

ABSTRACTS OF SIKH STUDIES

(Vol VIII, Issue 1)

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EDITORIAL

THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA

The historic decision at the end of the two-day international conclave organised by the IOSS and a number of the other parties at Chandigarh on the 13th November, 2005, to form the International Sikh Confederation*, marks the beginning of a new era in the history of the Sikh community. The Conclave had attracted eminent Sikhs from practically all countries of the world with any sizeable population of Sikhs, indicating the need felt by all for a Body of this nature. Speaker after speaker stressed the need for a central body of the Sikhs to handle affairs concerning the Panth as a whole. Global dispersion of Sikhs, interaction with other religions and cultures, and frequent challenges to *Rahit Maryada* and established values, have created a situation that demands a thoroughly-considered and prudent response and collective decision.

The idea is not new. When Guru Gobind Singh abolished personal Guruship, he ruled out dictatorship and gave the decision-making authority to the Panth, under the doctrine of Guru Granth-Guru Panth. In his lifetime, he trained the Sikhs to exercise this authority through *Panj Piaras*, and he is on record to have himself submitted to their decisions. In essence, it means that collective leadership is better than the whims of an individual. Subsequent history of the Panth also yields the same lesson. So long as the Khalsa followed this principle, as in the case of *gurmattas* of the *Sarbat Khalsa* in the eighteenth century, it touched new heights of glory, establishing a powerful empire in the north of India. On the other hand, when the authority passed into the hands of an individual, degeneration and decline followed. The empire fell and the Khalsa lost its sovereignty in the middle of

* Website : www.int-sikh-confed.net

the 19th century, and has not been able to recover it since then. The experience of the last few decades and the indignities and reverses suffered during this period, and the dispersal of the Sikhs with attendant problems, have led to an unprecedented awareness of the need for invoking the doctrine of Guru Granth – Guru Panth. The doctrine has been practically redundant, and leadership has remained in the hands of a few individuals following partisan goals or personal aggrandisement. The interests of the Panth have been relegated to the back burner. One particular feature of the situation is that Sikh intelligentsia, by and large, have remained aloof and silent spectators to the tragic happenings. Their criticism, if any, has been confined to drawing room discussions.

The decision taken at the Conclave demands that all Sikhs and their existing organisations make a united effort to identify and achieve the long-term goals, as well as to solve the problems that confront the Panth today or are likely to arise in the future. We need to follow policies which will ensure a place of honour for Sikhs in India as well as abroad. Fortunately, a large number of Panthic societies as well as eminent Sikhs have already offered their support. More and more are joining every day. The ISC has already been registered with the Punjab Government. An office has been set-up in Chandigarh, thanks to the Kendri Singh Sabha and its President, Giani Harinder Singh, which has already started functioning with necessary staff and equipment.

Enrolment campaign is going on, with good response in India as well as abroad. Major support has come from the World Sikh Council (America Region) and the American Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, whose representatives, Dr Surjit Singh and Sardar Yadvinder Singh, respectively, traveled all the way from the US to attend the Conclave. Representatives from Australia, Canada, Malaysia, New Zealand, UK, etc., have also shown enthusiasm.

The *ad hoc* committee appointed by the Conclave is very active, and hopes to call a meeting of the members enrolled so far in January 2006 to chalk out a provisional programme. It is planned to convene a general meeting of all Primary members in April 2006 to finalise the programmes of the ISC. In the mean time, effort will be made to organise the various Advisory Councils on a provisional basis to look after Religious affairs, Education, Economic affairs, Legal and

International affairs, and media requirements as provided in the Constitution. The Constitution is also being reviewed for final adoption in the general house in April 2006.

We have no doubt that all well-wishers of the Panth will lend full support to the organisation that has been floated.

We take the opportunity to make a special appeal to the SGPC to patronise the move. Being the premier organisation of the Panth, it was requested to take the required initiative in this direction. We trust the request is receiving a favourable consideration. We have made it clear repeatedly that the proposed ISC is not intended to replace any existing Panthic body, much less the SGPC. Rather, it will strengthen it with additional intellectual input and the required feedback, which it can use with advantage. The ISC envisages an advisory and supporting role for all existing bodies. It will constitute a think-tank of men of the highest caliber in any discipline available among Sikhs. They will discuss all problems threadbare, and furnish advice which could be followed with advantage by all Sikhs and their organisations. Their deliberations will indicate the direction in which the Panth needs to move to attain its destined glory, a place of honour nationally and internationally.

It provides a forum where all Sikhs can express and share their views with others. It will ensure coordination among various Sikh organisations, which at present often work at cross purposes, and avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.

With its representatives in all countries, the ISC will be in an ideal position to deal with any problem anywhere. With a non-political approach, it will not be affected by change in government in India or other countries.

Besides religious activities, development of the Sikh community is envisaged in education, economy, health and public relations through well-considered comprehensive schemes. We hope funds will not be a constraint in these programmes, since there are a large number of affluent people among Sikhs who will like to contribute liberally, once they know that these contributions will be properly utilised in the Guru's cause.

With the success of this new organisation are linked the hopes

and future of the Panth, so that the 13th November, 2005, when the formation of the ISC was declared, will constitute a major landmark in Sikh history. People at large and local *sangats* in particular have welcomed it with enthusiasm. We are confident that the SGPC as well as the DSGMC will soon throw their tremendous weight in its favour to ensure a glorious future for the Panth. This is the need of the day. People expect them not only to join this historic effort, but to support it whole-heartedly and lead it. They have nothing to lose and everything to gain in terms of feedback and appreciation from enlightened sections of the community, and gratitude of the masses.

We wish to remind the managing committees of thousands of gurdwaras all over the world and other big and small Sikh organisations to join the Confederation and play an effective role in the decision-making process. That is the only way the voice of Sikh people can be expressed and the doctrine of Guru Granth – Guru Panth implemented.

A special responsibility devolves on the Sikh intelligentsia. Here is an opportunity for them to join this mighty effort as members and to contribute their mite so that the community can have the benefit of their scholarship and experience. The various advisory councils of the ISC have to be manned by experts in the respective disciplines, in order to make the organisation a think-tank of the Panth in the real sense.

To facilitate exchange of views, and to elicit new ideas, it has also been decided to hold an International Seminar at Chandigarh on 8-9th April, 2006, in which scholars can present their papers. A separate notification in this regard appears on pages 122-123 of this issue.

□

JOIN THE ISC AS MEMBERS AND SERVE THE PANTH

ISC : THE VOICE OF THE PANTH*

KHARAK SINGH

The Conclave organised by the Institute of Sikh Studies (IOSS), is a historic event, for it seeks to set up an international organisation which will have a profound influence on the course of history, and will determine to a large extent the future of the Sikh Panth. The idea was mooted a few years ago, and was unanimously endorsed in the annual IOSS seminar of 2003. Since then, support has come from several quarters, particularly from the youth, women and numerous organisations engaged in missionary and educational activities. Leaders of political parties have not opposed it. In fact, the late Sardar Gurcharan Singh Tohra, Panth Rattan, had announced his support in the 2003 seminar. We are confident that the SGPC, DSGMC, the SAD and other political outfits will also extend their patronage.

We have thus reached a stage where it is no longer necessary to discuss the need for an apex body of the Sikhs. Sikhs have passed through a phase of dispersal during the last half century. It was triggered by the unfortunate Partition of India in 1947, when over 5 million Sikhs were forced to leave their hearths and homes in areas that now form Pakistan, to unknown destinations in the newly-created Indian Union. Pressures continued, so that a sizeable Sikh population left India for better fortunes abroad. As a result, we have a visible Sikh presence in over 100 countries of the world with concentrations in UK, USA, Canada, the Middle East and South East Asian countries and Australia. While this development is not unwelcome, it must be understood that it would tantamount to a complete disintegration of

* Inaugural address delivered by Dr Kharak Singh, Editor, *Abstracts of Sikh Studies*, on 12th-13th November, 2005 (29-30 *Katak*, 537 *Nanakshahi*) in the International Conclave on International Sikh Confederation at Chandigarh.

the Panth, unless its underlying centrifugal force is matched by a centripetal force of equal intensity. The proposed International Sikh Confederation (ISC) is an answer to this situation, and has not come a day too soon.

The problem is aggravated by the existence of schisms and the threat of new ones, the mounting list of unsolved ideological issues and challenges to *Rabit Maryada* and Sikh identity. No responsible Sikh can close his eyes to this extremely disturbing situation, and the consequent need for a central authority to deal with it.

Even a cursory look at the Sikh history makes it abundantly clear that our community cannot do without guidance of a responsible central authority. During the Guru period, this was provided by the Gurus themselves, and history is witness to the fact that Guru Nanak infused a new spirit of freedom and self-respect in a society completely demoralised and enslaved for centuries. And by the time of Guru Gobind Singh a new proud, powerful and self-reliant nation committed to the cause of freedom, justice, equality and service to the poor and the weak, had been created. In their march towards glory and human dignity, the Gurus always involved their Sikhs in all major decisions, imparting to them training in leadership. The *sangats* established by Guru Nanak and his successors, had full authority from the very beginning. There are instances galore to show that Guru Gobind Singh encouraged his Sikhs to make decisions even in disciplinary matters, which sometimes did not spare the Guru himself. And eventually when he pronounced the end of personal Guruship and declared Guru Granth Sahib as the living spiritual Guru of the Sikhs, he passed on the responsibility for all temporal affairs to the Khalsa.

Subsequent history also yields the same lesson. So long as the Panth or the collectivity of the Sikh community discharged its responsibility and provided the leadership, its ascendancy continued. The eighteenth century was the most challenging period of Sikh history. The Sikhs not only survived, but managed to establish, first principalities under popular leaders, and later a Sikh empire in the north India. That became possible because of the collective leadership and their decisions known as *gurmattas*.

On the other hand, when the Panth relaxed and neglected its responsibility, ambitious self-seeking individuals took over. This led

to the inevitable decline that explains the collapse of the mighty Sikh empire after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, a tragedy from which we have not recovered and may take long to recover. Like the rest of India, Punjab was occupied by the British, and it took full one century to force the British to quit. In the struggle for independence, Sikhs made tremendous sacrifices, far out of proportion to their numbers. But the result was disastrous for the Sikhs, who were one of the three recognized contenders for power to succeed the British, besides Muslims and Hindus. While the other two divided the Indian subcontinent into two sovereign states, Sikhs were thrown out of the areas now constituting Pakistan, as unwelcome refugees to the Indian side, losing their hearths and homes, their sacred shrines and hundreds of thousands of lives. India became a republic with a new constitution, which the Sikhs refused to sign, as it was discordant with Sikh interests and aspirations, and ignored the assurances and safeguards promised to the Sikhs earlier by the Indian leaders. But nobody cared. It was promulgated all the same, engulfing the Sikhs in a new prolonged struggle for honourable existence in the new circumstances. In 1956, India reorganised its states on linguistic basis, but the claim of Punjabi-speaking state was rejected, for Sikhs could be the majority community in this state. It took another decade-long agitation involving thousands going to jail and hundreds losing their lives to get the demand for Punjabi-speaking state conceded. But the so-called victory was in fact worse than defeat, for what we got was only a helpless sub-state, deprived of its capital, river waters and large parts of Punjabi-speaking areas. The struggle for redressal of the wrong still continues. During the last quarter century, there were times when the Sikhs faced persecution of the worst kind amounting almost to genocide. They have been subjected to malicious propaganda as fundamentalists, secessionists and terrorists, world-wide. Hundreds of thousands died as victims of state repression in fake encounters. Thousands are still rotting in jails without trial for decades. While recounting the adversities, it must also be added that occasionally opportunities came our way, when some of our problems could be solved. But we consistently failed to avail of them. And the agony of the Panth continues.

I recall this tragic tale of misery and helplessness simply to point

out that our leadership consistently failed to deal with the problems, so that our history of the recent past is no more than a long list of wailings and failures. We forgot our responsibilities as Guru Panth and left our fate in the hands of ambitious self-seekers who could not see beyond their nose and have driven the community to the brink of doom. It is painful to say that the intelligentsia among the Sikhs have so far chosen to sit back, to fret and occasionally to curse the leadership, watching the downward slide of the Panth without fully realising the threat to their very existence.

This sordid state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue any longer. The holding of this conclave is an indication of awareness of the need for change in outlook and approach, and new initiatives to accelerate the march of the Panth towards ascendancy. It is clear that the Panth has decided to take its destiny in its own hands, as desired by the Guru who always blesses his Khalsa.

Let us all extend whole-hearted support to this new organization, ISC, for fulfillment of the divine mission of *sarbat da bhala* and service to humanity, entrusted to the Panth.

The objectives of the ISC as listed in the Constitution are fairly comprehensive. The ISC will seek to ascertain and articulate the aspirations of the Panth, and with inputs from best brains available in the community, suggest solutions and organize action for their achievement. It will prepare a road-map for peace and prosperity of the Panth, and a place of honour nationally and internationally for the Sikh community, through education, economic development and propagation of the lofty ideals preached by the Gurus.

While the proposal for the ISC has been widely welcomed, some questions have been raised which demand answers and clarification. One of these relates to its relationship with the existing organizations like the SGPC, the SAD and other political parties. The earlier attempts, viz., the World Sikh Organisation and World Sikh Council failed largely because of suspicions in this respect. Therefore, it must be made very clear that the proposed ISC is not supposed to supplant any of the existing organizations, much less the SGPC or SAD. It values these organizations and recognizes the services rendered by them in the past. The SGPC was achieved after a prolonged struggle and lot of sacrifices, and has a glorious record of reforms and support

to Panthic programmes. It is destined to play a major role in the future also. It needs to be not merely preserved, but strengthened. The same holds true of the SAD, and other parties. The ISC will provide them with intellectual inputs and technical support in formulation and execution of their programmes. The ISC will seek to ensure coordination among the various organizations of the Panth, so that all of them move towards goals unanimously adopted by the Panth. With this sincere approach there should be no room for any suspicions. It will be in the interest of the SGPC and the SAD and other political parties to support this forum with their members joining it as individuals, avoiding any party politics. The International Sikh Confederation should emerge as a powerful global organization of the Sikhs representing all shades of opinion, and not as an extended arm of any single political party or individual. It should assume responsibility for propagating Sikh values, addressing common concerns of Sikhs and promoting their interests as a part of their programme of achieving the goal of *sarbat da bhala*.

Sri Akal Takht is the highest seat of authority among Sikhs. The ISC will endeavour to strengthen this great and unique institution and invoke its authority in the implementation of its programmes.

Another frequently asked question is: "Earlier two attempts have failed. Why do you make a third attempt?" Our answer is simple, "Third attempt is necessary, *because* two attempts have failed. Experience has made us wiser and we are avoiding the mistakes and pitfalls that caused the earlier failures. We shall succeed, since we are seeking the support of everybody, and we are not against anyone."

With these few remarks, I extend a hearty welcome to all delegates assembled here to discuss and adopt the proposed constitution. I hope their serious deliberations will lead to the setting up of the ISC on strong foundations. I hope also that an *ad hoc* committee will emerge out of the deliberations of this conclave, so that the Confederation can start functioning without delay. I shall appeal to all Sikh organizations and individuals, particularly scholars and opinion leaders, to join the Confederation and strengthen it as the voice of the Panth, and to ensure a better future for our present and coming generations.

WOMAN IN SIKHISM*

PRINCIPAL TEJA SINGH

The civilization of a people can be judged from the position they give to their women. For the most part, our civilization being man-made, woman is assigned a lower position than man, who is supposed to be her lord and master. The *Bible* says, 'the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man;' 'he is the image and the glory of the God, but the woman is the glory of the man. For, the man is not of the woman, but the woman of man. Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man.' This is the burden of the teaching in almost all religions. Woman's touch is supposed somehow to defile the purity of man. St. Paul in his first Epistle to the Corinthians is at great pains to emphasise the necessity of keeping celibate, and allows marriage only on sufferance, "He believed that a man or a woman marrying would not care so much for God as one who remained unmarried." That has been the belief all over India too, where so much is made of celibacy, and nobody can claim to lead a pure and saintly life if he lives with a wife and children: There is supposed to be something inherently wrong with woman's make-up. That is 'why she has been excluded from the domain of religion. Manu would not allow her – along with Sudras – even to listen to the *Vedas*, although some of the Vedic hymns were composed by women themselves. St. Paul too would not extend the right of preaching to woman. In his first Epistle to Timothy, he expressly says that he would not suffer a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For, Adam was not deceived but the women being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing.' That is, for her salvation the best

* Reproduced from his book *Essays in Sikhism*, Languages Department, Punjab, 1988

thing for her to do was to bear children, and to make them religious. Even, up to this day – it is not possible for a woman among Christians to be ordained as a preacher. At the Kikiyuyu Conference, held some years ago, the leaders of Christians though tried to improve the position of woman in this respect, but the words of St. Paul stood in their way, and they could not succeed. Among Mohammedans too the position of woman is the same. She cannot utter the call to prayer, or become an Imam in a mosque; i.e., she cannot lead a congregation in prayer. Among Hindus, except in the case of Buddhists, woman suffers the same disabilities. She cannot have a personal religion or spiritual responsibility as apart from her man (father, husband, or son). Hence it is considered incumbent on a man to get a male child, who should look after his spiritual interests in this or the next world. How much evil has resulted from this pernicious doctrine !

WHAT IS THE POSITION OF WOMAN IN SIKHISM?

Guru Nanak restored to woman the fullest rights belonging to her in society. He says in his *Asa-di-Var*:

It is by woman, the condemned one, that we are conceived, and from her that we are born; it is with her that we are betrothed and married.

It is woman we befriend, and she who keeps the race going.

When one woman dies, another is sought for; it is with her that we get established in society.

Why should we call her inferior who gives birth to great men?

Woman was given back her personal share in religion. She was to have the same responsibility in spiritual matters as man, and was in every way his equal in the sight of God:

All (women as well as men) acknowledge the same God as their own, point out any who does not.

Each person is responsible himself for his actions, and shall have to settle his account himself."

Religious congregations were thrown open to woman. They were to participate freely in all religious and secular observances, and no social custom was to hinder them from doing so. Sikh women are to this day seen attending all occasions of public worship, all conferences, along with the members of the other sex; and their conjoint as well as alternate singing, in which they often lead the chorus, must move the

heart of anyone who wants to see what Guru Nanak did for womankind.

The third Guru (Guru Amar Das) forbade *Satee* in these words:
“They are not satees who burn themselves with their dead husbands. Rather are they satees, Nanak, who die with mere shock of separation from their husbands.

And they too are to be considered a satees, who abide in modesty and contentment;

Who wait upon their Lord and rising in the morn ever remember Him.”

Again:

“Women are burnt in the fire with their husbands:

If they appreciate their husbands, they undergo sufficient pain by their death;

And if they appreciate not their husbands, Nanak, why should they be burnt at all ?

– *Subi-ki-Var.*

Guru Amar Das¹ held women equal with men. Perhaps he remembered what he owed to a woman, Bibi Amro, who had brought him to his Saviour. This is his ideal of married life :

“They are not husband and wife who only have a physical contact; Rather are they wife and husband who have one spirit in two bodies.”

This ideal was amply realized in the time of next Guru. There is a beautiful story, in Sikh history, of the conscientious and brave daughter of the magistrate of Patti (District Amritsar). She did her duty by her leper husband even under most trying circumstances. She carried him about in a basket on her head for many years till he was cured by the grace of God. Bhai Gurdas,² a Sikh missionary of the time, says: “From temporal as well as spiritual point of view, woman is man’s other half and assists him to salvation. She assuredly brings happiness to the virtuous.” Guru Amar Das was also against the custom of *purda*, as may be seen from his exhortation to the Rani of Haripur who had come to the *sangat* (religious assembly) with a veil on.

The effect of all this was that the men with whom it had been usual in troublous times to leave their females to the mercy of the invader, now came forward as defenders of the honour of their homes.

Women, too, came to realize their position, and after this we often hear of their making a bold stand for their own defence. Woman came to be recognized, in one sense, as even the spiritual support of men. Somebody expressed his surprise to Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru, on his living a married life. The Guru answered, "Woman is the conscience of man." There is a good example of Sikh women helping their men to keep themselves on the right path, when the latter showed a tendency to go astray. Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru, once came to Amritsar to visit the Golden Temple. The people of the place closed the doors of the temple and would not allow him to enter. The Guru went away saying, "O people of Amritsar, how gloomy are your hearts!" From that moment the people of the city were filled with a mysterious gloom. The Guru took up his abode in Kotha Sahib – a place in Walla about three miles from the city of Amritsar. The women of the city felt sorry that their men had so disgraced themselves and came to the Guru in a body supplicating his forgiveness. It was then that the Guru forgave the people and said, "The women of Amritsar know how to love the will of God." Thus, had women saved their men from the irreverence into which they had fallen.

The following stories are other instances of the same spirit:

During the long siege of Anandpur, lasting for several months, some of the Sikhs became restive, believing that it was futile to hold out any longer. They showed signs of disaffection, and Guru Gobind Singh asked them to declare themselves. Forty of them signed a disclaimer renouncing their allegiance to the Guru and went away to their homes. Their women, however, shut their doors in their faces, and would not let them enter, for they had shamed their profession of arms. Their women taunted them as more fit for wearing women's gowns than for wielding the warrior's sword. They said, "You sit at home and mind the children. We shall go and fight for you with the sword." The men were struck with remorse, but did not know how to be reconciled to the Guru. Then Mai Bhago, a brave Sikh lady, came forward to help them out of this difficulty. She put on male dress, and taking a sword and mounting a horse, she told them to follow her. They came with her to the field of Muktsar, where, fighting against odds, they laid down their lives and won the title of 'the Saved Ones.'

They are remembered in the daily prayer of Sikhs.

Hayat-i-Afghani, a history of the North-West Frontier by an ancestor of Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, records a story about a Sikh woman who not only saved her honour from a Pathan but taught him a lesson. She was found by him walking alone in a deserted place. He was tempted to lay hands on her. She knocked him down single-handed, and siezing his sword dismissed him contemptuously. He went away with bowed head, but soon came back to her and said, "Please give me back my sword, or cut off my head with it. I can't face my people after surrendering my sword to a woman." She replied. "Yes, you may have your sword, if you promise that you will never again attempt to dishonour a woman." He gave the promise, and learnt the lesson of his life.

The Sikh Temple of Nander, called Hazur Sahib, is sacred to the memory of the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, who passed away at this spot in 1708. This temple was the victim of constant inroads of Mohammedans from the Deccan, and the Sikhs felt helpless. They began to desert the place. These news reached Malwa in the Punjab. About two hundred Sikh women volunteered themselves to go and rescue the temple. They formed themselves into a battalion and marched to the South on horseback. On reaching there, they engaged the enemy in a sharp skirmish lasting for many hours and drove out the Mohammedan usurpers. In this battle, they captured a drum and a banner of the enemy, both of which are said to be still lying in Nander.

On the Baisakhi day of 1699 A.D., Guru Gobind Singh convoked a big assembly of his people from far and near to lay the foundation of the Khalsa. The five Sikhs – or the Beloved Ones of the Guru, as the Sikhs call them – had been tried and stood ready to be initiated. The Guru was preparing Amrit, the water of baptism, when his wife, Mata Sahib Kaur, appeared on the scene with an offering of *patashas* (cakes of sugar). The Guru took the sugar and throwing it into the Amrit welcomed her, saying, "Your coming is opportune. Woman sweetens the Amrit of life." And to this day when Sikhs are baptised, it is announced to them that Guru Gobind Singh is the father and Mata Sahib Kaur the mother of the Khalsa.

In Sikh history, there are examples of women who not only fought in the battle but ruled over states, and assisted men in all the spheres

of social and political activity. Quite recently they got the right of vote, along with men, to elect representatives to the Central Board of Management for the Sikh Temples, called the Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. In the book of ritual, prepared by this body, women along with men have been given the right to join the Panj Pearas or the Five Beloved Ones, who are commissioned to administer baptism and perform other functions as the Guru incorporate.

Thus are abolished all the invidious distinctions between men and women.

~ ~ ~

References

1. Guru Amar Das, up to the sixtieth year of his life, had not yet become a Sikh. He was living when Guru Nanak was preaching his gospel, but he did not know him. Even when Guru Angad, the second Guru, came and carried on the mission of Guru Nanak he did not know it. It was reserved for Bibi Amro to bring him into the Sikh fold. She was the daughter of Guru Angad, and was married to the nephew of Guru Amar Das who lived in an adjoining house. One early morning she was churning milk and as usual singing the hymns of the Guru Amar Das, thirsty for spiritual satisfaction, lay awake restlessly in bed. The words touched him and he requested her to take him to her father, Guru Angad, and she did so.
2. He lived from the time of the 3rd to the 6th Guru. Next to the Guru's words, the Sikhs prize his works which are a sort of exposition and are called the key to their Scriptures.

□

*Gurbani is the treasure of jewels of Lord's meditation.
By singing, hearing and acting upto it, one is satisfied.*
– Guru Granth Sahib, p 376

ਭਗਤਿ ਭੰਡਾਰ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਲਾਲ ॥ ਗਾਵਤ ਸੁਨਤ ਕਮਾਵਤ ਨਿਹਾਲ ॥

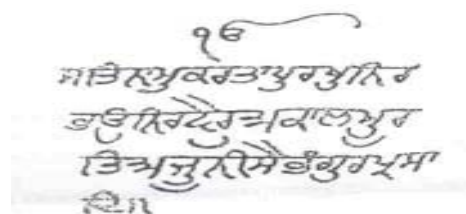
COMPILATION OF SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB

SANGAT SINGH*

Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh scripture, has the unique distinction of having been compiled by one of the Sikh preceptors himself. It bears all the characteristics of an original presentation of Sikh theology and philosophy, despite serious attempts at adulteration.

I

The Sikh movement was based on blossoming of cosmic consciousness of Guru Nanak. As *Janamsakbis* narrate, he was led to the presence of God, and had revelation, when he recited *mool-mantra* or basic precept, which sums up the divine personality of God. It consists of 14 monosyllables, as follows:



The author's translation, discussion, etc.

The only Infinite One (ੴ), The Only Supreme Being - God (*oankar*), the Eternal (*sati*), the Universal Spirit (*namu*), the Creator (*karta*), the All-pervading (*purakhu*), the Sovereign (*nirbhau*), the Harmonious (*nirvairu*), the Immortal (*akala*), the Embodiment (*murti*), the Unincarnated (*ajuni*), the Self-existent (*saibhan*), the Enlightener (*guru*), the Bountiful (*prasadi*)¹

* Dr. Author of *The Sikhs in History*, or *Itihās 'ch Sikhs*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 2002, acclaimed by Prof Noel Q King, Professor-Emeritus of History and Comparative Religions, California University, Santa Clara (USA) as one of the greatest works on Sikh history from the days of Cunningham and Macauliffe.

This constitutes the core of Sikh philosophy and provides the quintessence of teachings of Sikh Gurus and *Bhaktas* contained in Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS). It was only after the revelation that Guru Nanak started claiming that what he was saying, he was doing so under divine inspiration.

There are similar utterances by third, fourth and fifth Sikh Gurus in Sri Guru Granth Sahib.²

Even before that, right from his birth and childhood, Guru Nanak had shown a remarkable alacrity in chartering a new course of universal humanism. Equality of humankind formed an essential part of his teachings and philosophy. This was quite unique. But it was unacceptable to the prevalent social mores of Brahminism, which was another name for Hinduism. Guru Nanak's repudiation of *Varnashramdharma*, with in-built inequalities, struck at the root of the existing social structure.

Having entered into revolutionary characteristics to charter a new society and give it a new face, it was imperative for Guru Nanak to preserve his sayings or compositions in an authoritative form. *Hajis* asking Guru Nanak at Mecca to open his book and tell them whether a Hindu or a Muslim was more acceptable to God, clearly showed that Guru Nanak did keep a book to record his sayings. So did his successors. Composition of a volume known as *Pothi* (sahib) during fifth Guru's-times, *Granth* Sahib during seventh Guru's times, and eventually in 1708 when tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh conferred on Granth Sahib the title of a living Guru of the Sikhs for all times to come, was in the scheme of Sikhism right from the beginning. It was not a chance growth.

II

Guru Nanak was son of a *patwari*, (village accountant), a well-read class. It was normal for people of that class, firstly, to keep a *vehi*, sometimes multiple *vehis* of small, medium, or normal sizes to record their social, cultural and economic interactions of life.³

Secondly, as *Janamsakhis* record, Guru Nanak was taken at first to a *Pandba*, a Brahmin teacher, to teach him basics of Sanskrit and later to a *Maulhi* to impart him teachings of Persian and Arabic. Thirdly, Guru Nanak, without much efforts, must have learnt Takras or Landas,

the common language of village business.⁴

Guru Nanak at an early stage wrote *Patti*, an acrostic of 35 *Gurmukhi* alphabets.⁵ In the last line, he mentions himself simply *a shair*, a poet. (This again shows that it was composed at an earlier stage, as after revelation he mentioned at various stages that whatever he was saying, he was doing so at His command.)

Earlier, Kabir composed *Bawan Akbri*, a composition of all *Gurmukhi* alphabets, except the present-day last one, which he did not need. This *Bawan Akbri* is found both in *Kabir Bijak* and Sri Guru Granth Sahib.⁶

Guru Nanak must have, as *shair* or a poet, firstly laid down the parameters of Punjabi language, or improved upon it, to give the words definite meanings. He did lay down the ecrophils (*lag, matra* / ਲਗ, ਮਾਤਰਾ) as these would help to give varied meanings to various words for instance : ਮਨ, ਮਨਿ. In short, Guru Nanak must have laid down the basic rules of grammar to record his compositions in the new alphabet or new script that he must be using. Guru Nanak gave his followers the use of Punjabi language and broke the monopoly of Sanskrit, used as a monopoly by Brahmins.⁷

Secondly, Guru Nanak as a poet, not only mastered the use of various *raga*, meters he used in his compositions, but also various *ghars*, parts, to give a variety and life to his compositions. Guru Nanak's *bani*, hymns, reflect that variety of *ragas*, meters, in all their grandeur, dignity and splendour.

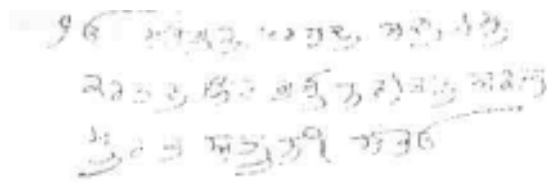
Guru Nanak's greatest work was to find a successor based on his ideology to carry forward his work. His sons, whose mind was full of malice and who were in revolts were ignored. Same thing happened with his successor, who ignored his sons and passed it on to Guru Amar Das who gave the movement great strides.

III

By now, the Brahminical opposition to the Sikh movement had come into the open. To begin with, Guru Nanak himself was described as *bhutna*, devilish in character, and *betala*, one without rhythm of life or style (*koi kabe bhutna, ko betala* (Ramkali, SGGS, p 991)) for repudiating all essentials of Hinduism. Guru Amar Das' increased activity placed Sikh Guruship on a firm footing and made 'Sikhism a

widespread movement'. This, firstly, made Brahmins to lead a delegation to Emperor Akbar at Lahore. Akbar looked through the widespread humanitarianism of the Sikh movement and made Brahmins to apologise for their misdeeds. This led Brahmins to resort to the second course to pressurise some of the followers of Guru Amar Das to cause a schism. The existence of 22 major dioceses and 52 *pirhas* came quite handy both for spread of Sikh movement and to win over some of the elements to play Brahminical game.

During the lifetime of Guru Amar Das, some diverse elements including the sons of Guru were worked upon to cause distortions in the Sikh movement by straightaway causing a schism in Guru Nanak's ideology which was explicit in the *mul mantra*. They now attacked the *mul mantra*, caused distortions in working out a new one to constitute an alternative centre of ideology, given in one of the rival *Pothis*.



Ek oankar suti guru p̄rsudu, sachu, namu, kartaru, nirbhau, nirikaru, akala, murat, ajuni, sambhau

Prof Pritam Singh, who made a special study of *Ahyapur Wali Pothi*, is of the firm opinion that it was a parallel product, which came from a hostile source, and Guru Arjun Dev had nothing to do with it. Consequently, when time came, Guru Amar Das who had warned against *kachi bani*, spurious hymns, ignored his sons and chose instead his son-in-law Bhai Jetha, known as Guru Ram Das as his successor.

The first job of Guru Ram Das was to ensure the authenticity of Guru Nanak's *mul mantra*. Consequently, he made available several copies of Guru Nanak's *mul mantra* and *Japji* in his own handwriting. Later, it was this writing that was used by Guru Arjun Dev while compiling *Pothi Sabib* which explicitly stated the source wherefrom the text came. Secondly, it served as a guard to keep an eye on the coming schism.

Guru Ram Das was a great exponent of Sikhism. Guru Nanak

had composed hymns in 19 *ragas* and Guru Angad had contributed only 62 *salokas*, while Guru Amar Das used only 17 of those 19 *ragas*. Guru Ram Das and, following him, Guru Arjun Dev composed in 30 *ragas* including the 19 *ragas* earlier used. (Guru Tegh Bahadur contributed 31st *raga* in SGGS to which we shall refer later on). Guru Nanak, during his widespread travels in several parts of India and abroad, had collected the compositions of various *Bhaktas*, both Muslim and Hindu of various denominations, including Brahmins, and people coming from the so-called lower or down-trodden castes. Some of the hymns were collected later by the successor Gurus.

The need for straightaway compiling *Pothi Sahib*, now known as Sri Guru Granth Sahib, arose because of two reasons. Firstly, because of alignment of Brahmins with hostile Minas – Guru Ram Das' elder son, Prithi Chand, who had defied his father and others – and their attempts at projecting Guru Nanak as an *avatar* in Puranic framework, while there was an urgent need to uphold the universal humanism of Guru Nanak. Secondly, Minas, Prithi Chand and his son Meharban started composing their poems under the name of Nanak, to cause confusion amidst the general populace, and thereby corrupt the Sikh philosophy.

It were some such considerations that forced Guru Arjun Dev to commission Bhai Gurdas as an amanuensis to compile *Pothi Sahib* to separate the real *bani* from the spurious one. Bhai Gurdas had been closely connected with the Sikh movement from the third Guru onwards, had blood relationship with Guru Amar Das, and was also a scholar par excellence, apart from being the first great exponent of Sikh religion, theology and philosophy. Besides Guru Arjun Dev, he had the competence to separate grain from chaff, and put real *bani* on a permanent footing. A structure at Ramsar at Amritsar was selected for the purpose, where Guru Arjun Dev and Bhai Gurdas spent a lot of time to compile *Gurbani*.

Guru Nanak had passed on the collection of his compositions and those of *Bhaktas* collected by him to Guru Angad, who passed on the same to Guru Amar Das. It was during this time that there was a major schism in the Sikh faith, and serious efforts were made to compile what he aptly described as *kachi bani*, unauthorized or spurious compositions. *Ahyapur Wali Pothis* were among some of those

compositions. Guru Amar Das passed on his collection of compositions including his own to Guru Ram Das. It was this collection that came into possession of Guru Arjun Dev. Prof Sahib Singh has conclusively proved that the compositions of first five Gurus traveled from one to the other as a normal course. This reading is justified by him firstly by identity of language used by various Gurus – 1st to 3rd and thereafter by 4th and 5th Gurus. This showed that they were in possession of compositions of their predecessors.⁹

Secondly, there are supplementary or corrective hymns especially by third and fifth Gurus along with *Bhaktas'* compositions. This again showed that they were in possession of the collected *bani*, hymns. At places, Sikh Gurus especially endorsed *Bhakta's bani* or adopted the same. This was the case with Guru Arjun adopting Kabir's hymn *na hum hindu na musalman*. We are Neither Hindus nor Muslims... but an independent entity.

The uniformity of theme runs down to the tenth Guru, and is indicative of the uniformity of mission of the Sikh movement.

The stories of Guru Arjun Dev's seeking to acquire *Ahyapur Wali Pothis* from Guru Amar Das' son, Baba Mohan who represented discordant, rival, faction, and nursed a grudge against his father for ignoring him, are cock and bull accounts, and wide of the mark.

IV

The *Pothi Sahib* as composed in 1604 had compositions of the first five Gurus, 15 *Bhaktas* of all denominations, both Muslim and Hindu, ranging from Brahmins to so-called low castes – 11 Bhatts who were all practising Brahmins and sang of sublimity of the first five Gurus in their own light comparing them to the best of Hindu pantheons, apart from four others - Bhai Mardana, Sunder, Satta and Balwand. Guru Arjun Dev was a strict connoisseur of various contributions on the basis of ideology and rejected a lot of compositions, like those of Chhajju, Pilu, Kahna, Shah Hussain, Mira Bai. He also rejected some others collected with a considerable effort and cost from Sri Lanka, but attributed to Guru Nanak; he regarded these as spurious ones. Guru Arjun Dev was the best judge of the material placed before him, and once he rejected it as non-acceptable, it would be stupid for a practising Sikh to contend otherwise. However,

It would be quite another matter for non-believers, as we shall see, to go on making hostile contentions.

As Guru Arjun Dev composed hymns as per *ragas*, musical measures, and their sub-meters, and keeping in view the contents and types of compositions in two, three, four, six, eight and sometimes 16 or more lines/paras, he mixed the *bani* of various Gurus, and various *Bhaktas* starting with those of Kabir and ending with those of Farid. It presented an integrated work, an anthology of five centuries of Indian religious literature from various parts of the country.

The composition or *Pothi Sahib* was a masterpiece of Guru Arjun Dev. Firstly, it straightaway consolidated the Sikh faith and gave it a valid and legitimate personality of its own. Secondly, as Guru Nanak had laid emphasis on *Shabad-guru*, Word of Lord as the Guru, Guru Arjun Dev, keeping that concept in view, put the *Pothi* at a higher pedestal and sat himself at a lower level. Here, like his predecessors, he laid emphasis on the Personality or Characteristics of God as the object of worship, and not any other object. Lastly, he enunciated an unadulterated monotheism and humanism, and reflected a pan-Hindustani and universal relevance of Sikhism.

There was no duality in Sikh thought.

V

Preparation of *Pothi Sahib* in 1604 caused a ripple in the Sikh congregation. The first copy of this *Pothi*, recension, was made from the original in 1605, i.e., within a year. It was copied by Bhai Bura Sandhu, at the instance of Bhai Milkhi, a resident of Peshawar in the presence of Guru Arjun Dev. These facts were written at the end of *Pothi*. This *Pothi* was written in one hand, of Bhai Bura Sandhu. Later on, as we shall see hereafter, some one removed two last folios, 587 and 588, and, with malafide intentions, inserted four more folios, 587 to 591 and also introduced some extraneous matter, like (a) *Salok Mahla 1, jit dar lakh mohammada*, (b) *Salok Mahla 1, bae atish aab kbak*, (c) *Rag Ramkali Ratan mala*, (d) *hakikat rah mukam raje Shivnabh ki.*, etc. As stated earlier, these had been rejected by Guru Arjun Dev this was part of the conspiracy to distort Sikh philosophy. We shall

come to that later. This particular recension was available at Mohalla Saidpuri, Rawalpindi.

The much touted Banno recension at Khara in Gujrat, or *Khari Bir*, was prepared in *Samvat* 1699, i.e, 1642AD. So many people have sought to weave untenable stories about this copy. Even G B Singh (*Prachin Biran*) failed to examine it in some detail, and failed to carry out his functions as a research scholar. His weaving some stories based on what a protagonist of *Banno Bir* wrote to him was unbecoming of a serious scholar and later invited brickbats from Bhai Jodh Singh as well as Prof Sahib Singh, two of the most respected names in *Gurbani* scholarship.

The sixth to eighth Sikh Gurus composed no *bani* or hymns as that would have led Minas to cause havoc in infiltrating their questionable compositions into *Pothi Sabib*, now also known as *Granth Sabib*. The Minas who captured Harimandir after 1635 when Guru Hargobind moved over to Kiratpur, installed their own *Granth* at Darbar Sahib. The *Pothi Sabib* fell into the hands of Sodhi Dhir Mal, son of Baba Gurditta, and elder brother of Guru Hari Rai, at Kartarpur.

Guru Hari Rai, seventh Sikh Guru, got prepared a copy of *Pothi*, or *Granth Sabib* for use of his son, Ram Rai, who, along with five leading Sikhs, was deputed present it to Aurangzeb. But this copy was compared with the *Granth* of Guru Arjun Dev. It is now available at Dehra Dun, and clearly states that a particular hymn attributed to Mira Bai was not found in Guru Arjun Dev's *Granth*, it also noted some hymns from that *Granth* which had not been entered earlier. This showed that Guru Hari Rai had direct or indirect access to Guru Arjun Dev's *Pothi/Granth Sabib*.

Dhir Mal was a prominent claimant to *Gurgaddi*, Guruship, on demise of Guru Har Krishan. One of his followers caused violence to Guru Tegh Bahadur, and in turn was taught a lesson. Guru Tegh Bahadur's followers also took hold of Guru Arjun Dev's *Pothi Sabib*, but Guru Tegh Bahadur made them to return the same. Frankly speaking, alternative sources were now available. Moreover, Sikhs were advised to worship *bani*, hymns, or *name*, God's word, and not a particular volume, whatever its origin.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's compositions in various *ragas* were entered at appropriate places in some of the recensions. At one time, these

were available with Shiromani Gurdawara Parbandhak Committee Library.

Finally the entire *bani*, along with the last *Slokas* was entered into a recension at Damdama Sahib, Anandpur, some 17 days after Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom. Copies of his last *Slokas* along with his entire *bani* were supplied to visiting congregations and also to those who had recensions of *Pothi / Granth Sahib*. This led to addition of only one *Raga*, not used by earlier Gurus. With this, the *Granth* was now complete in its present form. Earlier, four hymns under *sodar* which from part of *Rebras*, had been entered into the *Granth*.

There are various cock and bull stories by thoughtless persons about Guru Gobind Singh dictating recension of *Pothi / Granth Sahib* to Bhai Mani Singh at Damdama Sahib. Such persons mention of Guru Gobind Singh being irked by Dhirmal or his son Ram Chand who firstly, refused to part with *Kartarpur Pothi*, and, secondly, passed uncharitable remarks at his creation of Khalsa, etc. It may be mentioned that both Dhirmal and Ram Chand had been put to death by Mughal authorities in 1677-78 shortly after Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom, and these deaths had caused irreparable damage to Minas. No doubt, under the leadership of Bhai Mani Singh, some recensions of latest version of *Granth Sahib*, were got prepared at Damdama Sahib, and it was to one such recension that Guruship was finally passed to in 1708 by Guru Gobind Singh at Nanded in perpetuity.

It is a common knowledge that that particular *Granth*, now like others, known as *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, was seized by the forces of Ahmad Shah Abdali at the time of *Wadda Ghallughara*, Mega Holocaust in 1762. Dr Ganda Singh's efforts, at the instance of SGPC, to trace it in Kabul/Afghanistan around 1949 proved of no avail. There is no reason to disbelieve that it was destroyed.

VI

This brings us to the post Guru Gobind Singh period of Sikh history.

To begin with, Bhai Mani Singh was instrumental in indoctrinating the concept of 'Granth and Panth' into the Sikh psyche. He did a commendable job; it was he who was principally responsible for making Amritsar the centre of Sikh spirit.

On the contrary, hostile elements, especially Brahmins and Banias, assisted by such elements as having a grouse against Sikhism, scanned the countryside with the help of certain paid scribes and they removed certain pages from existing recensions of various *Pothis / Granths / Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, and put, in instead, a number of pages to show the continuity of handwriting by inserting certain hostile material, and cause distortions in Sikh ideology. This went on at a large scale, especially keeping in view the hostile atmosphere against Sikhism during the last phases of Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh, especially the first half of the 18th century. It is hardly possible for anyone to come across a handwritten recension that does not have spurious compositions, spelled out in first para Part V above.

Same was the case with induction of Brahminism into Sikhism. Some Sikh scholars, even men like Bhai Santokh Singh were carried away by the impact and expounded wrong Sikh ethos. It was the Singh Sabha Movement that put Sikhism on the correct path. Since *Kartarpur Pothi* had certain in-built safeguards, it has been possible for Sikh people to remain on the right side of Sikh religion and philosophy.

The publication of G B Singh's work *Prachin Biran* in 1944, based on half-baked material, caused severe damage to Sikhism. Firstly, he did not see the *Kartarpur Bir* at all, and despite that chose to pass certain value judgements, that were uncalled for. He rather chose to put forth that *Kartarpuri Bir* had been destroyed. Secondly, he had little time to study the numerous *Birs*, including *Banno Bir* recensions, but chose to pass on half-baked information that caused harm to the Sikh body politic.

Lastly, he put forth that some of hymns of Guru Nanak had not been included in the Sikh scripture, and he cast aspersions on Guru Arjun Dev's finality of the product. He seemed to contend that he knew better than Guru Arjun Dev in the matter.

Bhai Jodh Singh, Principal Khalsa College, Amritsar, along with Principal Ganga Singh of Sikh Missionary College, Amrtisar, and Prof Teja Singh of Khalsa College, Amritsar, on behalf of Dharma Prachar Committee of SGPC had the opportunity to conduct a detailed study of Kartarpur recension for some days, and submitted a report on October 11, 1945. This caused Bhai Jodh Singh to write a series of

articles in *Khalsa Samachar* (These were later published in the form of a book, *Prachin Biran Bare*, Lahore, 1947) to show how baseless were G B Singh's observations about *Kartarpuri Bir* in their entirety. He took note of the rough language used by G B Singh. He mentions that some of the acquaintances of G B Singh told him that G B Singh was not a Sikh, but an agnostic. According to his own admission, he had taken baptism thrice, but thrice had become an apostate, and now had no intention to take baptism a fourth time. Prof Sahib Singh's work *Aad Bir Bare* (Amritsar, 1970 /1990) too makes critical references to G B Singh, especially his lack of faith in Sikhism or Sikh Gurus. His agnosticism which caused him to cast aspersions on Sikh Gurus and *Gurbani* scriptures was the precise reason for his wild allegations.

This brings us to another agnostic who started writing on Sikhism in 1960s. This agnostic who started as a Christian Padri from a small country, New Zealand, has had powerful connections, firstly, with Whites working at Baring Union Christian College, Batala, Punjab, and secondly, with ultra Hindu lobby which not only had developed a powerful bias against the Sikhs and Sikhism, but also had the support of powerful Government of India and its intelligence setup, including RAW, the external intelligence agency.

W H McLeod has written profusely on the Sikhs with malice. By the time he wrote on Guru Nanak for his Ph D in 1960s, according to his own admission in his autobiography, he had become an agnostic. That showed that he had lost faith in Christianity, Christ and the *Bible*. These had earlier played a powerful role in framing his mind. One may take that at face value. It is surprising that one who loses faith in his own religion / faith, should claim to understand, much less interpret, another faith or a powerful character like that of Guru Nanak. It was not surprising that whenever he sought to apply his mind to Sikh scriptures, his character as a doubting Thomas must have come to the fore, and made him a skeptic and a cynic.

Now, we may bring in here the couplet in Rag Ramkali inserted by Guru Arjun Dev in *Kartarpur Bir*. Some of the handwritten versions available elsewhere spuriously sought to project the whole of hymn, spelling out puberty rites of Guru Hargobind. W H McLeod had earlier written that he believed in the version of *Kartarpur Bir* as spelled out by Bhai Jodh Singh. Bhai Jodh Singh wrote that this couplet stood

alone and this was followed by some blank space, and there was no cancellation by *bartal* or any other process. The matter should have rested at that, but McLeod held the issue as an open one. Firstly, he spelled out the whole of spurious verse. Later on, stated that Guru Arjun Dev had not used that type of vocabulary in his compositions. Hence, it was not genuine. However, McLeod's style of writing left much to be desired, and it gave needed support to anti-Sikh forces, for indulging in distortion of Sikh scriptures.

In my work *The Sikhs in History*, I wanted to spell out what types of influences worked upon him, to adopt an anti-Sikh course. It is now known that some of his collaborators had close links with Indian intelligence setup. A person who himself had such contacts, but later fought a case against that setup, made these disclosures. I have also mentioned how one of his collaborators was removed from the Chair in Punjabi language by Vancouver University. As per his autobiography, this has already compelled McLeod to do some serious thinking.

When I visited New Zealand in 1971 on a U N assignment, I was, firstly carried away by the truthful character that prevailed in that society. Secondly, I became aware how much the public employees in New Zealand were conscious of their suppressed financial situation, and were looking for merger of their state with Australia in a bigger federation. That would straightaway have given a boost to their emoluments. But that was not to be. However, W H McLeod's family had come into upper echelons of New Zealand social setup, firstly, by writing distorted and biased things on Guru Nanak, Sikh religion and philosophy that suited the Hindu society and Indian intelligence setup as well. At times, he had to recast his conclusions. That too, as it comes out, suited some of his collaborators. No intelligence agency in the world gets work from its partisans without adequate returns. He wants to tell us that Indian intelligence was lucky to find some philanthropists, like McLeod and his collaborators who did the work, as if, for nothing. Secondly, McLeod lost his respect for Lord Christ, Christianity and the *Bible*, but kept that at a lower ebb; he, however, reserved his ire only for Guru Nanak and Sikh religion. In 1999, at a California University Seminar, he was agreeable to accept some of the

propositions being advanced by his collaborators – Dr Gurinder Singh Mann and Dr J S Grewal. One expected him to put a slip at the beginning of his works that his conclusions were tentative. But Oxford University Press, New Delhi, put out a compendium of four of his works in 2000. Did that prevent him from doing so ? One hopes to hear from McLeod in times to come.

VII

Now, since we are celebrating the fourth centenary of compilation of *Pothi/Granth/Sri Guru Granth Sahib* (SGGS), it is imperative that we may highlight some of things that need immediate attention to make the celebrations meaningful.

Firstly, we know that *mul mantra, i oanko,. sati...gur prasadi*, or in whatever form it comes in SGGS, is Guru Nanak's perception of his meeting with God at the time of his revelation, and is uniformly given in the beginning of every composition in *Kartarpur Pothi*. We should remove this dichotomy in the existing recensions of SGGS. We are aware how Chief Khalsa Diwan in 1950s, at the instance of traders who published recensions of SGGS and made huge profits, torpedoed the implementation of a sensible approach. The SGPC, despite unanimous reports by its committees, could not implement the same. (One may see the proceedings reproduced in Bhai Sahib Principal Harbhajan Singh's work, *Gurbani Sampardan Nirnai* (Mohali, 1989). Now, since publication of SGGS is the sole responsibility of SGPC, this part can be implemented without any fuss/problem. If need be, another Committee's report can be solicited before its implementation.

Secondly, we are also aware that a lot of works from the Library of SGPC were removed in 1984 by the Indian authorities and this was authenticated by Giani Kirpal Singh, then Jathedar, Akal Takht. This has also been admitted by Defence Minister, George Fernandes. The Akalis, who have been part of NDA and have close collaboration with BJP, should now exert to get the books and other literature back. This needs political decision, which Badal-Akali Dal can arrive at jointly.

Thirdly, apostasy is one of the main issues of universal concern. It was mentioned that Third Centenary of Khalsa, 1999, would see

every Sikh as *Amritdhari*. But that was said more in jest. No one seemed serious on that. The Sikh leadership, especially the clergy, should look at the erosion of Sikh identity that is being caused. This issue needs urgent attention.

Fourthly, there is need for provision in the SGPC Act that a member of SGPC, seeking an elected post in assembly or Parliament will lose his SGPC seat. That alone will make SGPC members to pay full attention to their duties and functions, and prevent SGPC from being used as a launching pad for a political career.

Lastly, (for Jathedar Akal Takht): since the Shiromani Akali Dal since 1996 has become a Punjabi Party and is no longer a Sikh party, it should be prevented from using the word Akali with its nomenclature. That would help to put the Sikh polity on an even course.

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1. From text of Japji in the original Kartarpuri Pothi. The contents, folio 2/2 reads:

ਜਪੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਰਾਮਦਾਸ ਜੀਉ ਕਿਆ ਦਸਖਤਾ ਕਾ ਨਕੁਲ ..
 It must be understood that this revelation, *1 oankar sati .. gur prasadi* was Guru Nanak's perception and was not upsurge of *Bhaktas* or others whose compositions find place in Sri Guru Granth Sahib.
 ਹਉ ਆਪਰੁ ਬੋਲ ਨ ਜਾਣਦਾ ਮੈ ਕਹਿਆ ਸਭੁ ਹੁਕਮੇਉ ਜੀਉ ॥
 When Thou, O Lord, caused me to speak, then alone did I repeat the Name.
 Wadhans Mahla 1, Guru Granth Sahib, p. 566
 ਜੈਸੀ ਮੈ ਆਵੈ ਖਸਮ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਤੈਸੜਾ ਕਰੀ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਵੇ ਲਾਲੇ ॥
 As the word of the Lord comes to me, so do I utter, O' Lalo.
 Tilang Mahla I Guru Granth Sahib, p. 722
 ਸਚ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਆਖੈ ਸਚੁ ਸੁਣਾਇਸੀ ਸਚ ਕੀ ਬੋਲਾ ॥
 Nanak utters the word of truth and proclaims truth at the right time.
 Tilang Mahla I. Guru Granth Sahib, p. 723
 ਸਬਦੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਪੁਨਿ ਚੇਲਾ ॥
 The Lord is my Guru, whose meditation, I, His disciple greatly love.
 Ramkali Mahla 1, Sidhi Goshti, Guru Granth Sahib. p. 943.
2. Cf. Guru Granth Sahib. Pp, 35, 763, 984, 1310.
3. This included happenings both in extended Biradari, brotherhood, of relatives and friends, apart from their particular village or surroundings, connected with birth of a child in the family, their marriages, offerings made on such occasions and mutual obligations, deaths special social gatherings, events of note, and sundry matters.
4. I learnt in 1930s Gurmukhi from village Gurdwara before I Joined the village

school for my 1st class at the age of five, and learnt *Takras/Landas* without formal education.

5. Rag Asa, Guru Granth Sahib, pp.432-34.
6. Guru Granth Sahib, pp 340-43.
7. Kabir too was forced to use *Gurmukhi* alphabets, picked up by him during various visits to Punjab for Haj purposes, as Brahmins of Benaras violently objected to his use of *Devnagari* script, the language of *devas* or gods, which a *julaha*, weaver, could not be permitted to use.
8. Cf. Pritam Singh, *Ahyapur Wali Pothi*, Amritsar, Guru Nanak Dev university, 1998
9. *Aad Bir Bare*, Amritsar, 1970/ 1990
10. Guru Granth Sahib. p. 1136.
11. Cf. Prof Pritam Singh's account on *Ahyapur Wali Pothis*, n.8 above.
12. It is another matter that Guru Nanak throughout his life never quoted Vedas, Shastras, Smritis, etc., as an authority for what he was saying. He relied on his revelation as the source of his philosophy. His successors strictly followed him.
13. G.B. Singh. *Prachin Biran.*, pp. 108 onwards
14. It is reprehensible that despite alignment of Parkash Singh Badal with the BJP Government at the Centre, and otherwise extending its support like a *mundu*, the various literature it got in 1984 onslaught on Darbar Sahib complex, and verified at the time by Giani Kirpal Singh, then Akal Takht Jathedar, has not been returned. The Courts, at whatever level, so far have failed to act, as if Sikhs don't count for anything in the Indian Union.
15. Cf. G B Singh, *Prachin Biran*, pp215-33, 301-03.
16. Principal, Harbhajan Singh, *Gurbani Sampardan Nirnai* (Mohali, 1989)
17. Prof. Sahib Singh's *Aad Bir Bare* (Amritsar, 1970 / 1990)
18. W .H. McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community*, OUP 1976, p.78
19. *The Sikhs in History*, Amritsar, 2002, p.560.
20. *Ibid*, pp. 559-60.

□

*In this wondrous world forest, there is tumult,
And confusion and shrieks resound in the high-ways.
What Thee, O my Spouse, am I attached in love,
So I traverse the jungle with joy.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 520

ਬਾਰਿ ਵਿਡਾਨੜੈ ਹੁੰਮਸੁ ਹੁੰਮਸੁ ਕੂਕਾ ਪਈਆ ਰਾਹੀ ॥
ਤਉ ਸਹ ਸੇਤੀ ਲਗਤੀ ਡੇਰੀ ਨਾਨਕ ਅਨਦ ਸੇਤੀ ਬਠੁ ਗਾਹੀ ॥

GURU GRANTH SAHIB – THE PERFECT, PERPETUAL GUIDE IN MORAL AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF MAN

BHAGWANT SINGH*

That Guru Granth Sahib as a World Scripture and Mankind's Spiritual Treasure is now widely acknowledged, and its relevance to the solution of Man's problems is as valid today as it was when it was compiled. But, in my view, because of the degeneration in human values despite scientific advances, the validity of the guidance in Guru Granth Sahib and the universal message for mankind is much more relevant today and will dominate the new millennium. Paradox as it may seem, it is true that the material progress and material comforts have only increased tensions, increased restlessness and increased unhappiness. Another paradox is that spiritual messages in all communities are televised and broadcast with great enthusiasm but the practical life does not get influenced by them. Inter-faith meetings and global efforts to understand differences and create harmony have not shown results that could create permanent consolation in man. With all the encomiums for our great Scriptures and with all the enthusiasm that we show in stressing and propagating the validity of our Guru's teachings – and I am quite certain that the new millennium will need more and more stress in living these teachings – we have not been able to display in our personal and in our social and political approach these teachings in practice.

The problems that we face in the new millennium are not new. They have been there all along. But they are now known all over the world, they breed concern among us all, and they create enthusiasm to

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do something for the benefit of all. And, to our surprise and grief, new problems of global terrorism, social and economic domination, use of drugs and increase in violence, political domination, are now becoming endemic despite our seeming progress and better living. The reality of these problems can be assessed in terms of moral and spiritual orientation. If you are not able to believe and stress that we are all equal, we all are entitled to live in peace and happiness, we are all children of one God who would never like to discriminate, we have to get rid of the exploitation of the under-privileged, and that the grief of my brother is also my grief, you will never be in peace yourself. In this distressing scenario, Guru Granth Sahib's message, approach and direction show perpetual guidance. Of course, we are talking of the new millennium. I believe these teachings will be relevant as long as the world exists. Before I talk of other things, let me explain why I think so. Guru Granth Sahib –

- Never suggests that these teachings are for the benefit of Sikhs alone;
- Never suggests that Sikh religion is superior to others' beliefs;
- Never suggests that any man is inferior to anyone else;
- Never suggests that the Sikhs' way of worship or the Sikhs' prayer-houses are more sacred than others;
- Never suggests that the Sikhs will be judged more compassionately than others.

The core message of our scripture is development of Man's moral and spiritual strength so that he can face evil squarely, and not only overcome it but also share his well-being with all others, irrespective of caste, creed, sex, nationality or race. Since the whole world wants to live in peace, but expects everyone else to tow his particular line, conflicts arise. Guru Granth Sahib has one and the same message for all, and also advises prayer for all mankind, *Sarbat Da Bhalla*. Here are some quotes :

Khatri brahman sood vaish, updesb chauh varna kau sanjha.

(The message for everyone is common, whether one is of this *varna* or that.)

– Guru Granth Sahib p 747-48

Sarb dharam mein sreisht dharam, harko naam jap nirmal karam.

(The highest *dharmas* among all *dharmas* is the meditation on God's

name and doing good deeds.)

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 266

Koi bole raam raam koi khudae.....

(Some call him Ram, some Khuda; He is the gracious Doer;
Some call him Gusain, other Allah.

Some go on pilgrimage to Hindu centres, others to Mecca for Haj;

Some worship in temples, others offer Namaz;

Some read Vedas, others Quran; some wear blue, others white;

Some call themselves Muslims, others Hindus. Some wish to go to Swarag, other to Bahisht (Hindu and Muslim Names for Heaven)

But, says Nanak, only those who recognise the will of the Lord, are able to know His secrets.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 885

Jagat jalanda rakh lei apni kirpa dhar

Jit dware ubhre, teite leio ubhar.

(Oh Lord, save this burning world by your Grace, by whichever door – religious path, they approach you, lift them from the quagmire.)

– Guru Granth Sahib, p.853

Daya kapah santokh soot jat gandi sat vat

Eh janeo jeeka haai tan pande ghat.

(O Pandit, let their be cotton of compassion, yarn of contentment, knots of self-control and interwining of truth, if you have such a *janeo* of the soul, bring it to me.)

We shall see that whether one belongs to any of the divisions of the Hindu religion, or to a Muslim faith or to self-proclaimed Brahmin fold, Guru Granth Sahib dwells on values and makes no distinction. In fact, the Guru's two-fold emphasis is that every religion is wonderful if recitation of *Naam* and good deeds form the core. And, the prayer to the Lord is to lift everyone from whichever religion they are.

Here is thus a perpetual system of spirituality which neither believes in conversion of faith, nor is interested in making others adhere to the tenets of a particular faith from outside. In other words, it is clear that so long as one believes in truth, love and meditation of God's Name, anyone can belong to the religion of Guru Granth Sahib.

Now let us concentrate on the values that Guru Granth Sahib envisages for all human beings, irrespective of the faith they belong to:

Ghal khae kichch hathon deh, Nanak rah pachane seh

(Earning one's livelihood through honesty and hardwork and practising charity constitute the path of righteousness, says Nanak.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 1245

Sachon ore sabkau uppar sach achaar

(Truth is the highest, but higher still is the truthful living.)

– Guru Granth Sahib, p.62

Faida bure da bhala kar gussa man na handae; dehi rog na lagai palle sabkuchch pae

(O Farid, do good to the bad, do not be angry; this way. you will not be diseased and you will attain everything)

– Guru Granth Sahib p.1382)

Bisar gai sab taat prai, jabte sadhsangat moe paai. Na ko bairi nahin bagana, sagal sang hamkau banpai.

(Ever since I found the company of the Holy, I lost the sense of mine & not mine. No one is now my enemy nor is anyone alien. I get along with everyone)

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1299

Haq praya nanaka us soor us gaey

(To usurp others' rights is like pork to the Muslim and beef to the Hindu - according to the religious beliefs, Hindus do not eat beef, and Muslims do not eat pork.)

– Guru Granth Sahib, p.141)

I happen to believe that the core of almost every religious dispensation is the same, but the biggest challenge remains how to live the dictates of our Masters. The most wonderful message of Guru Granth Sahib is that our Scriptures almost treats anyone as its adherent and recognises no distinction of label. Why I say this is that:

- Guru Granth Sahib includes the sayings of saints of religions other than Sikhs, although Guru Granth Sahib is the Guru of the Sikhs.
- The sayings of ALL saints in Guru Granth Sahib have the same status of GURU and are not treated differently from the sayings of 6 the Gurus.

- Non-Sikh saints freely and openly talk of Allah, Ram, Isharwar and other names, and also talk of their own form of worship. Since *Gurbani* is our Guru, i.e., Guru Granth Sahib is our *Sabad* Guru, every word of every saint included in Guru Granth Sahib is our Guru.
- Our most important shrine, Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar has the distinction of its foundation stone having been laid by a Muslim saint, Hazrat Main Mir.
- Guru Gobind Singh says: *manas ki jaat sabhe eke pehchanbo* – Recognise the whole human race of one caste. And he also asserts : *Deora masit soi pooja namaj obi* – Temple and the mosque are the same; Hindu worship are the same.
- When Guru Gobind Singh had to fight tyranny of the rulers, he made no distinction between the Muslim rulers or the Hindu Rajas, and his army had Muslims fighting on his side, because the fight was for righteousness and not personal ends.
- Our gurdwaras are always open to all human beings, not only for worship but also for lodging and boarding.
- Our Gurus themselves declare that the Sikhs will be treated not on the basis of what label they have, but what their deeds are.
- Our system absolutely forbids mere *karamkand*, hypocrisy, external cosmetism and intellectual word-jugglery. Only the internal purity and dedication matter.

I am personally convinced that on the basis of Guru's teachings in Guru Granth Sahib, anyone who lives these can become a good universal human being. In fact, whenever I attend inter-faith meetings, I insist that I should be considered not only of Sikh tradition but belonging to all Mankind. So long as one believes in Truth, Love and God's Name, he is my co-religionist, whatever his label.

But my chagrin is that although we have held seminars, we have propagated the universality of Guru Granth Sahib, and I am sure that Guru Granth Sahib is definitely and perpetually relevant to the handling of the problems of the new Millennium, I do not see the results even among Sikhs today. Let me share my anguish :

Even the leaders, managers, *jathedars* of our leading Sikh religious and political institutions have not learnt anything from the teachings of Guru Granth Sahib. They display an unfortunate

hiatus between their conduct and the Guru's dictates.

Guru Granth Sahib envisages honesty, truth, humility, regard for others' sentiments; our so-called leaders lead us in impurity, greed, illegal amassing of wealth and political chicanery for personal pelf and power.

When bribery and corruption dominate our religious bodies, and winning of voters is resorted to, how can we be leaders in telling the world that Guru Granth Sahib is the guide for the new Millennium?

The insistence of Guru Granth Sahib is on eradication of evils like hypocrisy, mismanagement of public funds, personal glory and personal vanity. The requirement of our Guru is purity, piety, selflessness, honesty, kindness, truth, love, humility, understanding of others, while looking at our own shortcomings. What we see today is cross materialism and rampant corruption in men and institutions claiming adherence to Guru Granth Sahib.

Gurdwaras and *akband paths* as also siropas show our places of worship as commercial houses and their managers political and managerial businessmen, not the type of Sikh that Guru envisages.

As I have said above, the biggest challenge in the new Millennium is not the absence of rules of righteousness, but our alienation from them. We were supposed to show ourselves as the embodiment of our Guru's teachings and personification of the rules of piety, purity and propriety, but the materialistic ambitions and comfortable living have deprived us of our Guru's grace.

Just as we live today, we shall continue to face the problems arising out of alienation from moral and spiritual guidance. My impression – and my personal experience – is that intellectual exercises do not give us hope. In fact, when we merely discuss, debate and produce books, we miss the bus. Let us see other cases :

The United Nations Charter is an excellent document, but those who have to work it, always find loopholes for action not conducive to its expectations.

Iraq, Afganistan, Palestine and various other problems are there not because of institutional guidance or legal or semi-legal provisions, but are there definitely because of Man's insolent behaviour, which remains insolent, selfish, impure and unbecoming.

Guru Granth Sahib provides an excellent framework of Man's equality and respect for women. But among the Sikhs, the caste-system and cruelty to women continue.

The Constitution of India is a great Law for the entire country, but there are always conflicts in States. Also, there are Centre-State conflicts and conflicts among States – witness Cauvery, Punjab Waters, Bluestars, anti-Sikh carnage in Punjab and anti-Muslim carnage in Gujarat.

The above examples are a clear proof that there has to be a change of heart and internal revolution in Man to provide the basis of the following two principles :

- I must do unto others as I wish to be done to me.
- There must not be hiatus between what I say and what I do. My deeds must match my words.

There is no doubt that Guru Granth Sahib is the greatest guide in this respect. Even if it could mean personal boasting, I would not mind risking my honour by detailing some of the most effective results that I have seen in my own life by trying to adhere to the teachings of Guru Granth Sahib. I have lived in five foreign countries and travelled to many more, and nowhere did I face any conflict, any animosity, any alienation. Quite the contrary, friendliness, oneness, love, welcome, understanding and harmony were always my companions. I shall explain further.

Since we are the direct disciples of Guru Granth Sahib, it is incumbent upon us to show the Guru's universal love and harmonious understanding in our personal conduct. The messages that we give even in our gurdwaras in India and abroad, are that we are haughty, quarrelsome, selfish and power-hungry, and we do not mind going to courts against our fellow-Sikhs. In my efforts to live the Guru's dictates in life, I found that I was accepted as everyone's own, whether I lived in Cairo (Egypt) or Belgium or France. In my personal relationships with my fellowmen everywhere, I tried to live and explain the Guru's universality, and I found, to my pleasant amazement, that the reality of Guru's following message was evident everywhere :

Sabkai meet ham aapan keena ham sabna ke sajan.

(I have made everyone my friend and I have become the friend of

all.)

An old Muslim lady whom I used to treat as my mother in Cairo, wanted to meet me on her death-bed before she breathed her last;

A Catholic French woman, Mine Coiral in Paris thought that by repeatedly asking her to think of Jesus all the time so that she would get rid of her loneliness, I had restored her faith in Christ. I used to serve her on week-ends, as a member of the Society for the poor, when I was free from diplomatic work;

A Pakistani Muslim in the METRO in Paris was grateful that in a non-Muslim country, a non-Muslim had reminded him of his religious duty, when I asked him if he performed his 5-time *Namaz*, and if he was planning to go back to serve his countrymen. He was in Paris as a Doctor for advanced studies;

For the last 25 years I work in an organisation for leprosy patients where no one is a Sikh or Punjabi, but, because of the teachings of Guru Granth Sahib, nearly 1000 people are like my own children, parents and brothers and sisters.

Inter-faith conferences, discussion and repetitions of the universality and relevance of our perpetual Guru's perpetual love for all as also guidance on equality, friendliness and oneness, are fruitful when they are shown the examples of such universality. I am reminded of a Christian priest, whom I personally loved and served in Vellore, when I was learning leprosy work in CMC & Hospital in Tamil Nadu. So long as he was sick, he appreciated and welcomed my association, but when he went to a temporary home for convalescence, he began to think of his conversion magic. He told me that Jesus was the Saviour of the World, and I agreed that like Nanak, Mohammed and other prophets, he was indeed great. He said: No, he was the floodlight while Guru Nanak was like a candle. Without mincing words, I told him I had gone through the *Bible* and I found great similarities between Guru Granth Sahib and the *Bible*. Later he wrote to ask me whether I had read the *New Testament* which he had left with me. I wrote back in reply that I loved it because it confirmed what I had learnt from Guru Granth Sahib. I had added that if the priests did not do disservice to Jesus, people would love Jesus more. When I received 4-page letter of chiding mentioning his many years of theology, more work of Christian concepts, I thought of Guru Nanak's words:

Likh likh padia teta karbia

(The more you read and write and become intellectually great, the more you develop rancour and narrowness.)

– Guru Granth Sahib, p.467 *Asa-di-Var Slokas*

Whenever I attend the inter-faith conferences, I insist that since all religions represent Truth and love, and they come from the one reservoir of truth and love, i.e., God, how can they be different except in their rites? When they are all Gold, how can one convert Gold into Gold? I was a little taken aback when on his visit to India the Holy Father, the Pope had hoped that as Christianity reaped Europe in the first millennium and Africa in the second millennium, it would now reap Asia in the third millennium. Whatever he meant, I personally believe that so long as we believe that certain religions are better than others, we cannot achieve harmony and peace. The marvel of Guru Granth Sahib is that our scripture freely acknowledges, allows and accepts the same truth, the same love and the same appeal in all religions. That is why I sincerely believe that our scripture can meet the challenges of the new millennium, but only if we ourselves live the message and propagate it, not only through sermons, lectures and printed material, but also through our practical life.

All the ills like sectarian, regional, linguistics and ethnic violence, social and economic disparities and other social problems should automatically vanish, if we adhere to the dictates of Guru Granth Sahib. It is absolutely true for the whole world. Let us see:

When we are all children of one God and are equal in every respect, how can we even think of harming our own people?

ek pita akas ke ham barik,

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 611

When Guru Granth Sahib ensures equality of all and love of the poor, why should the disparities occur? What communists thought about the alleviation of poverty through violence, Guru Nanak wants it through love. Remember his words? *neechan andar neech jaat neechi boun att neech Nanak tinke sang saath vadian sio kya rees. jithe neech samalian thithe nadar teri bakshish* Lowliest of the low, even lower than that, Nanak belongs to such a caste. What have I got to do with the highly-placed? whenever the lowliest are taken care of, God resides there.)

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 15

- Moral degeneration, drugs and other vices, are naturally out when one lives a life of the spirit which Guru Granth Sahib envisages. The core message of Guru Granth Sahib – valid for all mankind – is that *karam-kand* is out, only the inner purity and internal commitment to righteousness will bring about harmony. External cosmetism is out.

Perhaps, I am repeatedly referring to the living of the principles of Guru Granth Sahib to emphasise the relevance for all of us. Why do I do so? Because, despite the views of Dr Radhakrishnan, Rabindranath Tagore, Rev. H.L. Bradshaw, Miss Pearl S. Buck, Dorothy Field, M.A. Macauliffe and other personalities, we in India or abroad have not been to respond to the kind of message that we receive from Guru Granth Sahib. Do you think we lived religion in our lives or have anti-Muslim carnage in Gujarat or anti-Sikh carnage in Punjab, if we had acted on Guru Granth Sahib's universal message? It seems the lust for power and pelf overwhelms everything, and while the message of Guru Granth Sahib is clear and relevant, we will need to live it to be able to avail of the harmony available to us.

Indeed the teachings of Guru Granth Sahib can decidedly rid the society of all the evils. Even otherwise, what Man goes after for hallucinations of happiness, satisfaction and progress, turn out to be deception. Guru Granth Sahib has clearly said so:

*Att sundar kuleen chatur mukh gyani dhanwant
Mirtak kahiye Nanaka je preet nahin bhagwant.*

(One may be the most beautiful, one may belong to the most respectable family, one may be very intelligent and a great orator. Yes, one may be the richest person; without the love of God, he remains a dead body.)

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 253

In other words, all the materialist goods, possessions and external splendour lead one to misery. In the present-day, hankering for materialism and lack of interest in the life of the Spirit account for our major ills including jealousy, intrigue, one-upmanship and exploitation of others. The remedies in humility, equality, love, truth and brotherhood dictated by Guru Granth Sahib would definitely

remain valid for the new millennium.

Let me conclude this paper on a very positive note. I hold the view that the present-day race for accumulation of wealth, for illegal and immoral hankering for glory and political power and moral degeneration will have ended after some years when man would find, in terms of the clarity for all the people, that one will never find peace in such pursuits. We all shall have woken up and would perhaps more willingly obey the teachings. Bhai Gurdasji's warning that mere talk would take us nowhere would be taken more seriously. Let me quote Bhai Gurdas in full:

Preetam ke des kaise batan se jaiye.....

(You go on asking the directions, but do not step on the path; how can you reach the Beloved's destination merely by talking? You go to the doctor for treatment but do not take the medicine properly and regularly; how can you get rid of the disease and live in comfortable peace? You ask a faithful, wedded spouse for a life of love, but your actions are that of a separated wife; how can you expect your husband to come to your bed? And finally, you recite the Scriptures with closed eyes and sing and hear sermons, but you cannot achieve self-realising unless you live the teachings of your Guru in life.)

Ever since I received the grace to love Guru Granth Sahib and took my final vows to live the principles, I have found that I have no problems. As a matter of fact the problems arise only in alienation from the Guru's Word. Therefore, the challenges in the new millennium will be met and can be met by living the principles enunciated in Guru Granth Sahib.

Even at the cost of repetition, I would like to dwell on the specialties that Guru Granth Sahib offers in the solution of Man's problems:

When all religions project their systems and believe that their own system is valid for living a life of peace and happiness, Guru Granth Sahib emphasises that any system, when followed in sincerity, leads to that peace.

Guru Granth Sahib not only respects all religions and religious practices, but has included the sayings of religious prophets and their sayings, other than Sikh Gurus and given them equal status as Word Guru.

Love and truth projected by all religious prophets have been institutionalised in Guru Granth Sahib's teachings; and anyone of any religion can become pure in his own religion by listening to and living the dictates of Guru Granth Sahib.

The challenge for all of us is to live the teachings in the new millennium when we will find that the ills have vanished without any effort. In general we quarrel over truth as the property of a particular religion, while Guru Granth Sahib declares truth as the common property of Man, and encourages its followers to show this in practice. The challenge is to commit to obey the teachings and live them in practise in day-to-day life.

□

*The Lord Almighty is bestower of life :
Discarding all clever cogitation,
Day and night contemplate thou the Lord
He is true friend, helper, companion,
All-highest, inaccessible, beyond extent –
In your heart lodge His lotus feet, prop of life.
Lord Supreme Being! show Thy grace that Thy laudation I chant.
In that lie all joys, great exaltation –
Nanak in utterance of the Name find life.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 405

ਕਰਣ ਕਾਰਣ ਸਮਰਥ ਸੇ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਜੀਅ ਦਾਤਾ ਆਪਿ ॥
ਤਿਆਗਿ ਸਗਲ ਸਿਆਣਪਾ ਆਠ ਪਹਰ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਜਾਪਿ ॥ ੨ ॥
ਮੀਤੁ ਸਖਾ ਸਹਾਇ ਸੰਗੀ ਉਚ ਅਗਮ ਅਪਾਰੁ ॥
ਚਰਣ ਕਮਲ ਬਸਾਇ ਹਿਰਦੈ ਜੀਅ ਕੇ ਆਧਾਰੁ ॥ ੩ ॥
ਕਰਿ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗੁਣ ਤੇਰਾ ਜਸੁ ਗਾਉ ॥
ਸਰਬ ਸੂਖ ਵਡੀ ਵਡਿਆਈ ਜਪਿ ਜੀਵੈ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਨਾਉ ॥

LET WISDOM PREVAIL

BIRENDRA KAUR*

A GREAT PEOPLE

The Sikhs, nurtured by their great Gurus, are a great people on the whole:

- Their concept of One Almighty of all humanity is exclusive, taking equality to its heights;
- Their worship of Word Guru is unique, as it puts all individuals on a common platform, each capable of direct communion with the Lord;
- Fineness becomes integrated into their personality, as their only mode of worship is singing in *ragas* the poetic compositions of their Eternal Guru, Guru Granth Sahib;
- Their concept of bravery/sacrifice in defense of the needy, irrespective of race, region, and religion, is unparalleled;
- It is compassion and humility personified when they pray, with folded hands, for the welfare of entire creation;
- Their natural looks and unshorn hair reflect true understanding of living in tune with nature;
- Their colourful, spectacular congregations/processions, with men, women and children in service of all, are indicative of their vibrant disposition;
- Their *langar* amazes even the socialist states of the world today;
- *Anand bhaya meri maye* recited at the end of every ceremony on all occasions, happy or sad, is indicative of the fact that they take miseries and joys of life in their stride; and, so on.

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A PARADIGM SHIFT

The world is gradually becoming aware of this uniqueness of the Sikh Panth. But all these qualities get negated, when we appear in the news for wrong reasons, such as, getting physical or filing lawsuits over supremacy in gurdwaras or disagreeing vociferously over petty issues. With the result, *mann neevan matt uchi* gets obliterated, and *matt neevin mann ucha* comes to the fore. It is not far back in history when Sardar Kapoor Singh, a humble *sewadar*, was chosen, in spite of many leading *sardars* present on the scene, for the title of 'Nawab', based on a *vaak* from Guru Granth Sahib. And he, on his part, had to be hard-pressed to accept the same, which he did only on the condition that he would be permitted to continue with his *sewa* of fanning the *sangat*. We, too, are fanning, but *kaam, krodh, moh, lobh, and ahankaar*. We can well imagine the chaos that could ensue, if a somewhat similar situation were to come up in our day! Today, the aim is *mewa*, and not *sewa*.

VISION NOT IN SIGHT

Attacks on the Ideology of Guru Nanak are as old as the Ideology itself. Every generation has witnessed attempts to dilute/distort *Gurbani*, by hostile forces. Thanks to scholars, these have been countered effectively to date. But when it comes to resolving internal issues, we have failed repeatedly, thereby cutting a sorry figure each time. We are all aware that, at this point in time, we have piled up many controversies, with none resolved to the satisfaction of all. Also, as a *qaum*, our performance in sports, education, health, politics, etc., is not up to the mark, keeping in view our glorious history. As followers of the Gurus, who possessed infinite vision, whatever has happened to our vision?

The Gurus demonstrated their Ideology and kept its spirit aloft under the harshest of circumstances and the least of facilities. Even the centuries following the Guru-period have witnessed historic developments. The Sikhs, in no time in history, have been found wanting; they responded as per the requirement of the situation, holding the Ideology of the Guru close to heart, no matter how dear it would cost them. In spite of the fact that there was a price on every Sikh head and they were hunted mercilessly by the rulers of the day, they created landmarks: landless laborers rose to become landlords, courtesy

Banda Singh Bahadur; the Misl *sardars* ruled the Punjab, providing security to the people against Mughal and Afghan atrocities; Maharaja Ranjit Singh established sovereignty for all in the region and set an example of a fair and just rule, unknown to the world even to this day; extraordinary courage was demonstrated and a heavy price paid in life and limb, while wresting control of gurdwaras from *mahants*; and so on. In short, they truly and literally answered the call of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind – *sir dhar tali gali mori aayo*.

Today, there is no price on our heads, and no cruel, mighty rulers hunt us. On the contrary, new laws of hate crime are being framed the world over that award death penalty to those who kill us for our Sikh look. We are enjoying the most cordial of circumstances as compared to those of our ancestors. Further, nowadays, the aviation technology is at its height, media have brought the world at one's fingertips, and democratic governances are the trend in a majority of the countries. Why then have we failed to communicate with each other? Unity still eludes us. No *mahants* control our gurdwaras, yet *maryada* is not uniform in the various gurdwaras. Had our ancestors run after *golaks* and been notorious for brawls, what would have been our image today? And, if that is what we do today, then what face are we gifting our youth? Irreligious politicians and political *sants* of the day have distorted the concept of *miri-piri* to their advantage. Imagine a head that is to be held high always, never to bow to any earthly power, and did not do so even in the face of the executioner, may soon, at this rate, hang in shame even in solitude.

The Panth faces numerous challenges, internal as well as external. Every concerned Sikh is well aware of these. Whereas the internal ones regarding *maryada*, identity, etc., are in the open, public, the external ones are more subtle. Unfortunately, up till now, we have to keep prattling that we are not Hindus; for legal purposes also, we are clubbed under Hindus in the Constitution; our signatures were not considered necessary for passing the Constitution in 1947; we are denied minority status in spite of being less than 2% in the vast sea of Hindu Indians; entry of our robust youth into army is restricted; we have no right over our river waters, etc, etc. Not to mention the 1984 massacre, and the nation's response to it as if nothing happened. Just

consider: when it comes to signatures on the Constitution or clubbing us with Hindus in the same, the decisions are justified by keeping the Country as a unit, when our percentage becomes minimal to matter, but when it comes to assigning us minority status or getting into the army, a State becomes the deciding factor. Further, if river waters are national resources, then what about coal, oil, etc? Are these resources, in spite of being restricted to some states, also shared by the nation, as a matter of right? Also, when reorganization on the basis of language was done, Haryana was delineated as a separate state out of Punjab, but when it comes to river waters, Haryana should get its 'share' in spite of being non-riparian to Punjab rivers. Such issues, to name only a few, without doubt, need concerted deliberations and a collective response.

It is not only the internal controversies or national issues that have to be addressed/resolved, but we also need to chalk out plans for a grand future of the Panth, which should be seen as at the service of humanity. But as long as we are a split lot, no body needs to pay any heed to us, nor would we be capable of any achievements. Once united, even sparrows can outsmart the hunter; and, we are supposed to be the hawks/lions of Guru, each equivalent to a *sama lakh*. Why then does it not reflect in the image that we enjoy (?) today? Surely, we are off the mark, that means.

A RAY OF HOPE

I congratulate the Institute of Sikh Studies for taking the initiative to form an International Sikh Confederation (ISC), which would enable the Sikhs, once again, to take charge of their affairs. Independent decisions taken by regional organizations, like the IOSS, Chandigarh, SGPC, Amritsar, DSGMC, Delhi, WSC-AR, America, may not be true reflection of the will of the Panth. But once their representatives meet on a common platform, their decisions, made with the assistance of experts of relevant fields, would be acceptable to all. And, the Sikh *jagat* would be able to put up a united front and communicate to the world in one voice, putting an end to the present-day clamour (the most recent example is the handling of the case of world heritage status for Golden Temple). The blueprint of the Constitution of ISC has been so worked out, that it would not be financially dependent on

any mega organization, which may, therefore, be in a position to manoeuvre its functioning; collective leadership is the watchword. The ISC should not be seen as a replacement of any existing organization. Its status, vis-à-vis existing organizations, can be understood in terms that if each existing organization is a bead, then ISC is like the string of a rosary that holds all the beads together. While each bead is valuable, the significance of the rosary can well be estimated. Let all Sikh organizations, even with variant views (because the proposal is to deliberate and reach consensus), become members of ISC, and, thereby, strengthen the string. The stronger the string, the stronger would be the rosary.

Establishment of an Apex Body of Sikhs would be a landmark in our history. It is not a new concept to Sikhism; rather, it is the only way we can bring to fruition the expectations that Gurus have of us. The situation during the time of every Guru was different from that of others, and so it has been ever since. New assessments have to be made and conclusions arrived at under variant circumstances. The Gurus, therefore, for over a period of two centuries, trained their followers to meet any eventuality. Guru Nanak laid stress on *sangat* and *vichaar*, thereby, encouraging the followers to think logically and act collectively. By introducing Gurmukhi script, Guru Angad Dev ensured that everybody could gain knowledge. Guru Arjun Dev, by compiling the religious treasure of various godlike personalities in this Script, ensured spiritual enlightenment for all seekers. Thus, individuals with sharpened intellect and religious bent of mind were being nurtured. Construction of Sri Akal Takht *on the same premise as* and *facing* Darbar Sahib by Guru Hargobind highlights that temporal matters too need to be addressed with equal import and magnitude, along with spiritual ones. The manner in which Guru Gobind Singh selected the *panj pyaras* projects the degree to which commitment is essential to tread the path of *Sikhi*. Further, by letting them make decisions and by abiding to these himself, the Guru inculcates organizational, managerial skills, instills self-confidence, and inspires leadership qualities. Such are the traits that we are expected to imbibe, emulate, and possess. So, let us not fail the Gurus, and resume our responsibilities.

ON THE MARKS, GET SET, GO

Nirdishayan de Disha, hey Sache Pita! Guide us. But, our prayers can only be answered if we execute our duty. All that our ancestors achieved over the centuries was not by mere prayers; they acted in every situation, as per the Ideology of the Guru. It is our turn today. Guru Nanak dedicated his entire lifetime and, in spite of no means of communication, travelled to distant lands spreading the Word of One Almighty to humanity that was in tatters, socially, morally, and spiritually. The later Gurus established his Ideology as separate and distinct from other religions, at a price beyond comprehension. Today, we are recognized as a distinct people/nation at the global level. So, our job is simple, almost effortless, comparatively. We are to project *Sikhi* as an answer to and a promise for the future of humanity, which it truly is. The first step is to unite; sans unity amongst ourselves, we cannot preach it to the world.

May *Wahguru* grant us the acumen and vision to contribute gracefully to the times! *Jo kaal ko ik bar dbeyaye hai, ta ke kaal nikat nahi aaye hai.* The Guru has promised his *tej* to his *niare* till eternity. Let us become worthy of Guru's *tej*.

□

*By the Divine will does man serve the Lord,
And realize truth.
Through Divine decree does he laud the Lord :
Obedience to the Lord's will brings joy everlasting.
Through Divine decree is found the blessing of human incarnation,
And ennobled enlightenment.
Nanak ! laud thou the holy Name –
By Godward-turning may liberation come.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 365

ਹਰਿ ਕੈ ਭਾਣੈ ਜਨੁ ਸੇਵਾ ਕਰੈ ਬੁਝੈ ਸਚੁ ਸੋਈ ॥
ਹਰਿ ਕੈ ਭਾਣੈ ਸਾਲਾਹੀਐ ਭਾਣੈ ਮੰਨਿਐ ਸੁਖੁ ਹੋਈ ॥ ੩ ॥
ਹਰਿ ਕੈ ਭਾਣੈ ਜਨਮੁ ਪਦਾਰਥੁ ਪਾਇਆ ਮਤਿ ਉਤਮੁ ਹੋਈ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮੁ ਸਲਾਹਿ ਤੂੰ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਗਤਿ ਹੋਈ ॥

DILUTION OF SIKH RAHIT MARYADA

RAGHBIR SINGH*

Sikh *Rahit Maryada* is the socio-religious living system evolved by competent Sikh authority in the light of *Gurbani*, which every Sikh must observe for betterment of personal life and enhancing the Sikh cause for the welfare of mankind, in accordance with the Sikh *sidbant*. *Inter alia* it mainly consists of:

- a) Prescribed mode of respect for Guru Granth Sahib, Gurdwaras and Sri Akal Takht including other Takhts; and
- b) Sikh identity as a sign of commitment to *Gurbani* with restriction on adultery and smoking or use of intoxicants and narcotics, etc.

A nation robbed of its culture, its principles, its discipline and its *maryada*, becomes impotent. Guru Granth Sahib, Gurdwaras and all Takhts are three sources of inspiration for spiritual and material progress of the Sikhs. Undiluted *Rahit Maryada* is essential to carry on the Sikh mission started by the Gurus that envisages worry-free and egoless society in which there can be no exploitation of the poor by the rich and cunning people, who cleverly misuse religion in collaboration with clergy. Unfortunately, the rulers and their puppet priests have always tried to weaken the Sikh Movement by all means. The above three institutions and Sikh identity are their special targets for this purpose.

GURU GRANTH SAHIB, GURDWARAS AND TAKHTS

Martyrdoms of Guru Arjun Dev, Guru Tegh Bahadur and their countless followers, efforts to decimate Shri Darbar Sahib and fill up the *sarovar* around it by Mughal kings and Afghan invaders, and depriving Sikhs of the control of their Gurdwaras by the British

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Government were aimed at the Sikh Movement. Sikh leaders of the time successfully thwarted these attempts by organizing *morchas*, etc. Situation has become grimmer for the religious minorities since the transfer of power by the British Government to the Indian leaders in 1947. Now Hindu aristocracy feels free to adopt any measures against Sikhs, Muslims and Christians. It befools even the poor Hindus, Dalits and Tribals. Intoxicated with power, cleverly gained under the veil of democracy, they did not hesitate to attack even Sri Darbar Sahib, Amritsar in 1984. They are encouraging Radha Swamis, Nirankaris and many other *Deras* to create confusion about the Sikh philosophy and *Maryada*. Issuance of certain *Hukamnamas* from Shri Akal Takht and frequent changes of its *Jathedars* seem to be the handiwork of such powers through their pseudo-Sikh agents. Punjabi language is not getting requisite attention. They are playing havoc with the culture of the minorities, especially Sikhs, through legislation, executive policies, diplomatic activities through intelligence agencies resulting in Kanishak episode and Gurdwara disputes in foreign lands, films and control on electronic and print media. (For more details reference may be made to “Soft Target” by two famous correspondents of Toronto-based *Globe and Mail* and *Toronto Star* and *Open Secrets* by M.K Dhar of CBI). Presentation of Sikh characters on screens in a funny way is aimed to adversely affect the Sikh psyche. They are saffronising the sources of Sikh culture by re-writing history books describing Sikh Gurus as bandits; caricaturing Sikh character; clandestinely controlling Sikh educational and cultural institutions; weakening their social base; dubbing the Sikh community as terrorists, putting Sikh youth in jails for indefinite periods without trial; claiming Sikhs as part of Hindus and presenting *Dasam Granth* as a rival of Guru Granth Sahib, etc.

In addition to above, other Brahminical activities include:

- a) Introducing practices like illumination of candles before Guru Granth Sahib; placing water pitcher and photos near it, doing *arti* before it, installing Guru Granth Sahib in *mandirs* and *samadhs*, introducing Hindu rites and rituals in the Sikh functions; installing *Dasam Granth* in Gurdwaras along with Guru Granth Sahib;
- b) Unsikh-like behaviour shown on the screens in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib;
- c) Showing the Sikhs as drunkards, smokers, using intoxicants and

- misbehaving with ladies and creating *balla gulla* in public; and
 d) Tempting Sikh political leaders, for their personal gains, to participate in *bavans* and such other Brahminical rites, etc.

These efforts are aimed at denigrating the *Sikh Maryada* and shaking their faith in these institutions. Unfortunately, the present Sikh leaders most of whom are not conversant with Sikh ethos have failed to understand these tactics. In their lust to share power with the Hindu aristocracy for personal benefits, they overlook their evil designs. It is during their shared administration, both in center and state, that such efforts become more prominent. They patronize *Deras*. They even take part in functions aimed at diluting the *Sikh Maryada*. Recent statements of RSS leaders and the revelations made by CBI Joint Director Mr M K Dhar in his book *Open Secrets* about the role of Sikh leaders stand testimony to their anti-Sikh actions.

SIKH IDENTITY

Since the Sikhs were expected to carry forward the Sikh Movement for social and political revolution, Guru Gobind Singh prescribed five *kakars* in 1699 to identify them from others. Commitment to wear them is also part of the *Maryada*. Merely wearing these *kakars* is not enough for a Sikh, unless he appreciates and lives by the *sidhant* behind them on which is based the whole edifice of Sikh religion. Life based on this *sidhant* makes a person of powerful character and determination. It helps him to improve his social behaviour, attitude and dialogue. Majority community ridicules the Sikhs, makes fun of them, and presents them before the public through print and electronic media as crude, distraught and illiterate persons, thus trying to distract them from marks of Sikh identity. Those with weak faith in *Gurbani* become easy prey to such efforts without feeling any pangs of conscience. *Kakars* without faith in *sidhant* are like the *janeu* that Guru Nanak Dev refused to wear as he found that the actions of the people wearing it did not match the faith for which it was worn. Now our leaders are using Sikh symbols merely as *janeu* and people are losing faith in their leadership. Efforts made by different institutions to restore faith and symbols have not created the desired effect, as many of the preachers themselves do not live up to what they preach. Discourses of most of the missionaries about faith being outdated and

unimpressive, do not meet the demands of the youth who want to look at every thing in their modern context. If some people still adopt symbols of Sikh identity they soon shed them because of their weak faith. *Gurbani*, teachings of which even scientists have started appreciating, does not preach blind faith, which with little effort gets effaced.

REMEDIAL MEASURES

We should counter the bad effect created by our ignorant and selfish leaders on the Sikh psyche by their undesirable conduct. We should, therefore, exercise utmost vigilance at the time of selecting/ electing our leaders. For this purpose, sincere Sikh scholars should come forward in a big way to educate the people to ensure election of persons of unimpeachable character who are competent to lead the community and offer strong resistance to anti-Sikh efforts. They should be prepared to face any challenge to the Sikh Panth. If our leaders are clean with unflinching faith in Sikhism, dilution of *Rahit Maryada* can be stopped by timely actions.

The work of Dharam Parchar, the SGPC and the Takhts should be entrusted to Sikhs, who are competent to handle it, and who understand and practise the spirit of Sikhism. They should also be free from narrow political influence and personal considerations, and they should have the courage to discontinue any Brahminical dilution of *Rahit Maryada* in Gurdwaras and other institutions where there is *parkash* of Guru Granth Sahib. Discourses on Sikh *Itibas*, *Rahit Maryada* and *Shabad Vichar* by qualified scholars should be arranged so as to create lasting effect on the *sangat*. TV channels should be liberally used for this purpose where Sikh problems should be freely and fearlessly discussed. No *sirapao* should be given merely on political considerations. For, it smacks of gaining some personal favour from its recipient at the cost of Sikh interests. Such practices create disenchantment in the Sikh *sangat*.

Alarming as the present situation is, let us not feel dejected. It is a temporary phase, and ours is a community of *Charbdi Kala*, destined to follow the course of *sarbat da bhala*, chartered by our great Gurus.

For lasting effect, the Sikh intelligentsia should come forward and jointly formulate action plans and execute them with the help and cooperation of Sikh masses who yearn for this.

RAJ KAREGA KHALSA ?

KULWANT SINGH*

The Sikhs all over the world recite the following two lines :

Raj Karega Khalsa Aakee Rahey Na Koy

Khuar Hoyey Sabb Milengay, Bachey Sharan Jo Hoi

in their daily prayers. When and how can this Sikh prayer be answered? What are the connotational implications of these prophetic words? What is the Divine *Wahguru's* will behind this assertive command and what steps should the Sikhs take to realise this aspiration. Political dominance of the Khalsa over others is, perhaps, the narrowest interpretation of these lines. The widest comprehensive connotation of these lines is the empowerment of the Sikhs in all the politico-social, economic, cultural and moral aspects of life. How can an individual Sikh or the Sikhs as a corporate body or distinctly religious-social group empower themselves in the modern globalised and extremely competitive world. The first and foremost steps towards Sikh empowerment must be to mentally walk out of the narrow, ethnic, ghettoised compulsive mentality of remaining confined to some of the perceived grievances and feelings of hurt against some of the identifiable forces both in the past as well as in the present. Licking and nursing of old wounds and deriving a sort of masochistic pleasure out of those grievances would make the Sikhs more pathetic and further victims of exploitative politics which has been thriving on rousing these passions and leading the Sikhs on a torturous path of senseless *morchas*, violence, militancy degenerating into terrorism and counter State acts of reprisals such as genocide of the Sikhs in 1984, and desecration of its sacred shrines. This vicious cycle of grievance-protest-retaliation-repression has badly damaged the Sikh psyche rather than providing them their promised empowerment. The twenty-first

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century and the new Millennium have put fourth new challenges before each nation and each socio-religious group. The Sikhs, too, must deliberate on these modern challenges and synchronise their aspirations and collective reflexes to meet these challenges.

This topic came for a critical debate in the recently held two-day International Sikh Conclave held at the Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh on November 12-13,2005. A resolution was passed for the urgent need and establishment of an International Sikh Confederation of all the Sikh institutions spread all over the world as well as eminent, enlightened Sikhs. An effort was made to identify some of the major challenges needing immediate redressal and the possible strategies to address those problems and empowering the Sikhs. The inaugural address prepared and read out by a modern Sikh savant Dr Kharak Singh identified some of these major challenges as those of apostasy among the Sikh youth, schisms such as the medieval monastic revival based on personality cult of *deravad*, drug addiction, poor quality of both infrastructure as well as instructional content of Sikh educational institutions especially in the rural areas. Corruption in the management of the Sikh shrines and electoral politics, re-emergence of Brahminical rituals in Sikh way of life need Panthic attention. Estrangement and alienation of the Sikh youth from its rich vibrant Sikh legacy and heritage and their degeneration, especially the rural youth, due to lack of role models in the elder generation as well as their own imagination and aspirations to dream for higher goals and their consequent fall into petty undignified jobs in foreign lands through the exploitative network of unscrupulous travel agents and drug *mafias* have to be looked into. Re-emergence of caste system, dowry, female foeticide, senseless ostentation in social functions even at the cost of economic deprivation through borrowings and incurring heavy debts have further impoverished the Sikhs economically, morally and religiously. There is a total collapse of value system based on the teachings of the revered Sikh Gurus and the *Gurbani*. Ritualistic superstructure in the form of marbled structures of Sikh gurdwaras, crowd pulling, over publicised processions and lavish *langars* and series of repetitive scriptural readings rather than effective preaching and propagating of Sikh philosophy and way of life based on deep understanding, research and spirit of devotion have completely eroded the quality of Sikh institutions responsible for the propagation of Sikh

religion and Sikh life. The daily recitation of *Raj Karega Khalsa* rings hollow in the absence of any systematic, institutional and organizational efforts at Sikh empowerment.

How should the Sikhs bring about a complete rejuvenation and renaissance of individual Sikh psyche as well as a social and religious reformation and empowerment of the Sikhs in the real sense. Presiding over the concluding session of the International Sikh Conclave, Dr Sukhmandar Singh, Professor of civil engineering at Berkeley, Santa Clara Campus, USA and a visiting professor at Cambridge University UK, suggested the emulation of a Jewish paradigm for the revival and empowerment of the Sikhs as a Corporate Community. The Jews, like the Sikhs, have been hounded out, persecuted and almost led to an edge of total extermination by the forces inimical to their religion and driven out of Europe through centuries of repression and tyranny. They, like the Sikhs, have passed through all the phases of persecution, organised state repression and violence of Hitler's concentration camps and gas chambers, genocide, destruction of their homes and hearths and migration to America and a tiny-land-locked desert patch of land of insecure homeland of Israel, surrounded by a host of hostile Arab countries. But instead of falling into the pit of pathetic helplessness against their impending extinction, the intellectual and the religious among them assembled together for a brainstorming stock-taking of their plight and for finding out a strategy to rejuvenate and empower their brutally battered community to make their presence known in the new world. The one tool, that they all agreed upon for Jewish empowerment, was the tool of education. For this, they decided to create a Jewish Education Fund (JEF) for educating each Jewish child and lend special financial assistance to those who were meritorious and brilliant among the younger Jewish generation. The fund was created and the programme for Jewish empowerment through education started in right earnest.

The results are there for all of us to see. The Jews, not only control the biggest economy and all other wings of the American society but have won the highest number of Nobel prizes in several disciplines announced so far. They have, through their command over education, science and technology, made the parched desert land of Israel into fine economically sustainable dairy forms and agricultural forms called 'Kibutz'. They have created the resources and technology to live with dignity despite a massive Arab hostility.

Dr Singh emphasized that the Sikhs, having a similar checkered history of persecutions and future threats of impending extinction, must emulate and implement this Jewish paradigm. They must rise like a phoenix from the ashes of the past under the guidance of an umbrella organization like the International Sikh Confederation consisting of some really enlightened, selfless, politically neutral and eminent persons and Sikh institutions as well as the representatives of established Sikh institutions in India and abroad to draw a clear cut charter of aims and objectives to combat the existing maladies threatening the Sikh society in India as well as the Sikh diaspora in foreign countries and to empower the Sikhs to face the challenges of the modern, globalised western-media dominated world. Setting aside all individual egoistic aspirations and political aspirations and obsessions, they must discuss, debate and arrive at a consensus about the real challenges and the ways to meet those challenges.

The one aspect that needs urgent attention of the entire Sikh community is their excessive adherence and indulgence in senseless ritualistic aspects of Sikh religion and non-adherence, rather intentional avoidance, to the essential spirit and teachings of Sikhism. “Package has become heavier than the substance” to use the words of the learned Dr Singh. Let us shed the flab of excessive ostentation and return to the basic fundamental Sikh way of life – a life of hardwork based on rational, educational approach, faith in one eternal, physically invisible but mentally and spiritually understandable *Wahgurni* we must contribute something to that cause of the community which is committed to educational empowerment of the Sikhs rather than to the medieval *maths*, monasteries and *deras* of semi-literate phony *babas* and self-proclaimed *sants*. The prophetic prayer of the Sikhs, *Raj Karega Khalsa* will materialise only when we truly understand the real implications of these words, which means the Sikhs must purify and polish themselves in words, thought and deeds and deserve to be *Khalsas* and empower themselves with the modern arsenal of various kinds of educational tools. To conclude, in the words of Rattan Singh Bhangoo, the real empowerment of the Sikhs means :

*The Khalsa must be autonomous and self-respecting,
An embodiment of all the Divine attributes,
Never submitting to the sovereignty of anyone else,
Except the sovereignty and autonomy of God alone.*

MINORITY RIGHTS ARE INDIVISIBLE
– MAJORITY PRESSURES CAN DENY EQUALITY –

SYED SHAHABUDDIN*

The August 8, 2005, judgement of a three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court in the Bal Patil case (CA 4730 of 1999), written by Mr Justice D M Dharmadhikari, has not received the critical attention it deserved. Perhaps, it may be due to the Jains being a relatively small minority with a population of about 4.2 millions (2001), which is not much in the news or wields little political strength even in five states where more than five lakh Jains live.

The Jains have been counted as a separate religious community, since the first decennial census in 1871, with the distinction that they are not recognised as a religious minority by the same government which holds the census.

The judgement rejects the Jain plea to the Central Government to notify the community as a minority under Section 2 (C) of the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992, basing itself on the 11-judge Bench decision in the TMA Pai case, which related to the scope of Article 30 of the Constitution. The majority opinion speaking through the then Chief Justice Kirpal was that since the reorganisation of the states in India has been on a linguistic basis, the unit for the purpose of determining a linguistic minority be the state and not the whole of India. But the opinion goes on to apply illogically the same yardstick to religious minorities, though the states were not organised on “religious basis”, and comes to the conclusion that “religion and linguistic minorities, who (sic) have been put on a par in Article 30, have to be considered state-wise”. The Central Government found it convenient to take shelter under this illogical presumption and refused

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to exercise its statutory power under the Act, thus making it redundant.

The interesting point is that the Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and even the Parsis (a miniscule community with less than 0.1 million population) had been notified by the Central Government under the provision of the same Act, but the guillotine has fallen on the Jains. Thus, refusal is a clear discrimination against the Jain community.

The Constitution, in Explanation to Article 25, recognises the existence of the Jain religion, but brackets it with Buddhism and Sikhism for the limited purposes of one section of the Article dealing with a common social aspect. Only five days after the promulgation of the Constitution, the then Prime Minister Jawarharlal Nehru, through the letter of June 31, 1950, signed by his Principal Private Secretary, had assured a Jain deputation that the Jains are a distinct religious minority and there was no reason for apprehending that they would be considered as Hindus. Thus the judgement is constitutionally unsound and violates an explicit assurance of the executive. The appellants have decided to seek a review of it.

Having summarily disposed of the Jain demand, the judgement devotes another 12 pages to what can only be called *obiter dicta* or the personal views of Mr Justice Dharmadhikari. He gives his version of the history of the freedom movement, in particular, the effort for resolving the communal problem in terms of the constitutional safeguards as demanded by the Muslim community and conceded in stages by the imperial power.

Finally, there was no communal settlement culminating in the Partition of 1947. His historiography is full of flaws; it confuses the sequence of events; it describes India Wins Freedom as the "personal diary" of Maulana Azad and attributes to him the role of a "mediator" between Nehru and Patel, on the one side, and Jinnah and Liaqat Ali Khan, on the other.

In effect, the *obiter dicta* reduced the complex course of negotiations between the Congress and the Muslim League, over 20 years, in which Rajendra Prasad, Nehru, Subhash Bose and Gandhiji all participated (it is doubtful if Azad was directly involved at any stage) for finding a mutually-acceptable settlement to a one-shot event!

Eminent jurist H M Seervai is quoted to place the responsibility for Partition on Gandhi, Nehru and Patel for having destroyed the

(Cabinet Mission) Plan. It is true that Azad did his utmost to prevent Partition but failed to persuade Nehru and Gandhi not to accept it. But this relates to the very end of the sad chapter.

Secondly, Justice Dharmadhikari's thesis states that in order to allay the fears and apprehensions in the minds of the Muslims and the Christians, the Constitution provided them special guarantees and protected their religious, cultural and educational rights in the form of Articles 25 to 30. This is an absurd reading of the Constitution. Articles 25-28 relate to the freedom of religion and are universal in their application to all citizens. Articles 29 and 30 relate to cultural and educational rights of minorities. Both sets distinct from each other, both in scope and purview, form part of the Fundamental Rights.

Then the *obiter dicta* says that only Muslims, Christians, Anglo-Indians and Parsis are recognised as religious minorities at the national level and attributes the size of the Muslim and Christian communities to the duration of Mughal and British rule! It hints as if the objective of the Mughal State and British rule was conversion. This is far from the truth.

The *obiter dicta* describes the Sikhs and the Jains as "so-called minority communities," which have "throughout been treated as part of the larger Hindu community". It seeks to reduce them to sects or sub-sects of the Hindu religion.

The fact is that in making the Constitution, the Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Parsis all were recognised as minorities.

But the real purpose of Mr Justice Dharmadhikari's travel into the uncharted territories, without a compass, becomes apparent when he identifies Jainism with what he calls Hindu Vedic religion, though the Jains reject the Vedas and the Brahminical philosophy, as their Tirthankaras and specially Mahavir have charted their own spiritual course like Buddhism.

Then he comes to his final conclusion: "Hinduism can be called a general religion and common faith of India." He thus elevates Hinduism above other religions of India and equates Hinduism with Indianness. This is an anti-thesis of the constitutional principle of equality of all religions which implies that religions, whatever the number of their followers, are equal before the law and that no distinction can be made among them on the ground of origin, i.e., where they were born! This projected superiority of Hinduism is not

only a denigration of Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism but also an affront to the status of Islam and Christianity and “Other Religions” which are recorded in every Census.

Having wandered through philosophy and religion, Mr Justice Dharmadhikari propounds his constitutional thesis for redefining the status of various religious groups as minorities and conferring it only to those which had to be re-assured of their religious and cultural rights in the background of Partition “in order to maintain the integrity of the country”. He opines that the process of the Constitution did not contemplate any addition to the list of religious minorities other than those identified in the course of independence negotiations or those which are materially well-off.

He seems to think that recognition of the religious identity of a group by the State is a favour, a privilege, a prerogative of the executive or the legislature in accordance with the political compulsion at a given time. Obviously, he has not studied the Constituent Assembly Debates. Dr Ambedkar forcefully argued for the recognition of the absolute rights of the religious minorities. And the first right of a minority is the right of recognition, followed by the right to equality before law. The Fundamental Rights, the finest crystallization of political thought and constitutional theory, are independent of time and place. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights had an impact on our Constitution but the International Covenants and, above all, the UN Declaration of Rights of Minorities, 1993, all reflect what the Constitution gave to the religious, linguistic, racial and cultural minorities. Today minority rights are universally accepted as indivisible from and essential to human rights, because almost every nation-state is multi-religious, multilingual and multicultural.

But Mr Justice Dharmadhikari sees assimilation in Hinduism as the alternative and desirable goal of religious groups in India while the international community recognises multi-religiosity as the natural state of things. Any majoritarian pressure to erase the identity and to absorb and assimilate their distinctive personality goes against the concept of freedom and equality.

Constitutional safeguards under the Constitution and in international law shall be reduced to zero if the distinct identity of any religious group, howsoever small, is denied and any group is forced to relate to Hinduism as a sect or sub-sect.

SHAME OF THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

M S RAHI*

France is a country of historic contradictions; and the French of volatile temperament, going with frenzy from one extreme to the other – from monarchy to republic and from republic to monarchy. The French penchant for violence is also well known, as all life in France – with barricades all around – suddenly comes to stand still. At one time, they fight for the republic, chanting slogans of ‘Liberty, Equality and Fraternity’; and then bring back the monarchy without any hesitation. This has happened many a time in France since the French revolution in 1789; and the process of history repeating itself still goes on.

Louise Napoleon, the nephew of Napoleon the Great, came to power after the second French outstanding universal value to mankind revolution in 1848, and shortly thereafter declared himself as the Emperor of France. It was during that time in Paris, that Karl Marx had written the most powerful words of the century in his Communist Manifesto: “Workers of the world unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains, You have a world to win,” setting in motion the general revolt of nations against their rulers. Karl Marx was expelled from France. The people of France had shown love for Marx, but they sided with Louise Napoleon, when he declared himself as an emperor and robbed the people of their liberty. Liberal intellectual writers and artists were suppressed. They were forced to go underground and form secret societies to continue their liberal intellectual work. Victor Hugo symbolized the predicament of France in his immortal classic *Les Miserables*, when he wrote on its title page, “So long as by the effect of laws and of customs, social degradation continues in the

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midst of civilization, making artificial hells and subjecting to the complications of chance the divine destiny of man.” Perhaps it was a comment on the decadent Paris, where not much liberty was left for the people. Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901), who lived during the turbulent times in France, depicted the quintessence of Parisian depravity in many of his paintings. It was unthinkable that the Republican France, the champion of liberalism and progress, should have moved closer to reactionary tyrants.

In 1865, in one such society of the liberal intellectuals, a French historian-jurist, Edouard de Laboulaye, while speaking at a dinner party, proposed that the people of France should construct a monument in the United States that would celebrate the American independence and the bonds between the two nations. One distinguished French sculptor, Fredric Auguste Bartholdi was also present there. He took upon himself to work on such a project. But there was no money for constructing such a colossal monument. It was only ten years later, when the Third Republic was established that the work started on the Statue of Liberty. It took almost ten years in its construction and the people of France collected funds for the same.

Lady liberty might never have been uncraeted on American shore, had not the New York World publisher Joseph Pulitzer launched his own campaign to cajole the poor and shame the rich into providing money for liberty’s new home. The people of America collected 3, 50 thousand dollars for constructing the pedestal for the installation of the Statue of Liberty on the Ellis Island in 1886. However, sour notes were sounded on the dedication day. The first was a jib by the *Times* of London, which called the unveiling, ‘a curious festival’ and wondered why liberty should be exported from France, which has so little thereof, to America which has so much’. Though the French peoples have always remained champions of freedom, their rulers, however, betrayed them many a time. Napoleon Bonaparte, the heroic child of the French Revolution and passionate supporter of human freedom, unfortunately, ended as tyrant emperor of France. On his abject surrender to the British, France felt humiliated. Napoleon III, his nephew, repeated the story.

The French admired the Americans for their War of Independence and in recognition of the same donated the Statute of Liberty, which

Bartholdi had constructed with the assistance of Alexandre-Gustav Eiffel, the famous engineer and builder of the Eiffel Tower. This Statue of Liberty became world famous as a symbol of human freedom. It inspired freedom movements all over the world. Emma Laurus, an American poetess' poem, *The New Colossus*, celebrating the spirit of Liberty, was chosen to be inscribed on the base of the Statue of Liberty, reading:

*“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she
With silent lips, “Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breath free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
“Send these, the homeless, tempest-lost to me,
I light my lamp beside the golden door!”*

And incidentally, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the founding member nations in Paris itself on 10th December, 1948. However, contradiction of France on human rights continued – one policy for internationally supporting the human rights and the other domestic one, curtailing the human rights of the people. Frederic Bastiat, one distinguished jurist of France, has clearly said, “It is not true that the function of law is to regulate our conscience, our ideas, our wills, our education, our opinions, our work, our trade, our talents, or our pleasures. The function of law is to protect the free exercise of these rights, and to prevent any person from interfering with the free exercise of these same rights by any other person”.

However, in 21st Century, France is doing exactly the opposite – trying to regulate the conscience of the people through the force of law. Lady Liberty, looking at France across the Atlantic, must be feeling ashamed of the new concept of liberty in France. Alas! the nation, which took pride in celebrating the independence of an other nation by constructing such a colossal symbol of Liberty, has come to the level of forfeiting the liberty of others – forgetting the Voltaire spirit – by passing such retrogressive laws which humiliate the people by removing their turbans. This unfortunate repetition of history is really agonizing.

The lesson which disillusioned Napoleon the Great left for his son in his Will needs to be re-read by the French: “To govern is to increase and spread morality, education, and happiness,” if they want to avoid such disillusionment in times to come.

FROM CROWN TO THE CROSS-ROADS – SIKH HISTORY GOES FULL CIRCLE –

JARNAIL SINGH*

It is an accepted fact that History repeats itself and those that fail to learn from History, fail in this world. Sikh History is also repeating itself and if we fail to learn from its lessons, we will only have ourselves to blame.

We are all aware that the march of Sikh history on the world stage begins with the advent of Guru Nanak, the Founder, in 1469. Over a span of 200 years, Sikhism evolved and matured into a major player and in the decades following Guru Gobind Singh Ji's creation of the Complete Man – the Khalsa in 1699, Sikhism under the able and dynamic leadership of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, arrived at the Cross Roads, one of which roads led to the Crown. The Khalsa took the right road and, within a few decades of intense struggle, took centre stage in Punjab and managed to defeat the mighty Mughal empire as well as Asia's finest and the most brilliant military genius, Ahmad Shah Durrani of Afghanistan. Banda Singh established the First Khalsa kingdom and from then onwards the Khalsa never looked back until the Khalsa kingdom stretched from Delhi in the South to Ladakh in the North, from Jamuna to the East to the Khyber Pass in the west.

What were the reasons behind this meteoric rise from a fledging religion to the mightiest power under Maharaja Ranjit Singh? And then just as rapidly, the Khalsa lost its sovereignty and became subservient to the British and from then went on a rapid decline, until today we have gone one full circle and stand at the Crossroads again !!! Now, as earlier, the roads either lead to a total submission and merger

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into the majority Hindu religion, apostasy and atheism among the youth, degeneration into various sects, *babadoms*, *derawaadism*, rituals and symbols, in other words, slip into total oblivion or once again March towards the Crown, maybe not in the same physical kingdom of Banda Singh Bahadur /Misls/or Maharaja Ranjit Singh, but to the sense of Pride in our fine religion, our fine credentials, as we become the World's Fifth largest religion, with 25 million followers worldwide.

We need to re-think, re-evaluate, re-invent, rejuvenate and re-empower ourselves to make ourselves relevant. We need to pull ourselves out of the quagmire of the Western thinking whereby everything goes according to rules, regulations, by-laws, enactments, etc, etc. This is no body's fault, we have been living in a westernized society for so long that we have forgotten or neglected our own homegrown solutions – solutions that have proved SUCCESSFUL, solutions that led us up the right road towards the Crown, once before. I am very sure those same solutions and practices if adopted can lead us back to the Crown we cherish so much and which is our birthright.

Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa in 1699, a fighting force that rivaled the finest soldiers of the land. Before he left this earth, Guru Gobind Singh gave us two guiding principles – Complete and total Faith in the Guru Granth (*Gurbani*) and the Democratic-Republican Punj Piara System of Rule by Consensus of the Guru Khalsa Panth. Total dedication by all our leaders to these two Principles in the past led us towards the Crown.

Banda Singh was sent to the Punjab by Guru Gobind Singh to carry forward His mission. He took this seriously and shook the Mughal govt to its very foundations. Many others who were not Sikhs also joined his forces against the govt, some for the opportunity to loot, others to taste freedom, but majority of the Sikhs out of a sense of religious duty. Baba Banda Singh's force uprooted the Govt Law and Order in many places, and Banda Singh was able to have a semblance of a rival Govt in small plots of territory. As a Devout Khalsa, Banda's Govt struck coins in the name of not Banda, but the Guru. Alas! it was too early in the day for a sustainable Govt of anti-Mughals, and the Banda Govt soon collapsed, but the Sikhs had tasted freedom and wouldn't let go of it so easily. Defeat merely drove them deeper into the struggle. The next person on the stage, Ahmad Shah Durrani, the

bitterest enemy of the Sikhs, was paradoxically their greatest benefactor. He invaded India and helped destroy the Mughal administration, then in 1761 he crushed the Maratha Power at Panipat, thereby creating a huge power vacuum, which the Sikhs filled quite adequately. Durrani tried his best to subdue the Sikhs and the Punjab, but retreated in the face of an relentless onslaught by the Sikhs. The 12 *Sardars* occupied territory between the Jamuna and Indus, a loose intermingled mass of independent land, with fluid borders that shifted constantly.

What strikes us with astonishment is that within a short span of about 50 years (1708-1760's), Sikhs had gone from being chased from pillar to post, hunted down like wild animals, with a price of Rupees 80 on each Sikh man, woman and child, sleeping on horseback, and always on the go, to being established rulers of the land.

If we take a real close look at the situation: The problems we faced then and those we face now are not so much different. Then, we were physically hunted down, and killed. The Sikhs were surrounded by enemies on all sides, and daily existence was a challenge. Thus the "problems" and "dangers" were more well-defined, and visible. Today the situation is not so clear-cut. The dangers the Panth faces are not as cut and dried. Apostasy is rearing its ugly head insidiously among the youth, and today has reached the middle-aged and even the elderly Sikhs. *Gurbani* is being questioned, misinterpreted and misrepresented, and useless and empty rituals as opposed to morality and high living are on the upbeat. "Truth is High, but higher still is truthful Living", declared Guru Nanak. But today this rings hollow in the Sikh context. We don't have many leaders that subscribe to truth or truthful living.

In the 1920's, the Sikh nation faced the very same situation as we face today. We overcame the odds and gained the crown in the 1760's and again in changed circumstances in the 1920's, and we can do it again today – if we follow the same Rules and Systems we used then.

1. The *Punj Piaras* were accepted by all, irrespective of status, as Supreme. No one from the commonest Sikh foot soldier to the Sardar/ Chief/ even the Maharaja dared to question the *Punj Piara's* verdict

2. The *Misls* met twice a year without fail and all decisions were

taken in *tabiah* of Guru Granth ji and the Punj Piaras. Such a decision taken after full consultation and absolute freedom of speech by all, was then accepted in toto by all. In essence, once a decision was arrived at, no one questioned it or disobeyed it.

3. The Entire Body of the Khalsa behaved as One – no doubt there were Sardars and Foot Soldiers, but when it came down to basics, there was absolute freedom among all Sikhs. The Sardars sat down and ate with the common Sikhs, there was upward and downward communication and mobility, each was a servant of the whole. If a Sardar committed something against the Moral Code, he could be and would be punished. Even the Maharaja was tied to a tree and lashed twenty times in public for a moral offence. In essence, no one was above the law of the Khalsa.

This is a very brief account of how we arrived at the Crossroads and then went on to claim the Crown.

The Sikhs are one of the most prosperous and politically-important religious minorities in India. Today, the Diaspora Sikhs are a vibrant part of many Foreign countries such as Canada, UK, USA, Australia, New Zealand, apart from the long-established migrant colonies in Malaysia, Singapore Indonesia and Thailand. The religion itself is of comparatively recent origin – it dates from the time of Babur – but the history of its community, called Panth , or “Path,” by the faithful, is a deeply rooted aspect of Sikh life. Since its inception, the Sikh community has been one of the major factors in Indian history, and in the Two World Wars proved its valour and valuable contribution as well on a Global scale.

The Mughals correctly “understood” that Sikhism was a separatist movement, a “Danger” to their Hegemony and Empire, and tried their best to kill it in its infancy by martyring Guru Arjun Ji and waging war against Guru Hargobind Ji, Guru Gobind Singh ji, but they failed and by the eighteenth century, the Sikhs had established a separate kingdom with its capital in Lahore. The British arrived in India as the British East India Company and gradually changed from traders to conquerors. They also realized the “ biggest obstacle to their Empire” lay in the form of the Sikh kingdom of Lahore. By 1850, they had annexed the whole of India barring only the Punjab Khalsa Kingdom of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. As long as the Maharaja was alive, the British kept their

distance, but once he was dead, they made their move, as the contemporary Muslim poet of the day Shah Muhammed writes, "*Jang Hind Punjab da hon laggab..dovehn patshahi faujaan bharian ne*" (on one side was the Khalsa Army of Punjab and on the opposite side was the British Allied Army of the Conquered Indians). After two of the bloodiest wars, known as the Anglo-Sikh wars, the British eventually won and annexed the Punjab. From then on the Sikhs became a major force in the British Allied army as the British gradually consolidated their hold over India, and during the failed and ineffective Indian Mutiny of 1857, it was the Sikhs that helped save the British, and after Indian Independence, the Sikh community, half of which had to flee Muslim Pakistan after partition, became economically and politically the most significant and successful minority community in India. The Sikhs are unique as a religious movement. Founded in the deepest spirituality and mysticism, they are a radically egalitarian group rooted deeply in their sense of community, called "brotherhood" (Khalsa), and history.

The Khalsa is unified by one aspect: all Sikhs are disciples of the founding Gurus of the religion – the word, "Sikh," means disciple. They are also, however, a highly militant religion and society; the community has to be protected with the highest martial vigilance and ability. Since the seventeenth century, Sikh fighters have been feared throughout India for their ability and sheer courage. The British, who employed them in their army in the nineteenth century, referred to them as the greatest of the "martial races."

It's an odd mixture, *Miri* and *Piri*, something unique to Sikhism. On the one hand, Sikhism is one of the most deeply spiritual and profoundly mystical religions of the world, advocating a social harmony and egalitarianism unrivalled by any other major religion, with the possible exception of Buddhism. On the other hand, the Sikh community is a militant, warrior community, willing to fight, sacrifice, at any cost to protect or further the interest of their community.

The core teaching of Sikhism is one truth: that God is one God and is behind and present in all of creation, particularly in each human soul. God can be directly connected to by an individual by examining his or her soul; this examination is carried out by meditating on the name of God. There is no need of any intermediary functionary, such

as rituals, priests, fasting, churches, mosques, or anything else. All other gods are human particularizations of the one God, that is, they particularize one aspect of God. So all religions are both legitimate and illegitimate.

Perhaps the most radical of Guru Nanak's teachings was the rejection of caste or class. Since all human beings contain God within themselves, social distinction and inequality are externalizations of humanity's sinfulness. The ideal community is one in which no social distinctions are in place at all. The early history of Sikhism under Nanak and the first four Gurus is largely an attempt to build a class-free and caste-free society.

The core of Guru Nanak's teachings involve three fundamental doctrines.

- **Nam: The Name.** A direct, unmediated experience of God can be attained by meditating on God's name (Nam); this name, according to Guru Nanak, is *ek*, or "One." Each human being can overcome his sinfulness and achieve a mystical union with God by meditating on this name.
- ***Shabad*: The Word.** God is revealed through the spoken word (*shabad*). The spoken word reveals the nature and name of God as well as the methods by which one can meditate on the Name and achieve union with God.
- **Guru: The Teacher.** The Name and the Word are revealed through the Guru; knowledge of both only comes through the Guru. The Sikh concept of the Guru is different from the Hindu concept, for the Sikh Guru is synonymous with the Name and the Word. It is slightly inaccurate to say this, but it comes close to hitting the mark: in many ways, the Guru is the voice of God speaking to humanity.

The Guru is one of the foundational concepts of Sikhism, and before his death, Guru Nanak appointed his successor. He was followed by nine more Gurus; the tenth and the last declared the office to be discontinued and there has been no Guru since. While Guru Nanak established the central teachings of Sikhism, each Guru who followed added significantly to the religion (which was one aspect of the office of Guru). The figure of the Guru gave Sikhism a stable continuity from its earliest and most volatile period; it also made it

adaptable to changing situations. The figure of the Guru, who had the same authority as the founding Guru, allowed the religion to change and adapt to a growing community and growing hostility from the Mughal emperors.

THE GURUS

The first four Gurus of Sikhism established many of the customs and rituals of Sikhism. The fourth Guru, Guru Ram Das (1574-1581) founded the city of Amritsar as a place of Sikh pilgrimage. It is to this day the most important city in Sikh geography; the central temple of Sikhism, the Golden Temple, is located there.

The most important of the early Gurus, however, was Guru Arjun, who led the Sikh community as Guru from 1581 to 1606. Guru Arjun was the Guru who assembled the verses of Guru Nanak and the first four Gurus into the anthology, *Adi Granth*, which became the scripture of the Sikh community. Guru Arjun was the first Sikh Guru to fall foul of the Mughal authorities, thus setting the tone for the remaining history of the Mughal Empire. When Prince Khusrau rebelled against his father, Jahangir, Guru Arjun helped him. Jahangir, growing suspicious of the steady growth of the Sikh community and Guru Arjun's increasing influence over the region, arrested him in 1606 and tortured him to death.

This event, more than any other, converted the Sikh community into a militant community. Guru Arjun was succeeded by his son, Guru Hargobind (1606-1644), who built the Sikh community into a military power. He elevated martyrdom to an ideal of the religion; this was not merely dying for the faith, but being killed while fighting for the Sikh community. At this point in history, the Sikh community began to actively resist the Mughal Empire and several battles were fought between the two sides.

GURU GOBIND SINGH JI

The most militant of the Gurus was the tenth and the last, Guru Gobind Singh. Under Aurangzeb, who fanatically tried to suppress non-Muslim practices, the Sikhs were persecuted viciously by the Mughal government. In response, Guru Gobind Singh transformed the Sikh community into a military community. For the Mughals and

for Muslim historians, Guru Gobind Singh was no better than a warlord with no religious credentials. He was a powerful military general with a profound vision of transforming Sikh society into a militaristic society—an absolute necessity for a community surrounded by a hostile and powerful empire. Guru Gobind Singh established the fourth and last most important doctrine of Sikhism (the first three being the *Naam*, the Word, and the Guru): this was the doctrine of the Khalsa, or the “Brotherhood” of Sikhs. The khalsa gives the community a deep sense of unity founded on Rehit – Discipline. The most important of these is an initiation rite called *Khande Batte dee Pahul* (Amrit). In this rite, the believer drinks sweetened water that has been stirred with a dagger (the dagger represents the initiate’s willingness to fight for the faith and the community). After this ceremony, the initiate is given a name which is added on to his own name: Singh, or “lion.” This common name identifies each person as part of the community, as part of the same family, and as willing to fight for the faith. Each Sikh is required to wear an external uniform known as the *Panj Kakaars*, to make manifest his membership in the community: these include uncut hair, *Kangha* (comb), *Karra* (steel bangle), *Kachh* (shorts) and *Kirpan* - a steel dagger.

There is no doubt that the formation of the khalsa is the single most important event in the Sikh experience of history. It fully unified the community and made it a force to reckon with militarily. After the formation of the khalsa, the political and military power of the Sikhs grew tremendously. By the early 1800’s, the Sikhs managed to carve out an independent kingdom within the Mughal Empire, which they retained until the British annexations in the 1850’s. The Sikh military brotherhood was the most powerful fighting force that rose against the Mughal Empire in its closing days.

Guru Gobind Singh declared the Guruship to be officially ended at his death. From his death onwards, religious authority has rested in the scriptures, which were renamed *Guru Granth Sahib*, and in the Sikh community – called *Guru Khalsa Panth*.

To this day, the Sikh community is economically and politically very powerful and is one of the most restive of India’s minorities...as well as one of most vibrant migrant communities in Canada/USA/UK and other places in the Diaspora. In India It has demanded greater

autonomy and has militantly defied the government which partly led to the invasion of the Sikh Golden Temple in Amritsar. To Akbar, the Sikhs were a religious community deserving imperial support. To Jahangir, they were a growing political force that potentially threatened the Empire. To Aurangzeb, the Sikhs were dangerous heretics to be stamped out at any cost. To the successors of Aurangzeb, the Sikhs were a major military and social force pulling the Empire apart. As a separate and militant community, the Sikhs still find themselves partly foreigners in their own country, suspicious of and suspected by the dominant government.

THE SIKH RENAISSANCE AND NEED FOR AN INTERNATIONAL APEX BODY

In the early 20th century, Sikhism faced almost the same type of situation we face today. Sikhism was on guard from all sides, Hinduism had its Arya Samaj Movement which aimed at absorbing Sikhism into the fold of Hinduism, and the newly established Christian Missionaries were also very active among the Sikhs, even to the extent of converting a Sikh Royal Household. The Sikh nation rose to the occasion and started the Singh Sabha Lehr which then evolved into the Gurdwara Sudhaar Lehr culminating in the hugely successful Morchas of the Shiroamni Akali Dal which brought British Govt to its knees, and Sikhs tasted sweet success in the formation of the SGPC as a sort of an Apex Body to manage all historical gurdwaras in the Punjab region. Despite many decades of trying, the Sikhs have been unable to get this extended to cover the whole of India, under an All India Gurdwara Act.

Now we face an almost similar situation, with one big difference. Sikhs now are spread out all over the World and the Diaspora Sikhs form a substantial section of the Sikh Nation. The SGPC is governed by an Indian Act confined to only Punjab state in India and is, therefore, inadequate to satisfy all Sikhs worldwide. Hence the need for an International Confederation of Sikhs.

But the question arises ..Why Confederation? The answer is that it obviously works, based on tried and successful Misl System/*Gurmattas*/consultations/democracy of *Punji* instead of one individual.

By the time of the late Seventeenth Century, when Guru Tegh

Bahadur, stood his ground for religious freedom and mutual tolerance and understanding between the different religions and cultures in the Land, was martyred in Delhi on the orders of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, Sikhism had begun its relentless march towards eventual “independent entity” – a Third Force as the British called it later on. Guru Gobind Singh in his historic Revelation of the Order of the Khalsa on Vasakhi Day 1699 sealed this Path. Since that eventful day, the Guru Khalsa Panth has never looked back.

Guru Gobind Singh reinforced in the Khalsa the Internal Moral Discipline, the External Discipline of the *rebat*, and the Moral Courage to Stand Out in Millions as the Unique and one of his own kind. A Khalsa from then on could never “hide” behind the anonymity of the public at large. A member could be instantly recognizable from afar.

Guru Gobind Singh also codified the unique concept of *Punj* biasas which had been propagated by the previous nine Gurus. From 1699 Vasakhi Day, the Punj Khalsa was to represent the GURU in Person. Guru Gobind Singh gave the First Five the *Pahul* and then took *pahul* from them to emphasize that NO ONE, not even the GURU himself was exempted from this rule. The Concept of *gurmatta* and rule of the Consultation instead of an individual’s decision took root and flourished as the Khalsa began to assert itself...finally turning into the Mislis or “groups” that practised the rule of all for one and one for all. This win-win situation worked so well that the Sikhs, although “divided” into 12 Mislis or groups led by individual *sardars*, defeated the greatest Military Genius of the time Ahmad Shah Durrani. Ahmad Shah lost to the Sikhs when he had managed to completely destroy the Marhatta Power and vanquished the Mughal Armies. Compared to the Marhattas and the Mughals the Sikhs were an insignificant force – but they emerged victorious, and established their little kingdoms all over Punjab – all this within a few decades of the passing of Guru Gobind Singh from the scene. Against all odds – being hunted down like wild animals, having no home or hearth, spending their entire life on horseback, always on the run, having a price on their head, not big enough to wage full scale war but only small skirmishes with the enemy, the Sikhs went on to be the rulers of the land of their birthright. This was possible only with the use of the

Winning Formula of the PUNJ/Consultation used by the Misls.

Today the Khalsa Panth faces a similar situation. We are at the losing end from outside and from within. We need to focus on our long-term “needs” and evolve it is very. The Panth is spread out all over the World. Each Diaspora Sikh community has its own unique set of restraints of environment/cultural influences/political environment/economic forces, etc, etc., that has to be dealt with. one Common SOLUTION for all won't work. Yet we all have certain core values that we all share with all Sikhs all over the world. We have to work on the premise that we can agree to disagree on certain points. This is the most compelling reason for the establishment of an International Confederation of Sikhism – an Apex Body that has worldwide representation – so that decisions reached at the Head can be suitably disseminated at ground zero.

Lets have a look at the MISL SYSTEM and how it was so successful in the late 17th century and how its validity can be used today for our benefit.

KHALSA CONFEDERATION – AKA THE MISL SYSTEM

The Misl System can be rightly called the Golden Age of Sikhism (if we include the time up to the Khalsa Raaj of Maharaja Ranjit Singh as that was also a part of the same ideology).

WHY WAS THIS KHALSA CONFEDERATION SO SUCCESSFUL ?

The answer lies in the four aspects of Khalsa Brotherhood's ideology that were strictly followed. Equality of all, Justice for all, Khalsa above all and Gurmatta Principle of republican Democracy.

1. Equality of all Khalsa. In the Misls, although there was a Sardar or leader – that was strictly for command structure purposes – in effect all were equal. From the foot soldier to the sardar – no one was more equal than the other. As an example, we can see that when Punjab Governor of the Mughal Govt decided to make peace with the Sikhs and offer them a *Jagir* and title of Nawab to go with it, the Khalsa Forces had a meeting and the post was offered to the Stable Hand Kapur Singh, who then became Nawab Kapur Singh. In an ordinary classification, the title and *jagir* would have gone to a *sardar* of one of the Misls. This was one Underlying Principle of faith Guru

Gobind Singh had drilled into the Khalsa and this was so faithfully followed that it was the strength of the Confederation. Another example – for an alleged indiscretion, the Jathedar Akal Takht Phoola Singh ordered the Maharaja Ranjit Singh to be bound to a tree and given 20 lashes in public. The Maharaja complied immediately and without protest from any quarter. Third example – all the *Sardars*, Banda Singh Bahadur before them, and even Maharaja Ranjit Singh did not strike coins or legal tender in their own names, but in the name of Guru Gobind Singh and Guru Nanak or the Khalsa. This proved beyond doubt that the *Sardars* and *Maharajas* were ruling in the name of the Guru and not in their personal capacity. Fourth Example – the Sardar and his territory was the *malkiat* of all – not hereditary. The next successor was chosen from among all the capable ones. Many times, the *sardar's* sons or relatives were ignored and passed over.

2. JUSTICE FOR ALL

This was another of Guru Gobind Singh's injunctions strictly followed. Justice was not denied to anyone – Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Isaii were all equal in the Sikh-ruled territories and the Maharaja gave equal amounts of gold and other aid to all religious institutions without fear or favour. Sikhism had evolved a distinct set of ideals and the basic framework of the ethics had been formed by the end of the 18th century. Whenever a Sikh 'Leader' was found 'wanting', he was shown the right path. No Sikh Leader, no matter how powerful, dared to go against the Sikh Ideals.

3. KHALSA PANTH – COMMONWEALTH – ABOVE ALL

This sacred institution was created by the Gurus and given its final shape by Guru Gobind Singh at Vasakhi 1699 by merging himself into it. No Sikh, big or small, dared to do anything that violated the tenets laid down by Gurbani or Gurus. There was no exemption to anyone on any account. No Single individual or group of individuals could be considered above the Panth. No Sikh ruler dared think of himself as a 'ruler' destined by God to rule and, therefore, special in any way – everyone kept always in mind that their position as due to the grace of the Guru and the Panth. The Gurus had strictly enjoined upon the Khalsa that all decisions were to be taken through the *Punj* –

Panchayat – Councils and all important decisions relating to common interest of the Community must have the approval of those affected by them. Gurus had evolved this democratic Ideals and all followed them in letter and spirit. In the Panth, this process of democracy and Republican Ideals was called the *Gurmatta*. Every triumph was not of the individual, but the entire Panth . A solemn promise made in the presence of the Guru Granth *Ji* was always followed to the best of the ability. Morality standards were high and followed.

4. GURMATTÀ – REPUBLICAN DEMOCRACY AT WORK

The Gurmatta started in the *sangat*. A Mata is an ‘opinion’ or ‘resolution’. In the Khalsa Concept, when an opinion is placed before the congregation of Sikhs (*sangat*) in the presence of the GURU Granth Ji, and some decision/common consent is arrived at after dispassionate and unbiased discussions and deliberations and is confirmed by formal *ardas* and *bukem* of Guru, it is considered Final and binding on all as it is from the Guru himself. This now becomes known as a *gurmatta*. The First Person to submit to a Gurmatta was Guru Gobind Singh *Ji* himself when he submitted to the Khalsa Punj at Vasakhi 1699 and at Chamkaur later on. Through a revolutionary and democratic step, Guru Gobind Singh brought Guruship to the level of his Khalsa followers – and they proved able “containers” of this asset.

The *gurmatta* concept helped the Panth ‘divide itself’ for better organization and centralise itself for better counsel. When Sikhs met for a *gurmatta* – all individuals ceased to exist for the greater good of the Whole. Thus, a *gurmatta* is religiously and morally binding on every khalsa everywhere. In theory, Khalsa the *Sarbat Kablsa* was Primary democracy similar to the Democracy of Ancient Greece, Athens and Socrates – at other times it became representative democracy like the modern democracies. The Sardar faithfully implemented the wishes of his followers who elected him. No matter how many dissented or agreed to any *gurmatta* but when the final deliberation was announced, it would be carried unanimously – as a decision made by the Guru himself. Even those absent from a particular meeting never opposed the resolutions passed.

To conclude, we can clearly see that this Dal Khalsa/*Sarbat* Khalsa/*gurmatta* were the Essential win-win components of the success

of the Khalsa Panth in the difficult times of the 17th-18th centuries. In the 1920s also, the same principles of unity in diversity overcame great odds to bring the mighty British govt to its knees.

We can implement this Winning Formula in our present situation. The International Sikh Confederation can be constructed, representatives of all Sikh communities can send in their representatives, and deliberations can take place and a final Gurmatta can be passed, the representatives can ensure that their communities follow the decisions taken as one coming from the GURU.

To sumup, I would like to put forward the view that We are a Freedom loving people – we just cannot accept all those minute laws, rules and regulations that govern Western Society. The more the ‘Laws’ the more we ‘rebel’. Our past shows we are more attracted to *Misl* types of *sardars* who are strong leaders, very successful at what they do, yet very approachable, humble and down to earth. Guru Gobind Singh *Ji* bowed down on bended knees BEFORE the PUNJ to show us Leadership by Example. The question is : WHY not our present so-called ‘leaders’ emulate the Tenth Guru? I am sad to say that our Organizations, our Gurdwaras, Societies, Panthic Managements are run by leaders who do not have any of these qualities.

That in short is our failure. In our case, ‘reform’ has to begin from the top. We must elect or place in positions of power leaders who are humble, approachable, and effective like the Sikh leaders of the old. To be a Sikh leader, one must be like Guru Gobind Singh *Ji* or Baba Banda Singh *ji* or the 12 Misl Sardars, *maan hundeh boi nimanna, taan hundeh boi nitanna*...having the strength of steel but being soft as silk. With leaders like these, we can bring down apostasy, *pakhandee babas* and *derawaad* will disappear from the scene, rituals and empty *dikhana* will retreat...Truthful Living is the key to this winning situation.

I haven’t had enough time to write up a complete paper, but I am sure given the time we can all work towards finding more complete solutions, provided we are on the right path from the start. I firmly believe the System given to us by Guru Gobind Singh *ji* is one such complete system, and its success has been proven twice.

SPIRITUALITY AND SCIENCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

GURBAKHSI SINGH USA*

The thought of spirituality is as old as humanity itself. Along with the development of human knowledge, the nature of faith in the concept of Supernatural Authority has also changed.

Hinduism, a major faith in the East, claims its origin in antiquity. Its date of founding and the name of the founder cannot be identified. It started even before man developed written language. Many sages and holy people have contributed to it over ages. It is a complex combination of many beliefs, sometimes mutually contradicting each other. Semitic religions of the West describe their origins from the very first human beings, Adam and Eve. The first faith, named Judaism, was followed by Christianity and Islam. Native people of North America, Africa, Australia, and other regions of the world, have their own spiritual beliefs and methods of worship, uninfluenced by the above mentioned major religions.

FAITH VS SCIENCE

Science dealing with matter and space, has also slowly revolutionized the thinking of man. Scientific discoveries, however, did not always agree with the beliefs of the faiths. As the human knowledge developed, many early religious beliefs come to be accepted only as mythology and legends. Later discoveries of science did not agree with even the basic beliefs of the faiths. Hence, the scientists came into clash with the protectors of the faiths.

About five centuries ago, Galileo stated that the earth revolves around the sun. He was punished by the Pope because this observation

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was different from what is stated in the *Bible*. (In 1986, the then Pope regretted the punishment given to Galileo and he accepted that the scientist was correct and the Pope was wrong.) On the basis of his findings in the 19th century, Darwin theorized that the life on earth, including humans, was not created on a specific date(s), but evolved over millions of years. Whereas the scientists now accept it as a fact and teach it in the schools, those who take the *Bible* literally still do not believe in the theory of Darwin. This is a major issue today being argued between scientists and the people of the Book.

The same is true for the religious beliefs in the East. The people worshipped the sun, the moon, and some creatures as gods, some even do it today. They also believe that only some specific days/dates are sacred for certain religious or social activities. With all this, science does not agree.

FAITHS AS FOUNTAINS FOR FIGHTS

Based on the religious beliefs, the major faith groups we have today are theists, agnostics, atheists, and those who believe only in the soul, but not in God. Basic morality preached by different faiths in general is, however, similar. It is strange, rather unfortunate, that those who believe in the Creator, God, do not have the same definition of Him. Therefore, each religion claims that only the believers of that faith are qualified to be admitted to the Heaven. People of other faiths, even though they are theists, will not be permitted entry into Heaven because they believe in a “false God” and not the “true God.”

These beliefs split society into opposing and mutually hating groups, which behaved as enemies of one another. They are behaving as such even today in the age of science. Different religious beliefs have been the cause of most of the world's wars. This has done great harm to people all over the world. This is history well documented in the history books. Ironically, even within the same faith, bloody intra-religious fights are going on among their sects. For example: Protestant and Catholic clashes in North Ireland, Shiite and Sunni Muslim battles in the middle east, high caste and low caste Hindu killings in India, violent tribal clashes in Africa and other places.

Maybe because of this, (challenges from the science and inter- and intra-religious fightings) and the believers fighting, Toynbee, the

world-famous British historian was pessimistic about the acceptance of the traditional religions by the people in the coming times. A large number of people agree with him.

SEARCH FOR PEACE

In the East, a holy man named Nanak, who went to a nearby river, was not seen for three days. People, both Hindus and Muslims, gathered around him when he came out of the river, and asked him, "Where were you?" Nanak revealed a new thought in the field of spirituality to the people gathered there. He told them, "I was summoned by the Creator – our common Father-Mother, and was given the holy message to be shared with all the people. The sermon God gave me is: "Do not divide human beings into Hindus, Muslims, or into other groups/faiths; they are all My children and equal. I love all of them, they may love Me by any name - Allah, Ram, or so no. No one should be hated or considered alien."

Nanak gave up his job, took long journeys all over Asia to the holy places of the Hindus, Muslims, and other believers. Wherever he went, he preached, "Anyone who loves God, realizes Him, and achieves the mission of human life. Beyond this earth, there is no physical place assumed to be Heaven or Hell anywhere in outer space. When we love the Lord and sing His virtues, we enjoy Heavenly bliss. When we ignore Him and become prisoners of vices such as ego, lust, anger, and greed, we undergo the sufferings of Hell here on this very earth."

Guru Nanak founded institutions, called Sangats (a congregation of equals without discrimination) where all people, Hindus, Muslims, low caste, high caste, rich, poor, etc., were to sit together and recite His praises. For this, they adopted many names, (Allah, Ram, Rahim, Gopal, Krishan, Niranjan, Guru, etc.), with equal respect for all names, then in vogue among people of different faiths. The holy scriptures compiled by Guru Nanak's successors include hymns by about three dozen devotees of God, irrespective of their being a Hindu or a Muslim, a low caste or poor. They all had adopted different names for God, but they all realized the ultimate truth, "The same Lord, our common Father-Mother, is reflected in every human being. We can love Him in any language and by any name, the way we may address our father as Dad, Daddy, or Pappa. The best way to worship God and to please

Him is to sincerely serve all people whatever their faith, caste, colour, or race. Hurting anybody's mind displeases the Father, and is, therefore, a sin."

This thought united the mutually-hating Hindu-Muslim communities. It also removed the inferiority and superiority complexes among Hindus of different castes. They joined together in common congregations, which brought peace to the split-society. They were called Sikhs, the students or the seekers of Truth. Their faith came to be known as Sikhism, its actual name is *Gurmat*, the wisdom coming from the Guru, the guide.

It is probably because of the universal message and the non-discriminatory nature of the hymns in the sacred writings of the Sikhs that made Toynbee conclude, "Mankind's religious future may be obscure; yet one thing can be foreseen. The living higher religions are going to influence each other more than ever before. . . In this coming religious debate, the Sikh religion and its scriptures, the Guru Granth, will have something special of value to say to the rest of the world."

PRISTINE GLORY OF THE SIKH PANTH

We, the members of the Guru Khalsa Panth, feel great by telling, "Our scriptures is great, they are for all people, they are non-communal. Our Gurus suffered for religious freedom and human rights of the weak. They fought against state terrorism, social evils and injustice being done to the helpless." But, the question before us should be, "Will the Gurus who suffered for preaching truth be proud of us and our contribution to the world peace?" The glory of the Panth will resbine if we Sikhs, particularly the representatives of the Sikh organisations practise their faith sincerely:

- i. Let us value truthful living, and be convinced of its greatness and its necessity for the world peace today. Let us not sell our faith for filthy lucrative available to us in India or anywhere else. Living according to our faith should always have a first priority, whatever sacrifice it may need. Once a Sikh preacher when asked, "What is the use of keeping uncut hair and tying a turban?", replied, "If the Sikhs submit to ego, greed, lust, anger, etc., as do the other people, this question will continue to crop up in the minds of the youth. The best answer to such question is that Sikhs start

living the life of a Sikh, at least majority of them should be known for living an upright and virtuous life as required by their faith. Without being described, people will know how great is the value of keeping the turban of a Sikh; they make an ideal humanist.”

- ii. People want to live in safety without being harassed for their beliefs and without being deprived of their human rights and individual dignity. For this, we should share the teachings and heritage of the Khalsa Panth with the rest of the world searching for peace in society.

In the end, the mission can be achieved not by writing such articles but by the example of role models who practice the message of the Gurbani and can share it with others. Instead of finding weaknesses and short-comings of the politicians/preachers, let those committed to Sikh faith make a start themselves. The Panth will join them. They did it earlier more than once. Success submits to those who serve and sacrifice for protecting human rights and religious freedom, as was recently done by the founders of the Singh Sabha Movement.

The field is open for scholars and leaders gifted with political acumen and awareness of the modern society and those who can provide right leadership and motivate the people, in particular the Sikhs, are urged to motivate people to recognise the Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of people and make them live together with mutual regards for the sake of peace in the world.

□

*At the right place is my devotion fixed –
This by the Lord, maker of union is brought about.
Saith Nanak :
Amid millions of impulses in mind arising,
The Divine Beloved from sinking saves me.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 519

ਲਗੜੀ ਸੁਥਾਨਿ ਜੋੜਣਹਾਰੈ ਜੋੜੀਆ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਲਹਰੀ ਲਖ ਸੈ ਆਨ ਡੁਬਣ ਦੇਇ ਨ ਮਾ ਪਿਰੀ ॥

A TALE OF HELPLESSNESS
– GROWING DRUG ADDICTION IN PUNJAB –

REEMA ANAND*

Today I feel helpless as a Punjabi foremost, then a helpless writer and finally a helpless filmmaker! After touring the state for three days and three nights, I realise my state, which was once an epitome of prosperity, joy and laughter, *basant* and mustard fields, is slowly sinking into an unmentionable physical and mental despair.

I stare into a near future, where Punjabis (70 per cent) will be mere zombies and hence soft target for any form of exploitation — by the State, vested foreign interests and mercenary individuals. It is a ticking time-bomb.

How can I, in my individual capacity, stop a class VII student of my state from drifting into drug addiction and also stop him from inducing his equally innocent friend? I cannot, therefore I am helpless.

How can I ask his parents to be more vigilant and stop pampering him with money and mobiles, which make him go looking for other “kicks”?

How can the school authorities of the state shut their eyes on a problem which has become an epidemic in the last seven years? How can they shirk their responsibility and not carry out an anti-drug awareness campaign in the schools?

The information about the nexus of the police, politicians and drug mafia is nothing new for the general public or the media. But I wish truly that at least one politician who unloads trucks and tractor-trolleys of “bhukki” during elections to woo his voters, and one police official who waits for his share from the proceeds of drug sale, could

* The writer is making a documentary film on drug addiction in Punjab. (*Courtesy: The Tribune, November 22, 2005*)

witness how a young Punjabi youth, when he has no means to buy drugs, when he has already disposed of his home articles to provide for the “nasha,” pours kerosene over himself and sets himself afire! When his poor old parents cannot stand his mental and physical agony and request the doctor on duty “give him an injection which puts him out of his pain forever”.

The 20-year-old taxi driver could be my son and despair grips me when he says, “It is not that bad in my case. I just take small doses, but if I don’t get it then I can’t drive”. I look at his thin, drug-abused frame and his constantly shifting eyes, and wonder, where has the once eulogised Punjabi “gabru” vanished?

While sitting in another de-addiction clinic, the doctor, who has brought out countless books and magazines on drug abuse, educates me. “Where the urbanites are concerned, parents don’t want to acknowledge that their children are into drugs. It is a social stigma and they would rather open their pockets to aiding their children rather than curing them!”

What apathy!

He points to a young lady, “she has been married for two years, has one-year-old child and the husband is an addict. She has been bringing him regularly for treatment. But it is not possible for all ruralites to undergo this treatment. They cannot afford a private doctor’s fee and government hospitals are not equipped to handle de-addiction.”

I look at Dr Vandana of Bathinda, who is normally besieged with drug-addicts numbering 40-70 in the peak season, who has made de-addicting Punjabis her mission and feel hope stirring inside me.

Moreover, she charges them a very nominal fee so that they have no hesitation in coming to her.

“I can go to the extent of touching their feet and begging to leave drugs.” Dr Praveen Agarwal, who runs O.C.E.D — Organisation for Children’s Education and Development — along with 40-odd members, says: “We have adopted 20-odd government schools in the Mamdot sector and provide educational facilities and also run an awareness programme about drugs. Because we know that these very children whose parents have been labourers for many generations will be used as drug carriers from across the border”.

This awareness in a 32-year-old was an eye-opener!

Today there are no jobs to rehabilitate those graduates or professionals who undergo de-addiction and want to lead a normal life. After drifting in a void for some months, without anything to exhaust their energies, these youth go back to being addicts. When they run out of money, they become peddlers. I feel helpless, for State policies are not what they should be, and one can do nothing about it.

On the one hand, I see the youth of my state killing themselves and, on the other, I see unaccounted poppy blooming in the neighbouring Rajasthan, UP and MP, and I feel helpless that the powers that matter cannot see where Punjab is heading! Where is the State consciousness?

Young Megha, who has been my companion for some hours, says, “Maybe because we have become used to this extensive drug abuse, your reaction seems strange!”

Harnek, who has been driving me around, comments, “There are parents, who will fall before you and beg you to get their sons cured, but there are also others for whom peddling is the only means of livelihood.”

What had started for me as a **recce** for my next documentary, has become an ordeal and a tale of helplessness. Would making a film help wipe out the agony and tears of thousands of mothers, fathers, wives and sisters? Is someone out there listening to what has gone wrong with my Punjab?

□

*By joining the society of saints Man's soul is illumined for ever,
And he obtains a dwelling at God's feet.*

O my soul, daily repeat the Name of the Omnipresent Lord.

*My soul, by this, thou shalt always obtain coolness, tranquility
and peace, and all thine sins shall depart.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 378

ਸਦਾ ਸਦਾ ਆਤਮ ਪਰਗਾਸੁ ॥ ਸਾਧਸੰਗਤਿ ਹਰਿ ਚਰਣ ਨਿਵਾਸੁ ॥
ਰਾਮ ਨਾਮ ਨਿਤਿ ਜਪਿ ਮਨ ਮੇਰੇ ॥
ਸੀਤਲ ਸਾਂਤਿ ਸਦਾ ਸੁਖ ਪਾਵਹਿ ਕਿਲਵਿਖ ਜਾਹਿ ਸਭੇ ਮਨ ਤੇਰੇ ॥

BHAI LADHA SINGH JI OF FARIDKOT

GURCHARAN SINGH*

When I am attempting to write impressions about our illustrious grandfather, Bhai Ladha Singh of Faridkot, my resources are scanty. My parents or others who knew him are no more and there is hardly any literature where his life was narrated, except a small booklet distributed at the time of his death, which only gives a very sketchy view of his life. There is a brief reference of his association with Akali Kaur Singh in a biography by Himmat Singh (Guru Nanak Dev University). There is a reference in biography of Bhai Takhat Singh Zinda Shaheed (famous for setting up Sikh Kanya Mahavidyala at Ferozpur) written by Col Dalvinder Singh & published by Sikh Missionary College, Ludhiana, regarding association of Bhai Ladha Singh in the *parchar* cell of the Institution. And introduction to 1st Vol of *Faridkot Wala Teeka* (translation of Guru Granth Sahib) by Bhai Badan Singh jointly with Bhai Ladha Singh also reminds me of him. I have to mainly fall back on my own memory and a few words exchanged with some of the persons who came in contact with him. There is a portrait of him in colour and some photographs preserved in our family album, which remind us of him. We talk of him at family gatherings. There is a gurdwara built by him and now named after him situated in our Basti (Manjeet Inderpura, Faridkot). There is our ancestral home left by him as our inheritance, a few hundred books from his personal library which bring back old associations. Otherwise time has its toll; the present generation with its own struggle for existential concerns, and changed priorities has no time to remember him.

Even as a little boy at the time of his death, I cannot forget that

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during his last journey from home to funeral grounds, almost the whole of Faridkot town joined the last procession. This can tell the reader of his popularity among the masses. He had no official authority, nor political power. He was only a Bhai Sahib, a venerated person in the Sikh tradition and culture, whom everybody admired and respected.

There is a legend in our family that our ancestry goes up to Bhai Jetha who was a devout Sikh in the Court of the fifth Master, and who was among the five Sikhs who accompanied him on his last journey before martyrdom. Successors of Bhai Jetha remained devout Sikhs, and his great grandsons got the *amrit pabul*, and fought in the battles of Anandpur Sahib. Some of the successors later also participated in Anglo-Sikh wars. After the fall of Sikh Kingdom, the family who belonged to Rohtas migrated to Jammu area & settled in Mirpur across the Punjab border (now in Pak). Sikhs settled in Jammu & Kashmir have always been a neglected minority, the affluent communities being Pandits and Dogras. Petty trading was the family business, but attachment to the Guru was always strong which carried us through difficult times. Bhai Sahib was born on 15th *Vaisakh*, 1940 BK and brought up in these circumstance. He was the third of the four sons of Bhai Buta Singh. Not satisfied with the situation of difficult economic conditions of the family, as a young man, he started on his way to Punjab along with his wife Bebe Har Kaur to explore better prospects.

He wanted to sharpen his talent as a *ragi*. His tour took him to various places including Amritsar, Tarn Taran, Khadoor Sahib and Wazir Bhullar where he stayed for some time to improve his *kirtan* under the famous Ragi Bhai Santa Singh. Here a daughter was born to them. She grew up there and in her teens was engaged. Before her marriage materialized she expired at a very young age. Their other children also did not survive.

He then moved to Ferozepur Cantt, and started *kirtan parchar* at the Gurdwara where probably Raja Brijinder Singh of Faridkot appreciated his talent and invited him to the state.

In Ferozepur, he came in touch with Bhai Takhat Singh, the head of Sikh Kanya Maha Vidyalaya, the first Sikh Women's educational institution. Here his wife completed her middle level school education while Bhai Sahib took the duties of a preacher and *ragi* of the Vidyalaya,

Promises were made to him for a life-long association, but somehow things did not work out, because some associates in the Vidyala created misunderstanding between Bhai Sahib & Bhai Takhat Singh, and he had to leave for Wazir Bullar again.

He used to visit Faridkot now & then for *parchar*. Raja Sahib promised him life-long service and adequate compensation. Ultimately, he moved to Faridkot in *Vaisakh* 1968 BK. For a year, he served without any salary, and then was appointed as *hazuri ragi* for *kirtan* in the royal premises at gurdwara Quila Mabarik, where Raja and his family used to listen to him, regularly. Gradually, more and more responsibilities were entrusted to him which included weekly Dewans in Gurdwara State Dharamsala, Gurpurab celebrations, then Secretary, Gurdwara management Committee, Faridkot (looking after the historic Gurdwaras of Faridkot State) and Manager of the "Teeka House", dealing with, printing, publication and distribution of first ever translation of Guru Granth Sahib known as *Faridkot Wala Teeka*. The translation was done by Bhai Badan Singh & other Sikh scholars of traditional style. Probably, Bhai Ladha Singh was the coordinator of various activities, as can be seen from a joint introduction along with Bhai Badan Singh of the first volume of the "Teeka". In spite of heavy duties, his compensation remained modest. Though the Raja was always courteous & appreciative of his work, the bureaucracy did not let him have all the advantages promised to him verbally by the Raja.

After demise of Raja Brijinder Singh at young age, while the young Raja Harinder Singh was still a minor, an advisory council took charge of the administration. Bhai Sahib patiently waited the young Raja to take over. But even after that promises made to him did not materialise, and he continued to discharge the multifarious duties with his modest salary. His aspirations of proper recognition were never fulfilled.

Although there were feelers from Kapurthala & Patiala states for his services, but he evaded these suggestions, as he had promised the late Raja Brijinder Singh for life-long services of Faridkot state.

At Faridkot, he had brought his eldest brother Jhanda Singh's widow and his surviving son Inder Singh (our father) and supported them till our father completed engineering education at Rasul, and was married and settled in a job at Faridkot. That is how we were

born and brought up in Faridkot and received all the love and attention due to grandchildren.

At the end of his career, the prospect of a Sikh Educational Conference give him a challenge worth his capability, and he worked hard, making various arrangements. But alas! The conference was postponed and materialized only later after his death. In another field also he faced disillusion. He wanted to take long leave and support his famous friend Akali Kaur Singh Nihang in establishing a Hostel for educational facilities at Chakaar in J & K. But the Raja did not favour his leaving Faridkot. With these burdens on his mind, and a prolonged illness with various complications, he ultimately expired on 17th *Jeth*, 1999 BK, survived by his wife, Bebe Har Kaur and his only nephew Sardar Inder Singh, our father and his family.

This is an overview of his life. What is important to posterity is his life as a *ragi* and a Sikh Preacher. Some impressions follow in the subsequent paras.

His preaching was mainly through *kiratan*. He had a sonorous voice and used to support the idea of main *shabad* by reference to other *shabads* having the same theme. This was to emphasis and reemphasize the Guru's sayings on a topic, so that it went home to the listeners. A similar style was recently adopted by Bhai Darshan Singh Raagi (Ex-Jathedar Akal Takhat); others have gone over to the easier popular rendering. He performed many marriages in well-known Sikh families by *Anand Karaj* then only a recent practice. Another thing we observed as children was, whenever we visited him, he was always surrounded by a number of persons discussing *Gurmat*, Sikh history or current Sikh topics. His visitors included Gurdwara heads, *udasis*, *granthis*, *raagis*, professors and teachers of local institutions. Sometimes, we have even attended *rababis* singing classical tunes in early hours of morning. He encouraged such talented persons. I also remember him rendering *katha* from Suraj Prakash and Guru Granth Sahib in the evenings.

He participated fervently in the processions on occasions of Gurburabs. Attired in *achkan* and *churidars* and a neatly tied turban of matching colour, swinging a stick in his hand, he looked a grand sight. All those who saw him admired, him and paid respect by exchanging *Fateh* salutations with him.

Sometimes, he used *tonga* for transportation to and fro work, but more often he walked. Women in the neighbourhood would tell their children to pay respect to him by touching his feet. He blessed them and always had pocketful of tid bits like dry fruit for such occasions to give them lovingly.

He left us a good collection of books. When we grew up, we voraciously went through these with our young appetite for the written word. It is amazing to list the variety of subjects and authors. Extract from Guru Granth Sahib & its translation, discussion on *banis*, its grammar, Sikh history (*Twarikh Guru Khalsa, Gubilas Patsbai 6th & 10th* etc., *Shamsher Khalsa*, other biographies of Gurus including *Puratan Janam Sakhi, Bale wali Janam Sakhi*, books on Maharaja Ranjit Singh & his generals etc.). Books on poetry, magazines like *Phulwari, Preet Lari, Rubani, Ohanodra, Fateh, Hans*, etc. Books on other religions such as Hindu Mythology, Vedas, Puranas, Bible, Satyarath Prakash of Swami Dayanand - almost all in Punjabi Gurmukhi Script were also available. The authors included persons like Bhai Kahn Singh of Nabha, Giani Dit Singh, Bhai Vir Singh, Prof Puran Singh, Hira Singh Dard, Prem Singh Hoti, Gurbaksh Singh Preet Lari, Akali Kaur Singh, Dhani Ram Chatrik, S S Charan Singh Shahid and many more. This shows his deep involvement in Sikh life and culture, and even other religious and diverse topics concerning spiritual and religious life.

Another side of his personality was reflected in the design of his *kothi*. The main building had a facade like a traditional Sikh palace with *chhajha* and small *gumtis*. The approach to it was over what he used to call a "hilly bridge" a wide short road lined by brick walls under which water flowed serving the garden. In those days, this area was served by canal water and a watercourse flowed through the suburb. The concept of garden was purely Indian. It meant variety of trees and plants with a water tank in the midst. The trees were so thick that to us children it gave the impression of a forest. Birds like crows, parrots, sparrows, brown chattering birds, robins, shyamas, bulbuls etc., made their nests in the trees. The variety of trees and plants was amazing. I have counted 35 to 40 types of fruit and flowering trees and creepers in the garden. Nobody can believe as at present, since these have disappeared; because of closure of the watercourse, besides lack of attention.

A room was set apart for prayers where Guru Granth Sahib was installed. The lingering smell of flowers and *agarbatti* always reminded us of holy atmosphere. There were many Sikh artifacts like *kirpans*, *khandas*, *chakras*, arrows, daggers of various types; and on the walls paintings & reprints of pictures from Sikh history. He had a harmonium and *tabla* for *kirtan* and many other musical instruments, such as piano, banjo, etc., for playing in leisure hours.

Whenever we entered his home, Bhai Sahib was casually dressed in a *chola*, *kachhera* with wooden sandals on his feet and a small *dastaar* on his head, unless he was going out in a formal dress of *achkan* and *churidars*.

Language spoken between his friends included a number of "Singh Bolas". We children were addressed as '*bhujangis*'. I particularly remember his friend Akali Kaur Singh Nihang dressed in dark black Akali uniform. With his fair face, he always looked handsome and distinguished. There were many others whom I do not remember by name, but were always friendly and benign, and exuded *charhdi kala*.

In no way I can claim the above narration to be a comprehensive biography, but to some extent it gives a glimpse into his life as a *raagi* and a preacher, and as a person whom we loved and respected.

□

*Beauteous are Lord's lotus feet,
And the instruction of God's saints.
Rare, is the pious person who is attached to them.
Nanak, in the saints' society,
The love for Divine knowledge is awakened.
On the very fortunate, is the God's grace.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 380

ਚਰਨ ਕਮਲ ਆਨੁਪ ਹਰਿ ਸੰਤ ਮੰਤ ॥ ਕੋਊ ਲਾਗੈ ਸਾਧੂ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਸਾਧੂ ਸੰਗਿ ਜਾਗੇ ਗਿਆਨ ਰੰਗਿ ॥ ਵਡਭਾਗੇ ਕਿਰਪਾ ॥

WORLD SIKH CONCLAVE
(12TH & 13TH NOVEMBER, 2005)
- A REPORT -

KARTAR SINGH*

INTRODUCTION

The proposal to form a Global Sikh Organisation in the wake of the collapse of the now defunct World Sikh Council (WSC) was mooted very forcefully by the Institute of Sikh Studies (IOSS), Chandigarh, in November 2003. On the culmination of a well-attended Seminar, held at Gurdwara Kanthala Sahib, Chandigarh, a resolution was passed “accepting the necessity for a central Body of the Sikhs with Global representation, whose deliberations will guide and assist the entire Sikh community.” Sardar Gurcharan Singh Tohra, the then SGPC President, addressed the Seminar, blessed the idea and assured that the SGPC would welcome the move, provided it did not hurt the existing Panthic Institutions.

On 21st Feb, 2004, the IOSS formed an ‘Action Committee’ consisting of representatives from a wide spectrum of Sikh Institutions/ Gurdwara Committees/Study Groups to give effect to the Resolution passed in Nov 2003. This Group further nominated a Core Group from the IOSS to frame a draft Constitution to be presented in the next meeting of the Action Committee. This Core Group consisting of Dr Kharak Singh, Dr Gurcharan Singh Kalkat and Lt Gen (retd) Kartar Singh Gill PVSM with the help of various scholars and professionals, framed a draft Constitution for this global body to be named as ‘The International Sikh Confederation’. This Constitution is a unique document which embraces the basic tenets of Sikhism as

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laid down by the Sikh Gurus. It embraces the doctrine of ‘Guru Granth – Guru Panth’ proclaimed by Guru Gobind Singh *ji*, and discourages individual ambitions to attain self-glory.

In a subsequent presentation to the Action Committee, this draft Constitution was approved with modifications, and the Core Group was authorized to give wide coverage to this thought in the press, various magazines and by personal contact. The year 2004 saw the publication of this idea in the *Abstracts of Sikh Studies*, published quarterly by the IOSS and distributed globally. A special website was established and the draft Constitution circulated. A spate of letters and emails followed, wherein criticism as well as support for this very laudable project started coming in. The constitution of ISC was thus continuously revised and updated by the Core Group/Action Committee.

To generate acceptance of this project by the Sikh Sangat in India and abroad, a vigorous campaign to actually interact with active Sikh Groups in the country was launched in mid 2004. The Core Group supported by IOSS visited prominent centers such as Ludhiana, Amritsar and Patiala. Formal presentations were made to well-attended gatherings of eminent Sikh organizations and individuals. Question and Answer sessions brought out vital concerns, and helped consolidate the Constitution of ISC. Today we have with us a proposed Constitution of the ISC which has stood the test of fired doubts of the Sikh *sangat* in general. We are proud to say that this project has received general acceptance amongst the Sikh masses in India and abroad.

The Action Committee of ISC then thought it fit to call a World Sikh Convention at Chandigarh on 12th and 13th November, 2005, to discuss the issue and the draft Constitution in detail before adopting measures to bring it into actual being. Towards this end, letters, e-mails and telephone calls were sent/made to a wide spectrum of the Sikh masses in India and Worldwide.

CONCLAVE – 12TH NOVEMBER, 2005

(Chairperson : Giani Harinder Singh (Morning Session), Bibi Kulwant Kaur (Afternoon Session), Stage Secretary : Bhai Ashok Singh Bagrian)

The World Sikh Convention was inaugurated with a full house by the singing of *shabads* by a *jatha* from the Sri Guru Singh Sabha,

Sector 28-A, Chandigarh. Sardar Gurdev Singh, President IOSS, Chandigarh, while welcoming the gathering of eminent Sikhs including a large number of foreign delegates of outstanding Sikh Organisations, spelt out the role of the IOSS and also the Action Committee of the ISC in the organisation of this historic event.

Dr Kharak Singh, the Convener, outlined the events leading to this historic convention, succinctly spelt out the dire need for a global Sikh Organisation. He then went into great detail to explain the role of the ISC, its overall structure and the tremendous response received from all sections of society to quickly bring the ISC into being. The speaker's impassioned speech was heard in pin-drop silence and is reproduced in the *Abstracts of Sikh Studies* of Jan-March 2005 issue. It left the audience convinced about the need for the ISC, and also the sincere efforts initiated towards the launching the same.

It was then the turn of Lt Gen Kartar Singh Gill PVSM (retd), a Core Group member, to explain to the audience the concepts and basic principles that helped in the formulation of the draft Constitution of the ISC. He compared the tenets adopted by the Sikhs with those of Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. Against the hierarchical system of the Christians (2000 million) we have approximately 23 million Sikhs worldwide. While the Christians elect their Pope, we have an Akal Takht Jathedar appointed by the SGPC. While Sikhs worldwide pay obeisance to the Akal Takht Sahib, we have no globally represented organisation. Hence the need for the ISC, one of whose vital roles will be to give strong representation in world Sikh affairs, and also deal with the multifarious problems faced by us in all spheres.

ADDRESSES BY EMINENT SPEAKERS

The first speaker from abroad was Sardar Sarjit Singh of Vancouver Gurdwara Sahib. He expressed the hope that the ISC electorate would consist of genuine Gursikhs and thus elect an effective and dedicated Executive Committee. He advocated more representation for the USA and Canada in the Governing Council. Sardar Charanjit Singh, Khalsa Diwan Vancouver who is an experienced and respected Sikh shared his experiences with the audience in organising various youth camps abroad along with the redoubtable Dr

Gurbakhsh Singh. He advocated that the younger generation must be encouraged to eventually take over the ISC. Both speakers totally supported the Constitution of the ISC. Dr Surjit Singh from Cleveland, Ohio, said that he had opposed the WSC because of the lack of devotion by its organisers. He, however, praised the present WSC American Region and its functioning. He stressed that individuals must not be allowed to dominate the ISC and advocated *Panth ka Raj*. He wholly supported the ISC. Sardar Balwant Singh of Chicago who had started the Sikh Study Circle in the USA, felt that elections caused stress and ego problems. He also felt that we must connect Sikh *dharm* with other religions by meeting their representatives. He praised the IOSS, magazine as classy. Criticising our Takht Jathedars he felt that we must lay down basic qualifications for them. He added that the need genuine *parcharaks* to go abroad and spread the religion and also translate Guru Granth Sahib into other languages. He supported the Constitution of the ISC with modification.

Some very eminent speakers from our country addressed the audience. These included Dr Gurnam Kaur, Sardar Prithipal Singh Kapur, ex-Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Guru Nanak Dev University, Dr Kehar Singh, Ex-Director PSEB, Prof Balkar Singh, GNDU, Sardar Surinderjit Singh Pall, Chief Commissioner Income Tax, Ludhiana, Brig Gurdip Singh, Ex Secretary General, World Sikh Council, Dr Harnam Singh Shan, a noted Sikh scholar, Dr Gurbachan Singh Bachan ex-Secretary SGPC, Dr G S Kalkat, ex-VC, PAU and now Chairman, Farmers Commission Punjab, Sardar Bakhshish Singh Subra, Sardar Karamjit Singh Aujla from Ludhiana, Sardar Bakhshish Singh Jaura and Sardar Jagdish Singh, our upcoming student of Punjabi literature. All accepted the urgent need for the ISC and lent whole-hearted support to the organisers.

We need to make special mention of the contribution of Sardar Yadvinder Singh, LLB from New Jersey who represented the American Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, which controls nearly 43 gurdwaras in the USA. He narrated his experience in interacting with the US Government on various Sikh issues. He congratulated the organisers for mooted the ISC as a platform to discuss international problems of Sikhs, such as identity, *kirpan*, *maryada* and conflict with various myths.

We must mention here that Sardar Yadvinder Singh effected the American Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee's membership of the ISC. Later, he visited Amritsar and featured in various discussion with the Akal Takht Jathedar Sahib, advocating the cause of the ISC.

Other speakers who addressed the gathering were Sardar Milkha Singh Brar from Australia, Sardar Ajaib Singh Mann from Alberta (contributed to IOSS), and Sardar Ujagar Singh Gill from Chicago. All found the Constitution of the ISC to their liking and advocated appointment of *Panj Piaras* in the Executive Committee after ensuring their commitment to the cause.

The culminating session Chairperson, Bibi Kulwant Kaur, Chairperson, Mai Bhago Brigade, Patiala, then summed up the issues and praised the quality of the various presentations. She advocated a larger participation by women. Like Dr Harnam Singh Shan, she, too, felt that Chandigarh should be the Headquarters of the ISC. She exhorted youth to enthusiastically join the ISC and work for its success, and volunteered her own services towards propagating the ISC. Finally, she presented a book by Sardar Kesar Singh Mand of the United Kingdom to the IOSS.

This ended the first day's proceedings of the International Sikh Convention on a very high note. It was indeed a thrilling session, with a house full audience listening most attentively to the voices of eminent Sikhs from all corners of our country and the wide world.

CONCLAVE – NOVEMBER 13, 2005

(Chairperson : Dr Sukhmandir Singh, Stage Secretary : Bhai Ashok Singh)

In this session, Giani Jarnail Singh Sidhu from Australia read out paper on Sikhism. He quoted many instances from Sikh history to prove that the Sikhs are a very virile and strong community. He accepted the need for a global organisation like ISC and gave it full support on behalf of his parent organisation.

Giani Kartar Singh Sidhu from Canada said that he had reviewed the draft Constitution of ISC in detail and whole heartedly supported it and recommended it to be adopted. However, he sounded a note of warning that Sikhs are not united, and stressed that unity is vital to progress which can be achieved if we are loyal to the global Sikh

cause.

Dr Gulsher Singh from Malaysia was brief in his comments. He stressed the importance of 'Gurbani' in all our organisational activities. He felt that the draft Constitution was too brief and we need to elaborate it with detailed bye-laws.

Prof Charan Kamal Singh of the Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle, Ludhiana, spoke as a representative of this prestigious organisation. He wholly supported the ISC and exhorted scholars to get involved in this visionary project. He felt that we should re-think the inclusion of elections in the ISC. His own organisation believed in selections rather than elections.

Sardar Gurdev Singh, President IOSS now intervened to give his views on the issue of elections versus selections. He agreed that during the period of our Gurus selection of leaders was the order of the day, because of the prevailing situation and the compact and limited spread of the Sikh population. With our global expansion, advance of science and technology, diversity of thought, advanced communications and increase in literacy, selection by a few alone will not be an accepted mode of appointing managers/leaders. We have to resort to participation by all in the selection process, i.e., elections. Here, young Prof Bibi Birendra Kaur suggested that we adopt a via media of election-cum-selection. She exhorted women to take more active part and also felt that the voters need to be bold and forthright in electing leaders.

Well-known international lawyer Dr M S Rahi, who was closely involved in the working of the world Sikh Council, felt that our community's failures are mainly caused by lack of commitment, without which nothing can work. He offered to work for the ISC nationally as well as internationally.

At the end of the morning session, the Chairman Dr Sukhmandir Singh gave an impassioned closing address. He did his Civil Engineering doctorate at Berkeley and is, at the moment, a visiting Professor at Cambridge, besides heading a department at Santa Clara University in USA. He is based in San Francisco and was the first Sikh Gurdwara President in his area. He stressed the need for an organisation to channelise all our assets and tackle problem areas with a very astute and mature dictat. He felt that existing Institutions do not seem capable of achieving these and other objectives. Leaders of many nations

having learnt very useful lessons during various wars have lost them during peace. Sikhs have also made the same mistake. We have forgotten many lessons taught to us by our Gurus. However, having studied the history of the Jews, he felt that we could learn some lessons from them. One such example is their education fund to which every Jew residing any where in the world contributes a fixed sum. It's a very affordable amount, but the total sum collected is huge and enough to finance the education of each and every citizen to the graduation stage. Bright students are then selected to achieve higher education and research in their chosen disciplines. This system has produced a myriad scholars of repute and a galaxy of Nobel Prize winners. We should emulate this example. Dr Sukhmandir Singh totally supported the aims and objectives of the ISC and promised dedicated support to establish this very laudable effort.

HISTORIC RESOLUTION

After these confabulations, the House then unanimously adopted the Resolution formulated by the Action Committee and presented to the House by Giani Harinder Singh, President, Kendri Singh Sabha, Chandigarh. This resolution is reproduced at the end of this report.

The afternoon session being reserved for discussions mainly with the global delegates, the gathering adjourned with full throated cries of *Jo Bole So Nihal Sat Sri Akal* giving a deeply emotional stamp of authority to the sacred birth of the International Sikh Confederation

CONCLAVE – NOVEMBER 13, 2005 (AFTERNOON)

(Final Session, Chairman : Dr Gurcharan Singh Kalkat, Stage Secretary : Lt Gen Kartar Singh Gill)

In this session, each and every delegate from abroad was given unlimited time to express his views and render suggestions to improve the draft Constitution of the ISC. A number of excellent suggestions were put forth which will be discussed and implemented. A few delegates desired to discuss the Constitution page by page and were encouraged to do so. Those who took active part included prominent dignitaries such as Sardar Balwant Singh Hansra, Sardar Yadvinder Singh, Sardar Surjit Singh from USA, Sardar Surjit Singh Canada, Dr Charanjit Singh Randhawa from Vancouver, Sardar Ujagar Singh Gill

and Dr Sukhmandir Singh.

Many useful points were discussed, a few of which are listed below:

- a) Subscription by Gurdwaras needs to be based on membership rather than on income.
- b) Priority be given for membership to Institutions / Organisations rather than to individuals. This was agreed to as already envisaged by us.
- c) General Body should meet more frequently than at four yearly intervals. This would be given deep consideration.
- d) The diaspora membership in the Governing Council should be increased. USA and Canada need to be given at least 10 seats each. We need to examine this in detail again.
- e) SGPC has been given 60 seats. This need to be scaled down to allot more seats to the diaspora. However, quite a few delegates felt that SGPC, being the premier of the Sikhs, must be represented appropriately.
- f) Core Committee members were invited by all delegates to visit their respective country to personally address and enrol organisations especially Gurdwaras and prominent Sikh Societies as members. Personal visit would lend special impetus to establishing the sway of the ISC globally. Delegates promised to do the necessary spade work to make these visits worthwhile and a success. This was gratefully accepted.

CONCLUDING ADDRESS

Dr Kharak Singh then rose to address the august audience. He had already taken active part in the detailed discussions and elaborated various issues raised. He gave the audience an assurance of sincere and concerted follow-up action to implement the Resolution and the points raised by honourable delegates. He announced that an *ad hoc* working committee with the Action Committee as nucleus would be formed to finalise the Constitution as per acceptable suggestions put forth in the conclave. ISC Headquarters would now be established at a suitable location in Chandigarh and that we will work towards enrolment of maximum members. He exhorted delegates present to act as Regional representatives of the ISC and enrol membership abroad

vigorously which was agreed to by all present. He hoped that enrolled members will meet at Basakhi 2006 to elect a Governing Council and an Executive Committee of the ISC.

RESOLUTION

Chandigarh, November 13, 2005. On this auspicious day 13 Nov, 2005, at this International Sikh Convention held at the IOSS location, Gurdwara Sahib Kanthala, this august body of Sikh masses representing eminent scholars and Sikh Institutions/Organisations hereby resolves as follows :

“We have noted with great concern that the Panth is passing through a crisis marked by disunity, challenges to Sikh identity and established institutions like the Akal Takht Sahib and SGPC. This can undoubtedly weaken the Sikh Panth, and urgent remedial measures are required to meet this challenge. This gathering accepts the necessity to have a central body of the Sikhs with appropriate representation from all sections of Sikh society, including global Sikhs, whose deliberations will guide and assist the entire Sikh community.

“To give effect to this, we endorse the Constitution of the International Sikh Confederation as presented by the Action Committee during this Convention with suitable amendments as suggested. We desire that the Action Committee give concrete effect to actually constitute an *Ad hoc* Governing Council of eminent Sikhs drawn from all walks of life as envisaged in the Constitution. We expect this Body of about 50 (fifty) Sikhs to meet urgently and, within a short period of 6 (six) months or so-organize a membership drive followed by proper elections to the Governing Council, the Executive Committee and the Advisory Councils, as laid down in the approved Constitution.

“We unitedly applaud the efforts of the IOSS, the Action Committee and the Core Group for the hard work put in towards the establishment of the above global organization. We also place great faith in the Action Committee, whose continued dedication is vital to ensure the successful establishment and working of the International Sikh Confederation, as visualized by this august gathering.”

MAJ GEN NARINDER SINGH – A TRIBUTE –

KARTAR SINGH*

I first met the late Maj Gen Narinder Singh during the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war. He was holding the key appointment of Director Military Operations, Indian Army in the rank of Brigadier. I remember that the then Chief General ‘Muchoo’ Chaudhary placed great faith in him. Throughout the war, he dedicatedly devoted himself toward the conduct of operations and was the key adviser to the Chief.

He was born into an Army family and spent his early years with his grandfather (*Nanaji*) who had retired as an Honorary Captain and settled down in Lyallpur district. Having passed Intermediate (F. Sc.) examination from Khalsa College, Amritsar, this young, adventurous student enlisted in the British Indian Army as a Sepoy in April 1938. He served in the Frontier force. A British Officer, Major Douglas saw a potential leader in this young sepoy, and recommended him to be interviewed for a commission in the Army. Thus this young man was commissioned as an Officer in the IMA, Dehru Doon in 1943 and joined the 8 Cavalry Regiment. World War II found him on the Burma front. Gradually he rose in rank, and held key command and staff appointments. The 1948 Hyderabad action saw his armoured squadron in the forefront, when they occupied Aurangabad. He then moved to Jammu and Kashmir and also served in the North East Frontiers. In 1951, he was selected to be trained at the prestigious Defence Services Staff College at Wellington. His was indeed an ideal Army Career. At last came the Red Letter day when he was given command of newly-raised 20 Lancers at Ahmednagar in 1957. After distinguished service as Grade One Staff Officer of an operational Division, he was

* Lt Gen (retd) PVSM, # 1801, Sector 34-D, Chandigarh

promoted to the red collar coveted rank of Brigadier. He commanded the Kargil Brigade with distinction, and was selected to be Director Military Operations in army HQ as already stated – a meteoric rise by any standard.

There was no doubt about Narinder's next promotion to the hallowed rank of Major General and command of a key division in Srinagar (J&K). Here, he met DG BSF, Mr Rustamji – a brilliant policeman – who somehow persuaded him to shift to the newly-raised Border Security Force as Inspector General Operations. Narinder Singh's adventurous spirit took him straight into operation in the Bangladesh Sector in 1971. He helped train the Mukti Bahini – a guerilla force of local Banglas who played havoc with the supply lines of the then East Pakistan Forces. He retired in 1975 as Commander BSF troops in J&K and settled down in Chandigarh.

The second phase of this brilliant officer's career now took hold. From 1978 to 1982 he joined the mainstream of the Akali movement. He turned towards religion and was a frequent visitor at the holy Darbar Sahib. Here he met the late Sant Jarnail Singh Bhinderanwale a few times and sympathised with his aspirations to gain autonomy for the Sikhs. During the 1984 Blue Star Operation, he avoided arrest by cycling around from village to village for days, sleeping under the open sky and thus escaped arrest. The scenes that he witnessed in rural Punjab, motivated him to join Human Rights activists. For two years, he was an avid Human Rights worker and was constantly on the move. His wife felt ill and needed his presence, but Narinder Singh was seldom at home. In 1986, he was arrested for making a so-called anti-national speech in a public gathering. He was jailed for over two years. This was a blessing in disguise, as he could no more travel at the cost of his health. During this time, the family consisting of his wife and his elder son Air Commodore R P S Dhillon devoted themselves to consoling him in prison by frequent visits. His passport was confiscated.

He came out of jail in 1988, and was restored his passport. He utilised his release to visit the USA, Canada and UK where he spread the word about the numerous human rights violations constantly taking place in Punjab under Governor's Rule. In 1999, on return to India he was appointed Secretary General of the World Sikh Council. By 2001, his knees started giving him trouble, and his back trouble increased.

Medication did not help much. Operation on one knee led to pain in the other, and walking became difficult. His activities were now considerably reduced. Besides, his wife, too, was confined to bed, and this exerted extra mental strain on this very brave soldier.

As time went on, he started missing his attendance at the IOSS, where he was the Vice-President. In August 2005, he got acute urine trouble. Family affairs now started weighing on his mind. His second son's divorce and subsequent marriage to a Philippino also caused acute mental strain. Finally, this very brave soldier and Panthic scholar and avid Sikh *Sant-Sipahi* succumbed to physical and mental pressures, and breathed his last on 10th October, 2005.

The Sikh community has lost in him a true Human Rights worker and a valiant fighter for Sikh Rights. He was an enlightened and intellectual activist, whose absence will be sorely felt by the Institute of Sikh Studies, Human Rights Organisations and the Sikh Panth as a whole. May his soul rest in peace and may Guru Sahib grant his devoted family the strength and fortitude to tide over the demise of this giant of a man!

□

*The Lord is near, and is the perpetual companion of man.
 Lord's Omnipotence is pervading all the forms and colours.
 My soul neither emaciates, nor repents and nor does it bewail.
 Imperishable, Unshakable, Unapproachable,
 And ever safe and sound is my Husband.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 376

ਨਿਕਟਿ ਜੀਅ ਕੈ ਸਦ ਹੀ ਸੰਗਾ ॥ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਵਰਤੈ ਰੂਪ ਅਰੁ ਰੰਗਾ ॥
 ਕਰੈ ਨ ਬੁਝੈ ਨਾ ਮਨੁ ਰੋਵਨਹਾਰਾ ॥
 ਅਵਿਨਾਸੀ ਅਵਿਗਤੁ ਅਗੋਚਰੁ ਸਦਾ ਸਲਾਮਤਿ ਖਸਮੁ ਹਮਾਰਾ ॥

REVIEWS

MAIN CURRENTS OF FREEDOM STRUGGLE IN PUNJAB

A REVIEW BY GURMIT SINGH*

Author : Prithipal Singh Kapur.

Publisher : Director, Information & Public Relations Department, Govt of Punjab

Pages : 213+; Price : not mentioned

It is said that if you want to eliminate the identity of a people, then push them out of the pages of history. This subtle technique is being used in India against the Sikh people by distorting their history and denying their contribution to the struggle against the British. The book under review is a good effort to put the record straight by narrating the valuable contributions made by the Sikhs in this regard. According to the author, the freedom-loving Punjabis started the struggle from the day Punjab was annexed by the British in 1849. It specially mentions the names of those who adorn the pages of history as pioneers of this struggle. The first freedom fighter of Punjab was Maharani Jind Kaur, the youngest consort of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who was a woman of extraordinary courage and determination. At the time of annexation of the Punjab, she was the guardian of her minor son, Maharaja Duleep Singh, the last Sikh ruler. When the British Government in India made a suggestion to her that the British forces should be stationed at Lahore during the minority of Maharaja Duleep Singh, she demanded "The forces be confined to just two regiments of infantry, one of cavalry and a battery of artillery for maintenance of Public order." However, she was allegedly involved in the 'Prema conspiracy case' which was aimed at killing of the British resident at Lahore and his stooge, Lal Singh, who was

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responsible for the defeat of the Sikh army during the Anglo-Sikh war. The plot, however, got leaked out and the British Government decided to banish the Maharani from Lahore to Banars. She was imprisoned in the old fort at Banars under the supervision of Major McGregor. She remained defiant, and escaped from imprisonment disguising herself as a lady tailor. After escape, she crossed the Ganges in a boat waiting for her and continued to travel incognito towards Nepal, dressed as a *yogini* on pilgrimage to Pashupati Nath temple of Kathmandu. On reaching Kathmandu, she met the Prime Minister Rana Jang Bahadur, and was granted asylum. From Nepal, the Maharani got in touch with Punjabi rebels and state prisoners at Allahabad. When the Nepal Government developed cold feet under the British pressure, she contacted her son, Duleep Singh, in England. The British allowed Duleep Singh to bring her mother to England in 1860. The mother and the son met at the Great Eastern Hotel Calcutta in April 1861, and the Maharani persuaded Duleep Singh to return to the faith of his ancestors, i.e., Sikhism. She died in England on 1st August, 1863.

The other freedom fighter described in the book is Bhai Maharaj Singh, originally known as Nihal Singh. It is said that if Maharani Jind Kaur was the brain behind the struggle against the British, Bhai Maharaj Singh was its soul. He was also allegedly involved in the Prema conspiracy. He called upon the Sikhs to rise against the British and contacted the Sikhs of the Punjab cavalry Corps at Lahore in this regard. He toured the Jalandhar Doab intensively and made plans for an assault on the British. As a Sikh missionary, he enjoyed great influence amongst the Sikhs. He was deported to Singapore and lodged in the New Jail, where he died on 5th July, 1856. The other freedom fighter of note described in the book is Baba Bikram Singh Bedi of Una, who along with the hill raja of Kangra joined the revolt. He supported Bhai Maharaj Singh's proposal to regroup and fight another battle with the British.

In fact, the British faced toughest opposition to their rule in Punjab. The reason was that Punjabi nationalism was a force in itself distinct from the the rest of India. There was no communal divide in Punjab until late 1946. This was one reason why British wanted the Punjab to remain united as it would have been a balancing factor

between Hindu India and Muslim-dominated Pakistan. The book is an anthology of articles on the subject of Freedom Struggle in Punjab. It would have added to its value if one or two articles by some historian from the West Punjab also had been included it.

However, a valuable analysis of cause of communal riots in Punjab is provided by Dr Kirpal Singh, an expert on the Partition of Punjab in the chapter *The Price that the Punjab is paid for Freedom*. The learned doctor opines that the root-cause of communal riots in Punjab was not the communal strife, but the denial of opportunity to the Muslim League, the single largest party in Punjab to form a government. It caused such frustration amongst the Muslims that they felt that there was no alternative left but to stir up strife. He writes: "If Sir Khizar had not formed the ministry and the League leaders had been left with some hope of office, they would have been compelled, just in order to gain power, to adopt a more conciliatory attitude towards the minorities. In that case, they would have been less tempted to stir up strife." The learned historian also describes the movement of refugees, Muslims as well as non-Muslims, and the attacks on them during the journey. He quotes O H K Spate to assert that these were enforced movements of the people on a scale absolutely unparalleled in the history of the world. According to the author, peaceful exchange of population was possible.

Another valuable contribution to this book is an article by V P Menon, which deals with the politics of the rulers of States in Punjab which were later merged to form the PEPSU. He was the state Secretary. While Giani Kartar Singh favoured merger of these six states, namely, Patiala, Nabha, Jind and Faridkot, Kapurthala and Malerkotla in East-Punjab, another Sikh leader Udham Singh Nagoke bitterly opposed this merger. The British, before partition, had tried to create a third force by merging these states with Jammu and Kashmir and some Princely States of Rajasthan. But on account of strong opposition by the Maharaja of Patiala, Yadvindra Singh, and differences between the Raja of Faridkot and the States People Conferences, the President did not allow the British plan to materialise. According to Mr V P Menon, "Besides, Sikh politics were in so fluid a state that we felt that, until they became crystallized, there was immediate need for a Union of all the Punjab States under the control of the Government

of India. The author deals in detail with first ministry formation in PEPSU.

The book also contains a detailed account of the Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy and its impact on freedom movement. Besides, the book has chapters on *The Akalis in the National Struggle for Freedom*, and *The Congress Movements in the Punjab* which are of great interest to the people of Punjab. The book is full of information on various aspects of Sikhs' contribution to the struggle for ousting British from India and will be useful to writers of history. However, a notable omission is the role of Maharaja Duleep Singh, the deposed ruler of Punjab, whose contribution to struggle against the British is tremendous. He travelled to Paris in July 1886 and from there wrote letter to the "British princes and Nobles and the people of beloved Hindustan" calling upon them 'to be not cowards but be brave and worthy of your great forefathers' by rising against the British. He proclaimed himself to be sovereign of the Sikh Nation. He had also contacted the Emperor of Russia and guaranteed an easy conquest of India with the help of the people of Punjab.

But all said and done, the book is a valuable addition to books of history on Punjab which anyone interested in Punjab history can ignore at his own peril.

□

*God's slave is called the sublime saint.
He obeys God's order and obtains peace.
Whatever placeses Him,
He accepts as true and Lord's will he abides within his mind.
Say Kabir, listen O saints, false is to indulge in egoism.
Breaking the bird's cage, the death takes away,
And bird and the threads and yarns, are shorn.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 480

ਹਰਿ ਜਨੁ ਉਤਮੁ ਭਗਤੁ ਸਦਾਵੈ ਆਗਿਆ ਮਨਿ ਸੁਖੁ ਪਾਈ ॥
ਜੋ ਤਿਸੁ ਭਾਵੈ ਸਤਿ ਕਰਿ ਮਾਨੈ ਭਾਣਾ ਮੰਨਿ ਵਸਾਈ ॥
ਕਹੈ ਕਬੀਰੁ ਸੁਨਹੁ ਰੇ ਸੰਤਹੁ ਮੇਰੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਝੂਠੀ ॥
ਚਿਰਗਟ ਫਾਰਿ ਚਟਾਰਾ ਲੈ ਗਇਓ ਤਰੀ ਤਾਗਰੀ ਛੂਟੀ ॥

SO SAID GURU ANGAD DEV

A REVIEW BY HARDIT SINGH*

Author : Professor Dr Harnam Singh Shan

Publisher : Punjab Govt, Public Relations Dept, Chandigarh

Price : Not mentioned; Pages : 132

The book, *So Said Guru Angad Dev*, by Dr Harnam Singh Shan, a well-known scholar and theologian on Sikhism, is indeed, as captioned by the author, *A Dictionary of the Thought of the Second Prophet-Preceptor of the Sikhs*. It has been published by the Government of Punjab in commemoration of the birth-quincentenary of Guru Anand Dev *ji* (1504-1552).

It contains foreword by Captain Amarinder Singh, Chief Minister of Punjab, who has highlighted the achievements and contributions of the Guru in regard to the recording of the Janam-Sakhi of Guru Nanak Dev *ji* (1469-1539); fashioning and formalising the Gurmukhi script, introducing sports (*Mal-Akhaara*) for physical fitness along with the spiritual advancement of community, and strengthening Guru Nanak's tradition of the maintaining Sikhism as the faith of the devoted householders. Guru Nanak Dev *ji* on appointing Guru Angad Dev *ji* as his successor, had particularly asked him "*Purkha Panth karna*", to establish a Panth of saint-soldiers. Guru Angad Dev himself displayed this saint-soldier spirit when he admonished the Mughal emperor Humayun (1530-1556) on his fleeing like a coward to Iran after his defeat by Sher Shah Suri (1540-1554).

In this small but nicely produced book of 132 pages, its learned author has brought out the holy personality of Guru Angad Dev *Ji*, all his sayings (original in Gurmukhi with their English translation and

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Hindi transliteration) under various subject-wise headings, line-index of the sayings given in Gurmukhi script and a bibliography at the end for further study and research on the subject.

Guru Granth Sahib holds 63 hymns of Guru Angad Dev *ji*, all are in the form of *Sloks* interspersed in various *vars* (odes). As the author has said, “Their significance lies in the intensity of thought, subjectivity of presentation, pungency of projection and brevity of expression. These are characterised by directness, simplicity and sublimity. All of these are complete in themselves, outpourings of an extremely sensitive and dedicated soul.” (p. 11) One hundred and twenty five very expressive subject-headings have been selected out of these *Sloks*; and through the medium of three languages / scripts, the author has guided and promoted a luminous path for the aspirants to lead a purposeful and spiritual life. To quote a few insertions :

ANXIETY

ਨਾਨਕ ਚਿੰਤਾ ਮਤਿ ਕਰਹੁ,
ਚਿੰਤ ਤਿਸ ਹੀ ਹੋਇ ।
ਜਲ ਮਹਿ ਜੰਤ ਉਪਾਇਨੁ,
ਤਿਨਾ ਭਿ ਰੋਜੀ ਦੇਇ ।

Don't fall into anxiety,
This he surely takes on Himself.
He provides sustenance to all,
Even to those created by Him in water. (p. 29)

DEEDS DONE UNDER COMPULSION

ਬਧਾ ਚਟੀ ਜੋ ਭਰੇ,
ਨਾ ਗੁਣੁ ਨਾ ਉਪਕਾਰੁ ॥
ਸੇਤੀ ਖੁਸੀ ਸਵਾਰੀਐ ।
ਨਾਨਕ ਕਾਰਜ ਸਾਰੁ ॥

He, who does any deed under force or compulsion,
earns neither any merit nor any obligation to others.

A good and beneficial deed is that which is done willingly and with pleasure. (p. 41)

TRUE SERVANT

ਨਾਨਕ ਸੇਵਕ ਕਾਢੀਐ,
ਜੇ ਸੇਤੀ ਖਸਮ ਸਮਾਇ ॥

Such a one are elect among God's servants,
who remains absorbed in Him, the Divine Universal Master. (p. 107)

(This also applies to the servants who remain true to their worldly master – Reviewer)

Based on the *bani* of Satta and Balwand, the Court-musicians and *kirtan*-singers, that is, the Guru's court-bards, Professor Shan whilst describing the personality of the Guru, has said, "He was an epitome of spiritual joy, wisdom, purity, humility and generosity. He was an embodiment of virtuous living, equable meditation, dedicated service, austerity and abstinence." The Guru together with his spouse, holy Mata Khivi, dispensed *gurshabad* and free delicious food to all those who visited them as well as to the travellers, passing through Khadur Sahib.

The author has also brought out a guideline, in a comprehensive form, for the art of good and virtuous living. With the reproduction of the Guru's holy word in three different languages/scripts, the book has become very useful and convenient to major sections of society.

A value-based writing can help sow the seed of much-needed moral consciousness in our youth. The reader may open up the *Bachnavli* on any page to find inspirational and soul-elevating hymns of Guru Angad Dev Ji.

A well-bound valuable book which any reader will be proud to possess and there should be no library without it.

□

*He who feels happy only when his Lord blesses him with weal
But becomes sad in adversity, call him thou not a lover
For, he trades with the Lord for his good.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 474

ਚੰਗੈ ਚੰਗਾ ਕਰਿ ਮੰਨੇ ਮੰਦੈ ਮੰਦਾ ਹੋਇ ॥
ਆਸਕੁ ਏਹੁ ਨ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਿ ਲੇਖੈ ਵਰਤੈ ਸੋਇ ॥

NEWS & VIEWS

INTERNATIONAL SIKH CONFEDERATION LAUNCHED

Chandigarh, November 13, 2005. An International conclave was held at Chandigarh on the 12th and 13th November, 2005, by a number of like-minded Sikh Bodies on the initiative of the Institute of Sikh Studies (IOSS), Chandigarh. A large number of scholars and eminent Sikhs from India and abroad, attended the conclave. As a result of the deliberations, the International Sikh Confederation is a global Sikh organisation was formed. The three Press notes issued on this historic event are reproduced below, while the Resolution appears on page 100 of this issue.

1

Chandigarh, November 8, 2005. The proposal to form a Global Sikh Organisation in the wake of the collapse of the now defunct World Sikh Council, was mooted very forcefully by the Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh in November 2003. On the culmination of a very well-attended Seminar held at Gurdwara Kanthala Sahib (Near Tribune Chowk) Chandigarh, a Resolution was passed “accepting the necessity for a Central Body of the Sikhs with Global representation whose deliberations will guide and assist the entire Sikh Community.” Sardar Gurcharan Singh Tohra, the then SGPC President addressed the Seminar, blessed the idea and assured that the SGPC would welcome the move, provided it does not hurt the existing Panthic Institutions.

On 21st Feb, 2004, the IOSS formed an ‘Action Committee’ consisting of representatives from a wide spectrum of Sikh Institutions/ Gurdwara Committees/Study Groups to give effect to the Resolution passed in Nov. 2003. This Group further nominated a Core Group

from the IOSS to frame a draft Constitution to be presented in the next meeting of the Action Committee. This Core Group consisting of Dr Kharak Singh, Dr Gurcharan Singh Kalkat and Lt Gen (retd) Kartar Singh Gill, PVSM with the help of various scholars and professionals, framed a draft Constitution for this global body to be named as 'The International Sikh Confederation'. This Constitution is a unique document which embraces the basic tenets of Sikhism as laid down by the Sikh Gurus. It embraces the doctrine of 'Guru Granth – Guru Panth' proclaimed by Guru Gobind Singh and discourages individual ambitions to attain self-glory.

In a subsequent presentation to the Action Committee, this draft Constitution was approved with modifications and the Core Group was authorized to give wide coverage to this thought in the press, various magazines and by personal contact. The year 2004 saw the publication of this idea in the *Abstracts of Sikh Studies* published quarterly by the IOSS and distributed globally. A special website was established and the draft Constitution circulated. A spate of letters and e-mails followed, wherein criticism as well as support for this very laudable project started coming in. The constitution of ISC was thus continuously revised and updated by the Core Group/Action Committee.

To generate acceptance of this project by the Sikh *sangat* in India and abroad, a vigorous campaign to actually interact with active Sikh Groups in the country was launched in mid-2004. The Core Group supported by IOSS visited prominent centers such as Ludhiana, Amritsar and Patiala. Formal presentations were made to well-attended gatherings of eminent Sikh organizations and individuals. Question-and-Answer sessions brought out vital concerns, and helped consolidate the Constitution of ISC. Today we have with us a proposed Constitution of the ISC which has stood the test of fired doubts of the Sikh *sangat* in general. We are proud to say that this project has received general acceptance amongst the Sikh masses in India and abroad.

We have now thought it fit to call a convention of various eminent Sikh individuals and organizations at Chandigarh on 12th and 13th November, 2005. The IOSS has sent out letters and e-mails to a wide spectrum of the Sikh masses in India and abroad.

The draft Constitution as conceived by the Action Committee is being presented to this august gathering. After a two-day debate, we

are optimistic that the International Sikh Confederation will achieve a general acceptance and will come into being on this auspicious occasion – Guru Nanak Dev ji's birth anniversary. We are optimistic that this august Sikh gathering of global Sikhs will lay the foundation stone of the ISC by selecting an *ad hoc* governing council to give concrete effect to the establishment of a great Sikh Organisation which will represent us in Punjab, India and the whole wide world.

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## 2

Chandigarh, November 12, 2005. A two-day international Sikh Convention for the Constitution of proposed International Sikh Confederation, an Apex Body of the Sikhs began at the Institute of Sikh Studies here today.

The opening session started with an inaugural address by Dr Kharak Singh, who emphasised the urgent necessity of establishing ISC for the resolution of various pending issues. He also clarified that ISC will be a purely non-political global organisation comprising the representatives of established Sikh institutions and eminent Sikh individuals which will strengthen the primary existing Sikh institutions like the SGPC and the Akal Takht, Shiromani Akali Dal and Chief Khalsa Diwan, etc. He also revealed that earlier efforts in the form of World Sikh Organisation had failed. The ISC will endeavour to ascertain the outstanding issues confronting the Sikh diaspora, diagonalise the reasons for the degeneration, suggest remedies for the resolution of these issues and provide intellectual inputs to the concerned leadership of various Sikh organisations. He also declared that an *ad hoc* committee of the ISC would be constituted at the end of this International Conclave.

Lt Gen Kartar Singh Gill, member of the Core Group of the Action Committee then presented the basic principles on which the ISC constitution is based. These in short are (a) to give representation to Sikh residents in India and the world over in totality; (b) to give priority to our Institutions / Gurudwaras and then to eminent citizens; (c) a constitution that is acceptable to a majority of global Sikhs based on true Sikh Maryada, and; d) help our existing organisations to flourish. The adoption of a selective-cum-elective system was also discussed.

Various delegates from India and abroad who spoke at the

Convention, by and large, endorsed the constitution of the proposed International Sikh Confederation with minor amendments relating to the enrolment of members, eligibility and age of the members, etc. Prominent among those who spoke on the occasion included Sardar Surjit Singh, President Gurdwara Khalsa Darbar, Vancouver, BC, Canada, Sardar Charanjit Singh, President, Canadian Sikh Study and Teaching Society, Vancouver, BC, Canada, Dr Surjit Singh Dhillon, former President of Sikh Gurdwara, Cleveland, Ohio as representative of World Sikh Council (America Region), Sardar Balwant Singh Hansra, a Member Parliament of World Religions, Chicago, USA, Dr Gurnam Kaur, Punjabi University, Patiala, Dr Prithipal Singh Kapur, Ex-Pro-VC, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, Dr Kehar Singh, Former Chairman, Punjab School Education Board, Dr Balkar Singh, Head (retd.), Department of Guru Granth Sahib Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala, Sardar Charanjit Singh Paul, Chief Income Tax Commissioner, Ludhiana & Dr Milkha Singh, Australia.

Giani Harinder Singh, President, Kendri Singh Sabha, presided over the opening session and endorsed the formation of this Confederation. He concluded the morning session with a very vigorous and enlightening address. He requested all to join in and proceed forward to the final destination. The foreign delegates' role and presence was lauded by Dr Sukhmandir Singh, Chairman for the Sunday morning session. As many as 30 (thirty) delegates from various countries of the USA, Canada, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore attended the convention and are likely to take part in further sessions.

In the evening session, which was chaired by Dr Kulwant Kaur, Dr Kirpal Singh, a veteran Historian emphasized that a collective leadership of the Sikh Panth was a dire necessity of the Panth. Parminder Singh (USA), Dr Harnam Singh Shan, an eminent Sikh scholar, Brig Gurdip Singh, S Gurbachan Singh Bachan, Dr G S Kalkat, Ex-Vice-Chancellor, PAU and Sardar Ujagar Singh, USA also spoke in the evening session.

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### 3

Chandigarh, November 13, 2005. On the second day of the International Sikh Conclave being held at the Institute of Sikh Studies

here for the Constitution of the proposed International Sikh Confederation, an apex body of the Sikhs, many other delegates from India and foreign countries offered their comments.

The opening session started with the comments of Giani Jarnail Singh Arshi from Australia, who compared the state of Sikh affairs at the present time with the period of Sikh history just after Banda Singh Bahadur's downfall. He suggested that the constitution of ISC should be based on principle of 'Collective leadership' a present version of old institutions of 'Panj Piaras', 'Sarbat Khalsa' and 'Gurmatta'. Sardar Avtar Singh Sidhu (Canada), laid stress on quality of management and integrity of office bearers, because the earlier two World Sikh Organisations had failed. He endorsed the forming of the ISC and its proposed constitution.

Sardar Gursharan Singh from Malaysia endorsed the constitution of ISC, although he favoured a brief constitution with only basic essentials. Amendments and additions could be made later on as and when the need arises. He said that the ISC should adopt the latest means of information technology for the quick insemination of its programmes.

Brig (retd.) Hardit Singh regarded the drafted constitution as the best possible one. He also suggested dividing the whole globe into 22 Sikh zones and taking two delegates from each zone into the governing body, besides a few enlightened individuals. Immediate formation of an *ad hoc* committee of 50 persons was also suggested by him.

Sardar Angrej Singh, a leading spokesman of the Chandigarh Union Territory villages, endorsed the formation of the ISC and suggested that there should be no election atleast for five years, so that the first governing body could make this ISC fully functional and operative.

Sardar Charan Kanwal Singh, Chief Secretary, Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle, Ludhiana brought a mandate from Principal Ram Singh, the chief of this Organisation, endorsing the formation of ISC. He cautioned the organisers that the ISC should not appear to be a brainchild of the IOSS only. It should be projected as a collective voice of the whole international community of the Sikh diaspora. He also cautioned that the Sikh organisations to be given representation in the ISC should be selected on the basis of their performance for the Sikh cause in any field, rather than their nomenclature. He did not favour the election system for the constitution of the ISC.

Dr Birendra Kaur felt that the ISC would bind together like the thread of a rosary does its beads all Sikh Organisations. She advocated greater participation of women in the ISC on the basis of their merit and contribution.

Dr Surjit Singh from Cleveland, USA wanted a thorough clause-by-clause discussion on the draft of the Constitution, which the organisers assured him would be done immediately after the enrolment of members.

Dr Sukhmandir Singh, Dean & Professor, Civil Engineering, Berkeley University, Santa Clara Campus, USA, and Visiting Professor, Cambridge University, UK, in his Presidential Remarks on the second day of the Conclave, stressed the extremely urgent need to create an international body of the Sikhs to meet the challenges of the modern times. He also dwelt upon the reasons for the failure of two earlier efforts to create such an international body. He expressed his strong displeasure with the ritualistic superstructure that has crept into Sikh religion over and above the teachings of Sikh Gurus and Guru Granth Sahib. "Package has become heavier than the substance", in his words. Finally, he suggested the emulation of the Jewish paradigm for the rejuvenation of the Sikh diaspora. The Jews, passing through a similar tortuous historical period, rejuvenated themselves and emerged winners after they found the best tool of empowerment of their community through the medium of education, for which they created a billion dollar educational fund called JEF. They dominate every aspect of American society through the education of their children for which they ensure financial support. Dr Sukhmandir Singh suggested creation of a similar educational fund for the Sikhs to educate and empower every Sikh child to combat all the dangers facing the Sikh Panth.

Giani Harinder Singh, President Kendri Singh Sabha read out the Resolution for the formation of the ISC, and the constitution of the *ad hoc* committee to give a practical shape to this Body within a period of six months (copy of the Resolution attached). The resolution was passed by a voice vote and raising of hands, and hailed with *jaikaras* of Sat Sri Akal by the delegates present in the convention.

In the concluding session which was chaired by Dr Gurcharan Singh Kalkat, Lt Gen Kartar Singh Gill then announced the method to be adopted for the formation of the *ad hoc* committee within the

next 15 days. Delegates who endorsed the ISC Constitution were requested to forward and sponsor only those names of persons who are really keen to join as members and are ready to devote the required time towards the work involved in further consolidating the very important task of bringing the ISC into its final shape and making it fully functional.

Finally, Sardar Gurdev Singh, IAS (retd), President, IOSS, read out a vote of thanks and assured the delegates that the organisers of this Convention will make earnest efforts to come upto the expectations of the assembled delegates and try to incorporate all the amendments suggested during the convention after a thorough discussion.

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#### **SECRETARIAT OF INTERNATIONAL SIKH CONFEDERATION INAUGURATED**

The Central Secretariat of the ISC was formally inaugurated on Sunday 11th November, 2005, on the premises of the Sri Guru Kendri Singh Sabha, Chandigarh. This is a prime and easily accessible location on Madhya Marg at Plot No 1 of Sector 28-A, Chandigarh.

The ceremony itself started with *kirtan* at 10am in a hall adjacent to the neatly renovated offices of the ISC. The open lawns of the Kendri Singh Sabha welcomed the guests to a short but auspicious ceremony in which Sikh intellectuals joined hands to formally establish the nerve centre of a vitally needed global Sikh organisation. The Chief Guest this time was not any glorified dignitary; the dignified and holy *Panj Piaras* of Chandigarh, were humbly invited to perform the inaugural ceremony.

At 11am sharp, *Panj Piaras* in full and colourful regalia were escorted into the premises by Lt Gen Kartar Singh Gill and Sardar Sadhu Singh Deol. On arrival at the actual site, they were formally garlanded by Dr Kharak Singh, Dr Gurcharan Singh Kalkat and Sardar Gurdev Singh. The large hall was soon full of Sikh representatives of important Gurdwaras and Organisations located in Chandigarh, Ludhiana, Amritsar and Patiala.

*Kirtan* was followed by brief speeches by a few representative guests, wherein they blessed the efforts of the organisers in bringing into being the International Sikh Confederation. Dr Kirpal Singh, the

noted senior historian set the pace by citing from Sikh history the methods adopted by our worthy ancestors in meeting the challenges of the time. We too are facing similar challenges today and he expected the ISC to help meet these challenges through collective leadership. Sardar Hardip Singh, Member SGPC, while supporting the efforts of the organisers, desired harmonious relations between the ISC and existing Sikh organisations of importance such as the Akali Dal and SGPC. He visualised many hurdles that the ISC would face in establishing itself, but was optimistic that these would be overcome as long as we propagated the major tenets of Sikhism and combated the challenges of modern time.

Others who blessed the occasion and uttered words of support were Brig Gurdip Singh, Sardar Karamjit Singh from Ludhiana, Sardar Kashmir Singh, youth worker from Patiala, Sardar Karam Singh Raju IAS (retd). Sardar Shamsheer Singh from USA said that he has good rapport with many gurdwaras in USA & Canada, he will motivate them to become the members of this central Sikh organisation. Dr Kharak Singh assured the *sangat* that the ISC would carefully steer clear of political affiliations, and work for the welfare and development of the global Sikh community. The ISC would provide vital feedback to the SGPC regarding the problems of Sikhs all over the world. It would render intellectual inputs to the Sikh political leadership, and try and initiate a process wherein all Sikh political parties present a united front in our homeland and also globally. Gen Kartar Singh assured that the Sikh *Maryada* would be totally preserved while revising the Constitution of the ISC and in its implementation. Individuals and their egos would have no place in the ISC. Finances would be strictly controlled and utilised most effectively. He exhorted our Gurdwaras and Institutions to send support and join the ISC.

Giani Harinder Singh, President, Sri Guru Kendri Singh Sabha conclusively assured full support in all respects to the efficient functioning of the Secretariat of the ISC. He termed this day as a historic day. Placing all resources of the Singh Sabha at the disposal of the Panth, he very gracefully said, ਮੇਰਾ ਮੁਝ ਮੇ ਕੁਝ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ । ਬੜਾ ਚਾਓ ਚੜਿਆ ਸੰਸਾਰ ਪੱਧਰ ਤੇ ਸਿੰਘ ਸੰਭਾਵਾਂ ਦਾ ਸੰਗਠਨ ਹੋਵੇ ।

*Ardas* was led by Bhai Sahib Kirpal Singh Ji of the *Panj Piaras* and the hall echoed with the culminative full-throated chants of *Jo*



*Bole So Nihal Sat Sri Akal.* The *Panj Piaras* led the *sangat* towards the entrance to the Office-cum-Secretariat, where *kesri saropas* were tied in a holy knot. Having lined up for the main ceremony, the *Panj Piaras* all put forth their hand to untie the holy knot. The entrance was showered with flower petals and, led by the *Panj Piaras*, we all entered the precincts which had a simple but dignified look. *Parshad*, was distributed followed by *Guru Ka Langar*.

Thus was launched the *Sansar Sikh Sangathan* (ISC) with its Secretariat safely launched in the lap of noted Panthic organisation and at a prestigious location of Chandigarh. May it march forward with rare devotion and dedication !

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MAKKAR IN FAVOUR OF GURDWARA ACT

Fatehgarh Sahib, December 2. SGPC President Avtar Singh Makkar today said that he was in favour of the enactment of the All-India Gurdwara Act.

Talking to mediapersons after presiding over a prize distribution function at Mata Gujri College here, Makkar said that though the SGPC was in favour of the enactment of the All-India Gurdwara Act, the Centre was not cooperating with it. Interestingly, Shiromani Akali Dal chief Parkash Singh Badal has maintained a studied silence on the issue.

In reply to a query, Makkar clarified that the SGPC had not given recognition to the Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (PSGPC), but had decided to extend cooperation for the maintenance of gurdwaras there. He said a delegation of the SGPC would be sent to Pakistan soon to assess the condition of gurdwaras. Asked whether the projects initiated by his predecessor Bibi Jagir Kaur would continue, Makkar said that he would review them.

On the verdict of the Akal Takht Jathedar to boycott Chandigarh-based newspaper '*Spokesman*', he said, "It's our duty to obey the Akal Takht's verdict."

Later, Mata Gujri College additional secretary Ranjit Singh Libra and principal Gurmohan Singh Walia honoured Makkar. Kirpal Singh Libra and principal D.S. Hira and Manjinder Kaur were also present. (*Courtesy : Hindustan Times, December 3, 2005*)

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**VEDANTI IN FIX OVER MEDIATION IN US GURDWARA DISPUTE**

Amritsar, November 20. Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti is in the fix following 'mediation' between two warring groups of a gurdwara in Los Angeles as some members have written to the SGPC to take up the matter at the forthcoming general body meeting of the Shiromani Committee, to be held here on November 23.

Mr Sukhi Sandhu, and Mr Harjit Singh Saini (USA), in a representation faxed to Bibi Jagir Kaur, here today said that though Akal Takht was supreme for all Sikhs, but there must be some rules for the Jathedar to stop him from interfering in local affairs of the Sikhs in foreign countries. They said the *Jathedar* should not take up the matters which were sub-judice. However, Mr Prithpal Singh Sandhu, personal assistant to Jathedar, Akal Takht said that such issues could not be taken up by the general house.

Meanwhile, Mr Yadvinder Singh, President of the American Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (AGPC), who held a meeting with Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti, said that the Sikh clergy should refrain from interfering in local and administrative strife of foreign gurdwaras.

Talking to *The Tribune*, the AGPC president said that Sikh high priests should issue directives only if there was any violation of '*Maryada*' (Sikh code of conduct) in gurdwaras. He said sometimes, any edict issued by the jathedar regarding local issues encouraged infighting in foreign gurdwaras.

Mr Yadvinder Singh said that Jathedar Akal Takht should help in the formation of proposed International Sikh Confederation (ISC), which should be responsible for resolving burning issues pertaining to Sikhism all over the world. He clarified that the proposed ISC was not aimed at replacing the SGPC at all. He said the ISC would give due representation to the grass-root level Sikhs the world over and help fulfil long-cherished aspirations of the community. The AGPC president said that Akal Takht was supreme for the Sikhs hence the '*Maryada*' approved by it was being implemented in its all 43 member gurdwaras in America.

Mr Yadvinder Singh, however, alleged that Jathedar Vedanti had 'dumped' the manuscript of the proposed ISC for reasons best known to

him.

Giving details of the activities of the AGPC, Mr Yadvinder Singh said that it had given training to Transport Security Agency (TSA) to understand Sikhs and Sikhism after 9/11 attacks in America. He claimed that Sikhs were very much safe in America and measures were taken by the American government to save members of the Sikh community. *(Courtesy : Hindustan Times, December 3, 2005)*

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RS 72 CR FOR GOLDEN TEMPLE GALLERY

New Delhi, December 3, The Centre has sanctioned Rs 72 crore as part of a beautification project around the Golden Temple, Punjab Local Bodies Minister Jagjit Singh said today.

The state government plans to build a 4 km elevated road at a cost of Rs 150 crore from Amritsar's municipal limits to the Sikh shrines he said. "The centre has cleared Rs 72 crore for the Darbar Sahib Galliarra (gallery) Project." the minister, who is in Delhi to attend the launch of the Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, told reporters.

The project, which originally began as buffer-type zone around the Golden Temple Complex in the wake of Operation Black Thunder in 1988, aimed at clearing the area around the historical shrine of market congestion. "The government could have its own motives them but now it has become a beautification project", Manjit Singh Calcutta, who was the SGPC secretary when the project was announced in 1988, said. *(Courtesy : Hindustan Times, December 4, 2005)*

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#### **DR RAJINDER SINGH BAJWA PASSES AWAY**

It was a great shock to know about the demise of Dr Bajwa, an active humanist, and a strong supporter of different projects related to spreading of the *gurmata* message and the education of the Sikh youth. He was a renowned scientist, a water management specialist in Washington DC with the federal government of the USA. On a personal request from the President of USA, he once visited California to advise the government to overcome the emergency of water scarcity in the State. Success of his plan was appreciated by all and he received

a special letter of thanks from the President for his help.

After retirement, he continued to actively participate in Sikh affairs, both in USA & India. He was closely associated with the activities of the Institute of Sikh Studies. He provided a valuable support for a girls college in the backward area of Sangrur district in Punjab. Unfortunately, his cancer was detected at a late stage and in spite of the best efforts of the medical specialists, he expired on December 2, 2005. The members of Institute of Sikh Studies express their grief and sympathy with the members of his family, and his wife Dr Manjit Kaur, his daughter Param and his son Amrit.

May God grant peace to his soul and spiritual strength to his family, relatives and friends to bear the shock of his un-timely departure with grace !

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INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON TASKS BEFORE THE ISC

Chandigarh, December 25, 2005. A two-day seminar will be held on the 8-9th April, 2006, at Chandigarh on the theme *Tasks Before the International Sikh Confederation* under the joint sponsorship of the Institute of Sikh Studies (IOSS) and the International Sikh Confederation (ISC). The intention is to identify the problems facing the Sikh community in various areas, the desirable goals and the measures required to achieve them. The discussion will provide a sound basis for long-term as well as short-term plans of the ISC. A large number of scholars and experts in various disciplines are being invited to present their papers on selected subjects. All are invited to attend/participate.

The theme, *Tasks Before the ISC* is very broad-based, since the Panth faces countless issues which demand serious deliberations and prioritisation. Papers can be presented on any aspect of the theme. Some of the topics could be:

a) Religious Affairs

- Translation of Guru Granth Sahib
- Propagation of Guru's message
- Outstanding academic issues
- Schisms and Deras
- Institutes for research and training

- Controversies
- Interfaith Relations
- b) Education and Social Affairs**
 - State of education in Punjab
 - Quality education in schools
 - Technical education
 - Higher education
 - Education Fund
 - Sports
- c) Economic Affairs**
 - State of employment
 - Training and career guidance
 - Financial assistance
 - Farm sector development
 - Industrialisation
 - Avenues abroad
- d) International & Legal Affairs**
 - Problems of diaspora
 - Dealings with Governments
 - Issues of identity
 - Legal issues
- e) Media & Public Relations**
 - Press
 - Publications
 - Use of modern media
 - Full time TV Channel

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## Letters to the Editor

### ‘BLATANT DERELICTION OF DUTY’

In a letter reproduced below, Justice Mota Singh, an eminent international jurist of UK holds Sikh leaders guilty of a blatant dereliction of duty towards the community, particularly the youth. He hails the inception of the ISC and assures his full support to it. (– Editor)

Dear Dr Kharak Singh ji,

It is my misfortune that I was not able to be present at the Conclave at which the decision to set up the International Sikh Confederation was taken. The considerations that prompted the organisers have been the subject of intense concern and discussion among a number of Sikh organisations in London; regrettably, nothing concrete has resulted from these discussions, the preponderant reason

being the perceived reluctance on the part of the authorities in Amritsar to respond in a meaningful way to any approaches.

I have often wondered whether the Sikh leaders in India and elsewhere, religious and political, were alert to the dangers to the community; whether they were aware of the pitfalls and the perils to which Sikh youth of today (and not only of the Diaspora) are subject. If they are aware, they do not seem to be doing anything to the youths' total and inevitable alienation; if they are not, then they are guilty of a blatant dereliction of duty. Past experience has shown that Sikhs only wake up to the dangers to the community when there is a catastrophe, such as the one the community faced in 1984. Now, that was a providential opportunity for the leaders to galvanise the community into a cohesive community as envisaged by Guru Gobind Singh. The clear need at the time was for enlightened men with a clear vision, men of discipline, steeped in the *Maryada*, men with a spiritual depth, not uncaring bigots, above all men of moral courage who, one hoped, would stand like a rock, who would speak to our deep instincts that there was more to life than self-indulgence, personal power or position that modern culture seems not only to expect and condone, but encourage, men who would be alive to the challenges to the community and demonstrate the ability and the courage to articulate its concerns, its apprehensions and its aspirations and who would set their faces like flint against any fissiparous tendencies, men with the perspicacity to identify and define the goal for the community and give imaginative, decisive leadership and not dither or quarrel among themselves. But the disarray in the community was utter. I believe that it was with all that in mind that some ten years ago, the World Sikh Council was set up. I was appointed Chairman of the European Section. Now, we all know what happened to that organisation. Sadly, once again, the opportunity was wrecked. It was all very disheartening. And I asked myself, must we wait for catastrophes to happen to bring us to our senses?

Sikh values and Sikh identity are being assailed, as much from without as from within. We cannot always point the finger of blame at the stars or at others for our misfortunes. We must be prepared to accept our share of the blame. The need to put our house in order has never been greater or more urgent. It is the future of the Sikh Panth that is at stake. All this makes the case for a new global organisation

so overwhelming. And I am absolutely delighted that the IOSS and other bodies have joined hands and embarked on this new initiative. As I indicated in our conversation, you have my complete support.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

Mota Singh

<bhmsqc@btinternet.com>

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#### COMMENTS ON PROFESSOR DHARAM SINGH'S KEYNOTE SPEECH

Dear Editor,

Kudos to Dr. Sarjeet Singh Sidhu for his article: Being Politically Correct. The author is indeed endowed with *Bibek Budhi* (discriminating intellect/critical thinking) and the deep understanding of Nanakian philosophy (*Gurmat*). Dr Sidhu has dealt in a superb manner the explosive issue of “political correctness” and the misinterpretation of Kabir’s hymns and other erroneous statements made by Professor Dharam Singh of the Department of Encyclopedia of Sikhism, Punjabi University in Patiala. Prof Dharam Singh had earlier taken the liberty to reinterpret *Gurbani* to suite his “Keynote Speech: The Sikh Spirit and the Global Society.” However, I want to echo and reinforce what Dr Sidhu has said so eloquently for the following reasons :

First, W H McLeod and his supporters insist that only academicians are qualified to critique academic work. On the other hand, learned Sikhs are of the view that anyone who has proper understanding of Guru Granth Sahib (GGS), Sikh history and traditions is qualified to comment on academic work. As a matter of fact, academic scholars in the field of Sikh studies rarely criticize each other’s work—their own self-imposed version of “political correctness.” For example, Dharam Singh’s article was published more than a year ago and not a single academician has raised a voice to correct the errors. Why? Had Dr. Sidhu’s eye not caught the mistakes in Dharam Singh’s articles, it might have remained unnoticed, unchallenged, and quite possibly become a source of reference for others in their writings. Let us examine Professor Dharam Singh’s following statements:

1. “Sikhism not only acknowledges and appreciates other faiths, it accepts their equal validity as well.”

There is absolutely no reference in Guru Granth Sahib that

supports his assertion that Sikhism dubs other faiths as equally valid. On the contrary, Guru Nanak rejected all earlier religious traditions:

- Neither the *Vedas* (four Hindu texts) nor the four *Kateba* [Semitic texts: the *Torah*, the *Zabur* (Psalms), the *Injil* (Gospel), and the *Quran*] know the mystery of the Creator of the cosmos. (Guru Granth Sahib\*, p. 1021)
- It is the teachings of *Vedas*, which has created the concepts of sin and virtue, hell and heaven, and *karma* and transmigration. One reaps the reward in the next life for the deeds performed in this life – goes to hell or heaven according to the deeds. The *Vedas* have also created the fallacy of inequality of caste and gender for the world. (p. 1243)
- The Merciful One is the only Emancipator (*maula*), not the holy men (*pir* and *sheikh*), or prophets. The Master of every heart, Who delivers justice, is beyond the description of the *Quran* and other Semitic texts. (p. 897)

*Gurmat* differs from other religions in the basic premise: the concept of God. Sure, the concept of one God was known long before Guru Nanak. However, that God as described is nothing more than a tribal god. In addition to millions of gods, Hindus also believe in a god who communicates only through the Brahmins and then there is a god for the chosen people, the Jews. The Christian god is approachable through His only son, Jesus Christ whereas the Muslim god, Allah, is accessible only through Mohammed who is Allah's last and final Prophet in a long line of Prophets.

On the other hand, Guru Nanak preached about God who is accessible to all seekers of "Truth" irrespective of their creed, caste, gender, color, ethnicity and geographical consideration. For Guru Nanak the Creator is "One and Only One" and, mankind is also one whereas earlier religions believed in various versions of "exclusive God" which caused balkanization or disintegration of mankind. In the compositions of Guru Granth Sahib, the thoughts of many sages of diverse backgrounds being compatible with *Gurmat* are incorporated; however, there are no quotes from the texts of Semitic and Hindu religions.

Guru Nanak rejected the incarnation of God, the caste system,

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\* All the subsequent references are also from Guru Granth Sahib



hell and heaven, transmigration and *karma*, miracles, demons, angels, gods, and goddesses. Guru Nanak also rejected the concept of salvation preached by the Semitic and the Indian religions.

2. “Sikhism exhorts Hindus to become true Hindus and Muslims to become true Muslims.”

- Again, this statement is a distortion of Guru Nanak’s teachings. Guru Nanak urged both Hindus and Muslims to give up their conventional beliefs and focus on higher religion – universal humanism – love, respect, equality and justice for all. Whereas during Guru Nanak’s time a true Hindu followed the dictates of the caste system faithfully and a true Muslim believed in the dreadful punishments for non-believers (*kafirs*) plus some other un-human doctrines.

Professor Dharam Singh has misinterpreted the hymn of Bhagat Kabir on page 1349 of Guru Granth Sahib: “Neither the *Vedas* nor the *Qatebs* (the Semitic scriptures like the *Bible* and the *Quran*) are to be called false, rather false are those who do not reflect on them or however, they do not condemn scriptures – eastern or western: these scriptures are not false, rather false are those humans who do not contemplate and comprehend them.”

Dr Sidhu is correct in saying that Kabir did not vouch for the validity of *Vedas* and the Semitic texts; rather he rebukes those who do not reflect on the teachings of these texts before rejecting/condemning them. Kabir strongly disagreed with the *Vedas* and the Semitic texts similar to the Sikh Gurus and other *bhagats* whose hymns are recorded as part of Guru Granth Sahib.

- I have searched many *Shastras* and *Smritis*; their teachings do not show the way to God, but the dwelling on God’s attributes is invaluable. (p. 265)
- Many a Brahma got tired of studying the Vedas, but they could not estimate even an iota of God’s greatness. Ten incarnations of Vishnu and the famous ascetic Shiv, who got tired of smearing his body with ashes, could not fathom God’s extent. (p. 747)
- Using horse as a metaphor for mind and good actions as the path to God, Kabir says that a good rider keeps his focus on the path and is not distracted by the teaching of *Vedas* and *Kateb*. (p 329)
- O my brethren! *Smriti* is based on the *Vedas*. It has brought chains of

the caste and ropes of false rituals and ceremonies to entrap you. (p. 329)

- I shall not sing the endless songs and poetry of *Vedas*, *Puranas* and *Shastras*. I shall play a steady tune on the flute of love of the Formless One, Whose abode is Eternal. (p. 972)
- If one determines good or bad actions on the basis of *Vedas* and *Puranas*, one's mind is filled with doubt and worry. These scriptures do not tell how to cure self-conceit. (p. 346.)

Baldev Singh USA  
<BALDEV6@aol.com>

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#### SIKH CONFEDERATION TAKING SHAPE

Dear All,

It appears that some like-minded individuals have gotten together to address the problems facing the Sikh community, be it at local, national or international level. Given how great the problems are, and how difficult the task is, I have nothing but admiration for these individuals for taking the bold step. I am sure a lot of mistakes will be made, but I am also sure a lot of good will come out of their effort.

Let us be complimentary of them, and offer any assistance we can as lesser mortals (here I speak for myself) to improve the wellbeing of our community.

Let us not suspect their motives, or cast aspersions, or think or speak any negative thoughts. Just wish them *chardi kala* and pray for their success. Happy *gurpurab*.

Pritpal Singh Kochhar  
New York City  
<pskochhar@hotmail.com>

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*With our own hands,*

*Let us ourselves manage our own affairs.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 474

ਆਪਣ ਹਥੀ ਆਪਣਾ ਆਪੇ ਹੀ ਕਾਜੁ ਸਵਾਰੀਐ ॥