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THE SIKH REVIEW

Vol. 67: 07

JULY 2019

No. 787





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July 2019

THE SIKH REVIEW

A theological, educational and socio-cultural Monthly founded in 1953

Vol. 67:07

JULY 2019

No. : 787

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THE SIKH REVIEW, 116 Karnani Mansion, 25A Park Street, Kolkata 700 016

Ph: 91-33-2229-9656 / 4604-6462 • Email: sikhreview@gmail.com,

INTERNET EDITION: <http://www.sikhreview.org>

For Subscription Rates, Please see Page No. 21

Price : ₹30.00

THE SIKH REVIEW

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The opinions expressed in the articles published in *The Sikh Review* do not necessarily reflect the views or policy of The Sikh Cultural Centre.

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Pity the misguided!

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ਗੁਰੂ ਜਿਨਾ ਕਾ ਅੰਧੂਲਾ ਸਿਖ ਤੀ ਅੰਧੇ ਕਰਮ ਕਰੋਨਿ ॥
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 ਨਾਨਕ ਜਿਤੁ ਉਦਿ ਲਾਏ ਤਿਤੁ ਲਗੇ ਉਦਿ ਬਪੁੜੇ ਕਿਆ ਕਰੋਨਿ ॥੨॥

[SGGS: 951]

Translation*

Those having a blind man for a guide, themselves act in
blind ignorance:

Guided by egoism, are they ever in lies involved:

Acting on falsehood and evil, others they slander:

By such slandering ruined themselves, their family, too,
to ruin they drag.

Saith Nanak: so misdirected, they wander, poor helpless
creatures! (2)



* Translation by Gurbachan Singh Talib

The Sands of Time !

I.J. SINGH*

A cat, no matter how meticulous and finicky, or a dog, no matter how smart, never check their watch ten times a day – not even once in a lifetime. Birds migrate thousands of miles every year and have an incredibly precise sense of the changing of seasons, but they have no computer or clock warning them of the passage of time.

Early humans surely noted the passage of time by the play of day and night, as also by the changing pattern of stars in the sky. A primitive sundial may have been invented 3500 years ago; the movement of sand in an hour glass was used on ships to mark time 1500 years ago. Even today one can appreciate the inexpensive simplicity of the timeless technique of marking time by watching the hypnotic shifting of sand in an egg timer.

A short trek down Google lane shows us the myriad ways that humans have invented to measure the passage of time – existential variations of the day and night that come to us from the magic and mystery of creation.

Look at us now, attached by our umbilical cords to chronographs and atomic clocks that are true to fractions of a second. Only humans obsess about time, whether in seconds, minutes, and hours, years, ages or what we euphemistically label eternity. But forget not fractions like milli, micro, nano., and more variations on seconds in this list.

Does time become the prison of our minds? Are we prisoners of time or is the reverse true instead.

Humans are driven to lie about their age or need to. We are the only animal that has created religions promising us an everlasting eternal life, with its heart-throbbing never-ending delights, or the eternal fires of hell. We are endlessly imaginative.

We celebrate every birthday as a marker of life that has no end. We forget that each passing year – nay, day, hour.... indeed, every moment – tells us that time is running out. ਅਉਧ ਘਟੈ ਦਿਨਸੁ ਰੈਣਾਰੇ ॥ “Audh ghatyae dinus rainaray....” as the Guru Granth (p. 13) tells us. Time marches on inexorably. Only a metaphoric life is eternal. And Time runs out. *Tempus Fugit*, as they say. That is what gives life its challenge, its quality and its immediacy.

In a life that looks ahead to years and has no end, issues of quality can be deferred, choices can be pushed aside; in life measured as eternity there is no urgency to imperatives of quality and value. Perhaps then eternity should not be quite as desirable – not something to desperately want. And that's why it may not really exist except, metaphorically. At

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least, that's my interpretation of this metaphoric concept of an eternal life that pervades most religions. I leave this here for future cogitations.

But there is a way to eternity that, perhaps in our desperation, we humans have invented. Our past merges with the future through continuity of blood lines and more importantly, through the work that we do, through issue and events that have defined us and obsessed us in this life, and the societies that we build. Causes for which we have lived and died. Issues that we have sweated for and fought all life long – that we have valued more than life itself. Open any page of Sikh history (or any people's history) for an object lesson in such events and happenings. In fact, since its inception, Sikhi has been a powerful movement in the cause of human development.

Gurbani talks about time. I bring to you one forceful and impactful yet very brief illustration that takes more meaning as you ponder and parse it. Sikhi reduces the short duration of our individual existence to its minimal measure of one single breath when it says: ਹਮ ਆਦਮੀ ਹਾਂ ਇਕ ਦਮੀ ਮੁਹਲਤਿ ਮੁਹਤੁ ਨ ਜਾਣਾ ॥ “Hum Aaadmi haen ik dami.” In other words, we are all creatures of one breath -- the breath that defines the present; the breath we took before this is now in the past and has gone and disappeared, the breath yet to come is in the future that remains unknown, its presence uncertain. Our lives, therefore, are defined by the present in which we live. I would add that if we live the present right, the future will take care of itself. That to me is the essence of Sikh teaching.

Today then, is mine a call to the future? Past, present and future are linked and connected. We stand in the present, rooted in the soil of the past, while resolutely facing the future. That is how the past becomes a prologue to the future. The present is but a moment in an endless chain. Ergo, it is true that the past is dead, the future yet unborn, the moment of the present is all that we ever have.

It is important in life to look ahead, and also to look back. Perhaps I am at a stage in life that I look back just as much, if not more, than looking forward towards the future. Am I being overly optimistic here or is it the other way? Perhaps I look ahead far less than I look behind. Is it because I know that one phase lengthens while the second progressively shortens and one day there will be no remaining time for me. Awareness of time and attempts to control its passage or add meaning to it in order to measure it and navigate it more purposefully are human traits.

Finally, at the end of life, Guru Granth posits a challenge to us all; When the clock has run out, it asks, what footprints will you leave in the sands of time “ਏ ਸਰੀਰਾ ਮੇਰਿਆ ਇਸੁ ਜਗ ਮਹਿ ਆਇ ਕੈ ਕਿਆ ਤੁਧੁ ਕਰਮ ਕਮਾਇਆ ॥” (*Eh sareera merya iss jug meh aye ke kya tudh karam kamayya?* P. 917). □

Concept of 'Amrit' (Nectar) in Gubani

PROF BALBIR SINGH MAKKAR (RETD.)*

According to Guru Nanak, founder of Sikhism, the basic purpose of coming to life is to obtain the Elixir of Immortality. So says the Guru:

ਜਿਸੁ ਜਲ ਨਿਧਿ ਕਰਿਣ ਤੁਮ ਜਾਗੋ ਆਏ ਸੋ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਗੁਰ ਪਾਹੀ ਜੀਉ ॥ [SGGS: 598]

(*The elixir for which you have come into the world, You can receive it only from the Primal Guru (the Transcendent Being) Himself.*)

Now, what kind of nectar is Guru Nanak referring to here? Is it some kind of drinkable elixir in liquid form which is with gods and goddesses of 'mythical stories' that make them immortals? As all stories are fictional in character and their characters no longer existent, the kind of nectar they refer to has no true existence. It existed only in the minds of their authors. Guru Nanak's nectar, however, is of a different kind. It is the nectar of immortality but not in the drinkable form.

What is the Nature of Amrit?

True nectar, according to Guru Nanak, is the knowledge of the three worlds or the states of being of the Absolute Consciousness, the Creator of and the created Self in the creation that comes by abiding in the Transcendent Being. So says the Guru:

ਅਹਿਨਿਸਿ ਨਿਰਮਲੁ ਬਾਨਿ ਸਥਾਨੁ ॥ ਤੀਨ ਭਵਨ ਨਿਹਕੇਵਲ ਗਿਆਨੁ ॥ ਸਾਚੇ ਗੁਰ ਤੇ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਪਛਾਨੁ ॥੨॥ ਸਾਚਾ
ਹਰਖੁ ਨਾਹੀ ਤਿਸੁ ਸੋਗੁ ॥ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਮਹਾ ਰਸੁ ਭੋਗੁ ॥ [SGGS: 414]

(*The spiritual aspirants remain pure day and night by abiding in the Transcendent Being, the most exalted place.*)

They acquire knowledge of the three worlds. And through the True Guru identify the divine principle of His Will (the self regulating principle that sustains the creation in a state of poise).

Thus they relish the nectarian gnosis and consume the sublime essence of the Transcendent One.)

What are the three Worlds?

Guru Nanak's three worlds are of an entirely different from the traditional conception. The three worlds in the traditional sense are (i) the imaginary world from where the soul comes, (ii) the present world and (iii) the hypothetical heaven (or hell) where the hypothetical God is sitting disbursing awards according to our *karmas*.

Guru Nanak's three worlds, however, refer to the three forms the Absolute Consciousness (Dhundhkaara; SGGS pp. 1026 & 1035) assumes in His pre-creation

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and post-creation states. To understand these three forms, it is necessary to understand Guru Nanak's theory of relativity. In the pre-creation state, the Supreme Being was in the formless state of conscious-creative energy. According to the laws of nature, the conscious-creative energy can convert itself into conscious matter of the manifest state. The consciousness of the Supreme Being remains involved in the conscious matter and gradually starts evolving in the form of infinite forms and kinds. This is what we call Guru Nanak's involution-cum-evolution theory. The evolving consciousness can, at some stage, evolve to the state of pure-consciousness and become like the Supreme Being (*sudhi*). The beauty of such a form is inconceivable. In this form, one never suffers death of any kind of defilement.

As already explained in one of my previous articles, Guru Nanak explains the process of conversion of cosmic-conscious energy into conscious matter by using the example of two stones of a flour mill. The Transcendent Being devised a mechanism like that of the two stones of a flour mill, puts the cosmic energy into it to spiral out in the form of stars and galaxies the way a flour mill spirals out wheat in the form of flour particles.

Now we can describe Guru Nanak's three worlds as:

1. The Pre-creation state:

In this the Absolute Consciousness is in the formless state (*Nirankaar*), invisible and unfathomable. He is in the state of Supra-Macrocosmic-Conscious-creative-Energy. In this state, he remains seated in His Transcendental state of cosmic consciousness. So says the Guru:

ਕੇਤੇ ਜੁਗ ਵਰਤੇ ਗੁਬਾਰੈ ॥ ਤਾੜੀ ਲਾਈ ਅਪਰ ਅਪਾਰੈ ॥ ਧੂਪੂਕਾਰਿ ਨਿਰਾਲਮੁ ਬੈਠਾ ਨਾ ਤਦਿ ਧੰਧੁ ਪਸਾਰਾ ਹੇ ॥
[SGGS: 1026]

(For countless ages, the Absolute stayed in a state like an airy substance.

The infinite, inconceivable and unfathomable One remained in a state of self-absorption.

The misty-Conscious-Creative-Energy sat detached and there was no extension into the manifest state of the creation.)

2. In the second state, the Absolute Consciousness converts itself into the manifest state through a process of involution-cum-evolution. So says the Guru:

ਆਪੀਨੈ ਆਪੁ ਸਾਜਿਓ ਆਪੀਨੈ ਰਚਿਓ ਨਾਉ ॥ ਦੂਜੀ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਸਾਜੀਐ ਕਰਿ ਆਸਣੁ ਡਿਠੋ ਚਾਉ ॥
[SGGS: 463]

(He created Himself out of Himself, and being in the form of conscious-creative-energy, involved His own consciousness -generally known as spirit - in it.)

The absolute Consciousness produces His manifestation in a continuous succession and introduces the life supporting like the water, air and forms of energy as also the forces of creation (*Brahma*), preservation (*Vishnu*) and destruction (*Mahesha*) to evolve matter back to the conscious state.

In the Japuji, the Guru says:

ਕੇਤੇ ਪਵਣ ਪਾਣੀ ਵੈਸੰਤਰ ਕੇਤੇ ਕਾਨ ਮਹੇਸੁਸ ॥ ਕੇਤੇ ਬਰਮੇ ਘਾੜਤਿ ਘੜੀਅਹਿ ਰੂਪ ਚੰਗ ਕੇ ਵੇਸ ॥[SGGS: 728]

(In this region we study numerous climatic factors such as air, water and the sources of energy and numberless forces of preservation and destruction in nature (Krishnas and Shivas) working together to evolve consciousness.

There are also forces of creation (Brahmas) fashioning forms and beings of various hues and shapes.)

What is its nature and from where is it available? The Guru adds that we can obtain it from the Transcendent Being Himself.

Then how can we obtain it from the Transcendent Being who is inconceivable, without form and infinite beyond limit? The Guru adds:

ਮਨ ਰੇ ਬਿਰੁ ਰਹੁ ਮਤੁ ਕਤ ਜਾਗੀ ਜੀਉ ॥ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਢੂਢਤ ਬਹੁਤੁ ਦੁਖ ਪਾਵਹਿ ਘਰਿ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਘਟ ਮਾਹੀ ਜੀਉ ॥
ਰਹਾਉ ॥ [SGGS: 598]

(O my mind stay firm and wander not outside to seek it (by some clever contrivance.

Searching for the nectar outside yourself you suffer a lot for its true abode lies within you.)

At another place, the Guru says:

ਅੰਤਰਿ ਵਸੈ ਨ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਜਾਓ ॥ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਛੋਡਿ ਕਾਹੇ ਬਿਖੁ ਖਾਓ ॥੧॥ [SGGS: 728]

(The Transcendent Being abides within the mind. So do not wander abroad.

By seeking outside you forsake nectar and take only poison.)

Obtaining knowledge of divine creativity and then using it to serve the cause of divine creativity is a pre-requisite to perceive wherein exactly lies the true elixir of life. The person who contributes to the divine creative purpose is the true servant of the Transcendent Being. Regarding this the Guru says:

ਪ੍ਰਿਆ ਬਾਝੁ ਦੁਹੇਲੀ ਕੋਇ ਨ ਬੇਲੀ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਪੀਵਾਂ ॥
ਰਚਨਾ ਰਾਚਿ ਰਹੇ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰੀ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਮਨਿ ਕਰਮ ਸੁਕਰਮਾ ॥ [SGGS: 598]

(Without You O my Beloved One, I feel miserable. I have no friend.

It is only by harmonizing the self with the divine principles of Your Will that I can drink the nectar of immortality.

The Formless Creator creates His own manifestation (in the form of the creation).

A person's karmas become divine only by enshrining the divine principles of creativity in the mind).

Guru Gobind Singh also expresses a similar idea in Akaal Ustat:

ਗਿਆਨ ਕੇ ਬਿਹੀਨ ਮਹਾਦਾਨ ਮੈਨ ਹੂਜੈ ॥ ਲੀਨ ਭਾਵਨਾ ਬਿਹੀਨ ਦੀਨ ਕੈਸੇ ਕੈ ਤਰਤ ਹੈ ॥

July 2019

(Without intuitive knowledge of the divine you cannot contribute to the creative process.

Without attuning to the divine principles of the Cosmic Will, how can you ascend to divinity?)

All other systems of philosophical or religious thought have been unable to associate divine creative aspect of the Creator's manifestation and so have remained lost in the labyrinth of worldly bonds:

ਗਿਆਨੁ ਧਿਆਨੁ ਸਭੁ ਕੋਈ ਰਵੈ ॥

ਬਾਧਿਨਿ ਬਾਧਿਆ ਸਭੁ ਜਗੁ ਭਰੈ ॥੨॥ ਸੇਵਾ ਕਰੇ ਸੁ ਚਾਕਰੁ ਹੋਇ ॥

[SGGS: 728]

(Everyone speaks of gnosis and meditation.

Bound with the worldly attachments, the whole world wanders (aimlessly) in the labyrinth of worldly entanglements.

Only those who perceive the principles of divine creative process and contribute to it are the true servers of the Creator.)

Now, let us ask ourselves, wherein to look for the Divine Nectar? □

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Guru Nanak ‘Enlightened Me’ on the Walls of Separation

BHAI HARBANS LAL, PH.D. D.LITT. (HONS). *

It was during a study circle at the Gurdwara of the Medical College Amritsar in 1951 or so that Dr. Harbhajan Singh asked this question, “Will the predicted expansion of knowledge in science hurt or help the spread of Sikhism worldwide?” Putting it another way, will scientists be attracted to Sikhi or they will begin ignoring it.

The late Dr. Harbhajan Singh was the Professor of Surgery, and the Study Circle was a regular weekly feature of the Gurdwara.

My answer was that, undoubtedly, the expansion of knowledge about the universe and the natural laws would help Sikhi to attract more adherents.

My answer was considered so startling that it was reported by the major Sikh newspaper of the day because most people in those days believed that modern science and education would drive people towards atheism and agnosticism. Moreover, the Sikh youth, in particular, will be impacted adversely; they will abandon Sikhism. So much so that many parents would not send their children to college for fear of their abandoning Sikhi.

Guru Nanak and the Expanse of Knowledge

Since the days of those Amritsar study circles, our knowledge of the creations has expanded substantially; billions of Galaxies, new worlds in Blackhole, intelligence in the brain and heart cells, on and on. I have been in the thick of it. I obtained my doctorate in Biomedical Sciences, and since then I pursued the scientific discoveries as my profession as well as my pastime.

Further, I was born in the house of Guru Nanak. That is a story in itself that I published elsewhere (Sikh Review). Here I must acknowledge that I am one of many who is and had been overwhelmingly grateful to be blessed with the association of Guru Nanak for the past 550 years. It makes me humble every day as I appreciate intriguing Guru Wisdom ever.

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To date, we are among the oceans of knowledge that religion and science have amassed in front of us. It is because of that expansion in the knowledge that we also seem to be at the verge of really seeing God. It is in the vertex of that knowledge by which I comprehend Nanak's telling me that the reality of creation is the home in which God lives, manifested, and revealed.

ਗੁਰ ਪਿਲਿ ਨਾਨਕ ਠਾਕੁਰੁ ਜਾਤਾ ॥ ਜਲਿ ਥਲਿ ਮਹੀਅਲਿ ਪੂਰਨ ਬਿਪਾਤਾ ॥ [SGGS: 739]

Meeting the Guru, Says Nanak, now comprehended my Icon of Worship. I see The Perfect Architect of Creations pervading and permeating the water, the land, and the sky.

Nanak invented an icon in which he embedded the implication of the above verse. We exhibit it prominently in all our religious places and at homes. It is  *Ek Onkaar*. It literally means, One Reality manifested in all creations.

Walls Between Me and My God

Five hundred fifty years ago, in 1469, Guru Nanak appeared on this earth. With him, he brought the Divine Wisdom to shine on this earth. He named it "Gurmat." Whereas Gurmat showed us, God, it also pointed out two walls or prevailing deceptions that keep us separated from God. These walls of separation are harder than steel to break.

Wall of Narcissism

Narcissism or egotism closes the human mind so that we think that we know it all and we are the center of everything. As said Deepak Chopra, "the ego is not who you really are. The ego is your Self-image; it is your social mask; it is the role you are playing. Your social mask thrives on approval. It wants control, and it is sustained by power because it lives in fear". Thus, our narcissism becomes a wall between us and our Creator.

To learn more on ego, I may direct you to read Dr. IJ Singh (<http://www.sikhnet.com/news/little-ego-may-be-good-thing>). Here I emphasize that narcissism is a wall that separates us from our Creator. Guru told us of this wall as the following verse.

ਧਨ ਪਿਰ ਕਾ ਇਕ ਹੀ ਸੰਗਿ ਵਾਸਾ ਵਿਚਿ ਹਉਮੈ ਭੀਤਿ ਕਰਾਰੀ ॥ [SGGS:1263]

The soul-bride and the Divine spouse live together as one, but there is a hard wall of egotism standing between them. The closed-mindedness barricades the path to reach the Creator even when He is manifested in the creation around us.

Walls of Religiosities Invented by Professional Clergy

Although not intended by the founders of various religions, definitely not by the Founders of Sikhi, the professional clergies have attained a status of God's ambassadors or agents in every religion. In Sikhism, they are known as Baba, Bhai, Granthi, Saint, etc. Invariably, they are ill-educated. They bring into the religion, worst kind of religiosity.

These clergies scare the congregations into modes of worshiping the SABD Guru as the SABD was a human deity. For example, they invoke their deity with a variety of tasty foods, expensive clothing, and currency. Their anthropomorphic Guru needs heating and cooling of the room, expensive bedding, and restriction on access. Some ban the Guru from traveling overseas. Some are known to prescribe specific language to communicate, discuss, or do vichaar. Similarly, some promote specific dress culture that is ethnic and not universally adaptable.

The Guru condemned such inroads of religiosity in the harshest language. Let me cite a few examples of Guru's disapproval; SGGS says:

ਵੇਸ ਕਰੋ ਕੁਰੂਪ ਕੁਲਖਣੀ ਮਨਿ ਖੋਟੈ ਕੂੜਿਆਰਿ ॥ ਪਿਰ ਕੈ ਭਾਣੈ ਨਾ ਚਲੈ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਕਰੇ ਗਾਵਾਰਿ ॥ [SGGS: 89]

She may wear good clothes, but the bride is still ugly and rude when her mind is false and impure. When the spouse does not walk in harmony with the Will of the God spouse, it is foolish to ask for favors.

ਕਰਿ ਪੰਜੀਰੁ ਖਵਾਇਓ ਚੋਰ ॥ ਓਹੁ ਜਨਮਿ ਨ ਮਰੈ ਰੇ ਸਾਕਤ ਢੋਰ ॥ [SGGS: 1136]

You prepare sweet treats and feed them to your stone god. God is not born, and He does not die, you foolish, faithless cynic!

ਪੰਡਿਤ ਮੁਲਾਂ ਜੋ ਲਿਖਿ ਦੀਆ ॥ ਡਾਡਿ ਚਲੇ ਹਮ ਕੁਝੁ ਨ ਲੀਆ ॥ [SGGS:1159]

Whatever the Pandit and the Mullan have written (the path of religiosity), I have abandoned all of that; I have not taken any of it. □

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Charddi Kalla: A state of Ever-Ascending Spirit

PARAMJIT SINGH BAWA*

A few centuries before books *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living* by Dale Carnegie and *The Power of Positive Thinking* by Norman Vincent Peale were published; the holy Guru Granth Sahib had already given a talisman of good living and positive thought. The Sikh ethos is embedded in God's will and total acceptance of the state of affairs, yet keeping the future under control and not surrendering to the negatives. He is always in a state of positive thinking and living.

CONCEPT

The expression *charhdi kalla* is an embodiment of this attitude. It is used by everyone during *ardaas* (an entreaty, supplication, prayer) to convey positive vibes and repeated all the time everyday and all over, along with welfare of all (*sarbat ka bhalla*) which too is an informant of positivity as it is devoid of any negativity about others. It is not only an expression but also one that has been actualized by the Gurus and the followers of their teachings. The views of holy persons strengthen the philosophy of positive thinking by praxis. They walked the talk. Their words are oracular, inspired by the higher power and hence more credible. **This is exemplified in Guru Arjun's "terā bhana meethā lagei (sweet is Thy will)" even when he was being tortured for alleged apostasy.** The bhagats are always in total bliss, rejoicing and in bloom (*Nanak bhagtan sadda vigass*) when they contemplate on the eternal Being (*sunnea dookh paap ka naas*) and uproot the worries and sins.

There are many intimations of the idea of positivity in the holy text that inspired the Sikhs to give it a practical shape in their life and living. They try to live within this tenet. These attitudes are contained in the Holy text and are foundations of the world view of the Sikhs.

(a) Looking forward

The Guru instructs that one must look beyond in future (*agah koo taarangh*) and not lament over the past like looking back on the shoulder (*pichhe dekh na muhdarha*: Guru Granth; p.1096). Why? Because the grieving over the split milk and regret that one did not do what he could, lead nowhere except grief and brooding. So the advice is to look forward, make amends, start afresh and compensate for the loss. One can always make a fresh start and compensate for the lost time. Nothing is lost if one did not practice recitation in

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young age and there is still occasion to make amends. Kabir Ji is happy when his allegorical first wife of ignorance left him and he wedded the wise one later (Guru Granth; p.483). So there is nothing to regret; the loss can be compensated. This attitude urges one to look forward and beyond, and not be constrained by the past incidents, regrets, and burdens of missed opportunities. One can always make a fresh start; age is no bar, and it is not too late to start on the right path. There is never a room for dejection.

(b) The pure shall rule

Raj keraga khalsa is invoked after submission and prayer is over; and there shall be no enemy (*aaki rahey na koei*). The significance of this utterance by the community is the vision that the pure shall rule. Those indulging in oppression, exploitation, and tyranny shall be replaced by the righteous rule which is also a caricature of *Begampura*, land without sorrow, conceived by Bhagat Ravidas ji (p. 345) where the honest shall govern without the tortuous conduct of minions. There is also a vindication of Guru Nanak's critique in *Babar Vaani* and *Var Malhar* (1288) when Guru Nanak states that rulers are tyrannous and their officials are like dogs that disturb the peaceful people (*rajey sheen mukaddam kuttey*; 1288). The reverse is a conviction worth pining for. The vision is reinforced by concept of *Halemi Raj*, a compassionate rule (74), and *Abchal Nagar*, the immortal city of God. The Gurus also attempted to create a pure being by chiseling his personality with ethical conduct.

(c) Victory forever

The Sikh is constantly in a victorious state of mind. He is in perpetual contentment, exemplified by the word santokh. Nobody is ever satiated without contentment (*binn santokh nahi ko raajjei*; 279). He adopts the tenets of truth, contentment, forgiveness and compassion, and dharma. He is in a constant state of happiness because of contentment. That is how he ever states that he belongs to God and victory is ever for Him. Another expression that he uses is degh tegh fateh, implying that both the provisions/kitchen and the protection devices are successful and fulfilled. He is not worried as He undertakes welfare of all (*sarbatt da bhalla*). So he is ever fulfilled.

Guru Gobind Singh had declared that when it was appropriate he wished to confront and struggle (*ab jhujjan ko chhao*) and he was confident of his victory (*nishchei kar apni jeet karo*) when he prayed for strength to wage a war for the sake of good causes (*deh shiva barr mohey eh hei, shubhh karman tei kabhoo na tarron*). Thus the follower is always in a mental condition of victory, satiation, and contentment. He believes that what goes out as spent gets replenished (*jiss bahndareon nikleya so bhandara bharpoor*). The whole philosophy is one of celebration, bright side of life, and a spirit of accomplishment.

(d) All is happiness

The Guru assures that all is well, good, and happiness. The Lord's devotee finds no sorrow but joy all over keeping Him in mind. He finds no evil but only good; no defeat but victory all through; and never in pain but ever in bliss (*dukh nahi sabhh sukh hi hai; Kanara M.5; 1302*). Such is the attitude of the disciple who finds happiness in all that happens and feels victorious all through. The Lord is ever new and fresh in various manifestations (*sahib mera nitt navan; 660*).

(e) All is in bloom

The earth and sky are in bloom during spring (*mauli dharti, mauleya akkaas; 1193*). So are the living entities. The compositions in *Raga Basant* testify to the presence of bloom all over. There is an atmosphere of emancipation if one is imbued in Lord's name. One is freed from the weaknesses of egocentricities. There is spontaneity all around. If the mind is in a state of bloom, then the world has appearance of bloom. The mind ought to be tuned to the condition of basant. One is in bloom if one abandons one's ego (*dekh phool phlulei, echain? tyaaag tyagei; 1185*). This is also a season of holi. So in *raga Basant Hindol*, cherishing His name leads to blessings. One is one with nature and receives its gifts. For the devotee, celebration of holi lies in service of the saint (*holi keeni sant sev; 1280*). The Gurus are ecstatic and wonderstruck at the immensity of nature and its diversity (*gagan mei thaal; Dhanasari M.I*). It is captured in *Assa-di-Vaar* when Guru Nanak expresses wonder at the world, knowledge, creatures, species, their forms and colors, also wind, water, fire, and earth. The whole environment is in bloom (*mauli dharti mauleya akaas; Kabir; 1193*). The Gurus refer to eighteen loads of vegetation (*bhhar athharan*).

The language, idiom, rhythm, and imagery of the Guru Granth testify to the presence of positives, never a dejection but happiness all through. There are many verses that express the joy and delight (*anand*); unstruck melody (*anhant naad*); expansion of joy and happiness (*vigaas*); songs of happiness (*mangal*); salvation (*mukt*); amazement (*vismad*); state of bliss, peace, joy (*anand mein*); nectar (*amrit*) and many more.

CONVICTION

It is a powerful concept that has enabled Sikhs to bear unbearable hardships as an aspect of His will. On what is based this concept and the confidence? How is it that the devotee is always in a state of bliss? What is the basis on which depends this positive attitude?

The Power of Naam

The faith of the Sikhs is based on the Guru's word which he is convinced is true and must be believed. The recitation of the word and internalization of its essence prepares him for facing the problems. It is a treasure one can depend upon. In this is hidden the utmost trust in His benediction, guidance to the true and good path, a support in all times

of difficulty, and no need of dependence upon false promises and allurements. By recitation, the devotee develops a paternal and maternal relationship with Him (*toon mera pitta toon hai mera matta*; 103). He is confident that his Guru shall save him from all calamities, problems, and ailments. The guru is his mentor, doctor who cures (*mera vaid Guru Govinda*), and gives confidence to negotiate through difficulties and problems. The devotee is ever in bloom by reciting his name (*har ka naam dheiye ke, ho hariya bhai*). The word of the Guru has power of transformation from dross into gold through absorption of good teaching and thought.

Belief in His will

This attitude has nothing to do with fatalism or inaction. It is acceptance of the inevitable, what has already happened and over which there is not control as it cannot be reversed. It is strategy to adjust to what has happened and cannot be undone. This is a height of acceptance, a total surrender to His will. The fifth Guru says 'sweet is Your will' (*tera bhaana meetha lagei*) when he is physically tortured by the tormentors. Guru Nanak even considers pain as gift (*eh-bhi daat teri dataar*; 5). There is no anguish or speck of blame, but only acceptance. The Guru also advises that what happened may be accepted as it could not be otherwise. On the other hand, the Guru considers pain as medicine when the pleasures, possessions, and worldly entanglements have become disturbing. Out of this pain emerges the treatment through His naam (*dukh daroo sukh rog bhiya*). There is always hope; one need not repent the past but go ahead.

The Sikh is more prudent than atheists who claim God's non-existence and do not believe in His attributes of omnipresence and omnipotence in view of misery and evil around. The latter expect God to save them rather than going under His command. They do not subscribe to the fact that most of the aberrations are due to people not accepting His ethical path. They also question the natural calamities not realizing the laws of nature. The Sikh accepts all and never quarrels with Him. His Guru is his preceptor and he believes what the Guru says is derived from Guru's experience.

Redemption is here

The Gurus never took us for a ride by promising a paradise in the next world. Paradise is here and now. One has to create it through good deeds, hard work, and ethical life through His teachings. Of what avail is redemption if it is during the next birth, insists Namdev, when he was denied entry into a temple on the basis of his low caste. The idol turned towards him with its back on the objectors. This is confirmed by the Fifth Guru in Basant M. 5 (*sunn sakhi japp mann pyaar*; 1192) by giving the example of those who contemplated on God with love like Ajamal who was emancipated, Valmiki who was also redeemed, like Ganika, Sudama,

Gajendar, Kubja, Prehlad, and Draupadi. Saints like Trilochan, Jaidev, Dhanna, Beni, Sain, Kabir, Namdev, and Ravidas too had His blessings and patronage as they dedicated their attention to Him and are revered among all humanity (1400).

Litany of thanks

The Sikh is in a perpetual state of thanks-giving. He thanks Him for the taken for granted gifts like the body, breath, senses, organs, hands, feet, eyes, etc. The Gurus never rejected the body beautiful, and advised that it be used for a good purpose (195, 266, 661, 862). The composition of *Anand Saheb* alludes to this wherein the Guru expects the follower to make the best use of his faculties. He is happy wherever He locates him (*jithein rakhein baikunth tithayee*; 106) as he feels the Guru is with him (*Guru mere sangh sada hei naalei*). He finds peace in the company of the holy and seeks His grace in all humility. He even thanks Him for the adverse condition if it ever happens.

Positive prayer

The *ardaas* that the Sikh recites every day and all over is itself a bundle of positive thoughts. He is imbued by inspiration from ideal lives of Gurus and seeks their support. He remembers the steadfast devotees who shared their earnings with others and overlooked their faults and failings, and those who sacrificed for their faith and good causes. He seeks divine protection for their supplies and armory (*degh tegh*), honor being upheld and victory for their endeavors. He seeks gift of disciplined life, trust, and confidence, wisdom to discriminate between good and evil (*bibek*), and seeks naam. Nowhere has he sought riches or comforts and worldly possessions. He prays for humility (*mann neevan*) and higher level of thinking, comprehension, and understanding (*matt uchhi*). These are all creative positives imbued with sincerity.

PRAXIS

The above attitudes and convictions are not empty expressions but find their resonance in the life of a Sikh who is ever ready to sacrifice for a good cause, walks his talk, and tries to be an embodiment of Guru's thought and convictions. This is reflected in the following aspects of his life.

Pleasure in giving and serving

The community, guided by the Guru's precept and words, is large-hearted and never withdraws from responsibility in times of calamity. It derives fulfillment in giving. The community kitchen (*langar*) is a living example. The practice and concept is one of sharing and not charity. There is never a scarcity but abundant stores. It is a wonder that gurdwaras all over the world have this regular institution. All are welcome. There is no discrimination. One does not choose ones place in the hall but sits next to the other. The food is simple and wholesome. There is never any dearth. On the other hand, stocks are full with

abundance of supplies and provisions (*tot na aveiy atutt bhandaar*). One marvels at the reach of Sikhs to sites of calamities all over the world with assistance of medicines, local food, expertise, and an abundance of sympathy and gestures of comfort. They share joys and pains of others.

All their religious sites are spick and span with abundance of love, faith, and physical cleaning and humility in attending to upkeep and security of shoes. Most of the religious sites have contribution of volunteers. The cleaning of sarovars is an inspiring sight whenever it happens. Its periphery (*parikarma*) too is taken care of and cleaned regularly. The Sikh believes that the services and tasks are beauteous that has His blessings (*so kamm suhela jo teri ghalli*; 97).

It is under this belief that institutions like *birdhh ashrams* (houses for the old) and *pingalwaras* (houses of the differently-abled persons) are run. The example of Bhagat Pooran Singh is unique in that he gave a lot of respect and genuine love to the inmates. This inspires the Sikh who is never shy of taking up such projects. For him ultimate redemption lies in service in this life (*vichh duniya sev kamayeia ta dargei baissan jaeeayei*; 26).

Positives on death

The devotee acknowledges that his life consists of each breath (*hum aadmi haan ikk damie*; 660) and its continuation is not known, and death is considered as departure to eternity (*akaal chalanna*). That which is born shall die . Therefore, one need not ruminate over death but accept the happening (*jo hova so hovan janu, prabh apney ka hukum pachhano*). At the final ceremony after death, anad bani is invoked which is also an occasion for celebration. It is sung at both the happy and sad occasions. This is unique. One must take things in the stride.

The language of the Nihangs, the fearless

The positive attitude is best reflected in the language of traditional Sikhs who belong to the community of Nihangs. They take a practical approach of taking comfort in the coarse, elevating the ordinary into precious and extraordinary, and carefree view that whatever is given is priceless and with the grace of God. So coarse grams are almonds; unripe gram is raisin; stale bread is sweet (*mithha parshada*); one Sikh = an army (*faujan*); money = *chiller* or left-over; jagir as favorable endowment by the and government is just a loaf (*tukkar*); death or passing away = attack (*chraie karna*); thatched hut = *sheesh mahal* (palace of mirrors); onion is *rupa* (silver), and many more. The lingo itself is full of confidence that treats the sought after as insignificant the ordinary as valuable.

The language is full of elevated acceptance on the one hand and making the best of the given on the other. The Tenth Guru in a difficult state after abandoning the fort palace, separated from his family, and in the midst of forest on a cold night has no regret and is

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still thankful to Him (*mittar pyarey nu hall mureedan da kehna*). He longs for His protection and never even once conveys dejection or a feeling of betrayal. The Nihangs have taken Guru's words seriously and live on his precepts and are always in a state of bliss.



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Kirpan: Symbol of Sovereignty

NANAK SINGH NISHTER*

A SWORD (Talwar or Kirpan) is both a weapon used during close quarter combats and battles and is also carried and displayed as a symbol of chivalry during civil ceremonies. The conquered and defeated commanders are always disarmed made to surrender their weapons. Even in this atomic and digital age, the sword is conferred to the distinguished personalities by the States and Society as a recognition of their honour, strength and bravery. Sword is traditionally used for salutation and during presentation of the Guard of Honour to the dignitaries by the all wings of the Defence and other related forces (Navy, Army and Air Force, Para-Military and Police) in India and elsewhere. Thus even in modern times, the sword has retained its significance, grandeur and still holds a supreme place in the list of arms. In defence colleges and academies where future officers are trained, at the end of the course the best cadet is presented with a Sword of Honour. In military parades, the person who leads the contingent carries a naked sword.

Swords can be of several kinds (double edged straight, edgeless and thrusting type, single edge sword, curved or straight etc). The Kirpan is a small dagger, originating from the Indian subcontinent and carried by Sikhs. It can be seen as is a shorter, handier and easily displayable form of the sword. Kirpan is the name given to it by the 10th Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh and meant for the protection of self as also of the oppressed. Kirpa or Kripa means compassion and protects while Aan means dignity. In Sikh religious terminology, the sword and the kirpan are respectfully referred to as SIRI SAHIB. In the frequent sikh prayer Ardaas, a specific and mandatory mention is made of "Siri sahib ji sahai" (that may the sword protect you or come to your aid.). A beautiful full sword is daily displayed in front of Guru Granth Sahib in the Golden Temple.

In the present era, one can find the statues of "Roman Goddess of Justice" all over the world holding a weighing scale in one hand and a sword in the other. The images of Goddess of Justice, holding the sword, indicates the ancient philosophy of justice based on punishment, the sword being admitted as a symbol of dispensing justice. Any weapon in the hands of law abiding citizen or the forces responsible for maintaining the security is a visible assurance of protection for the common man and peace in the society.

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In Sikhism, its founder, Guru Nanak (1469-1539) made the masses courageous and bold enough through his preaching to protest against oppression though without any physical weapon. Our following Gurus upto the 5th Guru Arjan Dev (1563-1606) also carried on the campaign to fight oppression making even self sacrifice as a weapon. The torture of Guru Arjan Dev by Jahangir resulting in his death marks a major turning point in introducing weapons in the Sikh thought and armoury. To counter the and increasingly oppressive Mughal regime, 6th Guru Hargobind Sahib (1595-1644) introduced the concept of Miri and Piri). He weaponised himself and his followers to effectively face and defeat a menacing regime of the day. He himself trained in shashtra vidya, a form of martial arts that became prevalent among the Sikhs. He first conceptualized the idea of the use of weapons through the notion of Sant Sipahi, or "saint soldiers" and trained them to be competent and to use them fearlessly to defend their faith and protect the oppressed ones.

The tenth master Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) who was a grandson of the 6th Guru upon establishment of the Khalsa order (Vaisakhi day in April 1699) made it essential for the Sikhs to carry a kirpan all the time as an article of faith. Kirpan was made one of the five essentials items to be worn on the body of every Khalsa, both male and female. Thus the Sikh and the Kirpan (Sword) became inseparable from each other.

The sword and the kirpan proved to be a rare and beautiful combination of Bhagti and Shakti i.e., devotion and defence of spiritual and temporal values. This evolution took shape over 239 years during the life span of ten Gurus, to make a Sikh fearless but just person to face every challenge. In the Constitution of India (Section 25-b), Sikhs have been exempted to carry a Kirpan (sword irrespective of size). In some other countries, a Kirpan has been admitted as an article of faith for the Sikhs. As the awareness of the identity of Sikhs is increasing, so is the number of such nations.

Today, many Sikhs (even the Kesha dharis (who keep unshorn hair and beard) do not carry a Kirpan. This casual and convenient attitude is encouraging the Police to even suspect the religious Sikhs carrying a Kirpan as fundamentalists (kattar) and may even label them as "Khalistanis". It is right time for every Kesha dhari Sikh to pledge to carry a Kirpan irrespective of the fact whether he/she has been formally baptised (receiving the Amrit) or not, for preserving the right and privilege conferred by the Guru Sahib and the Constitution. The glory and sovereignty of Khalsa is such that he is permitted to move with the Kirpan everywhere as an acceptance of it being a religious symbol.

The author is of the view that it is a wrong notion that only Amrit dhari need to wear the Kirpan. That is, unless you take Amrit, it is not necessary for you to carry Kirpan; keeping of hair is sufficient for you to be a Sikh. If a majority of the Sikhs do not carry Kirpan, it gives wrong signals about it's being an essential part of their religion. By not carrying Kirpan, most of the Sikhs are putting a question mark on the genuine contentions of the Kirpan-dharis (wearer of the kirpan) and demonstrating a bad precedence for others. Therefore, it is strongly suggested that every Sikh should become a Kirpan-dhari.

Particularly since the mid 1980s, it has been observed that the religious Sikhs with flowing beard and wearing Kirpan are being singled out, and put to unnecessary interrogation and even humiliation. They were often labelled as fundamentalists or even pro-Khalistani within India and even elsewhere. The Sikhs who do not follow the religious principles or display the 5 Ks are considered to be moderates. In other words, the more you are disloyal towards your faith; the more you become acceptable to the society and the Government of the day.

In the Government of India, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) was formed in September 1968. It was given the responsibility for strategic external intelligence, after two consecutive wars (the China-India war of 1962 and the India-Pakistan war of 1965) as it was evident that a credible intelligence gathering setup was lacking. However and very unfortunately, RAW was also used in coalition with the Foreign Mission Offices/embassies against the prosperous, out spoken, strong and vibrant religious Sikh Diaspora. It is learnt that RAW has framed a list of hundreds of NRI Sikhs, refusing them Indian visa, mobilizing poisonous propaganda in general and among security circles all over the world particularly at airports. Another fall out of this interference is instigating faction-fighting and promoting conflicts among the Sikhs, their Gurdwaras and other organizations.

Our Foreign Mission Offices have played a vital role in creating these two factions of fundamentalists and moderates among the Sikh community throughout the world. This is one of the main reasons of growing apostasy among Sikh youth, after the bloody events of 1980s. This trend still exists and will continue to stay for the years to come in view of the growing terrorism activities of other communities.

Therefore, to avoid the persecution of the religious Sikhs, every Sikh irrespective of the fact whether he has taken Amrit or not, should start wearing Kirpan. This will boost the morale of the religious Sikhs and discourage those elements who oppose or mistrust this

privilege granted to the Sikhs. In true spirit it will be a real service to the Sikh Panth to up keep its dignity and honour in the society. A person should be proud of his faith, rituals, traditions, culture, preserve and protect its values and personally practice and preach it as a role model. A wide variety of high quality Kirpans are available in the stores around Gurdwaras as also in the international market,. (khalsastore.com, indiamart.com, khalskirpans.com etc).

The Sikhs of all age groups and in all geographies must understand and appreciate that just keeping long hair and presenting a Sikh appearance is not enough. It is not even going half way upto the standards set by our Gurus. Let all of us start wearing a Kirpan to move a step further. Progress in steps but progress we must.



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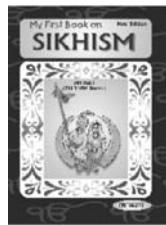
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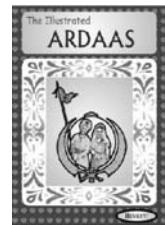
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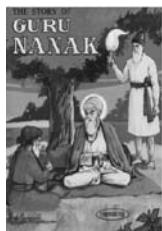


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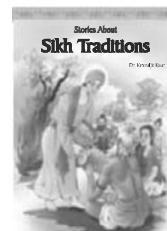
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Child Prophet: Guru Har Krishan Sahib Ji

*DR. AMRIT KAUR, PH.D**

Guru Har Krishan Sahib (1656-1664), the Eighth Guru or Prophet Teacher of the Sikhs was the younger son of Sri Guru Har Rai Sahib (1630-1661), the Seventh Guru of the Sikhs and Mata Sulakkhani Ji. The Guru was born on 7 July 1656 at Kiratpur Sahib, which falls in the present day Ropar district of Punjab. Since his very childhood, he had a religious bent of mind and interests.

At this time four sons of Emperor Shah Jahan - Dara, Shujah, Aurangzeb and Murad were fighting to ascend the throne of Delhi. Out of these Guru Har Rai Sahib helped Dara, which annoyed Aurangzeb. Finally, when Aurangzeb came to power he sent a message to Sri Guru Har Rai Sahib to come to Delhi and explain his position. Guru Har Rai Sahib sent his elder son Ram Rai in his place along with his minister Dargah Mal. Guru Har Rai Sahib instructed Ram Rai to remain fearless, speak truth and not to show any miracle. On reaching Delhi in order to please Aurangzeb, Ram Rai distorted the *Bani* (*hymns*) of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. When Aurangzeb asked Ram Rai as to why Guru Nanak Dev Ji had insulted the Muslims by writing "*Mitee Musalmaan Ki*" (SGGS: Page 466) Ram Rai deliberately distorted the hymn of Guru Nanak Dev Ji and said the words, "*Mitee Beimaan Ki*". Ram Rai also showed miracles. He made alive a ram, a rode and a muck elephant, told a person what he had eaten, showed stars during day, unlocked locks without a key etc. He showed as many as fifty-two miracles. Guru Har Rai Sahib got annoyed with Ram Rai because he had distorted the hymn of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. He antagonized him and sent a message that he should not show his face to him. Because of this fact Guru Har Rai Sahib chose his younger son Har Krishan Ji as his successor ignoring his elder son Ram Rai. Thus, the main reason why Sri Guru Har Rai Sahib chose Har Krishan Ji as his successor was the fact that Ram Rai had distorted the hymn of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji. On 6 October 1661 he conferred Guruship on his younger son Har Krishan Ji who was only five years old at that time. Thus, Har Krishan Ji became the Eighth Guru of the Sikhs.

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In appreciation of the young Guru, Bhai Santokh Singh, in his monumental book *Sri Gur Pratap Suraj Granth* says, "The early morning sun looks small in size, but its light is everywhere. So was young Guru Har Krishan's fame without limit". This shows that Sri Guru Har Krishan Sahib was spiritually as elevated as an adult. He imparted true knowledge to his followers. He had the ability to explain passages from Guru Granth Sahib (the Holy Book of the Sikhs) with clarity.

Taking advantage of the young age of Guru Har Krishan Sahib, Ram Rai declared himself as the Guru on his own and gave him many troubles. Ram Rai asked Aurangzeb to help him in snatching Guruship from Guru Har Krishan Sahib. Aurangzeb summoned Guru Har Krishan Sahib to Delhi through Raja Jai Singh of Amber (Jaipur). Guru Har Krishan Sahib left for Delhi along with his mother Mata Sulakkhani Ji and his grand-mother Mata Bassi Ji. On his way to Delhi after travelling through Ropar, Banur, Rajpura and Ambala, on the third day of the journey he reached the village Panjokhra, which is 10 km north-east of Ambala city along the Ambala-Naraingarh Road. At this place he was informed that Sikh *Sangats* was coming from Peshawar (now in Pakistan), Kabul (now in Afghanistan) and Kashmir to pay their obeisance. Thus, he decided to stay at Panjokhra for a day. In this village a very learned but proud *Pandit* (scholar) named Lal Chand came to see him and spoke insultingly saying "It is said that you sit on the gaddi of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. But what do you know of the old religious texts." Incidentally, at this time Chhajju Ram, an illiterate, *Jheevar* (a water carrier) by caste who was carrying a bundle of hay on his head happened to pass by them. Guru Har Krishan Sahib asked Chhajju Ram to explain the gist of Bhagwad Gita, the sacred book of the Hindus. To the astonishment of all who were present there, Chhajju Ram quickly and clearly explained the gist of this sacred book. Pandit Lal Chand felt ashamed and overcame his pride. He and Chhajju Ram became disciples of Guru Har Krishan Sahib and accompanied him upto Kurukshetra. Pandit Lal Chand later adopted Sikhism. In Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji's time, he was renamed as Lal Singh. He died as a Sikh warrior in the battle of Chamkaur Sahib on 7 December 1705. Sri Guru Har Krishan Sahib stayed at Panjokhra for three days. Upto Panjokhra a large number of Sikhs had accompanied him. But on reaching here except for a selected few, He asked them to go back.

It may be mentioned that in Panjokhra at the spot consecrated by Guru Har Krishan Sahib, a memorial has been raised in his honour which is named as **Gurdwara Panjokhra**

Sahib which constitutes a vast complex including a double storey sanctum, an enclosed sarovar, *Guru Ka Langar* (Community Kitchen), buildings for the staff and pilgrims who visit the Gurdwara from far and near throughout the year especially during *Magh Sudi* 7 to 9, days of the stay of Guru Sahib at this place which falls in January or February.

On re-aching Delhi, Guru Har Krishan Sahib stayed in the bunga-low of Raja Jai Singh of Amber (Jaipur). He was asked by Aurangzeb's courtiers to meet Aurangzeb. On 25 March 1664 he met Aurangzeb, who had pre-planned a trial for him. Two large trays were brought before him, one of these had expensive clothes, toys and ornaments and the other had a holy man's cloak and a cowl. Guru Har Krishan Sahib accepted the second one, which had a cloak and a cowl. Aurangzeb called Guru Har Krishan Sahib the second time with an intention to perform miracles. Guru inkling as to Emperor see him the Since he no one miracles involved the law of nature, he refused to see the Emperor.



GURDWARA BANGLA SAHIB, NEW DELHI

At this time, smallpox was ravaging in Delhi. Guru Har Krishan Sahib took lot of pains to take care of the smallpox-ridden people. As a result of his strenuous involvement in this activity, he himself was inflicted with this disease. All his disciples became very sad. As reported by Bhai Santokh Singh in his book *Sri Gur Pratap Suraj Granth*, his mother Mata Sulakkhani Ji asked, "Son, you occupy the gaddi of Guru Nanak. You are the dispeller of the world's sorrow and suffering. Your very sight removes the ailments of others. Why do you lie sick now?" Guru Har Krishan Sahib promptly replied, "He who has taken this mortal frame must go through sickness and disease. Both happiness and suffering are part of life. What is ordained must happen. This is what Guru Nanak

taught. Whatever one does is in accordance with His order. One must live in the light of His command."

After falling ill Guru Har Krishan Sahib moved out of Raja Jai Singh's bungalow to a place on the bank of Yamuna River. The Sikhs, by this time had become very desperate. As reported by Bhai Santokh Singh, Guru Har Krishan Sahib instructed them that 'Guru Nanak's throne is eternal. It is everlasting and will continue to command ever-increasing honour. The *Granth* is the Lord of all. He who wants to see me let him with faith and love see the *Granth*. Thus, he will shed all his sins. He, who wishes to communicate with the Guru, let him read the *Granth* with devotion. He who practises its teachings will obtain all the four *padaraths* (materials). He who has faith gains everything. He, who is without faith, acquires but little. None in his world lives forever. The body is mortal. In the *Granth* abides the Guru's spirit. Daily bow your head before the *Granth*. In this way you will conquer your passions and attain liberation."

At the site of the bungalow of Raja Jai Singh, where Sri Guru Har Krishan Sahib stayed when Emperor Aurangzeb called Him to Delhi, now stands stately **Gurdwara Bangla Sahib**. This Gurdwara was initially established in 1783 by Sardar Baghel Singh. The birth anniversary of Sri Guru Har Krishan Sahib is celebrated every year all over the world by Sikh Sangat especially in Gurdwara Bangla Sahib with great fervour, pomp and show. This year, the birth anniversary is being celebrated on July 18 by the Sikh *Sangat* all over the world.

Because Sri Guru Har Krishan Sahib tendered to all smallpox stricken patients irrespective of their religion, and being impressed by his humanitarian outlook, the Muslims of Delhi nick named him *Bala Pir or Bala Pritam* (Child Prophet). That is why the Gurdwara raised at the site of his cremation has come to be called *Gurdwara Bala Sahib*, which is situated between Mathura Road and the bent of Ring Road in Delhi.

On March 30, 1664 just before leaving for his heavenly abode, Guru Har Krishan Sahib asked his attendants to bring the ceremonial marks of succession and uttered the words, "*Baba Bakale*" i.e., the next Guru is in the town of Bakala, which now falls in Amritsar district of Punjab. □

When the Sikhs captured Sarhind

(What happened to Wazir Khan, Sucha Nand and Sher Mohammed Khan)

DR ALKA MISHRA, Ph.D*

By the middle of April 1710, Banda Singh Bahadur was in control of most of the land between Yamuna and Satluj rivers as well as eight forts in this zone. Though Sihri (now Sarhind) was not a province (it was under Delhi suba), but it was a major centre of power of the Mughal Empire; hence it was treated just like a province. It was a 'shak' (just like Division of present system, which has many districts under it) and had 28 *parganas* and its income was 52 lakh rupees in 1710.; that is why it was known as *Baawni Sarhind* (*Baawani*=52). The control of such a province could be given to a senior person only. Earlier, during the time of Shah Jehan, Diwan Todar Mal (Ind) had been the administrator of this zone. Aurangzeb had appointed Mirza Askari (known more as Wazir Khan) as the Faujdar of Sarhind. He had an Irani background and was amongst the emperor's most loyal persons. He had a *mansab* for two thousand horsemen, and, the land between Satluj and Jamuna/Yamuna rivers was under his administration. The chiefs of Malerkotla, Rupar, and Machhiwara etc. were his subordinates.

In the end of April 1710, Banda Singh Bahadur decided to attack Sarhind. At that time of preparations, Banda Singh was in the area of *Chhat-Banur* forest. Wazir Khan too had received information of this attack. He got a bit scared; he had in his mind that the Sikhs had already captured eight forts and several major towns. He was also angry for the Sikhs' attack on his own village Kunjpura. Thus, he wanted to crush them (the Sikhs). Wazir Khan sent messages to his neighbours to be ready for a battle against the Sikhs. He raised the flag of *Jehad* (holy war) and instigated young Muslims to join his army. He sent messages to all the Pathans, Balochs, and Ranghars etc. to join his forces. He also recruited several new soldiers. Several Muslim *Chowdhrys* and feudal promised to send their private forces for his help. His deputy in this campaign was Sher Mohammed Khan of Malerkotla. Wazir Khan also sent his emissaries to Delhi and Lahore asking them to send force and arms.

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Thus, he had assembled a very powerful army and a big arsenal of weapons. Besides, he had a very large number of not only horses but also elephants. Having assessed all the arrangements he decided to attack the Sikhs before they could move towards Sarhind as he did not want to fight inside or near his city. So, he led his army towards the place where the Sikhs had encamped and were planning to attack Sarhind. **Chappar Chiri**¹ site is about 20 km from Sarhind. The Sikhs were resting there to plan an attack on Sarhind. When they got news that Wazir Khan himself was marching towards them, they took their defensive positions. According to Khafi Khan, the number of the Sikh soldiers was 30 to 40 thousand but they did not have good weapons. They had mostly swords, spears, arrows and only a few guns and just six cannons.²

On the morning of the 12th of May 1710, both the armies had taken positions in the fields of Chappar Chiri. Though it is often said that the number of the Wazir Khan's soldiers was about one lakh but this seems to be an exaggeration. Most source believe that there were 5-6 thousand horsemen, 7-8 thousand artillery and about 8 thousand *Ghazis* (who had joined them in the name of 'holy war'); thus, their number could be around 20 thousand. Wazir Khan's army was led by elephants, which guarded them from the Sikhs' attacks. When the battle began, the Sikhs, in order to attack the Sarhindi soldiers, needed first to remove elephants from the scene; so, they began throwing cannon balls at the elephants. This achieved the desired effect and some of the elephants were badly wounded. These elephants screamed, trumpeted and began retreating, thus wounding several of the soldiers of their own army. This angered Wazir Khan and he ordered his men to shower the Sikhs with cannon balls. But, as the Sikhs had the protection of trees and bushes, hence these balls did not affect them much. On the other hand, the Sikh cannons began shelling the Sarhindi cannons. Soon, the Sarhindi cannons were silenced because their masters (operators) had been killed by the Sikh canons. Since the Sikh soldiers were not under direct attack, their horsemen pushed forward and entered the frontline of the Sarhindi army. Soon there was full fighting in the midst of the Sarhindi army. The Sikh soldiers began cutting the enemies like carrots. In minutes, hundreds of them were slain. This frightened them and they began running away. The first to desert were the *ghazis* (recruited in the name of 'holy war') as a very large number of them had already been killed.

Finding his soldiers over-awed, Wazir Khan himself went to the soldiers and inspired them in the name of Islam and *Allah*. His minister Sucha Nand too joined him. Finding Wazir Khan and Sucha Nand near them, the Sikh soldiers attacked the enemy so forcefully that most of them began fleeing from the battle-field in order to save their lives. Some Sikh soldiers chased them. But, they did not kill the coward Sarhindi soldiers. They allowed them to retreat after leaving their horses and weapons. The Sikhs spared their lives. After this, several Sarhindi soldiers fled from the front line.

Sucha Nand fled the battlefield

Soon hand-to-hand fight began. During this fight Baj Singh and Sucha Nand came face to face. On seeing Baj Singh, Sucha Nand was frightened and he began trembling as if he was facing his death. Coward Sucha Nand took no time to run away, and, he did not stop before he reached Sarhind.

How was Wazir Khan killed

Though Sucha Nand fled the battlefield, Faujdar Wazir Khan was still there, encouraging his soldiers; sitting on his elephant, he was fully active in the frontlines; and when Baj Singh and Fateh Singh saw him, they rushed towards him and attacked him. Wazir Khan fought with great defence but was killed in the hand-to-hand fight with them. There are several versions of the death of Wazir Khan: According to Khafi Khan, Wazir Khan was hit by a bullet. According to him Sher Mohammed Khan had attacked Binod Singh. But, at the same time a bullet hit Wazir Khan and Sher Mohammed Khan rushed to help him.⁴ In this situation Sher Mohammed Khan was killed.⁵

According to Kanhaya Lal too, Wazir Khan was killed by a bullet.⁶ But Latif says that Wazir Khan was killed by an arrow.⁷ According to Mir Ahsan Ijad (in *Shah Nama*), Wazir Khan saw Banda Singh and moved towards him to attack him. When Baj Singh noticed this he kicked his horse and came in between Banda Singh and Wazir Khan. Wazir Khan shot his spear at Baz Singh which the latter captured with his hand and threw the same back towards Wazir Khan. This spear hit the horse of Wazir Khan and he fell down. Even in this position, Wazir Khan shot an arrow at Baj Singh which pierced the arm of the latter. At this moment Wazir Khan attacked Baj Singh with his sword too. But, before Wazir Khan's sword could hit Baj Singh's body, Fateh Singh gave a strong blow with his sword which almost chopped off the right arm of Wazir Khan, and with another blow his head too was severed. Yar Mohammed, in *Dastur-ul-Insha*, writes:

"Wazir Khan's head was hung on a spear and his trunk was dragged behind a cart up to Sarhind".

After the battle was over, the Sikhs cremated their martyrs in large groups. After covering a distance of about 20 kilometres the Sikh army reached Sarhind. It was not yet dawn. The gates of the walled city were closed from inside, hence they could not enter; they had to break open the gates and for this purpose they had to fight the garrison of the Sarhind regime. The Sikhs were carrying with them the body of Wazir Khan. They took a round of the main streets of the town to show the head and trunk of the body of Wazir Khan which, later, they hung from a tree so that the people may see with their own eyes the fate of the cruel ruler. It being extremely hot weather; the body of Wazir Khan began stinking. The vultures began picking upon the body to get their share. This frightened the residents of Sarhind and they begged mercy of the Sikhs. Banda Singh sent them a message telling them that the Sikhs will not trouble any innocent person; only the tyrant officials shall be punished.

How was Sucha Nand killed?

When the Sikhs gained the confidence of the residents of Sarhind, most of them began co-operating with the Sikhs. One of them also gave the Sikhs information about the hideout of Sucha Nand. After fleeing from Chappar Chiri he had gone to Sarhind but did not flee further as he wanted to manage his wealth. Soon, he was arrested and paraded through the streets of Sarhind like an animal, with a string through his nostrils, and, around his neck with a rope. He was asked to beg alms from folk. While he was being paraded through the streets of Sarhind, common Hindu and Muslim folk, who had been victims of his cruelty and injustice, threw stones at him. Due to stoning and torture he died in the evening.

Sucha Nand could have escaped death by fleeing from Sarhind, but he did not do so because of his wealth. He had hoarded immense wealth; all this was confiscated and deposited in the Sikh treasury. Mohammed Qasim writes: '*It seems that he had collected all this wealth for this day...People said that there was no form of injustice that Wazir Khan had not perpetrated on the poor people; and, now, there was no seed of (cruelty) which did not sprout; as he sowed, so did he reap.'*⁸

Sucha Nand's family too got its share of punishment; they were stripped of their precious clothes and allowed just under clothes and were compelled to beg through the

streets of the town. The residents were told that none shall give them more than one *kaudi* (one twentieth of a paisa) i.e. trifling.

Wazir Khan's wife given stipend.

Wazir Khan, the Faujdar of Sarhind had been killed in the battle of Chappar Chiri. Hearing this, Wazir Khan's wife Khair-ul-Nisa and his son fled Sarhind . On April 15, 1711, when Bahadur Shah, the Mughal emperor was in the area of Chhat (near Banur), she presented herself before the emperor and stated the state of her poverty. At this the emperor ordered that she should be given a daily allowance of five rupees (which should be paid from the treasury of Batala. He also commanded that Wazir Khan should be addressed as 'shaheed'.⁹ Whereras the Sikhs do not believe on this aspect of story, wrongfully presented by some scholars, and for them Wazir Khan was solely responsible for the burtal murder of *the Sahebzadas*



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- 3 Elliot and Dowson, History of India as told by its Historians.
- 4 Khafi Khan, Muntakhab-ul-Lubab., p. 653; Irvine, Later Mughals, vol. 1, p. 96; Elliot and Dowson, History of India As Told By Its Historians, vol.7, p.414).
- 5 The Malerkotla family's history states wrongly that Sher Mohammed khan died in 1712; the contemporary evidence confirms that he was killed in the battle of Chappar Chiri.
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Bhagat Surdas – Follower of ‘Gurmat’ Philosophy

SURJAN SINGH PBM, PBS, FRGS, BA (LOND)*

Bhagat Surdas Ji, whose original name was Madan Mohan, was a devotee of God. According to the writer of *Mahan Kosh*, he was born in 1529 to a high-ranking Brahmin family. (Some say that he lived from 1483 to 1573). As he grew up, he gained proficiency in Sanskrit, Persian and other regional languages, but had natural talents for composing poetry and music. It is said that he had a deep passion for singing lyrics of Divine love.

It appears that his singing of devotional songs attracted the attention of Emperor Akbar, who appointed him governor of the *parganah* of Sandila. Being a person of simple and compassionate heart, he used to help the poorer people. This was reported by the enemies of Surdas, to the Emperor. An investigation was conducted and he was suspended. Later, Akbar found that there was no loss to his treasury, and wanted to install him back. But Surdas rejected the offer and took to the company of holy men and dedicated himself completely to the Lord. He settled in Khashi and passed away there in 1573.

Not many readers of Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji, pause to reflect on the importance of the single line of Surdas, which is incorporated in the Granth Sahib by Guru Arjan Devji on page 1253. This may be due to the fact that Surdas’s name is not mentioned in the line. However, by doing this, Guru ji has placed Bhagat Surdas on par with other saints of the Bhagati Movement of South Asia. Names of 15 bhagats are recorded in Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji – Beni, Bhikhan, Dhanna, Farid, Jaidev, Kabir, Namdev, Parmanand, Pipa, Ramanand, Ravidas, Sadhna, Sain, Surdas and Trilochan.

The one line of Surdas in Guru Granth Sahib is charged with Gurmat philosophy. It would be an excellent thing for us to examine this single line critically. We shall also examine the hymn of Guru Arjan Devji’s in Raag Sarang (page 1253) on Surdas.

Bhagat Surdas provides the following revelation: “ਛਾਡਿ ਮਨ ਹਰਿ ਬਿਮੁਖਨ ਕੇ ਸੰਗੁ ॥” It means, “O my mind, do not associate with those who have turned their backs on their Lord”. *Bemukhan* (ਬਿਮੁਖਨ) here is a powerful word. If a person keeps company with a person who has turned his back on his Lord, it will entangle him in *Maya*. He would want more money than necessary and will not hesitate to take over other people’s rights for

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himself. The advice of Surdas is to avoid at all cost the company of such persons who outwardly show that they are pious, but inwardly are criminals. There is no dearth of them (ਅਸੰਖ ਗਲਵਡ ਹਤਿਆ ਕਮਾਹਿ ॥ ਅਸੰਖ ਪਾਪੀ ਪਾਪ੍ਯ ਕਰਿ ਜਾਹਿ ॥- SGGS: 4). Non-believers, fake fakirs and fake saints, fall in this category.

Using the revelation of Bhagat Surdas, Guru Arjan Devji composed a *shabad* (hymn) in Surdasji's name (page 1253). The gist of the hymn is as follows. Being intoxicated by the melody of celestial bliss, they dedicate to the Lord, their bodies, soul and everything else. Seeing the Lord, they are freed of sin and corruption. But a person who has turned his back on the beauteous Lord and desires for himself all worldly riches is likened to a leech on the body of a leper. Surdas says that the Lord has taken his mind in His Hands and has granted him heavenly bliss.

An important question is raised as to why Guru Arjan Devji, selected only one line for inclusion in *Adi Granth*, when the whole hymn of Surdas is given in the *Bhai Banno Wali Beed*. Here, Surdas has likened a 'bemukhan' to a snake, an elephant, a crow, a donkey and a stone. He has not mentioned, how these fallen people can be emancipated, and this according to Sikh intelligencia goes against Sikh philosophy as there is always an opportunity for a sinner to genuinely regret his past mis-deeds and beg for forgiveness. This could probably be the reason why Guru Arjan Devji selected only the first line.

There is some confusion regarding the Surdas whose first line of a hymn is contained in Sri Guru Granth Sahib and another Surdas who was either born blind or became blind later on. He too was a great poet and able to compose beautiful soul-stirring songs. It is believed that when he was in his early thirties, he came under the influence of a South Indian philosopher, Vallabhacharya, who blessed him with Krishna-consciousness. His most famous anthology of poems is known as "Sursagar", containing 125,000 different kinds of songs, but only 5,000 have been brought to the surface. The songs deal with village life, women teasing, children playing, people in festive mood and of the love, quarrels and playfulness of Radha and Krishna. It is said that Tansen, the singer at Akbar's court, used to sing compositions from "Sursagar".

However, this is not the blind Surdas of "Sursagar", who has a place of honour in Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji. □

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“Sikligar & Vanjaras - Gurus’ loved ones”

BALJEET SINGH*

The name Sikligar and Vanjaras, immediately creates a picture in the mind, vagabond people, moving in carts, pitching tents in the open grounds or roadsides, living there with their cattles, preparing food in the open, making utensils etc. from iron and selling their products at low rates that too with difficulty, to make a living. The picture ends there and our deep obsession with our materialistic, stressful and self-centred life do not make us ponder over it or raise further questions, regarding the said picture which is not changing or moving for decades rather centuries. Why so? Why our conscious never gets touched with the plight of people? Have we different and thick bly, being part of made us so and knowingly drifted human feelings. ‘materialistic would not like to shrewdness with lot many prove otherwise. hundreds of justifications and compulsions, which have emanated out of compelling circumstances created by us only.



millions of these become so in skinned? Probamad race has we have un-away from Our ego and intelligence’ admit it and our would come out arguments to We can invent e x c u s e s ,

Well, we need to know about these people. Vanjaras, basically of Rajput clan from Rajasthan are nomadic wande-rers. They had been trading all type of goods, including weapons, by travelling in caravans, from one part of the country to another, selling their merchandise. Sikligars amongst Vanjaras were excellent blacksmiths. They were known for manufacturing all type of weapons. For centuries, these people had been living like this only.

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British rule in India created a hostile atmosphere for them, making their life more tough and miserable. British wanted to sell their own weapons; moreover they desired weapons manufactured by Sikligars may not reach rebels. So they imposed Criminal Tribes Act- 1871, which classified Vanjaras/Sikigars as criminals. Thus, these people were hounded like criminals by British Police. Consequently, left with no other option, these people had to hide in forests, uninhabited and remote areas. They also remained on move regularly to avoid contact with authorities. These circumstances kept them economically marginalised and socially suppressed. It was demonization of their sect which created such conditions, eventually crushing them.

For centuries, they have been amongst most marginalised, poor, neglected people of the nation. Even after independence things have by and large remained the same for these people. Even now, the quality of life most of these people are leading, would make us hang our heads in shame. Even though, Criminals Tribes Act was repealed in 1952, but the damage done over the centuries couldn't be undone. Many of them don't even have documents such as Aadhar Card, Voter Card, BPL Card, Ration Card etc to prove their identity and to avail benefit under various Govt. schemes meant for SC/ST/OBC even though they fall under these categories.

Poverty, backwardness, illiteracy, marginalized, neglected and deprived section of the society; having substantial population, is scattered all over the country. Scholars who have carried out in-depth study of the subject, have reported different figures as regards the total population of *Sikligars/Vanjaras/Lobanas*. But exact or even near exact figure can't be ascertained, in absence of such data in census. However, the population is substantial, in millions, spread over more than-20000- Tandas (settlements). Presently, they are engaged in petty works such as manufacture of utensils, agriculture implements, house-hold implements, repair of lock and keys, etc. Many are agriculture labourers, small time traders and industrial workers also.

According to various scholars, they came in contact with Guru Nanak Dev Ji, during his travels “***Udasis***”, to central and southern India. However, another version is that they came in contact with Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji, during his visit to central India. Since there is substantial population of these people in A. P., Maharashtra, Karnataka and Chhattisgarh; the fact that they came in contact with Guru Nanak Dev Ji sounds credible. But in any case they were so impressed with the teachings of Gurus & principles of Sikhism, that a large number of them were encouraged to adopt Sikhism. At the time of Guru Gobind

SinghJi, many of them partook “Amrit” and became baptized Sikhs. The level of commitment, conviction and faith is so high that in-spite of extreme challenging circumstances, they still cherish Sikhism.

Moreover, in-spite of adversities, tough & challenging conditions the role models they have produced is worth mentioning here, as it would not only inspire us but also make us search our souls. The brief profile of a few Sikligars/Vanjaras/Lobanasis as under:

- 1) **Bhai Mani Singh (1670-1737):** A saint soldier, scholar, pious and blessed soul with extra-ordinary courage. He was childhood companion of Guru Gobind Singh Ji. He along with his three brothers and five sons partook *Amrit* from Guru Gobind Singh Ji in 1699 at Anandpur Sahib. He acted as a scribe when Guru Gobind Singh Ji dictated Guru Granth Sahib, at Damdama Sahib, Bhatinda. He was third Head *Granthi (Mukh Sewadar)* of Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar, after Baba Budhaji and Bhai Gurdasji. He was also Jathedar of Akal Takht and used to perform katha at Manji Sahib, Amritsar and Anandpur Sahib; also used to perform Gurbani Kirtan. He was executed on the orders of Zakaria Khan in 1737 at Lahore. The torturous death, he was subjected to is a part of daily prayer of Sikhs. He achieved supreme martyrdom. A total of more than fifty members of his family, including his nine sons, achieved martyrdom.
- 2) **Bhai Makhan Shah Lobana (1619-1674):** A merchant, trading in spices, Bengal silk, Kashmiri shawls etc, was coming in a ship with his goods. His ship was caught in a furious storm and was terribly damaged. He performed ‘Ardas’ to Guru Nanak. Such was the faith that, immediately the wind died down and the wild sea calmed. His ship reached the nearest port in Gujarat. It was a miracle. He immediately went to Punjab to offer -500-gold coins to Guruji, as committed by him. But when he reached Bakala in 1664, to his utter surprise, he found Twenty-two people claiming themselves to be Guru. He offered two gold coins to each one of them, which they happily accepted. He also offered two gold coins to Guru Teg Bahadur Ji, who asked him that he had promised five hundred gold coins. Guruji told him that even though he doesn’t require the same, but a Sikh must fulfil his promise. Then, he offered five hundred gold coins and fell at Guruji’s feet. There after, he went to the rooftop and announced that the true Guru has been found.
- 3) **Bhai Lakhi Shah Vanjara:** A trader of cotton & lime, he used to live in Raisina village of Delhi. He was present at ChandniChowk on the day; Guru Teg Bahadur Ji

was martyred in 1675. A dust storm hit Delhi, immediately after Guru Teg Bahadur Ji was executed. Bhai Lakhi Shah Vanjara and Bhai Ude planned to bring several bullock carts loaded with cotton, through Chandni Chowk, at that time. Bhai Lakhi Shah and his son Nagahiya, removed the headless body of the Guruji in a cart loaded with cotton and took it to his home. Since, Aurangzeb had instructed that the body of the Guru should not be removed from that place; Bhai Lakhi Shah cremated the body by burning his house.

4) Bhai Udey Singh: He was the son of Bhai Mani Singh. When hill chiefs mounted attack on Guru Gobind Singh Ji, Bhai Udey Singh was sent to defend Fatehgarh fort. He killed Kesri Chand, commander-in-chief of hill forces and carried his head on his spear. He was honoured by Guru Gobind Singh Ji and declared hero of the battle. When Guru Gobind Singh Ji vacated Anandpur Sahib in 1704, the enemy forces comprising Aurangzeb and hill chiefs attacked the entourage. Bhai Ude Singh alongwith other brave Sikhs kept enemy forces at bay for considerable time, enabling Guruji and other Sikhs, cross Sirsa river. However, Bhai Udey Singh achieved martyrdom in the process.

5) Bhai Bachittar Singh: He was also a son of Bhai Mani Singh. During second battle at Anandpur Sahib, when combined forces of Aurangzeb and hill chiefs had mounted attack, he was advised to defend Lohgarh fort. He faced a drunken elephant, single handedly, so bravely that he could injure the elephant on his forehead. The elephant got furious, ran back and created havoc among enemy's ranks. Bhai Bachittar Singh also achieved martyrdom along with his brother, Bhai Udee Singh, in 1704.

6) Bhai Dayalaji: He accompanied Guru Teg Bahadur Ji, to Delhi in 1675, in the court of Aurangzeb. He remained steadfast, even though Aurangzeb gave option, either convert to Islam or face death. He preferred the second one. He was boiled alive in a big cauldron, in front of Guru Teg Bahadur Ji and achieved supreme sacrifice.

7) Bhai Mansukh: He was a trader and came in contact with Guru Nanak Dev Ji. He became a devout sikh. He preached sikhism in southern India. Such was his personality, conviction and faith that he could inspire king Shivnabh of Sri Lanka to embrace Sikhism.

The list of such great personalities from *Sikligars / Vanjaras* is long, who have been role models and have irrigated the plant of Sikhism with their blood, making it strong like steel.

However, it is extremely disturbing that even though having such a glorious past, supreme sacrifices, association with Guru Sahibans; these people continue to lead a miserable life.

Here comes our role and responsibility; to uplift these people. Even though state has miserably failed to take care of these people, our responsibility increases manifold, for these Guru's loved ones, whose faith can't be shaken in-spite of extreme challenging circumstances

At this juncture it is important to know the scholars who have carried out in depth study of Sikligars/Vanjaras. Prominent among them are; Col. D S Grewal, Jagmohan Singh, Sher Singh, H S Dilgeer, Kirpal Kazak, Himadari Bannerjee, Chamkaur Singh, Gurmukh Singh, Mohinder Singh, Nanak Singh Nishter, Col. PS Randhawa, Harbhajan Singh, Harpreet Khurana, etc. These scholars have done excellent work in publishing the research work carried out by them, pertaining to history and socio-economic conditions of these people.

Fortunately , during last two decades more than thirty-five organizations/institutions/ NGO's have come up, which are working at more than -200- places for overall upliftment of these people. Many of the scholars named above are actively associated with these projects. It would be great disservice if we don't mention names of prominent organizations, which are doing excellent job for these people:

- 1) **International Confederation of Sikhs, Chandigarh:** The organization is actively into education, as well as skill development & employment of children of these people. The ICS is also coordinating with various other organizations actively working for Sikligars/ Vanjaras. Last year, on 28th Jan 2018, a seminar was organized by the ICS, at Rakab Ganj Gurudwara, New Delhi; wherein several organizations and individuals, including overseas delegates, working for these people, participated. The objective was to make strategies and develop coordination for the projects pertaining to upliftment of Sikligars/ Vanjaras.
- 2) **Guru Angad Dev Educational and Welfare Council, Ludhiana:** A school, namely Bhai Baaz Singh Public School, exclusively for the children of Sikligars/Vanjaras, has been started by the council, at Ludhiana. The school was established in 2014, wherein more than -700 -children are getting free education.
- 3) **A Little Happiness Foundation, New Delhi:** They are also sponsoring education of hundreds of children at various centres in UP and MP. They are also into skill development and empowerment of these people. The organization is also carrying out research work pertaining to Sikligars/Vanjaras/Lobanas.

- 4) **Sewak Welfare Society, New Delhi:** They are also sponsoring education of hundreds of children at -10- villages in western UP, wherein there are Tandas of *Sikligars/Vanjaras*.
- 5) **Trust for welfare of Vanjaras and other weaker sections, Mohali:** They have established four schools in Rajasthan and are arranging for training of girls in tailoring at various centres.
- 6) **Karnataka Sikh welfare society, Bangalore:** They are also sponsoring education of more than -500- children in different schools of Karnataka.
- 7) **Bhai Mani Singh Sewa Sanstha, Alwar:** They are sponsoring education and skill development of hundreds of children at Alwar, Rajasthan.
- 8) **Gurusikh Educational Society, Dehradun:** They have set up a school at Dehradun where hundreds of children are getting education.
- 9) **Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa Educational Welfare Trust, Kanpur:** They are also sponsoring education of hundreds of children.
- 10) **Khalis Social Welfare Society, Burhanpur (M.P.):** They are also sponsoring education and skill development of hundreds of children in M.P.
- 11) **Nishkam Welfare Council, Canada:** They are sponsoring education of hundreds of children and have also built up more than -100- houses for these people.
- 12) **Sikh Council Of Scotland:** They are sponsoring education of hundreds of children; set up -3- sewing centres; -19- water projects; and -8- Gurudwara buildings. They also got conducted more than -1400- eye surgeries at different centres for these people.
- 13) **British Sikh Council:** They are sponsoring education of hundreds of children, set up a school and -13- Gurudwara buildings.

In addition to above there are various other Organizations/ Societies/ NGO's engaged in several activities, for overall upliftment of *Sikligars/Vanjaras*. A lady, Mrs. Jyoti Grover, single handedly is involved in this project, at Nasik. She has turned around a Tanda. She is taking care of education of around -100- children, along with teaching of Gurbani and Punjabi language. She also got -25- ladies trained in tailoring and is now assisting them in establishing their small scale business, so as to be independent and financially secured. Blessed are these people indeed, who are voluntarily engaged in various activities for the

well being of these poor and neglected people, either through Organizations/ Societies/ NGO's, or in informal groups or even single handedly.

As reported in the beginning that the picture of *Sikligars/Vanjaras* is not moving or changing; well, it has started moving, if we see the settlements (Tandas) wherein these organizations are working. After centuries of neglect, marginalization, poverty, illiteracy, backwardness and what not; light has started falling on thousands of people belonging to these communities. What nobody thought of, two decades ago, is happening. The impact is visible, strong & everlasting.

However, looking to the magnitude of the task, the number of volunteers, along with financial assistance required is on a very high scale. What is required at this stage is closer coordination among various organizations and individuals working for the upliftment of *Sikligars/Vanjaras*. One organization has to act as nodal body for coordinating and sharing the information with all those who are engaged in this task. Research work being carried out is also to be shared at a single platform. It would help in prioritizing the assistance work undertaken by various bodies. By having proper blueprints of tasks being carried out, it would enable us to approach philanthropist, not only among Sikhs, but also others like Azim Premji and even Bill Gates foundation. We can also approach big corporate for assistance under CSR scheme.

There is also need for active participation by various Singh Sabha Gurudwaras, in this project. Since, there are large number of Singh Sabha Gurudwaras spread all over the country; they have to be approached by the organizations which are already working for these people. Seminars to be organized at these Gurudwaras, so as to convince and encourage them for their active involvement as getting volunteers would become easier, along with financial help. These Gurudwaras, may adopt Tandas, in collaboration with the organizations engaged in the wellbeing of *Sikligars/Vanjaras*.

These steps would definitely accelerate the process of upliftment of *Sikligars/Vanjaras*. We have to make it a movement by spreading the message that the entire community is with these Guru's loved ones. It is time to rise above party politics and shed extravaganza we are inclined in our social and religious affairs. We don't require any more gold plated domes in our Gurudwaras. If we can't take care of these people now, it may be too late & the time will never forgive us.

May God give us strength, courage and wisdom for this noble cause.



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The Nihangs: Prestigious Armed Sikh Order

BHUPINDER SINGH**

The *Nihangs* are a militant order among the Sikh people. The word *Nihang* is derived from the Persian language, which mean crocodile, alligator, shark or water dragon, and signifies qualities of ferocity and fearlessness. They are also known as the reckless ones, though some say the word means naked. Originally *Nihangs* were suicide squads of the Mughal army and wore blue uniforms. The Sikhs took the name and the uniform from the Mughals. The order is said to have been founded by one of the elder sons of Guru Gobind Singh and it became very popular among the Sikhs. *Nihangs*, also known as *Akalis* (servitors of the timeless God), wear blue and dedicate their lives to the service of the community. Members of the present-day Sikh political party – the *Akali* party also wear blue turbans.

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One or God Almighty. The *Akalis* are the only fanatical order of Sikhs and they are *Khalsa* or *Govindi Singhs* of the pro-nounced type. It is said that Guru Gobind Singh ji himself founded and organized this sect as a counterpoise to the Pathan Ghazi. *Akali*, a term now adopted by members of the dominant Sikh political party, the Shiromani Akali Dal, founded in 1920, and groups splitting from the Akali Dal from time to time was earlier used for *Nihangs* (q.v.), an order of armed religious zealots among the baptized Sikhs (*Khalsa*).

While kingdoms were being lost and won around them, these dedicated soldiers of the *Khalsa* – ‘immortals’ as they genuinely believed themselves to be – devoted themselves

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to the care of Sikh shrines. They had few needs and to serve a temporal master was against their creed. They were difficult men to get along with. Their whole way of life was a paradox. On the one hand they were humble and pious people continually praying and doing menial jobs for the love of the Guru in holy places and gurdwaras, and on the other hand, they believed that they were entitled to get from the community whatever they needed for their upkeep.

Before Maharaja Ranjit Singh came to power; during the period of upheaval, when the Misls were breaking up and Sikhs were at each other's throat, *Shahid or Nihang Misl* was the only one that kept aloof. The service of the *Shahid or Nihang Misl* was completely selfless, as the leaders of this misl did not occupy any territory. When fratricidal wars started among the Sikh *Misls*, the *Nihangs* remained neutral, refusing to raise their weapons against the fellow Sikhs. But whenever and wherever any misl faced a non-Sikh enemy, the brave men of this misl fought with unmatched valour, and helped keep the Sikh flag (*Nishan Sahib*) flying high. After the battle they would always retire to their camps and immerse themselves in their religious duties.

Life in the open plains of Punjab, seasoned by constant riding and physical exercise had kept the *Nihangs* fit and more than aggressive. They lived in their deras or camps, where they performed their religious duties and practiced martial arts and horsemanship. They were equally apt at fighting on foot as well as on horseback. Though do not have formal education, yet they have had knowledge of Sikh scriptures, excellent warriors capable of moving at great speed and of enduring hardships that could decimate an army on foot. They were horsemen and their descendants are horsemen even today. Their equestrian skills were superb and even today they keep horses in their deras and their horsemanship is admirable.

Whenever there was any especially dangerous or bloody task to be done, or any difficulty to be overcome requiring courage and fearlessness to a very high degree, the Akalis were usually chosen to perform it. The *Nihangs* were fanatic bands of fighters who had since the times of Guru Gobind Singh formed the commando or suicide squads/ troops of the Khalsa armies; they were employed on occasions when every other method proved futile and all was given up as lost. These men knew no fear. Only the fierce and warlike can dominate others. The *Nihangs* had won the name for their valour and it was believed that they were invincible. They always wore arms, the berserks of the clan went

to battle as if they were going for a feast. They were dour and disciplined fighters, full of fire and dog like in their devotion to their religion and Guru. They were savage, wild, fierce, and tenacious with the lust for battle and made savage attacks. They were the flower of the Sikh armies. These people were an answer to the Muslim Gazis and the enemy dreaded them.

To give the Gazis a taste of their own kind of religious fanaticism, Maharaja Ranjit Singh used Akali Phula Singh and his band of *Nihangs*. The *Akali* character combined the best and the worst features of human beings. Their best quality was their dashing gallantry and their worst was blind fanaticism. Ranjit Singh made use of both these qualities at the same time by throwing the Akalis into battle at critical moments in engagements against similar Muslim fanatics, for example, at Kasur and Nowshera. He owed many of his victories to the desperate valour of the Nihangs.

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among the Sikh masses. In the matter of religious doctrine and practice, they were uncompromisingly orthodox. According to Ali-ud-Din Mufti, *Akalis* were an order that never cared about death and misery. And because of the respect for this order the Sikhs were strictly forbidden from oppressing these people or shedding their blood and doing so was a sinful act. The Akalis have, ever since their origin, been held in high esteem by the Sikhs. Their contingents were called the forces of Guru Gobind Singh. Therefore, they enjoyed the regard of the whole Sikh community. It was for this very reason that the *Shahid* or *Nihang Misl* was held in deep veneration.

In the words of Gordan, “They exercised a fierce scrutiny as censors in upholding strict compliance with the militant creed of the Singhs, constituted themselves defenders of the faith against all innovations, took a prominent part in the councils in the planning and arranging of expeditions for averting national dangers and in educating the people in the doctrines of the Sikh religion.” Through their extraordinary zeal and enthusiasm, they acquired the character of the priests in which capacity they acted effectively while directing the conduct of the Sikh councils at the Akal Takht. They did not like the Europeans and Muslims because of their anti-Sikh practices. According to Malcolm they were, “insufferable to strangers for whom they entertain a contempt which they take little pains to conceal.”

The Nihangs have a glorious past and during their hey days they were admired, respected and held in a high esteem. They were long the dreaded not only by their enemies, but of the other Sikhs , and under Maharaja Ranjit Singh their power was very great. The *Nirmalas*, *Udasis*, *Sevapantis* and Nihangs (or *Akalis*) were liberally endowed with grants of land by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Sikh chiefs and nobility. During the days of the Khalsa Raj, Maharaja Ranjit Singh gave the Nihangs a lot of concessions, perks and privileges, but they refused to take any pay/remuneration for their services. They were venerated, honoured and recognized for their daring deeds, chivalry and dauntless courage, but since the annexation of the Punjab the sect is declining.

Today the Nihangs are still living in the past; they live in a world of their own, of past memory, not divorced from fancy; their dress and lifestyle has not changed much. They are rigid adherents to the five K's prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh, but to show their absolute devotion to the sword, they supplement the 5 K's by carrying steel about their person to a very ridiculous extent. Nevertheless, they are a picturesque lot – the Sikh version of the Spanish author Miguel de Cervantes' Don Quixote with speech full of braggadocio.

A Nihang describes himself as a sava lakh (equal to 125,000) or a *fauj* (army) in himself and calls his dera/camp a *chhauni* (cantonment). Similarly they have colourful names for many items and actions. Coarse food like grams is *badam* (almonds); onions is *ruppa* (silver pieces), a chillie is *ladaki* (a quarrelsome dame); shoes/slippers, *athakk savari* (tireless mount); to die, *charchai karna* (an order to march out for an invasion/expedition) – and so on. This vocabulary was coined in the difficult days when the Sikhs suffered fierce persecution at the hands of the Mughal rulers. The jargon of hilarious

euphemisms and humorous parallels to the words and expressions in common use is indicative of high-spirited confidence and courage and how light they made of their adversity and mocked at their own misery and misfortune, in those dark days. This language was used to keep their morale and spirits high and to belittle articles of worldly comfort (beyond their reach) to the point of ridicule.

Today, Anandpur Sahib, the birthplace of the Khalsa, remains the main centre of Nihang gatherings. They assemble here in thousands in the month of March every year to celebrate *Hola Mohala*, a Sikh festival introduced by Guru Gobind Singh. On that occasion, they display their martial and equestrian skills and hold competitions (in the use of traditional weapons) and mock battles. The most spectacular part of the festival at Anandpur is the magnificent procession of *Nihangs* on horses and elephants and on foot in their typical costumes carrying a variety of traditional and modern weapons and demonstrating their expertise in using them. The media, journalists and foreigners from all over the world throng to watch the martial activities of the *Nihangs*, and to catch them in their cameras and also to make films or short documentaries on them.

The names of some famous Nihangs are Baba Deep Singh (1682-1757), the founder of the *Shahid Misl* and Damdami Taksal (school of Sikh learning) - who fell fighting at the Golden Temple, Amritsar; Nihang Gurbakhsh Singh (of village Khem Karan, who along with thirty Sikhs pounced on the army of Abdali at the Golden Temple and attained martyrdom), Akali Naina Singh (guardian and tutor of Akali Phula Singh), Akali Phula Singh (*Jathedar* of Akal Takht and commander of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's crack Akali brigade), Nihang Natha Singh, Nihang Hanuman Singh and Akali Kaur Singh Nihang, a scholar and religious preacher (1886-1955).

A paragraph from Rudyard Kipling's book 'KIM' (Page 71-72, Chapter IV) reads as follows:

Then an Akali, a wild-eyed, wild-haired Sikh devotee in the blue-checked clothes of his faith, with polished '*chakkar*' quoits (a ring of iron) glistening on the cone of his tall blue turban, stalked past, returning from a visit to one of the independent Sikh states, where he had been singing the ancient glories of the Khalsa to College-trained princelings in top-boots and white-chord breeches. Kim was careful not to irritate that man; for the Akali's temper is short and his arm quick. □

Need to Preserve the Gurdwaras in Bangladesh

DR. PARAMVIR SINGH*

Takht Sri Harmandir Ji Patna Sahib is one of the five holy seats of Sikhism. While tracing its history and tradition, it came to light that the Gurdwaras in Bangladesh are being managed by the Takht. To get more information, there was an opportunity to travel to Bangladesh in the month of February 2019. Some important facts appeared regarding Gurdwaras in Bangladesh which seek the attention of the Sikh Sangat.

In Dhaka, it was an opportunity to visit the four Gurdwaras there - Gurdwara Nanakshahi, Ramna; Gurdwara Bangla Bazar; Gurdwara Rare Bazar, Gurdwara Mohan Singh. Among them, Gurdwara Nanakshahi is situated along the wall of Dhaka University. It is said that Dhaka University is situated on a portion of the Gurdwara's land. The Gurdwara was built originally by Bhai Natha, a missionary who came here during the time of sixth Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji. The present, strong and long lasting, building of the Gurdwara was built in 1830 but was neglected during 1947 to 1972 when the western Pakistan ruled over its eastern counterpart as its colony. It was repaired and renovated after Bangladesh came into being in 1972. The devotees from Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Christian and Sikh communities assemble here on every Friday and partake in *Langar*. However, a few rooms are available for Sangat where only 50-60 pilgrims can be accommodated for stay. The two old manuscripts of Sri Guru Granth Sahib and *Kharavan* (wooden sandals) of the ninth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji, are the focus of attraction for the Sangat. Efforts were made to preserve the manuscripts of Guru Granth Sahib in original form, but now the work has been stopped: the process needs special attention.

Baba Swarn Singh and Mohammad Ul-Malik had contributed a lot to save this Gurdwara. When the rulers of East Pakistan took possession of the Gurdwara's land and expanded the Dhaka University during the 1960's, Baba Swarn Singh appealed in the Munsif court and got a verdict in his favour. The government and the university had

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challenged this decision in the High Court but before the verdict came, Bangladesh came into being on December 16, 1971 and before that on December 14, 1971 Swarn Singh and his Muslim friend Muhammad Ul-Malik were shot dead. Both had sacrificed their life to save the Gurdwara but there is no sign in the shrine to commemorate their memory. Efforts should be made to make this memory permanent.

On left side of the main entrance adjoining the Gurdwara there is a building with a compact hall and two rooms at ground level and four rooms at the first floor. The building is named as the Sikh Research Centre but now no research activity is carried on. Kazi Nurul Islam, now a retired Professor of Dhaka University, had been associated with this centre and it is said that he was the figure in establishing it. To re-activate this centre it is significant to get help of Dhaka University and the scholars of Sikhism. There is a Department of Sikh Studies in Dhaka University. Many students of the university want to get information about Sikhism. If the Gurdwara becomes functional, it will play a vital role in academic activities. It is indeed a great opportunity to see the students of Dhaka University in the Gurdwara on Friday assembly. A few of them were surprised to see the unique practice of *Langar* and *Sangat* in the Gurdwara. They wanted to know about Sikhism but most of them are not comfortable in understanding in Bengali language. There is a need to prepare books for the students in Bengali language by the scholars having knowledge of Sikhism and Bangla language.

Gurdwara Sangat Tola, commemorating the visit of Guru Tegh Bahadur, is situated at Dhaka's Bangla Bazar. The old building of the Gurdwara is in very bad shape and it is feared it may collapse anytime. No *Granthi* or *Sevadar* is there to manage the affairs of



World Religious Studies University and department authoritative regarding centre becoming it can play a fulfilling their needs. It was pleasure for me professors and Dhaka the Gurdwara

daily routine. The Granthi or a Sevadar, from Gurdwara Nanakshahi, goes there to attend the pilgrims. There is no regular visitor and the Jathas from India visit twice a year to attend the *Vaisakhi* fair in April and *Prakash Purab* of Guru Nanak Dev Ji in the month of November. The land of the Gurdwara was illegally occupied by some people. In a successful effort, the land has been got vacated from the five families but about six families are still in illegal possession of the Gurdwara land. The need is to get the land vacated from them also. A new multi-purpose building should be constructed in place of the present crumbling structure.

Gurdwara Mohan Singh was said to be behind the Chitra Mahal Cinema. Earlier it was named as Nagar Mahal Cinema. Parash Lal Beghi, president of Gurdwara Management Committee, Bangladesh, tells us that S. Mohan Singh was his grandfather. Giving information regarding the Gurdwara he disclosed that in 1971 the Pakistan army had set the Gurdwara on fire and S. Mohan Singh was martyred inside. Now the Gurdwara does not exist.

The Gurdwara in Rare Bazar was situated at a distance of about one kilometre from the Bazar and now the area is known as new Dhan Mandi. Subhash Chandra Pal, born in 1946, said that one of his relatives used to serve at this place. He had become the follower of Guru Nanak and kept his hair unshorn. There was a well, known as Guru Nanak's well, at this place and it was believed that it had miraculous curative properties. Pal said that he also drank water from this well several times. Shri Subhash Chandra took us to that place but when we reached there, we found a six-storied building at the place in place of the Gurdwara.

One Gurdwara is located at Mymensingh, the town is situated about 110 km from Dhaka. The Gurdwara, situated at 75 Guha Road, Shiv Bari, near railway station, is said to be built by Sikh employees of the railways who remained there during British period. Some families have occupied the land of the Gurdwara that need to be vacated. The Granthi serving there is sent by the Gurdwara Managing Committee, Bangladesh.

There are two Gurdwaras in Chittagong, about 250 km from Dhaka. The historic Gurdwara Sikh Temple Estate is situated at Chowk Bazaar and the other old Gurdwara Sikh Temple is located in Punjabi Lane, Pahartali area. The Granthi Singh who serves at Chowk Bazar Gurdwara also looks after the place in addition to performing his duties at the former place. His wife, who belongs to Bengal, is also a baptized Sikh and can perform

all the duties of the Gurdwara. Some families have occupied the land of Gurdwara by constructing a temple. This Gurdwara is being managed by a local committee of Chittagong. There is no arrangement for pilgrims' stay or Langar in the Gurdwara. Granthi Singh's wife serves *Langar* to the pilgrims but she can do so only for a few people. A very small number of pilgrims come to visit this place. Their number may be increased if there is a suitable arrangement for Sarai and Langar. The Sikh Jathas who visit Bangladesh to have glimpse of their holy shrines face the problem of inadequate arrangements. Those who visit the shrines in Chittagong, either return back to Dhaka in the evening or stay in hotels. But without arrangement of stay it is very difficult for the pilgrims to remain there at night. There is an open land available around the shrine in Gurdwara's boundary adequate arrangements can be made there for *Langar* and stay.

The other Gurdwara Sikh Temple is situated, about 10 kilometers from Gurdwara Chowk Bazar, at Punjabi lane, Pahartali area. I was told that a Muslim family has been serving here for a long time. Ali Hussein, the head of the family, saved the shrine from an illegal occupant. He appealed against him in the court and succeeded but faced a life-threatening attack from the opponent. However, Ali has since passed away after serving the shrine for more than 60 years and now his eight sons and one daughter reside at the back side of the shrine. They take care of the shrine with the help of the *Granthi Singh* of Gurdwara Chowk Bazar, who perform the required religious duties including the daily Prakash of Guru Granth Sahib. There is an open land available around the shrine can be used for providing some facilities to the Sangat. The two shrines and the land situated in the name of the Gurdwara Chowk Bazar is under the supervision of District Judge of Chittagong.

In 1972, after the liberation of Bangladesh, Captain Bhag Singh and S. Joginder Singh Jogi worked day and night to save and revive the glory of Gurdwaras in Bangladesh. With the help of their friends, religious leaders and Gurdwara committees they did a commendable work to save the shrines. Although the Sikhs migrated to India after the partition in 1947 but the devotees of Guru Nanak are still present there who perform various duties in the shrines and try to maintain them.

Takht Sri Harmandir Ji Patna Sahib has entrusted the Kar-seva of shrines in Bangladesh to the *Sampardai* of Sant Baba Tara Singh Ji of Sarhali in Taran Taran district

of Punjab. They provide assistance in sending the *Granthi Singhs* and making other arrangements for the pilgrims but, presently, no Kar-seva is being done in any Gurdwara.

Now it is the time to reduce illegal encroachments at Gurdwara Sangat Tola, Dhaka; Gurdwara Guru Nanak Temple, Mymensingh; Gurdwara Sikh Temple, Chittagong etc., and to increase the facilities for the pilgrims. The present secular government of Bangladesh, which respects all religions and treats them alike, can play a vital role in releasing the illegal encroachments on the grant lands. There is a need to work immediately in this direction by getting support from Sikh organizations and the devotees. The Gurdwara Managing Committee, Bangladesh is also keen to work for the welfare of the shrines, but because of lack of *Sangat* and proper funds for *Langar* etc. they can hardly move in this direction. They need necessary support and help to get the Gurdwara lands vacated and making other arrangements.

Guru Nanak Dev Ji's 550th Parkash Purab is being celebrated globally and government of India has announced to organize special programs in every country through its high commissions. However, there is no Sikh population in Bangladesh: the Sikh community in India should come forward to celebrate this event with the help of Indian high commission. A request should be made to the Bangladesh government to adopt a simple visa system for the pilgrims seeking to visit the Gurudwaras in Bangladesh and to set up a Visa Centre in Punjab in order to facilitate the devotees forever. *Granthi Singhs* who visit there to perform routine services get a tourist visa for three months, long-term visas should be granted to them. Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Sri Amritsar, Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee and Takht Sri Harmandir Ji Patna Sahib Management Committee should come forward and join hands to provide basic amenities and facilities to the visiting pilgrims in Bangladesh. □

**FOR BASIC KNOWLEDGE,
BOLD COMMENT READ**

The Sikh Review

Conflict Resolution - The Sikh Way

K S AHLUWALIA **

Conflicts arise when one needs to score a point, prove that his thought or belief has more sanity, more validity, and more acceptance, than an alternative. And these fixated ideas make one cemented and rigid, thereby deviating himself from rejoicing, celebrating and experiencing the expansive view of the soulful ever-expanding self existence.

Vast majority of us will waste without blinking an eye, countless man hours of our limited energy, our efforts directly to simply outscore the other – amusingly our body language stiffens our octaves, our thinking becomes uni-polar, one dimensional, myopically focussed. And then we become largely unfocused.

Guru Nanak gave a new dimension to how differences may be constructively explored probed and expanded thereby resulting in their dissolution. His approach stemmed not from trying to prove one view more right than another. *For Him experiencing and living the truth was the aim. His view: There isn't any Hindu truth or a Muslim truth. There isn't your or my truth. Only the truth exists. So, let's discard our individual truths and seek, cherish, celebrate, immerse in the ultimate truth.*

Guru Nanak's teachings were simple, easy to grasp and adapt. He offered new and better insights, foresights, observational ability, and analytical steps to experience *maturity – the responsibility of being oneself*. For Nanak a human is born to achieve life, but it all depends on him; he can miss it, he may simply go on breathing, eating, breeding, excreting, and growing old thereby moving towards his grave and gradual death. *Life is not growing old, it's growing up.* Growing old, every animal is capable of while growing up is a prerogative of human beings. *And yet only a few claim this right.*

Growing up as elucidated in Sikh Ethos is moving every moment deeper into the principle of life- going farther away from death- not towards death. *The deeper you go into life, the more you understand experience and savour the immortality within you. For a Sikh death is the greatest illusion.*

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Growing up infers growing deep within one's own self and that's where one's roots lie. This in other words is maturity – being child like, not childish, being innocent not ignorant. Master exalted us all to be like a child- one who has transcended the desires – he is one with and in the moment – absorbed, immersed, totally and in totality- a bird on the wing catches his eyes so totally. A butterfly, it's beautiful colours, and he is enchanted, the rainbow in the sky and he cannot conceive that there can be anything more significant or richer. And for him the starry night is eternity personified. He is rich, centred, and innocent – because he is experiencing the richness of innocence- pure distilled bliss.

There isn't any iota of ignorance in him because he is aware that it's poor. It's a beggar, it wants this or that, it wants to be knowledgeable, it wants to be respectable, wealthy, powerful and proving itself right each time, every time. *Ignorance moves on the path of desire, while innocence as elucidated in the Sikh Ethos is a state of desirelessness- where scoring brownie points by usage of astute vocabulary, knowledge, oratory skills, and octaves are passé.* There exists room to discuss without taking fixed positions – in fact in all cases *Guru Nanak and subsequent Masters changed the traditional fixated goal post itself. And suddenly the fixaters had no clue how to converse further. Innocence needs to be supported, protected, because that's our greatest treasure- found only after arduous effort.* Hence whenever one is in a conflict zone, one is fractured and fragmented; he has actually missed life, and the first step for him is to go back to the roots – get connected with his innocence.

And how can that be done? Just imbibe the following:

- Drop your knowledge
- Forget your previous learnings, theologies, and philosophies
- Be willing to unlearn and be excited to re-learn. Unfreeze to re-freeze.

Be born again, become innocent and it's all in your hands again. I need to dust the mind of all that I know, all that that I have borrowed, all that which has come from traditions, rituals, conventions; all that is given by others to me. Just get rid of it. Be real and in the now.

This requires courage – the joy of living dangerously- where no uncertainty exists – it's only wonder, where no insecurity exists. It is freedom. Master did not come here to give us a dogma that makes us certain. No promise for the future because any promise will make me secure. He simply was here to make me alert, aware- that is, to be here and now, with all the insecurities that life has, with all the uncertainty in life, with all the danger that life hands us.

He wanted me to be free to taste the freedom with the courage to be yourself. Hence, he transformed the fear, a constant companion for most of us, into wondrous existence till eternity. He exalted us to get rid of the dogmas- shun the ostrich approach, cause following it will never change one's life. It simply will make us more stupid, more imprisoned, lonelier, more aggressive, and more broken.

Understand that nothing is secure, permanent, because a secure life is worst than death. *Life is a series of glorious uncertainties, an avalanche of surprises, experiences, and that's its beauty.* Whenever you say you are certain, you simply declare your death; you have committed suicide. Life goes on moving in infinite uncertainties. That's its freedom. Don't call it insecurity.

Let's revisit some happenings that were conflict situations in the life journey of the Guru Nanak and how he resolved them- by not winning or scoring a point – but by changing the thinking dimensions – expanding the thought, vision and its accompanying belief. He simply rewrote a new game- which wasn't his or mine – a celestial game which each can play and immerse to one's own depth.

Enumerating first are those events in which He effected a Paradigm shift to challenge and change the centuries old traditions, by taking on a well entrenched elite, who believed that they were the only custodians of the truth. Pause, reflect that they wielded unassailable power, mass following and knowledge which was never to be challenged. *An apt example for ways to dissolve conflicts – amongst unequals.*

- **Sacha Sauda** – transcending from mundane to something more fulfilling, more enriching. Charity or sharing with the have nots and not feeding an obese child. Giving due to one who deserves.
- **Janeu ceremony** – Leapfrogging over the self constrained rituals that inwardly coiled my thinking ability by showing a better path to be a centred being – whose wisdom drives his actions. One who could think beyond, think clearly, and think simply.
- **Water offerings to Sun God** - A den of ritualism, fixated knowledge followers, masses being blinded – and imagine one who challenges this basic thought – is an example of what extreme conflict situation could be. And yet the goal posts changed – not by brute force, or by effecting miracles. It was one against the masses – and yet he stood his ground- logical, analytical and a clear line of sight was all that he had. No emotional outburst, no one-upmanship. It was simply to make others aware what of the ultimate truth.
- **Kabba** – the house of God- An apt example of conflict – where traditions, fanaticism, absolute power broking ruled the roost. And there He did the unthinkable and reactions

poured. With grit, determination, patience and logic, prevailing hostility dissolved paving way for better awareness.

- **Kauda** – The most challenging task is to change the thought of one who believes that his past success and beliefs are the best practices. Here the Master did not paint him in black or white- but was more focussed to solve things immediately thereby refocusing his misguided energy into something more constructive, useful, and conducive, for both his individual and societal evolution.

The list is endless – other examples also exist of Wali Khandari, Rameshwaram, Kamrupa, Benares, Malik Bhagho, Babar etc.

Let's re-visit another perspective. While the above weren't the very knowledgeable ones – let's look at how did he resolve the conflicts/ differences, with the ones who thought they were better aware and were the guiding angels to the masses – Conversations with *Siddhas – The Sidhh Ghost*.

- He followed the approach of giving and taking – endeavour was not to prove them wrong. He understood that they were clinging to their self-validating theories instead of seeing the real world. Physical energy or manipulative usage of one's own knowledge may end things quickly but not necessarily well. He followed a different approach – of being sincere, while focussing on emotions with intelligence (emotional Intelligence) and led them all to re-lay their path in search of the expansive truth and truthful living. Not mere academics but actionable actions too. Interestingly some of these Siddha's narrative was dictated by one being simply upset and all he wanted was to be heard. Thus acceptance, caring and patience exhibited made the day.

If one dissects the accompanying thought in the whole conversation – the Master starts by making them like him and accepting him. When the others feel positive about the process, they are more amenable to accept differing and opposite views to their earlier beliefs and thoughts.

Guru Nanak was calm, clear, precise, and concise- which slowed the velocity of the conversation.

- He used active listening and labelled the emotions,
- Inspired them to think beyond their beliefs,
- Made them aware of who they were.
- Thereby created a trusted friendship- the most successful are always getting and giving.

He made them revisit their inherit traits of believing in oneself is nice, yet forgiving oneself is better. Hence one needs to adjust his natural level of self esteem, thereby creating a meaningful story of one's own self.

Take aways- Conflict resolution entails

- Transiting from love to lovingness.
- From reaction to action.
- Rebellion not revolution.
- By decoding the way to one's heart- subtly using the way of intelligence, trust and innocence.

End Result

- It's not a relationship now; it's now a state of being.
- This cake is delicious for all.
- A world sans boundaries.
- It's neither easy, nor difficult, just natural. No more. No less. Perfect as it is.
- The ultimate courage - no beginning, No end – place for everything and everything in place- blissful till eternity.

This folks is my limited understanding of *Conflict Resolution - the Sikh Way.*



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Sardar Narinder Pal Singh: The Brave 'Sikh' MP of Afghanistan

*CONTRIBUTED**

Amidst radically dwindling numbers of Sikhs and Hindus in Afghanistan, Sardar Narinder Pal Singh has been appointed as the new Member of Parliament through the minority quota by the Afghan President Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai. WSN chronicles Sikh Afghan Members of Parliament over the decades.

Despite multifarious challenges to life, the drastically decreased Sikh and Hindu population in Afghanistan, still continues to keep the flag flying.

Narinder Pal Singh, the son of Avtar Singh Khalsa, who was Member of Parliament in 2018, who along with Sikh leaders and killed in a suicide nearly a year ago **ted Member of Parliament.**

With the number of Sikhs and Hindus down from nearly two lakhs thousand, those that remain are fighting a struggle to keep their religious historical legacy intact by guarding their Gurdwaras and Temples.



Afghanistan and other Afghan activists was bomb attack has been nominated Member of Parliament.

Sardar Jai Singh Fani was the first Sikh Member of Parliament in Afghanistan and he was elected as an independent candidate in 1969 during the reign of King Zahir Shah. Sources in the Afghan Sikh community told this writer that when Mohammad Daud Khan became prime minister by overthrowing monarchy under King Zahir Shah, he recognized the qualities of Jai Singh Fani and offered him senior ministership in the first cabinet of the Afghan Republic. However, it was not to be as Sardar Jai Singh passed away in the flight

*Courtesy: SikhNet.com

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on route to Delhi for his treatment. Subsequently, the Afghan Sikhs had Gajinder Singh Safri as the second Member Parliament from 1988 - 1992.

Dr Joginder Singh Tej Khurana was also a member of the Afghan Grand Assembly and has written a foreword of the recent book on Afghan Hindus and Sikhs, painstakingly written by UK based Inderjeet Singh.

Dr Anarkali Kaur Honaryar has been a member of Parliament, a member of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and in 2009 was Radio Free Europe Afghanistan “Person of the Year”.

The National Assembly of Afghanistan is a bicameral body, comprising two chambers, Wolesi Jirga or the lower house with 249 seats and Meshrano Jirga or the Upper House with 102 seats.

It was a Presidential decree by President Harmid Karzai, overruling the Parliament, on 26 August 2003, which gave the Sikh and Hindu Afghan nationals representation in the lower house of the country's Parliament.

While the Afghan Sikh community has welcomed the appointment, many Hindus and Sikhs rue the fact that they have been maltreated so much in the last few decades. They are very skeptical about what Narinder Pal Singh can do under such trying circumstances.

Writing on the timeline of Afghan contemporary history documentalist Pritpal Singh, the Afghan activist, founder and director of Porsesh Research and Studies Organization - Ehsan Shayegan says, “Please do not over optimize the situation by just a photo leaked out on social media. The situation for Afghan Hindu and Sikhs citizens is very tragic in Afghanistan. I have travelled to different provinces, visited their homes and conducted research on them. Photos are political propaganda. Let's not forget how unfair the Afghan politicians have been to our brothers and sisters Hindus and Sikhs.



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UK Sikhs commemorate the 35th Anniversary of Operation Bluestar

SUKHJEEVAN SINGH AND GURSEVEK SINGH*

On 2nd June, tens of thousands of Sikhs gathered in London to join the 1984- 35 Years Remembrance March and Freedom Rally organised by the Federation of Sikh Organisations (FSO). The Sikh Council UK would like to thank all the sangat that attended and express gratitude towards Gurdwaras across the nation that organised transport and supported the event.

The attack on Sri Harmandir Sahib (the holiest shrine of Sikhs) in 1984 changed the course of modern Sikh history. Thirty-five years later, such a vast gathering in the country's capital stands testimony to the unity of Sikhs in their pain over the injustices perpetrated by the Indian Government.

In 2014, the release of previously classified documents revealed the involvement of the British Government with the Indian State during the events of 1984. This served as a chilling shock to the British Sikh community who pressured the government to give answers. Former PM, David Cameron carried out a review lead by Sir Jeremy Heywood to examine the alleged collusion of his late predecessor: Margaret Thatcher. However, the findings of this review have since been rejected as a 'whitewash' by a number of Sikh organisations.

SCUK Secretary-General: Jatinder Singh alongside representatives of various Sikh organisations and human rights activists spoke about injustices against Sikhs as well as the need for a public inquiry of the British Government involvement in 1984.

SCUK also applauds the efforts of long-standing member Justice A.S. Choudhry for his latest publication: ***Sikh Genocide 84*** which amongst much else serves as a source of reference to historians and researchers. This book contains one of the most comprehensive collections of media reports surrounding 1984. Another book, ***The Sikh Martyrs - Volume One***, was released this Sunday and is an anthology of biographies relating to important

*Spokespersons, Sikh Council UK

July 2019

personalities in modern Sikh History. Both of these literary contributions serve as a fitting and active tribute to the events of June 1984.

Finally, we would like to encourage all Sangat to support and watch the upcoming documentary: "**Punjab Disappeared**" that is being showcased in 5 cities across the UK in a national tour this month. Continuing the legacy of Bhai Jaswant Singh Khalra, this project has been produced by Punjab Documentation and Advocacy Project (PDAP), a non-political group uncovering evidence of several thousand '**enforced disappearances**' in **Punjab (presently 8257 cases)**.

Please note: SCUK is the largest representative body of Sikhs in the UK. The views and opinions reflected in any promoted material may not be fully endorsed by SCUK. Our



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Remembering a Sikh postman whose battle benefits the community in UK even today

The UK Sikhs owe it to the first postman who fought for the right to wear a turban and won. A postcard from London reaches his family 59 years later.

Divya Goyal*

In 1955, Sant Singh Shattar moved from Jalandhar to Birmingham. He applied for the job of a postman on March 7, 1960, only to be rejected. As a Sikh, his turban meant he could not meet the Post Office's requirements of wearing a uniform cap. But he fought and won — becoming the first postman in the UK postal department in 1961 to be allowed to wear a turban on duty, a change that helps Sikhs in the UK even today. Fifty-eight years after he won this battle and nearly two years after the Postal Museum, London, installed a panel narrating this inspiring story — a postcard from London has reached Shattar's family in India.

Advertising

Shattar died in 1983, aged 73, at his home in Phagwara, Punjab. His family hadn't been in touch with the UK postal department and was unaware that they had taken such an initiative in Shattar's memory. His daughter-in-law Santosh Kaur, 72, says it was her granddaughter who started searching for traces of her great-grandfather's travels in Birmingham in 2016. But it wasn't until December 2018 that they got to know about the installation. The museum then got in touch with Shattar's family through the UK-based historian Amandeep Singh Madra.

Speaking from Los Angeles, Santosh, who recently visited the museum, says, "We knew little about my father-in-law's struggle as he would not discuss much when he came home. I found a scrapbook in which he'd stick his write-ups and documents about the turban issue and old photographs, but we got no other details." Santosh's son Hartej Bans Singh still lives in Phagwara with his family, and she hopes that they, too, visit London to see "how their great-grandfather's struggle has been recognised".

*Courtesy: indianexpress.com

"My father-in-law also used to write a column '*Pagdi Di Jang*' (Battle for Turban) in vernacular newspapers whenever he came home but never discussed what was going on in Birmingham. We are thankful to the UK postal department for not letting this piece of history go unrecognised" she says.

This March, when Santosh visited the museum, she carried along Shattar's scrapbook. It had, among other things, a 1963 letter from then Punjab chief minister Partap Singh Kairon, in which the CM wrote, "I'm very glad to know the splendid work done by you in vindicating the honour of the turban. It thrills me to know that our brothers have now, through your help, got their rights in England."

Andy Richmond, head of exhibitions, access and learning, at The Postal Museum, writes in an email, "The rejection of his application was referred to the Commonwealth Relations Office by the High Commissioner of India in the UK." After lengthy discussions, Shattar joined in 1961 as a postman in training at Birmingham post office, who was allowed to wear a navy-blue turban instead.

Security was the ground of rejection initially. The Commonwealth Relations Office had written: "Until quite recently, there were strong practical reasons, connected with security, for our requirement that postmen should wear a uniform cap. In the future, we shall not insist that Sikhs who apply for employment as postmen must wear a uniform cap..."

Richmond writes, "The idea to install the panel came from a project we ran in 2014 with a group of people from the University of the Third Age (a global movement of retired people). They had been tasked with researching our archive to find the unsung heroes of the Post Office, who could be featured at the museum. They found an article about Sant Singh in the Post Office Magazine of December 1960." The museum then decided to honour his memory.

While Shattar's victory led the Birmingham Corporation in 1962, Manchester Corporation in 1966 and, later, the UK Railways to allow the turban, in France, the turban struggle continues, with "religious symbols", including the headgear, being banned.

'Pioneering Postman – Birmingham resident Sant Singh Shattar joined the Post Office in 1960, having fought to bring about an important change. When he applied for the job of postman, he was initially rejected. As a Sikh, his turban meant he could not meet Post Office requirements to wear a uniform cap. But the High Commissioner from India in the UK intervened and Post Office reviewed its decision. Sant Singh became the first postman to wear a turban on duty, now an everyday sight,' reads the panel installed at The Postal Museum, London remembering Shattar.



First chronicler of Partition Prof Kirpal Singh dies in Chandigarh at 95

CONTRIBUTED*

Prof Kirpal Singh, the first chronicler of Partition, who started building an archive in 1954, passed away in Chandigarh on 7th May. He was 95.

His last work was aimed at “fixing the responsibility” for the tragedy. He had once said that not even one of the key figures he had interviewed was ready to take responsibility for the monumental human tragedy that had unfolded seven decades ago.

His journey in Partition’s historiography began in 1953 as a young lecturer at Khalsa College, Amritsar. Bhai Veer Singh called him and said what had happened in 1947 was unique. “It has never happened before, it will never happen again. I want to work on Partition but I am too old. You write Partition’s history,” Bhai Veer Singh told Kirpal, himself a victim of the tragedy.

His assistant started visiting refugee camps to document the stories of victims and Singh himself started doing the rounds of offices in Shimla and Delhi to fish out records. This continued for two years.

The turning point came in 1962 when then chief minister Partap Singh Kairon offered to send him to the UK to collect papers related to Punjab.

Over six months, Kirpal interviewed the leading figures connected with Partition—Punjab Boundary Commission chairman Cyril John Radcliffe, Governor of West Punjab Sir Francis Mudie, PM Clement Attlee and Mountbatten’s Chief of Staff Hastings Ismay.

Singh met almost every architect of Partition while compiling his seminal work, ‘Select Documents on Partition of Punjab’. After each interview, he would jot down the excerpts in longhand. These documents are now part of the Punjabi University library in Patiala.

Till his last days, he believed there was a design behind the idea of Partition which, he said, couldn’t be found in documents, but was visible from the interviews of the architects of Partition he did in the UK.

Amid the despair of Partition, he believed that the stories of hope were yet to be told. “People saved girls, collected dowry, and married them off. They sheltered them for years and later united them with families. Both sides saw such stories. The second part, ‘Silver Lines in Dark Clouds’, comprises those stories,” he said □

*Courtesy: Tribune News Service

**To commemorate the
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October, November and December 2019 - of its monthly – The Sikh Review,
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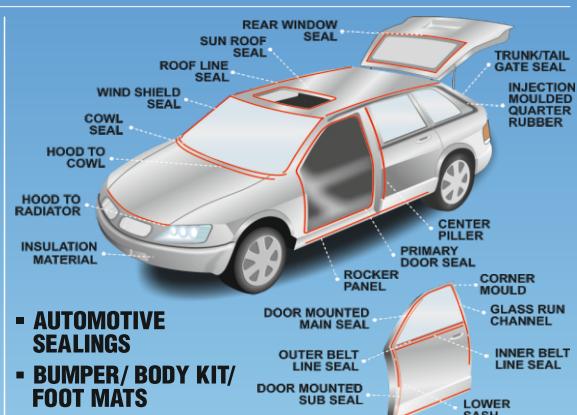


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A Brief Report on Seminar held at Muscat, Oman

DR. HARPREET KAUR*

Guru Nanak Dev Ji evolved the principles of belief as well as moral and rational action, the relevance of which is increasing in the contemporary world. The timeless message of Guru Nanak should be disseminated across the globe and across religions for the Guru erased all differences and laid grounds of a world society. Compassion, contentment, equality and well-being of all (*Sarbat da bhalla*) taught by Guru Nanak Dev would teach the world to be more harmonious.

*During this auspicious year 2019 when the whole world is gearing up for celebrating 550th Birth Anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, many commemorative programmes and creative activities are being held. Many educational activities like, conferences, seminars, workshops etc. and religious activities like, *Katha and Kirtan, Prabhat Pheri* etc. are being organized with fervour in India and other parts of the world. **One such laudable initiative taken by the Indian Government is that the Embassies all over the world would organize lectures and religious events so that diaspora is benefitted.***

In this vein on 28 April 2019, the Embassy of Muscat, Punjabi Wing of Indian Social Club and Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Oman organized a '**Talk on Life and Teachings of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji**'. The event was held at Muscat, Oman in the Embassy of India Auditorium in Al Khuwair.

The Ambassador of India to Oman, Shri Munu Mahawar welcomed two Keynote Speakers from India, Dr. Jaswinder Singh, Principal, Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Khalsa College, University of Delhi and Dr. Harpreet Kaur, Principal, Mata Sundri College for Women, University of Delhi and Guests of Honour, Ahmed Khamis Masood Al Bahri, Director, Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs of Sultanate of Oman, and Prof. S. L. Gupta, Dean of Waljat College, Muscat. Ambassador Munu Mahawar apprised the audience about the forthcoming events to mark the 550th Birth Anniversary of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji in Oman would be screening of two films on the Guru, essay and quiz competitions for the school students, painting exhibition and other cultural events.

* Principal, Mata Sundri College for Women, University of Delhi
[Email:harpreetjaswal5@gmail.com]

S. Karanjeet Singh Matharoo, Convener, Punjabi Wing outlined the significance of the present event and introduced Keynote Speakers from India.

Dr. Jaswinder Singh, Principal, Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Khalsa College spoke on the life, teachings and principles of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. The universal message and ideals propounded by the Guru like, Fatherhood of God, Brotherhood of Mankind, equality, tolerance, empathy and exalted position of women were elaborated by him. He also emphasized on the need to reiterate it in the present times.

As one of the two Keynote Speaker from India, I tried to outlined the *maxim of Kirat Karo, Wand Chhako and Naam Japo*, three golden principles preached by Guru Nanak. I also spoke on the cardinal principles of community life, religious principles and codes as preached and practiced by Guru Nanak at Kartarpur, the abode of God. *Guru Nanak's Model Community at Kartarpur was all-embracing and all-inclusive that is ideal for all times and has a greater relevance in solving problems beset in the present society.*

The event was well-attended by nearly 250 people and the august gathering comprised of members of the Punjabi Wing and Sikh community in Oman as well as many students from Indian Schools in Muscat. S. Paramjit Singh, Co-convener of ISC Punjabi Wing presented the vote of thanks. □

“Ik Onkar Satgur Prasad”

There is only one God. Only the grace of true Guru can guide us to Him

Guru Granth Sahib is forever true:

- ◆ For it contains the message of one God
- ◆ It is for all times Guru of the Sikhs
- ◆ It was compiled by Guru Arjun, the fifth Guru
- ◆ It contains verses by six Gurus as well as saints like, Kabir, Farid, Namdev, Trilochan, Ravidas, Ramanand, Dhana, Jaidev and Surdas.
- ◆ The verses are set in 31 musical raagas (melodies)
- ◆ Most verses are easy to understand
- ◆ God has been addressed by different names, like Ishwar Gobind, Ram, Rahim, Karim and Allah.

U.S. Air Force Grants Historic Religious Accommodation to Sikh Airman

Airman 1st Class (A1C) Harpreetinder Singh Bajwa an Airman with the U.S. Air Force has received a religious accommodation allowing him to wear a turban, beard, and unshorn hair, in compliance with his Sikh religious beliefs. Mr. Bajwa, crew chief at the McChord Air Force Base near Lakewood, Washington, is the first active Airman to be authorized to adhere to Sikh religious grooming and dress principles while serving his country.

“I’m overjoyed that the Air Force has granted my religious accommodation,” said A1C Bajwa. **“Today, I feel that my country has embraced my Sikh heritage, and I will be forever grateful for this opportunity.”**

As a first-generation American born to an immigrant family, A1C Bajwa enlisted in the Air Force in 2017, eager to give back by serving his country. At the time, he was not permitted to practice due to Air Force rules. However, after recently to Sikh the U.S. Army, as well accommodation Force JAG Corps Ouza, to wear hijab, SAVA to determine would be eligible for an accommodation.



certain Sikh beliefs grooming and dress learning about dations granted service members in as a religious allowing a Muslim Air officer, Cpt. Maysaa A1C Bajwa contacted whether he, too,

SAVA, through its pro bono counsel BakerHostetler, then connected Bajwa with the ACLU, which had successfully represented Cpt. Ouza and had won a groundbreaking lawsuit against the Army, requiring religious accommodation of a Sikh ROTC cadet. In response to a letter sent by the ACLU on Bajwa’s behalf, the Air Force approved his accommodation request.

Kiran Kaur Gill, Sikh American Legal Defense, and Education Fund (SALDEF) Executive director said, “SALDEF is thrilled with the announcement that Airman 1st Class

(A1C) Harpreetinder Singh Bajwa received accommodations from the Air Force to wear his turban and remain unshaven.”

Heather L. Weaver, senior staff attorney for the ACLU, applauded the Air Force’s decision: “**No one should have to choose between following their faith or serving their country. We’re pleased that the Air Force granted our client’s request, and we hope that all branches of the military come to recognize the importance of religious inclusion and diversity.**”

Lieutenant Colonel Kamal Kalsi Singh, president of SAVA, added: “**As one of the first Sikh service members to receive a religious accommodation from the Army, I’m proud to see A1C Bajwa become the first active Airman allowed to wear his Sikh articles of faith while in uniform.** Sikhs have a long history of serving in militaries around the world, and I’m confident that A1C Bajwa will represent that tradition honorably.

[Courtesy: SALDEF]

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Ajay Singh Banga: A Business Role Model

Mastercard CEO Ajay Singh Banga tops the list of ethnic minority role models in business while seven Asian women made it into the top 20 positions.

Ajay topped the 100 Ethnic Minority Executives 2019 annual list released by London-based diversity and inclusion network involve that celebrates the top ethnic minority senior executives.

Since joining the organisation in 2009, Ajay Singh Banga has led Mastercard on an inclusion journey, including the expansion of its global inclusion and diversity council, which he co-chairs.



Under his leadership, Mastercard embraces, encourages and supports its people to bring their whole selves to work and use their unique perspectives as a competitive differentiator, according to the list entry.

July 2019

The Master top executive is no stranger to the corporate world. In 2015, US President Barack Obama had appointed the American-Indian as a member of the Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations.

"I consider myself incredibly lucky to work at a company where decency is the foundation for how we approach the work we do," Banga said in a statement. "When we lead with decency, all of our other values are supported. They are made even stronger by a commitment to diversity."

[Courtesy: Asia Samachar]

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Sikhism to be taught in Oklahoma Schools

Last month, the state officials announced that Oklahoma schools will include Sikhism in their social studies classes in future school years. The decision came courtesy of the Oklahoma State Department of Education, NBC News reports, which released new standards for public school curriculums on 23rd May.

"The accurate inclusion of Sikhism in more state standards across America is part of the Sikh Coalition's efforts to ensure that all children feel represented, included and safe when they go to school," Pritpal Kaur, education director of the Sikh Coalition, said in a press release. "Accurate education and representation in the classroom remains critical to combating school bullying, bigotry and raising Sikh awareness."

The coalition said that it first requested that Sikhism be added to Oklahoma's public school curriculum in a November 2018 letter to the state Department of Education, in which it argued that the religion should be included "wherever world religions are mentioned" in classrooms.

"Many students surveyed over the years report that there is overwhelming ignorance about their religion among students in our public schools and believe that educating American students about Sikhs is an effective and proactive way to address the problems of bullying and harassment," the coalition wrote in the November 2018 letter. "In requesting inclusion of Sikhism in Oklahoma's social studies standards, we are honoring their request."

Forwarded by J S Tiwana
[Courtesy: bustle.com]

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Toronto Sikh Surjit Singh Babra donates 11 tons of food to Second Harvest charity



Ludhiana-born Toronto businessman Surjit Singh Babra, who made history by becoming the world's first Sikh to start his own SkyLink airline in 1991, has now created a record in charity.

To mark the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak, Babra donated ten truckloads of cans of ready-to-serve beans this week to feed Canada's needy people.

"My family and I feel humbled to make this donation on the 550th anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev ji. It will be distributed through food banks to feed poor people," Babra said while handing over the donation to Canada's biggest food charity Second Harvest.

"Our total donation is 230,544 cans of 'True North Harvest' beans, each can weighing about one pound. It is about ten truckloads, weighing nearly 11 tons (104,573 kg to be precise)."

What prompted him to donate on such a huge scale?

Referring to 'terā terā' by Guru Nanak, Babra said, "The Guru has given it to me and I am sharing it with others."

He said he first thought of making this mega donation to the local Sikh-run Seva Food Bank. But they said they didn't have the capacity to handle it.

"So we approached Second Harvest which is Canada's biggest charity and equipped to handle it."

Thanking Babra for the donation, Second Harvest food recovery manager Ian Gibbons said, "We are Canada's largest food recovery charity and what we got today is very unique. We often see large donations, but it is closest to the best we have ever got (since inception in mid-1980s). There is such a demand for this protein-rich food (beans) that our fleet of refrigerated trucks can move it out by the end of the week, but we will take up to three weeks."

Babra is a known name in international charity work as his SkyLink group has donated funds, food, medicines, relief supplies and equipment during natural disasters and political strife around the world – the Nepal earthquake, the Haiti crisis, the flooding in Mozambique, etc.

For his exemplary charity work and philanthropy, he was given the the prestigious World Travel Market (WTM) Globe Award in London in 2012. Babra's SkyLink has also funded drip irrigation farming in Rajasthan.

A devout Sikh, Babra is also known for arranging his SkyLink to fly 149 copies of the holy Guru Granth from Amritsar to Toronto in 2004.

"It was the most satisfying moment of my life when SkyLink flew 149 new birs (copies) of the holy Guru Granth Sahib from the Sikh holy city of Amritsar to Canada. The local Sacha Sauda had approached me to fly the holy books from India," according to Babra.

"Since the Guru Granth Sahib is a living guru for us, each copy (*bir*) of the *Holy scripture* was seated on a individual seat."

Born in Ludhiana, Babra was just two when he moved to Kenya with his family. He was still a student in London in 1972 when he started his own travel agency SkyLink Travel.

Having grown his travel agency into multiple offices in Europe quickly, young Babra next targeted Canada, landing in Toronto in 1979 to set up his first office in North America..

As his business grew with addition of new offices in LA, New York, Chicago, Vancouver and Montreal, Babra – in collaboration with his business partner Walter Arbib – set up his SkyLink Aviation in 1991..

SkyLink Aviation became globally known for flying – up to 100 aircraft at times – relief missions for the UN, the Red Cross, Canadian forces and other agencies to the trouble spots of the world.

Babra later created other companies under the SkyLink brand.

[Courtesy: thecanadianbazaar.com]



"Ik Onkar Satgur Prasad"

There is only one God. Only the grace of true Guru can guide us to Him

Message for humanity

- ◆ Only by the grace of a true Guru can the ego be dissolved and eternal happiness.
- ◆ Accept the Will of God - to be at peace.
- ◆ Selfless service of humanity is true worship.
- ◆ Women deserve the same respect as men.
- ◆ Truth is a highly ideal, higher still is truthful living.

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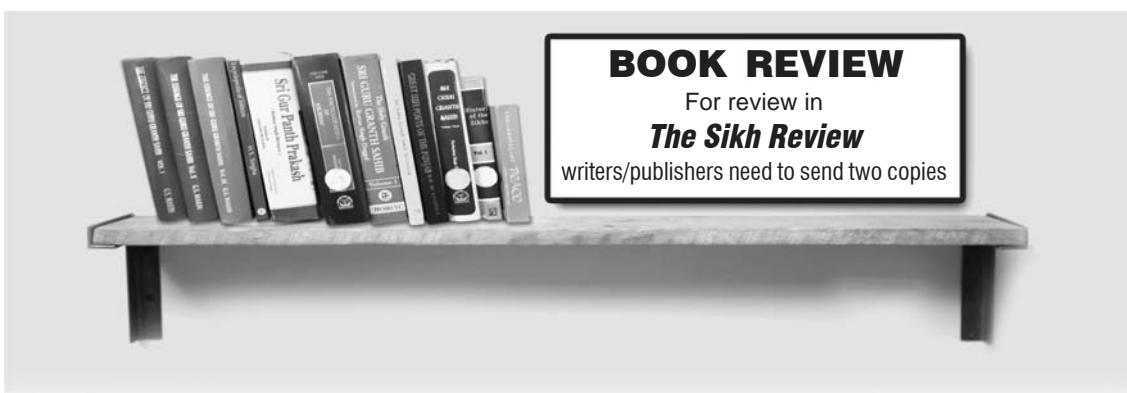
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Book Title : My Journey in Science - Autobiography of an Indian Scientist

Author : Prof. Hardev Singh Virk, Prof. of Eminence, Punjabi University, Patiala

Published by : Gracious Books, Patiala, India

Year of Publication : 2018; Price: Rs. 300; Pages: 234

A Review by Dr. D. P. Singh, M.Sc., Ph.D., P.E.S.I (Ex.)*

Autobiographical books of Punjabi Scientists are a rare genre. "*My Journey In Science*" by internationally acclaimed scientist Professor Hardev Singh Virk is a welcome addition in this category. Prof. Hardev Singh Virk, a multifaceted personality, is an eminent Physicist, an ardent researcher, an eloquent orator, a passionate poet, and a globe trotter. In addition he is a devout Sikh, a renowned Sikh theologian and a prolific writer in many areas of Science, Religion and Literature.

On reading "*Up Against Odds*", the autobiography of Piara Singh Gill, a world famous Physicist, Professor Virk was motivated to write his autobiography "*Mera Jeevan Safar*" in Punjabi. Later, the book was transliterated in *Shahmukhi* and published as an e-book by Academy of the Punjab in North America. In addition, for the benefit of young people, who are born and brought up in the West, and are not well versed in Punjabi language, Professor Virk took the arduous task of publishing his autobiography in English. His

* A Physicist by profession and a writer by choice, Till date he has published about 20 books and over 1000 articles; and has appeared in over 60 TV/Youtube presentations in the fields of science, religion and environment. At present, he is working as Director, CanBridge Learning and Educational Consultant to various educational institutions in Canada. Email: drdpsn@gmail.com

autobiography titled as "My Journey In Science" with a sub-title: "Autobiography of an Indian Scientist" contains a lot more detail about his scientific endeavours, as compared to its Punjabi version.

The purpose of "My Journey In Science" is to inspire younger generation to pursue their chosen fields of study, with full dedication against all odds. This ensues from the fact that he has dedicated it to his grand children, who inspired him to write this book. Additionally, the author uses the forum to express his extreme gratitude to all the mothers, the teachers and the seekers of Truth, who inspired him in his life journey, by dedicating it to them as well.

This autobiographical work of Prof. Virk, showcases various aspects of his life. The book is divided into two parts. The first part titled, "Making of an Indian Scientist", contains eight chapters and the second part titled "*Scientific Journey of My Life*" contains six Chapters. Deliberations in the first part, focus on his personal life, whereas the second part describes the diverse areas of his research, and his trials and tribulations in their pursual. The last Chapter of the book describes his forays in the domains of History & Philosophy of Science, Physics Education, Sikh Religion, and Punjabi Literature. An exhaustive list of his research publications and books, alongwith his research report on the "Ecological crisis in Punjab", are appended thereafter.

In the chapter "Memories of My Childhood and Family", the author has vividly described events and experiences of his early life. The events included are the story of his birth, the partition of India, his early school education, and vicissitudes of his mother's and his own life. The heart-rending tales of partition, glimpses of his maternal and paternal families, and a chance meeting with his fiancé in Chandigarh are also a part of this chapter. In the narrative, the characters description, is well developed and true-to-life.

The arduous part of author's life journey is reported in the chapter "My Student Life: Up Against Odds". The heinous murder of his maternal grandmother (*Nani*), resulting in a severe adversity to him and his mother, is described herein. In addition, the indifferent attitude of his father, apathetic disposition of his step mother, and open hostility of his step brothers, caused him acute anxiety and great impediments in his life. The author has been successful in portraying, with a stunning accuracy, the hostile attitudes from both collateral and lineal descendants (*shariq*) in a *Jatt* family of Punjab. Despite such adversity, young Hardev's ambition and strong determination to pursue higher education, and going ahead for this purpose, with the help of his mentors and well wishers, reflects author's firm resolve

to face his situation with great fortitude. Facing such adverse circumstances, spanning over a decade, young Hardev emerges as a steadfast person, who is sturdy enough to face the dire situations of his future life.

The author describes his “Memories of Punjabi University, Patiala and Paris” as the golden era of his life. This period of author’s life is replete with several life changing events; e.g. his professional success, enjoying marital bliss, attaining fatherhood, obtaining doctorate in Nuclear Physics, initiating scientific research as an independent expert, publishing textbooks for B.Sc. students, and pursuing his research interest in Sikh cosmology. His indulgence in teachers’ politics, and parliamentary elections in India, is also described briefly herein. In this riveting tale of his struggles, successes, glories, failures, and frustrations, Hardev emerges as a visionary, hardworking, experienced, and dedicated scientist.

During the 1979-2002 period, his scientific and educational expertise was put to test, when he was invited to establish a new Department of Physics at the Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. Therein, he played a vital role in laying down infrastructure for conducting scientific research, initiating research collaborations, participating in several national and international conferences and meetings. He had been instrumental in setting up an earthquake prediction studies center at the university. The chapter “Memories of Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar” covers it all. Operation Blue Star, and its impact on the University, author’s foray in Punjabi literature, his efforts for popularisation of science, and his affiliation to ICTP, Trieste (Italy) are all recounted in this chapter. The successful culmination of these multifarious activities, points out his versatility as a multifaceted personality.

Prof. Virk emerges as a Globe trotter in the Chapter; “My Travels Around the Globe: A Synoptic View”. In 2008, he had published his travelogues (three volumes) in Punjabi. A brief description of his travels to Hungary, China, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand is included in this chapter. Prof. Virk’s inherent nature, having an immense respect for women, is reflected in his impressive encounters with a wide spectrum of ladies during his life. He has portrayed a deep respect and appreciation for his mother, whom he adores as the image of God on earth. He has expressed a similar feeling for his Bhua (Father’s sister), whom he describes as an iron-willed lady. The author recounts several remarkable incidents of his younger days in the chapter “Role of Women in My Life”. For his candid description of his romantic entanglements, he concedes to having inspiration from the

autobiography of Prof. Pritam Singh, a doyen of Punjabi literature. Musing on the solid foundation of a marital relationship, he opines, "It is my belief that husband-wife relationship must rest on pillars of mutual faith and understanding". The situations revealed in the chapter, confirms the author as a living example of such a wonderful relationship and he emerges as a devoted Sikh, with high moral and spiritual principles.

Some mystical incidents of author's life are described in riveting detail, in the Chapter "Some Memorable Events of My Life". The chapter 'An Unfulfilled Wish of My Life' elaborates the professional hurdles faced by the author, to secure the most deserving position as a Vice-Chancellor of a University in Punjab. In a candid portrayal, he unveils the sad spectacle of bribery, corruption, nepotism, and sifarsh (inappropriate recommendation) prevalent in educational system in India in general, and in Punjab, in particular. Thereby, meritocracy is sacrificed at the altar of many crooked practices of hypocrisy, avarices, and abuses of political powers. In his explicit description of the situation author's audacious nature of calling a spade a spade is evident.

Poetic spirit of Prof. Virk finds its expression in the Chapter "Literary Journey of My Life". In his college days, under the influence of his friends; U. S. Kanwal, K. Grewal, and N. Bharti, who were adept at writing poetry in Punjabi, he too started writing poems and songs in Punjabi. But this phase ended in a short time, as responsibilities of his teaching job took over. The pursuit of his scientific research activities also took its own toll on his poetic characteristic. But, this latent talent, resurfaced during the phase of his romantic entanglements in Paris. The author reports; "As it is almost impossible to translate Punjabi poetry into English, due to different cultural ethos and nuances, so only a few selected poems and folk songs have been translated in English". But even this limited sample of poems and songs, provide a vivid depiction of his sensitive nature. The poetic outpourings of Prof. Virk are full of natural symbolism, cultural ethos and scientific terminology.

The second part of the book consists of six chapters. The chapter; "Moving from Cosmic Rays to Elementary Particles", apprises the story of the author joining Aligarh Muslim University, his search for a research supervisor in Paris, suffering harassment at the hands of his research supervisor, his return to India, and frustrations of pursuing scientific research in India. In "My Journey in Earth Sciences and Creation of Physics Department", the author elaborates on changing his research field from Particle Physics

to Earth Sciences, playing a leading role in creation of Physics department at Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. The monotonous problems of university administration, tribulations of creating infrastructure for teaching and research, and the presentation of his research results at International forums, are part of the tale shared here.

The chapter “Radon Studies for Uranium Exploration and Earthquake Prediction” revolves around author's research activities, using Radon as a tool for biogeochemical exploration of uranium, and as a precursor in the prediction of earthquakes in Punjab and Himachal Pradesh. The author's research team was successful in creating an extensive database on Radon measurements in soil, air, and water in India. In the next Chapter; the author describes his investigations in Solid State Nuclear Track Detectors. Being pioneers in using ‘Heavy Ion’ beams for irradiation of SSNTDs in India, author's team was able to formulate a ‘Single Activation Energy’ model of radiation damage annealing in these detectors. “My Encounter with Nanotechnology” is the story of author's post-retirement research activities, taken up at DAV Institute of Engineering and Technology, Jalandhar. At the institute, the author's research team attained success in the fabrication of nanowires and nanoflowers of exquisite beauty.

In the last chapter; “My Forays in History of Science & Other Areas of Interest” the author presents a panorama of his life, with his research interests, in diverse areas such as History and philosophy of science, Physics education, Sikh religion, Ecology, Nature of Reality and Punjabi literature. His notable contributions in these diverse fields of research brought him several accolades from various Government and non-Government organizations.

With publication of about 450 research papers in various research journals of international repute, 40 books and over 70 foreign visits related to his research and educational activities, he emerges on the world scenario as a great scholar, an eminent educationist and a professional scientist. Thus an ordinary rural youth, with his sheer hard work, brilliance, and intelligence, distinct and unique accomplishments, arose to join the company of elite scientists and scholars of national and international prominence such as Nobel Laureate, Prof. Abdus Salam, Pakistan, and a galaxy of world renowned scientists mentioned under acknowledgements. "My Journey In Science " is the story of that young man.

Prof. Virk's autobiography is quite fascinating and engrossing. Once you start, it is very hard to put it down without reading it till the end. He has a great mastery of presenting his life experiences in a lucid and authentic style. The whole autobiography is replete with open and honest reflections. He is unstintingly honest and unafraid as he excavates his motivations and reservations, his fantasies, and the implications of the choices he has made. Insightful, provocative, and fearlessly frank, Prof. Virk attracts readers with his warmth, wit, and wisdom.

Despite numerous challenges and obstacles in his life, the author has presented a great zest for life in his autobiography. Stylistically it is his best work to inspire and delight readers everywhere. The whole book is easy to read and comprehend. It provides a valuable and absorbing window into scientific research and education system, that for most of us is generally inaccessible. En passant, I am truly amazed, how Prof. Virk has shared all the information so meticulously and with such minute details of dates, times, and places. The much illustrated autobiography describes Prof. Virk's seventy five years' life journey in good detail.

Prof. Virk is a shining example of a scientific researcher, who portrays an interrelationship among the search of truth, science of discovery, literary activities, rationality and spirituality. In addition, he exemplifies the underlying unity of these diverse fields of human thought and action. "My Journey In Science" passes on to us much of the wisdom of this world famous Indian Physicist. Believe it or not, all this makes for wonderful and glorious adventure in reading. Even if you are not a Physicist, this is an enjoyable read. "My Journey in Science" has the potential to inspire countless readers / learners around the world and gives them a unique insight into the life of an international scientist cum litterateur. It is a timeless book, to be rightly treasured by all learners and truth seekers.



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