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ABSTRACTS OF SIKH STUDIES

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EDITORIAL

ਤਖਤਿ ਬਹੈ ਤਖਤੈ ਕੀ ਲਾਇਕ : Prof Kulwant Singh 1

ARTICLES

- COMMEMORATING GURU TEGH BAHADUR ON
HIS FOURTH BIRTH CENTENARY : Nirmal Singh 7
- ARMY ATTACK ON THE GOLDEN TEMPLE
EMBOLDENED HINDUTVA IN INDIA : Jaspal Singh Sidhu 27
- SIKHS ARE DIFFERENT : Dipankar Gupta 33
- SIKHISM – A RELIGION OF ITS OWN : Bhai Ashok Singh 36
- RICHARD SULIVAN'S WRITING ON SIKHS DURING
THE MISL PERIOD IN THE LATE 18TH CENTURY : Inderjeet Singh 47
- LEGENDARY PIONEERS IN SIKH STUDIES
– BHAI SAHIB BHAI VIR SINGH : Dr Gurdeep Kaur 52
- BATTLE OF SARAGARHI : Col Bhupinder Singh 63
- SIKH PHILOSOPHY CAN HELP MODERN MAN
FACE HIS CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS : Dr Sawraj Singh 68
- SPIRITUAL VOYAGE OF BHAGAT KABIR : Prin. Prabhjot Kaur 72
- STATUS OF WOMEN IN SIKHISM : Dr Madanjit Kaur 81
- THE FIRST GURDWARA, A PLACE OF SIKH
WORSHIP, IN NORTH AMERICA : Harbans Lal 102
- WE OURSELVES ARE DESTROYING OUR MARYADA : Col Avtar Singh 107
- ਗੁਰੂ ਗੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਤੇ ਅੱਜ ਦਾ ਯੁਗ : Dr Sarabjot Kaur 109
- ON THE ISC FRONT : Col Jagtar Singh 115

REVIEWS

PROF HARBANS SINGH – A LEGEND IN SIKH STUDIES : Pric. Prabhjot Kaur 118

TAHI PARKASH HAMARA BHAYO

PATNA SHEHR VIKHE BHAV LEYO : G.S. Khurana 121

NEWS & VIEWS : 125

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EDITORIAL

ਤਖਤਿ ਬਹੈ ਤਖਤੈ ਕੀ ਲਾਇਕ

THE DESERVING ALONE DESERVE TO RULE

Alexander Pope, the famous 18th century British classical poet in his well-known long philosophical poem “Essay on man” writes:

“For forms of government let fools content,
Whatever is administered best is the best.”

From the beginning of social life on this planet earth various forms of governments like monarchy, dictatorship, ideological totalitarian party governance, presidential form of governance, and liberal democratic form of governance have been tested and tried in different regions of the world. Each form of governance has its own merits and demerits. Neither of these forms have been absolutely free from blemish nor completely blameworthy. All the experiments with various models of governance made so far all over the world boil down to the truth that it is not the form of governance which matters but the quality and character of men/ women who govern and administer a State. Men of integrity and impeccable character can make even a monarchy or an autocracy acceptable to the masses while men with deprived character and conscience, prone to raise personal fortunes out of public positions, can make even the best form of governance a complete disaster and failure. Such people with leaky and porous hearts and minds, given public office, tend to become collaborators with the economic offenders instead of becoming defenders and protectors of State’s and peoples’ interests. Unfortunately, this latter brand of elected representatives have been in governance in the State of Punjab for a period of more than last two decades, a state with a Sikh majority of small marginal farmers, medium size industrial entrepreneurs and with a very little services sector. From being a comparatively prosperous and economically viable state in the mid twentieth century, it has been continuously witnessing

an economic downslide and suffering from mounting state in debtedness. The reasons for this economic deterioration are not far to seek. It is the State's rulers who are blameworthy for this economic mess rather than the enterprising, hard working farmers, entrepreneurs and workers of the State. What makes this allegation stick and visible to the public eye is the enormous rise in the personal fortunes of some of these politicians who have been in power, especially the top brass whose assets have increased at a speed inversely proportional to the States' economic indices. It would be befitting to analyse the graph of the two main political dispensations which have been governing Punjab almost alternatively during these decades and look for the possibility of a third alternative which may bring about an economic, social and cultural turn about in the State and provide succor to the toiling masses of Punjab and create some employment avenues for the highly unemployed and underemployed youth of Punjab. Before we explore the possibility of an emergence of a third alternative or a new dispensation which may hopefully endeavour to revive the heavily indebted state economy and put under leash the existing drug cartels and several other mafias and cleanse the toxic culture of Punjab, it would be befitting to critically evaluate the graph of the two existing dominant political dispensations.

First, regards the record of the main Sikh representative and traditional regional political party, the Akali Dal, which has been in power for a fairly long period since the reorganization of Punjab on linguistic basis, its performance has been less than inspiring and steadfastly regressive. Despite some of the development projects such as the completion of a network of highways, two, three airports and making the State power surplus during its periodic spells of being in power, it has reneged completely on its political agenda of bringing back the left out punjabi speaking areas, the restoration of the arbitrarily taken away Punjab's river waters, getting back the State Capital Chandigarh and reducing the burgeoning mountain of State indebtedness. Moreover, the high ways and airports which have come up in the state during their tenure have come up with the central investment and the surplus power generation has been created by bringing in private entrepreneurs at terms and conditions highly unfavourable both to the State and its consumers. Instead of the

consistent and holistic development of the State on a long term basis, its rule has been marked with economically unviable populist measures, decline in investment in fundamental sectors such as Public health and education, consistently deficit annual budgets and increasing state indebtedness. Instead of strengthening the state infrastructure in public transport, research and development in agriculture by increasing investment in Agriculture universities and extension institutions, it has been promoting and patronizing private vested interests in these key areas. Its leadership instead of eliminating drug, liquor, land and sand mafias during its rule, has been perceived to be collaborating with these vested interests inimical to the State's economy and culture. Films like *Uda Punjab*, damaging the State's reputation has been the product of this period. Its leadership's excessive lust for power and pelf became synonymous with unbridled loot and plunder of the State exchequer in the public mind. Its parternership with the Hindutva oriented Bhartiya Janta Party both at the centre and the state, instead of brining any economically beneficial projects to the state, inhibited its powers to demand more powers for the state and strengthen the inbuilt federal structure. Apart from its lapses on the economic front, the most objectionable action an its part has been its ostrich like attitude towards blatant acts of sacrilege including its manipulation of the topmost Sikh clergy and triggering first a grant of pardon to the anti-Sikh dera Chief for his blasphemous act and then getting the granted pardon withdrawn under public protest and its excessive interference in SGPC management. Late S Harcharan Singh's book, *Shromani Committee di Vartman sathiti* (2020), written after resigning from his nearly two year's stint as the SGPC's Chief executive, lays bare the glaring acts of financial corruption indulged in by some of the politically patronized managers of the bigger Sikh shrines and gross misappropriation of Gurdwara funds and violation of settled rules in the execution of bigger financial transactions during the grant of construction contracts and agricultural lands lease grants of Gurdwara properties. The most repulsive event which bruised rather badly lacerated the collective Sikh psyche of the Sikhs all over the globe was the theft and desecration of the holy *swaroop* of the sacred Guru Granth Sahib from a village Gurdwara and then its subsequent desecration and later on two incidents of police firing on the peaceful

Sikh protests in which two devout Sikh youths were mercilessly killed during its rule. What irked the Sikh community, more than the heinous acts of sacrilege was first its ostrich like attitude towards these repulsive events and then its failure in arresting and prosecuting the guilty criminals and equally blameworthy trigger happy State officials during its rule. The occurrence of these events and failure of this political dispensation to accept moral responsibility for its occurrence has completely lowered its credibility among the Sikh masses and the general populace of the state. Despite the severe beating that it has received during the subsequent election to the State legislature by losing even the status of an opposition party in the present legislature, its stock among the people due to its acts of consistent financial bungling, administrative misdemeanors and overt and covert role in the acts of sacrilege is still very low. The voters of Punjab would loath to cast their votes in their favour if given a better choice.

The other political alternative before the people of Punjab is the national level political party, the Indian National Congress which has been in power in Punjab almost alternatively and is now in power and suffers from a serious crisis of faith and breach of public trust. Despite its tall promises made at the time of election in 2017, some promises solemnly made under an oath, it has miserably failed to fulfill even a fraction of those tall promises. It had solemnly promised to eliminate the pervasive drug menace within days of coming to power, write off the marginal farmers' debt, provide employment to at least one member per family and bring to justice all those who were responsible for the heinous acts of sacrilege during its predecessor's rule and put under leash all the mafias controlling illicit land, liquor and mining and sand trade in the State. In addition to these unfulfilled promises, its governance of the State bears the stamp of being run by a feudal chief, inaccessible not only to the general public but even to some of its own elected legislators, and the key portfolios being controlled by an extra-constitutional band of advisers and retired bureaucrats. Now when its tenure is coming to a close and fresh legislative elections are only a few months away, it has nothing worthwhile among its achievements to present before the public of the State. To use an analogy of a sinking ship, even some of its own cabinet members seem to be berating its own leadership and hinting at their desertion.

Unfortunately, its national leadership constituting the party's high command is as indecisive and faction ridden as its state unit. All its legislators including its ministers seems to have split down the middle mainly on the issue of unkept promises. This kind of factional fight among the legislators just a few months before the next election bodes ill for this political dispensation. The biggest victim of this factional acrimony is the State, its economy and its helpless citizens. The daily mass protests by qualified temporarily employed contractual teachers and other employees and unemployed youth bring discredit to this ruling political dispensation.

Hopes of its return to power under the present leadership are receding by the day. In such a situation, when both the established political dispensations lack public trust and credibility and their stock is at an all time low what is the alternate choice before the hapless electorate of the State. While the Bhartiya Janta Party seems to be facing an existential crisis in the State, the left parties are disoriented and the offshoot of the Delhi based Aam Admi Party is too infant, too small and too less deep-rooted in Punjab soil to provide a viable alternative. But politics seldom allows a vacuum to exist. Since the prospects of a coalition between the two main contenders are bleak in the post poll scenario in the event of a hung house due to their ideological differences, it will be a miracle of sorts if an altogether new alternative comes up a little before the election time.

Without pretending to be having any powers of clairvoyance, it is still worthwhile to do some exercise at crystal gazing and see if the currently going on All India farmers' agitation primarily led by more than two dozen farmers' unions of Punjab at the borders of India's capital can throw an altogether new political dispensation at a short notice to enter into the coming electoral fray? What inspires the possibility of emergence of such a viable dispensation is the daily display of complete synergy among the different organizations, maturity of its joint leadership and timely and appropriate decisions taken from time to time. Added to these assets are its intellectually clear-headed grasp of major farm issues and the essentially corporate character of the newly passed farm laws by the central government under duress from a handful of corporate conglomerates and the remarkable capacity of this leadership to carry on this agitation for

more than seven months and maintenance of complete unity despite all the desperate efforts made by the central Government's and surrounding BJP ruled State's intelligence agencies' to sabotage and derail this unique agitation. Despite bearing the tag of being a farmers' agitation, it has the whole hearted support and equally active participation of agricultural and Industrial labourers, shopkeepers and traders, students, teachers, women, youth, employees and retired senior citizens including retired bureaucrats, farm experts academicians and almost all the political parties with the exception of BJP only. The meticulous planning for sustaining this agitation for a long haul with the provision of improvised comfortable accommodation for the protesters, supply of nutritious meals and medical facilities at the various agitation sites speaks volumes for the maturity, vision and organizational skill of the farmers leadership. What makes this movement a model public crusade like India's independence movement is its enduring patience, perseverance, non-violent peaceful protest and mass participation of people across all castes, classes, regions, religions and ideological allegiances. This agitation is a demonstration of this cooperative interactive leadership fully alive to the problems and aspirations of the people and completely free from the cult of one upmanship and any personal vested interests. Its clear headed understanding of the corporate agenda behind the hurriedly passed anti-farm laws without following proper legislative procedures, public and parliamentary debate by a captive government and its dogged determination to get these anti-people laws annulled clearly reveals its potential for providing ideal leadership at the political level as well. It is in the arc of possibility that a new political leadership in Punjab may emerge from this peoples' movement in the midst of daily factional fights in the presently ruling political dispensation and the other highly discredited regional and Sikh representative party. In this highly murky, exploitative and corruption-ridden existing political atmosphere, let us hope and pray for the emergence of a clean, dedicated and visionary leadership for Punjab and its hapless people. Nothing is impossible, nor is reversal of situation and sudden emergence of order out of total chaos and disorder an exception.

ਤਖਤਿ ਬਹੈ ਤਖਤੈ ਕੀ ਲਾਇਕ ॥

ਪੰਚ ਸਮਾਏ ਗੁਰਮਤਿ ਪਾਇਕ ॥

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1039

COMMEMORATING GURU TEGH BAHADUR ON HIS FOURTH BIRTH CENTENARY

NIRMAL SINGH*

BACKGROUND

The year 2021 marks the passing of 400 years since the birth of Guru Tegh Bahadur, 9th Sikh Guru, in April 1621. Sikhs at that time were just 15 years past the martyrdom of the 5th Sikh Guru and nascent Sikhi was passing through a difficult period. It may help develop a clearer perspective of the role of Guru Tegh Bahadur, if we took an overview of the lead events since Guru Arjun's martyrdom.

Historians mostly agree that robust growth of Sikhi made segments among the Hindus and the Muslims which made them turn increasingly inimical towards the Sikh Gurus. Additionally dissonance in the Guru families provided a sharper focus to those hostile towards Gurughar (House of Nanak). One effect of action by Jahangir to impose death penalty on Guru Arjun at the behest of orthodox Hindu coterie among his courtiers was that it demonstrated the reversal of Akbar's 'policy of religious neutrality and eclecticism'¹ under the new Emperor. The brief internment of Guru Hargobind, successor of Guru Arjun, further confirmed the change in his policy. Post that period, Jahangir tried to moderate his relations with the Guru.

Guru Hargobind, while he maintained friendly relations with Jahangir, did not forget to explore other means to strengthen and consolidate the Sikh community. The Guru had accompanied Jahangir to Kashmir and Rajputana and subdued rebellion by Tara Chand of Nalagarh.² He however discretely continued to organize and train his band of armed Sikhs and tried to bring the community together by attempting to heal the divide³ with the Minas. He did not succeed to

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turn Mina divide round but another opening came up.

In 1624, a few days after his eldest son Gurditta was married, Guru Hargobind with his four sons went to meet Sri Chand at Baarath. Baba Tegh bahadur was three at that time and was not with them. During their stay at Baarath, Sri Chand asked Guru Hargobind to give a son to him. Guru replied 'if you desire, they all are available'. Sri Chand gave Udasi *bhekb* to *Gurditta*. After the Guru left, Gurditta stayed back. Sri Chand explained Udasi *Mat* and bestowed the *Gadi* of a *Pramukh Guru* of *Udasi Sampardai* on him before Gurditta left⁴. It helped to heal a divide in the Sikh community and Udasis soon became an active component of the Sikh *parchar* missionary.

In 1627, Jahangir fell ill in Kashmir and decided to go back to Lahore but died on the way. Shahjahan, known to be close to orthodox groups, succeeded in the struggle for succession to the throne and the Sikh-Mughal relations again turned inimical. Sikhs too were not at all hesitant to cross swords with adversaries. Guru Hargobind fought four battles with Mughal forces after which to avoid recurring conflicts, c. 1634 he moved to the hilly area of Shiwaliks and set up a base at Kiratpur, outside the territory under direct Mughal control.⁵ But Amritsar slipped into Mina hands.

Gopal Singh⁶ records that under Guru Hargobind seats of Sikhism were consolidated from Kabul to Dacca — His son Baba Gurditta, as the *Pramukh Guru* of Udasis, set up four *Dhunas* (monastic seats) that supplemented the system of *sangat* and *masand* to further spread teachings of Guru Nanak. Encyclopedia of Sikhism, Entry Dhuan, PUP, adds that these *Dhunas* were initially assigned to different areas but later each of the branches spread out and established their preaching centers over the country. The *Dhunas* headed by Bhai Almast, with its headquarter at Nanak Mata had branches in Eastern India including at Dhaka. A couple of decades later the sangats in Eastern India provided not only strategic depth to the Sikh community but also became the source of support and funds to the Gurus in the difficult times.

Guru Hargobind, before he passed away in 1644, installed Har Rai, the younger son of Gurditta, as the successor Guru. Gurditta had predeceased his father in 1638 and none of other children of the Guru 'seemed suitable for the position'. Dhir Mal, elder brother of Har Rai

was rejected because he had ‘formed an alliance with Emperor Shâh Jahân’. Dhir Mal also claimed to possess the original copy of Adi Granth to support his claim to Gurgadi and continued to intervene in later succession too⁷. After the ceremony, Guru Hargobind asked everyone to bow to Guru Har Rai, and Baba Tegh Bahadur, 24 and by passed, was the first to do so.⁸

Guru Har Rai had a peaceful disposition and he moved further into the interior hills of Sirmor and stayed there most of the time. During his ministry, three new branches of Udasis known as Bakshishes were added to the already large Udasi order. Guru Har Rai had blessed the Bakshishes known as Suthrashahis, Bhagat Bhagwanias and Sangat Sahibis. This was helpful to Guru’s missionary work in Shiwaliks.

Guru Har Rai’s relations with Shahjahan had improved after he helped treat his favorite son, Dara Shikoh. But Aurangzeb’s ascension to the throne ‘in 1658 marked the beginning of long, consistent and active policy to gain a control over the Sikh religious affairs’⁹-foreboding the testing times in the half century ahead.

Aurangzeb sent a message to Guru Har Rai ‘to deliver his son Ram Rai as a hostage for the Guru’s reported support of Dara Shikoh’. Aurangzeb asked Ram Rai after his arrival in Delhi, to explain a verse from *Asa di Var* in Adi Granth. Ram Rai replied that the text had been miscopied and should have been *mitti beiman ki*, instead of *Mitti Musalman ki* the dust left after cremating the bodies of faithless people. Guru Har Rai, on hearing of this, decided not to see Ram Rai again for changing the word of Guru Nanak¹⁰. Before his passing in October 1661, Guru Har Rai installed his younger son, aged five, Har Krishan as Guru.

Ram Rai was rewarded by Aurangzeb with land grants in Dehra Dun region. After a few years, in Jan 1664, Aurangzeb summoned Guru Har Krishan, through Raja Jai Singh, to appear at his court¹¹. The Guru came to Delhi and was lodged at the house of Jai Singh.

When Guru Har Krishan was summoned, Kunwar Ram Singh was present with Guru on the first day.¹²In the session, Ram Rai was emphatic that decision of his father to install his brother was based on cogent reasons. It went well but the next session planned for the

following day could not be held because Guru Har Krishan passed away that night.

When Guru Har Krishan was sick with small pox, Baba Tegh Bahadur had arrived in Delhi on 21st March from his visit to sangats in Patna and the East from 1656 to 1664. He was on way back to Bakala and with his mother and visited Guru Har Krishan to offer condolences on the passing of Guru Har Rai.¹³

Guru Har Krishan passed away on 30 March, 1664 and his dying words were, “Baba Bakala”, indicating that his successor Guru was in Bakala. This was considered by many as a cryptic utterance but those in the know had no doubt who was the person in view of Guru Har Krishan.¹⁴

TEGH BAHADUR – THE NINTH SIKH GURU

Sikhs had witnessed the happenings over the decades since the martyrdom of the fifth Guru and had no doubt that the Mughal Kings had made continued attempts to contain the activities of each of the Gurus and possibly to install a person who would take the cue from them. This process firmed up the resolve of the Gurus and Sikhs to resist Mughal interference.

Baba Tegh Bahadur had stayed in touch with Guru Har Rai and had undertaken *parchar* to Patna at the Guru’s suggestion. His brother in law, Kirpal, a soldier in Guru Har Rai’s armed guard is also said to have kept Tegh Bahadur informed of the Sikh developments periodically.¹⁵ It is reasonable to infer that Tegh Bahadur had stayed sensitive towards Sikh happenings but without interfering in the matters. It is also possible that the Mughals with their ears to the ground, would have been conscious of the possibility of Tegh Bahadur becoming the Guru, with some trepidation, at a juncture when they were closing in to take control of the Guru institution.

Sangat Singh has speculated that the delay in announcing ascension of Tegh Bahadur to Gurgadi by months was a strategic ploy to keep Aurangzeb and his close coterie from guessing who was going to succeed the 8th Guru to Gurgadi¹⁶ lest they try to harm or in any way compromise the person.

As soon as news got out that the dying words of Guru Har Krishan were Baba Bakala, there was flurry of activity in Bakala as

the local as well as outside aspirants of *Gur Gadi* set up shop as potential Gurus. Their total number is put at 22 that included Sodhis of various lineages like Minas, Dhir Mal, Sodhis of Lahore, and descendents of Suraj Mal plus a crop of local impostors¹⁷. Tegh Bahadur judiciously stayed aloof from this motley crowd. As per Surjit Singh Gandhi, Dhir Mal was the most vociferous of the claimants.

After over four months, a Delhi Sangat led by Diwan Dargah Mal and others including Mata Sulakhni, mother of Guru Har Krishan, Baba Gurditta son of Baba Budhha came to Bakala and Baba Gurditta performed the ritual ceremony of installing Tegh Bahadur as the next Sikh Guru. Sangat Singh says that the Guru asked for promise to maintain silence for the time being. Ranbir Singh records that it was a quiet, private ceremony. However, Surjit Gandhi's version is that it was an open ceremony where grandson of Bhai Mohan, son of Guru Amardas, was also present.¹⁸

The news finally became public on the Diwali day, 9 October 1664, when Makhan Shah Lubana came to make up his *mannat* - promised offering to the Guru for saving his prized merchandise on high seas and was aghast at the sight of so many people posing as Gurus. Each one of them accepted two gold coins he offered but when Makhan Shah got to Guru Tegh Bahadur, he asked for the 500 coins he had promised. That became the '*gur ladho re*' moment – the joyful, spontaneous expression that Lubana Sikh is said to have uttered and has since become a part of Sikh memory. It continues to be retold by the kathakars and ragis lauding the miraculous finding and thankful acceptance of the true Guru by Sikhs. Gopal Singh sees the process of elevation of Tegh Bahadur to have been 'an election by consensus'¹⁹ a speculation because consensus of aspirants was invariably sought but its absence did not change the choice that the earlier Guru has made!

Dhirmal continued to be sullenly skeptical and his Masand Sihan made a gun assault on the Guru one night. The Guru suffered a minor injury, was calm but Sikhs were upset. They plundered Dhir Mal's house and took away the Saroop of original Adi Granth that he had appropriated. The Guru did not approve of the revenge attack and asked Sikhs to return the sacred Text to Dhir Mal which was done.²⁰

Tegh Bahadur was now publically acknowledged as successor to

Guru Hari Krishan. He appointed Bhai Mati Das and Sati Das as Dewan and Minister and Bhai Dayal Das as household minister.²¹

THE TEGH BAHADUR MINISTRY – OCT. 1664- NOV. 1675

In Nov. 1664 Guru Tegh Bahadur travelled to Amritsar to pay obeisance at Hari Mandir Sahib but ‘when he tried to enter the temple, its doors were closed upon him by the custodian of the temple [Harji]’ highlighting the continuation of familial hiatus.²²

Subsequently, the Guru reached Kiratpur in May 1665, and in June 1665 the Guru bought some land from Raja of Bilaspur near Makhawal village and founded a new town named after his mother as Chak-Nanki. Later this town was renamed as Anandpur. Baba Gurditta son of Sikh veteran Baba Buddha, had laid its foundation.

After a brief stay there, in August 1665, Guru Tegh Bahadur, accompanied by his family and some Sikhs, set out for a missionary tour of sangats towards the East. The Sangats’ response was overwhelming, causing concern to Mughals. Upon reaching Dhamdhan in Banger area in December 1665, a Mughal enforcement officer Alam Khan arrested the Guru and some of his associates and produced them before Emperor Aurangzeb, who ordered to hand them over to Kanwar Ram Singh, son of Raja Jai Singh. Released after about two months, he resumed his mission and reached Patna via Agra, Allahabad, Benaras and Sasaram in May 1666. They halted at Patna as arrangements for the stay of the Guru’s family were made. Guru Tegh Bahadur proceeded to Dacca in October 1666. Mata Gujri, who was expecting and a son was born on 22 Dec. 1666 at Patna.

At Dacca the Guru established a Hazuri Sangat with the help of Bhai Almast. Gurdwara Sangat Tola now marks the place where Guru Sahib used to deliver his sermons. It was here that the Guru heard of birth of his son. From Dacca, Guru proceeded to Chittagong via Jatia Hills, Sylhet and Agartala and returned to Dacca in 1668.

Raja Ram Singh, deputed by Aurangzeb, was then in Dacca for his expedition to Assam. He met the Guru and requested him to accompany him on the expedition. Guru agreed and the Guru’s presence is credited to have made possible the historic avoidance of a bloody conformation between the ruler of Kamrup and Raja Ram Singh.

An alternate account is that Aurangzeb deputed Raja Ram Singh, under house-arrest for negligence since escape of Shivaji, to the tough task to recapture Gauhati seized by Raja of Kamrup. Ram Singh knowing that Guru Tegh Bahadur had gone to Patna, halted there and learnt from Masand Bhai Dyal Das, that the Guru was at Dacca and planned to go to Dhubri and Assam to revive the Sikh centers established by Guru Nanak. Ram Singh set off to Dacca, met the Guru who acceded to his request to accompany him. A negotiated settlement took place and Guru Tegh Bahadur was asked to mark the new boundary line between the two forces. Mughals and Assamese agreed to co-exist without interfering in each other's territory.²³

The Guru returned to Patna to learn that under orders of Aurangzeb, things had turned ugly for Hindus and some Gurudwaras too had been demolished. He decided to return to Anandpur immediately. As had happened on his way out, the Guru along with some prominent Sikhs, was arrested also on the return journey at Agra in June 1670 and then released by an imperial court at Delhi after a short detention.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was the first Guru to visit Sikh sangats in Eastern India set up 150 years earlier at the instance of Guru Nanak. These sangats saw increase in the days of succeeding Gurus who placed them under Masands to collect offerings and minister to the spiritual needs of devotees. In the time of the sixth Guru, Sikh sangats were firmly established at several places including Agra, Bina, Burhanpur, Mongher, Prayag, Ujjain, Gujrat, Lucknow, Patna, Daaca and Raj Mahal.²⁴

The Guru returned to Anandpur around 1671. He had spent about 5 ½ years, and as it turned out, 50 % of his total ministry in the missionary to the East. Besides this, he had earlier, prior to becoming Guru, spent some time in that area. The Guru also blessed the Udassi Mihan Shahi Bakshish. Guru Gobind Singh later blessed Jitmaliyas and Bakhatmalia udassi groups. The Udasis thus became active participants in the efforts launched by the later Gurus to spread the message of Guru Nanak and to the propagation of Sikh faith.²⁵

Around 1672, the Guru set out on missionary to Malwa region of Punjab that lasted about 1 ½ years. The mission assisted in planting trees, digging community wells and cattle heads being distributed to

encourage dairy farming. Several Muslim followers of Sakhi Sarvar adopted Sikhi. These developments did not sit well with fundamentalist Muslims and the ruling elite.

Concurrently Brahmins at major pilgrimage centers and Kashmir had been told to turn Muslims or face death. At this juncture, a group of Kashmiri Pandits led by Kirpa Ram came and met Guru Tegh Bahadur at Anandpur in May 1675 to seek his protection. The Guru, 'after long discussions with prominent Sikhs and Kashmiri Pandits' made up his mind to sacrifice himself for the cause of "Righteousness" and for the freedom of "Dharma."

The script played out fully. The Guru's offer was conveyed to Aurangzeb who was said to be pleased to accept it. The Guru with his three companions – Sati Das, Mati Das and Dayal Das – set out from Anandpur. All of them were arrested and brought to Delhi. In time, the authorities offered three alternatives to the Guru viz : (1) show miracles, or (2) embrace Islam, or (3) face death. The Guru accepted the last and did not budge from his resolve even after his three companions were tortured to death. He was publically put to death by severing the head from his body in Delhi's Chandni Chowk on November 11, 1675²⁶. Gurdwara Sis Ganj marks the place where the execution took place.

The divine miracle followed in the form of a storm when a devotee Lakhi Shah Lubana, retrieved the Guru's dead body and cremated it by burning down his house and young Jaita, who separately took the severed head of Guru Tegh Bahadur to Anandpur, was honored by the young Guru Gobind Rai as "Rangretta Guru Ka Beta" and the head was cremated with full honor and proper ceremonies the next day.²⁷

TESTIMONY OF GURU GOBIND SINGH AND SOME OTHER VIEWS

The event of martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur has been briefly but succinctly recorded by Guru Gobind Singh. His testimony is recorded in Dasam Granth Canto 5, Verses 13-16 in the following words:

*Divine Lord is protector of the tilak and Janeo
A great saga of sacrifice in kaliyuga was performed by (Guru Tegh Bahadur)*

*Such a great deed was done in defence of the pious,
 He offered his head without even a whisper.
 He made this sacrifice in defence of religious freedom,
 Sacrificing his head (life) without compromising his dignity.
 Performance of miracles and magic feats are dirty tricks,
 Which Divine Lord's devotees feel ashamed of indulging in.
 Holding the Delhi's emperor blamesworthy for his mortal death,
 Did Guru Tegh Bahadur Bahadur leave for his heavenly abode,
 It was a unique deed done by Guru Tegh Bahadur,
 Like of which none had done before indeed.
 A pall of gloom descended upon earth following Guru Tegh Bahadur's departure,
 While a wail of cries spread across the world,
 Shouts of joy and victory rent the skies.²⁸*

(English translation by the Editor)

Besides his supreme sacrifice, he had done a substantial Sikh missionary work in Eastern India. The Guru reorganized management of Sangats in the eastern region by a well-defined structural hierarchy working under his authority; thus creating a network of relations between the different Sangats, so far working in isolation independence. Eastern region had two Subas - Suba of Benaras and Suba of Patna. Both the Subas were placed under Bhai Dyal Das, the chief Masand of the eastern region. The Sangats of Patna city and Monghyr were under Patna Suba. Bhai Dayal Das was Masand of Patna Sangat and in charge of Patna Suba too. Sangats of Benaras city and Mirzapur were under Benaras Suba with Bhai Javehari Mal in charge of Benaras Suba.

In one hukamnama, the Sangat of Benaras was instructed to entrust their offerings to Bhai Javehari. It was Bhai Javehari's duty to send offerings to Bhai Dayal Das who then transferred these to the Guru. Thus a networked system of checks and controls was brought into being which could facilitate coordination.

The system set in place expected a Sikh to contribute a part of his earning - known as *kar* or *karbar* - to the Sangat. Sikhs also paid money for getting some ceremonies like engagement performed; made donations on fulfillment of desire or wish - *mannat* - and offered gifts and presents for the Guru - *bhet*. There are *hukamnamas* in which the Guru had asked Bhai Dyal Das to send such receipts.

An unconnected paper by Hardip Syan²⁹ investigating a different historical perspective on Sikh experience of that period offers evidence of other factors that may explain some of the developments that Sagar reflects upon in his study.

Khatri from Punjab had affinity with Guru Nanak and successor Gurus, all of whom were Khatri. They noted the growth of commerce along the Gangetic and north-west trade routes and started moving to those parts during 1500-1700. They maintained ties with the Guru.

Migration of Khatri Sikhs resulted in the formation of significant Sikh sangats in Delhi, Mirzapur, Lucknow, Allahabad, Benaras and Patna by the early seventeenth century. It is also said that the sangats were predominantly managed by Khatri.

In Guru Hargobind's letter in early 17th century, he reminded Sikhs of the east [purb di sangat] that *sewa* is directly beneficial for *rozzgar* in this life because Guru's blessing is for now - not afterlife. Later in seventeenth century when Guru Tegh Bahadur sent letters to Sikhs in Patna and Benaras to help fund langar to support so many Sikhs who travelled with him on all his missionaries and construction at the new township at Makhawal, he continued to stress the relationship between *sewa* and *rozzgar*, and introduced the catchy phrase '*sewa ki belal*'³⁰

Syan says 'Melding of religion and materialism was a unique feature of Sikhism in this period. In order to obtain divine protection a Sikh had to abide by the Guru's teachings' including *simran*, *kirtan* and *sewa*. The Sikh who did this would gain *rozzgar* in this life and peace hereafter. He also says that possibly the Khatri donated gold at the call of the Guru in late 17th and early 18th centuries.

Khatri merchant network developed almost parallel to Sikh sangats and the Gurus used it to support their fund needs and get direct transmission of fund offerings by the use of *bundies* by individuals and sangats especially after the Masands were discontinued.

Syan says that it appears from Hukumnamas of early 18th century, that the ability of the Guru to raise a sizable war chest to fund Khalsa army is likely to have been a factor that influenced establishing Khalsa insurgency against Mughals in Punjab.

With the above factors added, the study by Syan seems right to infer that the ‘Sangats of eastern region not only served the Panth under Guru Tegh Bahadur but also became backbone of the Panth which is evident from the *hukammamas* of Guru Gobind Singh.’

Sangats in East held on in support of the Guru, but started to peel off and wither away after the Guru’s passing possibly due to the lack of the Guru person that had been the focal point of their contact and support from the early days.

Let us also look at how history gets made if Sikhs engage with the society at large – an example came from Brandon, Manitoba, Canada where the Sikh community of the City met with the Mayor Rich Chrest in the year 2021 about the 400th anniversary of the birth of Guru Tegh Bahadur and shared with him the story of martyrdom of the Guru.

The Mayor issued a proclamation saying ‘Guru Tegh Bahadur sacrificed his life for the Human Rights and dignity of humankind — The City of Brandon honors Sikh history and culture, Guru Tegh Bahadur’s place in South Asian history, and the City’s valued relationship with the Sikh Community’ and proclaimed April 1, 2021 to be “Guru Tegh Bahadur Day” in the City of Brandon.

COMPOSITIONS OF GURU

We know that the Pothi Sahib known as Adi Granth was compiled by Guru Arjun and it contained the compositions of the first five Gurus. The 6th, 7th and 8th Gurus did not leave any composition but subsequently Guru Tegh Bahadur did and his compositions were added by Guru Gobind Singh to Adi Granth. We thus have access to Shabads in 15 Ragas and 54 Sloks written by Guru Tegh Bahadur in the SGGS. We will dwell briefly on the Guru’s compositions to grasp some facets of his preaching and persona.

Guru Tegh Bahadur’s grasp of Sikh thought and lived Sikhi enabled his uncanny skill to understand the finer points of the reality that the Panth faced. This set his ministry as an exemplar visionary and a catalyst. Coming to occupy Gurgadi just half a century after the execution by torture of his grandfather, Guru Arjun, he went about followed by his unarmed Sikhs. He talked to them, sought their views in an open and accessible manner – truly a people’s Guru.

He was thoughtful and pensive in expressions – that brought mellow sweetness, seen in Guru Arjun’s bani, to his compositions. In a world that is ephemeral and where all relations seem guided by fickle self interest, one does tend to feel lonesome and that is the feel one gets reading his bani. A careful reading of his compositions though reveals a veneer of resolute compassion seeping through, suggesting his inspiration emanating from the ideals of Sikh resistance. He commends the fundamental teaching of Gurmat – *naam* is the real blessing; imbibing it is the way to *nirbaan* – so contemplate on *naam* and live by it. The message comes in various forms – all in simple words and familiar metaphors, going straight to one’s heart!

The verses of Guru Tegh Bahadur are characterized by the flow of complex emotions and thoughts using simple language and easily graspable metaphors. They express the human dilemma of sharing one’s psychic anxieties arising out of the human inability to cope up with the onslaught of human vices, the regret at missed opportunities of meditating upon the divine sacred name despite listening to the scriptures and the human ideal of achieving a state of complete detachment leading to complete synchronization and communion with the Divine.

*The man that in suffering feels not affliction;
Is by pleasures, attachment and fear unaffected,
And holds gold and dust alike;
Who by slander and praise is not affected,
Nor by avarice, attachment and pride,
Who to joy and sorrow keeps unattached,
Nor by Honour and dishonour is swayed;
Who renounces lure of the world and covetousness,
And frees himself from all desire;
Abjures lust and wrath
In the mind of such a one dwells the Supreme Being.
One by Divine grace favoured
Does this way of life learn.
Saith Nanak: Such a one into the Lord is merged,
As water into water.³¹*

LEGACY OF THE GURU

MISSIONARY ACTIVITY

The Guru had stayed on in Bakala from the time of demise of Guru Hargobind [1644] till he was called up to Gurgadi after the demise of Guru Har Krishan [1664]. During the intervening years, he had stayed in touch with Guru Har Rai who had suggested to him in 1656 to take on the missionary work in the Eastern part of the country and the Malwa region of Punjab.

Baba Tegh Bahadur left for the sangats in the East and learnt of the passing of Guru Har Rai when at Patna. It was on his return journey, that when he arrived at Delhi, he heard that Guru Har Krishan was in Delhi and he, with his mother, went to see the Guru and pay their condolences after the passing of Guru Har Rai in 1664. He therefore could have been in Eastern UP and Bihar for 3-8 years in his pre-Guru days.

After his Gurgadi, the Guru left Anandpur for the sangats in the East in August 1665 and returned in or after 1671 – after 5 ½ years, half of his ministry. He had revived and added to Sikh sangats all over the East during his travels to the present day Haryana, UP, Bihar, Bengal, Assam, Orissa and Bangladesh areas.

The Sikh sangats in the East became a strong backup support and a source of funds for the Sikhs during the time of Guru Tegh Bahadur continuing in the time of Guru Gobind Singh and is speculated to have helped in funding the latter's resolute resistive struggle against Mughal oppressive rule. This missionary initiative in the East however lost its sheen as it gradually withered away later in the 18th century, possibly due to lack of any continuing active contact, post Guru Gobind Singh that would have facilitated the Sikh sangats in the far flung Eastern areas to transition in tandem with changes taking place in the Punjab region.

The Guru was a very active missionary, leading the missionary activities from the front himself and spending most of the time on missionary work even as he used the Udasis to help as much as they could. He also was the first Guru to have visited and spent few years reviving and extending Sikh foot print in the Eastern parts. What

happened that we now hardly come across any local Sikhs from those parts? I found this to be the case in Hyderabad too. I met several Dakhani Sikhs but I found out that their forebears were Sikhs from Punjab. Old Sehjdharis of Hyderabad were Sikh supporters but had melded back into Hindu fold. The same seems to be true of Sehjdharis from Pakistan, they have almost fully merged into Hindus. My sense is that the transition that Sikh sangats of the East missed was *amrit parchar*. They stayed Sikhs as long as the Guru connection lasted. With Masands also gone, there was no link left to remain Sikhs.

Let us now come to the question of legacy of missionaries in the East. If we go by the simple yardstick of the missionary's effect on the Faith community, the initiative in the Eastern India may end up creating an increasing burden for the Sikh community as more heritage sites are discovered and activated per their historical significance, with no local Sikh help to maintain the heritage. This is happening in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Burma, Bangladesh, Iran and in India too. Nor is this withering away experience unique to the Sikhs. It has happened to the Jewish community, Buddhists, Bahais, Zoroastrians, Jainas and lot more. We have to set our own priorities and thoughtfully select heritage to revive and the manner in which it should be maintained.

The success of Guru's Malwa missionary to draw converts from Sakhi Sarvar Muslims in the region caused alarm among Muslim Ullama and may have been one additional factor in Aurangzeb's decision to pass the order for Guru's execution in 1675. This is a project SGPC might gladly hand over to Rashtriya Sikh Sangat!

STRATEGIC VALUE ADDITION BY EASTERN SANGATS

Another aspect that may bear examination is the likely effect that the initiative to revive and reinforce sangats in the East may have had on the course of Sikh and Indian history at that critical juncture. Later Sikh Gurus saw two imminent threats: oppressive Mughal rulers and dissident truants from Guru household. This caused their move to Shivaliks that had created financial difficulties. [harji d 1696, sons ousted 1698 minas wikipedia]

Guru Tegh Bahadur no doubt saw two imminent needs: the town, Chak Nanaki, had to be constructed and the Sikhs had to stay fortified for their own safety. They needed the *bbeta* to keep flowing. He had

spent some time visiting sangats and knew that they also had experienced similar split and confusion that had hit Sikhs in Punjab post the passing of Guru Har Krishan. He showed excellent astuteness to immediately repair to the East and put the sangats there on path of stability. Hukamnamas based discussion should make that need abundantly clear. It was achieved by the Guru through bringing about changes in personnel, systems and structure. If 18th century Sikh leaders were similarly endowed, the Sikh story may have been truly glorious.

In any case, the changes came. Harji died in 1696 and Minas were ejected in 1698 from Amritsar. After a series of see saw actions, Khalsa finally snatched control over parts of Punjab and were able to hasten the down fall of Mughals. In the long run, the real gain accrued to India as a whole, partly as a consequence of the strategic shift to go East by Guru Tegh Bahadur. This deserves to be recognized and added to his legacy.

MANAGING SIKHS & SIKHI

The Guru obviously realized that with the wide spread of Sikhs, he needed trustworthy and reliable persons in charge of sangats and an organization to ensure co-ordination and control. He attempted a model of regional, suba and city sangat set up that seemed to have worked.

His leadership qualities and management style also seemed to have worked. There are a few characteristics relating to these matters that came to notice in the literature scanned for this paper. The main feature that emerges is the use of simple and easily understood language and metaphors in his letters, Bani and surely in his speech. He certainly had the assets of being a great communicator. Apart from that he addressed a cross section of Sikhs, not just his close confidants, and invited suggestions from the sangat members - seen essentially as more participative than paternalistic for the times he lived in. His insistence to seek information on collections for special services shows his penchant for detail and ability to handle relations with the Masands with finesse.

Dwelling a bit further on the above, we know that the participative style of Guru Tegh Bahadur got further developed by Guru Gobind

Singh by a series of his actions. One was his demonstration of *aapae gur chela* and the related institution of *panj pyaarae*. The next was recognition of *inhi kee kripaa sae sajae hum bain* – that put Khalsa on a different pedestal as a collective body. The third was the creation of conditions for the eventual emergence and continued evolution of the institution of Guru Panth.

Cumulatively it is these norms of room for individual contribution and initiative within the collective ideal of *ek pita ekas kae hum balak* and *sarbat ka bhalla* that make Sikhs vie for *sewa*, that has been equated to prayer for seeking *govind milan* or liberation. Sikhs are not perfect and have taken several missteps along the way but eventually the Sikhs will, hopefully, develop a model for their corporate religious life that is sensitively suited for their religious culture. That will be consummation of the modernizing process of Sikh institutions – the legacy of initiating this process belongs to Guru Tegh Bahadur.

MARTYRDOM & OTHER UNIQUE POINTS

There are three exceptional features to Guru Tegh Bahadur's life that make him unique in the Sikh annals. He was:

- The only person who was present and available, yet was overlooked twice for the Gurgadi and yet was installed as Guru the third time in a unique sequence of events
- The only Guru whose Bani was added to Adi Granth after its first installation at the Harmandir Sahib in 1604
- The only martyrdom of a religious Preceptor at Sikh Guru's level who put his life on stake for the religious freedom of the followers of another Faith

These points are important for any evaluative analysis of Guru Tegh Bahadur's life and contribution both for the Sikh causes and the larger issues relating to the amelioration of human foibles and suffering. These have variously been mentioned and explained in our brief discussion but my suggestion would be that the explanation of these points may be more realistic and less biased if attempted through wider consultation.

MARTYRDOM

It was perhaps the divine hand that stayed Tegh Bahadur being picked to be made the Guru when his father died, or when Guru Har

Rai passed away, for the call had to come later when the level of oppression were to become unbearable and sacrifice would have been the only way to give voice to the sense of utter helplessness of the people.

The Guru gave life for the sake of freedom for the ‘others’ to be able to *nirbhau hoe bhajo bhagwan*. This is a Sikhi advisory and an aspiration that Sikhs value. It matters little who was the oppressed and who was the oppressor. The Guru made the sacrifice because of his own belief, not to earn gratitude from any group. Embracing martyrdom is the very ultimate in expression of a high principle and that recognition is its reward.

The Guru’s sacrifice was important then – it is important today, and its importance may continue undiminished as long as the religious differences continue to trigger hate for the ‘other.’ It is for all of us to work towards reduction of the prejudices that sow seeds of hate in us. This is a shared burden for us all and we should, as individuals, try to get actively engaged in helping to create and maintain peace and harmony in the society we live in.

With the example of sacrifice by the Guru, we should try to promote the dictum ‘*bhai kabu ko daet neh, neh bhai maanat aan*’ (Whom do you frighten when I do not feel frightened) that the Guru persuaded us to internalize. It is a non sectarian call by the Guru that could enhance our ability to overcome difficulties in life and accomplish the near impossible through resurgence of ‘*bal hua bandhan chhuttae*’ (I feel energized and all fatters broken) state of mind that he experienced. A crown of glory - *Jai jai jai surlok* (shouts of victory echoed in heavens) - as said by Guru Gobind Singh certainly awaited the apostle of societal peace and harmony, Guru Tegh Bahadur!

MEMORIALIZING & CONCLUSION

Religious communities develop traditions to honor the memory of their preceptors and leaders in various ways. Sikhs, however, have displayed a marked indifference to the use of museums to display their faith and faith practices, history, trauma and achievements. One of the inhibiting factors could have been the Sikh opposition to idol worship which can get whipped up easily by activist groups opposing any proposal.

Whatever the reasons, the fact is there is only one Sikh museum worth a visit in India – Virasat-e-Khalsa at Anandpur Sahib that exhibits 500 years of the Sikh history and the 300th anniversary of the birth of Khalsa, based on writings attributed to Guru Gobind Singh. It attracts tourists and pilgrims.

Sikhs realize that little is known about them and their faith by lay public and post 9/11 have made serious efforts to spread awareness about their Faith, history and culture but still have not paid attention to clear evidence that “Among all the media and means through which a broad swath of the public comes to understand religious lives and traditions, museums have emerged as some of the most prominent social institutions influencing the popular conceptions and imaginaries of religion — museums actively shape how people come to know about beliefs and practices other than their own.”³²

We, the Sikhs have used various facets of memorializing so that the preserved memory assumes an aura of the sacred and thus turns into a powerful expression to showcase the Sikh survival, renewal and moral victory in the face of extreme adversity.

We also have used oral media like phrases, verses, lyrics, stories et al to summarily describe our traumatic experiences and in many cases to trivialize or even challenge the oppressors in extremely trying circumstances, with view to reinforce the sense of pride and courage in the community.

We have established Gurdwaras at various historical sites associated with our trauma. Gurdwaras Sis Ganj and Rakab Ganj in Delhi respectively are intended to remind us of the martyrdom of Guru Tagh Bahadur and the isolation of Sikhs of Delhi but do not in any way give expression to the event or symbolize the ideals that inspired the Guru to put his life on the stake. We can make some alterations and displays to mould popular religion, narrative and history and let the visitors savor the significant memories that the site would invoke.

Delhi has been home to all hues of memorials for centuries but Guru Tegh Bahadur still awaits a befitting memorial by Sikhs and a grateful nation. This fourth centenary of the Guru's birth has the grapevine saying that memory of the Guru is likely to be suitably recognized in a national martyr's museum to be created in Delhi. We

have made brief comments in various segments of this Paper more particularly the legacy part hoping it may trigger some conversation on the subject.

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- 2 This assertion is found in several accounts. Surjit Singh Gandhi, *History of Sikh Gurus Retold: 1606-1708*, p. 506, has attributed it to Sikh tradition.
- 3 Prithia died in 1618. Guru Hargobind met Meharban and talked of need to get past the differences that existed between their fathers. Meharban was adamantly opposed to reconciliation. For more, read Gandhi, *Ibid*.
- 4 *Life History: Baba Sri Chand Ji & Founding of Udasi Sect*, Giani Ishar Singh Nara, Translated into English by Harinder Singh Bedi, MS, pp. 274-76
- 5 Encyclopedia Britannica site – accessed 16 March 2021.
- 6 Gopal Singh, *A History of the Sikh People*, Allied Publishers, 2002, note on p. 228. See also Gandhi, *ibid*, from challengers, the Udasis had turned supporters, p.631.
- 7 This account is per Encyclopedia Britannica site, accessed 20/3/2021.
- 8 Ranbir Singh, *Guru Tegh Bahadur, Chief Khalsa Diwan, 1975* – full text of the book can be accessed at: [http://www.gurmatveechar.com/books/English_Books/Guru.Tegh.Bahadur.Ji.by.Ranbir.Singh.\(GurmatVeechar.com\).pdf](http://www.gurmatveechar.com/books/English_Books/Guru.Tegh.Bahadur.Ji.by.Ranbir.Singh.(GurmatVeechar.com).pdf)
- 9 Sangat Singh, *The Sikhs in History*, New Delhi, 1999, p. 53
- 10 *Ibid*, Britannica
- 11 *Ibid*, Sangat, p. 55
- 12 *Ibid*, Sangat, p. 56; Gandhi, quoting Malcom's *Sketch of the Sikhs*, says in note 23 on p. 626, *ibid*, that the dispute between Ram Rai and the Guru went to Aurangzeb and he had ruled that Sikhs were allowed to elect their own priest [Guru]. They picked Guru Har Krishan.
- 13 See Sangat, *ibid*, p. 55; Gopal Singh *ibid*, note* on p. 249; for a detailed account see Gandhi, *ibid*, p. 622
- 14 See DSGMC site and Wikipedia entry Guru Har Krishan. In any case, the insiders present in Delhi knew about the call by Baba Tegh Bahadur on the Guru and that he was headed to Bakala.
- 15 Gandhi, *ibid*, p. 621.
- 16 Sangat, *ibid*, p. 57
- 17 *Ibid*
- 18 See Sangat, *ibid*, p. 57; Ranbir Singh, *ibid*; Gandhi, *ibid*, p. 623.
- 19 See Gopal Singh, *ibid*, pp. 244-45 and note*
- 20 See Gopal Singh, *ibid*, p. 245
- 21 See Gandhi, *ibid*, p. 625.
- 22 See Gopal Singh, *ibid*, p. 246
- 23 Ranbir Singh, *ibid*, pp. 81-83. Accounts by other sources are on similar lines and

describe the high respect that Guru Nanak's message enjoyed with all segments of people, reinforcement and renewal of existing Sangats and establishing of new Sangats in some places. It was a very successful mission.

- 24 See Gopal Singh, *ibid*, text and note* p. 248.
- 25 See Sikh Encyclopedia entry Udasi, Mahan Kosh, pp. 9-10 and SGPC Website
- 26 Fenech has identified some similarities in martyrdom of Gurus Arjun and Tegh Bahadur. See Louis Fenech *Martyrdom in the Sikh Tradition*, Oxford, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 84-5. There are more similarities, not taken up in this search.
- 27 Unless otherwise indicated, the lead parts of the narrative in this section draws upon the account given at the web site of the SGPC.
- 28 ਤਿਲਕ ਜੰਝੂ ਰਾਖਾ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਤਾ ਕਾ ॥ ਕੀਨੋ ਬਡੋ ਕਲੂ ਮਹਿ ਸਾਕਾ ॥ ਸਾਧਨ ਹੇਤਿ, ਇਤੀ ਜਿਨਿ ਕਰੀ ॥ ਸੀਸੁ ਦੀਯਾ, ਪਰੁ ਸੀ ਨ ਉਚਰੀ ॥੧੩॥ ਧਰਮ ਹੇਤ ਸਾਕਾ ਜਿਨਿ ਕੀਆ ॥ ਸੀਸੁ ਦੀਆ; ਪਰੁ ਸਿਰਰੁ ਨ ਦੀਆ ॥ ਨਾਟਕ ਚੇਟਕ ਕੀਏ ਕੁਕਾਜਾ ॥ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਲੋਗਨ ਕਹ ਆਵਤ ਲਾਜਾ ॥੧੪॥ ਠੀਕਰ ਫੋਰਿ ਦਿਲੀਸ ਸਿਚਿ; ਪ੍ਰਭ ਪੁਰਿ ਕੀਯਾ ਪਯਾਨ ॥ ਤੇਗ ਬਹਾਦੁਰ ਸੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਆ; ਕਰੀ ਨ ਕਿਨਹੂੰ ਆਨਿ ॥੧੫॥ ਤੇਗ ਬਹਾਦੁਰ ਕੇ ਚਲਤ; ਭਯੋ ਜਗਤ ਕੋ ਸੋਕ ॥ ਹੈ ਹੈ ਹੈ ਸਭ ਜਗ ਭਯੋ; ਜੈ ਜੈ ਜੈ ਸੁਰ ਲੋਕਿ ॥ Dasam Granth Canto 5, Verse 13-16
- 29 Hardip Singh Syan, SOAS University, UK, *The Merchant Gurus: Sikhism and the Development of the Medieval Khatri Merchant Family*, June 2014, *Indian Economic & Social History Review*. Hardip has taught and worked at the University of London, the British Museum and the Institute of Historical Research. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285490501_The_merchant_gurus_Sikhism_and_the_development_of_the_medieval_Khatri_merchant_family/citations
- 30 The actual word used is 'vela' [masculine] – popular in braj as 'bela' [feminine]. Both have been used in SGGS but none by M IX. In East the message would have been received as 'bela'- sewa kee - is 'feminine' Bela has connotation of auspicious day, auspicious chance, blessed moment, blessed time one would be sacrifice to - ਓਹ ਬੇਲਾ ਕਉ ਹਉ ਬਲਿ ਜਾਉ ...ਭਲੇ ਦਿਨਸ ਭਲੇ ਸੰਜੋਗ ...ਸਫਲ ਮੂਰਤੁ ਸਫਲ ਓਹ ਘਰੀ – Gauri M V, p. 191. The word is popular in Braj and has been used by Guru Arjun in a shabad that could inspire altruistic spirit of giving – savor the text ਕਰਉ ਬੇਨੰਤੀ ਸੁਣਹੁ ਮੇਰੇ ਮੀਤਾ ਸੰਤ ਟਹਲ ਕੀ ਬੇਲਾ - Gauri Poorbi M V, p. 13.
31. ਜੋ ਨਰੁ ਦੁਖ ਮੈ ਦੁਖੁ ਨਹੀ ਮਾਨੈ ॥ ਸੁਖ ਸਨੇਹੁ ਅਰੁ ਭੈ ਨਹੀ ਜਾ ਕੈ ਕੰਚਨ ਮਾਟੀ ਮਾਨੈ ॥ ੧ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥ ਨਹ ਨਿੰਦਿਆ ਨਹ ਉਸਤਤਿ ਜਾ ਕੈ ਲੋਭੁ ਮੋਹੁ ਅਭਿਮਾਨਾ ॥ ਹਰਖ ਸੋਗ ਤੇ ਰਹੈ ਨਿਆਰਉ ਨਾਹਿ ਮਾਨ ਅਪਮਾਨਾ ॥ ੧ ॥ ਆਸਾ ਮਨਸਾ ਸਗਲ ਤਿਆਗੈ ਜਗ ਤੇ ਰਹੈ ਨਿਰਾਸਾ ॥ ਕਾਮੁ ਕ੍ਰੋਧੁ ਜਿਹ ਪਰਸੈ ਨਾਹਨਿ ਤਿਹ ਘਟਿ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਨਿਵਾਸਾ ॥ ੨ ॥ ਗੁਰ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਜਿਹ ਨਰ ਕਉ ਕੀਨੀ ਤਿਹ ਇਹ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਪਛਾਨੀ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਲੀਨ ਭਇਓ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿਉ ਜਿਉ ਪਾਨੀ ਸੰਗਿ ਪਾਨੀ ॥ Guru Granth Sahib, p. 633.
32. S. Brent Plate, *Getting Religion in the Museum*, *Sacred Matters*, May 24, 2017 <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=48348938>

ARMY ATTACK ON THE GOLDEN TEMPLE EMBOLDENED HINDUTVA IN INDIA

JASPAL SINGH SIDHU*

Thirty-seven years ago in June 1984, the entry of the army into the Golden Temple, the holiest shrine of the Sikh faith, has undoubtedly encouraged the Hindutva ideology which gradually upstaged the secular discourse in India. On Independence in 1947, India had opted for and became a secular and democratic polity when Pakistan and Nepal and Maldives, and others in the subcontinent chose to be theocratic states. With neighboring China becoming a totalitarian state governed by the single communist party, India was applauded as a multi-party democracy in Asia. When the outgoing British empire transferred power to Congress, RSS sympathizers and Hindutva elements within the Congress desperately scrambled for making India a 'Hindu Rashtra'. But they failed to deviate Nehru and his senior colleagues from the secular and democratic path. Ironically, his daughter Indira Gandhi whom Nehru had groomed to become a statesman and virtually bequeathed his power to her, turned the tables and forsook the secular-democratic path to be fully exploited by her rival Hindutva forces later on. Thereafter, India gradually drifted away from the secularism. Even her direct descendent and presently Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has been forced to publically affirm his allegiance to the majority community's religious ethos by claiming that he "is a sacred thread wearing (jeneudhari) Hindu".

A few years after the army operation, codenamed 'Operation Blue Star' the emboldened Hindutva forces demolished the Babri Mosque at Ayodhya when Congress was ruling the country. They whipped up the ultra-nationalist sentiments to reach the seat of power

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at New Delhi with the avowed goal of turning India into a 'Hindu Rashtra'. The story goes back to the days of the early 1980s when Indira Gandhi regime, instead of negotiating with the Akali demands chose to suppress the Sikh dissent to appease and consolidate the majority community behind Congress. In run-up to the army attack on the Golden Temple, New Delhi propagated that they had no other option but to 'flush out terrorists entrenched there'. How much truth that official euphemism carried and how much the army action succeeded in chastising the Sikh dissent has been and will remain a moot point. But the reckoning impacts of that army action were: it left an indelible impact on the Sikhs that shook them off from their deep nationalistic slumber. And, secondly, it marked the turning point in the future course of fledgling Indian democracy soon to be transmuted into a stark majoritarian and unitary political dispensation as manifested by the Modi regime now.

It is still hard to imagine: how come the Sikhs who were proud Indian citizens representing Punjab as an 'armed front' and granary of the country till the 1970s metamorphosed into "anti-nationals posing threat to India's unity and integrity". All that happened within a short span of 5-6 years after Sikh-Nirankari clash in April 1978. And, no doubt, a large number of Indians outside Punjab had begun believing the official version about the Sikhs and Punjab as the embedded (lap dog) and willing media was at the beck and call of the then Congress regime.

The impact of that official propaganda was so sweeping and swayed a good section of Indians, into believing the government version. The main thrust of this government's publicity against the Sikhs was: "Their protests are inspired by Punjab's bordering Pakistan which is out to take revenge on India for the creation of Bangladesh... Sikhs are out to dismember 'Mother India'...Sikhs are killing Punjabi Hindus ... and gurdwaras in Punjab have become Sikh terrorists' safe havens and militant leader Sant Jarnail Singh Bhinderanwale dispatching killer squads from the Golden Temple, Amritsar."

That hate-spewing vicious campaign against the Sikhs was orchestrated through officially controlled All India Radio (AIR) and Doordarshan (Television) and by using the willing nationalistic print

media with news agencies – UNI, PTI, and Hindi newspapers in the lead. This propaganda blitzkrieg virtually suppressed and obfuscated the reality about ‘what was the Sikh dissent and struggle; and what were their demands. Two main factions of the Akali Dal and Bhinderanwale, representing Damdami Taksal, a Sikh seminary had jointly launched a protest agitation (called *morcha*) on August 4, 1982, from the Golden Temple, Amritsar to press for their religious, economic, and political demands of Punjab conceded.

As the history goes, there was nothing unusual for the Sikhs in making the Akal Takht, a focal point of their agitation. The venue has been the epicenter of all historical Sikh protests and bloody conflicts spanning 400 years during Mughal and the British regimes. Even after independence, the Indian political class had never opposed the launching of 16-year-long ‘Punjabi Suba *morcha*’ and later 21-month long anti-Emergency *morcha* from the Akal Takht. The main demand of the *morcha* named as Dharmyudh *morcha* was for the acceptance of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution to devolve the centralization of powers at New Delhi thereby making the Indian polity truly federal and pluralistic as enshrined in India’s Constitution. That demand, however, struck at the nerve-center of mono-ideological nation conceived and nurtured by Congress. The project had, no doubt, gained strength with the Partition and the creation of two inimical countries- India and Pakistan which had already stalled the installing of a federal polity in sub-continent.

Against this background, the Indian Establishment had adopted a strong stance against the Akali *morcha*, officially projected as a “revolt and rebellion” against the Indian nation, and sought the people’s support to “save unity and integrity of Indian state”. Invoking such an emotive card carried away even liberal intellectuals, democrats and even a larger section of the Left who joined the bandwagon of Indira Gandhi. And the Opposition raised the chorus for sending of the army in the Golden Temple to “restore religiosity there”.

At a stage when the army was about to mount an attack on the holiest shrine, Indira Gandhi had held a series of “tripartite meetings with Opposition and Akali leaders in February (1984) to resolve the Punjab tangle”. As planned, each of those meetings was to end in the

deadlock as to shift the blame for the failure of talks on “Akalis’ intransigence”. Rather, when those meetings were on, Congress instigated the Hindu organizations in Punjab, Haryana, and Delhi to “communalize and polarise the society to isolate the tiny Sikh community”. Several Hindu organizations had cropped up in the region and enjoyed official patronage. With the creation of such a vicious atmosphere, the Akali demands got eclipsed as the nearly two-year-long *morcha* was crushed in which around 2 lakh Sikh volunteers had courted arrest. Instead of listening to genuine and legitimate Sikh demands and reaching a negotiated settlement, a calculated hype was created to brand this genuine *morcha* as a secessionist movement. This created an ideal situation for Indira Gandhi to launch an army operation with the aim of emerging as “Durga goddess” in the “people’s cause”.

So, on the night between June 4 and 5, the army attacked the Golden Temple exuding over-confidence in catching Bhinderanwale and his armed men like sitting ducks within two hours. But, as per the Sikh traditions, the entrenched Sikhs returned fire and defeated their initial assaults forcing the generals to send armoured tanks, APC, and more sophisticated weaponry inside the shrine. Poisonous gas, use of which was prohibited after World War two by UNO, was also used in the Akal Takht building. It took nearly 72 hours to completely neutralize around 125 Sikh fighters holed in the building. That bloody conflict resulted in the dismantling of the Akal Takht, the highest temporal seat of the Sikhs built by Guru Hargobind in 1606 to challenge the Mughal-rule. Also, thousands of non-combatant faithful Sikh pilgrims including women and children who had assembled there to observe martyrdom day of fifth Guru Arjun Dev were killed in the raging tank and artillery firing.

The official announcement about the death of Bhainderanwale and his lieutenant Bhai Amrik Singh came on June seven morning along with reports that the army had simultaneously entered 38 other historical gurdwaras at various places in Punjab after putting the state under an unprecedented curfew. This proved that the Indian Establishment had a larger scheme of not only capturing Bhinderanwale as publicized before but to crush the Sikh dissent, their exclusive and

distinct culture and history for all times to come.

No doubt, Indira Gandhi had thought of achieving consolidation of the 'Hindu vote-bank for her party and also to crush the Sikhs' deep notion of 'sovereignty. The building of the Akal Takht, the fountainhead of the Sikh political assertion lay crumbled after the army operation. Earlier, Abdali had reduced the Akal Takht to rubble twice in 1762 and 1764. Later the British, however, tactically controlled "the Sikh Durbar representing a parallel to Delhi Durbar historically." Indian State, once again, repeated the Afghan experiment with the avowed aim of crushing the Sikh identity with almost similar consequences.

The Sikh dissent grew after 1947 as Partition of the Indian subcontinent actually represented the "unfinished agenda of Independence". During the freedom struggle, the Congress insisted on the claim of representing all religious and regional denominations in the sub-continent which obstructed its political settlement with the Muslim League. An exaggerated notion of Nehru and other Congress leaders that India had been a united cultural and historical entity with the civilization stretching beyond 5000 years amounted to the denial of the existence of other distinct nationalities developed in the sub-continent over time. As Nehru's contemporary and eminent opposition leader Ram Manohar Lohia wrote that Congress leaders who were impatient to secure power from the colonial masters first agreed to accept the dominion status two decades after adopting programme for "pooran swaraj" (complete freedom) in early 1947 thereby paving way for an agreed Partition.

The Sikhs voluntarily joined India believing in the Congress promises of securing a 'special region' to them where their religion and culture could flourish unhindered. The Sikh leaders had resisted Jinnah's overtures for joining Pakistan which would have avoided the division of Punjab and their uprooting. On the other hand, Congress rulers, being acutely aware of the fragility of much diversified India's unity, retained the British administrative set-up intact and operative and attempted to consolidate the country keeping Lord Mountbatten, representative of the outgoing British empire as governor-general of the free country. Anxious to build an Indian nation, the Congress rulers

renege on all their pre-independent promises with the Sikhs and declined to accommodate their aspirations. They shamefacedly refused to honour all the solemn assurances given by their tallest leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and others that the Sikhs would be given a place where “they could feel the glow of independence”. All those promises were negated as early as 1950 even before the adoption of Indian new Constitution. Like some other vocal dissenting people, the Sikhs too became the target of the Indian Establishment as early as in the 1950s. The 1984 army attack and the subsequent Sikh massacre and bloodshed in Punjab has further given the rise to ‘Hindu nationalism’. It furnished a fertile ground for the BJP-RSS to usurp power and to concretize their a century-old dream of formalizing India as a “Hindu Rashtra”(Hindu State).

The majoritarian rule, the travesty of democracy, has already come to stay in India. Now like other minorities, the Sikhs in Punjab also feel like “colonialized people” with police and security forces frequently penalizing the Sikh youth falsely accusing them of advocating “Khalistan” just to keep them subdued. Even the most All India secular farmers agitation, currently going on against anti-farmer laws passed undemocratically by the Central Government has been tagged as movement led by Khalistani elements which, however, has misfired. Such a strategy of the State also helps the consolidation of the large majority nationalism. Now, liberals are listlessly waiting for the return of the issue-based democracy which the founding fathers had dreamt of.

ਸੰਤਾ ਨਾਲਿ ਵੈਰੁ ਕਮਾਵਦੇ ਦੁਸਟਾ ਨਾਲਿ ਮੋਹੁ ਪਿਆਰੁ ॥

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 649

SIKHS ARE DIFFERENT – ROUTINISATION OF 'SEWA' PRIMES THEM TO HELP OTHERS. THE PANDEMIC DEMONSTRATED THIS*

DIPANKAR GUPTA

Think of Sikhs and the mind conjures a barrel of laughs, a chest full of medals and a well-stocked bar. Or, to recall the old joke: Neil Armstrong lands on the moon expecting to be the first, only to find a Sikh taxi driver had beaten him to it.

That was then, but what about now? This pandemic has changed the popular image of Sikhs, not just in India, but the world over. People from distant Croatia and Syria acknowledged the help Sikhs gave them during their nightmare moments, and neither did US hesitate to rename New York's 101 as Punjab Avenue to honour the contribution of Sikhs to the city.

Nearer home, in India, the impressive contribution of Sikh organisations in fighting the ongoing pandemic has been cited in the press and in the media in the most glowing terms. From providing oxygen, to ambulatory service, to feeding the poor, the Sikhs are nearly always the first to help. Even when relations quail to pick up a Covid corpse, Sikh volunteers willingly, and unhesitatingly, come forward.

There has to be a special reason for this. The answer lies in Sikh religion. Yes, of course, Sikhism, like every religion professes universal love, encourages altruism and promotes compassion. But it does something more which no other religious denomination does and that aspect is lodged in Sikhism's main frame. It is in Sikhism alone that service to others is an important aspect of devotional practice for the laity, especially for the laity, within the temple premises.

True, other religions have saints, healers and preceptors too, yet

* Courtesy: *The Times of India*, June 11, 2021

in Sikhism alone it is the laity and not the virtuosos, it is the everyday worshipper and not the ordained priests, who are the heroes. It is they who uphold the fundamentals of their religion, its absolutely essential core, by serving others and performing 'sewa'.

It begins with the person who puts away your shoes at the temple gates, to the person who assiduously sweeps the temple floors, to those who stand over hot fires in the kitchen 'langar'. It is the routinisation of these everyday acts of service that primes Sikhs to reach out to others even where there is no gurdwara in sight. They still call that 'kar sewa', or serving the house of God, because God is everywhere.

In Sikhism, it is not the great, the gifted, the sage who serves ordinary people but it is ordinary people who serve ordinary people. Nor is there a special premium reserved in Sikhism for serving the guru, the maulvi, the deacon, which is above serving everyday people including those who are non-Sikhs too.

If Sikh gurdwaras are spotlessly clean, langars bountiful, and there is shelter for all, then that is because devotees practise service as a routine religious act and not as a deliberated heroic act.

For such 'sewa' to be performed, Sikhs don't need the 'granthi', the priest, or the 'raagi', nor sundry virtuosos to sign up. The communion, or the 'sangat', does not just pray together, but serves together as well. Nor does this service happen on special occasions determined by the movement of heavenly bodies. 'Sewa' is a routine daily activity without which everyday worship by everyday Sikhs is incomplete.

Charity is not a standalone attribute in Sikhism. When Sikhs step out to help others they do not do it as charity, but as service first. Charity is not uppermost in their minds as it may be in other religions. Service is more immediate and has to be done at close quarters. Charity and almsgiving are not quite the same for they can be performed at a distance. To perform service trumps plain charity, because when service begins at home, especially at the home of God, can charity be far behind?

It is this unique aspect of Sikhism that makes Sikhs stand out in times of trouble. It is not because Sikhs are brave, for some mysterious

genetic reason, that they jump into the fray and face dangerous wars and viruses without a thought. There are brave people in all communities, the Marathas, the Gorkhas, the Rajputs, and the list goes on. Sikh bravery is not bravery first, but service first and that is where the difference lies. A Sikh may be a 'Rambo' outside, but bring one such person to a gurdwara and you will find a devotee at heart.

Even in the gurdwara, the donation that Sikhs make before the book is not marked by grandstanding of the kind that other charity events are. The money is slipped, unannounced and with no fanfare, into the collection box. Who has given how much is not known and no receipts are issued, no loudspeaker commends the generous giver and that is what makes this act a commendably egalitarian one. Rich and poor are all the same as they approach the Holy Book under the canopy.

It is this centralisation of service as ritual that marks Sikhism out from other religions and gives it its remarkable and unique feature. It is this that primarily explains why so many Sikhs, in temple organisations and outside, are willing to risk their lives to save distraught patients. When others have either turned their backs, or pleaded helplessness, trust a Sikh to fill in the breach. To modify a popular riff: 'A Sikh who does sewa is worth sawa lakh!'

SIKHISM – A RELIGION OF ITS OWN

BHAI ASHOK SINGH*

INTRODUCTION

The attack on the identity of Sikh religion had been started from the last decade of 19th century, when Arya Samaj was openly preaching against minorities. It was Hindu reform movement which was started and it came to be known as Arya Samaj. From Punjab both Hindus and Sikhs acclaimed this movement. However, after joining this movement the Sikhs came to know the derogatory remarks about the Sikh Gurus and other minorities by the founder of this movement. W. Owen Cole mentioned in his book, *The Guru in Sikhism*, about it.

Swami Dayanand, the founder of Arya Samaj in his *Satyarth Parkash* had used a derogatory language against Guru Nanak and his verses and the sacred Sikh scripture. Hinduism as a religion too has been intolerant towards Sikhism.

D Petrie, Assistant Director, Criminal Intelligence, Govt of India had said on August 11, 1911 at Simla in *A report on Developments in Sikh Politics (1900-1911)* which was also reproduced in the *Gurdwara Gazettee*, Amritsar, April 1969, that, “Hinduism has always been hostile to Sikhism whose Gurus powerfully and successfully attacked the principle of caste which is the foundation on which the whole fabric of Brahmanism has been reared. The activities of Hindus have, therefore, been constantly directed to the undermining of Sikhism both by preventing the children of Sikh fathers from taking *pahul* and by reducing professed Sikhs from their allegiance to their faith. Hinduism has strangled Buddhism, once a formidable rival to it and it has already made serious inroads into the domain of Sikhism.” (quoted from *Sachi Sakhi* by Sirdar Kapur Singh)

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Even though during the struggle for India's independence the topmost Hindu/Congress leaders have been assuring the Sikhs a life of dignity and equality for the minorities, they changed their stance immediately after Independence.

In the very first Legislative Assembly meeting held on December 9, 1946 under the Chairmanship of Dr Rajinder Parsad. Mr Jawahar Lal Nehru moved the first resolution regarding minorities in this meeting. The resolution is being reproduced below:

“Adequate safeguards would be provided for minorities... It was a declaration, a pledge and an undertaking before the World, a contract with millions of Indians and, therefore, in the nature of an oath which we must keep.”

And Mahatma Gandhi also congratulated the Sikh community through a telegram on the victory of the Keys Agitation in 1921. He said, “First Battle of India's Freedom Won, Congratulation.” He rejoiced in British defeat.

Mahatma Gandhi also said during a meeting held at Gurdwara Sis Ganj, Delhi, that, “I ask you to accept my word... and the resolution of the Congress that it will not betray a single individual, much less a community... our Sikh friends have no reason to fear that it would betray them. For, the moment it does so, the Congress would not only thereby seal its own doom but that of the country too. Moreover, Sikhs are a brave people. They know how to safeguard their rights by exercise of arms if it should ever come to that.” (*The Young India*, March 19, 1931)

Jawahar Lal Nehru had also given assurance to the Sikhs in All India Congress Committee meeting in 1946 that, “The brave Sikhs of Punjab are entitled to special consideration. I see nothing wrong in an area and a set-up in the North wherein the Sikhs can experience the glow of freedom”. (*The Statesman*, Calcutta, July 7, 1946)

But these leaders ditched the Sikhs soon after British left India when the above promises made to the Sikhs had been negated by the Minority Sub Committee of the Constitution Assembly on May 11, 1949 and passed a resolution that, “no special provision should be provided for the Sikhs other than the general provisions already

approved by the Assembly for certain other minorities.” The logic was given by the sub-committee that ‘Conditions have, however, vastly changed since August 1947 and the Committee are satisfied that minorities themselves feel that in their own interest, no less than the interest of the country as a whole, that the statutory reservations for religious minorities should be abolished.’ (quoted from *Punjab Under Siege – A Critical Analysis* by Iqbal Singh)

Despite all the opposition by the rabid Hindu ideologues and the Hindu political leadership, Sikh Gurus and numerous Sikh scholars have been putting up a continuous rebuttal to this sort of Hindu propaganda and opposition. Guru Nanak, throughout his verses, has emphasized upon the supremacy of the formless concept of God especially in his “Sodar Bani”. In another verses, he states:

*I do not keep fasts, nor do I observe the month of Ramadaan.
 Serve only the One, who will protect me in the end.
 The One Lord, the Lord of the World, is my God Allah.
 He adminsters justice to both Hindus and Muslims.
 I do not make pilgrimages to Mecca,
 nor do I worship at Hindu sacred shrines.
 I serve the One Lord, and not any other.
 I do not perform Hindu worship services,
 nor do I offer the Muslim prayers.
 I have taken the One Formless Lord into my heart;
 I humbly worship Him there.
 I am not a Hindu, nor am I a Muslim.
 My body and breath of life belong to Allah, to Raam, the God of both.¹*

Similarly, Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha begins his book *Hum Hindu Nahin* in 1898 with a verse/ kabit from Bhai Gurdas:

*We do not accept the authority of the Vedas
 Neither that of Simritis and Puran
 We worship neither Bhairva, nor Ganesha.
 We recognize neither Tithis nor omens, nor days
 Neither Rabu, Ketu, Shani, Shukar, Sun nor moon,
 We do not believe a bit in Sandhya, Sutak, Caste,
 Varna, Jantar, Mantar, Fasting, Homa or Shradh.
 Disciples of the Tenth Master, Khalsa Panth is distinct.²*

Really ignorant is he who calls Khalsa as Hindu.

The factor of the matter is that Sikhism is a distinct religion with its own scripture (*Ahl-e-Kitab*), place of worship (*Ahl-e-Mukam*), distinct standard (*Alb-e-Nisban*), distinct identity and dress code, and distinct code of conduct, traditions and practices. formed by Guru Nanak in fifteenth century. It has grown steadily and become the fifth largest religion of the world today.

The first sermon of Guru Nanak (the founder of Sikhism) after his mystical audience with *Parbrahm Parmesbar* – God was that there is no Hindu and no Musalman. His concept of God is enshrined in *Mool Mantra* of *Japji Sahib* as:

*One Universal Creator God, The name is Truth, Creative being personified.
No fear. No hatred, Image of the undying, Beyond birth, Self-existent, By
Guru's Grace.*³

This line of sermon is further elaborated in *Guru Granth Sahib* over and again as:

*I have no quarrel with anyone.
I have abandoned both the Pandits,
The Hindu religious scholars,
And the Mullahs, the Muslim priests.*⁴

Independent identity of Sikh faith is reiterated over and again in the scripture to drive the point home. Sikhism cannot be properly understood or evaluated with Hindu prejudice.

To go into detailed study of Sikhism one has to go back into its history to appreciate its uniqueness. All the major religions of the world are from two cultural backgrounds.

Judaism, Christianity and Islam are from Jewish stock. These are also referred to as Semitic religions or Semitic thought.

The other three, Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism are products of Ganga Jamuna culture or oriental religious.

But the place where Guru Nanak the founder of Sikhism was born belonged to neither of these two cultures.

Guru Nanak established Sikhism at the close of 15th Century. We can conveniently construe that Sikhism belonged to neither of the

two cultures. Its doctrines were new, quite different from the established two thoughts.

No doubt Nanak was born in a Hindu Family. But he left Hinduism or Hindu Dharam at the age of 12 when he refused to wear *Janju* and *Tilak*.

Janju and Tilak as referred to as 'theirs' (Hindus) by Guru Gobind Singh, who writes, ਜੰਜੂ ਤਿਲਕ ਰਾਖਾ ਪ੍ਰਭੂ ਤਾਕਾ When the Guru wrote about ninth Nanak, sacrifices.

The salient features of Guru Nanak's doctrine are:

- Oneness of God,
- no *Avtaarvad* (re-incarnation)
- no Idol worship
- no Caste System or no Social Barrier

The Sikh scripture says the following about the above:

ONENESS OF GOD:

*My Lord and Master is One;
He is the One and Only;
O Siblings of Destiny, He is the One alone.⁵*

NO AVTAARVAD (RE-INCARNATION):

*Let that tongue be burnt, which says that our Lord
And Master is subject to birth.
He is not born, and He does not die;
He does not come and go in reincarnation.⁶*

*He never perishes;
He does not come or go in reincarnation.
So serve Him, forever and ever;
He is contained in all.
Why serve another who is born, and then dies?⁷*

NO IDOL WORSHIP:

*I am not torn by duality, because I do not worship any other than the Lord;
I do not visit tombs or crematoriums.⁸
Why worship gods and goddesses, O Siblings of Destiny?
What can we ask of them? What can they give us?*

*The stone gods are washed with water,
O Siblings of Destiny, but they just sink in the water.⁹*

*The ignorant fools pick up stones and worship them.
But when those stones themselves sink, how will they carry you across?¹⁰*

NO CASTE SYSTEM:

*I am not a Hindu, nor am I a Muslim.
My body and breath of life belong to Allah – to Raam – the God of both.¹¹*

*The four castes . the Khsbaatriyas, Brahmins, Soodras and Vaishyas are
equal in respect to the teachings.¹²*

*The Guru, the True Guru, is my social status and honour;
I have sold my head to the Guru.¹³*

Guru Nanak and his successor Gurus practised what they preached. For instance, all the Gurus condemned Caste system. They not only condemned it but also practised it. Guru Nanak's long time companion Bhai Mardana belonged to another religion and socially low caste. Similarly, the institution of Langar, where there is no discrimination on the basis of religion or caste and all eat together. Any one coming to meet Guru Sahib, even Emperor Akbar partook langar before meeting Guru Sahib.

In *Tankhanama* it is written 'ਨਿਰਪੰਨ ਦੇਖ ਨਾ ਪਾਸ ਬਹਾਵੈ ਸੋ ਤਨਖਾਇਆ ਮੂਲ ਕਹਾਵੈ।'

Fifth Guru, while compiling and editing Guru Granth Sahib included the bani of Bhagats belonging to different castes creeds and religion and gave their bani an equal status as that of Guru Nanak. So much so that foundation stone of Sri Harimandir Sahib was laid by a Muslim Saint, Sian Mian Mir. Even the first Granthi of Sri Harimandir Sahib, Baba Budha ji, came from an ordinary peasant background.

It reached the final culminating stage when Guru Gobind Singh, after administering *Amrit* for the first time, made five *pyaras* belonging to different castes and made them to partake *amrit* from the same bowl – *Batta*.

SIKHISM IN THE EYES OF NON-SIKHS

When Dr Radha Krishnan met great Russian leader Stalin he asked the Dr. "how would you backfill the wide trench between the rich and poor of India?" Dr Radha Krishnan promptly replied, "In the same way as Guru Gobind Singh abolished the caste barriers and engulfed the wide split between Hindus and Muslims of India."

"The Sikh Khalsa was an astonishingly original and novel creation, a democratic institution." (Aurobindo Ghosh, an eminent Indian scholar) The Governor of Lahore, once explained to Nadar Shah about the Sikhs said:

"It (Khalsa Panth) is distinct from Hindus and Moslems. Distinct and marvellous is their sect.

They perform marriage ceremony neither like Hindus nor like Moslems.

Their marriage is "Anand" ceremony.

When a Singh (man) or Singhni (woman) dies, they prepare sacred pudding and distribute it.

They do not perform the Hindu rites and they do not throw the bones (of the dead) in the Ganges.

On the tenth day they complete the reading of the Granth and distribute offering to the poor.

They do not wear the sacred thread, nor put the mark on their forehead.

They neither worship idols. They worship the One Almighty and do not make obeisance to anyone else. Vedas, Puranas and other (semitic) books, they do not accept the authority of any.

Whatever Guru Nanak said, they keep faith on that.

From the same vessel they administer Amrit (baptismal water) to everyone. They all eat together and live like true brothers.

They leave behind all caste, Varna, family names, Karma and Dharma of the ancestors.

On the contrary, if any Sikh comes to our religion (Islam) on getting the opportunity he goes back and baptizing him they absorb him in their religion."

BHAI KAHN SINGH NABHA – *HUM HINDU NAHIN*

The Sikh faith is a universal religion for the present space age. The Sikh religion is truly the answer to the problems of modern age. The older faiths were good in their day but that day is now past and we are living in the dispensation of Guru Nanak. The other religions contain Truth but Sikhism contains the fullness of Truth. It is the faith of new age. It is the summum bonum for the modern man. It completely supplants and fulfills all the former dispensations of older religions. (*H L Bradshaw, a Christian Priest and Scholar of world religions of USA, Sikhism, Sikh Review, Calcutta*)

“In the coming religious debates, the Sikh religion and its scripture Adi Granth will have something of special value to say to the rest of the world.” (*Prof Arnold Toynbee, the eminent American scholar of world History, UNESCO selections from Sacred Writings of Sikhs, Foreword, p. 10*)

“Guru Nanak saved Sikhs from those blunders in which Indian society had been indulging for centuries and he instructed the Sikhs for the remembrance of God and truthful character and in this manner he founded the religion simple, clear-cut, independent and beyond the false rituals and rites. It was on these basic principles that Guru Gobind Singh formed such a nation which elevated everyone politically and religiously after doing away with class system.” (*J D Cunnihgham, an eminent British historian author of History of Sikhs, London 1849*)

“Sikhism indeed itself revealed something of what in the last analysis Religion is. It is an independent and conspicuous order of its own. The world today needs its message of peace and Love.” (*John Clark Archer, Eminent Scholar of Religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, London, p. 267*)

“Sikhism is a wholly new, original and genuinely monotheistic religion. It is an independent religion. It is the only living faith that gives the healing outlook of life.” (Edward Britten Court, the eminent scholar of religions, Foreword, *The Sikh Way of Life* by Ranbir Singh, p. 10)

“Guru Nanak had brought a practical religion. Guru Nanak had understood the basic knowledge which had not been understood by other reformers. Only that religion can survive which teaches practical way of life (as Sikhism) and not that how to flee from the worldly affairs.” (C.H. Payne, the eminent scholar of religions, in *A Short*

History of the Sikhs)

I have studied the scriptures of the other great religions, but I do not find elsewhere the same power of appeal to the heart and mind as I find in Guru Granth Sahib. They are compact in spite of their length and are a revelation of the vast reach of human heart varying from the noble concept of God to the recognition and indeed the insistence upon the practical needs of the human body. There is something modern about these scriptures.” (Pearl S. Buck, the American scholar and Nobel Prize winner)

It was reserved for Guru Nanak to perceive the true principles of reform and to lay those broad foundations, which enabled his successor, Guru Gobind Singh to fire the minds of his countrymen with a new nationality to give practical effect to the doctrine that the lowest is equal to the highest in race as in creed, in political rights as in religious hopes. (J D Cunningham, Eminent British Historian)

“Sikhism is no disguised Hindu sect but an independent revelation of the one truth of all sects; it is no variant of Muslim teachings save in that it too proclaims the love of God and need for men to hold Him always in their heart. It too is a distinct religion like the other great religions of the world. It seems certain that those views (as contained in Guru Granth Sahib) welled up from the depths of inspiration in their own heart (Sikh Gurus) and owed little or nothing to what they received from others, either through books and through their words.” (Duncan Green, *Gospel of Guru Granth Sahib*, p xxxvii)

“Sikhism is a new separate religion and not the reformed sect of Hinduism.” (Dorothy Field, British Scholar, *The religion of the Sikhs*, London 1914, p. 34)

It is totally to be rejected that Sikhism is a mixture of Hinduism and Islam” (Edward Geoffrey Parrinder, an eminent scholar of Religion)

When Iqbal came to know about Habib’s intention (translation of Japuji), he sent a telegram to Habib saying, “Habib, while doing translation of Japuji of Guru Nanak into Urdu Language, do pray to Almighty to give you strength so that you can do justice to this superb spiritual hymn. Please try not to be biased with Japuji Sahib under any circumstance because the pious person, who has composed this Bani,

has done more service to Islam than the greatest Muslim devout.”

Famous Historian Robert Rust was obliged to write that, “In the whole history of the world, only Guru Nanak has been the person whose last rites were performed respectfully by two religious traditions, (Hindu and Muslims).”

Maulvi Ghulam Ali Muhyat Ahzam was the scribe of king Farukhsiyar, a grandson of Aurangzeb. He writes about Guru Nanak and the Sikh faith as under: “Guru Nanak’s faith loves praying to God. This religion is very simple. There is no discrimination for anybody. Guru Nanak was a contemporary of Mughal Emperor Babar. His sermons can melt even the stone-hearted. His pious hymns had sanctified considerable sections of humanity. Sayyed Pir Hussain who was considered at that time the light house of Islam, used to respect and praise Guru Nanak very much. All the best tenets which can elevate the human soul up to prophetic level are possessed in Guru Nanak and Almighty God did not give them to anybody else.”

Cunningham writes in History of the Sikhs, 1848 A.D. page 71: “Thus Guru Gobind Singh transformed his followers into brave fighters, who possessed so much strength and courage that they could dare the lions in their own dens and challenge dreadful Aurangzeb in his own court. The lowest of the lowly became equal to the highest of the higher caste. All became one and the four castes started sitting and eating together in one plate, in one room.”

The haze clouding the identity of the Sikh faith due to ignorance, lack of study and negative thoughts have made it necessary to project Sikhism in its right perspective.

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NOTE : At the end of this document, I would like to thank the authors whose writings

I have quoted from ‘Religion and History of the Sikhs by Sardar Mewa Singh (retired Judge), ‘Excellence of Sikhism’ by Dr Sarup Singh Alag.

I have been able to write above few pages guided by the spirit and guidance conveyed in the writings of our revered Sikh philosopher Late Bhai Sahib Bhai Kahn Singh of Nabha.

1. ਵਰਤ ਨ ਰਹਉ ਨ ਮਹ ਰਮਦਾਨਾ ॥ ਤਿਸੁ ਸੇਵੀ ਜੋ ਰਖੈ ਨਿਦਾਨਾ ॥ ੧ ॥ ਏਕੁ ਗੁਸਾਈ ਅਲਹੁ ਮੇਰਾ ॥ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਤੁਰਕ ਦੁਹਾਂ ਨੇਬੇਰਾ ॥ ੧ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥ ਹਜ ਕਾਬੈ ਜਾਉ ਨ ਤੀਰਥ ਪੂਜਾ ॥ ਏਕੋ ਸੇਵੀ ਅਵਰੁ ਨ

- ਦੂਜਾ ॥ ੨ ॥ ਪੂਜਾ ਕਰਉ ਨ ਨਿਵਾਜ ਗੁਜਾਰਉ ॥ ਏਕ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਲੇ ਰਿਦੈ ਨਮਸਕਾਰਉ ॥ ੩ ॥ ਨਾ ਹਮ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਨ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ॥ ਅਲਹ ਰਾਮ ਕੇ ਪਿੰਡੁ ਪਰਾਨ ॥ ੪ ॥ Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1136
2. ਮਾਨੈ ਨਾਹਿ ਵੇਦ ਭੇਦ ਸਿਮ੍ਰਿਤਿ ਕੇ ਪੂਜਤ ਨ ਭੈਰੋ ਭੂਤ ਗਿਰਿਜਾ ਗਣਿੰਦੂ ਹੈ ? ਤਿਥਿ, ਵਾਰ, ਸ਼ਕੁਨ, ਮੁਰੂਰਤ ਨ ਜਾਨੈ ਕਛੁ, ਰਾਹੂ, ਕੇਤੂ ਸ਼ਨੀ, ਸ਼ੁਕ੍ਰ, ਚੰਦ੍ਰਮਾ, ਦਿਨਿੰਦੂ ਹੈ? ਜਾਤਿ, ਪਾਤਿ, ਮੰਤ੍ਰ, ਜੰਦ੍ਰ, ਤੰਤ੍ਰ, ਵ੍ਰਤ, ਸ਼੍ਰਾਧ, ਹੋਮ, ਸੰਧਯਾ ਸੂਤਕਾਦਿ ਕੋ ਵਿਸ਼ੁਸੀ ਨਹਿ ਬਿੰਦੂ ਹੈ ? ਦਸਮੇਸ਼ ਕੋ ਸੁਪੂਤ ਖਾਲਿਸਾ ਹੈ ਭਿੰਨ ਪੰਥ, ਮਹਾਂ ਹੈ ਅਗਯਾਨੀ, ਜੋਊ ਯਾਕੋ ਕਹੈ - 'ਹਿੰਦੂ ਹੈ'?
 3. ੴ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ
 4. ਹਮਰਾ ਝਗਰਾ ਰਹਾ ਨ ਕੋਊ ॥ ਪੰਡਿਤ ਮੁਲਾਂ ਛਾਡੇ ਦੋਊ ॥ ਪੰਡਿਤ ਮੁਲਾਂ ਜੋ ਲਿਖਿ ਦੀਆ ॥ ਛਾਡਿ ਚਲੇ ਹਮ ਕਛੁ ਨ ਲੀਆ ॥ - Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1158-59
 5. ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਮੇਰਾ ਏਕੋ ਹੈ ॥ ਏਕੋ ਹੈ ਭਾਈ ਏਕੋ ਹੈ ॥ - Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 350
 6. ਸੋ ਮੁਖੁ ਜਲਉ ਜਿਤੁ ਕਹਹਿ ਠਾਕੁਰ ਜੋਨੀ ॥ ੩ ॥ ਜਨਮਿ ਨ ਮਰੈ ਨ ਆਵੈ ਨ ਜਾਇ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਕਾ ਪੁਭੁ ਰਹਿਓ ਸਮਾਇ ॥ - Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1136
 7. ਓਹੁ ਅਉਹਾਣੀ ਕਦੇ ਨਾਹਿ ਨਾ ਆਵੈ ਨਾ ਜਾਇ ॥ ਸਦਾ ਸਦਾ ਸੋ ਸੇਵੀਐ ਜੋ ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਰਹੈ ਸਮਾਇ ॥ ਅਵਰੁ ਦੂਜਾ ਕਿਉ ਸੇਵੀਐ ਜੰਮੈ ਤੈ ਮਰਿ ਜਾਇ ॥ - Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 509
 8. ਦੁਬਿਧਾ ਨ ਪੜਉ ਹਰਿ ਬਿਨੁ ਹੋਰੁ ਨ ਪੂਜਉ ਮੜੈ ਮਸਾਣਿ ਨ ਜਾਈ ॥ - Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 634
 9. ਦੇਵੀ ਦੇਵਾ ਪੂਜੀਐ ਭਾਈ ਕਿਆ ਮਾਗਉ ਕਿਆ ਦੇਹਿ ॥ ਪਾਹਣੁ ਨੀਰਿ ਪਖਾਲੀਐ ਭਾਈ ਜਲ ਮਹਿ ਬੁਡਹਿ ਤੋਹਿ ॥ - Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 637
 10. ਪਾਥਰੁ ਲੇ ਪੂਜਹਿ ਮੁਗਧ ਗਵਾਰ ॥ ਓਹਿ ਜਾ ਆਪਿ ਡੁਬੇ ਤੁਮ ਕਹਾ ਤਰਣਹਾਰੁ ॥ - Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 556
 11. ਨਾ ਹਮ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਨ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ॥ ਅਲਹ ਰਾਮ ਕੇ ਪਿੰਡੁ ਪਰਾਨ ॥ - Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1136
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 13. ਹਮਰੀ ਜਾਤਿ ਪਾਤਿ ਗੁਰੁ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਹਮ ਵੇਚਿਓ ਸਿਰੁ ਗੁਰ ਕੇ ॥ - Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 731

RICHARD SULIVAN'S WRITING ON SIKHS DURING THE MISL PERIOD IN THE LATE 18TH CENTURY

INDERJEET SINGH*

Professor Ganda Singh in his illustrious career found several European writings on the Sikhs written prior to the ascent of Maharaja Ranjit Singh to the throne of Lahore and Punjab in 1799. In 1960, eight such accounts were published under the title *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs* edited and annotated by the great historian.¹ A few years later, in 1965 Professor Ganda Singh wrote *A Select Bibliography of the Sikhs and Sikhism* where further early British and European accounts on the Sikhs were mentioned.²

Four decades later, in 2004 British Sikh historians Amandeep Singh Madra and Parmjit Singh updated the above work and added some new accounts and titled their book *Sicques, Tigers or Thieves Eyewitness Accounts of the Sikhs (1606-1810)*.³

Although these accounts tend to contain lot of errors in relation to Sikh Guru period (1469-1798) but they are fairly accurate about the contemporary period and give us an insight how Sikhs were viewed by the British and the European people before their formal interaction in the era of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

The writer of this article, an Independent researcher, came across several British and European accounts which were not covered in the above mentioned books.⁴ The format used by Professor Ganda Singh on the subject has been followed which includes short summary about the author and commentary on the account. Some of the spellings are old and outdated but for the sake of authenticity they have not changed them like Seik (Sikh), Shaw (Shah), Cawn (Khan), Owd (Awadh) Thannaisser (Thanesar), Puttialah (Patiala) among others.

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AUTHOR

History of the Parliament Online, the official Crown's website informs that Richard Joseph Sullivan was born on 10th December 1752 and was a British MP and writer from an aristocrat family. His brother John Sullivan was also a Member of Parliament. Richard was related to Laurence Sullivan another Parliamentarian who held an important position in East India Company and encouraged Richard to visit India.

In 1768 Richard went to India as a writer and wrote *An Analysis of the Political History of India*. The extended title of this book also includes, 'In which is considered the present situation of the East, and the connection of its several Powers with the Empire of Great Britain in 1779.'

He came back to England in 1782 and was later in 1787 elected MP for New Romney. In 1804 he was made 1st Baronet and became Sir Richard Sullivan. He died a couple of years later, on 17th July 1806.⁵

ACCOUNT

Sir Richard Sullivan wrote several books, but readers of Sikh history will be interested in his work pertaining to India. *An Analysis of Political history of India* was published in 1779. An enlarged second edition came out in 1784 which included an account of the Sikhs, the Jats (of Bharatpur), the Rohillas among others.⁶

This account is important as it is a contemporary source when Sikh Misls ruled the territories between rivers Indus and Yamuna. This period prior to the rise of Maharaja Ranjit Singh who ruled from 1799 to 1839 has been ignored. The Sikh confederacy ruled over the provinces of Lahore, Sirhind, Multan (lost in 1794 later regained under Maharaja Ranjit Singh). The Sikh incursions into Western and Central UP, their cooperation with Jats of Bharatpur and treaties with Rajput rulers of Rajputana have been largely disregarded by non-Sikh historians.⁷

The author calls the Sikhs 'powerful' and 'extraordinary' people. He has made some mistakes while explaining the history of the Sikhs. He erroneously mentions Guru Nanak instead of Banda Singh Bahadur who conquered Sirhind and major part of Punjab in 1713. He is very

appreciative of Sikh Sardars and states that they are known for their benevolence and 'attention to travellers and strangers'. He adds that a stranger and acquaintance are treated with the same kindness.

The author writes that Sikh manners are plain and simple. They are moderate in their living and dress, and honest in their dealings. Unfortunately, today on the western side of river Raavi, the Sikh rule especially the Misl period is portrayed as detrimental to the Muslims. Sullivan account refutes this allegation and states that Punjab's town and cities abound with Muslim artificers and tradesmen, who are most liberally encouraged. He describes the atrocities of Aurangzeb and his son Bahadur Shah on the Sikhs and their fortitude to withstand their tyranny. Both the Moghul emperors failed to surpress the Sikhs and convert them to Islam. He Writes, "He murdered the Seiks whenever they were to be found, Nor could he prevail upon them to abjure their principles, and profess Mohammedanism, though the alternative was offered to them. Magnanimity and fortitude grew, as intolerance increased. Persecuted and scattered though they were, they had an attraction to one common center; and to that center they were certain to return when a cessation of difficulties should take place."⁸

After freeing themselves from the Mohammadan Yoke, they organized themselves and occupied their native territory and parcelled the occupied territory into different principalities (Misls) these principalities were independent and sovereign but formed a lose confederation in the event of a foreign invasion. He states, " At length being freed from the Mohammedan yoke, the Seiks assembled from their lurking places, and formed themselves into a new community. They adopted no regular system of government. The richer sort assumed the title of Rajah, and annexed to it a full and sovereign authority, independent of each other. The next in consideration called themselves Sardars, and established an equal share of independency, both of each other and of the Rajahs. They formed a federal association, not a commonwealth, as it hath been erroneously denominated. They erected, as it were, distinct principalities; to act together in concert, only when a common enterprise should be in question. Their leaders were then to assemble in congress, on a perfect equality, and each to rear his standard in the general cause."⁹

He predicts that like the Mahrattas, the Sikhs, with their excellent organizing capacity, generous supplies in the form of voluntary donations, and adventurous spirit, are bound to rise and become a force to reckon with. He describes their repeated combats with Ahmad Shah and Taimur Shah and made the river Attock almost impassable for the Afghan invaders. He writes, “The river Attock they rendered impassable. Timur Shaw has likewise met with the same bad fortune, and that even more frequently than his father.”¹⁰ They have even made several predatory incursions into territories situated on the western bank of Ganges Upper and Rohilkhand, Saharanpur and Delhi.

Finally, he warns the ruling English to be wary of the rising power of the Sikhs and their political importance. He writes, “It is not, therefore, requiring too much to say, that the Seiks are a power which should be carefully watched by the English. They certainly are of great consequence on the political scale of India.”¹¹

The Sikhs protect all foreign merchants and taxes are assessed with moderation. He informs that the Sikh government is the ‘most lenient’ and many Afghan families continue to possess their hereditary estates in Punjab. This was despite the devastation and anarchy caused by Afghan ruler Ahmed Shah Abdali who invaded Punjab no less than 8 times.

The author interestingly seems slightly less impressed by Cis-Sutlej Sikh rulers, perhaps due to their incursions into the territories of Awadh (written as Owd, Western-Central Uttar Pradesh) which was a British ally. By 1806 all Cis Sutlej rulers had come under British protection fearing that Maharaja Ranjit Singh may annex their territories. It was a failure of diplomacy on the Sikh part.

Sullivan writes that the Sikh cavalry consists in excess of hundred thousand and anyone with a horse and minimum clothing can find refuge with the Sikhs. He states that Sikhs have no dislikes or prejudices. He sees them as formidable force within India in future. The readers will find the extract interesting and it will be a valuable addition to the existing 18th century European accounts on the Sikhs.

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LEGENDARY PIONEERS IN SIKH STUDIES – BHAI SAHIB BHAI VIR SINGH –

DR GURDEEP KAUR*

ABSTRACT

At the outset I am greatly indebted to the Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh for giving me the opportunity to contribute a comprehensive article on Bhai Sahib Bhai Vir Singh under the series *Legendary Pioneers in Sikh Studies* to be published in the July-October issue of the Institute's quarterly Journal *Abstracts of Sikh Studies*, in order to highlight his seminal contribution to Sikh religion and its renaissance, rejuvenation and punjabi language and literature in various genres such as poetry, prose, novels, pamphlets, scholarly writings in newspapers, journal, and books. All his scholarly works are a treasure trove for researchers, students, historians and others for today and ever after. Through this paper a humble attempt is being made to bring to light Bhai Sahib's multifaceted personality and his valuable contribution to Sikh religion, history and literature. Bhai Vir Singh was prominent among the pioneers who were harbingers of Sikh renaissance in Sikh religion, Sikh heritage and history, Sikh revival of interest in Sikh classics, Sikh literature, Sikh education, culture and commerce.

Bhai Sahib Bhai Vir Singh (1872-1957) (hereafter addressed as Bhai Sahib) was born on 5th of December 1872 in Katra Garba Singh, Amritsar in a family of scholars and intellectuals. His father Dr. Charan Singh was a medical practitioner and was also a illustrious scholar in Sanskrit, Braj, English, Persian and Sikh texts and Sri Atal Parkash, Dasam Guru Charitra, Gurmat Sangeet Nirnaya (Musical Measures in

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Guru Granth Sahib), Sri Guru Granth Beora (Verse forms in Guru Granth Sahib) are some of his notable contributions. Bhai Sahib's grandfather Bhai Kahan Singh, contemporary of a renowned English scholar Mr. Max Arthur Macauliffe was a learned man himself. Bhai Kahan Singh (1788-1878) was the first in the family to be sworn as a Sikh and was a forerunner of the family's literary and scholarly tradition. Bhai Kahan Singh ji is remembered for his contributions as an eminent scholar, a Gurmat researcher, a learned annotator, a scientific lexicographer, a language expert, a great poet and an excellent editor in Punjabi¹. Bhai Sahib's family traces its ancestry back to Diwan Kaura Mal (died 1752) who rose to the position of vice-governor of Multan under Nawab Mir Moin-ul-Mulk. The maternal grandfather of Bhai sahib, Giani Hazara Singh too was a renowned exegete and a man of letters who compiled a lexicon of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib, penned and wrote commentary on Bhai Gurdas' varaan. Giani Hazara Singh's collaboration with the colonial scholars like M.A.Mcauliffe are well known². Thus Bhai sahib's upbringing in the legendary scholarly Sikh family shaped his personality and his works immensely. The zeal, passion and enthusiasm for spearheading the projects for reawakening the Sikh consciousness was the result of Bhai Vir Singh's upbringing in the Sikh milieu and his education by his illustrious grand father Giani Hazara Singh and his scholarly father Dr Charan Singh.

His early education at the Church Mission School at Amritsar facilitated his command over English language which enabled him to master the intricacies of modern writing and equipped him with science of exegesis under the guidance of his maternal grandfather. His writings hence were a perfect blend of modern and classical learning. Despite being well versed in Sanskrit, Persian, Urdu, Braj and English, he chose to express his thoughts in Punjabi language making a renowned place for himself in the world of literature and raising the status of his native language Punjabi as a medium of good literature. Through his excellent choice of words and meticulous use of metaphors, similes, idioms, phrases Bhai Sahib infused a new life in all his writings be it prose, poetry, short stories, editorials, philosophical and religious essays, and novels which are thus deeply engaging.

Bhai Sahib's contribution towards the promotion and propagation

of Sikh values and ideals can be traced back to his teenage days when his religious convictions about Sikhism were strengthened as he noticed his fellow students at school coming under the increasing influence and allure of Christianity and their conversion to the same. Over a period of years he passionately devoted himself to restore the Sikh confidence in the divine ministry of the Great Sikh Gurus. His writings gave a new lease of life to Sikhism that had severely come under cultural onslaught of Christianity under the British rule. He eventually established himself as a Sikh icon and legendary personality with his exemplary creative works and editing of Sikh classics. Through his fluent style of writing Bhai Sahib sought to shed light on the divinity in Sikhism in its purest form and highlighted its aesthetic and intellectual appeal. His mission of life was to revive the forgotten glory of Sikhism and reaffirm the faith in the Sikh scriptures, heritage and traditions among the young and old; distinguished and common people who were losing interest in Sikhism.

His role was central in the Singh Sabha Movement (1873-1920) initiated to bring religious and social reform through the publication and circulation of journals, tracts, newspapers and books and for addressing the identity threats among the Sikhs due to the growing popularity of evangelists and the Hindu revivalists. Through various activities intended to disseminate information enabling Sikhs to denounce lifestyles inconsistent with the teachings of the Sikh Gurus, the movement gained considerable importance by the end of the nineteenth century. Bhai Sahib's notable work in the Singh Sabha Movement added vigour, vibrancy and strength to the movement, which produced scriptural commentaries and biographies on the Sikh Gurus. He also employed the Victorian novel form to produce popular fictional literature that promoted Khâlsâ identity. His cherished works *Sundari* (1898), *Bijay Singh* (1899) and *Satvant Kaur* (1900) stressed on the importance and the adoption of the articles of Sikh faith (five Kakkars); the Sikh rituals, the recitation of bani; following the *Rahit* (Sikh Code of Conduct). In the very first novel, *Sundari*, Bhai Sahib invests the lead character with the noblest of Sikh merits derived from Sikh history and teachings with an attempt to encourage all Sikhs to become baptised Khalsa Sikhs (purest of all) holding steadfast to the

principles and path of the Gurus. All his writings spread message of peace and divinity however, categorically abandoning Khalsa way of life as sinful. The degeneration of Sikhism was largely due to neglect of highly held Sikh values and practices and preference towards other religions:

“Look at yourself and see whether or not the decline of the Sikh nation is caused by your own hands. Leaving your God and your true Gurus, you worship stones, trees, idols, tombs and saints. Forgetting Sikh religion, you rot in another religion. Turning your back on the true Gurus you teach someone else’s religion to your offspring too. Your children will grow to be half-baked like you - Sikh on the head, Brahmin around the neck and Muslim below the waist³. (Sundari, Amritsar 1972, quotation translated by S.S. Dulai)

He sought to accomplish his mission by penning down his religious feelings thoughts words of wisdom in a language that was not considered a literary language in those times and this is what made him unique in Sikh annals. He chose to address the challenge by accepting a challenge of a higher order. At a time, when Persian and Urdu were the literary languages, Bhai Vir Singh ji chose to write in punjabi instead. He wrote exemplary philosophical and historical essays in punjabi to resuscitate the glory of the Sikh religion, Sikh martyrdom and the heroic tradition professed and practiced by the Sikh Gurus and Sikh warriors to defend their own faith and uphold human rights. The dual challenge to instill feelings of pride, respect and honour in professing faith in Sikhism as well as the Punjabi language were accomplished by Bhai Sahib with dogged perseverance, hard work meticulous efforts deep insight and a pragmatic approach. Indeed, the social, political and the cultural milieu prevailing at that time in Punjab was an influential force for his scholarly achievement but definitely not the only one. Stronger still was his passion to give expression to his creativity, his mystical faith in God and Sikh Guru’s divinity and internalization of feelings of living and non living beings and his desire to spread the message of peace, love, co existence, compassion, empathy and magnanimity. From his early young days till his death at the age of 85 years, Bhai Sahib was single mindedly engaged in his religious spiritual and literary pursuits with absolute clarity of the goals

and the means to be taken for the same. Literature, as he knew by intuition and intellect, has always been a potent force in the development of society. It has played a key role in shaping civilizations; in the evolution of political systems and in establishing an orderly, peaceful society by exposing injustice and tyranny. Since, there exists a two way relationship between literature and society, both influence one another significantly in a dialectic manner, he chose this area. However did not limit himself to be a litterateur only. He was a poet, prose writer, historian, research scholar, exegete, novelist, social reformer, Sikh theologian and ideologue not for his own age but for all times to come. All his works, being a meticulous blend of classic and modern, reflected the richness of his thoughts and feelings. Every piece of his writing was deeply immersed in divine philosophy that leaves an indelible impression on the minds of readers irrespective of the age and time it is read. The thoughts and the expressions are so captivating that the more one reads, the more is the urge to read and communicate with such a great man. He has deservedly been honoured with the Sikh congregational honour and epithet “ Bhai Sahib Bhai”.

Bhai Sahib's writings repeatedly stressed on *khande di pahul* initiation for transformation from being 'effeminate' and 'immoral' into 'virtuous' and 'moral' individuals⁴. The central characters in his works *Bijay Singh* (1899) and *Satvant Kaur* (1900 & 1927), *Baba Naudh Singh* (1921) and *Rana Surat Singh*, 1st Punjabi Epic (1905) undergo transformation from passive Hindus to Khalsa warriors after baptism. Their stories and tales remind the Sikhs about the valiant deeds of Sikhs and encourage readers to enact these characters within their own selves.

All Sikh women are given a message to become like Sundari, a character akin to Mai Bhago who, during the time of Guru Gobind Singh ji, fought bravely in the battle of Muktsar. Extremely concerned and conscious of the contemporary developments threatening sikh religion and identity, Bhai Sahib made an attempt to highlight not only martial qualities exhibited by the sikhs in the past but also the fact that the principles of justice, fairness, democracy, human rights of all and equality for all, were equally upheld by the Sikhs in all times. He thus played a key role in augmenting religious and cultural renaissance

in Sikh society/ community in conformity with the ideological propagation by the Singh Sabha Movement.

He envisioned a strong, morally and ethically inclined, prosperous, strongly bonded and grounded sikh community, making a niche for itself through genuine, pure, humanitarian efforts and deeds. And the vision became his mission of life and all literary pursuits. Bhai Sahib started a printing press in 1892 - *Wazir-e-Hind* – to promote and propagate his vision and mission. At the press, all the works of Bhai Sahib were published at this press. Followed by the establishment of the printing press, the *Khalsa Tract Society* (1893), emulating the model of the Religious Tract Society in London, was also started by Bhai Sahib. Most of the tracts published by this society were penned down by Bhai Sahib himself and these were an immensely powerful medium to connect with the readers. They had a still wider readership through pamphlets on varied topics like social ills, derogatory practices, and need to adopt *Rabit*, moral values. The purpose was accomplished by penning and publishing stories and parables, quotations from Guru Granth Sahib and Gurburab greetings on the occasion of birth anniversaries of the Sikh Gurus following the western model of exchanging good wishes. Combinations of conventional and western practices were effectively used for the accomplishment of achieving the goals of Singh Sabha Movement. To further the goal, in 1899, he started the *Khalsa Samachar*, a weekly newspaper, which influenced and shaped the Sikh thought, to a considerable extent, among the Sikhs. It proved an important vehicle for social, cultural and religious renaissance for the Sikh World. The newspaper, besides providing readers with the latest panthic information and developments, disseminated valuable information on Sikh faith and its tenets, principles, history, philosophy. Publication of another journal *Nirguniara* started in 1893 which was another milestone that contained well researched essays and articles on Sikhism. One finds a reflection of his academic excellence and philosophic maturity in his journalism, tractarian and scholarly writings and his grasp over the Sikh historical and religious doctrines. His command and control of the poetic expression, flow of ideas and plot of the imaginary stories was smooth, flawless and aesthetically superb. However, equally unparalleled was

the area of his scholarly work where he expressed himself assiduously. Some of his major theological works *Sri Guru Nanak Chamatkar* and *Sri Guru Kalgidhar Chamatkar* were serialized in the columns of this newspaper which served as a ground for the monumental work of *Kalgidhar Chamatkar* (1925) followed by *Sri Guru Nanak Chamatkar* (1928). The first work however, was the *Sikhan Di Bhagat Mala* that was chosen by Bhai Sahib for scholarly scrutiny. This edited work was published in 1912. He also edited celebrated Sikh classics *Prachin Panth Prakash* (1841) by Rattan Singh Bhangu that provides a detailed account of the cataclysmic days of Sikh struggle for survival in the eighteenth century when the Sikhs, through their dogged resistance, laid the foundations of their Sikh rule in the Punjab. The first hand information and development of events as provided by the author of this classic and later edited by Bhai Sahib and brought out in 1914 was indeed phenomenal and has been an authentic source of information to scholars and students of a widespectrum of scholars and readers. Another major contribution by Bhai Sahib was edited version of *The Puratan Janamsakhi*, which remains the most valuable source material on the life of Guru Nanak. His knowledge of science of exegesis, various indigeneous languages gave him the confidence and wisdom to take up the gigantic task of editing Bhai Santokh Singh's *Gur Pratap Suraj Granth* (1843), commonly known to the people as *Suraj Prakash*, conscious of the importance of the *Suraj Prakash* for being a rich reservoir of information on Sikh religion and history. Bhai Sahib delved deep into it by engaging in intensive research, dedication and meticulous editing. Bhai Santokh Singh's *Suraj Prakash*, is a reflection of author's genius, academic talent, versatile knowledge, grasp over various languages and about a variety of things such as the flora and fauna of the Punjab, birds and cattle, horses and elephants, weapons of war and the strategy of battlefield. And indeed no other person than Bhai Santokh Singh could have devoted his time and energy in a task of such a great magnitude. Besides Bhai Sahib's intellectual, literary and linguistic capacity, the editing assignment of this classic required sustained and dedicated labour and planning of a highly sophisticated order. Besides annotating the text with highly Sanskritized vocabulary and the elaborate conventions of poetry—the text had to

be standardized and, as far as possible, and Sikh doctrines dissociated from poetic fancy and mythologizing. For nearly nine long years, he was completely engaged in this expansive work. The *Suraj Parkash* was translated exhaustively into punjabi prose, by Bhai Sahib in a 14-volumes annotated edition and published between 1927-35 after years of hard work, perseverance, commitment. Its editing involved meticulous planning, deep investigation covering varied aspects like the sources of historical information, philosophy of history and the place of history in the Sikh system as well. The *Suraj Prakash*, as published by him in 1934, represented Sikh scholarship at its best and will continue to be an exemplary contribution to Sikh studies.

A man of extraordinary talent and superhuman qualities and dedication beyond limits, Bhai Sahib resolved to add to the *chamatkar* series, by covering the account of the remaining of the eight gurus. However, during his lifetime he could finish only four of these. Three of these accounts he published under the title *Sri Asht Guru Chamatkar* (Vol.I) in 1952. The life of Guru Arjan was published posthumously by his brother Dr. Balbir Singh. The other scholarly works included exegete selections from the Sikh scripture published in 1906 under the title Panj Granthi Steek. He also revised and enlarged the dictionary of the Guru Granth prepared by his maternal grandfather Giani Hazara Singh. This revised edition was published in 1927. He dedicated his life towards spreading the message of the Guru Granth and addressing the distortions that had come up due to external and internal reasons. His dedication and undwindling faith motivated Bhai Sahib to write a commentary on the entire Sacred Granth but unfortunately the commentary remained incomplete. His commentary on nearly half of the Holy Book – he had done, was published posthumously in seven large volumes by his brother Dr Balbir Singh. The *Santhya Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, as the series has been styled, is a testimony of his industriousness, mastery of the Sikh sacred texts and his vast knowledge of Indian literature, philosophy, semantics and grammar. Another work in the series of his literary and scholarly accomplishments was the *Sakhi Pothi*, an important historical document that Bhai Sahib edited. This work deals with the travels of Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh in the Malwa region of the Punjab.

In addition to his contribution to the religious and Sikh studies, his creative talent manifested itself in a significant body of secular Punjabi poetry which included around half a dozen collection of Short poems and lyrics namely *Dil trang* (1920) *Tarel Tuptee* (1921), *Lebran de Har* (1927) and *Mere Sajjan Jio* (1953). Besides expressing his love of beauty of nature, these poems reflect his aesthetic and mystical aspirations. These poems reflect his poetic excellent craftsmanship as he not only refined the old metrical forms like Kabit, Sortha, Baint, Rubai but also light, nimble meters, thus enriching Punjabi poetry. These verses are unique for their mystical content as well as their fine craftsmanship.

Besides his monumental contribution to the rejuvenation of Sikh religion and heritage, he also contributed to bring about an educational, cultural and economic renaissance in Sikh Society. He extended his assistance in the formation of the Chief Khalsa Diwan (1902), a representative body of Sikhs, which played a leading role in organizing the social, religious and political and educational activities of the Sikh community. The Chief Khalsa Diwan constituted in 1900 engaged itself for the multiple amelioration of the Sikh society. In cooperation with the Chief Khalsa Diwan, he played an eminent role in establishing the premier Sikh Educational Institution, the Khalsa College at Amritsar. He founded the Sikh educational Committee in 1908 which has been instrumental in spreading primary and secondary education among the masses. His ceaseless and untiring efforts for the betterment of humanity culminated in opening orphanages, asylum for the blind and destitutes; homeopathic hospital at Amritsar; old age homes; amelioration of the socially- culturally marginalized among the Sikh society. He was also a prominent member among the founders of the Punjab & Sind Bank (1908) which provided employment to thousands of Sikh Youth.

Bhai Sahib, an epitome of dedication to his faith, knowledge, humility, generosity, kindness, love for humanity, holds the same place as is occupied by Iqbal in Urdu, Rabindranath Tagore in Bengali or Wordsworth in English. Eminent scholars like Jean Helbert, Khushwant Singh, Prof. Puran Singh, Dr. G S Mansukhani, Shri Vegeshwar, Shri K.N. Sharma and Madan Mohan Singh have brought out poetic

qualities of Bhai Sahib's work. Their articles inspire the readers to make extensive and intensive reading of the works of Bhai Sahib. In her article, Sabita Sen Gupta draws a comparison: "A comparison between Tagore and Bhai Vir Singh may seem inappropriate but in the limited sky of modern Punjabi literature, Bhai Vir Singh was the luminous sun almost holding the same position of unchallenged supremacy which Tagore had in Bengali." Harindranath Chattopadhyaya titled his article: "A River of Culture and Learning" and says: "In the land of the Five Rivers, Bhai Vir Singh may well be said to be the sixth; for he has always been known to his people as a river of culture and learning, one who has flowed for several years like a nourishing influence into their lives and sustaining them."⁵ He was honoured with the degree of 'Doctor of Oriental Learning' in the year 1949 by Punjab University and conferred with the national honour 'Padam Bhushan' in 1956 by the Government of India. And when people exhorted him to say a few words at the Sikh Educational Conference on December 5, 1954, where he was presented the 'Abhinandan Granth' for his great service to Punjabi and Punjab, he did not deliver any speech but when insisted to speak few words he asked for the recitation of the following Gurbani verse, which reflects his humility despite his monumental contribution:

*"Rolling in dust were we, regarded by none –
By association with the holy Preceptor, the Master,
Were exalted worms such as we."*⁶

Bhai Sahib left this world on 10 June 1957 leaving behind a great legacy. "Shri Neelam Sanjiva Reddy, the then President of India, in inaugurated the building of Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan, New Delhi on 28 November 1978 in honour Bhai Sahib said "Bhai Vir Singh ji was not an individual but an institution. An eminent poet, distinguished educationist, social reformer and above all, a humanist Bhai Vir Singh was truly the architect of modern Punjabi literature."

Thus, Bhai Vir Singh was a colossus among the legendary pioneers and Sikh stalwarts who enriched Sikh and Punjabi Literature through his literary works and whole-hearted commitment. He was also a leading light among the harbingers of Sikh renaissance in the early twentieth century.

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BATTLE OF SARAGARHI

COL BHUPINDER SINGH*

PROLOGUE

The Sikh-Pashtun rivalry dates back to 150 years, beginning with the first of the nine invasions of Ahmad Shah Abdali or Durrani that took place in 1748; thereafter, a bitter struggle ensued for the next fifty years for the control of Punjab. Thus were sown the first seeds of that bitter and implacable enmity that afterwards came to exist between the Afghans and the Sikhs. By 1800, the Sikhs had prevailed and over the next 30 years, they had pushed the Afghans to the Durand Line (2,430 km line established in 1893 to demarcate the international boundary between British India and Afganistan). The architects of the Sikh success were the two Sikh generals Hari Singh Nalwa and Akali Phula Singh. The British inherited this line and named it the Durand Line after the Anglo-Sikh Wars. Today, it forms the western boundary of Pakistan.

The **Battle of Saragarhi** (12 September 1897), was fought between the Sikhs, who were in the service of the British, and the Pashtuns, who were fighting for their freedom. The homeland of the Pashtuns had been divided by the Durand Line; this led to simmering discontent among the tribes. The account of the battle is recorded in the Digest of Service of 36 Sikh (now 4 Sikh) and is also described in the personal letters of Lieutenant Colonel John Haughton, who was the commanding officer of the unit, as reproduced in his biography *The Life of Lieutenant Colonel John Haughton*.

In August 1897, the Mulla of Hadda gave a call for 'Jehad' against the British and the Afridis, Orakzais and Shinwaris, the Pashtuns of the Tirah region, rose up in rebellion. While the British Indian Army

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was building up its force in Kohat (garrison town), the Orakzais and Afridis focused their attention on the Samana ridge.

STRENGTH AND DEPLOYMENT OF TROOP

In January 1897, half of 36 Sikh was deployed on the Samana Ridge. There were a total of six posts in all namely: Fort Lockhart (Battalion Headquarters), Fort Gulistan, Saragarhi (connecting Fort Lockhart and Fort Gulistan through signal communication), Dhar, Sangar and Sartop. Rest of the battalion was deployed 80 km further west, in the area of Parachinar.

The post at Saragarhi was occupied by a detachment of one non-commissioned officer, Havildar Ishar Singh, 20 other ranks and one 'camp follower' (civilian employed for menial tasks), Daad, of 36 Sikh (4th Battalion, The Sikh Regiment). Thus it had an overall strength of 22. It was located on a hilltop and connected two forts (on both sides of a high mountain in the Samana range of mountains) through signal communication.

About ten thousand Afghans surrounded the posts on the Samana range including the signal post of Saragarhi (district Kohat), in North-West Frontier Province (now in Pakistan). Between 28 August and 11 September, Fort Gulistan and the outposts around Fort Lockhart were attacked a number of times without success.

THE BATTLE

On the morning of 12 September, a part of the Pashtun rebels invested the vulnerable small fort at Saragarhi. The commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Haughton expressed his inability to send relief. The post was attacked at about nine in the morning. The strength of the enemy attacking the post is estimated to be 1,000-1,500 rebels. Rest of the Pashtuns were cutting/blocking the route to Lockhart and Gulistan and also investing Gulistan and other forts. The battle began at 9 am and ended a little after 3:30 pm with the entire garrison killed in action.

Since there were no survivors, the military account is based on the visual observations made with binoculars/telescope from Fort Gulistan and Fort Lockhart, 2.8 km and 2.4 km away respectively

from Saragarhi. The official accounts mention only two messages sent from Saragarhi by signaler Sepoy Gurmukh Singh through the heliograph – one at 12 noon, giving a factual report, and the other just after 3 pm, seeking permission to close the heliograph and join the battle.

The Pashtuns initially tried to rush to the post but were unsuccessful. They retreated and took cover behind the boulders and continued firing at the post. Saragarhi had a cliff facing towards the south and a narrow spur linking it to the ridge. It was not practical for more than 80-100 men to attack at one time, but adequate reserves were available for repeated attacks. As observed from the Gulistan Fort, two Pashtuns had stayed behind to dig under the fort wall to make it collapse to create a breach. Being at a dead angle, they could not be seen by the defenders at Saragarhi. Gulistan tried to warn the post, but the message never reached.

At 12 noon, the signaller reported that one sepoy had been killed, one non-commissioned officer wounded and three rifles damaged due to firing. Lt Col Haughton sent Lt George Munn with 12 soldiers to create a diversion by firing from a distance, but it had no effect. Between 12 noon and 3 pm, the Pashtuns made two more attacks with 80-100 men each, but were again repulsed with heavy losses.

At 3 pm, Lt Col Haughton with Lt Munn and 98 other ranks set out to create a diversion and ease the pressure on Saragarhi. He had barely moved a kilometre when part of Saragarhi's wall collapsed due to the digging by the two Pashtun men who had stayed behind. The final assault was launched and the fort stormed. Just after 3 pm, Sepoy Gurmukh Singh sent his last message seeking permission to join the battle. At 3.30 pm, it was all over.

A great saga of bravery had been enacted. Since there were no survivors and there is no record or account available of any Pashtun version of the battle, little is known of what actually happened at Saragarhi. However, since it was a literal fight to the finish and a 'last man, last round' battle, which lasted six-and-a-half hours, there is no doubt that all that can be imagined in terms of individual and collective bravery and human emotions would have been enacted.

Most 'last stands' are seldom literal as there are rarely some survivors. Saragarhi was literally and metaphorically a great 'last stand'. Each of the 21 soldiers was awarded the Indian Order of Merit (IOM), the **highest decoration awarded to Indian soldiers by the British till 1911.**

A 30-foot pyramidal cairn, using stones from the ruins, was constructed at Saragarhi and a more formal obelisk was built at Lockhart as memorials. Gurdwaras commemorating the event have been constructed at Saragarhi, Amritsar and Ferozepur. The battle of Saragarhi has been compared to the battle of Thermopylae, where a small Greek force faced a large Persian army of Xerxes (480 B.C.). The battle, fought during the British Raj is etched in the annals of military history and can never be erased or forgotten.

THE FACTS OF THE BATTLE

With the passage of time, several legends grew on the battle of Saragarhi. So potent were the legends that over the years they began to be distorted and magnified, that it became difficult for an interested observer to separate the actual battle from the myth.

However, as per official records and assessment the facts are:

- About ten thousand Afghans surrounded the posts on the Samana range. The strength of the enemy attacking the Saragarhi post is estimated to be 1,000-1,500 rebels. It was not practical for more than 80-100 men to attack at one time, but adequate reserves were available for repeated attacks.
- Pashtuns/Pathans were masters of field craft and minor tactics and never indulged in foolhardy head-on attacks on well-defended positions.
- The Saragarhi fort wall collapsed to make a breach due to the digging by two Pashtuns; being at a dead angle, they could not be seen by the defenders at Saragarhi. These diggers were being observed from the Gulistan Fort. Gulistan tried to warn Saragarhi post, but the message never reached.
- Only two messages were sent from Saragarhi by signaller Sepoy Gurmukh Singh through the heliograph – one at 12 noon, giving a factual report, and the other just after 3 pm, seeking permission

- to close the heliograph and join the battle.
- The battle at Saragarhi lasted for six-and-a-half hours. It began at 9 am and ended a little after 3:30 pm with the entire garrison of 22 men killed in action.
 - The number of men killed at Saragarhi was 22 and not 21. The civilian, camp follower Daad's presence is generally ignored. On the fateful day, he joined the battle. He remains the unsung hero of Saragarhi.
 - Pashtun casualties on the Samana Ridge were 400 killed and 600 wounded, and of them, 180 died in the Battle of Saragarhi.
 - Each of the 21 soldiers was awarded the Indian Order of Merit (IOM), the **highest decoration awarded to Indian soldiers by the British till 1911**. In addition to 21 IOMs for the Saragarhi braves, 36 Sikh was also awarded another 14 IOMs in the battle at Samana and for the Tirah campaign that followed.
 - Writer-filmmaker Jay Singh-Sohal in his book *Saragarhi: The Forgotten Battle* found no records for the claims – that there was a standing ovation in British House of Commons for the Battle of Saragarhi, and it is listed by UNESCO as one of the seven epic battles.
 - According to the military account, soldiers of the Sikh Regiment kept their beards rolled, they did not carry *kirpans* (swords) into the battle and Sikh Regiment soldiers of that era wore khaki turbans.

Note: This account is largely based on Lieutenant General H S Panag's article '*What Akshay Kumar's Kesri won't tell you*' in *The Print* (28 March, 2019).

SIKH PHILOSOPHY CAN HELP MODERN MAN FACE HIS CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS

DR SAWRAJ SINGH*

What are the main challenges and problems of modern man? I feel that these are: Fear, Anxiety and Insecurity. What is the root cause of these? Alienation from one's true self caused by capitalist consumer culture is the main cause of the challenges and problems faced by modern man. Capitalism has alienated modern man from nature, society, family and self. Self-alienation is the ultimate price extracted by consumerism of capitalism. The philosophy of Sri Guru Granth Sahib helps us to reverse this phenomenon by realizing and uniting with our true self.

Consumerism of capitalism incites excessive material desires. The desire pathway leads to mental imbalance and frustration in the end; because desires can neither be defined nor be fulfilled. Needs can be defined and therefore can be fulfilled. This leads to stability and contentment. Fear, anxiety and insecurity are the result of the alienation and frustration from the unfulfilment of human desires. These psychic maladies are the byproducts of capitalist consumerism. Unbridled desires and frustration lead to imbalance and an imbalanced state of mind. An imbalanced mind cannot connect with one's true self. Our true self is the source of our inner strength that enables us to cope with the challenges and problems that we face in our life. Gurbani reminds us about this true self:

My self! in aspect art thou image of Divine Light:

Thy own exalted origin realize!

Myself ! The Lord is ever by Thee;

Listen to the holy master's teaching and live in bliss.¹

The Sikh philosophy emphasizes that we should achieve a

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balanced state of mind and get connected with our true self. For this purpose, we should first control our wandering mind and reach a state of equipoise. The one who has controlled the mind has conquered the world. "Let all mankind be thy sect. Conquering thus thyself, mayst thou be lord of the world."² Because then he can feel the way he wants to feel regardless of whatever is happening in the outside world. This state can be called an end of our suffering, a state of eternal bliss or wondrous joy called Vismad. The Sikh philosophy tells us that as a human being we are entitled to this state as long as we are connected with our true self and are living in harmony with nature.

*All boons within the self lie, not without,
Whoever seeks for these outside, is in illusion straying.³*

Alienation from nature and our true self makes us vulnerable to vicissitudes in our lives. We lose our balance. The unbalanced state of our mind is the main cause of our suffering. Consumer culture of capitalism has made this situation worse. It has practically negated the spiritual aspect of life and has led to unbalanced materialism. This imbalance in society has made the unbalanced state of our mind worse. The Sikh philosophy, by promoting spiritual enlightenment, can restore balance in society as well as in our mind and that will lead to stability in society as well as mental stability. Such a state of mind becomes less susceptible to psychic affliction like fear, anxiety and insecurity. Gurbani provides us the guidance:

*My self! in One sole Lord thy hope of succor centre
All other hope discard
Saihb Nanak: The Name you contemplate,
Whereby may your objectives be fulfilled.⁴*

The Sikh philosophy suggests a very simple formula to cope with fear. There are two kinds of fears; fear of worldly things and fear of God. One is negative and the other is positive. Fear of worldly things makes us weak, whereas fear of god makes us a stronger person. There is space for only one fear in our heart. In other words, we can have either the fear of worldly things, or we can have fear of God. We can get rid of our worldly fears by replacing it by the fear of God. Fear of God is realized by spiritual awakening. When we realize that the essence our existence is not our body or mind, it is our soul, then we become

fearless because there is no weapon or force that can destroy our soul. Fear only exists at the level of body and mind. There is no fear at the level of soul.

*My self! why share in depression? The Lord is fulfiller of desires.*⁵

Anxiety is the constant worry about what is going to happen to us. This is the result of limiting one's existence to oneself alone and not looking at it as a part of the whole. If we consider our existence as a part of the whole, then we will not feel anxious about what is going to happen to us. Because whatever is going to happen will happen according to universal will and natural law (Bhana and Hukam) rather than our efforts alone. The Sikh philosophy, while emphasizing the role of human efforts, also prepares us to accept the results because they are determined by universal will and natural law. To cope with anxiety, we have to constantly remember our creator and keep reminding ourselves that whatever is happening is happening according to His will. Therefore, we should stop worrying and gladly accept it because He is our father and friend and He knows what is in our best interest. We are destined to abide by His will and commandment:

Through obedience to His Ordinance and Will,

*Saith Nanak: This blessing too is pre-ordained.*⁶

By Divine Ordinance are beings marked with nobility or ignominy,

*By the Ordinance are the visited with bliss and bale.*⁷

Insecurity is the result of a feeling of a lack of support and back up from our real benefactor. To feel secure, we seek security from money and property as well as from influential and powerful people. However, Sikh philosophy tells us that instead of making us more secure, money and property make us more insecure because now we are constantly worried that somebody may take these away from us. Similarly, the influential and powerful cannot make us feel secure because they are constantly worried about losing their influence and power.

People that appear to be so important,

*Are all by malady of anxiety gripped.*⁸

The holy Name is my prop—

My prop the holy name, annuller of all desire.

In serenity and joy is it in the self lodged, all desire fulfilling.

*May I even be a sacrifice to the Master in whom such power are reposed.
Saith Nanak: Listen my devotee friends! in the holy Word repose your love.
My prop is the holy Name.⁹*

The Sikh philosophy tells us to seek support only from the one that is the most powerful and is prevailing everywhere, Omni potent and Omni present. Where can we find Him? According to Sikh philosophy, you do not have to go anywhere to find Him. Because He is present inside you. Recognizing your true self, you will get connected with Him. Self-awareness and self-realization will lead you to the ultimate source of energy; that will give you the strength to face all your challenges and problems.

*All boons within the self lie, not without.
Whoever seeks for these outside, is in illusion straying.¹⁰*

Once connected with with Divine Creator, human mind becomes detached from the daily ups and downs of human life. It is an ideal state of mind and an ideal state of human existence.

*He alone has known the Essence
Who meets indifferently pleasure and suffering.
Worldly honour and neglect, and has risen beyond joy and sorrow -
Such a one has realized the Essence in this world.¹¹*

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SPIRITUAL VOYAGE OF BHAGAT KABIR

PRABHJOT KAUR*

Bhagat Kabir is believed to have been born in 1398 in Kashi, in the state of present Uttar Pradesh in Northern part of India. Some people believe that Bhagat Kabir was born to a Brahmin lady and was brought up by a Muslim couple by the name of Neeru and Neema who were a low caste weaver by profession. When he came of age, Kabir got married to a very virtuous lady by the name Loi. A son and a daughter by the name of Kamala and Kamali were born to them. As a couple, they led a very contented and happy married life. They would together weave the cloth and sell it in the market. They made their both ends meet from whatever little they earned from it. Having a spiritual bent of mind, Kabir would like to keep the company of the saintly people and would welcome them in his house whenever the occasion so arose and would engage in spiritual dialogues with them:

*Speaking with the Saints, one becomes generous.*¹

Kabir taught a very valuable lesson in the art of living when he said that it was useless to argue with a fool:

*To speak with a fool is to babble uselessly.*²

Though Kabir was brought by a Muslim couple, he was instinctly attracted to the learned people who lived in Kashi, which was a high centre of learning in those days. It is believed that he became a disciple of Ramanand, a highly respected spiritual personality of the time. Bhai Gurdas relates how his strong desire to be blessed by Ramanand, made Kabir devise a way to seek his blessings inspite of his so called low caste status. Perhaps at that time Kabir did not know that Ramanand had stopped believing in the caste system and was propaging equality of all men:

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*Leading a life of detachment in deed,
 Did Ramanand and Gusain live at Benaras.
 Getting up early in the morning daily,
 Did he go for morning ablutions in Ganges.
 One day much earlier than his departure,
 Did Kabir lay down in Ramanand's pathway,
 Raising him after a touch with his feet,
 Did Ramanand made devout Kabir his disciple.³*

Ramanand ji told Kabir to keep the Lord always in his mind, which Kabir followed to the word. In this way, Kabir become Ramanand's lifelong disciple.

Kabir had a very deep insight into the meaning of life. Kashi (Benarus or Varanasi), the birth place of Kabir was considered to be so sacred a city that people would throng to that place especially in the old age when they believed that their end was drawing close. According to a prevalent belief, one who died in Kashi would straight away attain salvation after death, whereas those who died in Maghar, another city in Uttar Pradesh, would immediately be despatched to hell and would be damned for all the times to come. An awakened soul as *Bhagat* Kabir was, he refused to believe in the theory of heaven or hell. He also rejected the idea of attaining heaven or hell by virtue of dying at a particular place. To dispel this belief by personal example, Kabir shifted to Maghar, when he realized his end was near. He says:

No difference is between Magahar and Kashi - I both regard as the same.⁴

With the Grace of God, Kabir was absolved of all temptation or fear of the supposed heaven or hell. He says:

What is hell and what poor heaven? God's devotees reject both.

By Grace of the holy Preceptor, to none are we under obligation.⁵

Since God has created every place, every city and every single human being, He could not possibly discriminate against anyone. He argues how just by calling oneself a Hindu or a Muslim one cannot go to heaven and the other to hell. One must contemplate within as to who started this debate of one being better than the other, thereby conveying that this was a futile debate and one should not indulge in it:

*How did Hindu and Muhammadans originate?
Who initiated this path
Thou maker of disputations! consider in thy mind who are those that shall
get paradise and hell?*⁶

An enlightened soul as Bhagat Kabir was, he believed in the unity of whole mankind and was against creating differences between one and the other community on the basis of caste or religion when One God was pervading in every human being.

*Thus proclaims Kabir: In Hindu and Muslim abides one sole God.*⁷

He also challenged the idea that God was living in any particular place of worship:

*If Allah is present only in a mosque, then to whom does the rest of the world belong?*⁸

He declared that he was neither a Hindu nor a Muslim. He had forsaken both the belief systems and belonged to only One Supreme power that controls the world. He said:

*I am neither a Hindu nor a Muslim. My body and my life is the essence of the One who is called Ram by Hindus and Allah by Muslims.*⁹

Now no quarrel have I left:

*Brahmin and Mulla both have I discarded.*¹⁰

I don't have any issues with anyone as I have forsaken both the Qazis and Pundits (because they believe in divisions on the basis of religion).

Another prevalent belief that Kabir forcefully rejected was the belief in caste system. He asks the Brahman a very pertinent question that in the womb of the mother, where one remains before one's birth, no one knows what caste one belongs to. Then at what point of time, O Brahmin, you decided that you were a high caste Brahmin and I a low caste Sudra. He challenged the high caste Brahmin saying: O Brahmin! How can you call yourself a Brahmin of upper caste and me an untouchable, when we both are born the same way?

*If you really think yourself to be superior because you were born to Brahmin parents, then you should have been born in a way different from the rest of humanity.*¹¹

The fact that a Brahmin and a low caste weaver were conceived

and born in the usual manner proves that a Brahmin is as ordinary a person as anyone else, and has no right to call himself superior to others. He questions:

How can you say that you are all milk and I am made of blood?12

Kabir negated the idea of impurity (Sutak). He believes that the ones who are attuned with the Will of the Lord cannot be affected by any impurity of any kind whether of the birth or the death:

Saith Kabir: Impurity attaches not to such as in their heart the Lord contemplate.13

The only way to avoid impurity was in the loving devotion of God:

Says Kabeer, those humble people become pure, uncorrupted - they become Khalsa - who know the Lord's loving devotional worship.14

Kabir rejected all empty rituals whether of Hindus or of Muslims. He hits out at the Hindu belief of going for pilgrimages for the purpose of taking bath in the rivers considered holy when within his heart a man is all filth. He says:

*In the heart lies hypocrisy; by thy utterance dost thou appear enlightened,
Liar! why churn water? What good is washing the body,
While within thee lies impurity?
Let the bitter-melon at sixty-eight bathing-spots be washed
Still will its bitterness not go.15*

Similarly he vehemently spoke against the Muslim ritual of washing the body and going on pilgrimages when all the time the mind is swindling others and playing all kinds of tricks:

*When with duplicity in thy heart namaz thou dost perform,
What good is Haj at Kaaba?
What good is washing thy limbs,
washing the face and bowing the head in Mosque.16*

Kabir strongly opposed idol worship in the following words:

*Saith Kabir: Over the whole world those that worship stone as God
In such a belief shall they sink in mid-stream.17*

The whole world worships the stone idols, but the hard reality is that those who repose their faith in the stone idols are doomed for all the times to come.

He admonishes the flower woman plucking flowers and leaves, even though these were meant to be offered to the deity. He says the stone idol for which she was plucking leaves and flowers was lifeless, while the leaves she was plucking were pulsating with life. Plucking a live plant to be offered to something that was lifeless, was certainly a foolish act which the ignorant flower woman was doing:

*O! Flower-girl plucking petals, know in each petal abides life.
The Stone-image for which these petals art thou plucking is lifeless.
Deluded is the flower-girl; the Lord is the living God.¹⁸*

Kabir believed that God is pervading everywhere. He lives in every small blade of grass, in every leaf and could be realized only through the True Knowledge. And that he had learnt all this from the *bibek* (the discerning and clear uncorrupted wisdom) his Guru, from the realization of the True one, the enlightenment incarnate (ਬਿਬੇਕ).

Says Kabir, I have found that Guru, whose Name is Clear Understanding.¹⁹

Kabir is a sacrifice unto his Guru and would always like to remain in the company of such true ones who have a very clear understanding of the Truth and are devoid of all doubt:

Says Kabir, I am a sacrifice into my Guru; I remain in the Saadh Sangat, the Company of the True ones.²⁰

The storm of enlightenment brought about by being in the presence, in the company of the True Ones, Kabir got True Knowledge, a clear understanding of the True One (ਬਿਬੇਕ) blew away all the dust of superstition, empty rituals and doubts and broke away the bonds of false attachments of this world.

Look, there is huge storm of True knowledge and wisdom which has blown away all the doubts and has torn apart the bonds of maya.²¹

Thus enlightened with the Word of the *Gyan*, the Guru incarnate, Kabir was absolved of all fear, and the also the fear of death, the fear which has been troubling the mind of the man the most since ages:

Kabir, the enlightened one had conquered the fear of death as demonstrated by some incidents of his life.

Kabir was a weaver by profession and was considered a low caste as per the standards of the society of the time. Low caste people were

not even allowed entry to the the places of worship, leave alone reading the scriptures, as the religious leaders at that time did not want the ordinary man to be awakened.

These revolutionary ideas of *Bhagat* Kabir were against the temperament of the times. The Pandits and Qazis would have lost control over the masses if these ideas were followed by the common people. As such these were opposed by the orthodox Hindus and Muslims. They complained against Kabir to the king saying that whatever was being propagated by Kabir was sacriligious.

Sikandar Lodhi, the then king of this region, ordered that if Kabir did not fall in line with the prevalent system, let him be bound in chains and be thrown in the river Ganga, flowing near the city of Benarus. The king had thought that this way he would be able to make Kabir submit before him. But Kabir was made of a different stuff. His deep Love for the Lord had made him conquer the fear of death. According to him, the real fighter the real hero is he who is eveready to fight for his principles. For him, it is never going back when it is the question of his principles. He may be cut apart piece by piece, but he never leaves the ground, never compromises on the question of his principles:

*He alone is known as a spiritual hero, who fights in defence of his religion, his principles. He may be cut apart piece by piece, but he never leaves the ground.*²²

For Kabir dying was as much an art as living was and that the death was equally a part of life and both should be accepted with equal equanimity.

However he noticed that most of the people didn't know how to face death. They were unnecessarily afraid of the inevitable. Brave people die in a way that they don't have to die again, whereas the cowards die many times before their death. Loving devotion of God had absolved Kabir of all fear (ਨਿਰਭਉ ਜਪੈ ਸਗਲ ਭਉ ਮਿਟੈ). He declared:

The secret nature of death of which the whole world is terribly afraid, has been revealed to me, through the Word of the Guru's Shabad. My mind has already accepted death. Everyone being afraid says, "I will die, I will die." Only those who live in the darkness of ignorance and do not know the

*Lord, die over and over again, while those who end their physical existence with intuitive understanding become immortal and conquer death.*²³

He refused to bow down before the unjust demand and was all ready to embrace death rather than give up his convictions. So, as per the king's command, he was bound with chains and thrown into the river Ganga. But God so willed that a huge wave arose and broke the chains binding Kabir and threw him on a *mrigshala* (the skin of a deer) floating nearby. Nothing happened to Kabir. Unperturbed, he sat on the *mrigshala*, as if nothing had happened. He was fully absorbed in the remembrance of God.

*By the Ganga waves was snapped my chain,
And amid the Ganga was Kabir sacred on a deer-skin.
Saith Kabir: None else is our friend or companion
On water and land is the Lord our presever.*²⁴

No doubt the God keeps his true devotees ever under His refuge whether on land or in water. Gurbani says:

*The Lord keeps His True devotees under His refuge and the slanderers face utter ignominy.*²⁵

The slanderers, Pandits and Qazis were humbled. The king was furious as he was not successful in making Kabir deviate from his path and surrender before him. The king too like all haughty people was not to give in. He decided to make another attempt on the life of Kabir.

The king ordered that Kabir be thrown in front of the incited drunken elephant. This time too Kabir was saved with the grace of God. As per the will of God Almighty, the elephant turned away from Kabir and ran away shrieking loudly:

*The elephant ran away trumpeting,
Declaring, to this prostrate figure am I a sacrifice.*²⁶

The King tried three times, but without any success:

*Three times was this tried fully,
But his hard heart still was not softened.
Saith Kabir, the Lord is my guardian
In absorption in Him lies his servants life.*²⁷

Kabir thanked God saying that he was a sacrifice unto the Supreme

Powerful God. The truth of Gurbani was demonstrated to the whole world:

None but the Lord has power to bring death or grant life ²⁸

Kabir is believed to have lived in this mortal world for 120 years. During this time he created a lot of literature in the form of spiritual poetry. Guru Arjan Sahib decided to include in *Guru Granth Sahib*, the compositions that were in accordance with the Sikh ethos and Sikh principles. The total of 243 salokas and 224 sabads in seventeen *raags* in addition to, *Bawan Akbri*, *Pandrah thiti*, and *Satvar* have been included in *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Guru Arjan Sahib says that the so-called low caste Kabir became an embodiment of virtue by singing the praises of the Lord about him:

*A weaver from a lowly family, he became an ocean of excellence.*²⁹

Through the Lord's Name, Kabeer became famous and a highly respected personality. Bhagat Ravidas says about Kabir:

Kabir with constant devotion on Him meditated.

*Kabir spent his whole life imbued with the Love of the Lord.*³⁰

Meditating on God with an intense feeling of Love is the cornerstone of the principles of Gurbani. Other superficial differences did not matter to the Guru. Kabir passed this momentous test gloriously and as such was deservedly given a place of honor in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*.

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14. ਕਹੁ ਕਬੀਰ ਜਨ ਭਏ ਖਾਲਸੇ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਭਗਤਿ ਜਿਹ ਜਾਨੀ ॥੪॥੩॥ *Sri Guru Granth Sabib*, p. 654
15. ਕਾਇਆ ਮਾਂਜਸ ਕਉਨ ਗੁਨਾਂ॥ ਜਉ ਘਟ ਭੀਤਰ ਹੈ ਮਲਨਾ॥ ਲਉਕੀ ਅਠਸਠਿ ਤੀਰਥ ਨਾਈ॥ ਕਉਰਾਪਨੁ ਤਉ ਨ ਜਾਈ॥ *Sri Guru Granth Sabib*, p. 656
16. ਕਿਆ ਉਜੁ ਪਾਕੁ ਕੀਆ ਮੁਹੁ ਧੋਇਆ ਕਿਆ ਮਸੀਤਿ ਸਿਰੁ ਲਾਇਆ ਉ ਦਿਲ ਮਹਿ ਕਪਟੁ ਨਿਵਾਜ ਗੁਜਾਰਹੁ ਕਿਆ ਹਜ ਕਾਬੈ ਜਾਇਆ॥ *Sri Guru Granth Sabib*, p. 1351
17. ਕਬੀਰ ਪਾਹਨੁ ਪਰਮੇਸਰੁ ਕੀਆ ਪੂਜੈ ਸਭ ਸੰਸਾਰ॥ ਇਸ ਭਰਵਾਸੈ ਜੋ ਰਹੈ ਬੁਡੈ ਕਾਲੀ ਧਾਰ॥ *Sri Guru Granth Sabib*, pg. 1372
18. ਪਾਤੀ ਤੋਰੈ ਮਾਲਨੀ ਪਾਤੀ ਪਾਤੀ ਜੀਉ॥ ਜਿਸ ਪਾਹਨ ਕਉ ਪਾਤੀ ਤੋਰੈ ਸੋ ਪਾਹਨ ਨਿਰਜੀਉ॥ ਭੂਲੀ ਮਾਲਨੀ ਹੈ ਏਉ॥ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਜਾਗਤਾ ਹੈ ਦੋਉ॥ *Sri Guru Granth Sabib*, p. 479
19. ਕਹੁ ਕਬੀਰ ਮੈ ਸੋ ਗੁਰੁ ਪਾਇਆ ਜਾ ਕਾ ਨਾਉ ਬਿਬੇਕੋ ॥੪॥੫॥ *Sri Guru Granth Sabib*, p. 793
20. ਕਹੁ ਕਬੀਰ ਬਲਿ ਜਾਉ ਗੁਰ ਅਪੁਨੇ ਸਤਸੰਗਤਿ ਮਿਲਿ ਰਹੀਐ ॥੩॥੪॥੪੮॥
21. ਦੇਖੋ ਭਾਈ ਗਿਆਨ ਕੀ ਆਈ ਆਂਧੀ॥ ਸਭੈ ਉਡਾਨੀ ਭ੍ਰਮ ਕੀ ਟਾਟੀ ਰਹੈ ਨ ਮਾਇਆ ਬਾਂਧੀ॥ *Sri Guru Granth Sabib* p. 331
22. ਸੂਰਾ ਸੋ ਪਹਿਚਾਨੀਐ ਜੁ ਲਰੈ ਦੀਨ ਕੇ ਹੇਤ॥ ਪੁਰਜਾ ਪੁਰਜਾ ਕਟਿ ਮਰੈ ਕਬਹੂ ਨ ਛਾਡੈ ਖੇਤੁ॥ (Bhagat Kabir, p. 1105
23. ਜਿਹ ਮਰਨੈ ਸਭੁ ਜਗਤੁ ਤਰਾਸਿਆ॥ ਸੋ ਮਰਨਾ ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦਿ ਪ੍ਰਗਾਸਿਆ॥ ਅਬ ਕੈਸੇ ਮਰਉ ਮਰਨਿ ਮਨੁ ਮਾਨਿਆ॥ ਮਰਿ ਮਰਿ ਜਾਤੇ ਜਿਨ ਰਾਮੁ ਨ ਜਾਨਿਆ॥ ਮਰਨੇ ਮਰਨੁ ਕਹੈ ਸਭੁ ਕੋਈ॥ ਸਹਜੇ ਮਰੈ ਅਮਰੁ ਹੋਇ ਸੋਈ॥੨॥ *Sri Guru Granth Sabib*, p. 331
24. ਗੰਗਾ ਕੀ ਲਹਰਿ ਮੇਰੀ ਛੁਟੀ ਜੰਜੀਰ॥ ਮ੍ਰਿਗਸ਼ਾਲਾ ਪਰ ਬੈਠੇ ਕਬੀਰ॥ ਕਹਿ ਕਬੀਰ ਕੋਊ ਸੰਗ ਨ ਸਾਥ॥ ਜਲ ਥਲ ਰਾਖਨ ਹੈ ਰਖੁਨਾਥ॥ *Sri Guru Granth Sabib*, p. 1162
25. ਆਪਣਿਆ ਭਗਤਾ ਕੀ ਰਖ ਕਰੇ ਹਰਿ ਸੁਆਮੀ ਨਿੰਦਕਾਂ ਦੁਸਟਾਂ ਕੇ ਮੁਹ ਕਾਲੇ ਕਰਾਏ॥ (*Sri Guru Granth Sabib*, p. 308
26. ਹਸਤਿ ਭਾਗਿ ਕੈ ਚੀਸਾ ਮਾਰੈ॥ ਇਆ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਕੈ ਹਉ ਬਲਿਹਾਰੈ॥ *Sri Guru Granth Sabib*, p. 870
27. ਤੀਨਿ ਬਾਰ ਪਤੀਆ ਭਰਿ ਲੀਨਾ॥ ਮਨ ਕਠੋਰ ਅਜਹੂ ਨ ਪਤੀਨਾ॥ ਕਹਿ ਕਬੀਰ ਹਮਰਾ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ॥ ਚਉਥੈ ਪਦ ਮਹਿ ਜਨ ਕੀ ਜਿੰਦੁ॥ *Sri Guru Granth Sabib*
28. ਹਰਿ ਬਿਨੁ ਕੋਈ ਮਾਰਿ ਜੀਵਾਲਿ ਨ ਸਕੈ ਮਨ ਹੋਇ ਨਿਚਿੰਤ ਨਿਸਲੁ ਹੋਇ ਰਹੀਐ॥ *Sri Guru Granth Sabib*, p. 594
29. ਨੀਚ ਕੁਲਾ ਜੋਲਾਹਰਾ ਭਇਓ ਗੁਨੀਯ ਗਹੀਰਾ॥ *Sri Guru Granth Sabib*, p. 487
30. ਹਰਿ ਕੇ ਨਾਮ ਕਬੀਰ ਉਜਾਗਰ॥ ਜਨਮ ਜਨਮ ਕੇ ਕਾਟੇ ਕਾਗਰ॥

STATUS OF WOMAN IN SIKHISM

MADANJIT KAUR*

Sikhism is a modern religion. It made a radical departure from the contemporary religious traditions and adopted a progressive attitude towards the problems of human relationships. Sikhism defines equal gender roles to its adherents in all spheres. Theoretically, Sikhism has no place for sex discrimination. Woman is as capable a human being as man in temporal matters.¹ In Sikhism the status of woman has been clearly described by the Sikh scripture, Sri Guru Granth Sahib as equal to man, dignified and to be looked with respect and honour. Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism has made remarkable statement about positive and progressive attitude towards women. The Guru says in his *'Asa Di Var'*:

*In a woman, man is conceived,
From a woman he is born,
With woman he contracts friendship (is wedded).
Why denounce her the one from whom, even kings are born?
The women are the bonds of the World,
From a woman a woman is born,
None may exist without a woman.²*

From this hymn it is clear that the founder of Sikhism had clearly advocated a significant status for woman in all aspects of life. In fact the story of gender equality in Sikh society begins from the very foundation of Sikhism which believes in the equality of all mankind and commands:

God has created everyone equal and no one is higher or lower than the other.

The Great Guru Nanak categorically proclaimed:

There is only One Father of us all, and we are all His children.³

The concept of the unity of the whole cosmos as pronounced by

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Guru Nanak leads to the idea of universality of human spirit and consequent equality of all human beings:

*The Lord, the One dwells within all.*⁴

According to Science of Sociology, Religion has remained a powerful institution in shaping the thinking of its adherence and fixing the gender roles in the society. It defines how men and women should participate in religious activities and thereby legitimize the limitation of their role in the community.⁵

A people's cultural life at any point of time in history is the product of social forces that affect the role of man and woman. According to J. Barrow, the condition of women of any society will furnish a just criterion of the degree of civilization to which that nation has arrived.⁶

Sikhism has a glorious history. As a religious system its scripture pronounced a high status to woman. Seldom in Sikh religion has a distinction been observed between male and female. The annals of Sikh history are full of the sagas of significant role played by the women during the Guru period and the post Guru period. Nevertheless, we do not find detailed and continuous narration about the status of woman in the Sikh chronicles. However, from the contents of the Sikh scripture and the life stories of the Sikh *gurus* we are able to build up a thesis on the subject under study. It is evidently clear from the source material at our disposal that individuality of a woman was important in the religious and social context of Sikhism. The social value pattern of Sikh religion also supports this hypothesis.

In context to the subject under study it is to be pointed out here that western scholars recent work *Sikhism and Women: History, Texts and Experience* (Edited Doris R. Jacobash, Oxford, 2010) is to be considered with caution. The scholars and researchers whose works are included in this volume are not well acquainted with fundamental Sikh doctrines, Sikh practices, development of Sikh history against outside constraints of challenges of hostile Mughal State and vicious pressure of mythology, superstition, beliefs and practice of majority Hindu Culture and evidence of contemporary records in Gurmukhi and Persian. Most of these scholars have followed anthropological approach. They have drawn conclusions on conjuctered hypothesis

from the present to the past history of the Sikhs community. For them what constitutes Sikhism is problematic and status of women in Sikhism is highly complex construction. The above mentioned book presents interpretation of Sikhism in a complex and complicated parameter from the angle of sociological surveys. It is true that, the changing social milieu in different times and its reflection on the social life of different religions groups can affect the practices observed by each other. However, social interpolation of belief system in a pluralistic society exists to a certain limit and cannot replace the fundamental doctrines, and original practices of different religions.

In this study we have tried to present the status of women in Sikhism in its historical perspective at different stages of the time scale parameter.

Sikhism is a whole life religious system. It categorically rejects renunciation and celibacy and withdrawal from the worldly and social responsibilities. It does not consider women as hindrance in spiritual life and attainment of salvation. Guru Nanak put woman at par with man. He made it clear that woman is a partner in serving God and seeking spiritual elevation. The life of householder has been sanctioned as an ideal life. But one has to lead this worldly life with the spirit of detachment like lotus in the pond. Guru Nanak says:

*Living within family life, One obtainth salvation.*⁷

According to Guru Nanak the life of a house holder is desirable if it is pure and chaste as the crystal clear water of the Ganges. The Guru comments:

He alone is a householder who disciplines his sense desires.

And begs from God contemplation,

Austerity and self-control.

And gives in charity all he can through his body.

*Hear such a householder is pure, like Ganges water.*⁸

Guru Nanak has stressed upon the significance of women's role in society and said:

That it is God and God the Creator alone,

*Who is independent of woman because he is unborn Verily.*⁹

From the scriptural authority, it is evident that woman was

assigned the equal status and a dignified place in Sikh society. By projecting such a positive attitude and progressive vision the Sikh Gurus paved the way for social reform, social change and social transformation in the contemporary social milieu. In the medieval period a woman had no identity of her own. In the contemporary Hindu society, women had no freedom, she had to observe *purdah* (veil). She was denied all access to holy scriptures. The Brahmanical treatise *Manusmriti* does not recognize woman as independent entity and deprived all women by announcing that sacrifices by women displeases God.¹⁰ Even Buddhism and Jainism did nothing to improve the condition of woman in society and raise her status to a honourable position although entry of few women to Buddhist *Sanghas* and Jain *sadhvis* are available in the historical documents. Her life was confined within the four walls of the house performing domestic duties. All these evils were dominantly observed by the Hindu society. The custom of *sati* (self-immolation) at the pyre of her dead husband was another barbarous practice prevalent in the Hindu Society. The status of women in Muslim society was almost the same. Even Muslim scripture has no progressive attitude for women. She could not utter the call to prayer, or lead a congregation or visit the mosque. The holy Quran considers woman inferior to man and reminds menfolk (husbands):

Your women are a tithe for you to cultivate.

And they have rights similar to those of men over them in kindness.

And men are a degree above them.¹¹

Even in the Christian society in the Western world, the woman did not have a high position or enjoyed equal status to that of man. Bible says that woman was created for the entertainment of man out of his rib and she is considered responsible for the expulsion of Adam from the Garden of Eden. The Christian belief is that woman destroys God's image in man.¹² Before the Protestant Movement Christian organizations denied any higher status to women even as a missionaries. In Western countries, women got the right to property in 1882. The right to vote to women has been granted only in 1918. Even now women can not be enhanced to the status of bishops in Christianity. But the founder of the Sikh faith, Guru Nanak restored the woman to her fullest rights as equal member of society The Guru categorically

asserted that “women as well as man share equally in the Grace of God and are equally responsible for their actions to Him”¹³.

Guru Nanak denounced the decline of ethical norms and morality in his contemporary society. Lamenting over the deteriorated status of women in society at his times Guru Nanak comments:

The women have become instrument and men practice tyranny.
Gentleness, self-control and truth have fled away and
unclean material has become the food.¹⁴

Guru Nanak's *bani* is the only contemporary documentary evidence of the plight of the Indian woman at the hands of the Mughal invaders. In *Babar bani*, Guru Nanak narrates the misery suffered by the Indian women on account of barbarous and shameful acts of the alien invaders.¹⁵

The life stories of Guru Nanak (*Janamsakhis*) tell us that his sister, Bebe Nanki was the first one to accept the religious doctrines propounded by him. Thus a woman was the first disciple of the Sikh religion. The role played by Mata Sulakhani, Guru Nanak Dev's wife, is unique. The Guru spent most of his time in *Udasis* (travels) and the domestic responsibilities were all performed by her with dignity and self-status and reliance in the absence of her husband. After his settlement at Kartarpur, the *langar* (community kitchen) and organisation of the *sangat* (the assemblies of the Sikhs) were organised by the family members of Guru Nanak. The female members of the early Sikh community played an important role in making successful the new system of institutionalised religion tagged with social training, collective worship (*Nam Simran*), *kirtan* and assemblies of the *sangat* in *Dharamshalas* or *Gurdwaras* for the development of spiritual attitude and corporate life and strengthening the tradition of *seva* (voluntary service) for the welfare of the humanity. The community life, the Guru had set up at Kartarpur depended on full co-ordination and co-operation of the female members of the community in looking after the service of *langar* and *sangat*. Both men and women participated in this labour of love as partaker of *seva*. These progressive principles about the status of woman were advocated by his successor *gurus*, and these were further strengthened and consolidated by allotting more responsibilities and duties to women in the task of organisation,

management and propagation of Sikh religion. The response of women to this demanding role was equally successful and praiseworthy. Mata Khivi, the wife of Guru Angad, second Guru of the Sikhs organised the *langar* on solid footing and herself cooked the food in the kitchen. Food was served round the clock to all visitors without any discrimination of caste, creed and position. The contribution of Mata Khivi in the running of the *langar* institution has been applauded by Bhatt Balwand as:

Saith Balwand the bard, Khivi, noble soul,
 was like tree with shade of thick leaves,
 In her kitchen was distributed rich fare,
Khir enriched with *ghee*, tasting like *amrita* elixir.¹⁶

Sikh women played significant role in the spiritual life of the Sikh community. Bibi Amro, daughter of Guru Angad Dev, who was married to the son of Manak Chand, brother of (Guru) Amar Dass (the third Guru of the Sikhs) was a devout Sikh. She used to recite *Gurbani* (*Japji*) in the early hours (*Amrit vela*). Once on the visit to his native village Basarke (Guru) Amar Dass heard the *Gurbani* recited by Bibi Amro. He was deeply impressed by the *shabads*. The *Gurbani* inspired (Guru) Amar Dass so much that he left his religious convictions (Devi Puja and Brahmanic rituals and pilgrimage to Hindu holy places) and became a desciple of Guru Angad Dev.¹⁷

Guru Amar Dass, (1479 – 1574) clearly emphasized the status of woman as equal partner in married life. The Guru comments:

*Only they are truly wedded who have
 One spirit in two bodies.*¹⁸

Guru Amar Dass gave special attention to the amelioration of the position of woman in the society. Guru introduced many reforms to change the negative attitude of the society towards woman and to enhance the status of women in the society. *Sati* was prohibited by Guru AmarDass long before any notice of this inhuman practice was taken of by Emperor Akbar. Guru Amar Dass denounced the custom of *sati* (Hindu custom of the burning of the widow at the pyre of her husband) as a barbaric act of self-immolation without realizing the true spirit of sacrifice. The Guru says:

Sati is not she who burneth herself on the pyre of her spouse.

*Nanak! Sati is she who dieth with sheer shock of separtion.*¹⁹

According to Guru Amar Dass only those women are worthy of the status of *sati* who lead a modest life of contentment and have good conduct and remember daily the true name of the God. It is recorded in the Sikh chrinicles that Guru Amar Dass persuaded Emperor Akbar to issue *farman* (directive) to stop the practice of *sati*. Guru Amar Dass not only denounced the practice of *Sati* but also took practical steps to stop this evil. He stayed at Kankhal, Haridwar near the site of cremation at the bank of river Ganga where Rajput ladies used to perform *sati* at the pyer of their husbands. A Gurdwara stands nearby the site to commemorate the stay of Guru Amar Dass at Kankhal to prevent the social evil of *Sati*. Haridwar was the biggest centre of the Hindus. Even now Hindus go to Haridwar to perform the custom of emersion of ashes of their family members. The Guru also denounced the observance of *pardah* by woman and encouraged widow marriage. Guru Amar Das' strict injuction was that no woman observing *pardah* would be admitted into his presence. The Rani of Hamirpur State was not allowed to join the congregation wearing a veil.²⁰ Women were allowed to take personal share in religion. She was to have the same responsibility to spiritual matters as man and was in every way his equal in the sight of God. Religious congregations were thrown upon to women. They were to participate freely in all religious and secular observances, and no social custom was to hinder them from doing so. In his devotional compositions, Guru Amar Dass asserts the equality of men and women as creations of same Creator Lord.²¹

Guru Amar Dass organized the whole Sikh spiritual domain consisting of *sangats* spread in far off places into 22 centres called *Manjis*.²² There were two women preachers to take responsibility of these missionary centres.²³ It is a documentary proof of the fact Sikh women were trained as missionaries and they had the privilege to head the regional Sikh centres. This tradition continued during the time of successor *gurus*. We find names of prominent women of local *sangats* in the *Hukammamas* (letters/epistles) of the *gurus* to this effect.²⁴ Such a position was denied to women in almost all the major religious traditions of the world. Besides, encouraging woman's participation in the religious affairs, Sikhism preached that conjugal fidelity was the

ideal norm to be observed by the true Sikh. Bhai Gurdas, the sixteenth century Sikh scholar commenting on the Sikh code of conduct writes:

*He is truly celibate who is married to one wife.*²⁵

The Sikh Gurus not only expounded progressive attitude towards woman, but also took concrete steps to demonstrate by examples of everyday life that is the pragmatic and positive outlook of a liberal and civilized society. Mansa Devi, the wife of Guru Amar Dass helped in supervising all the projects undertaken by her husband at Goindwal and Amritsar. The social reforms introduced by Guru Amar Dass were opposed by the orthodox Hindus. They made false complaints against the Guru to Emperor Akbar and even accused the Guru for violating the Hindu customs. In 1571 A.D. Emperor Akbar made a visit to Lahore. On his way back from Lahore to Ajmer Sharif he passed through Goindwal and had a meeting with Guru Amar Dass. The Emperor was highly impressed with the Guru's mission and took food in the *Guru ka Langar* (community kitchen) prior to his meeting with the Guru. It is said that Akbar offered a land grant in the name of Guru's daughter Bibi Bhani.²⁶ Emperor's visit not only silenced the Guru's critics both Hindus and Muslims but also gave a great boost to Sikh movement.²⁷

As a result of Guru Amar Dass' progressive teachings Sikh woman not only become equal with men in social and religious matters of the community but also played momentous role in the development and consolidation of Sikh movement.

Bibi Bhani, daughter of Guru Amar Dass served her father with dedication and love. Bibi Bhani was married to (Guru) Ram Dass, the fourth guru of the Sikhs. The couple helped Guru Amar Dass in his religious mission and construction work with equal gesture with the spirit of labour of love. Bibi Bhani brought up her son (Guru) Arjan Dev the fifth Guru of the Sikhs with utmost care to inculcate highest virtues and mental faculties. It was a significant contribution to bring up such a personality, who not only consolidated the Sikh organisation by building the Harimandir, editing the *Adi Granth* but also sacrificed his life for the freedom of worship. It was the first martyrdom in Sikh history. Guru Arjan Dev categorically proclaimed that all (men and women) are equal:

*There is only One Father of us all, and we are all His children.*²⁸

Mata Ganga, wife of Guru Arjan Dev was an embodiment of courage and strength. She played a vital role in bringing up (Guru) Hargobind, the Sixth Guru of the Sikhs with qualities of a saint-warrior (*sant sipahi*) and send her husband Guru Arjan Dev for martyrdom with compassion and fertitude. Hargobind was only eleven years old at that time. Mata Ganga had great contribution in bringing her son with all care for the future role he had to play in the history of the Sikhs. The ingredients of the doctrine of *Miri* and *Piri* inculcated in the mental make up and personality of Guru Hargobind are greatly attributed to the training he received from his mother under the guidance of Baba Buddha Ji. Guru Hargobind complimented the role of women in society with highest regards and called the woman, as the conscience of man and enhanced the status of women in Sikh society. Guru Hargobind got a tank dug at Amritsar in the name of his virgin Muslim devotee Kaulan. It was named *Kaulsar*. Baba Buddha supervised the construction of the tank. After the tank was completed it became customary with the devotees to take a dip into the *Kaulsar* first and then in the holy Tank (*Amritsarovar*) of the Golden Temple.²⁹ This practice enhanced the prestige of the Kaulsar tank and immortalized the name of Mata Kaulan.

Mata Nanki, wife of Guru Hargobind had to face great hardships on account of her husband's struggle with the Mughals and afterwards the stress and strain of family dispute for the claim of *Gurgaddi*. She preferred to live with her son, Tegh Bahadur in isolation at Bakala and spend the rest of her life in looking after her son and meditation (*Nam Simran*). When Guru Tegh Bahadur founded a new village in the Shivalik hills he named it *Chak Nanki* after the name of his mother. The village was later extended and developed in a town and was called Anandpur Sahib.

Mata Kishan Kaur, wife of Guru Har Rai and mother of Guru Harkrishan accompanied her son to Delhi at the call of Emperor Aurangzeb. The child Guru died at Delhi.

Mata Gujri, wife of Guru Tegh Bahadur and mother of Guru Gobind Singh played a significant role in Sikh history. Guru Gobind Singh was born at Patna. Rani Maini, wife of local feudal Lord, Raja Fateh Chand Maini who was a devout Sikh, greatly loved the child Gobind Rai. The Rani was childless but she was allowed to spend full

time with Gobind Rai with reverence. The Sikh chronicles narrates that the lady could foresee the future role of Guru Gobind Singh in the history of India. She blessed Gobind Rai to save mother India in future crisis. After the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur, Mata Gujri became a source of strength to her son. Guru Gobind Singh was quite young, the administration of the Guru's *darbar* and the affairs of the Sikh community were conducted by his mother as it is clear from some of her letters – *bukammamas* available to us.³⁰ She bravely faced the sacrifices made by her grandsons and herself suffered cruelties of the Mughal tyranny.

The wives of Guru Gobind Singh also played important role in the Sikh history. Mata Jeeto, the elder wife of Guru Gobind Singh had three sons: Sahibzada Jujhar Singh, Sahibzada Zorawar Singh and Sahibzada Fateh Singh. Throughout her life she lived at Anandpur Sahib with Guru Gobind Singh and expired there in 1700 (1701). A *samadhi* is erected in her memory in Agampur (Anandpur). All her three sons were killed by the Mughals in the struggle of the *Khalsa* against the tyrant state. Mata Jeeto played an important role at the initiation ceremony of the creation of the *Khalsa*, while Guru Gobind had prepared the *Khande bate da Amrit* (nectar stirred by double edged sword) and bestowed it with valour, Mata Jeeto added sweetness to valour by putting sugar puffs (*patasas*) into the *Amrit*.³¹

Guru Gobind Singh taught the *Khalsa* the highest moral and ethical values. The *Khalsa* had to lead the householder's life and not to indulge in adultery. The *Khalsa* had to respect the honour of women. During the guruship of Guru Gobind Singh woman enjoyed freedom and a high status in the Sikh society which was denied to them (women) in Hindu and Muslim societies. Women were considered as equal human being (not to be considered inferior to man). Sikh concept of equality is based on the spiritual consciousness and the equal social platform to all human. According to Guru Gobind Singh a woman, the better half of man is the gateway to salvation. However, the Guru made it clear that only virtuous women are to be respected. Evil minded woman can be a curse to life and society. The Guru warned his Sikhs against having any contact with morally loose woman and to be always aware of their wicked designs, for self defensive purpose.³²

The moral character of the Khalsa and the respect they showed to their women was all due to Guru's teachings of maintaining a high moral character and humanism to his followers. This glorious aspect has been fully reflected in the history of the Khalsa. It is recorded in the Muslim chronicles and historical documents that, in the contemporary Muslim world every Muslim conquest was always accompanied by number of slaves and woman captives as articles of war booty. Women captured were taken by the alien soldiers and invaders and they were often sold in open market as slave girls (*kaneez*). The beautiful woman were offered to the rulers, officers as gifts for their *harem* (the female apartment of a palace).³³ But Guru Gobind Singh denounced this practice. It is said that once during the war, the Sikh soldiers captured one beautiful Muslim woman. They wanted to treat the woman in the same way as the Muslim soldiers had been treating the Hindu woman folk for eight hundred years (since Mir Qasim's invasious). But Guru Gobind Singh did not allow the Sikhs to show any disrespect to the Muslim women and consequently she was restored to her family as ordained by the Guru.³⁴ How the Guru argued with Sikh soldiers to keep aloof from adultery has been recorded by Bhai Santok Singh in his *Suraj Parkash Granth* as following:

The Sikhs argued with the Guru that: 'the Muslims carried the Hindu women. The Sikhs wanted to pay the Muslims in their own coins. Then why such a thing should be forbidden'. The Guru then replied, 'I want to take Panth to the highest level and will not allow it to fall to the depth of hell'; such an immoral conduct has, therefore, been forbidden' (Eng. Tr.).³⁵ It is the impact of Guru Gobind Singh's humanitarian teachings that the respect of women including those of Muslim ones, captured during the war, became a special feature of the moral character of the Khalsa. In Sikh *Rahitnamas* (code of conduct) and Sikh *Maryada* (moral values); marrying a Muslim woman (*Turkani*), was considered a sin as *Kurahait*. It is the practice of this code of conduct which was the motivation for the disciplined behaviour and high moral character of the Khalsa.

Mata Sundari, Guru Gobind Singh's second wife and mother of his elder son Sahibzada Ajit Singh; witnessed great sacrifices of her son and her husband with bravery and firm faith as the Divine Order

(*Hukam*). After the death of her husband, she lived in Delhi and provided leadership and guidance to *Khalsa* in strengthening the Sikh *Panth* and keeping the community intact in moments of crisis (dispute between *Tat Khalsa* and the *Bandai Khalsa*). Mata Sundari led the Sikhs with ability and vision and provided them able leadership and directions both on political and religious matters. She also made arrangements for the management of Sri Hari Mandir Sahib (Golden Temple) at Amritsar under the supervision of Bhai Mani Singh³⁶ and got prepared copies of Sri Guru Granth and *Dasam Granth*. This task was done under the guidance of Baba Deep Singh (*Shabeed*) and Bhai Mani Singh. She also made arrangements of the management of Sikh shrines at Anandpur Sahib and other places on sound footings. Mata Sundari's *Hukamnamas* are documentary evidence of her untiring efforts to consolidate the community as well as its cultural heritage.³⁷ She expired in 1747 at Delhi. She was honoured with the epithet of *Khalse di Mata* (mother of the Khalsa). Sardar Baghel Singh built a *gurdwara* in the memory of Mata Sundari at Teliwara, Delhi which is known as Gurdwara of Mata Sundari. A *gurdwara* was also erected at the place where she was cremated. It is known as Gurdwara Bala Sahib.

The leadership of Mata Sundari to the Khalsa is a glorious examples of the potentialities of the Sikh women and their influence in the Sikh society.

After the death of Mata Sundari, Mata Sahib Devi also called Mata Sahib Devan virgin wife of Guru Gobind Singh^{37a} took the Khalsa under her tender care. She organised Sikh *sangats* (congregations) at Delhi. With her wisdom and superb leadership she inspired the Khalsa to strive for the noble cause to protect the Sikh faith and serve humanity.³⁸ Her *Hukamnamas* addressed to the Khalsa *sangats* are documentary evidence of her qualities of head and heart.³⁹ She expired in 1733 A.D. at Delhi. Gurdwara Bala Sahib erected by Sardar Baghel Singh, the chief of the Karora Singhia Misal after the conquest of Delhi by the joint armies of the Sikhs and Rohillas in 1783 also commemorates the memory of Mata Sahib Devi.⁴⁰

It is noted from the documents of the *Hukamnamas* that after the demise of Guru Gobind Singh (1707 A.D.) and death of Banda Bahadur Singh (1716 A.D.) for nearly two decades the Sikh community was

guided by the orders of Guru Gobind Singh's wives – Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devan. Their leadership held together Sikhs in times of grave crisis. Their *Hukamnamas* addressed to the Sikh *sangats* are significant source of information regarding their status, position, control, command and guidance for maintaining direct contacts with the Sikh *sangats* of far off areas like Pak Pattan, Patna, Benaras, Gazipur and Dacca.⁴¹

Guru Gobind Singh brought a revolutionary change in the organizational framework of the Sikh community. Women were also baptized in the same way as men and were taken as equal members of the *Khalsa* fraternity.⁴² The example of Mai Bhago of Jhabal (District Amritsar), a baptised lady who commanded the contingent of the *Khalsa* (comprising of the forty Sikhs, who had earlier deserted the Guru during the siege of Anandpur Sahib by the Mughals) in the battle of Mukatsar at *Khidrane di Dhab* is an epitome of the spirit of bravery and valour of the Sikh women who proved equally excelled in the war field. The lady lost her husband and son in the battles fought by Guru Gobind Singh against the Mughals. Mai Bhago was wounded in the battlefield but lived to serve the Guru and the Sikhs for many years to come. She went to Nanded and encamped her *dera* near the abode of the Guru. A small Gurdwara stands at the site of the *dera* of this brave woman warrior of the *Khalsa*.⁴³

Starting with the Gurus' wives and down through the ages, Sikh women have made definite and significant contributions in shaping and preserving of the Sikh traditions and institutions. Sikh women, without a doubt, had made strong contributions to the creation of a progressive society, a new culture and a new social philosophy in the history of India. Yet, what contribution they made and how much they sacrificed, their history has not been duly accounted and estimated by the Sikh historians. In the later period, the Sikh women continued to follow Sikh traditions and cultural values. During the dark period of Sikh history (1716 – 1760) after the martyrdom of Banda Singh Bahadur the Sikh males were persecuted and they were declared outlaws. The Mughal government had announced rewards for capturing or killing of the Sikhs and their horses.⁴⁴ During this period the Sikh women put their full contribution in the heroic battles, made sacrifices

and were victims of great tragedies. They were captured, tortured, put into prisons and were forced to wear wreaths around their necks made from the flesh of their slain children. They bore all these miseries but did not forsake their religious beliefs. The text of the *Ardass* (Sikh prayer) stands testimony to this fact. The contribution made by Sikh women in sacrificing their children for the sake of *Dharam Yudh* (war for the protection of justice, human rights and righteousness) initiated by the Khalsa has been aptly recognised by the Sikh community and sanguine compliments attributed to this cause is recited daily in the holy *Ardass* (prayer) of the Sikhs in Gurdwaras all over the globe.⁴⁵

After the establishment of the Sikh rule under the *Misals*, Sikh women like Bibi Rajinder Kaur of Phulkian House and Mai Sada Kaur (mother-in-law of Maharaja Ranjit Singh) are well known examples of the adventures and valours of Sikh women. They showed excellence in affairs of statecraft and attained glorious victories at the battle fields. The role of Maharani Jindan, the widow of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and mother of Maharaja Daleep Singh is memorable saga in the history of the Sikhs. But so far as the position of the woman is concerned in the period of Sikh rule, it is infested with negative features. When the Sikh *Sardars* established their independent states and assumed life manners of contemporary feudal class and royalty, polygamy became a common practice in the Sikh society and women were pushed to the domestic confines. Most of the evils - *purdah*, *sati* and female infanticide became prevalent in the elite groups of the Sikh community also. With the assumption of regality by the Sikh *Sardars* and eroding of the republican characteristic of the Sikh polity of the Khalsa Panth and Misal organisation, the woman lost her equal status in Sikh society. Brahminical impact became dominant and apparent even in the beliefs, observances, customs, rituals and practices followed by the contemporary Sikh masses and classes both. At the funeral of Maharaja Ranjit Singh his four Hindu Ranis and seven slave girls performed *Sati*.⁴⁶ It was a morbid phenomenon of serious moral decline in the Sikh society affecting its religio-philosophical moorings, behaviour and thinking. The Sikh society became riddled with superstition and ritualism eroding moral values and code of conduct prescribed by the Sikh Gurus. This development posed a threat to the distinct identity of the Sikhs

and was a serious challenge to the survival of Sikh doctrines in original form.

In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries some Sikh women again played an active part in the Movement of Indian Struggle for Freedom. Bibi Gulab Kaur, Mata Kishan Kaur Kanke, Bibi Amar Kaur, Bibi Harnam Kaur and Bibi Daleep Kaur are noteworthy examples. The Sikh community has passed through many ups and downs in the last two centuries. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Sikh Resurgence Movement started under the leadership of Singh Sabha Movement, Social reforms, preservation of Sikh identity, religious ethos, doctrines and cultural traditions and production of authentic Sikh literature were the major objectives of the Singh Sabha Movement. Besides, development of education and literacy among the Sikh masses was also added in the agenda of the Singh Sabha's programmes. Subsequently, under the patronage of the Chief Khalsa Diwan, Sikh Education Conference was organised and a separate arrangement for the education of girls was introduced. With the rise of the Gurdwara Reforms Movement under the Akalis and the enactment of the Gurdwara Act in 1925 by the British Government, a new chapter in the socio-religious and political history of the Sikhs was heralded with great vigour and enthusiasm for social transformation and revival of Sikh values. Its reflection was clearly perceptible in the review of the position of woman in Sikh society. The Gurdwara Act has a provision for the right of vote to Sikh women. This was great achievement for the status of women in society. The Sikhs were the first to grant the right of franchise to woman in religious organisation in the modern times. In the post-partition era, Dr Rajinder Kaur, daughter of Master Tara Singh the famous Akali leader, participated in the Sikh Politics for a number of years, after the death of her father.

The Sikh church has been institutionalised under the august body of Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. Professional and non-professional educational institutions have been established under the patronage of S.G.P.C. Yet not much has been done or planned for the welfare, education and enhancing the status of women in Sikh society. We see no concrete change in the position of women in the Sikh

organisation. What is the role and status of Sikh women? It is a very pertinent question posing challenge to the Sikh community. The Gurus taught gender equality. But after 500 years of the foundation of Sikhism, Sikh women are no better of than their counter parts in any other religion, community or society. How can Sikh woman expect equality and honourable status, when the Sikh community seems unable to distinguish between their own religious tenets and cultural pattern imposed upon them by majority community which dominate the social milieu. Now, women are seeking gender equality and liberation all over the world. The time has come when the pattern of male dominating society has to be reviewed in the Sikh society. We have to heed the advice of Guru Gobind Singh and pave the way for future status of women in our society by our own efforts. The injunction of the Tenth Master has a 'calling' for social reforms:

Take up the sword of Divine knowledge in your hand.

And destroy the darkness of ignorance of mind, from the very roots.⁴⁷

Since the last two decades some change have been seen in the Sikh leadership, taking bold and pragmatic steps to give women their due place in matters of Gurdwara Management and Panthic Affairs. Reservation for women representation has been introduced in the election of Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. A couple of years ago (1999-2003). Bibi Jagir Kaur was appointed President of the S.G.P.C. earlier and is again President SGPC (may be out of constraints of the situation in the Sikh politics) and Sikh women have been allowed to perform services of the priest in the Sikh congregations and public occasions. This is a land mark change in the organisation and management of the central body of the Sikh community. This was a remarkable achievement coinciding with the 300 Tercentenary Celebrations of the birth of the Khalsa. However, in actual practice Sikh women's status has not improved.

The problems of status of women in Sikh society have to be tackled from many angles. There are various issues and questions related to this problem. The time has come where Sikh community must follow strong policy to eradicate evils associated with position of women in society such as dowry, bride burning, suicide of married women, female infanticide, female foeticide, women abuse etc. The

birth of a girl is not treated equally as that of a boy by parents and others. The birth of a boy is rejoiced and the girl is treated indifferently as unwanted burden. The plight of married women at the hands of in-laws and husbands, the divorce etc. are as pertinent issues of the Sikh society as that of the Hindu society in India. The status of even earning girls and married women remains subservient to the male members in the family and the society. Under the present social set up, a girl's entire life is spent in carrying out duties towards parents, husband/children and in-laws. Her condition can not be improved unless consciousness about women abuse and sense of social justice is aroused in society. The Sikh women must try to attain the status given to them by the Sikh Gurus. According to our Sikh scripture, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, she must have equal rights, respect, and dignity and honourable status. But such a situation can only be created if the Sikh community is receptive for social transformation and change its attitude towards women. Gender equality in the real sense can only be attained if we can generate healthy attitude towards women and introduce customs and practices that would make the parents to give equal treatment to the girls and to rejoice the birth of a daughter as like that of a son. If this desired status can be achieved, many problems related with the gender issue such as sex determination test, abortions, dowry, bride burning, women abuse will automatically be eliminated. Therefore, eradication of the root causes of gender discrimination will definitely ensure the pace of ensuring gender equality. In the present social scenario, the Sikh families must learn to treat their daughters and sons equally.

The perception of reality of the present situation of population ratio in Punjab is alarming. The Census Report 2001 has shown considerable decline in sex Ratio in the Punjab. Census Report 2011 has not shown considerable progress in this respect. On account of the practice of female foeticide the ratio of females have lowered down in comparison to that of the males. This factor is bound to bring long term grave consequences on the community as a whole. Such practices are bound to create serious imbalances in the society. On the other hand, in the field of education and academics including professional courses girls are achieving excellence and securing top

positions. The boys are far lagging behind in education but heading towards addiction and crime. It is an unhealthy situation for the growth of a health society.

A couple of years back, a *Hukamnama* was issued by Jathedar Joginder Singh Vedanti, ex-the Jathedar of Sri Akal Takht Sahib, Amritsar (the highest seat of Sikh authority) for putting an end to the immoral and inhuman practice of female foeticide in the light of the *Gurmat* (Sikh ideology). The Sikh community should abide by this edict and stop female foeticide. The need of the hour is a change in the social system. Ours is a value oriented society. Let the Sikhs save the community from such evils and their related grave consequences. Let the Sikhs be guided by the teachings of their Scripture and take every step to restore gender equality and enhance women's status in society. Only then Sikh families would be able to lead a happy life, ensure balanced growth of their children's personality and preservation of the glorious heritage of the Khalsa. The Sikh community can take lead and play the role-model to emancipate woman at the global level.

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Notes and References

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2. ਭੰਡਿ ਜੰਮੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਨਿੰਮੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਮੰਗਣ ਵੀਆਹੁ॥
ਭੰਡਹੁ ਹੋਵੈ ਦੋਸਤੀ ਭੰਡਹੁ ਚਲੈ ਰਾਹੁ॥
ਭੰਡੁ ਮੁਆ ਭੰਡੁ ਭਾਲੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਹੋਵੈ ਬੰਧਾਨ॥
ਸੋ ਕਿਓ ਮੰਦਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਜੰਮਹਿ ਰਾਜਾਨ॥
ਭੰਡਹੁ ਹੀ ਭੰਡੁ ਉਪਜੈ ਭੰਡੈ ਬਾਝੁ ਨ ਕੋਈ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਭੰਡੈ ਬਾਹਰਾ ਏਕੋ ਸਚਾ ਸੋਈ॥ - Asa Di Var, Mahala I, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 473.
3. ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਵਰਤੈ ਏਕੋ ਸੋਈ॥ Rag Ramkali Deccani Onkar, Mahala I, *Ibid.*, p. 931. Also: ਸਭਨਾ ਜੀਆ ਇਕ ਛਾਓ। - *Mohala 1 Sri Rag, Ibid.*, p.83.
4. ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਜੋਤ ਜੋਤਿ ਹੈ ਸੋਈ॥ ਤਿਸ ਦੈ ਚਾਨਣਿ ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਚਾਨਣੁ ਹੋਈ॥ Rag Gauri Deepki, Mahala I, *Ibid.*, p.13.
5. *The Encyclopedia of Sociology*, Frank N. Mcgill, Fitzray, Dearborn Publishers, U.S.A., 1995, Vol.I, p.556; as quoted by Dr. Jagroop Kaur, 'Challenge of Gender Equality in the New Millennium and Guru Granth Sahib' in *Proceedings of Fourth International Conference on Granth Sahib: Challenges and Response in the New Millennium, December 9-*

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6. J.Barrow, *Travels In China*, p.138.
 7. ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਐਸੀ ਵਡਿਆਈ ਪੁਤ੍ਰ ਕਲਤ੍ਰੁ ਵਿਚ ਗਤ ਪਾਈ॥ Rag Dhanaasari, Mahala I, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, p.661.
 8. ਸੋ ਗਿਰਹੀ ਜੋ ਨਿਗੁਹ ਕਰੈ॥ ਜਪੁ ਤਪੁ ਸੰਜਮੁ ਭੀਖਿਆ ਕਰੈ॥ ਪੁਨੰ ਦਾਨ ਕਾ ਕਰੇ ਸਰੀਰੁ ॥ ਸੋ ਗਿਰਹੀ ਗੰਗਾ ਕਾ ਨੀਰੁ॥ Ramkali Ki Var, Mahala I, *Ibid*, p.952.
 9. ਨਾਨਕ ਭੰਡੈ ਬਾਹਰਾ ਏਕੋ ਸਚਾ ਸੋਇ - Rag Asa, Mahala I, *Ibid*, p.473.
 10. *Manusmriti*, Punjabi Translation, Languages Deptt., Punjabi University, Patiala, 1989, p. 108.
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 12. Robert O' Ballou, *The Portable World Bible*, Pub. Penguines Books, 1976, pp. 237-241.
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 14. ਚੰਨਾ ਹੋਈਆ ਬੋਧੀਆ ਪੁਰਖ ਹੋਏ ਸਈਆਦ॥ ਸੀਲ ਸੰਜਮੁ ਸੁਚ ਭੰਨੀ ਖਾਣਾ ਖਾਜੁ ਆਹਾਰੁ॥ - Rag Asa, Mahala I, *Ibid*, p.1243.
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 17. Sarup Dass Bhalla, *Mehima Prakash* (1830BK, 1773AD), Pub. Bhasha Vibhag, Punjab, Patiala, 1971, p.49.
 18. ਧਨ ਪਿਰੁ ਏਹਿ ਨ ਆਖੀਅਨਿ ਬਹਨ ਇਕਠੇ ਹੋਏ॥ ਏਕ ਜੋਤਿ ਦੁਈ ਮੂਰਤੀ ਧਨ ਪਿਰੁ ਕਹੀਐ ਸੋਇ॥ - Rag Suhi, Mahala 3, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* p. 788.
 19. ਸਤੀਆ ਏਹਿ ਨ ਆਖੀਅਨਿ ਜੋ ਮਤੀਆ ਲਗਿ ਜੰਲਨਿ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਤੀਆ ਜਾਣੀਅਨਿ ਜਿ ਬਿਰਹੇ ਚੋਟ ਮੋਰਨਿ॥ - Salok Var Rag Suhi Ki, Mahala 3, *Ibid*, p.787.
 20. Sarup Dass Bhalla relates the story of the visit of Raja of Haripur State along with Rani. The Raja and Rani were escorted to Goindwal by Guru Amar Das' nephew Sawan Mall, but no laxity was shown to the royal couple in the restriction of observing the *Purdah* custom for attending the congregation at Guru's *Darbar*. See *Mahima Prakash*, p.113.
 21. ਇਸਤਰੀ ਪੁਰਖ ਹੋਇ ਕੈ ਕਿਆ ਓਇ ਕਰਮ ਕਮਾਹੀ॥ ਨਾਨਾ ਰੂਪ ਸਦਾ ਹਰਿ ਤੇਰੇ ਤੁਝ ਹੀ ਮਹਿ ਸਮਾਹਿ॥ Gauri Bairagani, Mahala 3, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p.162.
 22. There is a variation in recording the number of *Manjis*. According to Sarup Dass Bhalla (*Mahima Prakash, Vartak*) and Kahan Singh Nabha (*Gur Shabad Ratnakar Mahankosh*, Encyclopaedia of Sikh Literature, Bhasha Vibhag Punjab Patial, 1978, pp. 847-848 there were 22 *Manjis*. However, the list displayed in the Gurudwara Haveli Sahib, Goindwal the number of *Manjis* recorded is 21.
 23. In the list of the *Manjis* displayed in the Gurdwara Haveli Sahib, Goindwal names of two ladies i.e. Mai Sewan (Kabul) and Mai Bhago (Kashmir) have been recorded.
 24. Ganda Singh (Ed.). *Hukamname*, Pub. Punjabi University Patiala, 1967.
 25. ਏਕ ਨਾਰੀ ਜਤੀ ਹੋਇ ਪਰਨਾਰੀ ਧੀ ਭੈਨ ਵਖਾਣੈ - *Varan Bhai Gurdas*, Ed. Giani Hazara Singh

- and Bhai Veer Singh, Pub. Khalsa Samachar, Amritsar, 1972, *Var* 6, *Pauri* 8, p.109.
26. Sarup Dass Bhalla, *Mahima Prakash*, pp. 240-43.
 27. Fauja Singh, 'Guru Amar Dass Life And Thought', in *The Punjab Past And Present*, Vol. XIII-II, October 1979, Serial No. 26, Punjabi University, Patiala, p. 314.
 28. ਏਕੁ ਪਿਤਾ ਏਕਸ ਕੇ ਹਮ ਬਾਰਕਿ ਤੂ ਮੇਰਾ ਗੁਰ ਹਾਈ - Mahala 5, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p.611.
 29. Madan Jit Kaur, *The Golden Temple Past And Present*, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, Second Edition, 2004, pp. 219-221. See also, Santokh Singh, *Gurpratap Suraj Granth*, Clarendon Press, London, 1906, 6 Vols. Reprinted by Chand and Co. Delhi, 1963, A.D. 1843, Printed by Khalsa Samachar Amritsar 1926-34 in 14 Volumes, Reprinted by Bhasha Vibhag Punjab, Patiala, 1992, pp. 2590, 2591 and 2739; Macauliffe. M.A, *Sikh Religion*, Vol. IV, p.44. Also *Report Sri Darbar Sahib* (Pbi), p.290 and Kahan Singh Nabha, *Gurshabad Ratnakar Mahankosh*, Encyclopaedia of Sikh Literature, p.354.
 30. See Ganda Singh, (ed); *Hukamname*, Pub. Punjabi University, Patiala, 1967. Nos. 30 and 31, Pub. Punjabi University, Patiala, 1967.
 31. For details of the episode see Madan Jit Kaur, *Guru Gobind Singh: Historical And Ideological Perspective*, Pub. Unistar Books Pvt. Ltd., Chandigarh 2007, p. 14.
 32. It is apparently clear from various versions of *Rahitnamas*. Besides, the incorporation of *Charitropakhayan* in the *Dasam Granth* indicates to this injunction. Perhaps *Charitropakhayan* was selected in the collection of various texts in the *Dasam Granth* for the reason that it warns to the fighting class (soldiers) to be aware of the wicked designs of the vile women (of enemy side). The attribution of the authorship of *Charitropakhayan* is a controversial question. But it is certain that the core idea of this work has been derived from (apparently translation of ancient Sanskrit text Vatsanyas' *Kamasutra*, Vedic period) and also some portion from Kalhan's *Rajtarangni*, 12th Century History of Kashmir) and was prepared by some court poet of Guru Gobind Singh.
 33. Kirpal Singh, *Badsbah Darvesh Guru Gobind Singh*, Pub. Punjabi University, Patiala, 1999, p. 23.
 34. *Ibid.*
 35. *Ibid.*
 36. For detailed study see Madan jit Kaur, *The Golden Temple Past And Present*, 2nd Edition, Pub. Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 2004, pp. 35-54; Sewa Singh, *Shahid Bilas (Bhai Mani Singh)*. Ed. Giani Garja Singh, Pub. Punjabi Sahitya Academy, Ludhiana, 1961, pp. 183-184; Ganda Singh, *Tawarikh Amritsar Ke Chand Makbiza* (Urdu), Sikh History Society, Patiala and Amritsar, 1953, p. 96.
 37. Ganda Singh, *Hukamname*, see *Hukamnamas* of Mata Sundari, Nos. 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 76, 79 and 80. Total 9.
 37. Kesar Singh Chibbar, *Bansavalinama Dasan Patshabian ka* (A.D. 1769), edited by Ratan Singh Jaggi, printed in *Parakh*, Research Bulletin of Punjab University, Chandigarh, Vol.2, 1972, p.134.
 38. *Ibid.*, pp. 182-186. The author is confused about the role of Mata Sundari and Sahib Devan as regards sequence of events and chronology.
 39. Ganda Singh, *Hukamname*, see *Hukamnamas* of Mata Sahib Devi, Nos. 74, 75, 77,

- 78, 81, 82, 83, 84 and 85. Total 9.
40. H.P. Gupta 'Impact of the Sikhs on Delhi 1765–1787' in *Proceedings of the Punjab History Conference, Thirteenth Session, March, 1979*, Pub. Punjabi University, Patiala, p. 133. For detailed study see, Madan Jit Kaur, 'Political Relations of the Sikhs with the Rohillas from 1764–1794 A. D. with special reference to the House of Najib-Ud-Daulah' in *Journal of Sikh Studies, Vol. X, No.2, August 1983*, Pub. Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, pp.99–100.
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 42. Shamsheer Singh Ashok (ed.) *Guru Khalse de Rabitname* (unpublished Manuscript), Sikh Reference Library, Sikh History Research Board, Golden Temple Complex, Amritsar, 1979. Also Piara Singh Padam, *Rabitname*, Pub. Singh Brothers, Amritsar, Sixth edition, 1995.
 43. Madan Jit Kaur, *Guru Gobind Singh: Historical And Ideological Perspective*, Pub. Unistar Books Pvt. Ltd. Chandigarh, 2007, pp.28, f.n. 7 and p.35.
 44. Emperor Bahadur Shah issued order for the wholesale extermination of the Sikhs (*Khalsa*). The Sikhs were declared outlaws to be given no shelter, but to be killed at sight wherever found. This drastic policy was also reinforced vigorously by succeeding Mughal Emperor Farukh-Siyyar (1713–1719) and the governor of Punjab Zakaria Khan till the invasion of Nadir Shah (1739 A.D.).
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 45. ਜਿੰਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਸਿੰਘਾ ਸਿੰਘਣੀਆਂ ਨੇ ਧਰਮ ਹੇਤ ਸੀਸ ਦਿਤੇ, ਬੰਦ ਬੰਦ ਕਟਾਏ ਖੋਪਰੀਆਂ ਲੁਹਾਈਆਂ,
ਚਰਖੜੀਆਂ ਤੇ ਚੜ੍ਹੇ ਆਰਿਆਂ ਨਾਲ ਚਿਰਾਏ ਗਏ। ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਸੇਵਾ ਲਈ ਕੁਰਬਾਨੀਆਂ ਕੀਤੀਆਂ
ਧਰਮ ਨਹੀਂ ਹਾਰਿਆ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਕੇਸਾ ਸੁਆਸਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਨਿਬਾਹੀ ਤਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਕਮਾਈ ਦਾ ਧਿਆਨ ਧਰਕੇ ਖਾਲਸਾ
ਜੀ! ਬੋਲੋ ਜੀ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ! - *Ardas*.
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 47. Kamal Jit Kaur, 'Sikh Women', in *Fundamental Issues In Sikhism*, ed. Kharak Singh, Mansukhani and Jasbir Singh Mann. Pub. Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh, 1992, p. 102.
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THE FIRST GURDWARA, A PLACE OF SIKH WORSHIP, IN NORTH AMERICA

DR (BHAI) HARBANS LAL*

A new Gurdwara is always a milestone of a Sikh community anywhere. It signifies the presence of the Sikh community in that area. Over a century ago, the pioneering Sikhs built their first Gurdwara in North America in the city of Golden.

Golden is a town in southeastern British Columbia, Canada, located 262 kilometers west of Calgary, Alberta, and 713 kilometers east of Vancouver.

As the birth of Sikhism lies thousands of miles away from North America, the year 1890 acquired a special significance in the annals of Sikh history in North America. This year a gurdwara was established first time in North America.

In 1991, my wife Amrita and I availed the opportunity to celebrate the 101st Anniversary of the first Sikh Gurdwara in the American continent.

According to the book, *Kinbasket Country: The Story of Golden and the Columbia Valley*, Published by The Golden & District Historical Society, Golden, BC, Canada (1972), a Sikh Temple was built in Golden, in 1890. The Golden Society extracted evidence for this Gurdwara from the annals of Golden's history available with the city municipality and other depositories.

In a more recent book, *Golden Memories*, published in 1982, there are several references to the ancient Sikh population of Golden

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city, including the 1890 Gurdwara. Because of this discovery, the Heritage Conservation Branch of British Columbia, Ministry of Culture, considered installing a historical plaque in the City of Golden to commemorate the first Gurdwara founded in North America.

Golden has been chosen as one of 15 locations in the province to receive a special recognition status of historical importance to the South Asian Canadian community.

There is no other mention of any Gurdwara building in North America before 1890. The famous Ross Road Gurdwara of Vancouver that has been the seat of major Sikh activities for a century is believed to have been built eighteen years later, in 1908.

My wife Amrita and I visited the city of Golden with a population of around 3600 at the time of our visit. This was the year of the 101st celebration of the Golden Gurdwara.

The city of Golden is located on the Trans-Canada Highway at the Columbia and Kicking Horse rivers' confluence. Coming from the west, it is a gateway to Glacier National Park that leads to Yoho, Banff, and Jasper National Parks of the Canadian Rocky Mountains. It serves as a great base for exploring hiking trails, world-class skiing, waterfalls, lakes, and various heritage sites. These were the most heavenly places that we ever visited.

Driving around a few miles from Golden, we instantaneously remembered the Hem Kund valley described in Bachiter Natak's story of Guru Gobind Singh's time. Hem Kund Sahib, formally known as Gurudwara Sri Hemkund Sahib Ji, is a Sikh place of worship and pilgrimage site in Himalaya's Chamoli district, Uttarakhand, India. This is because, around Golden, there are two lakes of clear blue water surrounded by seven peaks of many glaciers that inhabit this area. Because of these peaks, it is not unusual for a devout Sikh visitor to have a vision of hem kund right there. The site is so beautiful that a picture of one of these lakes was chosen as an emblem printed on a \$20 note of Canadian currency.

We found references to Sikhs and the first Gurdwara in many records of Golden City. Besides, the coming of Sikhs to this town and they're establishing the Gurdwara there generated many stories

vividly remembered by many old-timers living in that city.

The last resident who personally knew the first contingent of Sikhs coming to Golden had deceased only a few years earlier. Before her death, she had related many stories of the pioneer Sikhs of that city to many Sikh friends and visitors and the media reporters.

There are records of Sikh patients in the local hospital. There were records of Sikh dealings with local businesses. Sikh skills in the lumber industry are well known to every citizen of Golden.

Sikhs, around 45 in number, are said to have come to this lumber mill town in 1880. Some traveled via mountainous roads that were laden with snow in winter and were hazardous to travel. Others reached this city by boats rowing through the Columbia River.

Hari Singh, who fought in the First World War as a soldier in Royal Canadian Army in Europe, moved to this town in 1902. He was wounded in the war and received treatment in a Golden City hospital.

The Golden inhabitants remembered Hari Singh for his cheerful personality and also for his silk turban. His turban was often found shortened at the laundry where Hari Singh often visited to get his turban cleaned. The laundry owner apparently could not resist keeping a piece of the precious silk material every time he had an opportunity to do so. The Golden Star newspaper often recorded stories about Sikh old-timers. According to available records, the local hospital treated the first Sikh patient in 1906.

On July 10, 1991, the Star published an article by Manmohan Singh Minhas in commemoration of the role played by Sikhs in the development and economy of Golden City. Sardar Minhas, a mechanical engineer, and a successful entrepreneur wrote a book on the history of the Sikh Canadians of the Golden city.

During our visit, the city residents told us that the original Gurdwara was built on land allotted by The Columbia River Lumber Co. It was built among bunkhouses that Sikhs used for their living quarters. A wooden building housed the Gurdwara that displayed the Sikh emblem, and Nishan Sahib, both installed on the gurdwara exterior. The inside of the gurdwara building was known to be lavishly decorated

with plush carpets and rugs where the congregation sat and where Sri Guru Granth Sahib installed.

In the beginning, the congregation or Sangat was all-male as the first Sikh woman entered Golden City only in 1923. Piara Singh, son of Herdit Singh, was the first Sikh Canadian born in the Golden Hospital nearly a century ago on August 26, 1924.

In the Golden Gurdwara of 1890, the Sunday service was held regularly and was open to everyone. The city residents often came to the service to join Sikhs Canadians in prayer. The Canadian neighbors frequently met their Sikh friends for an afternoon chai at the community kitchen, langer. True to the Sikh traditions, the Gurdwara served as a community center for everyone in need of such a place.

As misfortune was to have it in 1927, a massive fire broke out, and it burned the Columbia River Lumber Co and the original Gurdwara building, both to ashes. A few years earlier, the Sikhs Canadians had built a co-operative sawmill to sustain their employment, but it too had to be closed as it could not survive the competition.

Thus, the Sikhs lost their livelihood and were forced to leave this town searching for employment elsewhere. They took their sacred book, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, along with them. The Gurdwara land reverted to the city, and the building without Guru Granth Sahib ultimately came down.

The current Sikh era in Golden began in 1962 when Gurdial Singh Dhami moved to town. He still lived in Golden when we visited. Then, there were 67 Sikh families residing in Golden City and another eight Sikh families living in the surrounding areas.

In 1978, Ms. Wixen, an old-timer, coaxed local Sikhs to either restore the historical Gurdwara or build another to replace it. He offered his help.

Within a short time, the community collected nearly \$100,000 in donations; most neighbors, irrespective of their religious affiliation, contributed. The Government of British Columbia granted \$15,000 for the Gurdwara building. The state funds came from the lottery account. The Honorable Lames R. Chabot, Minister of Lands and Parks, helped a lot. Local lumber companies donated the needed lumber.

The Sikh employees worked overtime in exchange for the lumber they needed for the gurdwara building, and labor was donated by local Sikhs and Sikhs from neighboring areas. The non-Sikh Golden residents also were active participants in the construction project.

Thus, the new building to house the Gurdwara was entirely all community effort.

The Anniversary was celebrated in the new Gurdwara building that stood at 13th Street and 6th Avenue and was spotted easily for its tall Nishan Sahib. It was a two-story building, the upper level for the service and the lower one to house the langer facilities and the residential units.

The new Gurdwara building opened in 1981, and Sardar Shiv Singh Jaswal volunteered to perform duties of a granthi at no remuneration. During our visit to the Golden City, Jaswal Singh had us as his guest. He retired from his profession to continue to perform the Gurdwara services until 1984, when the new granthi, Giani Daljit Singh of New Delhi, was installed. Then the leading service was held every Sunday, but a mini service was held daily. The Golden Sikh Cultural Society was found to manage the Gurdwara. Sardar Balhar Singh of Evan Forest Products was serving as the president in 1991.

The Golden city is now a tourist attraction, and many visitors come to pay homage to the Gurdwara every year. Sikh congregations traveling between Vancouver and Calgary pass through this city. They invariably stop here. On the day of our visit to Golden in 1991, a busload of Sikh children came from Vancouver. They rested there and enjoyed their meals in the langar of the Gurdwara. They were en route to their summer camp in Banf National Park, but their bus broke down near this town.

The Society and the local Sikhs welcome every visitor and provide well-known Sikh hospitality to those dropping in on their way to Calgary or Vancouver or those who visit the Canadian Rockies and the Cascade Mountains for vacation.

WE OURSELVES ARE DESTROYING OUR MARYADA

COL (RETD) AVTAR SINGH*

It was Aug 1978 when I was posted to Delhi at Army Headquarters on Promotion as a Colonel. During those days, we were following the Georgian Calendar and days of Guru Purabs were fixed. I clearly recollect, 04 June as *Shabeedi Divas* of Guru Arjan Dev, 24 November as *Shabeedi Purab* of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib, 01 September as first *Parkash Purab* of Guru Granth Sahib ji etc.

Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib's *Shabeedi Purab* was being celebrated in the open ground opposite Delhi Railway Station, also called "Katalgat Sikhan" as per S. Kapur Singh. I have a habit of sitting near the stage and was sitting about 75 yards away from it. *Ragi Jatha* was singing the hymns and all were listening to it. Suddenly there was a commotion. Half the people sitting on the stage suddenly left it.

They had gone to receive S. Buta Singh, who was then the Home Minister. As soon he came on the stage, on a signal from the Manager, Ragi Singhs finished recitation of the *shabad* quickly and the *shabad*, *Tablamala* did Dhrum Dhrum three times and they left the stage immediately.

A resolution was read which was not clear due to commotion and noise generated by everyone on the stage wanted to greet and shake hands with the Minister. A *Jaikara* went up giving approval to the resolution. A man sitting next to me called out the second *Jaikara*. I asked the man, Sardar Sahib, "You have granted approval to which proposal." I do not know was the response. I was asked to call out the second *Jaikara*. By then third *Jaikara* was in progress. He pointed out to me the persons who had been nominated to call out the fourth and

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Fifth *Jaikaras*.

Next day in the news papers it was reported, heading *Jaikarian the Goonj* which following resolutions were adopted by the *sangat*.

Way back home, I was wondering what we have done to ourselves. A process (Maryada) which involved:

1. Enunciating the proposal clearly.
2. Explaining why has it become necessary, giving its complete history and background.
3. Deliberating on it, from all angles.
4. Getting a consensus on the proposal
5. Finally its approval.

Gurdwara Management has now become subservient to the political Masters. Politics means deceit and falsehood where as Dharam is Truth and truthful behaviour. *Miri* has taken over the *Piri*.

ਗੁਰੂ ਗੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਤੇ ਅੱਜ ਦਾ ਯੁਗ

ਸਰਬਜੋਤ ਕੌਰ*

ਆਧੁਨਿਕ ਯੁਗ ਵਿਗਿਆਨ ਦਾ ਯੁਗ ਵਿਗਿਆਨ ਦਾ ਯੁਗ ਅਖਵਾਉਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਪਰੰਪਰਾਗਤ ਸਭਿਆਚਾਰ ਵਿਚ ਨਵੀਆਂ ਵਿਗਿਆਨਕ ਤੇ ਤਕਨੀਕੀ ਖੋਜਾਂ ਦੇ ਆਧਾਰ ਤੇ ਜੋ ਤਬਦੀਲੀ ਆ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ ਜਾਂ ਉੱਨਤ ਦੇਸ਼ਾਂ ਦੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਵਿਚ ਆਉਣ ਨਾਲ ਪੱਛਮੀ ਸਭਿਅਤਾ ਦਾ ਜੋ ਸੰਚਾਰ ਤੀਸਰੀ ਦੁਨੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਦੇਸ਼ਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਹੋ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਆਧੁਨਿਕਤਾ ਕਹਿ ਲਿਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਆਧੁਨਿਕਤਾ ਦਾ ਇਹ ਇਕ ਅਤਿ ਵਿਸ਼ਾਲ ਸੰਕਲਪ ਹੈ ਜਿਸ ਵਿਚ ਹਰ ਕਿਸਮ ਦੇ ਪਰਿਵਰਤਨ ਨੂੰ ਸ਼ਮਲ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਪਰਿਵਰਤਨ ਹਰ ਪੱਧਰ, ਸਮਾਜਿਕ, ਆਰਥਿਕ, ਰਾਜਨੀਤਕ ਤੇ ਸਭਿਆਚਾਰਕ, ਤੇ ਹੋ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਪਰੰਤੂ ਇਕ ਗੱਲ ਪ੍ਰਤੱਖ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਪਰਿਵਰਤਨ ਚਾਹੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਵੀ ਸਤਹ ਤੇ ਹੋਵੇ ਉਸ ਦਾ ਸਬੰਧ ਸਿੱਧੇ ਤੌਰ ਤੇ ਆਮ ਮਨੁਖ ਨਾਲ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਸੇ ਲਈ ਆਧੁਨਿਕ ਯੁਗ ਵਿਚ ਮਨੁਖ ਦੀ ਹਰ ਕ੍ਰਿਤ ਵਿਚ ਮਨੁਖ ਨੂੰ ਹੀ ਕੇਂਦਰ ਬਿੰਦੂ ਬਣਾਇਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਹਰ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਰ ਦੇ ਸਾਹਿਤ ਵਿਚ ਆਮ ਮਨੁਖ ਦੀ ਦਾਸਤਾਨ ਹੀ ਕਹੀ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ। ਆਧੁਨਿਕ ਸਾਹਿਤ ਦੇ ਅਧਿਐਨ ਤੋਂ ਇਕ ਗੱਲ ਹੋਰ ਉਭਰ ਕੇ ਸਾਹਮਣੇ ਆਉਂਦੀ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਅੱਜ ਦਾ ਮਨੁਖ ਅੰਦਰੋਂ ਟੁਟ ਚੁਕਾ ਹੈ। ਕੇਵਲ ਟੁਟਿਆ ਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਸਗੋਂ ਉਹ ਰਿਸ਼ਤਿਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਕਦਰਾਂ ਕੀਮਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਟੁਟਦਿਆਂ ਮਹਿਸੂਸ ਵੀ ਕਰ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਭਰੇ ਸਮਾਜ ਵਿਚ ਰਹਿੰਦਿਆਂ ਵੀ ਉਹ ਬੇਵੱਸ, ਇਕੱਲਾ, ਬੇਗਾਨਾ, ਮਹਿਸੂਸ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਸੇ ਲਈ ਅਜੋਕੇ ਮਨੁਖ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਝਣ ਲਈ ਅੱਜ ਦੇ ਲੇਖਕ ਮਨੋਵਿਗਿਆਨਕ ਅੰਤਰ-ਦ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟੀਆਂ ਦਾ ਸਹਾਰਾ ਲੈਂਦੇ ਹਨ।

ਅੱਜ ਸਰਮਾਏਦਾਰੀ ਕਦਰਾਂ ਕੀਮਤਾਂ ਦਾ ਬੋਲ ਬਾਲਾ ਹੈ। ਸਰਮਾਏਦਾਰੀ ਨਿਜ਼ਾਮ ਵਿਚ ਇਕ ਅਜਿਹੇ ਸਮਾਜ ਦੀ ਉਸਾਰੀ ਹੋ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ ਜਿਥੇ ਧਰਮ, ਨਸਲ, ਜਾਤਪਾਤ ਅਤੇ ਰੰਗ ਦੇ ਅਧਾਰ ਤੇ ਮਨੁਖ ਵਿਚ ਦੀਵਾਰਾਂ ਖੜ੍ਹੀਆਂ ਕੀਤੀਆਂ ਜਾ ਰਹੀਆਂ ਹਨ। ਮਨੁਖ ਹੱਥੋਂ ਮਨੁਖ ਦੀ ਬੜੀ ਬੇਰਹਿਮੀ ਨਾਲ ਲੁਟ ਹੋ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ। ਗਰੀਬ, ਕਿਰਤੀ ਅਤੇ ਲਿਤਾੜੇ ਹੋਏ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਹੱਕ ਦੇਣ ਦੀ ਥਾਂ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਖੂਨ ਦਾ ਆਖਰੀ ਕਤਰਾ ਤਕ ਨਿਚੋੜਨ ਤੋਂ ਵੀ ਲੁਟੇਰਾ ਵਰਗ ਝਿਜਕ ਨਹੀਂ ਰਿਹਾ। ਮਜ਼੍ਹਬ, ਨਸਲ, ਕੌਮ, ਸਰਹੱਦ ਦੇ ਨਾਂ ਤੇ ਸੁਚੇਤ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਕਤਲ ਕਰਵਾਏ ਜਾ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ। ਮਨੁਖ ਇਕ ਦੂਜੇ ਤੋਂ ਅੱਗੇ ਲੰਘਣ ਦੀ ਅੰਨ੍ਹੀ ਦੌੜ ਵਿਚ ਬਹੁਤ ਬੁਰੀ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਜਕੜਿਆ ਨਜ਼ਰ ਆ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਵੱਧ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਧ ਮਾਇਆ ਜੋੜਨ, ਜੀਵਨ ਦੀਆਂ ਸਹੂਲਤਾਂ ਤੇ ਐਸ਼ੋ ਇਸ਼ਰਤ ਦਾ ਸਮਾਨ ਇਕੱਠਾ ਕਰਨਾ ਉਸ ਦਾ ਮੂਲ ਮੰਤਵ ਬਣ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ। ਆਪਣੀ ਅਤੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਪਰਿਵਾਰ ਦੀ ਸੁਰੱਖਿਆ ਨਿਸਚਿਤ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਉਹ ਪੱਖਾਂ ਭਾਰ

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ਹੋਇਆ ਬੈਠਾ ਹੈ। ਆਪਣੇ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਵੱਧ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਧ ਵਿਦਿਆ ਦਿਵਾ ਕੇ ਡਾਕਟਰ, ਇੰਜੀਨੀਅਰ ਆਦਿ ਬਣਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਤਰਲੇ ਮੱਛੀ ਹੋਇਆ ਪਿਆ ਹੈ। ਆਸ ਪੂਰੀ ਨਾ ਹੋਣ ਤੇ ਦੁਖੀ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਸੇ ਲਈ ਅੱਜ ਦੇ ਜੀਵਨ ਵਿਚ ਭਟਕਣਾ ਹੈ, ਚਿੰਤਾ ਹੈ। ਮਨ ਦਾ ਟਿਕਾਉ ਖਤਮ ਹੋ ਚੁਕਾ ਹੈ। ਮਨ ਰੋਗੀ ਹੋ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ। ਮਨੁੱਖ ਖਾਣ ਪੀਣ, ਨੱਚਣ-ਟੱਪਣ, ਦੇ ਜਸ਼ਨਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਖੁਸ਼ੀ ਲੱਭਣੀ ਚਾਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਪਰ ਇਸ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਹਾਸਲ ਹੋਣ ਵਾਲੀ ਖੁਸ਼ੀ ਛਿੰਨ ਭੰਗਰੀ ਹੀ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਹੈ। ਕੁਝ ਘੜੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਖੁਸ਼ੀ ਪਿਛੇ ਉਹ ਆਪਣੀ ਸਰੀਰਕ ਤੇ ਮਾਨਸਿਕ ਉਰਜਾ ਨੂੰ ਰਸਾਂ-ਕਸਾਂ ਦੇ ਚੱਕਰ ਵਿਚ ਉਲਝਾ ਕੇ ਅਜਾਈਂ ਗੁਆ ਬੈਠਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਵੇਂ ਹੀ ਫੈਸ਼ਨਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਨਸ਼ਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਵਹਿਣ ਵਿਚ ਵਹਿ ਰਹੀ ਸਾਡੀ ਨਵੀਂ ਪੀੜ੍ਹੀ ਕੁਝ ਆਪਣੀਆਂ ਤੇ ਕੁਝ ਆਪਣੀ ਨਿਗਰਾਨ ਪੀੜ੍ਹੀ ਦੀਆਂ ਗਲਤੀਆਂ ਕਰਕੇ ਮਨ ਦੀ ਬਹੁਤ ਥੋੜ੍ਹੀ ਚਿੜੀ ਕਾਰਨ ਤਨ, ਮਨ, ਧਨ ਸਭ ਕੁਝ ਬਰਬਾਦ ਕਰਨ ਤੇ ਤੁਲੀ ਹੋਈ ਹੈ।

ਇਕ ਪਾਸੇ ਚਰਮ ਖੁਸ਼ੀਆਂ ਵਲ ਉਲਾਰ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਦੂਜੇ ਰਾਜਨੀਤਕ ਅਤੇ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਖੇਤਰ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਸਮਤੋਲ ਘੱਟ ਹੀ ਨਜ਼ਰ ਆ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਧਰਮ ਨੂੰ ਮਾਨਵਤਾ ਦੀਆਂ ਖੁਸ਼ੀਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਖੇਡਾਂ ਦਾ ਜ਼ਾਮਨ ਹੋਣਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ ਪਰ ਅਜੋਕੇ ਸਮੇਂ ਵਿਚ ਤੋਤਾ ਰਟਨ, ਸੰਪਟ ਪਾਠਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਲੰਮੀਆਂ ਤੇ ਅਮੁਕ ਲੜੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਕਰਮ ਕਾਂਡ ਨੂੰ ਧਰਮ ਵਜੋਂ ਉਭਾਰ ਕੇ ਧਰਮ ਵਜੋਂ ਇਕ ਰੁਖੀ ਜਿਹੀ ਚੀਜ਼ ਬਣਾ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ ਜਿਸ ਦੇ ਲਾਗੇ ਆਉਣ ਤੋਂ ਮਨੁੱਖ ਘਬਰਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਅਸੀਂ ਸਭ ਜਾਣਦੇ ਹਾਂ ਕਿ ਧਰਮ ਦਾ ਮੂਲ ਸਬੰਧਨ ਮਨੁੱਖ ਮਾਤਰ ਨੂੰ ਹੀ ਹੈ। ਧਰਮ ਦਾ ਮੂਲ ਆਸ਼ਾ ਸਬੰਧਨ ਮਨੁੱਖ ਮਾਤਰ ਨੂੰ ਹੀ ਹੈ। ਧਰਮ ਦਾ ਮੂਲ ਆਸ਼ਾ ਮਨੁੱਖ ਨੂੰ ਵਰਤਮਾਨ ਨੀਵੀਂ ਦਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਕੱਢ ਉੱਚੀ ਸੁਆਰਥ ਦਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਲੈ ਜਾਣਾ ਹੈ। ਧਰਮ ਮਨੁੱਖੀ ਜੀਵਨ ਦਾ ਸਦੀਵੀ ਤੇ ਅਵਿਨਾਸ਼ੀ ਪੱਖ ਹੈ ਪਰ ਜਦੋਂ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ ਠੇਕੇਦਾਰ ਭੇਖੀ ਸੰਤ ਬਣ ਕੇ ਮਾਨਵਤਾ ਨੂੰ ਲੁਟ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ ਤਾਂ ਉਹੀ ਸਮਾਂ ਅੱਖਾਂ ਅੱਗੇ ਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਜੋ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਵੇਲੇ ਸੀ। ਧਰਮ ਕੇਵਲ ਧਨ ਕਮਾਉਣ ਦਾ ਸਾਧਨ ਬਣ ਕੇ ਰਹਿ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ। ਰਾਜਸੀ ਖੇਤਰ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਸਾਡੇ ਰਾਜਨੀਤਕ ਨੇਤਾ ਜੋ ਕਰ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ, ਕੁਰਸੀ ਯੁਧ ਵਿਚ ਜਿਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਜਨਤਾ ਨੂੰ ਰੋਲਿਆ ਜਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ ਉਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਕੁਝ ਕਹਿਣ ਤੋਂ ਬਿਨਾਂ ਹੀ ਬਹੁਤ ਕੁਝ ਕਿਹਾ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ। ਸ੍ਰ. ਕਪੂਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਇਕ ਥਾਂ ਲਿਖਦੇ ਹਨ ਕਿ ਛੋਟੇ ਹੁੰਦਿਆਂ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੇ ਜਦੋਂ ਵੀ ਕਦੀ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਦੀਆਂ ਇਹ ਤੁਕਾਂ 'ਕਲਿ ਕਾਤੀ ਰਾਜੇ ਕਾਸਾਈ ਧਰਮੁ ਪੰਖ ਕਰਿ ਉਡਰਿਆ' ਪੜ੍ਹਨੀਆਂ ਤਾਂ ਮਨ ਵਿਚ ਕਈ ਵਾਰ ਇਹ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੋਣਾ ਕਿ ਕੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਵੇਲੇ ਰਾਜੇ ਸੱਚਮੁਚ ਹੀ ਕਸਾਈ ਸਨ? ਕੀ ਉਹ ਸੱਚਮੁਚ ਹੀ ਕਲ ਰੂਪੀ ਛੁਰੀ ਨਾਲ ਪਰਜਾ ਨੂੰ ਕੁਹ ਰਹੇ ਸਨ? ਜਾਂ ਫਿਰ ਇਹ ਕੇਵਲ ਪ੍ਰਤੀਕਾਤਮਕ ਗੱਲ ਕੀਤੀ ਗਈ ਹੈ। ਬਾਅਦ ਵਿਚ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਦੇ ਆਲੋਚਨਾਤਮਿਕ ਅਧਿਐਨ ਨੇ ਆਪ ਦੇ ਸਾਰੇ ਸੰਕੇ ਦੂਰ ਕਰ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਪਰ ਜਿਸ ਚੀਜ਼ ਨੇ ਇਸ ਗੱਲ ਨੂੰ ਮੰਨਣ ਲਈ ਆਪ ਨੂੰ ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਵਧੇਰੇ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਵਿਤ ਕੀਤਾ ਉਹ ਸੀ ਆਪ ਦੀ ਮਿਸਰ ਯਾਤਰਾ। ਉਥੇ ਆਪ ਨੇ ਜਦੋਂ ਮੁਰਦਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਸੰਭਾਲ ਕੇ ਰੱਖਦਿਆਂ ਦੇਖਿਆ ਤਾਂ ਮਨ ਵਿਚ ਬੜੀ ਅਸਚਰਜਤਾ ਹੋਈ। ਇਸ ਅਸਚਰਜਤਾ ਨੇ ਆਪ ਨੂੰ ਮਿਸਰ ਦੀ ਸਭਿਅਤਾ ਬਾਰੇ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਲਈ ਪ੍ਰੇਰਿਆ। ਲੇਖ ਪੱਤਰ ਫਰੋਲਦਿਆਂ ਆਪ ਦੇ ਹੱਥ ਇਕ ਐਸੀ ਲਿਖਤ ਲੱਗੀ ਜੋ ਈਸਵੀ ਸੰਮਤ ਤੋਂ 3300 ਵਰ੍ਹੇ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਦੀ ਸੀ। ਉਸ ਵਿਚ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਸੀ:

ਅੱਜ ਰਾਜੇ ਕਸਾਈ ਹੋ ਗਏ ਹਨ ਜੋ ਛੁਰੀ ਨਾਲ ਪਰਜਾ ਨੂੰ ਕੋਹ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ, ਸਾਰੇ ਪਾਸੇ

ਹਨੇਰਾ ਛਾਇਆ ਹੋਇਆ ਹੈ।

Blackenedness has descended on human hearts. Kings' minions are like butchers. The friends are treacherous. The son is disobedient and wife disloyal.

ਸ੍ਰ. ਕਪੂਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਦਾ ਲੇਖ ਪੜ੍ਹ ਕੇ ਮਨ ਵਿਚ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਆਉਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਜੇ ਹਾਲਾਤ 3300 ਈ. ਪੂਰਵ ਮਿਸਰ ਵਿਚ ਸਨ, ਜੇ ਹਾਲਾਤ 545 ਸਾਲ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਵੇਲੇ ਸਨ ਕੀ ਓਹੀ ਹਾਲਾਤ ਅੱਜ ਵੀ ਤਾਂ ਨਹੀਂ? ਥੋੜ੍ਹਾ ਜਿਹਾ ਗੰਭੀਰ ਹੋ ਕੇ ਸੋਚੀਏ ਤਾਂ ਜੁਆਬ 'ਹਾਂ' ਵਿਚ ਮਿਲਦਾ ਹੈ। ਹਰ ਰੋਜ਼ ਦੀਆਂ ਖਬਰਾਂ-ਕਦੀ ਪੁਤਰ ਦੁਆਰਾ ਪਿਤਾ ਦਾ ਕਤਲ, ਕਦੀ ਪਤਨੀ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰੇਮੀ ਨਾਲ ਦੋੜਨਾ ਤੇ ਕਦੀ ਮਾਂ ਦੁਆਰਾ ਬੱਚੇ ਦਾ ਕਤਲ-ਸਾਨੂੰ ਮਨੁੱਖੀ ਹਿਰਦਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਕਾਲਖ ਦੇ ਸਨਮੁਖ ਲਿਆ ਖੜਾ ਕਰਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ। ਹੁਣ ਸੁਆਲ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਇਹ ਸਭ ਕੁਝ ਕਿਉਂ ਵਾਪਰ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ ਤੇ ਇਸ ਨੂੰ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਰੋਕਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ?

ਅੱਜ ਦੇ ਮਨੁੱਖ ਦੀ ਪੂਰੀ ਤਾਕਤ, ਪੈਸਾ, ਅਹੁਦਾ, ਸ਼ਾਨੋ ਸ਼ੌਕਤ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਸਭ ਦੁਨਿਆਵੀ ਵਸਤਾਂ ਇਕੱਤਰ ਕਰਨ ਵਿਚ ਲੱਗ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ। ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪ ਨੂੰ ਉਹ ਵਿਦਵਾਨ ਵੀ ਅਖਵਾਉਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਅਜਿਹਾ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਉਹ 'ਪੜ ਪੜ ਗਡੀ ਲਦੀਅਹਿ' ਵਾਲੇ ਆਦਰਸ਼ ਤੇ ਚਲ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ ਪਰ ਧਰਮ ਜਿਸ ਨੇ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਗਿਆਨ (ਖਨੋਲਦਦਗਏ) ਨੂੰ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ (ਲਿਗਹਟ) ਵਿਚ ਬਦਲਣਾ ਹੈ ਉਸ ਪ੍ਰਤੀ ਉਸ ਦਾ ਵਤੀਰਾ ਸ਼ਰਧਾਮਈ ਘੱਟ ਅਤੇ ਵਿਉਪਾਰਕ ਜ਼ਿਆਦਾ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਜਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਉਹ ਆਪਣੇ ਮੂਲ ਨਾਲੋਂ ਟੁਟ ਚੁਕਾ ਹੈ, ਇਸੇ ਲਈ ਉਸ ਦਾ ਮਨ ਰੋਗੀ ਹੋ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ। ਮਨੁੱਖੀ ਸਮਾਜ ਵਿਚ ਪਾਏ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਵੰਡ-ਵਿਤਕਰੇ, ਫਿਰਕੂ ਕੁੜੱਤਣ, ਦੰਗੇ ਫਸਾਦ, ਕਤਲੋਗਾਰਤ, ਬਲਾਤਕਾਰ, ਚੋਰੀ, ਠੱਗੀ, ਨਫਰਤ, ਖੁਦਗਰਜ਼ੀ ਆਦਿ ਸਭ ਬੁਰਾਈਆਂ ਰੋਗੀ ਮਨ ਦੀ ਹੀ ਉਪਜ ਹਨ। ਰੂਹਾਨੀ, ਇਖਲਾਕੀ ਅਤੇ ਸਮਾਜਿਕ ਕਦਰਾਂ ਕੀਮਤਾਂ ਦੀ ਭਾਰੀ ਟੁਟ ਭੱਜ ਅਤੇ ਤਬਾਹੀ ਵੀ ਵਿਗੜੇ ਹੋਏ ਮਨ ਦੀ ਕਰਾਮਾਤ ਹੈ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਮਾਨਸਿਕ ਪਰੇਸ਼ਾਨੀਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਹਰ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਸਮੱਸਿਆਵਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਨਿਜਾਤ ਪਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਆਪਣਾ ਮੂਲ ਪਛਾਣਨ ਦੇ ਰਾਹ ਤੇ ਚੱਲਣ ਦੀ। ਅਤੇ ਇਸ ਕੰਮ ਵਿਚ ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਵਧੇਰੇ ਰਹਿਨੁਮਾਈ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਨ-ਸਾਹਿਬ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀ। ਪ੍ਰਸਿੱਧ ਪੱਛਮੀ ਵਿਦਵਾਨ ਆਰਨੋਲਡ ਤਿਆਨਬੀ ਆਪਣੀ ਪੁਸਤਕ ਠਹੜ ਸ਼ਚਿਰਦਦ ਰਿਟਿਨਗਸੌਂਡ ਟਹੜ ਸ਼ਿਕਹਸ ਵਿਚ ਲਿਖਦਾ ਹੈ:

ਮਨੁੱਖਤਾ ਦਾ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਭਵਿੱਖ ਧੁੰਦਲਾ ਹੈ ਪਰ ਫਿਰ ਵੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਕੋਲ ਕੁਝ ਐਸੀ ਵਿਸ਼ੇਸ਼ ਕੀਮਤੀ ਗੱਲ ਜ਼ਰੂਰ ਹੈ ਜੋ ਸਾਰੀ ਦੁਨੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੀ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ।

ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਅਤੇ ਮਨੁੱਖ ਦਾ ਰਿਸ਼ਤਾ ਸਦੀਵੀ ਅਤੇ ਅਨਿੱਖੜ ਹੈ ਕਿਉਂ ਕਿ ਇਹ ਮਨੁੱਖ ਮਾਤਰ ਦੇ ਕਲਿਆਣ ਹਿਤ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਸਰਬ ਸਮਿਆਂ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਹੈ। ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਦਾ ਨਿਸ਼ਾਨਾ ਕੇਵਲ ਮਾਤਰ ਕਾਲਪਨਿਕ ਨਹੀਂ ਸਗੋਂ ਇਹ ਅਮਲੀ ਅਤੇ ਕ੍ਰਿਆਸ਼ੀਲ ਜੀਵਨ ਨਾਲ ਸਬੰਧਿਤ ਹੈ। ਬਾਣੀ ਦੀ ਲੋਅ ਵਿਚ ਜੀਵਿਆ ਜੀਵਨ ਅਗਿਆਨਤਾ ਦੀਆਂ ਸਾਰੀਆਂ ਬਖਸ਼ਿਸ਼ਾਂ ਵਾਲੇ ਜੀਵਨ ਨਾਲੋਂ ਉੱਚਾ, ਸੁਆਦਲਾ ਅਤੇ ਨਰੋਆ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ।

ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਮਨੁੱਖ ਦਾ ਆਦਰਸ਼ ਕੇਵਲ ਸੱਚ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤੀ ਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਸਗੋਂ ਇਸ

ਨੂੰ ਸੱਚੇ ਆਚਾਰ ਵਿਚ ਢਾਲਣਾ ਵੀ ਹੈ।

ਸਚਹੁ ਓਰੈ ਸਭੁ ਕੋ ਉਪਰਿ ਸਚ ਆਚਾਰ॥

ਇਕ ਚੰਗਾ ਮਨੁਖ ਚੰਗੇ ਜੀਵਨ ਦੇ ਨਾਲ ਨਾਲ ਚੰਗੇ ਭਾਈਚਾਰਕ ਸਬੰਧਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਵੀ ਉੱਤਮਤਾ ਨਾਲ ਨਿਬਾਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਸਵਾਰਥ ਦਾ ਤਿਆਗ ਉਸ ਦਾ ਵਿਸ਼ੇਸ਼ ਲੱਛਣ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਅਸਲ ਵਿਚ ਮਨੁਖ ਇਕੱਲਾ ਹੋਵੇ ਤਾਂ ਨਿੱਜ ਤਕ ਸੀਮਤ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਪਰ ਜਦੋਂ ਦੂਜੇ ਮਨੁਖਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਮਿਲ ਕੇ ਸਮਾਜ ਸਿਰਜਦਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਨਿੱਜ ਤੋਂ ਪਰ ਤਕ ਦਾ ਸਫਰ ਤੈਅ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਨਿੱਜ ਅਤੇ ਪਰ ਦੀ ਏਕਤਾ ਹੋਣ ਤੇ ਉਹ ਸਧਾਰਨ ਮਨੁਖ ਦੀ ਪਦਵੀ ਤੋਂ ਉਪਰ ਉਠ ਕੇ ਅਸਧਾਰਨ ਵਿਅਕਤਿਤਵ ਦਾ ਧਾਰਨੀ ਹੋ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਚਾਰਲਸ ਮੂਰ ਨੇ ਠੀਕ ਹੀ ਕਿਹਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਨੈਤਿਕ ਜੀਵਨ ਜਦੋਂ ਸਮਾਜਕ ਧਰਾਤਲ ਤੇ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਉਹ ਅਧਿਆਤਮਕ ਜੀਵਨ ਹੀ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਕ੍ਰਿਆਸ਼ੀਲ ਅਧਿਆਤਮਕਤਾ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਅਧਿਆਤਮਕਤਾ ਤਕ ਪਹੁੰਚਣਾ ਕੋਈ ਸਧਾਰਨ ਗੱਲ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਿਉਂ ਕਿ ਇਸ ਸਤਹ ਤਕ ਪਹੁੰਚਣ ਲਈ ਮਨੁਖ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਾ ਤਿਆਗਣਾ ਪੈਂਦਾ ਹੈ, ਸਵੈ ਤੋਂ ਉਪਰ ਉਠਣਾ ਪੈਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਲ ਕੰਮ ਲਈ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਸਾਡੀ ਅਗਵਾਈ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੈ। ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਸੰਜਮੀ ਜੀਵਨ ਜੀਉਣਾ ਸਿਖਾਉਂਦੀ ਹੈ। ਦੇਸ਼, ਕੌਮ, ਧਰਮ, ਗਰੀਬਾਂ, ਨਿਮਾਣਿਆਂ, ਨਿਤਾਣਿਆਂ ਲਈ ਕੁਝ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਪ੍ਰੇਰਦੀ ਹੈ। ਨਾਗਨੀ ਮਾਇਆ ਦੇ ਜਾਲ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਕੱਢ ਕੇ 'ਦੌਲਤ ਗੁਜਰਾਨ' ਦੇ ਆਦਰਸ਼ ਵਲ ਪ੍ਰੇਰਦੀ ਹੈ। ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੀ ਪਹਿਲੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਜਪੁ ਜੀ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਵਿਚ ਹੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਨੇ ਇਸ ਗੱਲ ਵਲ ਧਿਆਨ ਕੇਂਦ੍ਰਿਤ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਮਨੁਖ ਨੇ ਸਚਿਆਰੇ ਯਨੀ ਉੱਤਮ ਪੁਰਖ ਬਣਨ ਲਈ ਕੀ ਕਰਨਾ ਹੈ। ਨਿੱਜ ਤੋਂ ਪਰ ਤਕ ਦਾ ਸਫਰ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਤੈਅ ਕਰਨਾ ਹੈ। ਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦਾ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਅਜਿਹਾ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਰਾਹ ਵਿਚਲੀ ਕੂੜ ਦੀ ਕੰਧ ਨੂੰ ਢਾਹੁਣਾ ਪੈਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਕੂੜ ਦੀ ਕੰਧ ਅਸਲ ਵਿਚ ਹਉਮੈ ਦੀ ਮੂਲ ਉਪਾਧੀ ਹੈ। ਹਉਮੈ ਦਾ ਭਾਵ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਮੈਂ ਮੇਰੀ ਦੀ ਭਾਵਨਾ। ਇਹੀ ਭਾਵਨਾ ਅੱਜ ਮਨੁਖ ਨੂੰ ਲੋਭੀ ਤੇ ਸਵਾਰਥੀ ਬਣਾ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ। ਇਸੇ ਭਾਵਨਾ ਅਧੀਨ ਹੀ ਮਨੁਖ ਮਨੁਖ ਦਾ ਵੈਰੀ ਬਣਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਸੇ ਭਾਵਨਾ ਅਧੀਨ ਹੀ ਮਨੁਖ ਆਪਣੇ ਅਸਲੇ ਨਾਲੋਂ ਟੁਟ ਕੇ ਦ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟਮਾਨ ਵਲ ਰੁਚਿਤ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਅੰਦਰ ਵਸਦੀ ਜੋਤ ਨੂੰ ਦੇਖ ਨਹੀਂ ਸਕਦਾ। ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਹਉਮੈ ਤੋਂ ਮੁਕਤ ਹੋਣ ਦਾ ਇਕੋ ਇਕ ਸਾਧਨ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਮਨੁਖ ਆਪਣਾ ਆਪਾ ਰੱਬੀ ਨਿਯਮਾਂ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਢਾਲੇ:

ਹੁਕਮ ਰਜਾਈ ਚਲਣਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਨਾਲਿ॥ (ਪੰਨਾ, 1)

ਆਉ ਜਰਾ ਹੁਣ ਇਹ ਦੇਖੀਏ ਕਿ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਹੁਕਮ ਕੀ ਹੈ? ਕਥਨ ਹੈ:

ਏਕੋ ਨਾਮੁ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਹੈ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਦੀਆ ਬੁਝਾਇ ਜੀਉ॥ (ਪੰਨਾ 72)

ਨਾਮ ਕੂੜ ਦੀ ਮੈਲ ਦੂਰ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ:

ਮਲੁ ਕੂੜੀ ਨਾਮਿ ਉਤਾਰੀਅਨੁ ਜਪਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਹੋਆ ਸਚਿਆਰੁ॥ (ਪੰਨਾ 951)

ਕੂੜ ਦੀ ਮੈਲ ਨਾਮ ਨਾਲ ਦੂਰ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਮੈਲ ਦੂਰ ਹੋਣ ਨਾਲ ਸਚਿਆਰ ਬਣੀਦਾ ਹੈ। ਸੋ ਨਾਮ ਨੂੰ ਜਪ ਕੇ ਜੀਵ ਸਚਿਆਰ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ।

ਸਚਿਆਰ ਪੁਰਖ ਫਿਰ ਦੁਨੀਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਰਹਿੰਦਿਆਂ ਹੋਇਆਂ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਠਾਠਾ ਬਾਗਾ

ਹੀ ਰੱਖਦਾ ਹੈ, ਇਸ ਵਿਚ ਖਚਿਤ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੁੰਦਾ। ਉਹ ਦ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟਮਾਨ ਨਾਲ ਜੁੜਨ ਦੀ ਬਜਾਏ ਇਸ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਅਦ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟ ਦੇ ਦਰਸ਼ਨ ਕਰਨ ਦਾ ਚਾਹਵਾਨ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਗਿਆਨੀ ਸੰਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਮਸਕੀਨ ਇਕ ਥਾਂ ਲਿਖਦੇ ਹਨ ਕਿ ਜੇ ਕੋਈ ਬੁਢਾ ਆਪਣਾ ਜਨਮ ਦਿਨ ਮਨਾਵੇ ਤਾਂ ਸਮਝੋ ਉਹ ਮਰ ਕੇ ਜਨਮੇਗਾ ਕਿਉਂ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਜਨਮ ਨਾਲ ਜੁੜਿਆ ਹੋਇਆ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਜੇ ਕੋਈ ਬੱਚਾ ਮੌਤ ਦੇਖਣ ਵਿਚ ਸਫਲ ਹੋ ਜਾਏ ਤਾਂ ਉਹ ਭਗਤ ਬਣ ਆਪਣਾ ਜੀਵਨ ਸਫਲ ਕਰ ਜਾਏਗਾ। ਜਿਸ ਵੇਲੇ ਅੰਤ ਦਿਖਾਈ ਦੇਣ ਲੱਗ ਪਏ ਤਾਂ ਸਮਝੋ ਬੇਅੰਤ ਵੀ ਦਿਖਾਈ ਦੇਣ ਲੱਗ ਪਏਗਾ। ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਬਾਰ ਬਾਰ ਸੰਸਾਰ ਦੀ ਨਾਸ਼ਵਾਨਤਾ ਚੇਤੇ ਕਰਾ ਕੇ ਸਦਾ ਥਿਰ ਪ੍ਰਭੂ ਨਾਲ ਜੋੜਨ ਦਾ ਉਪਰਾਲਾ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੈ:

ਜਗ ਰਚਨਾ ਸਭ ਝੂਠ ਹੈ ਜਾਨਿ ਲੇਹੁ ਰੇ ਮੀਤ ॥

ਕਹਿ ਨਾਨਕ ਥਿਰੁ ਨਾ ਰਹੈ ਜਿਉ ਬਾਲੂ ਕੀ ਭੀਤਿ ॥ (ਪੰਨਾ, 1428)

ਅਸਲ ਵਿਚ ਸਾਰਾ ਸੰਸਾਰ ਮਨ ਦਾ ਹੀ ਪਸਾਰਾ ਹੈ। ਮਨ ਜਿਉਂ ਜਿਉਂ ਸੁਕੜਦਾ ਹੈ, ਸੰਸਾਰ ਵੀ ਸੰਕੀਰਣ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਫਿਰ ਮਨ ਦੇ ਅੰਤ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਸਾਰ ਦਾ ਵੀ ਅੰਤ ਹੋ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਸੰਸਾਰ ਮਨ ਦੀ ਉਪਜ ਹੈ। ਮਨ ਦੇ ਮਰਨ ਨਾਲ ਭਾਵ ਮਨ ਦੇ ਜਿੱਤਣ ਨਾਲ ਕਰਤਾਰ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਨਜ਼ਰ ਆਉਣਾ ਸ਼ੁਰੂ ਹੋ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਇਸ ਸੰਸਾਰ ਦਾ ਗੁਪਤ ਹਿੱਸਾ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਸੰਸਾਰ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਰੂਪ ਹੈ। ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੋਹਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਜੋੜਦੀ ਹੈ। ਸਿਮਰਨ ਕਰਕੇ ਨਿਰਗੁਣ ਨਾਲ ਅਤੇ ਸੇਵਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਰਗੁਣ ਨਾਲ। ਸੋ ਅੱਜ ਜੇ ਅਸੀਂ ਸਿਮਰਨ ਤੇ ਸੇਵਾ ਦੋਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੇ ਜੀਵਨ ਦਾ ਅੰਗ ਬਣਾ ਲਈਏ ਤਾਂ ਇਕ ਸਮਤੁਲ ਜੀਵਨ ਤੇ ਸੁਚੱਜਾ ਜੀਵਨ ਜੀਉ ਸਕਾਂਗੇ। ਫਿਰ ਨਾ ਅੱਜ ਵਰਗੀ ਮਾਰਧਾੜ ਰਹੇਗੀ ਤੇ ਨਾ ਹੀ ਕਤਲੇਆਮ। ਮਨੁੱਖ ਬੇਗਮਪੁਰੇ ਦਾ ਵਾਸੀ ਬਣ ਜਾਏਗਾ। ਬਾਣੀ ਦਾ ਮੁਖ ਸੰਦੇਸ਼ ਭਾਵੇਂ ਅਧਿਆਤਮਕ ਹੈ ਪਰ ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਵੀ ਦੱਸਿਆ ਜਾ ਚੁਕਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਜਦੋਂ ਨੈਤਿਕਤਾ ਅਤਮਕ ਧਰਾਤਲ ਤੇ ਸਕ੍ਰਿਅ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਅਧਿਆਤਮਕਤਾ ਹੀ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਹੈ। ਸਮੁੱਚੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਰਹੱਸਵਾਦ ਤੇ ਨੈਤਿਕ ਆਦਰਸ਼ਾਂ ਦਾ ਸੁਮੇਲ ਹੈ। ਜਿਥੇ ਬਾਣੀ ਵਿਚ ਨਾਮ ਜਪਣ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰੇਰਨਾ ਕੀਤੀ ਗਈ ਹੈ ਉਥੇ ਸਮਤੋਲ ਸੰਸਾਰਕ ਜੀਵਨ ਜੀਉਣ ਦਾ ਵੀ ਆਦਰਸ਼ ਹੈ। ਜੇ ਪੁਤਰ ਪਿਤਾ ਨਾਲ ਝਗੜਦਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਉਸ ਲਈ ਆਦੇਸ਼ ਹੈ:

ਕਾਹੇ ਪੂਤ ਝਗਰਤ ਹਉ ਸੰਗਿ ਬਾਪ ॥

ਜਿਨ ਕੇ ਜਣੇ ਬਡੀਰੇ ਤੁਮ ਹਉ ਤਿਨ ਸਿਉ ਝਗਰਤ ਪਾਪ ॥ (ਪੰਨਾ, 1200)

ਇਸਤਰੀ ਨੂੰ ਜੇ ਖਿਮਾ, ਨਿਮਰਤਾ, ਸਬਰ, ਸ਼ੁਕਰ ਆਦਿ ਦਾ ਸਿੰਗਾਰ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਕਿਹਾ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਹੀ ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਘਰ ਦੇ ਕੰਮ ਕਾਰ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਨਿਪੁੰਨ ਹੋਣ ਲਈ ਕਿਹਾ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ:

ਕਢਿ ਕਸੀਦਾ ਪਹਿਰਹਿ ਚੇਲੀ ਤਾ ਤੁਮ ਜਾਣਹੁ ਨਾਰੀ ॥

ਜੇ ਘਰੁ ਰਾਖਹਿ ਬੁਰਾ ਨਾ ਚਾਖੇਹਿ ਹੋਵਹਿ ਕੰਤ ਪਿਆਰੀ ॥ (ਪੰਨਾ, 1171)

ਸੋ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਸਮੁੱਚੇ ਸੰਸਾਰ ਦੀ ਅੱਜ ਵੀ ਉਸੇ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਅਗਵਾਈ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੈ ਜਿਵੇਂ ਅੱਜ ਤੋਂ 500 ਵਰ੍ਹੇ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਕਰਦੀ ਸੀ। ਤਾਂ ਹੀ ਤਾਂ ਇਕ ਸਿੰਧੀ

ਵਿਦਵਾਨ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਟੀ. ਐਲ. ਵਿਸਵਾਨੀ ਨੂੰ ਜਦੋਂ ਇਹ ਕਿਹਾ ਗਿਆ ਕਿ ਸਿੰਧ ਦੇ ਕਾਲਜ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਲਈ ਕੋਈ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਦਾ ਕੋਰਸ ਤਜਵੀਜ਼ ਕਰੋ ਤਾਂ ਉਸ ਨੇ ਕਿਹਾ:

ਸੁਖਮਨੀ ਹੀ ਐਸੀ ਬਿਹਤਰੀਨ ਰਚਨਾ ਹੈ ਜਿਸਦੀ ਅੱਜ ਹਰ ਹਿੰਦੁਸਤਾਨੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨ ਨੂੰ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਰਚਨਾ ਦਾ ਜੀਵਨ ਸੰਦੇਸ਼ ਸਭ ਕੌਮਾਂ ਤੇ ਸਭ ਦੇਸ਼ਾਂ ਲਈ ਇਕੋ ਜਿਹਾ ਲੋੜੀਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਅੱਜ ਸੰਸਾਰ ਕੌਮ ਪ੍ਰਸਤੀ ਦੀ ਤੰਗ ਖਿਆਲੀ ਵਿਚ ਗੌਰਵ ਮਹਿਸੂਸ ਕਰ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਜੰਗ ਵਿਚ ਮਰਨਾ ਪਰਮ ਮਨੋਰਥ ਸਮਝਿਆ ਜਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਵੀ ਆਖਿਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਚਾਈ ਕਮਜ਼ੋਰਾਂ ਦਾ ਬਹਾਨਾ ਹੈ। ਪ੍ਰੇਮ, ਨਿਸ਼ਕਾਮਤਾ ਤੇ ਨਿਮਰਤਾ ਕਾਇਰਾਂ ਦਾ ਧਰਮ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਹਾਲਤ ਵਿਚ ਸੰਸਾਰ ਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਸਮੇਂ ਪਰਮਾਰਥਕ ਸੰਦੇਸ਼ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਕੇਵਲ ਸੁਖਮਨੀ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਹੀ ਮਿਲਦਾ ਹੈ।

ਸ੍ਰੀ. ਟੀ. ਐਲ. ਵਾਸਵਾਨੀ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੇ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਬਾਰੇ ਕਹੇ ਇਹ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੀ ਸਮੁੱਚੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਸੱਚ ਹਨ। ਜੋ ਵੀ ਇਸ ਦੇ ਅਸੂਲਾਂ ਦੇ ਸੱਚੇ ਵਿਚ ਆਪਣਾ ਜੀਵਨ ਢਾਲੇਗਾ ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਫਿਰ ਹੋਰ ਕਿਧਰੇ ਵੀ ਟੱਕਰਾਂ ਮਾਰਨ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਨਹੀਂ ਪਏਗੀ। ਉਸ ਦਾ ਖਾਣ-ਪੀਣ, ਰਹਿਣ-ਸਹਿਣ ਸਭ ਕਾਬੂ ਵਿਚ ਆ ਜਾਏਗਾ। ਫਿਰ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਪੈਰ ਗੁਰੂ ਦੇ ਮਾਰਗ ਵਲ ਚਲਣਗੇ, ਹੱਥ ਗੁਰੂ ਦਾ ਦਾਮਨ ਪਕੜਨਗੇ, ਰਸਨਾ ਸਿਫਤ ਸਲਾਹ ਨਾਲ ਸਿੰਗਾਰੀ ਜਾਏਗੀ ਤੇ ਮਸਤਕ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਕਦਮਾਂ ਤੇ ਜਾ ਡਿੱਗੇਗਾ। ਇਸ ਅਵਸਥਾ ਵਿਚ ਮਾਣਸ ਦੇਵਤਾ ਬਣ ਜਾਏਗਾ।

ON THE ISC FRONT

COL JAGTAR SINGH*

INTRODUCTION

1. ISC activities during the quarter April to June 2021 were subdued due to Covid-19 pandemic. The high daily positive cases led to a sharp increase in number of active cases. The medical resources and infrastructure was stretched to its limit and the mortality rate touched at all time high. The Government had to take some harsh and strict measures to control the spread of disease and thus put a restriction on movement of individuals and closure of schools as a result of which our work came to a grinding halt. We however utilized the time by keeping close contact with our sister organizations, Institutions, our field workers and the students whom we are helping.

CHANGES IN THE ISC HQ

Change is important for the growth an organisation. We have also been evolving and changing to adapt ourselves with the environment. A few members who joined our team during the period are Ms. Neha Shera as office administrator and translator, Mr. Apoorva Singh joined as Editing Assistant in Media department. We also bid emotional goodbye to our team members who left us. Mrs. Tajinder Kaur Sonia left us due to her family commitment, Mr. Surmukh Singh (computer operator) left us as he got a government job and Mrs. Meenu (Caretaker) found a better job. ISC wishes them all a great success in their new endeavors and life. We will always remember them with warm thoughts and memories.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Our Executive Committee meeting was also scheduled in April,

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but could not be held due to restrictions by the Government on gatherings. Keeping in view of the safety of our members and staff, the meeting has been postponed to the first week of July.

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES/ HOMEWORK TUITION CENTRES

Village Alampur & Nepran. In spite of the restrictions, the enthusiasm of the students for study, forced us to conduct the class in small groups. A lot of rural students do not have the resources to continue their studies online. Our teachers ensured that all the protocol and safety measures were followed during the classes. ISC Team members also visited the homework tuition centre to confirm and ensure that the protocol is followed in letter and spirit.

Jalandhar. This Homework tuition centre was opened on 1st March 2021 and is located in a remote area in Gurudwara of Sikligar Dera. Ms. Baby Kaur, a Sikligar girl is teaching here and is working hard to help the poor Sikligar students in the online work given by the school..

Happy Learning Play School at Hyderabad. In view of severe condition of Covid -19 prevailing in Subhash Nagar, our school located there had to be shut down. However the Homework tuition centers are being operated in small groups in three Deras of Sikligar.

Update on Moga Govt ITI. To empower the youth of Rural Punjab, ISC and Late. S. Jugraj Singh Gill have been providing financial assistance to Government ITI in Moga for the training in skills of plumber, carpenter, electrician & turner. S. Balbir Singh (Instructor for Carpentry & Plumbing trade) has got Government service on adhoc basis as a result the post is vacant and will be filled soon.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO SIKH STUDENTS / SPORTSPERSON.

An Artist Mr. L.C Bhatt from Jaipur Rajasthan approached ISC for financial help as he was struggling to make ends meet. Being a good Artist of class he has produced wonderful items and flowers for Interior decoration. His work was much appreciated.

Financial assistance to the following students has been provided by ISC during the period: -

1. On 03 May 2021, Ms Sukhpal Kaur of G.G.S. Khalsa College, Chandigarh was paid Rs 16,640 as her semester tuition fee of

M.Sc..

- 2 On 17 May 21, Rs 2000/- was rewarded to Mr. L.C Bhatt of Jaipur, Rajasthan, a freelancer Artist work.

BOOKS & PUBLICATIONS

The Books, “**Homage to Shri Guru Gobind Singh ji**” and “**Bhoole Bisere Nanak Panthi**” are much in demand and popular among the readers. Punjabi version of the book “Homage to Shri Guru Gobind Singh ji” and English version of the book “Bhoole Bisere Nanak Panthi” is in progress.

TELEFILM ON 400 YEARS BIRTH CENTENARY OF GURU TEGH BAHADUR SAHIB

The media team of ISC started visiting Gurudwaras connected with Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib in Punjab. The local management of the Gurudwaras did not allow the shooting without specific permission from SGPC. We approached the president SGPC and It took one month to receive permission for film shooting of various Gurudwara.

SOCIAL & CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Corona Care Centre at Arobindo School in Sector -27. Ms Sartaj Lamba of Buddi Cabs (Who is also our member), Aurobindo Organization, ISC and Sh. Parinda Advisor, Chandigarh have opened 25 bedded Corona Care Centre. The ISC took the responsibility of providing free food & beverage to the patient and the Medical Staff. In one and a half months around 50 Corona patients were admitted and went home after being fully recovered. The centre is still in operation.

PROF HARBANS SINGH: A LEGEND IN SIKH STUDIES

A REVIEW BY PROF PRABHJOT KAUR*

Editor: Dr. Paramvir Singh

Publisher: Gracious Books, Patiala

Pages: 228, Price: Rs 350/-

The book under review has been edited by Dr. Paramvir Singh of the Department of Encyclopaedia of Sikhism, Punjabi University, Patiala. It is a collection of articles, most of which are in the form of tributes by various scholars, to Professor Harbans Singh, Editor-in-Chief of the *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism* published by Punjabi University, Patiala.

The main content of the book, preceded by the preface written by Dr. Dharam Singh, and an Introduction by Dr. Paramvir Singh, has been divided in three sections. The first section comprises articles written in Punjabi about the life, personality and contribution of Prof. Harbans Singh to the Sikh scholarship. Three articles written by Giani Balwant Singh Kothaguru, from the village Prof Harbans Singh belonged to, speak of him being the son of the soil. "ਕੋਠਾ ਗੁਰੂ ਮੇਰੇ ਦਿਲ ਤੂੰ ਜੋ ਧੂ ਪਾਉਣ ਵਾਲਾ ਸੀ, ਉਹ ਮੈਂ ਅੱਜ ਤਕ ਕਿਧਰੋਂ ਹੋਰ ਮਹਿਸੂਸ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੀਤੀ-ਨਾ ਪਟਿਆਲੇ, ਨਾ ਲੰਡਨ, ਨਾ ਵਾਸ਼ਿੰਗਟਨ ਨਾ ਰੈਸਟਨ।" Other articles in Punjabi have been written by, Dr Rattan Singh Jaggi, Prof Brahm Jagdish Singh, Gurcharan Singh Chaman, Tirath Singh, Kartar Singh Duggal, Gurcharan Singh Tohra and by Dr. Paramvir Singh himself.

English section carries the tributes written by Eldon.H.Hey, Prof. Daud Rahbar, Prof Margret Chatterjee, Kartar Singh Duggal, Prof Kulraj Singh, W. Owen Cole, Noel Q. King, Pritam Singh. Gurbhagat Singh, Prof H.S Virk, Amar Singh Chhatwal among others. All the articles talk of the great personality as a humble person with rare

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qualities of “gentleness, refinement of spirit, depth of learning.”

According to Kartar Singh Duggal, Prof. Harbans Singh “belonged to the tribe of eminent Punjabi litterateurs, the like of Principal Teja Singh and Prof Gurcharan Singh Talib, who started his scholarly career, as a teacher, rendered into English excerpts from Bhai Vir Singh’s Magnum opus, *Rana Surat Singh*, for the UNESCO, with distinction. He wields his pen in the most sensitive field, with amazing confidence and sovereign ease. While taking due cognizance of the latest researches, he makes fullest use of the traditional and scriptural evidence.”

Donald G Dave, a colleague of Prof. Harbans Singh at Centre for the study of World Religions at Harvard University, remembers Prof Harbans Singh as a scholar “thoughtfully and prayerfully working through the abundant testimony to Guru Nanak in Legend, poetry and historical remembrance given by *Janasakbis*. His task was to forge from these traditional texts the life story of Guru Nanak in a form intelligible to his contemporaries whose minds had been shaped by the modern historiography.” He firmly believed that his faith was grounded not in philosophical abstractions of the theologians but in the heart aflame with Love for God and that his heart was sustained by the love of God granted by the grace of the Guru. And he lived to see both his children to make a mark in Sikh Studies.

An emotional memoir written by Nikky Guninder Kaur the daughter of Prof. Harbans Singh on his tenth death anniversary also forms a part of the collection.

Hardly any contributor has forgotten to make a reference to hospitality and amiable demeanour of Sardarni Kailash Kaur, the other half of Prof Harbans Singh, who was a companion (ਅਰਧਾਂਗਣੀ) to him in the real sense of the word. Noel Q. King says, “I learnt so much of their hospitality, both domestic and academic, that was unsurpassable.”

The third section of the book comprises of the reviews of the books written by Prof. Harbans Singh, which range from translation of short stories from Punjabi to English and poetic translation of Bhai Vir Singh’s poems, history, tradition, theology and finally to cap it all the Encyclopaedia of Sikhism. The reviews have been written by eminent personalities such as W. Owen Cole, Harkirat Singh, Saran Singh, Kulraj Singh, Sant Singh Sekhon, Devinder Kumar Verma, Gurbachan Singh Talib, Ganda Singh, Darshan Singh Maini, I. J Singh,

Kuldip Singh Dhir, Spencer Lavan, Cyril G. Williams, Mrs. Eleanor Nicholas, J.L. Das, and Nirbhai Singh among others. A list of books authored by Prof Harbans Singh too has been given at the end.

Letters written by Prof Harbans Singh to luminaries such as Dr. Ganda Singh, Sirdar Kapur Singh and Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru included in the book speak of his commitment to the project he had taken up, his inquiring mind and his command over the language.

News about Prof. Harbans Singh published from time to time in different newspapers too, find a place in the book. A special mention has been made to the biography of Guru Gobind Singh which has been translated in fifteen Indian languages, and about the Sikh Prayer (Ardas) led by Prof. Harbans Singh at Kyoto in Japan on the conclusion of the World Conference on Religion and Peace. To honour the momentous work done by this great Sikh scholar, who was equally humble and down to earth, Punjabi University conferred upon him a life membership, Guru Nanak Dev University awarded him honorary doctorate, and the President of SGPC himself came to his house to honour Prof. Harbans Singh “whose work passes the strict test laid down by Trevelyan for a historian: one who combined the knowledge of evidence with the largest intellect, the warmest human sympathy and the highest imaginative power.”

A few photographs from the personal collection of Prof. Harbans Singh would have definitely lent more value to the book.

Dr. Paramvir Singh, who has stepped in his shoes in the Department of Encyclopaedia, Punjabi University, Patiala has shown his indebtedness by editing this book as a tribute to the man whose farsightedness was instrumental in the establishment of the University, and also the brain behind as unique a project as establishment of Guru Gobind Singh Bhavan which pioneered the subject of Religious Studies in this part of the country and is serving as a high centre of the study of comparative religion.

Lest the coming generations lose sight of the contribution of this stalwart, the book is a befitting memoir, a tribute to the man, who shunned the coveted post of the Vice Chancellor offered to him on a platter, so as to accord the study of Sikh religion a high place in the academic examination of the world's great faiths through his academic excellence. □

TAHI PARKASH HAMARA BHAYO PATNA SHEHR VIKHE BHAV LEYO*

A REVIEW BY G S KHURANA**

Book: Takht Sri Harimandir Ji Patna Sahib Ate Bangladesh de Gurdham

Author: Dr. Paramvir Singh

Publisher: Gracious Books, Patiala

Pages: 279, Price: Rs 450/-

In 1469, a divinely light manifested in human form at Talwandi Rai Bhoi, beamed far and wide, illumining universe and manifested again in 1666 at Patna when the last living Sikh Guru Gobind Singh was born to Mata Gujri. Blessed are those who can have a glimpse of that place which is now known as Takht Sri Harmandar Ji Patna Sahib various aspects of which have been recorded in the book written in Punjabi under review.

The book is by Dr Paramvir Singh of Department of Sikh Encyclopadia, Punjabi University, Patiala. He is a scholar of Sikh history and Sikh traditions. His work is the outcome of his visit to these shrines and personal observations, research, and interaction with various persons well-versed in history, tradition and management of Takht Patna Sahib and other Sikh Gurdwaras in Bangladesh.

Before providing the reader with the glimpses of Takht Sahib, he has reminded the reader about Patna being the latest version of ancient city of Patliputra, setting up of Dharamsal/Mats/Deras by Udasi Mahants in different parts of Bihar during Guru period.

The Takht building at Patna is now an imposing five storey structure (Photograph on cover of the book) In order to enlighten the readers about history of the the sacred shrine, the author proceeds

* *There did I see the light of the day, In city of Patna was I born*

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step by step since the setting up of a Dharamsal by Salis Rai Johri in his Haveli during the visit of Guru Nanak, its subsequent damage in a fire, building of a new Haveli on the same site by Raja Fateh Chand Maini in deference to Hukamnama of Guru Tegh Bahadur for a suitable accommodation of the Guru's family, birth of Guru Gobind Singh in this building and a new construction on that very site by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1896 BK (1833 AD), its devastation in 1934 earthquake, its renovation with donations from prominent individuals, Institutions, then ultimately laying down of the foundation stone of present building on 10.11.1954 and completion of Karseva in 1957. The whole narrative is quite informative for the readers.

Those who have not visited the Takht, will get to know about the daily religious routine (Mardaya) at this shrine which is at variance with the codified standard Sikh practice performed at Akal Takht and Harmandir Sahib, and all the Gurdwaras in PUNjab, Haryana, Delhi and some other States.

Photographs of the relics preserved at the Takht at Patna Sahib such as wooden footwear of Guru Tegh Bahadur, ivory footwear, cradle, chola, weapons of Guru Gobind Singh, and well of Mata Gujri will be seen by reader with reverence. The relics are displayed as a part of daily Maryada.

Human mind wants to be aware of the management of an Institution which it holds in high esteem. The author has provided sufficient information to the reader about it. The Patna Sahib Takht is governed as per the Religions endowment Act (Act No 26) 1863 under which the district Judge is competent to appoint Mahant/Sarbahkar of the religious endowment. The author has provided the list of Mahants appointed from time to time upto the last Mahant appointed in 1930 who died in 1954. Thereafter a Managing Committee came into operation in 1955 and Head Granthi/ Jathedar was appointed by the Committee. The reader of the book will want to know about the current management and may skip the portion of earlier Mahants, although it is be a source of research and information for historians. The present management is under the 15 member Management Committee, the composition of which was finalized by the District

Judge after prolonged deliberations after arriving at consensus among Sikh individuals and Sikh associations of Patna and other parts of Bihar. In exercise of powers, vested under the above mentioned act and regulation “The Constitution and Bylaws of Sri Akal Takht Harmandar ji Patna Sahib” govern the functioning of the committee which is truly a representative body of Pan-India Sikhs. The Committee looks after the Takht and other historical Gurdwaras in and around Patna Sahib and other parts of Bihar, fairly described in the book for the benefit of readers.

Observance of 300 the anniversary of martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur, 300th anniversary of the birth of Guru Gobind Singh have been given extensive coverage in the book along with the author’s personal observations and his interview with Giani Iqbal Singh Jathedar of the Patna Sahib Shrine. The author has words of praise for Chief Minister of Bihar, Nitish Kumar for his patronage of Sikh centenary celebrations and greater appreciation of the then shrines’ Jathedar, Giani Iqbal Singh. However, all this information is already in the public domain.

Turning to Gurdwaras in Bangladesh, we are referred to a 1932 report showing 15 Gurdwaras with monetary value of property of each shrine. Currently, a list of 10 Gurdwaras has been given by the author out of which only five are functioning and visitors from India are taken around for paying obeisance to these Gurdwaras. Photographs of Gurdwara Nanak Shahi Raman Dhaka, Gurdwara Sangat Tola Dhaka, Gurdwara Sikh Temple Estate Chittangong, Wooden footwear of Guru Tegh Bahadur preserved in Gurdwara Nanak Shahi Raman add to the book’s credibility. The detailed history and other particulars of these shrines are of historical importance and call for a thorough research. The author, being a researcher and an academician at the University level is expected to provide more than descriptive information of these shrines. A comprehensive information about the circumstances and timing of the establishment of these shrines and their history should have been provided. It would have made his work more than a tourist guide. The presence of these Sikh shrines in Bihar, other eastern states like Bengal and Assam and Bangladesh bear a testimony to the existence of a vast network Sikh missions/ sangats /

Manjis during the Sikh Guru period. The clusters of Sikh populations around these shrines and in big cities of East India also point to the massive propagation of Sikhism by the Sikh Gurus from Guru Nanak to Guru Tegh Bahadur. Similarly, the various Hukamnamas cited by the author also point out to the close rapport between the Sikh Gurus and the Sikh sangats. That the Sikh Guru's missionary work was also financed by their devout followers and urban Sikh sangats also becomes evident from the contents of the Hukamnamas. Each of these Sikh shrines has a history of its own. It is because of the historical importance of these shrines that they draw visitors from across the globe. The book is silent on this crucial aspect of these shrines. To cite a single instance, Gurdwara Dhubri Sahib in the Assam, Bengal border stands as a memorial to the historical compromise struck between Ohom kings of Assam and forces of Raja Ram Singh, an agent of Mughal empire with the intervention of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Similarly, Gurdwara at Rajgir near Patna in Bihar has a rich history of association with Sikh Gurus.

Apart from the detailed information about the Sikh shrines in Bihar and Bangladesh, a Chapter under the title "Hukamnama Gurmatta and Honour" and main features of Hukamnama under Sikh tradition have been dealt with. Research works of different scholars have been referred to pertaining to Hukamnamas concerning Takht Patna Sahib. The Hukamnamas of Mata Sundri and Mata Sahib Devan surely provide a reliable information about the Sikh history of that period. Hukanmanas by Mahant in 1815, 1862 show the prevalence of practices of those times. Honour Letters issued between 11.8.2007 to 29.11.2018 by Giani Iqbal Singh have been reproduced unnecessarily.

Dr Paramvir Singh has done a good service by providing detailed information about Takht Sri Harmandar Ji Patna Sahib and other Gurdwaras in Bihar and Bangladesh since the time of Guru Nanak's visit till date. The Book, being in simple readable Punjabi and dealing with revered historical Sikh shrines can reach all Punjabi knowing homes in India and abroad and is likely to find fairly good circulation.

NEWS & VIEWS

SCHOOL EDUCATION: PUNJAB TOPS PERFORMANCE GRADING INDEX

Punjab, which has improved its showing from 13th position it attained in 2018-19, topped the charts this time among all the states and union territories with a score of 929 out of 1,000, followed by Chandigarh (912) and Tamil Nadu (906). The performance grading index ranks the states on a set of 70 parameters relating to learning outcomes and quality, access, infrastructure and facilities, equity and governance processes to catalyse transformational change in the field of school education, according to a school education department official.

“Happy to share that Punjab has been ranked as top performer among all States and UTs in school education in the Performance Grading Index 2019-20. This is the result of focus, hard work and commitment of all our teachers and administrators,” chief minister Capt Amarinder Singh tweeted after the rankings were released by the Union ministry of education. Neighbouring Haryana and Himachal Pradesh are at 11th and 13th positions. (*Courtesy: The Hindustan Times, June 7, 2021*)

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SIKH STUDIES SCHOLAR, DR JODH SINGH, PASSES AWAY

A former professor of Sikh studies at Punjabi University, Dr Jodh Singh (79) passed away today. He had been suffering from the alzheimer’s disease for the past four years. He was born in Gurdaspur.

He was also editor-in-chief of Sikh Encyclopaedia published by the university. Dr Jodh Singh, who started his academic journey from Benaras Hindu University with a degree in philosophy, had joined Punjabi University as Professor at the department of Sikh encyclopaedia.

He worked on Sikh thought, philosophy and Gurbani. He also translated the ‘waran’ written by Bhai Gurdas into English apart from

translating Guru Granth Sahib into Hindi. He also worked on “banis” of Dasam Granth. He was a member of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research, New Delhi.

Dr Satnam Singh Sandhu, University Dean, Languages, and Head, Department of Distance Education, said: “A number of his lectures on Dasam Granth are available where he expressed his firm opinions on the topic. His daughter-in-law is an assistant professor at the university while two professors on the campus, who were his students, are carrying forward his legacy of work of Punjabi adaptation of Sikh encyclopedia. It’s fourth volume is expected to be out in a year.”

Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh expressed his condolences on his demise. (*Courtesy: The Tribune 21, June 21, 2021*)

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SIKH FIGHTER PILOT MEMORIAL IN U.K. TO HONOUR INDIANS WHO FOUGHT IN WORLD WARS

The design for a sculpture of an early 20th century Sikh fighter pilot, cricketer and golfer from Oxford University has been approved for a new memorial to be erected in the England port city of Southampton in memory of all Indians who fought in the World Wars.

Hardit Singh Malik first arrived in the U.K. in 1908 as a 14-year-old to Balliol College at the University of Oxford and went on to become a member of the Royal Flying Corps during World War I. As the first Indian and turbaned pilot with a specialised helmet, he became famous as the “Flying Sikh”.

“As such the statue to the legendary World War I hero, Hardit Singh Malik, the world’s first Royal Flying Corps (now the Royal Air Force) Sikh, turbaned fighter pilot will be emblematic for the broader Sikh contributions in the British armed forces of World War I and II, with Malik’s extraordinary accomplishments as a ‘touchstone’ for the whole Sikh community and other of its lesser-known heroes,” notes the One Community Hampshire & Dorset (OCHD) organisation behind the campaign for the memorial, which was approved by the Southampton City Council last year.

Mr. Malik also played cricket for Sussex and was also the Indian Ambassador to France after a long and distinguished career in the

Indian Civil Service. But it is as a fighter pilot during 1917-19 that he is best known.

“This project certainly speaks for itself; strongly furthering community cohesion and integration, and testifying to the major contribution our Sikh and broader ethnic minority communities make to our country, as we live in such a vibrant multicultural society here in Southampton,” said Pritheepal Singh, OCHD CEO and Director. “The public statue of Hardit Singh Malik embodies the spirit of inclusivity — representing the will to ‘breaking the glass ceiling’ at the intersection of two World Wars and minority enrolment in the RAF: a significant feat for an Indian at the time,” added Dr. Sanjukta Ghosh, Artistic Director at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) South Asia Institute and OCHD Advisor. (Courtesy: The Hindu, March 2021)

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MILKHA SINGH PASSES AWAY AT 91

Legendary Indian sprinter Milkha Singh died on Friday of complications due to coronavirus disease (Covid-19) at the age of 91 after a month-long battle with Covid-19 in Chandigarh.

Milkha Singh represented India at the 1956 Olympics in Melbourne, the 1960 Olympics in Rome and the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo and remained India’s most prominent athlete for four decades.

Nicknamed ‘The Flying Sikh’, inspired millions across the country. The legendary sportsperson passed away on Friday after complications due to coronavirus disease (Covid-19), after a month-long battle with Covid-19 in Chandigarh.

In a tweet, PM Modi said that Milkha Singh inspired millions around the world, and added that India have lost a colossal sportsperson.

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LETTERS TO EDITOR

Dear Sir,

I am a film maker from Kolkata and a Sikh by faith. I have read your article on the above subject (Max Arthur Macauliffe) in *Abstracts of Sikh Studies*. It’s a wonderful article on his contributions in the history of Sikhs for which I would like to extend my gratitude and congratulate

you for your meticulous work on giving us such insights on the life of the great man.

Further, I am contemplating to make a film on his life and want your kind contribution in writing a script for the film. I hope you will be very kind to help me in this regard. A line or two on my proposal will highly be appreciated.

Thanking you,
Gul Bahar Singh.

Note: Gul Bahar Singh is a six time National Award winning Indian film-maker. His documentaries on Munshi Prem Chand and other topics such as family welfare and other issues won national awards at the 33rd, 38th, 44th, 45th, 47th and 50th National Film Awards. Some of his documentaries have been screened at the International Film Festivals. For details visit https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gul_Bahar_Singh

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Respected Prof Kulwant Singh ji,

I am at a loss as to how to apologize for my tardiness in responding to your letter about the Sidh Ghoshat. In my above 90 age, I am becoming forgetful. But that is not an excuse.

I read your article and liked your format of Q&A side-by-side style. Meanwhile, I was reading Karminder Singh's book, *Understanding Sidh Ghoshat*, the book we mailed you some time ago among six books from the same author, courtesy of Col. Sahib. I am inclined to prefer his interpretation. I am still reading that book now the second time and recommend everyone to read it. That reading will change the meaning in many places, and the example is the translation of Gurmukh with sihari format.

Before closing, I must thank you for your time and efforts in making the *Abstracts of Sikh Studies* journal not only survive but flourish. Let me know if I can help there.

Please remember me to our in common friends.

Harbans Lal, Ph.D.; D.Litt (Hons)
harbansl@gmail.com

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OBJECTIVES

1. To bring the latest advances in Sikh Studies to the notice of scholars and general readers.
2. To project a correct image of Sikhism and the Sikh Community in India as well as abroad.
3. To watch, report and rebut any distortions or mis- representations of Sikh Religion and its History.
4. To serve as a living link, and provide coordination among organisations engaged in promotion of Sikh Studies.
5. To highlight problems of Sikh diaspora, and suggest solutions.
6. To arrange reviews of important publications relating to Sikhism.
7. To assist readers in framing an informed opinion on matters relating to Sikhism and Sikh Studies.
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