Phillauri Granthavali*, vol. I), Delhi: Nirmal Publications, 1997.
5. Ibid., pp.120-6.
6. Shraddha Ram Phillauri, *Bhagavat*, 1877, New Delhi: Sharda Prakashan, 1973, (rpt.), pp. 55-7, 67, 85.
7. Ibid., pp. Ibid., pp. 14, 15, 34, 38, 45, 72, 95, 96-98, 114-15. According to Geraldine Forbes, female education was informal and largely limited to practical matters. Women from respectable families often studied classical or vernacular literature as "a pious recreation", and girls from propertied families received some education in keeping accounts. But most females learned only the household arts. *The New Cambridge History of India IV.2, Women in Modern India*, New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1999 (rpt.), p. 36.
8. Shraddha Ram Phillauri, *Bhagavat*, 1877, pp. 58-60, 81-3, 118-19.
9. Ibid., pp. 8, 9-10.
10. Ibid., pp. 11, 26-7.
11. Ibid., pp. 119-20.
12. Ibid., pp. 13-14.
13. Ibid., pp. 54, 71, 105-07.
14. Ibid., pp. 38-39, 40, 41, 71.
15. Ibid., pp. Ibid., pp. 15, 41, 49, 53-4, 55-7, 67, 85, 111, 114.
16. Ibid., pp. Ibid., pp. 9, 11, 28-29, 36-7. Geetanjali Pandey also says that the Brahman was the 'recognized leader of the society and the nation', not on account of his wealth or physical prowess but because of the strength of his wisdom: 'The North Indian Intelligentsia and the Hindu-Muslim Question: A Study of Premchand's Writings', in *Social Transformation and Creative Imagination*, ed., Sudhir Chandra, New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1984, p. 258.

17. Shraddha Ram Phillauri, *Bhagyavati*, 1877, pp. 16, 26, 61, 75, 78, 86, 88, 112, 118-19.
18. Ibid., pp. 1, 20, 22, 52, 53, 84, 92, 108, 122.
19. Ibid., pp. 92-3.
20. Ibid., pp. 52-3.
21. Ibid., pp. 93-4.
22. Ibid., pp. 7, 20, 108.
23. Ibid., pp. 22, 83, 84, 92, 93, 98, 122.
24. Ibid., pp. 122-3.
25. Ibid., p. 122.
26. Ibid., pp. 9-10, 45.
27. Ibid., p. 80.
28. Ibid., pp. 117-18.
29. Sekhon, Sant Singh, *Bhai Vir Singh te Ubnai di Rachna* (Punjabi), Ludhiana: Lahore Book Shop, 1976 [1962], pp. 9-17. Also see, Giani Mahan Singh, *Bhai Sahib Bhai Vir Singh Ji da Gurmukh Jivan* (Punjabi), Amritsar: Minerva Press, 1969, pp. 8-10, 11, 13, 284.
30. Harbans Singh, *Bhai Vir Singh: Makers of Indian Literature*, New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1984 [1972], pp. 37-88.
31. For the text of *Sundari*, Bijai Singh, Satwant Kaur and Baba Nandh Singh, see *Bhai Vir Singh Rachnavali: Naval* (Punjabi), Patiala: Punjab Language Department, vol.II, pp. 5-53, 57-118, 121-219, 221-449 respectively.
32. Gurcharan Singh, 'Panjabi Tract Tradition and Bhai Vir Singh' in *Bhai Vir Singh: Life, Times & Works*, ed., Gurbachan Singh Talib and Attar Singh, Chandigarh: Panjab University, 1973, p. 140.
33. S.S. Kohli, 'Bhai Vir Singh's Novels', in *ibid.*, p.148.
34. Harbans Singh, *Bhai Vir Singh: Makers of Indian Literature*, p. 52.
35. Bhai Vir Singh, *Sundari*, Antika-I, p.47.
36. By 1885, the Aryas began to condemn contemporary Sikhism. In 1888, Pandit Gurudatt and Pandit Lekh Ram attacked Sikhs and Sikhism on the 11th anniversary of the Arya Samaj at Lahore. Bhagat Lakshman Singh, *Autobiography*, ed., and ann., Ganda Singh, Calcutta: The Sikh Cultural Centre, 1965, pp.135-6. Also see, Kenneth W. Jones, *Arya Dharam: Hindu Consciousness in the 19th Century Punjab*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1976, pp.136-39. For the concern of the Sanatanist-Hindu leaders for treating Sikhs as 'Hindus', see Sheena Pall, 'The Sanatan Dharm Movement in the Colonial Punjab: Religious, Social and Political Dimensions', Ph.D Thesis, Panjab University. Chandigarh, 2008, pp.260-86.
37. Bhai Vir Singh, *Sundari*, Antika-I, p.47.
38. Ibid., pp. 5-46.

39. Ibid., pp. 24-5, 31-2, 36, 38, 39, 41.
40. Ibid., p. 41.
41. Ibid., pp. 9, 10, 12, 13-14, 16, 25, 28.
42. For this and the following paragraph, see, *Sundari*, pp. 12, 13, 14, 15, 18-19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 29, 37, 39, 45.
43. Cf. S.S. Kohli, 'Bhai Vir Singh's Novels', p.150.
44. Ibid., pp. 12, 19, 41.
45. Ibid., pp. 9, 19, 22, 29, 31.
46. Ibid., p.45.
47. Ibid., p.40.
48. Ibid., p.30. For the doctrines of Guru Granth and Guru Panth, see Karamjit K. Malhotra, *The Eighteenth Century in Sikh History: Political Resurgence, Religious and Social Life, and Cultural Articulation*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 104-110.
49. J.S. Grewal, *The Sikhs: Ideology, Institutions, and Identity*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 270-5.
50. *Sundari*, p.28. The *Khalsa Akhbar* showed a serious concern over the issue of idols in the Darbar Sahib. See, for example, the *Khalsa Akhbar*, 20 November 1893, p.1; 5 March 1897; 29 January 1887, pp. 3-4; 5 March 1897, pp.5-6.
51. Bhai Kahn Singh's *Ham Hindu Nahin* (published in Devnagri in 1897 and in Gurmukhi in 1898) defended the distinct religious identity of the Sikhs which remained one of the basic concerns of the Lahore Singh Sabha. *Ham Hindu Nahin* is a tract originally carrying 109 pages. Its 5th edition was reprinted in 1981 from Amritsar by the Dharam Prachar Committee of the SGPC.
52. This is stated by Bhai Jodh Singh. See his 'Bhai Vir Singh te Singh Sabha Lehar', in *Bhai Vir Singh: Jivan, Saman te Rachna* (Punjabi), ed., Surinder Singh Kohli and Harnam Singh Shan, Chandigarh: Panjab University, 2000 [1973], p.48.

**FROM BUREAUCRACY TO BALANCE - THE LIFE
AND REFLECTIONS OF KBS SIDHU**
– AN INTERVIEW –

DR DEVINDER PAL SINGH*

The informed interview of the top ranking retired Civil Servant Karam Bir Singh Sidhu (KBS Sidhu) by Dr Devinder Pal Singh of USA goes on to emphasise the fact that the moral values enshrined in Guru Granth can be the guiding light for a dedicated Civil Servant. KBS Sidhu has demonstrated through his long and successful Civil Service career that how he always looked with hope to the Sikh scripture for solving the problems that came his way during his long career. – Editor

S. Karan Bir Singh Sidhu (KBS), a distinguished former Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of the 1984 Punjab cadre, stands out not only for his outstanding service record but also for his deep and evolving engagement with Sikhism. Over nearly four decades of public service, Sidhu's professional life mirrored the Sikh ideals of seva (selfless service), nimrata (humility), and tyag (renunciation), while his intellectual and spiritual pursuits increasingly drew from the rich teachings of the Sikh faith. His biography is a testament to how personal belief can be a guiding force in public life, and how Sikh values continue to shape contemporary leadership and governance.

Born with an analytical mind, Sidhu pursued Electronics and

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Telecommunication Engineering from Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology, Patiala, where he graduated with a Gold Medal. His academic brilliance was further demonstrated when he secured an All-India Rank of #2 in the Civil Services Examination in 1983 on his first attempt. Joining the IAS in 1984, Sidhu embarked on a remarkable journey of public service that would take him to the highest echelons of administrative authority, both in the Government of Punjab and the Government of India.

Sidhu's spiritual consciousness began to resonate more profoundly during his administrative postings in Punjab, particularly in Amritsar, a city that embodies the sacred geography of Sikhism. As Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar during the volatile years of the early 1990s, Sidhu not only handled civil crises with exceptional calm and strategic foresight, such as the successful resolution of two hijackings in 1993, but also revived the Golden Temple Beautification Project. This initiative, known as the "Galliard Project," was significant not only in civic terms but also in its symbolic attempt to honour and preserve the sanctity of the Sikh faith's most revered shrine, Sri Harmandir Sahib.

Sidhu's career spanned a diverse array of roles, including Financial Commissioner (Revenue) and Principal Secretary (Finance), as well as Special Chief Secretary (Social Security, Women, and Child Development), where he led Punjab to national recognition under the "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" programme. His consistent focus on inclusivity and social justice bore a strong ethical resemblance to Guru Nanak's vision of a society rooted in equality and compassion. Similarly, his work in the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and the Ministry of Urban Development at the central level reflected Sikh principles of *sarbat da bhala* (the welfare of all).

Beyond his official duties, Sidhu's affinity for Sikh philosophy and scripture began to blossom in more visible ways after his superannuation in July 2021. In his writings, lectures, and social media engagements, he frequently draws on Sikh teachings to explore themes such as leadership, ethical governance, and moral courage. His popular video content on media platforms covers such issues as life lessons from Gurbani, showcasing how Sikh spiritual wisdom can inform

everyday decision-making and interpersonal relationships. This confluence of administrative experience and spiritual introspection has enabled him to present Sikh thought not merely as a religious system but as a universal philosophy applicable to modern challenges.

His deepening interest in Sikhism is also reflected in his prolific writing. Through his newsletter “The KBS Chronicle” on Substack, where he has penned over a thousand articles, Sidhu blends reflections on current events with insights drawn from Sikh history, Gurbani, and personal encounters with the faith. His approach is neither dogmatic nor didactic, but rather dialogic, inviting readers to engage with the core messages of Sikhism, such as *Naam Japna* (meditation on the Divine Name), *Kirat Karni* (honest living), and *Vand Chakna* (sharing with others). *This consistent endeavour to relate spirituality with civic consciousness illustrates his belief that Sikh ideals must be lived, not merely revered.*

One of Sidhu’s most enduring contributions to public discourse remains his seminal work, “Sub-Divisional Magistrate: A Multi-functional Authority”, published by the Government of India in 1989. Although administrative in its framing, the book continues to inspire new IAS officers and reflects a worldview shaped by responsibility, ethical clarity, and a service-oriented mindset, principles that echo the Sikh code of conduct. The treatise is not just about bureaucracy but about the morality of power, an issue deeply examined in Sikh political history, from Guru Hargobind to Guru Gobind Singh.

Even in retirement, KBS Sidhu remains a torchbearer of enlightened service. He dedicates his time to mentoring young civil service aspirants and budding entrepreneurs, embodying the Sikh principle of *Guru Seva*, which involves serving others in the pursuit of wisdom. In doing so, he transforms mentorship into a form of modern-day *sangat* (spiritual fellowship), where ideas and ideals are shared in the spirit of collective upliftment.

In a nutshell, S. Karan Bir Singh Sidhu’s life is not merely a chronicle of administrative distinction but also a narrative of spiritual growth. Rooted in Sikh ideals and continually seeking to align his professional and personal life with the teachings of the Gurus, he exemplifies the modern Sikh public intellectual, deeply grounded, ever

reflective, and always in the service of truth and justice. In recognition of his exceptional contributions to the Civil Services and his deep engagement with Sikh philosophy and practice, his insights on various dimensions of these fields are presented here for the benefit of readers and scholars alike.

I. SIKH WISDOM AND CIVIL SERVICE ETHICS

Dr. Singh: You joined the Indian Administrative Service in 1984, a year marked by immense trauma for the Sikh community. How did your Sikh upbringing and the teachings of Guru Nanak guide your moral compass and sense of duty during this politically sensitive phase of Indian history?

S. Sidhu: The year 1984 was a deeply painful one for the Sikh community. The results of the Civil Services Examination were declared in the last week of May, and within days, Punjab was plunged into crisis. Operation Blue Star in early June was not only traumatic, it marked a rupture in the Sikh psyche and extreme stress in the community's engagement with the Indian State. A curfew was clamped across Punjab. For those of us who had cleared the exam, particularly Sikh candidates from Punjab, the prospect of joining the Mussoorie Academy that August was clouded with uncertainty.

Rigorous police verifications were initiated, aimed at "weeding out anti-national elements." However, despite this tense climate, I joined the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration in Mussoorie on August 21, 1984. The campus, idyllic and insulated, felt like a fragile bubble floating above the searing cauldron that was Punjab.

Then came 31st October 1984. I was with my training group in the heart of Kanpur, en route to a rural field visit to the Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh, when news broke of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassination. What followed was carnage against innocent Sikhs in major cities. How we survived that volatile moment, unscathed in the middle of a mob-susceptible city of Kanpur, is a story for another day. But suffice it to say: it was only by anchoring myself in unflinching faith in *Akal Purakh*, and by keeping my focus on *Seva*, the ideal of

service embedded in the ethos of the IAS, that I was able to stay committed to my path. In those days of fire and doubt, it was the victory over fear and despair within myself that enabled me to keep walking the path of public service.

Dr. Singh: Having served in Punjab's most sensitive districts, including Amritsar, Ferozepur, and Gurdaspur, how did principles like *Sarbat da Bhala* (welfare of all) and *Nirbhau-Nirvair* (fearlessness and absence of enmity) shape your approach to governance and conflict resolution?

S. Sidhu: My tenure in Amritsar during the most difficult years of Punjab's insurgency was marked by immense moral complexity and administrative challenge. I served as Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADM), Batala, in 1989, where I was in charge of the Police District as District Magistrate. I then served as ADM Amritsar from 1990 to 1992, and later as Deputy Commissioner/District Magistrate, Amritsar, from 1992 to 1996.

This was the peak of a proxy war unleashed from across the border. The civil administration was expected, at least in theory, to retain a supervisory role over police functioning, but this balance was often tested. One had to walk a tightrope: on the one hand, resisting the temptation to give the police unbridled powers, and on the other, not appearing sympathetic to extremist elements.

It was in these moments that Sikh principles, such as *Nirbhau* (fearlessness), *Nirvair* (absence of enmity), and *Sarbat da Bhala* (the welfare of all), provided a moral and ethical foundation. These values became my inner compass, urging me to uphold justice, protect the innocent, and ensure fairness without succumbing to fear or partisanship.

I consciously leaned on the Guru's teaching of standing with the downtrodden, resisting both the coercion of the state and the terror of the gun. My duty as a District Magistrate was clear: to protect life and liberty with firmness, fairness, and faith.

In the haze of conflict, it was this commitment to *Sach Aachaar* (righteous conduct) that allowed me to serve with dignity and without compromise.

Dr. Singh: The Sikh concept of Miri-Piri envisions a harmony between spiritual integrity and temporal responsibility. In your 37-year career spanning various roles, including Additional Chief Secretary (Home) and Principal Secretary (Finance), how did this duality influence your leadership style and policy decisions?

S. Sidhu: In my humble view, the Sikh doctrine of Miri and Piri does not represent a duality to be reconciled, it embodies a complementary unity. Guru Hargobind Sahib's vision of combining temporal authority (*Miri*) with spiritual sovereignty (*Piri*) was not to create tension between the two, but to assert that worldly power must be rooted in moral discipline and divine consciousness.

Throughout my administrative career, whether as Principal Secretary (Finance) or later as Additional Chief Secretary (Home), I never perceived a contradiction between my official duties and my Sikh values. The guiding principle was always to use the authority conferred by the State to serve the citizen, particularly the poor and the marginalized, and to ensure justice through lawful means.

To my mind, civil service is not meant to be a passive executor of orders or a tool in the hands of the powerful. It is intended to be an instrument of equity, wielding State power to uphold dignity, the rule of law, and the rights of the weakest. This is precisely the essence of *Miri-Piri*, righteous governance anchored in spiritual ethics.

Such was the spirit I aspired to uphold: authority that rests not in coercion, but in *naitik bal* (the moral strength) that Sikh teachings so abundantly provide.

Dr. Singh: Throughout your tenure, whether reviving the Golden Temple Beautification Project or resolving hijacking crises, did Sikh ideals of service (*seva*) and courage (*himmat*) ever consciously influence your actions under pressure?

S. Sidhu: I have always regarded my long tenure in Amritsar, nearly six and a half years cumulatively, both as Additional Deputy Commissioner and later Deputy Commissioner, as nothing short of a blessing from Guru Ram Das Ji. To serve in *Guru ki Nagri* was, for me, a sacred opportunity to perform *Seva* in the truest sense.

In moments of grave crisis, such as the 1993 hijacking incident,

it was this spiritual grounding that gave me the courage. At the time, my wife was in the advanced stage of pregnancy with our second son, who was born on July 1, 1993. Yet, her unwavering support and our shared faith in the blessings of Guru Ram Das Ji allowed me to discharge my duties without fear, grounded in the belief that we were walking the path of righteousness.

As for the Golden Temple Beautification Project, it had long been neglected. Dust swirled around the periphery, and what was initially conceived as a security buffer seemed at odds with the sanctity of the space. As a humble Sikh, I saw an opportunity: to reimagine that belt as a secondary Parikarma. This sacred circumambulatory path would enhance the spiritual and aesthetic aura of *Sri Harmandir Sahib*.

The project was fraught with political sensitivities and even threats from terrorist elements, but by Guru's grace, the first phase was executed with quiet determination. My humble contribution was also mentioned in the latest edition of Khushwant Singh's History of the Sikhs. What began then, has, over the passage of time, become part of the now-iconic surroundings of the Darbar Sahib complex.

Dr. Singh: As the Director of State Transport, during the 1999 Khalsa Tercentenary Celebrations, how did you blend administrative planning with the spiritual significance of the event to uphold the essence of the Khalsa tradition?

S. Sidhu: During the 1999 Khalsa Tercentenary Celebrations, in my capacity as Director of State Transport, I had the privilege of playing a critical role in coordinating the vast transportation network required to manage the sea of humanity that poured into Sri Anandpur Sahib for the historic event.

Ensuring the safe and smooth movement of lakhs of pilgrims over a sustained period was no small task. But it was, for me, an act of logistical Seva, an offering to the Guru and the Khalsa Panth during a time of great collective spiritual reflection.

More than a decade later, in 2011, while serving as Principal Secretary, Finance, I was also entrusted with the additional charge of Principal Secretary, Cultural Affairs, and was made overall in-charge of completing the long-delayed Khalsa Heritage Memorial Complex

at Sri Anandpur Sahib. The project had been in limbo, and with state elections due in early 2012, there was immense pressure and little time.

However, with the Guru's grace and the unstinting efforts of a dedicated junior IAS colleague and the team, we were able to prepare the complex for inauguration on Guru Nanak Dev Ji's Gurmurb in November 2011. To witness that sacred space, an architectural and spiritual tribute to the legacy of the Khalsa, finally open its doors to the Sikh world was among the most fulfilling and blessed experiences of my career.

ਸੇਵਾ ਕਰਤ ਹੋਇ ਨਿਹਕਾਮੀ॥ ਤਿਸ ਕਉ ਹੋਤ ਪਰਾਪਤਿ ਸੁਆਮੀ॥

One who performs selfless service, without desire for reward, attains the Lord.

Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 286

Indeed, both these moments were not administrative assignments, but sacred opportunities to serve the Guru and the Panth.

II. PERSONAL FORMATION, FAITH AND MOTIVATION

Dr. Singh: As someone raised in a devout Sikh household and later trained at institutions like the Harvard Kennedy School and the University of Manchester, how have you navigated the intersection of faith-based wisdom and modern global governance models in your public life?

S. Sidhu: Being raised in a devout yet broad-minded Sikh household, I was fortunate to experience a harmonious balance between spiritual discipline and secular openness. This nurturing environment laid the ethical foundation for my public life. Later, formal training at institutions such as the Harvard Kennedy School and the University of Manchester equipped me with analytical tools, policy frameworks, and exposure to global governance models.

However, while such institutions offered technical knowledge, my moral compass, anchored in Sikh teachings, remained my true guide. The spirit of *Seva* (selfless service), *Garib da Rakha* (protector of the poor), and standing for *Sach* (truth) are lessons deeply embedded in Sikh tradition. These values gave depth and direction to everything

I absorbed in the world of modern public administration.

Rather than seeing the spiritual and the institutional as separate, I have always sought to intertwine them. Sikh philosophy taught me that governance is not merely about efficient delivery, but about compassion, dignity, and justice for the downtrodden. Thus, modern management paradigms were transformed into instruments of ethical service, inspired by the Gurbani ideal of fearless and impartial duty. In this spirit, the institutions trained my mind, but it was Gurbani that shaped my conscience.

Dr. Singh: What role did Sikh values such as *Naam* (meditative remembrance), *Daan* (sharing with others) and *Isnaan* (physical and mental cleansing) play in motivating your consistent academic excellence, including securing All-India Rank 2 in the Civil Services Exam on your first attempt?

S. Sidhu: My father served in the Punjab Civil Service (PCS) and had always dreamed of seeing me in the Indian Administrative Service. Tragically, he passed away in January 1972, when I was just 10 years old. That loss left a deep imprint on me. While I formally trained as an Electronics and Telecommunication Engineer, completing my studies at Thapar Engineering College, Patiala, the silent dream of fulfilling my father's aspiration never faded.

It was my mother's quiet strength and encouragement that gave me the final push. She urged me to attempt the Civil Services Examination once. I did so immediately after my final year and while teaching at my alma mater.

The Sikh values of focus, perseverance, and Tapasya, epitomized by the 26 years of deep meditation by Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib Ji at Baba Bakala, served as a guiding force. That silent, unwavering resolve, rooted in *Naam Simran* and *faith in divine will*, became my inner source of strength.

By Waheguru's grace, I was able to clear the Civil Services Examination at the age of 22, securing All India Rank 2 in my very first attempt. It was not merely the result of academic discipline or analytical training; it was the realization of my father's dream, carried

on the shoulders of my mother's courage and the blessings of Akal Purakh. It was an outcome born of devotion, discipline, and grace, as well as the blessings of my parents.

Dr. Singh: While working on grassroots welfare projects like *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao* in Punjab, did you draw upon the egalitarian teachings of the Gurus, particularly around gender equality and the dignity of women, as part of your vision?

S. Sidhu: When I was transferred from the coveted post of Financial Commissioner (Revenue) to that of Special Chief Secretary in charge of Social Security, Women and Child Welfare in September 2018, many observers read it as a form of cold-shouldering by the political executive. But I chose to perceive it differently. For me, it was a divinely ordained opportunity, a chance to serve Punjab's women and girl children, whose status had long been mired in disturbing statistics and social neglect.

Punjab had historically fared poorly on gender indices. But with the committed cooperation of young, dynamic junior officers and a responsive field administration, we launched a series of intensive campaigns under the *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao* framework. Within a year, our performance, measured across key indicators and evaluated independently, showed remarkable improvement. This led to Punjab receiving a national award from the President of India, marking the first time the state had received such an honour in this domain.

At its core, this effort was not merely administrative; it was spiritual Seva inspired by the egalitarian teachings of the Gurus, especially Guru Nanak Dev Ji, who enshrined the dignity of womanhood in the most elevated terms:

ਸੋ ਕਿਉ ਮੰਦਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਜੰਮਹਿ ਰਾਜਾਨ ॥

Why call her bad, from whom kings are born?

– SGGS, p. 473

Guided by such values, we approached the issue not merely as a developmental challenge but as a moral and spiritual imperative.

III. THOUGHT LEADERSHIP, WRITING, AND MENTORSHIP

Dr. Singh: In over 1,000 articles published in The KBS Chronicle, you explore themes such as spirituality, leadership, and bureaucracy. How does Sikh wisdom, especially the writings of Guru Granth Sahib, shape the intellectual and moral lens of your newsletter?

S. Sidhu: The articles I write in The KBS Chronicle span a broad spectrum of themes, from technology and governance to constitutional interpretation, and occasionally, reflections on Sikh history and select verses from Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. While I do not claim to be a trained Sikh scholar, I do engage with these subjects as a seeker, drawing upon my lived experiences and cultural memory.

That said, consciously or unconsciously, and more by instinct than by design, the values imbibed from Sikh teachings, those of justice, equity, brotherhood, and dignity for the marginalized, tend to surface in the tone, emphasis, and ethical framing of many of my writings. I do not make a deliberate effort to embed religious commentary or insert scriptural references into every piece, but when viewed as a whole, the underlying spiritual fabric becomes evident.

In this sense, the Gurbani-rooted values of *Sarbat da Bhala* (welfare of all) and *Nirbhau-Nirvair* (fearlessness and absence of malice) gently permeate the narrative architecture of the Chronicle. The KBS Chronicle, in that sense, is an ongoing dialogue between personal reflection and public ethics, with Sikh values quietly illuminating the path.

Dr. Singh: Your YouTube lectures and Substack posts often integrate teachings from Sikh and Indian scriptures. How do you interpret these teachings as practical tools for civil servants, especially in navigating ethical dilemmas and leadership challenges?

S. Sidhu: When I engage with **young civil service aspirants**, deliver lectures, whether in **YouTube sessions or before live audiences**, or write on **leadership and governance**, my goal is always to **anchor abstract ideas in practical, lived experience**. I deliberately avoid a purely theoretical or academic tone, which often dominates the frameworks taught in conventional business and policy schools.

Instead, I present my audiences with real-world dilemmas, case studies, and institutional challenges that they are likely to encounter

in the field. The consistent feedback has been that this approach resonates with their immediate ecosystem, whether it is civil administration, business, or policymaking, making the ideas not only accessible but also actionable.

At no point do I attempt to appear professorial or didactic; nor is my objective to preach Sikhism in a religious sense. However, the underlying ethos of Sikh values, fearless *Seva*, *Nirbhau*, *Nirvair*, justice over convenience, and the imperative to do what is right rather than what is easy, runs through my presentations.

I aim to offer a conceptual and moral compass, enabling each individual to make their own decisions in the face of ethical ambiguity. That compass, for me, is unquestionably influenced by the teachings of the Gurus, even if expressed in secular language.

ਕਰਮੀ ਕਰਮੀ ਹੋਇ ਵੀਚਾਰੁ॥ ਸਚਾ ਆਪਿ ਸਚਾ ਦਰਬਾਰੁ॥

Each action is judged according to its own merit; the True Lord alone presides over the Court of Truth.

– SGGS, p.7

Ultimately, I seek to equip minds with frameworks, but more importantly, awaken the conscience, so that tomorrow's leaders are guided not just by efficiency, but by integrity and spiritual strength.

Dr. Singh: As someone who mentors young civil service aspirants, how do you advise them to retain their Sikh identity, values, and discipline in a system that often prioritizes pragmatism over principle?

S. Sidhu: The values enshrined in Sikhism are in complete consonance with the constitutional morality that underpins the Indian Republic. The emphasis on protecting the rights of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and minorities, including linguistic and religious minorities under Articles 29 to 30, mirrors the Sikh doctrine of standing with the marginalized and oppressed.

Far from being in contradiction, Sikh spiritual values reinforce the moral foundations of the Constitution. The ethos of *Sarbat da Bhala* (welfare of all), the commitment to *social equity*, and the insistence on fearless advocacy for the voiceless are deeply aligned with the vision of justice embedded in our democratic framework.

What Sikhism adds to this constitutional ethic is a grounding in action. The Sikh tradition discourages armchair idealism. Instead, it demands that we engage with the real theatre of conflict, bringing ethical clarity to complex administrative challenges. In my own experience, it has often meant confronting entrenched vested interests, who attempt to divert schemes or benefits meant for the poor and dispossessed. Taking the bull by the horns, as the idiom goes, becomes a sacred duty when viewed through this combined constitutional and spiritual lens. To be a civil servant informed by Sikh values is to stand as a custodian of that wealth, ensuring justice is not only promised on paper, but delivered in spirit and action.

IV. SIKHISM, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND GOVERNANCE

Dr. Singh: In your time as Financial Commissioner (Revenue) and as Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, did you encounter moments where Sikh doctrines of justice and compassion influenced your stance on land rights, tribal welfare, or resource distribution?

S. Sidhu: At first glance, the roles of Financial Commissioner (Revenue) in Punjab and Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, appeared to operate in very different legal and administrative ecospheres.

As Financial Commissioner, Revenue, in Punjab, I primarily worked under the framework of the Punjab Land Revenue Act, 1887, a British-era statute that defined ownership rights, titles, and state entitlements in agricultural land, with a strong emphasis on revenue collection and land record management.

In contrast, my tenure in the Ministry of Tribal Affairs brought me into the deeply layered world of tribal and forest rights, where one had to balance traditional community entitlements with emerging individual legal claims, often under the Forest Rights Act. This space was frequently marked by conflict, between local communities and state agencies, between conservation concerns and claims to habitation, and even between different classes of forest dwellers.

In navigating both these domains, I was deeply influenced by the Sikh doctrine of justice, compassion, and non-

possessiveness. The Sikh worldview teaches us that the earth and its resources are not possessions, but a sacred trust, to be held in stewardship for the collective good, not exploited for narrow private gain.

This moral compass helped me strive for equity over mere legality, ensuring that decisions, while compliant with law, were also compassionate, inclusive, and sustainable. My approach was guided by the principle that resources ultimately belong to the Creator and the community, and we are merely trustees, bound to distribute and manage them justly, without illegally alienating the rights of any individual.

ਪਵਣੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਪਾਣੀ ਪਿਤਾ ਮਾਤਾ ਧਰਤਿ ਮਹਤੁ॥

ਦਿਵਸੁ ਰਾਤਿ ਦੁਇ ਦਾਈ ਦਾਇਆ ਖੇਲੈ ਸਗਲ ਜਗਤੁ॥

Air is the Guru, water the father, and earth the great mother.
Day and night are the caretakers, and all beings play their roles
in this divine theatre.

– SGGS, p. 8

Thus, both in the plains of Punjab and in the forests of Central India, my effort was to infuse law with compassion and governance with Gurmat-inspired equity.

Dr. Singh: The Sikh philosophy of seva demands humility and service to the most vulnerable. How did you incorporate this ethic into your administrative strategy while leading departments like Social Security, Women and Child Development, and Rural Development?

S. Sidhu: The entire charter of duties in the Department of Social Security, Women and Child Welfare is, in essence, an exercise in Seva. The programmes, whether aimed at the differently abled, destitute women, or young children in Anganwadis, are focused on reaching out to the most vulnerable sections of society and ensuring they receive supplementary nutrition, preschool education, and maternal care that often lies beyond the formal reach of the health infrastructure.

The Anganwadi centres at the village level serve as beacons of grassroots equity, extending welfare support to expectant and lactating mothers, children, and caregivers in ways that reflect compassionate governance.

On the other hand, my experience in Rural Development brought

me face-to-face with questions of resource justice and democratic accountability. The management of village common lands (Shamilat), legally owned by the community but administered by the Gram Panchayats, was often skewed by Sarpanch-led hegemony. In many cases, efforts were made to convert community land into private property through questionable legal orders, including attempts at partitioning.

We took these on tooth and nail, challenging such misappropriations and reasserting the principle that Shamilat land exists in trusteeship for the welfare of the entire community, not for personal gain. Here again, it was the Sikh ethic of Seva and justice that underpinned our administrative resolve.

In both welfare delivery and rural land management, my focus was to ensure that state authority functioned as a servant of the people, upholding Gurbani's call for honest living and equitable sharing.

Dr. Singh: In your opinion, how can Sikh bureaucrats reconcile institutional limitations with the faith's call for fearless advocacy and moral clarity, especially in times of social unrest or political coercion?

S. Sidhu: As a practicing Sikh, I have never encountered any institutional constraints in my personal or professional experience. If there are shackles, they lie not in external systems but in **our own mindsets**. On the contrary, across the country, whether in the **Central Government or any State Cadre, turbaned Sikh civil servants are often held in high regard** for their perceived integrity, discipline, and fearlessness.

Far from conflicting with the demands of public service, **Sikh values offer a moral compass** that reinforces the spirit of the Constitution. The ideals of *Seva* (selfless service), *Nirbhau* (fearlessness), *Sach* (truth), and *Garib da Rakha* (protector of the weak) align seamlessly with the **directive principles and fundamental rights** enshrined in our democratic framework.

These values **strengthen the civil servant's resolve** to uphold the rule of law **in favour of the poor and downtrodden**, rather than becoming a passive instrument in the hands of vested interests or the politically powerful.

ਮਨ ਤੂੰ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਰੂਪੁ ਹੈ ਆਪਣਾ ਮੂਲੁ ਪਛਾਣੁ॥

O mind, you are the embodiment of Divine Light; recognize your origin.

– SGGS, p. 441

It is this **recognition of one's divine essence**, nurtured by Sikh teachings, that enables one to **serve with courage, compassion, and moral clarity**, even in the face of institutional pressure.

V. DIASPORA, CIVIC CULTURE AND SIKH IDENTITY

Dr. Singh: Having worked on both national and international platforms and interacted with the Sikh diaspora, what are your reflections on how diasporic Sikhs balance civic participation abroad with their spiritual heritage, and what can Indian governance learn from this dual identity?

S. Sidhu: The **Sikh diaspora**, much like the wider **Punjabi and Indian diaspora**, remains **deeply proud of its identity**. In fact, if I may say so, many Sikhs living abroad often **preserve and practise Sikh values with even greater intensity** than some within India.

Across countries and continents, Sikhs, though a **microscopic minority in numerical terms**, have emerged as **visible and respected participants** in civic life through **Langar Seva, disaster relief, and interfaith engagement**. These actions transcend nationality; they are rooted in the **timeless principles of Sikhi**, not in the passport one carries.

In this regard, we could learn much from the **Jewish community**, whose commitment to heritage, values, and collective resilience remains **independent of citizenship or political geography**. Sikh values are similarly **universal and portable**; they travel with the soul, not the state.

Governance models in Punjab and India could take a cue from the Sikh diaspora's emphasis on **community-led service over personal prestige or factionalism**. Too often, our energy is dissipated in **petty rivalries and ego clashes**. In contrast, if that same energy were redirected toward **resolving community challenges, building institutions, and fostering economic growth**, Punjab could become not only a **better place to live** but also an attractive destination for

investment, business, and raising **future generations**. The **diaspora's collective Seva** offers a glowing example of that redemptive path.

Dr. Singh: You've written on cross-cultural currents and public ethics. Do you see Sikh ethics offering a viable alternative framework to contemporary Western liberal bureaucratic paradigms, particularly in terms of community well-being and collective responsibility?

S. Sidhu: Each religious and philosophical framework, whether Eastern or Western, has its own historical context, relative strengths, and evolving interpretations. I would not go so far as to claim that Sikh ethics offer an "alternative" system of governance to Western liberal democracies, such as those in the United States, Canada, the UK, or Europe. However, I do believe that Sikh values can serve as a powerful supplementary lens, particularly in addressing the moral fatigue and social fragmentation that are increasingly evident in liberal societies.

In a world struggling with divisions based on race, gender, class, and identity politics, the unifying voice of the Gurus offers a vision of human oneness, dignity, and justice that transcends these fractures. The Sikh worldview does not reduce individuals to their labels but sees the Divine Light in all. This spiritual and ethical orientation can infuse modern governance paradigms with compassion, resilience, and collective responsibility.

Rather than imposing Sikh values on any system, we may present them as a beacon, a set of enduring principles that modern democracies could draw upon to recalibrate their frameworks toward greater harmony and moral clarity.

ਮਾਨਸ ਕੀ ਜਾਤਿ ਸਭ ਏਕੈ ਪਹਿਚਾਨਬੋ॥

Recognize all of humankind as one race.

Guru Gobind Singh Ji, Akal Ustat

This foundational idea of **spiritual equality and universal brotherhood** offers a **distinctive Sikh contribution to global governance thought**, one that does not seek domination but rather **dialogue and shared upliftment**.

Dr. Singh: How do you view the evolving role of the Sikh community in shaping public discourse on governance, both within

Punjab and in the global diaspora, particularly through think tanks, activism, or faith-based policy engagement?

S. Sidhu: The Sikh community, whether in Punjab, across India, or globally, must not shy away from participating meaningfully in public discourse, including the political, civic, and policy domains. Engagement need not mean confrontation. The goal is not to revive old wounds or inflame divisions, but to contribute constructively to national and community development.

A healthy, values-driven discourse is needed, one in which Sikh principles of justice, service, and dignity are not only articulated within the community but are also reflected in broader public policies, whether at the municipal, state, or national level.

The Sikh diaspora, particularly in countries such as Canada, the UK, and the US, is already leading by example, engaging respectfully and assertively with public institutions while upholding core Sikh values. Back home, there is a need for Sikhs in India to look beyond Punjab and participate actively in national political life, across party lines, guided not by narrow interests but by the broader ethos of *Sarbat da Bhala*.

Our political engagement should be rooted in the wisdom of the Guru:

ਪੰਚ ਪਰਵਾਣੁ ਪੰਚ ਪਰਧਾਨੁ॥ ਪੰਚੇ ਪਾਵਹਿ ਦਰਗਹਿ ਮਾਨੁ॥

The spiritually wise are approved; they become leaders. Such individuals are honoured in the Divine Court.

– SGGS, p. 3

Let our discourse be principled, our engagement constructive, and our presence national, so that Sikh values uplift not just Sikh aspirations, but also the moral tone of India's public life.

VI. LEGACY, REFLECTION AND CONTINUED SERVICE

Dr. Singh: In mentoring younger generations post-retirement, including entrepreneurs and public aspirants, how do you transmit Sikh teachings as a form of conscious leadership that extends beyond mere efficiency or compliance?

S. Sidhu: Sikh moral values offer an ethical framework that transcends statutory compliance. There are often moments in public

life where a decision may appear legally sound, but an inner voice of conscience signals discomfort. These moments frequently involve conflicts of interest, subtle, uncrystallized in Indian administrative law, yet ethically problematic.

It is in such grey areas that Sikh teachings become a guiding force. The principle of prioritizing the community over the self and engaging in selfless *seva* (service) without attachment to position or power becomes vital for any leader aspiring to serve with integrity.

A leader guided by Sikh values does not merely follow the rulebook; instead, he or she envisions the long-term well-being of the people he or she serves. Decisions are thus taken not for personal preservation, but for the larger good. This spirit of *sacrifice over self-preservation*, rooted in the legacy of the Gurus and the Shaheeds, becomes the touchstone of what I call conscious leadership. Such leadership is not defined by titles or tenure, but by the moral imprint it leaves behind, in institutions, in lives, and the conscience of society.

Dr. Singh: In your long and distinguished career, from overseeing revenue to supervising hijack negotiations to shaping national housing policy, which episode would you say most exemplifies Guru Nanak's teaching of living truthfully while serving humanity?

S. Sidhu: This is an exceedingly difficult question, as many moments come to mind, each carrying its own ethical complexity. However, one episode that stands out is from the year 2000, during my tenure as Chief Administrator of PUDA (Punjab Urban Planning and Development Authority).

At that time, we were acquiring five new sectors in Mohali, Sectors 76 to 81, each roughly 250 acres in size. Interspersed within these tracts were large landholdings belonging to the Radha Soami Satsang Beas, who mounted significant political pressure to halt the acquisition, thereby threatening the entire urban expansion of Mohali.

Rather than allow the confrontation to escalate, I chose a path of engagement and principled negotiation. I personally interacted with the Satsang leadership, as well as with the Advocate General of Punjab and the then Chief Minister, S. Parkash Singh Badal. Together, we arrived at a pragmatic yet equitable solution, wherein the Radha Soami land was consolidated and reallocated, with due planning deductions,

in a contiguous zone. This allowed us to proceed with the larger acquisition, which was critical for affordable housing and public institutional infrastructure.

Today, those sectors stand as some of Mohali's most successful developments, hosting not only vibrant residential zones but also premier institutions such as the Indian School of Business (ISB) and the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER).

It was a moment when Guru Nanak's teachings on truthful living and community-oriented justice deeply guided my actions. Ultimately, it was not about confrontation but courageous, values-based compromise, serving both the public interest and institutional integrity without yielding to undue pressure.

Dr. Singh: If you were to encapsulate your journey in public service through a Sikh lens, what would be the title of your autobiography, and which Shabad or verse would best summarize your legacy?

S. Sidhu: Many well-meaning colleagues and friends have urged me to write my memoirs or autobiography, but I have always believed that true legacy lies not in self-narration, but in the thoughts, values, and quiet impact we leave behind in the lives of those we served, without expectation, without publicity, and return.

I often reflect upon the humility of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, who, even after re-compiling the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji at Damdama Sahib, chose not to include a single verse of his own in the sacred scripture. That divine act is the ultimate lesson in ego-free service.

In public life, as in spiritual life, we must do our duty and walk away without fanfare, resisting the modern urge to become our own PR agents or to magnify our actions a thousand-fold for posterity. Let others judge. Let history decide. Let truth speak in silence.

If I were ever to write a memoir, I would perhaps entitle it: "Autobiography of an Unknown Sikh Civil Servant". For me, service is the story, and the people are the authors.

Dr. Singh: Thanks, S. Karan Bir Singh Sidhu, for sparing your time to share your incisive views on governance, Sikh philosophy and practice.

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SOLUTION

SRI AUROBINDO GHOSH*

This article is highly intellectual investigation into the status and salience of Vedas by a celebrated scholar-sage Sri Aurobindo. The reference to Vedas is also a recurring theme in Guru Granth, wherein, its significant features are brought to scrutiny. Taking a dispassionate view Sri Aurobindo observes that the “hymns of Veda are the sacrificial composition... and it is only in the later hymns do we perceive the first appearance of deeper... ideas.” The critical view of the Vedas can help make a better understanding of Gurbani references to them, as ਵੇਦਾ ਮਹਿ ਨਾਮ ਉਤਰੁ... (p. 919) and ਬੇਦ ਕਤੇਬ ਕਹਹੁ ਮਤ ਝੂਠੇ... (p. 1350) It is precisely for this reason that this article has been reproduced. – Editor

Is there at all or is there still a secret of the Veda?

According to current conceptions the heart of that ancient mystery has been plucked out and revealed to the gaze of all, or rather no real secret ever existed. The hymns of the Veda are the sacrificial compositions of a primitive and still barbarous race written around a system of ceremonial and propitiatory rites, addressed to personified Powers of Nature and replete with a confused mass of half-formed myth and crude astronomical allegories yet in the making. Only in the later hymns do we perceive the first appearance of deeper psychological and moral ideas — borrowed, some think, from the hostile Dravidians, the “robbers” and “Veda-haters” freely cursed in the hymns themselves, — and, however acquired, the first seed of the later Vedantic speculations. This modern theory is in accord with the received idea of a rapid human evolution from the quite recent savage; it is supported by an imposing apparatus of critical research and upheld

* Courtesy: *The Secret of the Veda*, Vol. 15, Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, 1998

by a number of Sciences, unhappily still young and still largely conjectural in their methods and shifting in their results, — Comparative Philology, Comparative Mythology and the Science of Comparative Religion.

It is my object in these chapters to suggest a new view of the ancient problem. I do not propose to use a negative and destructive method directed against the received solutions, but simply to present, positively and constructively, a larger and, in some sort, a complementary hypothesis built upon broader foundations, — a hypothesis which, in addition, may shed light on one or two important problems in the history of ancient thought and cult left very insufficiently solved by the ordinary theories.

We have in the Rig Veda, — the true and only Veda in the estimation of European scholars, — a body of sacrificial hymns couched in a very ancient language which presents a number of almost insoluble difficulties. It is full of ancient forms and words which do not appear in later speech and have often to be fixed in some doubtful sense by intelligent conjecture; a mass even of the words that it has in common with classical Sanskrit seem to bear or at least to admit another significance than in the later literary tongue; and a multitude of its vocables, especially the most common, those which are most vital to the sense, are capable of a surprising number of unconnected significances which may give, according to our preference in selection, quite different complexions to whole passages, whole hymns and even to the whole thought of the Veda. In the course of several thousands of years there have been at least three considerable attempts, entirely differing from each other in their methods and results, to fix the sense of these ancient litanies. One of these is prehistoric in time and exists only by fragments in the Brahmanas and Upanishads; but we possess in its entirety the traditional interpretation of the Indian scholar Sayana and we have in our own day the interpretation constructed after an immense labour of comparison and conjecture by modern European scholarship. Both of them present one characteristic in common, the extraordinary incoherence and poverty of sense which their results stamp upon the ancient hymns. The separate lines can be given, whether naturally or by force of conjecture, a good sense or a sense

that hangs together; the diction that results, if garish in style, if loaded with otiose and decorative epithets, if developing extraordinarily little of meaning in an amazing mass of gaudy figure and verbiage, can be made to run into intelligible sentences; but when we come to read the hymns as a whole we seem to be in the presence of men who, unlike the early writers of other races, were incapable of coherent and natural expression or of connected thought. Except in the briefer and simpler hymns, the language tends to be either obscure or artificial; the thoughts are either unconnected or have to be forced and beaten by the interpreter into a whole. The scholar in dealing with his text is obliged to substitute for interpretation a process almost of fabrication. We feel that he is not so much revealing the sense as hammering and forging rebellious material into some sort of shape and consistency.

Yet these obscure and barbarous compositions have had the most splendid good fortune in all literary history. They have been the reputed source not only of some of the world's richest and profoundest religions, but of some of its subtlest metaphysical philosophies. In the fixed tradition of thousands of years they have been revered as the origin and standard of all that can be held as authoritative and true in Brahmana and Upanishad, in Tantra and Purana, in the doctrines of great philosophical schools and in the teachings of famous saints and sages. The name borne by them was Veda, the knowledge, — the received name for the highest spiritual truth of which the human mind is capable. But if we accept the current interpretations, whether Sayana's or the modern theory, the whole of this sublime and sacred reputation is a colossal fiction. The hymns are, on the contrary, nothing more than the naïve superstitious fancies of untaught and materialistic barbarians concerned only with the most external gains and enjoyments and ignorant of all but the most elementary moral notions or religious aspirations. Nor do occasional passages, quite out of harmony with their general spirit, destroy this total impression. The true foundation or starting-point of the later religions and philosophies is the Upanishads, which have then to be conceived as a revolt of philosophical and speculative minds against the ritualistic materialism of the Vedas.

But this conception, supported by misleading European parallels,

really explains nothing. Such profound and ultimate thoughts, such systems of subtle and elaborate psychology as are found in the substance of the Upanishads, do not spring out of a previous void. The human mind in its progress marches from knowledge to knowledge, or it renews and enlarges previous knowledge that has been obscured and overlaid, or it seizes on old imperfect clues and is led by them to new discoveries. The thought of the Upanishads supposes great origins anterior to itself, and these in the ordinary theories are lacking. The hypothesis, invented to fill the gap, that these ideas were borrowed by barbarous Aryan invaders from the civilised Dravidians, is a conjecture supported only by other conjectures. It is indeed coming to be doubted whether the whole story of an Aryan invasion through the Punjab is not a myth of the philologists.

Now, in ancient Europe the schools of intellectual philosophy were preceded by the secret doctrines of the mystics; Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries prepared the rich soil of mentality out of which sprang Pythagoras and Plato. A similar starting-point is at least probable for the later march of thought in India. Much indeed of the forms and symbols of thought which we find in the Upanishads, much of the substance of the Brahmanas supposes a period in India in which thought took the form or the veil of secret teachings such as those of the Greek mysteries.

Another hiatus left by the received theories is the gulf that divides the material worship of external Nature-Powers in the Veda from the developed religion of the Greeks and from the psychological and spiritual ideas we find attached to the functions of the Gods in the Upanishads and Puranas. We may accept for the present the theory that the earliest fully intelligent form of human religion is necessarily, — since man on earth begins from the external and proceeds to the internal, — a worship of outward Nature-Powers invested with the consciousness and the personality that he finds in his own being.

Agni in the Veda is avowedly Fire; Surya is the Sun, Parjanya the Raincloud, Usha the Dawn; and if the material origin or function of some other Gods is less trenchantly clear, it is easy to render the obscure precise by philological inferences or ingenious speculation. But when we come to the worship of the Greeks not much later in date than the

Veda, according to modern ideas of chronology, we find a significant change. The material attributes of the Gods are effaced or have become subordinate to psychological conceptions. The impetuous God of Fire has been converted into a lame God of Labour; Apollo, the Sun, presides over poetical and prophetic inspiration; Athene, who may plausibly be identified as in origin a Dawn-Goddess, has lost all memory of her material functions and is the wise, strong and pure Goddess of Knowledge; and there are other deities also, Gods of War, Love, Beauty, whose material functions have disappeared if they ever existed. It is not enough to say that this change was inevitable with the progress of human civilisation: the process also of the change demands inquiry and elucidation. We see the same revolution effected in the Puranas partly by the substitution of other divine names and figures, but also in part by the same obscure process that we observe in the evolution of Greek mythology. The river Saraswati has become the Muse and Goddess of Learning; Vishnu and Rudra of the Vedas are now the supreme Godhead, members of a divine Triad and expressive separately of conservative and destructive process in the cosmos. In the Isha Upanishad we find an appeal to Surya as a God of revelatory knowledge by whose action we can arrive at the highest truth. This, too, is his function in the sacred Vedic formula of the Gayatri which was for thousands of years repeated by every Brahmin in his daily meditation; and we may note that this formula is a verse from the Rig Veda, from a hymn of the Rishi Vishwamitra. In the same Upanishad, Agni is invoked for purely moral functions as the purifier from sin, the leader of the soul by the good path to the divine Bliss, and he seems to be identified with the power of the will and responsible for human actions. In other Upanishads the Gods are clearly the symbols of sense-functions in man. Soma, the plant which yielded the mystic wine for the Vedic sacrifice, has become not only the God of the moon, but manifests himself as mind in the human being. These evolutions suppose some period, posterior to the early material worship or superior Pantheistic Animism attributed to the Vedas and prior to the developed Puranic mythology, in which the gods became invested with deeper psychological functions, a period which may well have been the Age of the Mysteries. As things stand, a gap is left or else has been created by our exclusive preoccupation with the naturalistic element in the

religion of the Vedic Rishis.

I suggest that the gulf is of our own creation and does not really exist in the ancient sacred writings. The hypothesis I propose is that the Rig Veda is itself the one considerable document that remains to us from the early period of human thought of which the historic Eleusinian and Orphic mysteries were the failing remnants, when the spiritual and psychological knowledge of the race was concealed, for reasons now difficult to determine, in a veil of concrete and material figures and symbols which protected the sense from the profane and revealed it to the initiated. One of the leading principles of the mystics was the sacredness and secrecy of self-knowledge and the true knowledge of the Gods. This wisdom was, they thought, unfit, perhaps even dangerous to the ordinary human mind or in any case liable to perversion and misuse and loss of virtue if revealed to vulgar and unpurified spirits. Hence they favoured the existence of an outer worship, effective but imperfect, for the profane, an inner discipline for the initiate, and clothed their language in words and images which had, equally, a spiritual sense for the elect, a concrete sense for the mass of ordinary worshippers. The Vedic hymns were conceived and constructed on this principle. Their formulas and ceremonies are, overtly, the details of an outward ritual devised for the Pantheistic Nature Worship which was then the common religion, covertly the sacred words, the effective symbols of a spiritual experience and knowledge and a psychological discipline of self-culture which were then the highest achievement of the human race. The ritual system recognised by Sayana may, in its externalities, stand; the naturalistic sense discovered by European scholarship may, in its general conceptions, be accepted; but behind them there is always the true and still hidden secret of the Veda, — the secret words, *ninya vacamsi*, which were spoken for the purified in soul and the awakened in knowledge. To disengage this less obvious but more important sense by fixing the import of Vedic terms, the sense of Vedic symbols and the psychological functions of the Gods is thus a difficult but necessary task, for which these chapters and the translations that accompany them are only a preparation.

The hypothesis, if it proves to be valid, will have three advantages.

It will elucidate simply and effectively the parts of the Upanishads that remain yet unintelligible or ill-understood as well as much of the origins of the Puranas. It will explain and justify rationally the whole ancient tradition of India; for it will be found that, in sober truth, the Vedanta, Purana, Tantra, the philosophical schools and the great Indian religions do go back in their source to Vedic origins. We can see there in their original seed or in their early or even primitive forms the fundamental conceptions of later Indian thought. Thus a natural starting point will be provided for a sounder study of Comparative Religion in the Indian field. Instead of wandering amid insecure speculations or having to account for impossible conversions and unexplained transitions we shall have a clue to a natural and progressive development satisfying to the reason. Incidentally, some light may be thrown on the obscurities of early cult and myth in other ancient nations. Finally, the incoherencies of the Vedic texts will at once be explained and disappear. They exist in appearance only, because the real thread of the sense is to be found in an inner meaning. That thread found, the hymns appear as logical and organic wholes and the expression, though alien in type to our modern ways of thinking and speaking, becomes, in its own style, just and precise and sins rather by economy of phrase than by excess, by over-pregnancy rather than by poverty of sense. The Veda ceases to be merely an interesting remnant of barbarism and takes rank among the most important of the world's early Scriptures.

THE BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS ANNEXATION OF THE PUNJAB (1849)

SUKHDEV SINGH SOHAL*

The author has highlighted the social and political changes in the aftermath of the annexation of the Sikh Empire by the British. The study of this period has generally been ignored and neglected. Prof Sukhdev Singh Sohal has rightly chosen to introduce to his readers about the momentous changes which emerged with the arrival of colonial masters.

– Editor

The Punjab being a frontier province has acquired a prominence place in the historiography of India. It remained either a gateway or a fighting field for a long time. In the tradition of Annales' School, philosopher David Hackett Fisher claims that "history is, in short, a problem solving discipline".¹ Pertinent question is: why and how did the British exhaust the subsidiary alliance option within three years (February 1846- March 1849) as it was in the cis- Sutlej states and rushed towards the annexation in 1849? So far the historians have focused on diplomacy and chaos within the Lahore Kingdom.² Present attempt is to venture into that domain when the industrial prowess of the British Empire was unleashed on the North- Western borders of India ie the Indus basin with special focus on the virtual occupation and final annexation of the Punjab in 1849.

I: THE BRITISH IMPERIAL PROJECT AND THE PUNJAB (1845-46) **(A) ASCENDENCY OF THE *BRITISH EMPIRE***

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The British Empire was the archetypical colonial empire, the epitome of a modern empire. It was a seaborne empire.³ The Empire had a bloody process of expansion which gained momentum after the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1814-15. Colonies played an important part in the expansion of the British Empire along with the British centre.⁴ The British East India Company's political and commercial influence, as well as its military power enabled it to annex into its direct rule some 2.5 million square kilometers, over 60 per cent of the territory of the Indian sub continent containing three quarter of its people.⁵ After 1815, it was from London that the world's 'financial system was articulated'.⁶ By 1818, with the final defeat of the Maratha confederacy, the British political supremacy was recognized throughout the whole of Indian sub-continent. The Pax Britannica had 'begun',⁷ consequently, there emerged Britain's Indian empire.⁸ In fact, in the experience of most Indians, Pax Britannica meant mainly 'Tax Britannica'.⁹ Moreover, the British East India Company ruled purely as an 'agent' of the British Empire.¹⁰ By 1835, the Company's armies were much larger than the whole British army, at home and abroad. India provided resources that could be turned to the task of conquest. During the 1840s, India had become a major asset for a trading empire.¹¹ After 1840, the British Empire formed the core of a larger British 'world system' managed from London. Its expansion was provided by subsidized mail services, telegraph wires, undersea cables, an expanding rail network, fast passenger steamers and imperial air routes.¹² In 1850, Britain was modern and wealth producing industry.¹³ The Lahore Kingdom was autonomous politically but significant geographically. The long shadow of the British Empire was looming large over north western frontiers of the Indian subcontinent. It makes Indian colonial history an integral part of the global history in the age of Imperialism.¹⁴

The British economy was undergoing rapid transformation from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in the middle of 18th Century A.D. The British expected that India could emerge as an excellent source of raw materials and a never failing market for the finished products of English factories.¹⁵ After 1832, the most powerful section in the House of Commons was the pro-free traders.¹⁶ In 1833, the monopoly of the East India Company in China trade was abolished.

Karl Marx (1818-1883) noticed, 'an exceptional interest of the ruling classes of Great Britain in the progress of India. The millocracy discovered that the transformation of India into a productive country had become of vital importance. The English millocracy intended to endow India with railways with the exclusive view of extracting at diminished expenses the cotton and other raw materials for their manufactures. He expected the railway system to become truly the forerunner of modern industry in India'.¹⁷ The region could be opened up as a market 'for the produce of British labour' and be developed into a supplier of raw material and foodstuffs.¹⁸ Economics of Imperialism guided the politics of Imperialism which became open in the sixth decade of the 19th Century India.¹⁹ The period of 1843-56 witnessed the triumph of the free trade doctrines in England. It also saw the most relentless phase of British expansion in India.²⁰ The 1840s were a time of railroad fever in the Western world and most of all in England. During 1830-50, England laid down the grand work for a modern industrial economy.²¹ During the 1800s and 1850s, the rate of capital formation in England increased from 5 per cent to 10 per cent.²²

(B) THE FIRST BRITISH-PUNJAB WAR (1845-46) AND TOWARDS OCCUPATION

In July 1844, Lord Henry Hardinge replaced Lord Ellenborough as the Governor General. It caused nervousness in the Darbar circles. In September 1844, Major Broadfoot replaced Colonel Richmond as the Agent at Ludhiana. The former was "rather too prone to war". In January 1845, Lord Hardinge reported that 'the affairs of the Punjab were more unsettled than ever'. He anticipated 'a successful mutiny in the Khalsa Army' yet rejected 'no immediate necessity for interference'.²³ The British had thrown a network of cantonments near the Punjab border; British spies and intelligencers, secretly assisted by the Lahore dignitaries, were everywhere in Lahore and around. Roads were repaired and the Governor General and Commander in Chief of the Army visited adjoining areas of the Kingdom.²⁴ In October 1844, Hugh Gough, the Commander-in-Chief of the East India Company's forces in India came up to inspect troops at Ludhiana and Ferozpur. The Punjab army was alerted against a possible invasion.²⁵

In 1839, the Lahore army consisted of about 1,10,000: the Regular army as 70,000 and Irregular army 40,000. Sardars and chiefs had force of 30,000. The payment to Regular army was Rs. 1,27,96,282.²⁶ The total army of the Lahore Kingdom increased from 85,000 in 1839 to 1,20,000 in 1844. The total expenditure on the army amounted to the Rs 6 million in 1844.²⁷ By autumn of 1845, the British assembled 'the largest ever force on the Punjab frontier'. It reached to 40,000 men and 66 guns.²⁸ On the other hand, the British could increase Indian Army by 1,20,000 men and 1000 officers from 1837 to 1846 with the cost of 10 million sterling annually.²⁹ In the first week of January 1845, the British assembled 20,000 men and 60 guns including seven of His Majesty's Regiment. There was plan to collect 33,000 infantry, 6,000 cavalry and 100 guns in about six weeks.³⁰ The Lahore Durbar deployed 60,000 men and 150 guns.³¹ Fierce battles followed: Mudki (December 18, 1845); Ferozeshahr (December 18, 1845); Buddowal (January 21, 1846); Aliwal (January 28, 1846) and Sabraon (February 10, 1846).³² The British were barely saved by the treachery of the Sikh leaders.³³ The War lasted for 45 days. Lord Hugh Gough, the British Commander-in-Chief described the Battle of Sabraon as 'the Waterloo' of India. The Treaties of Lahore were signed on March 9, 11, 1846; Treaty of Bhairawal was signed on December 16, 1846.³⁴ The monarchy formed by the genius of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was 'reduced to insignificance'.³⁵ The First British-Punjab War (1845-46) cost the British half a million pound sterling.³⁶ It had destroyed the Lahore Kingdom for intents and purposes.³⁷

The Treaties of Lahore were signed on March 9, 11, 1846: The Lahore Kingdom was compelled to give up the Jullundur Doab; to pay a war indemnity of Rs.1.5 crore; reduced its army to 20,000 infantry and 12,000 cavalry; handover all the guns used in the Sutlej campaign; a British unit was posted in Lahore and the British Resident was appointed.³⁸ The Jullundhur Doab was taken over by the British; the British force of 10,000 men was kept in Lahore under the command of John Littler at the expense of the Lahore Durbar. The Resident was empowered 'to direct and control the duties of every department'.³⁹ The State of Lahore was not merely smaller and weaker, it was 'a protected state for all practical purposes',⁴⁰ a virtual 'protectorate' of

the British.⁴¹ During the period of Regency (1846-49), the British had worked on the potentialities and resources of the Punjab. The Resident, Henry Lawrence had complete control over every affair of the State,⁴² virtually a 'dictator' in the Punjab.⁴³ He could disband and recruit Sikh armies or replace them by British troops throughout the Punjab.⁴⁴ The Lahore Durbar agreed to pay to the British Government Rs.22 lakhs per annum for the maintenance of the 10,000 British troops in the Punjab till 4th September 1854. The Treaty was ratified in a public Durbar held at Lahore on 26th December 1846. Lord Henry Hardinge presided in the presence of Lord Hugh Gough, the Commander-in-Chief.⁴⁵ Henry Lawrence became "the uncrowned King of the Punjab", the rule of 'Titans' began.⁴⁶ On the other hand, the Sikh force which in 1845 was about 85,000 and 300 guns was reduced to 24,000 regular and 10,000 irregular troops, majority of them employed in the N.W.F. Provinces.⁴⁷ In the words of Lord Hardinge, the Punjab never by the Treaty of Lahore 'intended to be independent state'. The Maharaja Dalip Singh was in 'fetters'.⁴⁸ The Lahore Kingdom was reduced to a "subsidiary state",⁴⁹ leading to "partial annexation".⁵⁰ By the 1840's, the Court of Directors pursued 'an aggressive policy towards the Indian states'. Each Governor General followed the policy.⁵¹

Lord Hardinge began mulling over the annexation of the Punjab and its feasibility both in military and financial terms. He worked out the revenues of the Punjab about £ 700,000 and the cost of the annexation around £ 1 million pounds. The annexation would extend the frontier at the greatest distance from all resources hence it would be 'a source of weakness and not of strength'. Consequently, he defended the Regency.⁵² John Lawrence was more enthusiastic in the area of land reforms. It caused uneasiness among the land owning classes and jagirdars.⁵³ Henry Lawrence set out to reform the Revenue Department.⁵⁴ Administrative changes were introduced both in the annexed territories which were administered in the name the Durbar.⁵⁵ The finances were scrutinized; the arrears justly due from the tax-gathers were demanded with vigour, arrangements were made to fix and limit both the demand on the people; summary settlements of the land revenue were made.⁵⁶ John Lawrence thought that the prosperous peasantry would be the bulwark of the country rather than the Sardars.⁵⁷

During the winter of 1846, a general money assessment was commenced of all the districts immediately under the Durbar. In that season, it was completed in four Doabs, and Hazara and some portion of Peshawar.⁵⁸ The assessment of the land revenue on each village was determined through the agency of the British assistants.⁵⁹ There was no survey or measurement. The officers were entrusted with this duty were assisted by the production of Durbar accounts of past collections and by the local knowledge of the Kardars.⁶⁰ John Lawrence insisted upon punctual returns from the Kardars. A Kardar was to be suspended on the first neglect of this duty.⁶¹ The Regency period (1846-49) in the Punjab was that of measuring potentialities of physical resources of the Punjab especially land and water. Extensive surveys and mapping was conducted. Economy was enforced. Development of resources received attention. Plans for the repair of old and construction of new public works were prepared.⁶²

In 1847, John Lawrence made revenue settlements directly with representatives of village communities thus by passing *Chaudharies* and *Lambardars* who were in consequence deprived of the privilege of rent free lands. The revenue officials became as disgruntled as the *Jagirdars*.⁶³ Moreover, all the *awabs* or cesses were to be abolished and the state demand consolidated into one sum; secondly, where the past assessment direct or indirect exceeded one half the produce, it was reduced to two fifth; thirdly, the practice of collecting land in kind was abolished throughout the Punjab and the assessments were all fixed in money.⁶⁴ The survey paid attention to contextual features such as geographical location, irrigational facilities, the class of people taxed, the seasonal changes in the area, the quality of soil and whether the tillers can pay in money or kind'. The Lahore Kingdom had been freed from transit duties and customs, confined to import and export duties.⁶⁵

II: LORD DALHOUSIE, ANNEXATION, AND IMPERIAL INCORPORATION OF THE PUNJAB

Lord Henry Hardinge was succeeded by Lord James Andrew Browne Ramsay, Xth Earl, Marquis of Dalhousie who became the Governor General of India at age of 35. Lord Dalhousie landed Calcutta on the 12th January 1848.⁶⁶ By nature, he was an autocrat in power.⁶⁷ By birth and training his instincts were 'authoritarian and

conservative'.⁶⁸ Between April 18 and July 14, 1848, no effort was made to suppress the Multan rebellion either by the British Resident or the Lahore Durbar. Lord Dalhousie favoured delay upto September as in raining season it would 'a war against God Almighty, and his Clements'. He anticipated 'heavy reparation'.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, Lord Dalhousie in his Minute of September 30, 1848 expressed himself in favour of annexing the Punjab.⁷⁰ On January 13, 1849, the Battle of Chillianwala was fought. Both sides claimed victory. The British loss was heavy and amounted to over 2000 men, and six guns and several stands of colours. It was the worst defeat suffered by the British since their occupation of India.⁷¹ The Battle of Gujrat on 21st February 1849 ended organized Punjabi resistance to the British.⁷² Sardar Chattar Singh and Sher Singh surrendered to Major General Gilbert at Hurmuck near Rawalpindi on March 11 and 14, 1849.⁷³ Hari Ram Gupta considers the Second British-Punjab War as a 'misnomer as it was no war in reality',⁷⁴ and Philip Mason calls it 'an interruption' in the work of the British officials in the Punjab.⁷⁵ Diwan Mulraj's Revolt of 1848 at Multan precipitated the matter leading to annexation which was executed 'with caution and threat'.⁷⁶

The Regency was a temporary measure in British scheme of things. The annexation remained a major concern since the conquest of Sind in 1843. In January 1847, Lord Hardinge noticed that 'the Punjab was sliding into annexation'. He favoured it in the light of sound economics and advocated audit till 'the Pear is Ripe'.⁷⁷ The policy was to annex a state into the British territories on all suitable occasions.⁷⁸ A strong British army moved into the Punjab in early November 1848 under the command of Lord Hugh Gough with the object of "defeating, disarming and crushing all forces of the Sikhs". It was an invasion without any declaration of war.⁷⁹ On February 1, 1849, Henry Lawrence assumed the charge of the Residency. He favoured *status quo* in the Punjab. However, in his meetings with Lord Dalhousie at Ferozepore, he admitted 'the justice of annexation but disputed its expediency'.⁸⁰ On 11 March 1849 and on 14 March 1849, the Sikh soldiers with tears in their eyes kissed their swords and laid them down never to see them again, exclaiming, with choked throats. 'Today is Maharaja Ranjit Singh dead'.⁸¹

The Punjab was to be governed preferably in the interests of the new social forces which had begun to dominate British society. With a view to transform India into a productive country, England intended 'to gift her means of irrigation and of internal communications'⁸². The Governor General Lord Dalhousie acted without the consent of the Court of Directors. Nevertheless, the President of the Board of Control approved the annexation.⁸³ Lord Dalhousie regarded annexation as a thoroughly sound plan.⁸⁴ In a letter to Hobhouse on August 15, 1848, Lord Dalhousie represented annexation as the most "advantageous policy" open to the British. He and John Lawrence magnified the defects of the subsidiary system to prove it unworkable.⁸⁵ He pushed his case for annexation. In the case of denial, he thought to resign.⁸⁶ The situation in Multan and the British Punjab War was an excuse by the British to conquer the Punjab.⁸⁷

The British Commander-in-Chief Hugh Gough had reached Lahore on March 26th, 1849. Mr. H.M. Elliot, Secretary, Foreign Department, deputed with full powers, arrived on March 28, 1849. The British colours were hoisted on the Citadel of Lahore. The Council of Regency signed submission to the British power and surrendered the *Koh-i-noor* to the Queen of England, Victoria.⁸⁸ Lt. Col. W. Sherry, Commandant, Govindgarh Fort, Amritsar reported that 'the streets filled with rejoicing crowds and illuminated the city most brilliantly.'⁸⁹ The conditions signed by Maharaja Dalip Singh at Lahore on March 29th, 1849 were ratified by Lord Dalhousie on the April 5th, 1849. Proclamation was issued on March 30th, 1849, announcing in every station of British India that the country of the Five Rivers was henceforth an English possession.⁹⁰ Henry Lawrence was resistant to the idea of annexation; Dalhousie desired the opposite as he wanted "utter destruction and frustration of the Sikh power, the subversion of its dynasty, the subjection of its people, and this must be done fully and finally".⁹¹ In fact, long before the battles of Chillianwala and Gujrat, Lord Dalhousie wrote to Frederick Curry on February 21, 1849 that he had made up his mind to put an end to the Sikh rule in the Punjab. Dalhousie wanted integrity of the British Indian Empire.⁹² By the annexation of the Punjab, Lord Dalhousie abolished that 'intervening military nationality'.⁹³ Lord Dalhousie received a Marquisate with the

addition “of the Punjab”. Thus, he parted with the tradition from “to be a Scottish Earl of 1633 to be an English Marquis of 1849”.⁹⁴ The two million sterling, which the Punjab including the Jallandar Doab was expected to yield by way of annual revenue was considered sufficient to pay the additional army to be maintained for the purpose of the Indian Empire.⁹⁵ All pro-annexationists mentioned economic advantage for the Company, Britain and themselves. Even high moral ground was also introduced to ‘civilise’ indigenous population under the British governance.⁹⁶

III: POST-ANNEXATION SITUATION:

The British Government was eager to annex the Punjab, also an account of its economic as well as political aspects. The cotton of the Punjab was one of the chief attractions to the British who foresaw in the land of five rivers a favourable market for the consumption of their goods. The Punjab also offered vast opportunities of employment for a large number of British civilians and politicians with handsome salaries, allowances, furloughs and pensions. It also offered facilities of extensive cantonments and mountainous training grounds for the British troops.⁹⁷ With a view to speed up the transformation of Punjab into a productive unit, while keeping down the expenditure of its administration, the Non-Regulation System was developed in which its administrative staff was not governed by an Act of Parliament or the regulations of the Government of India.⁹⁸ The Punjab experienced ‘complete fulfillment’ and became ‘the greatest example’ of the Non-Regulation System in British India.⁹⁹ Its main objective was to further the process of social transformation and bring the Punjab in line with the more developed provinces of British India. However, it paid due regard to customary law and social traditions.¹⁰⁰

A Proclamation was issued calling upon the people to surrender their arms, and demolish all private fortifications and strongholds. Headmen of the villages were involved to carry out the measures and they were held responsible.¹⁰¹ Lord Dalhousie maintained that “there will never be peace in the Punjab so long as its people are allowed to maintain the means and opportunity of waging war”.¹⁰² Throughout the Punjab, about 1,20,000 stands of arms were surrendered.¹⁰³ The leading ‘rebels’ were punished not only by confiscation of their *jagirs*

but of their entire property.¹⁰⁴ The early British administrators of the Punjab were anxious to tap every source of wealth and material prosperity, partly to justify their imperialistic hold on the country and win the good will of the new rising class – in industrial aristocracy and partly to show to the Directors at home that the new conquest was a paying concern.¹⁰⁵ The rate of assessment was reduced. Resultantly, revenue from land increased from Rs. 130 lakh in 1849 to Rs. 160 lakh in 1851.¹⁰⁶ The British always looked for revenue surplus as excessive military interventions bled the treasury white. The Company had ceaseless military campaigning with a large and expensive sepoy army. During 1839-1849, number of wars against Afghanistan, Oudh, Gwalior and British Punjab Wars, debt had risen to £ 51 million involving an annual payment of £ 2½ million. In the case of the Punjab, the deficit in revenue stood as: £1,496,865 in 1845-46; £ 1,91, 986 in 1847-48; and £ 1,473,225 in 1848-49.¹⁰⁷

The British East India Company had the parliamentary sanction and strength. By 1843-44, the British spies and intelligencers were everywhere in Lahore secretly assisted by the dignitaries of the Kingdom. The Sind occupation in 1843 provided a template to move towards the First British Punjab War (1845-46). The British occupation in 1846 fragmented and bled the Lahore Kingdom within both economically and politically. Resources were assessed and estimated to derive at economics of annexation. Rise of England as the dominant industrial power in Europe and as hegemon encouraged the industrial class to push forward annexation of the Punjab. Lord Dalhousie considered it his mandate to execute the policy of annexation. It extended the Empire's geographical and political frontier in the North-West. The basic feature of the Punjab's economy was its rapid colonization after 1850, leading to its integration with the rest of Indian colonial economy and also with the world capitalist economy in a subordinate position.¹⁰⁸ The philosophy of Utilitarianism derived imperial policy in India. The Lahore Kingdom though militarily powerful and economically sustainable had to face the collective might of the British Empire and Indian subsidiary system which had forced collaboration of the local rulers. The British Empire in India had a structured political and military system, while the Lahore Kingdom

had yet to institutionalize its polity. The Company was highly indebted due to imperial wars, a novel situation for a trading company, and finally imploded and collapsed with the Uprising of 1857.

(Footnotes)

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WHO KILLED GURU TEGH BAHADUR

SIRDAR KAPUR SINGH

The martyrdom of the Ninth Guru has been presented in various details by Sikh scholars and Sikh historical literature. Sirdar Kapur Singh has settled all misgivings surrounding the execution of the Guru by the imperial authority of Aurangzeb. The article is an incisive response to the writings of some scholars who sought to write about the sacrifice of the Guru without taking into account its spiritual and moral significance. Written nearly half a century ago this write-up continuous to be of enduring importance for the Sikh readers and researchers alike. — Editor

In the Sikh contemporary records of the highest credibility and in the consistent Sikh tradition and chronicles, as well as in the Sikh group-memory, Aurangzeb is shown as having personally ordered the public execution of Guru Teg Bahadur Ji at Delhi on the 11th November, 1675. The execution was ordered by the emperor after a number of interviews with the Guru in which the fundamental principles of the Mughal state-policy came under discussion, as to (a) whether the ultimate Truth could be encased in verbal formulae, (b) whether the creed-formula of Islam did so encase it justifying its claim to being the final and exclusive deposit of Truth, (c) whether this claim could be and should be imposed through terror and temptations, ash-shar's tahtussaif, and (d) whether a totalitarian, altogether dissent-free society was divinely pre-ordained as the Will of God. To all these profound and rootal questions the reply of the Guru is recorded as having been in the negative and consequently, Aurangzeb clinched the issue by formally inviting the Guru to embrace Islam. This the Guru declined, thus attracting the penalty of death according to the

basic state-law of Islam: amaa al-qatl wa amaa al –Islaam.

These historically momentous occurrences, demonstrably of the greatest possible significance and relevance to human situation -more so today than ever before -took place when Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the son of the martyr-Guru, Guru Teg Bahadur Ji, was nine years of age and throughout these occurrences, the Guru's House was in constant and uninterrupted touch, through carefully arranged intelligence and communications, with Guru Teg Bahadur Ji and what passed on at Delhi.

All this is described and consistently recorded in detail in the Sikh chronicles, as it is embedded in the Sikh group memory.

Guru Gobind Singh Ji himself, about whose altogether reliable testimony and credibility, no reasonable doubts can be raised, tells us in *Bachitranaatak* (1686), that his father,

“broke the pitcher of his mortal frame on the head of the Delhi emperor,”

not “on the head” of the Mughal State or that of the ruling race, the ‘Turks’, but ‘on the head of’ Aurangzeb himself. Those who are conversant with Hindi- Punjabi idiom, well understand that, Guru Gobind Singh's expression: *theekar phor dilis sir*, clearly implies that it was Aurangzeb who personally, not through an order issued through official channels from a distant place, had Guru Teg Bahadur Ji excuted at Delhi where he was present then, on the 11th November, 1675. Guru Gobind Singh Ji further records that the immediate cause of his father's martyrdom arose out of Guru Teg Bahadur Ji having directly and personally espoused and taken up the cause of Hindu religion, then placed under gradual interdiction by Aurangzeb and that the confrontation between the Guru and the emperor did not involve a direct Sikh cause: *tilak janjoo raabkaa prabh taakaa*. We are further told in the *Bachitranaatak* that the legal issue of Islamic jurisprudence was clinched against the Guru when he flatly declined to display a miracle such as would support his implied claim to independent prophethood, on the ground that miracle-working was undignified for a man of religion: *naatak chatak karat kukaajaa, prabh logan kau aavat laajaa*. Bhai Santokh Singh, Mahaakavi, in his *Guruprataapsooryodey* (1846) clearly tells us that, *adham naurange kaaran keenaa*, “it was the unspeakably

evil Aurangzeb who had Guru Teg Bahadur Ji executed.”

During the last few decades, however, a new discipline called, ‘historical research’ has swept over India, giving its contemporary historians access to sources of information hitherto not available, such as many-sided manuscript-material, techniques of interdisciplinary comparative studies such as archaeology, inscriptional matter, numismatic evidence and C-14 tests. This has vastly extended the frontiers of and illuminated historical knowledge, cleared it of its obscurantist cobwebs, and has furnished scholars with techniques and insights of interpretational methods that were not generally available earlier and that enables them to conduct historical studies more objectively and scientifically.

But, as is not uncommon, new techniques and new tools bring in new pitfalls, those of inadequacy of full understanding of their true significance and scope, and prejudices and biases born of erroneous assumptions, and last but not the least, lopsided partisanship resulting from absence of totality of vision. The recent restructuring of Sikh history, in particular, has suffered most grievously in recent times, at the hands of non-Sikh and Sikh historians both. Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar, for instance, forgetting altogether that the true source-material of Sikh history lies deposited in Sikh writings, sacred and secular, preserved in the Gurmukhi script and north-Indian vernaculars, of both of which he was blissfully ignorant, as he was innocent of any comprehension of the basic rule of interpretation that the only valid interpretation is the auto-interpretation to which hetero-interpretation is no more than impudence, has gone on a spree in his writings on Aurangzeb by speaking of the Sikh prophets and personalities, as if they are criminal probationers before Sarkar, the warden-magistrate.

He speaks of the ‘corruption of the original, Sikh doctrine’ and ‘degradation’ of its spirituality by Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji and Guru Gobind Singh Ji in particular, and severely reprimands them for hiring services of professional Pathan mercenaries for body-guard platoon as specifically asked by his father Guru Arjan Dev Ji and Guru Gobind Singh Ji, in everything he did, including the inauguration of the Khalsa, swore by Guru Nanak Ji. Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar should have realized that the ten Sikh Gurus, one after the other, were to be deemed as

more reliable authorities on what the true implications of the original spiritual teachings of Guru Nanak Ji are and if they resorted to political activities and took cognizance of the power-game around them it must have been because such were the true teaching of Guru Nanak Ji, and that to judge Sikhism and its historical evaluation by standards of vague Jain and Hindu teachings and prejudices about ahimsa and the Hindu imperative of utter separation of this world from the next, is just hetero-interpretation, like a gold-smith trying to test the excellence of a rose-flower by rubbing it against his touch-stone.

Nor, did Sarkar in his self-assurance, pause to take due note of the fact that in 17th and 18th century India, professional mercenary soldiers were and integral part of the political activity and participation in the power-game, there being no moral or spiritual issues involved. Accepted as a trend-setter in relation to Sikh history, Sarkar has given rise and lent respectability to certain extremely stupid guide-lines for his contemporary historiographers that have played havoc not only in the recently reconstructed Sikh history but have thrown the Sikh writers and teachers of History altogether off their balance.

These 'guidelines', accepted as axiomatic, have just to be stated precisely to show their extremely pernicious character and their impermissibility in objectives and scientific historiography. Some of these 'guidelines' or more correctly, gross prejudices, are these: (a) Almost exclusively, the reliable material about Sikh history is to be found in the contemporary Persian records. (b) Sikh records in Gurmukhi script and Sikh recial memory, consistent and continuous, are irrelevant and supplemental material. (c) Sikh prophets, the Gurus, are to be estimated just as ordinary citizens of the Mughal Empire whose words and deeds are to be tested and evaluated on the scale of contemporary official values and judgements. (d) Sikhism is not an autonomous prophetic world-religion, distinguishable from the Hindu religious tradition and, therefore, it is legitimate to judge and evaluate it under Hindu category and norms of judgement and thus to condemn and approve of it, finally and conclusively. (e) The writings of 17th and early 18th century European adventures are to be taken as most reliable and conclusive even when they are demonstrably self-stultifying.

It is, in this, grotesque frame-work that the new Sikh history is

being written by many of the non-Sikh and Sikh historiographers as a result of which the entire foundation-work of Sikhism and the Sikh history is being eroded into, and unless this trend is checked it cannot but have disastrous consequences for Sikhism and the Sikhs.

It is Sarkar who is more than anybody else singly, responsible for boosting up Persian records of Muslim historiographers, as the unerring sources of the historical fact. Sarkar's prejudice in this respect almost parallels the claim made about the Mahabharata, that, 'what is there in the world, it is here in this book also, and if it is not here, it is not there too', *yadibaasti tadanyatra yannebaasti na tatkvachit*.

10. Aurangzeb and Guru Teg Bahadur Sahib Ji are inextricably bound up together in history. There are three or four major Persian records relating to this period. Aurangzeb ascended the Mughal throne in August, 1658 and died in 1707. After a rule of ten years, he felt that he had completely mastered his dominions as the undisputed ruler of the country and he left justified in pursuing an all-out policy of converting India into an orthodox sunni Muslim state and to "bring the lives of people into closer accords with the teachings of Islam" (Edwards and Garret, *Mughal Rule in India*, Delhi, 1956, p.114). In the same year he forbade writing of all history, so that, in the darkness of this total news-blackout, he could systematically and ruthlessly root out Hinduism and the Hindu way of life as well as other forms of dissidence, such as Sikhism and non-sunni Islam. In 1669 he ordered demolition of all places of worship of non-muslims and closure of their teaching seminaries. In 1675 he had Guru Teg Bahadur Sahib Ji, who had formally assumed the responsibilities of protecting Hinduism, publicly executed at Delhi. In 1679 he reimposed the oppressive *jezieh* on non-Muslims, with the result, as Manucci tells us (*Storia da Magor*, II, p.234), that "many Hindus who were unable to pay turned Mohammandans to obtain relief from the insults of the collectors." In 1704 he ordered killing or capture of Guru Gobind Singh Ji and destruction and Diaspora of the Khalsa. In 1707 he died, leaving behind, not a monolithic, dissent-free sunni India, but a Mughal empire, shaken in its very roots, a fissi-rostral Government and a resurgent Maratha Hinduism as well as the Khalsa, "a deadly coiled snake in the striking posture," *pecheedeh maar*, as Guru Gobind Singh Ji reffered

to it in his Zafarnaameh.

Of this pregnantly black period of Indian history, the first contemporary Persian record that we have is that of Mirza Mohd Kazim, the official history-writer of Aurangzeb, who recorded events of the first ten years of his reign. It makes no mention, whatsoever, of the public execution of the world-famous sufi saint, Sarmad, whom Aurangzeb got murdered during the first year of his reign, for possessing and expressing religious views contrary to those of the fanatical Aurangzeb. Then, when Aurangzeb totally banned all history writing, some one secretly prepared the folios, called Muntakhabul-lubaab under the pseudonym, Khaafee Khan, which covers the period almost upto the demise of Aurangzeb and in this voluminous record also there is neither any mention of Sarmad's execution nor of the martyrdom of Guru Teg Bahadur Ji, although Khaafee Khan thought it important enough to record that, during those days, some cattle-grazing boys, while playing at the game of King and Subjects, actually strangled a playmate to death.

After the passing away of Aurangzeb, during the reign of Shah Alam I (1710), one Must'id Khan, in his Ma'aasari-Aslam-geeree recorded the history of 40 years of Aurangzeb's regin from 1669 to 1707 and in this document also, there is no mention of Guru Teg Bahadur Ji's martyrdom or of Sarmad's execution. One, Munshi Ghulam Hussain Khan, wrote his *Siyar-ul-Mutakbireen* in which he recorded a general history of India of 1702-1786, describing the reigns of the last seven emperors of India and an account of the progress of the English in Bengal. We do not know who this Ghulam Hussain was, when he actually wrote his book, vaguely believed to have been written round about 1785, though there is no chrono-grammatical support available to this guess. However, any original or otherwise authentic manuscript of this book is not there and it is not known under what circumstances he wrote it; the only certain thing about it being that it was first published in 1833. This Persian record makes a mention of the martyrdom of Guru Teg Bahadur Ji, but not much reliability can be placed on the author's statements as they are demonstrably sketchy, grounded in bazaar stories current long after the events. About Guru Teg Bahadur Ji he tells us that, (1) the Guru

was ordered to be arrested by Aurangzeb from Hasanabadal Camp on receiving news-reports that the Guru was highly regarded by the public and attracted large number of people wherever he went, that (2) in fact, all the men in the entourage of the Guru, from time to time, were godly, peace-loving people, unarmed and with no hostile intentions towards the state, that (3) the Governor of Lahore arrested the Guru as ordered by the emperor and that (4) the Guru was executed (at Lahore) with his body cut into four pieces and each piece hung at the four gates of the walls (of Lahore), opening towards the four cardinal directions.

It is obvious that the writer of these cock and bull stories cannot be regarded as a reliable source of information about the martyrdom of Guru Teg Bahadur Ji and also of many other events that he has presumed to record as history. But since he, presumably, wrote under the suggestion or orders of some British adventurer in India of those days, in the last decades of the 18th century, his book was translated into English by a British by a British subaltern, one, Raymond and published in three volumes in 1789, and a part of it was translated by another subaltern, John Briggs, published in London, in 1832.

The second of these two gentlemen, Lieutenant John Briggs, for reasons best known to him, said in his "translation" that Munshi Gulam Hussain Khan has recorded that Guru Teg Bahadur Ji was a robber chief who subsisted on "repine and plunder," "forsaking all means of honest livelihood" and for this offence he was executed under warrant from the Emperor. How this Briggs came to write his own fabrications, as translation from *Siyar-ul-Mutakhireen*, through malice, inanity or inebriation, most probably all three combined, for, malice towards the still free Sikhs in India was universal emotion in the minds of the British soldiery and inanity and inebriation was their national trait in India, is not clear but the fact remains that ever since, this account of the martyr-Guru has been accepted as authoritative and historically established by our modern historians, both Indians and non-Indians. Such are the high standards of 'scientific objectivity' that inspire our research scholars of History, particularly, in our Sikh Universities.

The latest of these research scholars happens to be the Head of the History Department of the Punjabi University at Patiala, Dr. Fauja

Singh, who, in his thesis-published in the inaugural issue (1974) of the *Journal of Sikh Studies*, sponsored by the Guru Nanak University, Amritsar –has said that, (a) it is Munshi Ghulam Hussain who says in the *Siyar-ul-Mutakhireen* that Guru Teg Bahadur Ji was a robber-chief subsisting on rapine and plunder, and that (b) the Guru was, for these crimes, executed at Delhi as a highway robber and political criminal, and finally, that (c) Aurangzeb is neither responsible for this execution, nor was he present at Delhi in the winter of 1675.

Around these self-spun fictions, Dr. Fauja Singh dishes out a pretty exciting story of how Guru Teg Bahadur Ji was, in reality, a pre-Marxian revolutionary espousing the cause of the exploited land tillers and attempting to organize a Che Guevara-type premature insurgence in his self-assumed role of a class-conscious midwife to revolution, in the course of which activities he was pounced upon and overtaken by the long arm of the Law and brought to justice at Delhi by having his head chopped off in the Chandni Chowk. “Long live Teg Bahadur Ji,” or to be more exact, “Long live Comrade Tyaagmal,” for according to Dr. Fauja Singh, the Guru’s real name, in all likelihood, was Tyaagmal and Teg Bahadur Ji was only his assumed name in the best revolutionary tradition.

This is where our University research scholars of history have taken us to, through their allegiance to the precept that all that is true is recorded in the Persian manuscripts and all that goes under their guise, and that what does not accord with these goes under their guise, and that what does not accord with these manuscripts, and the subsequent fabrications thereof are beneath their contempt to notice. Dr. Fauja Singh does not say so in so many words but the implied meanings, nuances and insinuations of his write-up are unmistakable. Dr. Fauja Singh, in his thesis, does not tell us, why he thinks so, but he takes it for granted that in November, 1675, Aurangzeb was not present at Delhi. Since the emperor then was not at Delhi, the entire Sikh story including the testament of Guru Gobind Singh Ji about a prolonged and most significant dialogue between the Guru and the emperor, before, and leading to, the former’s execution is shown as utterly imaginary and false and, by implication, such are the infirm and mendacious foundations upon which the superstructure of the

epiphany and evolution of Sikhism and the Sikh history has been raised.

Understandably, there have been anguished protests against this gratuitous and shameful distortion and perversion of the Sikh history and the Sikh doctrine, but these protests have been brushed aside by Dr. Fauja Singh and his supporters, mostly Sikhs, as uncalled for, unjustified, subversive of 'academic freedom' and non-conductive to 'scientific research' in history. Such is the pitiful condition to which the hapless Sikhs have been reduced today!

Was Aurangzeb not present in Delhi in November, 1675, when Guru Teg Bahadur was executed under imperial orders and is the consistent Sikh recorded tradition and unbroken group-memory altogether devoid of any historical truth? This is the question we set out to consider, of which question the foregoing merely forms a prologue.

Though Dr. Fauja Singh does not mention it, it is more than likely that he relies upon the chronology worked out by Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar in his, *Aurangzeb and His Times* (5 volumes), wherein it is stated that Aurangzeb stayed at Hasan Abadal till his return to Delhi on 27th March, 1676 (III, p.276) that is, about four months after the execution of Guru Teg Bahadur Ji. If this computation of Sarkar can be shown as untrustworthy there is nothing whatsoever, to cast any doubts on the account of the martyrdom of Guru Teg Bahadur Ji given by Guru Gobind Singh Ji and other Sikh sources.

Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar's chronology is obviously based upon and derived from the Hijra dates given in the afore-mentioned Persian documents.

The Hijra era is a religious chronology, commencing from the flight of Mohammad from Mecca to Medina (15th July, A.D.622) and the following day, Friday, 16th July is equivalent to the 1st day of Moharram, A.H.I. The year is a lunar one of 354 days and its primary functional use was and is determination and celebration of Muslim religious duties, commencement of the fasting month, its termination and celebration of Id, etc. but in Islamic societies, including India, the era has been used for secular purposes also, in spite of complications arising out of its initial day always traveling backwards through the

Julian calendar of 365 days, thus making a complete circuit in 34 years. The reckonings derived from it have apparent initial points in A.D.591, 593, and 600 though their real origin was in the 14th, 16th and 17th centuries. Emperor Akbar succeeded to the throne in February, A.D.1556 in Hijra year 963 which ran from 16th November 1555 to 3rd November 1556. In order to minimize, if not to obviate altogether, the confusion implicit in a lunar year for purposes of revenue administration which cannot but be based on a solar year to ensure that the crop maturations and revenue-collection occur during the same period in a given year, Akbar replaced Hijra by the Shamsee San, the solar year. This secular reform did away with a great deal of chronological confusion and multiplicity then prevalent in various parts of India in obvious attempts to coordinate somehow, the true secular year, the solar year, with the Muslim religious lunar year and era of the Hijra. This Shamasee san introduced by Akbar was intended to replace the Faslee san of upper India, the Vilaayatee san of Orissa, the Bengali san and the Maharashtra Arabee san. The initial days of all these sans or eras differed from place to place into which jungle of dates, Akbar tried to introduce some kind of rational order, though this chronological jungle was, by no means, altogether cleared off. The magnitude and the complexity of the problem can best be appreciated by going through the details of the stupendous efforts that have, from the end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 20th century, been made by eminent Calendarists and Chronologists, beginning with the *Kaala Sankaalita* (1825) of Warren, *Useful Tables* (1834-1856) of Prinsep, *Chronology* (1866) of Cawasjee Patel and *Book of Indian Eras* (1883) of Cunningham, culminating in *Indian Calender* (1898) of Dikshit and *Epigraphia Indica* (1894) of Jacobi.

Aurangzeb, quite early in his career, as the emperor, abruptly stopped rationalization of the secular chronological confusion of India by re-introducing Hijra era and lunar chronology into all official levels of Indian administration with the result that, for more than half a century, the Mughal official records are vitiated chronology, requiring expert know-how to make the dates given in our Persian records, understandable to us. It is to be noted that Aurangzeb, in this, had no other motive but that of religious fanaticism to change the entire face

of India into a Muslim state and a sunni Muslim society.

Sir Jadunath Sarkar has rendered a yeoman's service to the students of Indian history of this period by working out its Hijra lunar dates into the Julian solar calendar, plausibly, but not always faultlessly.

There are inherent pitfalls which even Sarkar has not been able to escape.

Firstly, as we will show presently, the dates given in our Persian records by no means tally with each other, always, and thus we are obliged to search for an outside point of reference. Secondly, the fact cannot be overlooked that Khaafee Khan and Must'id Khan wrote under obvious and great disadvantages, the one, under Aurangzeb's 'Emergency Ordinances', so to speak, forbidding all recording of contemporary events, a total ban on historiography, and two, the utter non-availability of official records to those who, under difficult circumstances, wrote out their histories.

The dates of Hijra, on which Sarkar had to work, are themselves impregnated with an element of uncertainty and also falsity such as every true Muslim would approve and accept as just and proper. For instance, if Aurangzeb so wished, in demonstrable interest of Islamic hegemony in India, that in the closing months of the year A.D.1675, all records prepared or maintained by Muslims, must show that Aurangzeb was not in Delhi, then such, indeed, would be the case, though it would merely be a political truth and not a historical truth.

This is the true explanation of variances between the Sikh chronological records which consistently show Aurangzeb's presence in Delhi in November, 1675 and the other dates given by Khaafee Khan and Must'id Khan, of certain other events, for, they would have us believe that, no such thing as martyrdom of Guru Teg Bahadur Ji at all took place in Delhi. These other dates refer to events of Aurangzeb's march to Hasan Abdal, his return to Delhi and his crushing of the Satnaamee insurgency.

These are the only dates available to Sarkar from which he has extracted and derived his own dates of the Julian calendar, according to which latter, it is asserted that Aurangzeb returned from Husan Abdal to Delhi on 27th March, 1676. The firm date given in the Sikh

contemporary records and unbroken tradition affirming that on maghur sudi panchamee, Vikram Era, 1732, Aurangzeb was present in Delhi when Guru Teg Bahadur Ji was executed, was neither available to Sarkar, nor, if it were so available, he would have taken serious notice of it, in view of his poor opinion of the epiphany and history of Sikhism.

Khaafee Khan gives two different dates of the Satnaamee rebellion with a difference of two years, one from the other. At one place he mentions 1082 Hijra (II,p.252) and at another place he mentions 1084 Hijra (II,p.249). Sarkar has accepted 1084 Hijra as the correct date of the Satnaamee rebellion, for reasons not explained satisfactorily, though, obviously, he must have relied upon some outside test-measure to reject the earlier and to accept the later date. If the earlier date is accepted as true, the entire edifice of the supposed assertion about Aurangzeb's absence from Delhi in November, 1675 crumbles. Must'id Khan gives the date of Satnaamee rebellion as 1082 Hijra, which is the year early 1673, as calculated by Sarkar (III, 338) but a Portuguese contemporary authority, Ormez tells us that, Aurangzeb marched against Satnaamee, "as near as we can combine in April, 1674" (Fragments, 51). Ormez's dates agree, more nearly with Khaafee Khan than with Must'id Khan, and if this chronology is to be preferred, then Aurangzeb's presence in Delhi at the end of 1675 becomes more than plausible. Dr. Fryer, another Portuguese, in a letter written between September 1674 and January, 1675, tells us that, "even at this instant, he (Aurangzeb) is on a project to bring them all over to his faith and has already begun by too severe taxes, very severe ones, especially on the Brahmins, making them pay a gold-rupee per head and the inferior tribes proportionately". (A New Account of East India and Persia, I, p.275). But Manucci, an equally respectable contemporary authority, assures us that "In 1679 he (Aurangzeb) reimposed jezieh in order to spread Islam and put down infidelity" (Storia, II, p.239). A difference of full four years in chronology is there. With regard to another most prominent event of Aurangzeb's reign as recorded by two well educated foreign contemporary observers about the date of the return of Aurangzeb from Hasan Abdal to Delhi, there is similar uncertainty. Khaafee Khan at one place (II, 241) says that it

was during the 19th regnal year while at another place (II, p.246) he says it was the 16th regnal year, a difference of about three years. Must'id Khan puts this date as 22nd. Muharram, 1087 (p. 154), that would be early AD 1676. According to Ma'aasari-Aalamgeeree of Must'id Khan jeziah was imposed in the 23rd regnal year (p.174) which would be 1090 Hijra or A.D.1680 while Elliot and Dawson (VII, p. 294) give this fateful date as 1088 Hijra, two years earlier than this and Khaafee Khan's date; and Manucci gives this date as A.D. 1679, "after the death of Raja Jaswant Singh", as he puts it.

Now, these are the dates and such is the chronology from which Sarkar has extracted his dating frame-work, depending on which later, our new research scholars, seek to falsify and profane the entire infrastructure of Sikh doctrine and foundations of Sikh history.

In opposition to this confusion of narrative and welter of historical dating, stands the firm date, clear, consistent and unassailable, that of Maghar sudee panchamee of the Vikram samvat 1732, when Guru Teg Bahadur Ji was put to death at Delhi at which metropolis Aurganzeb was then present, earlier returned from his Hasan Abdal expedition, in or about March, 1675. This date is recorded by Sikh contemporaries, on the blank sheets of the Sikh scriptures, preserved and present in various parts of India to this day, frequently bearing approval-signatures of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, testifying: *sambat 1732 Guru Teg Bahadur Ji samaane vich dilli manghar sudee 5 veervaar pehar din chadeh sri satguru kartaapurkb nirankaar.*

Latest and weighty historical judgement is now available that supports the version enshrined in the Sikh chronicles. Encyclopaedia of Islam (New Edition) published in Leiden and London (1958) after careful investigation concludes, under, Aurangzeb:

"The Pathans rose in revolt, the Yusufzais in 1707/1667 and the Afridis in 1083/1672, but though he (Aurangzeb) stationed himself at Hasanabdal (Rawalpindi District), the efforts of the imperial officers were strongly unavailing and peace could not be restored till 1085/1675" (p.769)

From times immemorial, the campaigning season in India is, October to February every year and, thus, it is obvious that by the end of March, 1675, Aurangzeb returned to Delhi, well in time, to order

and see the execution of Guru Teg Bahadur Ji.

A word before we conclude, about the Mughal Persian records which so fascinate and impress our teachers and research scholars of history, in particular, 'the History of the Sikhs written by the Sikhs' these days. Modern man's passion for history is not very old and it is a mistake to regard it as the natural behaviour of every civilized man. This interest manifests itself in two distinct ways that are inter-related. (1) A passion for historiography, the desire for an evermore complete and more exact knowledge of the past of humanity; (2) the tendency to define man, as, above all, a historical being, conditioned and in the end, created, by History. What is called, 'historicism', Historismus, Storicismo, as well as Marxism and certain Existential schools-these are the philosophies which, in one sense or other, ascribe fundamental importance to History and the 'historic moment'. This passion for history is a fairly recent passion; it dates from the time of Herodotus, the Graeco-Latin man knew and cultivated the writing of history, but this was not what has come to be known as 'history', since the 19th century -to know and describe as accurately as possible, all that has come to pass in the course of time. Herodotus, like Livy, like Orosius and even historians of the Renaissance wrote history in order to preserve examples and models and pass them on for our imitation. But for the last one hundred years or so the history has no longer been the source of exemplary models; it has become a scientific passion for exhaustive knowledge for all the adventures of mankind. This is an interest we find in no other past era. Practically all the non-European cultures are without historic consciousness and even if they have a traditional historiography, as in China or in Islamic culture, its function is always to provide models, not to describe and preserve the truth and nothing but the truth. Indian Muslim chronicles, such as *Muntakhab-ul-lubab*, *Ma'aasari-Aalamgeeree*, *Siyar-ul-Mutakbireen*, in fact, all the Muslim documents of traditional historiography from *Ibni-Khaldun* to Haarissee of *Ibrat-nameh*, are to be appreciated in this background.

Their writings are not objective attempts at gathering and grasping, as far as possible, the whole panorama of the past, in all its panoply, but conscious and motivated endeavours to portray Muslim society, as ordained by Allah and revealed in the Koran. The concern to pejorate

all that is alien or hostile to this final end, establishment and preservation of a dissent-free Muslim society, and to exalt all that is helpful and conducive to it, is implicitly owned up by all these chroniclers, without scruples, without hesitation and with a sense of exultation consequent upon a meritorious deed, well done. Khaafee Khan's detailed description of the accidental strangulation of a grazier-boy during the course of a children's play is intended to project the image and function of the King in Islamic society. Guru Teg Bahadur Ji was deemed as inimical and hostile to this exclusively valid and ideal society and he was, therefore, ignored in their narratives as an irritating irrelevancy. If it was deemed as in the interests of this ideal society to create chronological confusion on the point of the presence of the emperor at Delhi at the time of the Guru's execution, all Muslim records would unhesitatingly oblige, without an exception. Sikh history, therefore, cannot be properly reconstructed by voluntarily falling into the net of these excellent Muslim chronicles or Persian records, "He who controls the past controls the future", says George Orwell. If the Sikh teachers and writers of Sikh history have any concern for the future of their own people, let them not be privy to permit those against whom the Sikhs had to wage a bitter and prolonged struggle for sheer survival, to be the controllers of the Sikhs' past and future.

JAAP SAHIB
– A POWERFUL MEDITATIONAL VERSE –

PROF KULWANT SINGH*

Prof Kulwant Singh is eminently known for his thorough and painstaking translations of scriptural readings and Sikh historical literature. The Translation of Jaap Sahib, which the author has now undertaken, remains a most challenging and daunting task for any translator. The students and scholars of Sikh studies stand to benefit immensely from his work.

– Editor

Jaap Sahib is a verse composed by the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh in hybrid Gurmukhi script. As *Japuji* forms the first/ opening and foundational verse of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, similarly *Jaap Sahib* forms the first and foundational verse of the *Dasam Granth*. As the text of Sri Guru Granth Sahib is a further explanation of the major postulates enshrined in the opening *Japuji* verse similarly all the verses in *Dasam Granth* are an explanation of the major postulates contained in the opening *Jaap Sahib* verse.

It is believed that this verse had been composed in around 1625 at Paunta Sahib, a municipal town located on the bank of Yamuna river in Sirmaur district of Himachal Pradesh State of India.¹ It is also believed that it was dictated to his scribe Baba Deep Singh as Guru Arjan Dev had dictated the text of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* to his scribe Bhai Gurdas. But according to Rahitnama by Bhai Chaupa Singh (1700

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1. It is a composition of his earlier - The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism, Vol II, p. 350
2. Vide Article IV, subsection 2 of Rehat Maryada vide SGPC resolution No 97, February 3, 1945. (Quoted from M.S. Chahal's book *Jap Sahib* - Finger Print, 2024, p. 35)

A.D.). This verse was composed by Guru Gobind Singh in 1677 A.D. at Anandpur Sahib at the age of about sixteen years. Undoubtedly, this is the first verse in *Dasam Granth*.

This verse, besides being an integral part of daily morning prayer as prescribed by the established Sikh *Rehat Maryada* (Sikh code of conduct)², it is also recited at the Sikh initiation ceremony when a volunteer devout Sikh is administered *Amrit* or *Khandey-ki-Pahul* and made to take religious vows and bear the five Sikh *Kakars* (symbols) to become a practicing/ *Amritdhari* Sikh.

It consists of 199 verses written in ten forms of poetic prosody namely *Chhapai Chband*, *Bhujang Paryat Chband*, *Chachri Chband*, *Charpat Chband*, *Rual Chband*, *Madhubhar Chand*, *Bhagwati Chband*, *Rasawal Chband*, *Harbolmana Chband*, *Ek Acchhari Chband*. Each of these ten poetic forms consist of different metres as per their prevalent poetic prosody in India. While *Bhujang Paryat Chband* is the most widely used (poetic form/ *Chband* (65 times), *Chhapai Chband* has been used only once in the whole text. The remaining eight forms of poetic verses have been used in varying number of times. Dr Taran Singh has further divided these 1999 verses into twenty two sections/ *Pauris* along with the varying number of verses in each poetic form.

Regarding the category of language used in this verse, it is a sophisticated blend of traditional languages linguistic mediums of Braj Bhasha, Prakrit, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit used by contemporary poets. What is unique about this verse which distinguishes it from other gurbani verses is its prolific/ profuse use of adjectives as one-word poetic sentences to describe various Divine attributes such as *Gobinde*, *Munk ande...* *Ajai*, *Allai*, *Abhai* in *Pauri*/ Stanzas 94,95, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141.

All these verses in the above mentioned ten verse forms are rhythmical, recitative and repetitive. These are meant to be read and recited with concentration in order to create an intended impact on the reader's / reciter's as well as listener's mind. These verses are best suited for meditation as their repetitive, rhythmic sound reverberates in the devout reader's/ reciter's mind. As a result, this is a very powerful verse which is capable of sending a devout reciter into a sort of meditative trance and a spell of spiritual ecstasy. It has been a tradition

with the veteran baptized practicing Sikh soldiers (Nihang Singhs) as they used to recite this verse in a congregational mode before launching on a military expedition. Taken together, the meaning and impact of this verse is to be experienced rather than to be understood. It defies analysis, clear cataloguing of ideas and philosophical speculation. It is a purely recitative, ecstatic and energizing/ empowering verse which is capable of connecting the devout reciter/ practitioner with the omnipresent cosmic power, the sole object of meditation. It creates an environment of spiritual bliss as some of the verses in this text are irresistibly rhythmic and holistic such as the concluding verse:

ਚੱਤ੍ਰ ਚੱਕ੍ਰ ਵਰਤੀ ਚੱਤ੍ਰ ਚੱਕ੍ਰ ਭੁਗਤੇ ॥
 ਸੁਯੰਭਵ ਸੁਭੰ ਸਰਬਦਾ ਸਰਬ ਜੁਗਤੇ ॥
 ਦੁਕਾਲੰ ਪ੍ਰਣਾਸੀ ਦਿਆਲੰ ਸਰੂਪੇ ॥
 ਸਦਾ ਅੰਗ ਸੰਗੇ ਅਭੰਗੰ ਬਿਭੂਤੇ ॥੧੯੯॥

chatr chaker varti chatr chaker bhugtai

soyunbhv subhun sarbda sarb jugtai

dokalan prasi dayalan sroopai

sda aung sungai abhungun bebhootai. (199)

Salutation to the one all pervasive all round the universe;

As you are also the embodiment all kinds of consumption;

Salutation to the one who is self-illuminated, all pervasive;

As you are the Supreme master of all kinds of strategies.

Salutation to the reliever of pain during processes of birth and death;

As you are the one who is an embodiment of Universal compassion.

Salutation to the one who is forever close and around;

As you are one who is unceasingly all pervasive. || 199 ||

Sikh religious and spiritual pathway as laid down by Guru Nanak and successor Sikh Gurus lays utmost stress upon Simran or repeated remembrance of Naam, the Sikh sacred Name of *Wahguru* signifying Divine cosmic power. Alternatively, a large number of other names from the Hindu Pantheon of Gods and goddesses and Islamic origin have also been used in the sacred Sikh text of Sri Guru Granth Sahib for the same purpose. All these are attributive names of Divine cosmic power. In the same tradition, there are around one thousand words/ epithets which have been used in Jaap Sahib text derived from the classical Sanskrit, Braj Bhasha, Arabic, Persian and Urdu compounds to denote the Divine Cosmic Power. Max Arthur Macauliff (1837-

1913) believed that Guru Gobind Singh composed his *Jaap Sahib* consisting of such a large number of epithets for describing the godhead in the tradition of ancient Hindu Canonical text: *Vishnu Sahansar Nama* which contains one thousand names of the Hindu God Vishnu. He says the Hindus have a work entitled: *Vishnu Sahansar Nama* (Vishnu's thousand Names). The *Jaap ji* was composed to supply the Sikhs with a similar number of epithets for describing the cosmic creator?

All these are attributive epithets representing various facets of the God head as envisioned by its author since the supreme Divine cosmic power cannot be denoted by one single name or epithet. It is mainly in the realm of Abstract rather than in any tangible forum. Whenever an entity exists in the realm of abstract but is felt or thought to exist nevertheless, then it is best described in a roundabout, circumlocutory manner listing its multiple attributes which are communicable. This is the style which Guru Gobind Singh has adopted in this verse to communicate his vision of the ultimate Divine Cosmic Power. His poetic genius and skilled craftsmanship of various forms Chhands/ of then prevalent Indian prosody has made this verse rhythmical and melodious. He has also succeeded in creating a powerful environment of an intense meditational impact on the minds and hearts of its readers and reciters. Thus, this verse makes it communicable what is otherwise inexpressible and incommunicable.

Now let us make an attempt to broadly classify the multiple contributory epithets employed in this verse to denote the God head. These epithets are broadly of two types which either denote the godhead in clear direct, positive epithets like Sarab, Dyalay, Sarb Kalay, Sarab Bhupay denoting Divine attributes' such as His universal Divine benevolence, omnipresence and sovereignty or indirect, negative epithets which denote attributes which the Godhead does not have or is without these attributes such as Ajatai, Apatai, Amjbai, denoting that it is without any caste, any family lineage or any religion. Almost half of all epithets in this verse belong to this category. These have been used with a profuse use of a prefix (ਅ) in the Gurmukhi script with the repeated use of word (ਅ) before an attributive epithet such as Akai (ਅਕਾਏ) which means God head being without any form. Majority of the verses frame verse no 2 to verse no 53 belong to this

category. The three specimen verses of this category are quoted below:

ਨਮਸਤੰ ਅਭੇਖੇ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੰ ਅਲੇਖੇ ॥

ਨਮਸਤੰ ਅਕਾਏ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੰ ਅਜਾਏ ॥੩॥

namustun abhaikbai, namustun alakbai

namustun akaey, namustun ajaey. (3)

Salutation to the Divine Lord;

Who is without any attire and is immeasurable.

Salutations to the Divine Lord!

Who is bodyless is unborn of female. || 3 ||

ਨਮਸਤੰ ਅਕਰਮੰ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੰ ਅਧਰਮੰ ॥

ਨਮਸਤੰ ਅਨਾਮੰ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੰ ਅਧਾਮੰ ॥੫॥

namustun akarmun, namustun adharmun

namustun anamun, namustun adhamun. (5)

Salutation to the Divine Lord;

Who is beyond religions and rituals

Salutation to the Divine Lord;

Who is beyond any Names and places of worship || 5 ||

Besides these two categories of Divine attributes, the other prominent attributes of Divine God head are:

- i. Its monotheistic, all-pervasive sovereign, transcendent, immanent, omnipresent, self born, self incarnated and eternal existence.

ਚੱਕ੍ਰ ਚਿਹਨੁ ਅਰੁ ਬਰਨੁ ਜਾਤਿ ਅਰੁ ਪਾਤਿ ਨਹਿਨੁ ਜਿਹੁ ॥

ਰੂਪੁ ਰੰਗੁ ਅਰੁ ਰੇਖੁ ਭੇਖੁ ਕੋਊ ਕਹਿ ਨ ਸਕਤੁ ਕਿਹੁ ॥

ਅਚਲੁ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਨਭਉ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸੁ ਅਮਿਤੋਜਿ ਕਹਿਜੈ ॥

ਕੋਟਿ ਇੰਦ੍ਰ ਇੰਦ੍ਰਾਣੁ ਸਾਹੁ ਸਾਹਾਣਿ ਗਣਿਜੈ ॥

ਤ੍ਰਿਭਵਣੁ ਮਹੀਪੁ ਸੁਰੁ ਨਰੁ ਅਸੁਰੁ ਨੇਤੁ ਨੇਤੁ ਬਨੁ ਤ੍ਰਿਣੁ ਕਹਤੁ ॥

ਤਵ ਸਰਬੁ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਥੈ ਕਵਨੁ ਕਰਮੁ ਨਾਮੁ ਬਰਨਤੁ ਸੁਮਤਿ ॥੧॥

chakar chehun ar burn, jaat ar paat nehun jeh

roop rung ar raikh, bhaikh koboo keh na skut keh

achul mooret anbho parkas ametoje kehejai

koti eindar eindran sabo saban gnejai

tirbhavn maheep sur nar asur naiti naiti bun tirun keht

tav sarb nam kathai kavan karm nam barnat sumati. || 1 ||

Divine Lord! You being without any visible sign or colour;

Or being without any caste or family lineage;

or being without any visible form and complexion;

No body can dare to describe your real identity.

You being eternally unchangeable and self illumined;
 Your might / strength is beyond any reckoning.
 You being the king of millions of Indra like demigods;
 You are reckoned as sovereign among sovereigns.
 You being the lord of three worlds, its denizens angels, men & demons;
 Along with their entire vegetation describe you only through exclusion.
 Since no one can describe your complete identity;
 The wisest persons have described you only through your
 attributive names || 1 ||

ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਕਾਲੇ ॥ ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਦਿਆਲੇ ॥

ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਰੂਪੇ ॥ ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਭੂਪੇ ॥੧੯॥

namo sarb kale, namo sarb diale

namo sarb rūpe, namo sarb bhūpe]19]

Salutation to the Divine Lord;

Who being eternally omnipresent is universally compassionate.

Salutation to the Divine Lord;

Who being universally immanent is universally sovereign. || 19 ||

- ii. Its being forever magnificent, resplendent, benevolent bestower of all joys, comforts, happiness, prosperity, knowledge, brilliance and annihilator of all kinds of suffering and afflictions.

ਸਦਾ ਸੱਚਦਾਨੰਦ ਸਰਬੰ ਪ੍ਰਣਾਸੀ ॥

ਅਨੂਪੇ ਅਰੂਪੇ ਸਮਸਤੁਲ ਨਿਵਾਸੀ ॥੫੮॥

sada sachdanund sarbun pransi,

anoopai sroopai smustul nivasi. (58)

Salutations to the Divine Lord;

Who embodies eternal truth, bliss and consciousness and universal annihilation.

Salutations to the Divine Lord;

Who embodies rarest beauty, form and universal immanence. || 58 ||

ਸਦਾ ਸਿਧ ਦਾ ਬੁਧ ਦਾ ਬ੍ਰਿਧ ਕਰਤਾ ॥

ਅਧੋ ਉਰਧ ਅਰਧ ਅਧੰ ਓਧ ਹਰਤਾ ॥੫੯॥

sada sidhi -da budhi -da bridhi karta

adho oordh ardhun aghun ogh harta (59)

Salutations to the Divine Lord;

Who, is an eternal promoter of human brilliance, spiritual enlightenment.

Salutations to the Divine Lord;

Who is annihilator of all sins and evils across three regions. | | 59 | |

ਸਦਾ ਸੱਚਿਦਾਨੰਦ ਸੱਤ੍ਰੁ ਪ੍ਰਣਾਸੀ ॥

ਕਰੀਮੁਲ ਕੁਨਿੰਦਾ ਸਮਸਤੁਲ ਨਿਵਾਸੀ ॥

ਅਜਾਇਬ ਬਿਭੂਤੇ ਗਜਾਇਬ ਗਨੀਮੇ ॥

ਹਰੀਅੰ ਕਰੀਅੰ ਕਰੀਮੁਲ ਰਹੀਮੇ ॥੧੯੮॥

sda sachdanund sutrun prnasi.

kreemul kuninda smstul nivasi

ajaeib bebhootai gjaeib gneemai

hreeaun kreeaun kreemul rheemai. (198)

Salutation to the epitome of truth, consciousness, and bliss;

As you are the destroyer of all inimical powers.

Salutation to a the creator who is universally compassionate;

As you are imminent in all the created species.

Salutation to the unique one who is all pervasive;

As You are the one who wreaks vengeance upon the hostile.

Salutation to the one who is destroyer as well as creator;

As you are equally benevolent and merciful as well. | | 198 | |

ਚੱਤ੍ਰੁ ਚੱਕ੍ਰ ਵਰਤੀ ਚੱਤ੍ਰੁ ਚੱਕ੍ਰ ਭੁਗਤੇ ॥

ਸੁਯੰਭਵ ਸੁਭੰ ਸਰਬਦਾ ਸਰਬ ਜੁਗਤੇ ॥

ਦੁਕਾਲੰ ਪ੍ਰਣਾਸੀ ਦਿਆਲੰ ਸਰੂਪੇ ॥

ਸਦਾ ਅੰਗ ਸੰਗੇ ਅਭੰਗੰ ਬਿਭੂਤੇ ॥੧੯੯॥

Catr Cakr wartī Catr Cakr bhugte]

ṣuyābhav subham sarbdā sarb jugte]

dukālak pranmāsī diālakṣy srūpe]

sadā āṅg sāṅge abhāṅgṁ bibhūte]199]

Salutation to the one all pervasive all round the universe;

As you are also the embodiment all kinds of consumption;

Salutation to the one who is self-illuminated, all pervasive;

As you are the one the Supreme Master of all kinds of strategies.

Salutation to the reliever of pain during processes of birth and death;

As you are the one who is an embodiment of Universal compassion.

Salutation to the one who is forever close and around;

As you are the one who are unceasingly all pervasive. | | 199 | |

- iii. **Its being provider, nourisher and sustainer of all kinds of** existence and promoter and energizer of all kinds of beauty, virtues and all that which is meaningful.

ਕਿ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦਿਮਾਗ ਹੈਂ ॥ ਕਿ ਹੁਸਨਲ ਚਰਾਗ ਹੈਂ ॥
ਕਿ ਕਾਮਲ ਕਰੀਮ ਹੈਂ ॥ ਕਿ ਰਾਜਕ ਰਹੀਮ ਹੈਂ ॥੧੫੧॥

keh sahib demag hain, keh husnul charag hain.
keh kamal krim hain, keh razak rheem hain. (151)

That you possess the ultimate intelligence and cereberal brilliance;
As well as the most fascinating and aesthetic form of beauty.
That you are perfectly benevolent and compassionate;
As well as you are generous provider of sustenance. || 151 ||

ਕਿ ਰੋਜ਼ੀ ਦਿਹਿੰਦ ਹੈਂ ॥ ਕਿ ਰਾਜਕ ਰਹਿੰਦ ਹੈਂ ॥
ਕਰੀਮੁਲ ਕਮਾਲ ਹੈਂ ॥ ਕਿ ਹੁਸਨਲ ਜਮਾਲ ਹੈਂ ॥੧੫੨॥

keh rozji dehind hain, keh razak rhind hain
kreemul kamal hain, keh husnul jamal hain. (152)

That you are a generous provider of livelihood;
As you do not keep an account of your bounty.
That you are remarkably compassionate and benevolent;
As well as you are beautiful par excellence. || 152 ||

ਕਿ ਸਰਬੁਲ ਗਵੰਨ ਹੈਂ ॥ ਹਮੇਸੁਲ ਰਵੰਨ ਹੈਂ ॥
ਤਮਾਮੁਲ ਤਮੀਜ ਹੈਂ ॥ ਸਮਸਤੁਲ ਅਜੀਜ ਹੈਂ ॥੧੫੬॥

keh sarbul gynun hain, hamaisul rvun hain.
tmamul tmeez hain, smstul aziz hain. (156)

That you have an access upto all beings;
As you are forever existent in all of them.
That you know all of them inside out;
As you have a benevolent outlook towards all of them. || 156 ||

- iv. **Its being transcendent and immanent at the same time but its** presence is not visible and identifiable in any tangible form, shape, colour or contour. Its invisible, transcendental presence is experienced as a universal dispenser of love and affection.

ਨਾਮ ਠਾਮ ਨ ਜਾਤਿ ਜਾ ਕਰ ਰੂਪ ਰੰਗ ਨ ਰੇਖ ॥
ਆਦਿ ਪੁਰਖ ਉਦਾਰ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੋਨਿ ਆਦਿ ਅਸੇਖ ॥
ਦੇਸ ਔਰ ਨ ਭੇਸ ਜਾ ਕਰ ਰੂਪ ਰੇਖ ਨ ਰਾਗ ॥

ਜੱਤੁ ਤੱਤੁ ਦਿਸਾ ਵਿਸਾ ਹੁਇ ਫੈਲਿਓ ਅਨੁਰਾਗ ॥੮੦॥

*nam tham na jati jakar roop rung na raikh
adi purkh odhar moorat ajoni adi asaikh
dais aur na bhais jakar roop raikh na rag
jatar tatar disa visa boeh phailio anurag. (80)*

Divine Lord! You have no name, address or caste identification
Nor have you any form, complexion or any identity mark.
You are primal Lord with a generous disposition indeed;
You are beyond birth and perfect in all respects.
Being without any domicile you have no identifiable appearance;
Being without any visible form you are free from any attachment.
Being, Omnipresent here, you pervade in every direction;
You loving presence is manifest all around indeed. || 80 ||

ਨਾਮ ਕਾਮ ਬਿਹੀਨ ਪੇਖਤ ਧਾਮ ਹੂੰ ਨਹਿ ਜਾਹਿ ॥

ਸਰਬ ਮਾਨ ਸਰਬੱਤ੍ਰ ਮਾਨ ਸਦੈਵ ਮਾਨਤ ਤਾਹਿ ॥

ਏਕ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਨੇਕ ਦਰਸਨ ਕੀਨ ਰੂਪ ਅਨੇਕ ॥

ਖੇਲ ਖੇਲ ਅਖੇਲ ਖੇਲਨ ਅੰਤ ਕੋ ਫਿਰ ਏਕ ॥੮੧॥

*nam kam beeen paikhat dham boon neh jaeh.
sarb maun, sarbatar maun, sdev manat tae
aik moorat anaik darsan, keen roop anaik
kbail khaile, akbail kbailun, aunt ko phir aik. (81)*

Divine Lord, You are beyond any human name and desire,
You are also not associated with any place of domicile;
Still your supremacy is universally acknowledged;
As it has been eternally acknowledged all across.
Your single most presence is manifest in diverse forms;
As it has been manifesting itself in multiple forms.
After indulging in the wanton game plan of creation and destruction;
You merge everything into your sole single Being. || 81 ||

- v. Its being absolutely free from all the life denying, life negating attributes / qualities and vices. With the single stroke of using the Gurmukhi letter (A) as a prefix, the Guru author has clubbed all these negative attributes from which the Divine entity remains untouched.

ਅਜਨਮ ਹੈਂ ॥ ਅਬਰਨ ਹੈਂ ॥ ਅਭੂਤ ਹੈਂ ॥ ਅਭਰਨ ਹੈਂ ॥੩੪॥

4. Five elements: Air, Water, earth, sky, fire

ajanam bain, abarn bain, abboot bain, abbaran bain. (34)

You are beyond birth, beyond any caste;

You are beyond five elements⁴ and independent. ||34||

ਅਗੰਜ ਹੈਂ ॥ ਅਭੰਜ ਹੈਂ ॥ ਅਯੂਝ ਹੈਂ ॥ ਅਝੰਝ ਹੈਂ ॥੩੫॥

agunj bain, abbunj bain, ajoojh bain, ajhunjh bain. (35)

You are unconquerable and unbreakable;

You are invulnerable and bereft of controversies. ||35||

- vi) Its being absolutely free from any kind of human attachments, cast affiliations and feelings of favour or prejudice.

ਨ ਪੋਤੈ ਨ ਪਤੈ ॥ ਨ ਸੋਤੈ ਨ ਮਿਤੈ ॥

ਨ ਤਾਤੈ ਨ ਮਾਤੈ ॥ ਨ ਜਾਤੈ ਨ ਪਾਤੈ ॥੧੪੮॥

na potrai na putrai, na strai na mitrai.

na tatai na matai, na jatai na patai. ||148||

You are free from all family entanglements as of grandsons and sons;

Even as you have neither any enemy nor any friend.

You are liberated from bondage of fatherhood or Motherhood;

Even as you have neither any caste nor any ethnicity. ||148||

- vii) Its presence being eternal, immortal, all pervasive and sustainer of whole creation.

ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਾ ਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਹੈਂ ॥ ਕਰਣਾ ਕ੍ਰਿਤ ਹੈਂ ॥

ਅਕ੍ਰਿਤਾ ਕ੍ਰਿਤ ਹੈਂ ॥ ਧਰਣੀ ਧ੍ਰਿਤ ਹੈਂ ॥੧੭੮॥

amrita mrit bain, krunkirti bain.

akirta kirti bain, dburni dbirti bain. ||178||

Divine Lord ! You are an elixir and essence of immortality;

As you are the ocean of universal compassion.

Your identity/ image is beyond any artistic creation;

As you are the main stay of the whole earth. ||178||

ਅਮ੍ਰਿਤੈਸ੍ਵਰ ਹੈਂ ॥ ਪਰਮੈਸ੍ਵਰ ਹੈਂ ॥

ਅਕ੍ਰਿਤਾ ਕ੍ਰਿਤ ਹੈਂ ॥ ਅਮ੍ਰਿਤਾ ਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਹੈਂ ॥੧੭੯॥

ametaisver bain, prmaisver bain.

akirta kirt bain, amrita mirt bain. ||179||

Divine Lord! you are an epitome of immortality;

Even as you are the sovereign Lord of whole creation.

Your identity/image is beyond any artistic creation;

- Even as you are elixir and essence of immortality. || 179 ||
- viii. It is because of these above mentioned multiple attributes that Guru Gobind Singh pays his respectful obeisance and salutation to the Supreme Divine cosmic power.

ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਮਾਨੇ ॥ ਸਮਸਤੀ ਨਿਧਾਨੇ ॥

ਨਮੋ ਦੇਵ ਦੇਵੇ ॥ ਅਭੇਖੀ ਅਭੇਵੇ ॥੪੪॥

namo sarb mâne, smasti nidhâne]

namo dev deve, abhekhî abheve]44]

Salutations to the Divine Lord;

Who, being owner of everything, is universally honoured.

Salutations to the Divine Lord;

Who, being guiseless, is supreme among gods. || 44 ||

ਨਮੋ ਮੰਤ੍ਰ ਮੰਤ੍ਰੰ ॥ ਨਮੋ ਜੰਤ੍ਰ ਜੰਤ੍ਰੰ ॥

ਨਮੋ ਇਸਟ ਇਸਟੇ ॥ ਨਮੋ ਤੰਤ੍ਰ ਤੰਤ੍ਰੰ ॥੫੭॥

namo mâtṛ mâtṛang, namo jâtṛ jâtṛang]

namo istâ istâe, namo tâṛ tâṛang]57]

Salutations to the Divine Lord;

Whose (sacred) Name is most efficacious than all the incantations, Charms and esoteric strategems.

Solutions to the Divine Lord;

Who is Supreme among gods and wielder of magic spells. || 57 ||

ਨਮਸਤ੍ਵੰ ਅਕਾਲੇ ॥ ਨਮਸਤ੍ਵੰ ਅਪਾਲੇ ॥

ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਦੇਸੇ ॥ ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਭੇਸੇ ॥੬੬॥

nmastwaK akâle] nmastwaK apâle]

namo sarb dese] namo sarb bhese]66]

Salutations to the Divine Lord,

Who, being immortal, needs no protection at all;

Salutations to the Divine Lord,

Who, being all pervasive embodies, all identities. || 66 ||

While the original text in Gurmukhi script and is a Roman version of each verse is given below on the left side, its translation-cum-paraphrase-interpretation is given on the right side, a pattern followed throughout this article.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, in these invocatory verses, Guru Gobind Singh seeks Divine blessings through the articulation of diverse Divine attributes of creation sustenance, annihilation; His eternal and immortal yet immanent presservance of being a source of all virtues and aesthetics; protector of the humble and destruction of the evildoers; bestower of all human perks, powers, joys and comforts and unlimited love and compassion. While Guru Nanak's verse Japji included in the daily Sikh prayer is philosophical and thought provoking, this verse is emotionally appealing and spiritually uplifting. Its non-stop recitation loudly in one's own voice and listening to one's own recitation/ voice reverberates through one's whole being and creates an ambience of complete humility and submission to the Divine and an aura of Divine protection. In this respect, it is a very powerful verse capable of involving the faculties of fearlessness and martial spirits among the followers of Guru Gobind Singh. Its efficacy has been proved by the display of rare acts of Sikh chivalry and sacrifice and martyrdom during the history of Sikh battles in the past and the display of Sikh spirit of service during the occurrence of natural calamities and outbreak of epidemics/ pandemics in the present era. The cumulative impact of its daily recitation is one of strengthening one's faith in the Divine presence and imbibing its attributes in one's own character. Some of the spiritually uplifting and supremely poetic lines keep on reverberating in one's mind and synchronizing it with the Divine cosmic power.

We give below a sample of English translation of the first five Pauris/ Stanzas in free English verse along with their transliteration for our English readers of Gurbani and continue to publish the rest of this verse in serial form in the subsequent issues of the IOSS Journal, Abstracts of Sikh Studies.:

ਛਪੈ ਛੰਦ ॥ ਤ੍ਵ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥ chaupayee chhund. tav parsad.

ਚੱਕ ਚਿਹਨ ਅਰੁ ਬਰਨ ਜਾਤਿ ਅਰੁ ਪਾਤਿ ਨਹਿਨ ਜਿਹ ॥
 ਰੂਪ ਰੰਗ ਅਰੁ ਰੇਖ ਭੇਖ ਕੋਊ ਕਹਿ ਨ ਸਕਤ ਕਿਹ ॥
 ਅਚਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਨਭਉ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ ਅਮਿਤੋਜਿ ਕਹਿਜੈ ॥
 ਕੋਟਿ ਇੰਦ੍ਰ ਇੰਦ੍ਰਾਣ ਸਾਹੁ ਸਾਹਾਣਿ ਗਣਿਜੈ ॥
 ਤ੍ਰਿਭਵਣ ਮਹੀਪ ਸੁਰ ਨਰ ਅਸੁਰ ਨੇਤ ਨੇਤ ਬਨ ਤ੍ਰਿਣ ਕਹਤ ॥
 ਤਵ ਸਰਬ ਨਾਮ ਕਥੈ ਕਵਨ ਕਰਮ ਨਾਮ ਬਰਨਤ ਸੁਮਤਿ ॥੧॥
 chakar chehun ar burn, jaat ar paat nehun jeh
 roop rung ar raikh, bhaikh kohoo keh na skut keh
 achul mooret anbhoo parkas ametoje kehjai
 koti eindar eindran saho sahan gnejai
 tirbhavn maheep sur nar asur naiti naiti bun tirun keht
 tav sarb nam kathai kavan karm nam barnt sumati. ||1||

ਭੁਜੰਗ ਪ੍ਰਯਾਤ ਛੰਦ ॥
 ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਕਾਲੇ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾਲੇ ॥
 ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਰੂਪੇ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਨੂਪੇ ॥੨॥
 namustun akalai, namustun kirpalai
 namustun aroopai, namustun anoopai ||2||

ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਭੇਖੇ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਲੇਖੇ ॥
 ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਕਾਏ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਜਾਏ ॥੩॥
 namustun abhaikhai, namustun alakhai
 namustun akaey, namustun ajaey. ||3||

ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਗੰਜੇ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਭੰਜੇ ॥
 ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਨਾਮੇ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਠਾਮੇ ॥੪॥
 nabustun agunjai, namustun abhunjai
 namustun anamai, namustun athamai. ||4||

ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਕਰਮੰ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਧਰਮੰ ॥
 ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਨਾਮੰ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਧਾਮੰ ॥੫॥
 namustun akarmun, namustun adharmun
 namustun anamun, namustun adhamun. ||5||

Chhappe Chand || Tav Prasad

Divine Lord! You being without any visible sign or colour;
 Or being without any caste or family lineage;
 or being without any visible form and complexion;
 No body can dare to describe your real identity.
 You being eternally unchangeable and self illumined;
 Your might / strength is beyond any reckoning.
 You being the king of million of Indra like demigods;
 You are reckoned as sovereign among sovereigns.
 You being the lord of three worlds, its denizens angels, men & demons;
 Along with their entire vegetation describe you only through exclusion.
 Since no one can describe your complete identity;
 The wisest persons have described you only through your attributive names || 1 |

Bhujang Paryat Chhand (Swift Moving Cobra Style couplet)
 Salutations to the Divine Lord!
 Who is enternal and benevolent.
 Salutations to the Divine Lord!
 Who is formless and exceptionally beauteous? || 2 |

Salutation to the Divine Lord!
 Who is without any attire and is immeasurable.
 Salutations to the Divine Lord!
 Who is bodyless and unborn of female. || 3 |

Salutations to the Divine Lord!
 Who is unconquerable and indestructible.
 Salutations to the Divine Lord!
 Who is Nameless and without any address. || 4 |

Salutation to the Divine Lord!
 Who is beyond religious and rituals
 Salutation to the Divine Lord!
 Who is beyond any Names and places of worship || 5 |

ON THE ISC FRONT

KANWAL PAL SINGH*

The third quarter, July - September 2025, saw a change in the Administrative Team, as Lt Col Jagtar Singh Multani resigned on 29.07.2025. Hon'ble Convener Dr Sardara Singh Johl, Padma Bhushan and Hon'ble Co-Convener S Gurdev Singh Brar, IAS [retd] handed over the charge to a Team of three Members of the Empowered Committee. The reins of the International Sikh Confederation were handed over to the Head of the Empowered Committee, Dr Birendra Kaur as Secretary General, S Kanwal Pal Singh as General Secretary, and Dr Khushhal Singh as Advisor.

The Team officially took charge on 02.08.2025, marking the beginning of a new chapter for the Confederation. The new leadership is committed to fostering effective governance and ensuring transparent and collaborative functioning at the ISC, in alignment with its founding principles and constitutional framework. The Team visited and met Bibi Baljit Kaur, sought her blessings and wished her recovery from illness. Her tireless services and active role for the cause of the Sikh community at national and international level was put on record.

An Executive Committee Meeting of ISC was held on 12th September 2025 at 11:00 AM at the ISC Head Office, Chandigarh. The above appointments of the new Team were approved by the Executive Committee. Dr Birendra Kaur welcomed all the members and briefed them about the past functioning of the ISC. The services of Lt. Gen. Kartar Singh and Lt. Col Jagtar Singh towards ISC were appreciated. The General Secretary, S Kanwal Pal Singh informed all

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the members about the taking over of the administrative charge of ISC office (records, equipment, infrastructure, bank accounts) etc. The members were also briefed about the ongoing Home Work Tuition Centres (HWTTC) and the CSR Project Proposal by Fiinovation Pvt Ltd, New Delhi.

Following issues were deliberated:

■ President, SGPC, constituted a 34-Member Committee tasked with drafting rules, terms, functions, etc., for the position of Jathedar, Sri Akal Takht Sahib. ISC noted the non-inclusion of prominent Sikh organizations therein, and thereby responded to the SGPC vide letter dated 28.0.2025 (Copy of the letter by ISC is available on its website <http://www.sikhconfed.org> under the 'Updates' on the Home Page), expressing concern over the non-inclusion of prominent Sikh Institutions, Gurdwara Management Committees, etc. The letter emphasised that the left out organisations - both national and international, are all well-recognised in their respective fields, and have been serving the cause of the Guru for decades now. These have also been raising concerns, and engaging with the Issue at hand, from time to time.

The representation strongly urged for inclusion of such Bodies to ensure credibility, comprehensiveness, and global representation of the Sikh Panth. Members underscored the critical importance of ISC adopting a proactive and transparent role in safeguarding the sanctity and autonomy of Sri Akal Takht Sahib.

It was strongly felt that any process involving such a pivotal appointment must be rooted in the collective aspirations and consensus of the global Sikh *sangat*. The Committee emphasised that inclusivity must be the cornerstone of this initiative. To that end, it was proposed that voices and viewpoints of individuals and organisations who were not initially consulted be actively sought and incorporated into a Document, for the benefit of the Panth in general and the SGPC, in particular. This would ensure that the selection process is not only representative but also reflective of the diverse perspectives within the Panthic fold. This document should then be circulated among all

relevant stakeholders, including religious bodies, scholars, and community leaders, to foster transparency and build trust in the process. The Executive Committee also stressed the need for establishing clear criteria and ethical guidelines for the selection of the Jathedar, ensuring that the chosen individual embodies spiritual integrity, leadership acumen, and unwavering commitment to Sikh values.

■ 350th Martyrdom Day of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur ji is approaching. Guru Sahib made the supreme sacrifice to uphold the principles of faith, freedom, and human dignity, values which remain universally relevant in the present times. The International Sikh Confederation is of the view that we should propose and work towards getting the United Nations to declare this historic day as an “International Day for Freedom to Religion/Faith” to commemorate and spread Guru Sahib’s ultimate sacrifice for justice, human rights, and religious freedom. In this regard, we are planning to seek the valuable guidance and considered opinion of distinguished Sikh personalities and scholars. Specifically, we wish to deliberate upon:

- What should be the most appropriate name/title for the proposed International Day?
- How best can this proposal be articulated and advocated at national and international levels?

Dr Kharak Singh Trust in the name of the Founder father of ISC had earlier also worked on this issue. Reference is to earlier 2016 representation to the United Nations, later featured in UNESCO & Tudor Rose publication, *A Better World*, Page38, Vol 2, (2017). (Copy of the letter is available on website <http://www.sikhconfed.org> under ‘Updates’ on the Home Page)

■ **Advisory Councils:** In accordance with the Constitution of the International Sikh Confederation, six Advisory Councils have been established to guide and support key areas of its mission. These Councils are: Religious Affairs; Education & Social Affairs; Economic Affairs; International & Legal Affairs; Media, Publications & Public

Relations; and Heritage Affairs. Sincere efforts would be made to activate these Councils and ensure their effective functioning. To achieve this, subject experts, scholars, and thought leaders from each respective domain would be engaged. Their involvement is expected to enrich the Confederation's initiatives and uphold its values with informed guidance and strategic insight. Through these activities, the Team hopes to meet the Aims & Objectives of the ISC.

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BEYOND PUNJAB: SIKHS IN THE EAST AND NORTH-EASTERN INDIA

A REVIEW BY MANPREET KAUR*

Manpreet Kaur hails from Uttarakhand but preferred to pursue her doctoral thesis at Panjab University. She has offered a penetrating analysis of Himadri Banerjee's book on 'Early Sikh Settlers of North-Eastern Region of India'. The Institute of Sikh Studies welcomes the young researcher for contributing a scholarly review of a significant study of the Sikhs residing in various parts of India, outside the Panjab.

— Editor

Book: Mystic Echoes: Stories Rooted in Sikh Spiritual Realms

Author: Himadri Banerjee

Published: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, London and New York

Edition: 2023

GENRE:

Himadri Banerjee, the author of this book, holds the chair of Guru Nanak Professor of Indian History at the Department of History, Jadavpur University, Kolkata. His expertise lies in the study of Sikhism in contemporary India, specifically focusing on the eastern and north-eastern states. For this study, he relies on sources in Assamese, Bengali, Hindi, and Marathi. This book centers around six provinces of Eastern and North-Eastern India, exploring the causes of Sikh migration, the social composition of immigrants, and their success in maintaining community identity. Several scholars have previously examined Sikhs outside of Punjab — such as Gurmukh Singh in *The Rise of Sikhs*

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Abroad,” and Gurcharan Singh in “*The Sikhs in Canada*.” These works analyze various aspects of Sikh migration and their social and economic standing in host societies. Banerjee’s work adds to our understanding of the Sikh experience beyond Punjab.

PLOT:

Utilizing robust and ethnographic sources—including official documents from archives, media accounts, memoirs, and reports produced by local Sikh institutions—Banerjee traces the social composition of Sikh immigrants, their success in retaining identity, and the recreation of their memories of home (i.e., Punjab). He uses a subtle notion of the internal diaspora by examining the relationships between home, host, and society. The book is divided into six chapters, each corresponding to a specific province: Bihar, Odisha, Kolkata, Assam, Shillong, and Manipur. Each chapter encompasses two types of information: the causes of migration and the immigrants’ social composition, settlement, and identity.

Sikh migration dates back to the sixteenth century when Guru Nanak Dev began his journey, and Mughal Emperor Akbar expanded his territory into Bihar, Bengal, and Orissa. In Bihar, Sikhs arrived during Guru Nanak’s travels and during the reigns of the ninth and tenth Gurus. Their arrival in Orissa was initially for pilgrimage and trading, but post-independence saw migration due to employment opportunities at the *Hirakund Dam* and *steel plants*. In Kolkata, Sikhs began to settle during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, seeking employment in the emerging colonial city. Assam’s Sikh presence also goes back to the arrival of Guru Nanak, with employment opportunities attracting Sikhs during the colonial period. Similarly, Shillong and Manipur share comparable migration narratives. Banerjee emphasizes the indigenous features of the Sikh community in these regions. For instance, Sikhs in Bihar often identify as Nanakshahi, Sanyasi, Gosain, or Fakir rather than simply as Sikhs and celebrate Chhath Puja and speak Bihari language. Initially in Odisha, their place of worship was not Gurudwaras but Mangu Math. In Kolkata, the Sikhs faced indigenous influences, leading to their being labeled as “*Nakli Sikh*” until the Akali movement transformed their rituals, resulting in Kolkata being referred to as “*Small Punjab*.” The Sikhs of

Assam are recognized as the “*Sons of the Soil*” due to their acceptance of Assamese culture, while there is also tension between the Ramgarhia and Valmiki Sikhs in Shillong. Through this work, Banerjee seeks to answer several questions: Did the immigrants assimilate local cultural markers and social behaviors into their daily lives? Did this lead to differences within their ranks? How did they view their relationship with the host society? And did they adopt local languages?

CRITIQUE:

Without a doubt, this book represents a significant contribution to understand the Sikh community residing in eastern and north-Eastern India. However, there are few shortcomings that the author could have addressed further. While Himadri Banerjee provides information regarding Sikh migration and settlement in these regions, he does not frame them within migration theories. The work primarily focuses on the plain description of the community but neglects the analytical view of the relationship between home, host, and society. Furthermore, author missed to mention the women’s position in this regard. This work could be more authentic if it consisted of comparative analysis of these societies with those of other states having Sikh population. In summary, the author mainly emphasizes political and economic factors—such as migration, settlement, caste dynamics, and conflicts—without fully capturing the theoretical and comparative dimensions at play.