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MEDITATION

Guru alone holds the key

ਸਾਰੰਗ ਕੀ ਵਾਰ ਮਹਲਾ ੳ ਰਾਇ ਮਹਮੇ ਹਸਨੇ ਕੀ ਧੁਨਿ
ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥ ਸਲੋਕ ਮਹਲਾ ੨ ॥

ਗੁਰੁ ਕੰਜੀ ਪਾਹੂ ਨਿਵਲੁ ਮਨੁ ਕੋਠਾ ਤਨੁ ਛਤਿ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰ ਬਿਨੁ ਮਨ ਕਾ ਤਾਕੁ ਨ ਉਘੜੈ ਅਵਰ ਨ ਕੰਜੀ ਹਥਿ ॥੧॥

[SGGS: 1237]

Translation* Shlok Mahala 2

The mind is like a dwelling with body as its protective roof,
with duality in man represent the twin door,
while the lock of ignorance is used (to keep one in darkness).
But the Lord's true knowledge is the key (to enlightenment)
O Nanak! There is no other person having the
key except the Guru, so that only the Guru Himself
can open the door.

* Based on translation by G.S. Makin

SABAD, SABD, SHABAD – ad infinitum

I.J. SINGH*

I notice that many readers of Gurbani today, particular those who proudly identify themselves as super- careful and dedicated, when it comes to penning down or sounding words of Gurbani. They become aggressively careful and nit picking about the bases of the vocabulary of Gurbani – its pronunciation, precise unchanging interpretation and possible translation, meaning, and applications.

Their care is genuine, deserving admiration. Yet, I wonder sometimes! Should we be so unchangingly bound to a past and hoary tradition, even grammar and usage. Each and every word with even the most remote suspicion of use not in common with traditional usage is often credited with the stench of emerging sin. Hence, not approved. Is every departure from grammatical rules, such as enunciation and meaning always to be clearly so labeled, rigorously condemned and its usage more condemned than not?

For Sikhs, it is obvious that, for instance, every word of the Guru Granth Sahib is selected with total care meant for the holy. Such care is expected from the dedicated Sikh and that is as it ought to be. No departures from the specified specifics like enunciation, no luxurious sideroads with the language are to be entertained. The word(s) need to be read and sounded out as specified and translated with similar rigor.

In reading Gurbani, the above words and associated sentiments are usually lauded. Yes, I too celebrate such dedication and yet often. But certainly today I aim to depart from such narrow loyalty.

The question is, do such limited and narrow bounds to a word's fullness help or hinder us in understanding, even enjoying, the possible meaning and application? *Forget not that broader application expands a word's domain and territory?*

Think of the many human languages. At least in minimally urbanized domains, most people have more than one language under their command and easily speak more than one. Clearly the human species travels widely. In any widely used language some words enjoy many different applications.

This is just as true in the Guru Granth Sahib, the voluminous 1430-page scripture of the Sikhs, as well as in other holy writings of Sikhs. Remember also that what is sacred is not the pages of the Guru Granth but the content and meaning on its pages.

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Read the Guru Granth carefully and enjoy it. Remember that in usage the Gurmukhi language changes like every language. For instance, does a particular part relate that the language changes as does any and every language. For instance, do the particular words relate to Farsi areas or is it more related to Multani. The enunciation of common words varies, depending on whether you're speaking it in Lahore, Rawal Pindi or Peshawar. Is the language of a certain locale more applicable, purer better or holier? Sometimes yes but absolutely not always is what I would say.

Just look at English as a living language that has taken life centuries ago but even today continues to grow in usage and vocabulary worldwide. *It also continues to absorb words from other languages that enrich the existing English language.*

How do languages take birth? Just look at a mother and her newborn baby cavorting in the sun. Neither the newborn nor the mother might be even marginally competent in any major language under the sun. But their games and so-called conversations derive from meaningless nonsensical newly invented sounds of chatter to enhance their communication. Perhaps this is how some languages saw the light of day centuries ago. And who knows now, a few centuries later truly a new language sprouted and exists.

Travel just about half a day in any direction on a slow machine like a bicycle and enjoy the change in how the natives mouth the words of their mother-tongue. And this is irrespective of any high flouting instructions in or about their particular language. This is not contempt of the language but more of a relationship of love. This process is visible across the age range, on gray beards or teenagers. This is how languages grow. Ask any poet.

Think not that the language is being insulted or diminished by those who own it; in fact, they are loving it.

So, I wonder when I see gracefully adorned adults looking wise but acting otherwise when they begin harshly berating others about the correct spelling and pronunciation of some word, I have to wonder. How can grownups argue and fight over whether it is SABD or SHABAD? As a community we have to reach at a common enunciation, the place of the word in speech and prose, and the meanings thereof.

I remind you again! Kindly look at the English language. How many working variations of ordinary English exist across the world to entertain and inform us? The world of the English language grew in response to the flexibility in the English language as well as the widespread trading and fighting spirit of the English.

They enrich and expand our horizons. ***We must not deliberately and cheerfully cut Gurmukhi down to its narrowest, smallest existence?***

□

The Path of Love

RAWEL SINGH*

Love is a basic human trait. It is our nature to love and want to be loved. However, love may be true, based on affection or it may be false with a motivation. The exemplary love in the physical domain is between the mother and her child. She changes her life style from the time she conceives until the child is on its own. As the baby grows and becomes playful, the mother enjoys its antics. This carries on but at some stage, the mother starts thinking of what her child would do for her when it grows up. This leads to attachment. Attachment becomes bondage and the selfless love changes to one with expectations. This is so in most relationships including between siblings, friends and spouses. Everyone has expectation from the other. This is not true love. Gurbani explains:

Selfish Love does not last

ਨਾਨਕ ਗਾਲੀ ਕੂੜੀਆ ਬਾਬੁ ਪਰੀਤਿ ਕਰੇਇ ॥ ਤਿਚਰੁ ਜਾਣੈ ਭਲਾ ਕਰਿ ਜਿਚਰੁ ਲੇਵੈ ਦੇਇ ॥੨॥

Says Nanak: Talk of love without affection is false. One finds the relationship good as long as s/he keeps receiving, the other giving. [SGGS:594]

ਫਰੀਦਾ ਜਾ ਲਬੁ ਤਾ ਨੇਹੁ ਕਿਆ ਲਬੁ ਤ ਕੂੜਾ ਨੇਹੁ ॥ ਕਿਚਰੁ ਝਤਿ ਲਘਾਈਐ ਛਪਰਿ ਤੁਟੈ ਮੇਹੁ ॥੧੮॥

Says the Sufi saint Farid: What love it is if there is selfishness; if there is selfishness then love is false.

How long can one live under a broken roof in rain? [Farid, SGGS: 1378]

Message: Self-serving love does not last long.

True Love

There is one love however, that remains selfless forever. This is the love the Creator has for IT's creation and is without any expectation.

ਬਹੁਤਾ ਕਰਮੁ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਨਾ ਜਾਇ ॥ ਵਡਾ ਦਾਤਾ ਤਿਲੁ ਨ ਤਮਾਇ ॥

The abundant benevolence of the Almighty is beyond measure. The great benefactor expects nothing. [Japji Paurri 25]

In Arabic language, love is called Ishq and the lover Aashiq. Ishq is of two categories, Ishqe Haqiqi the true love as between God and the devotee; and Ishqe Majaazi the carnal

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love of flesh as between man and woman, based on desires. The latter love can also become real if the two souls of man and woman unite, with the two souls merging into one. Gurbani takes note of this and says:

ਏਹ ਕਿਨੇਹੀ ਆਸਕੀ ਦੂਜੈ ਲਗੈ ਜਾਇ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਆਸਕੁ ਕਾਢੀਐ ਸਦ ਹੀ ਰਹੈ ਸਮਾਇ ॥ ਚੰਗੈ ਚੰਗਾ ਕਰਿ ਮੰਨੇ ਮੰਦੈ ਮੰਦਾ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਆਸਕੁ ਏਹੁ ਨ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਿ ਲੇਖੇ ਵਰਤੈ ਸੋਇ ॥੧॥

What love it is if one looks elsewhere?

A true lover is one who is ever absorbed in love of the beloved.

But one who is happy in good times but unhappy in adversity;

Such a calculating person cannot be called a true lover. [SGGS: 474]

The above is also allegory for love between the Creator and the human.

Gurbani puts it thus:

ਆਸਕੁ ਆਸਾ ਬਾਹਰਾ ਮੁ ਮਨਿ ਵਡੀ ਆਸ ॥ ਆਸ ਨਿਰਾਸਾ ਹਿਕੁ ਤੂ ਹਉ ਬਲਿ ਬਲਿ ਗਈਆਸ ॥੨॥

A lover is one who has no expectation, but I expect a lot.

O Almighty, You alone are bereft of expectations; I adore You. [SGGS: 1100]

Cardinal Feature of Gurbani

The Sikh scripture Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS) teaches truthful living, where spiritual precept and practical life accord. This removes the dichotomy of two separate lives – spiritual and secular - of the same person. Religion then becomes a clean way of life rather than remain a set of rituals and dogmas. This facilitates to attain the two-fold purpose of life, namely,

1. Conduct the self for peace in life and contribute to make this world a better place.
2. Union of the soul with the Creator at the end of life.

The first is prerequisite for the second. Like pure love is selfless, the true devotee's relationship with God is without wish. This is the cardinal feature of the Sikh religion.

The content of SGGS is also called Gurbani, meaning the guru's word. Gurbani says

ਜਿਉ ਜਨਨੀ ਗਰਭੁ ਪਾਲਤੀ ਸੁਤ ਕੀ ਕਰਿ ਆਸਾ ॥ ਵਡਾ ਹੋਇ ਧਨੁ ਖਾਟਿ ਦੇਇ ਕਰਿ ਭੋਗ ਬਿਲਾਸਾ ॥ ਤਿਉ ਹਰਿ ਜਨ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਿ ਹਰਿ ਰਾਖਦਾ ਦੇ ਆਪਿ ਹਥਾਸਾ ॥੧॥

Like the expectant mother looks after the fetus expecting a child. Who would earn and be a source of livelihood and happiness when s/he grows up.

However, God looks after and supports the devotees – but expects nothing. P 165

Again

ਜਿਉ ਜਨਨੀ ਸੁਤੁ ਜਣਿ ਪਾਲਤੀ ਰਾਖੈ ਨਦਰਿ ਮਝਾਰਿ ॥ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਮੁਖਿ ਦੇ ਗਿਰਾਸੁ ਖਿਨੁ ਖਿਨੁ ਪੋਚਾਰਿ ॥ ਤਿਉ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਗੁਰਸਿਖ ਰਾਖਤਾ ਹਰਿ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਿ ਪਿਆਰਿ ॥੧॥

Like the mother gives birth and brings up the child always keeping it in sight. Feeds and pampers it.

Similarly, the Almighty looks after the creatures with love. [SGGS: 168]

The biological parents and God both look after. The child starts loving the parents because it can see what all they do for it. Similarly, God looks after all, but being unseen, is not acknowledged. The Guru helps to remove this ignorance:

ਮੇਰੇ ਰਾਮ ਹਮ ਬਾਰਿਕ ਹਰਿ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੇ ਹੈ ਇਆਣੇ ॥ ਧੰਨੁ ਧੰਨੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਪਾਧਾ ਜਿਨਿ ਹਰਿ ਉਪਦੇਸੁ ਦੇ ਕੀਏ ਸਿਆਣੇ ॥੧॥

O Almighty, we Your children, are ignorant of Your benevolence.

Glory be to the Guru, my teacher who made me conscious, of You, by his guidance. [SGGS: 168]

Then one acknowledges the Creator.

ਤੂੰ ਮੇਰਾ ਪਿਤਾ ਤੂੰਹੈ ਮੇਰਾ ਮਾਤਾ ॥ ਤੂੰ ਮੇਰਾ ਬੰਧਪੁ ਤੂੰ ਮੇਰਾ ਭ੍ਰਾਤਾ ॥ ਤੂੰ ਮੇਰਾ ਰਾਖਾ ਸਭਨੀ ਥਾਈ ਤਾ ਭਉ ਕੇਹਾ ਕਾੜਾ ਜੀਉ ॥੧॥

You are my father and mother; my relative and sibling;

You protect me everywhere so I have no worries. [SGGS: 103]

God and parents both guide

ਜੈਸਾ ਬਾਲਕੁ ਭਾਇ ਸੁਭਾਈ ਲਖ ਅਪਰਾਧ ਕਮਾਵੈ ॥ ਕਰਿ ਉਪਦੇਸੁ ਝਿੜਕੇ ਬਹੁ ਭਾਤੀ ਬਹੁੜਿ ਪਿਤਾ ਗਲਿ ਲਾਵੈ ॥ ਪਿਛਲੇ ਅਉਗੁਣ ਬਖਸਿ ਲਏ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਆਗੈ ਮਾਰਗਿ ਪਾਵੈ ॥੨॥

Like a child commits numerous wrongs by its nature. The father admonishes it in many ways, but again embraces it lovingly.

Similarly, the Almighty forgives past transgressions of the creatures and puts them on the right path. [SGGS: 624]

The God-creature love is such that we may have expectations from God but IT does not. However, wishes are fulfilled when deserved, by dedication.

ਹਰਿ ਭਗਤਿ ਹਰਿ ਕਾ ਪਿਆਰੁ ਹੈ ਜੇ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਕਰੇ ਬੀਚਾਰੁ ॥ ਪਾਖੰਡਿ ਭਗਤਿ ਨ ਹੋਵਈ ਦੁਬਿਧਾ ਬੋਲੁ ਖੁਆਰੁ ॥

Devotion to God is to love God; one does this by contemplating on the guru's teachings.

Pretense is not devotion; duality ultimately results in frustration. [SGGS: 28]

ਰੈਣਿ ਦਿਨਸੁ ਰਹੈ ਇਕ ਰੰਗਾ ॥ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਕਉ ਜਾਣੈ ਸਦ ਹੀ ਸੰਗਾ ॥ ਠਾਕੁਰ ਨਾਮੁ ਕੀਓ ਉਨਿ ਵਰਤਨਿ ॥ ਤ੍ਰਿਪਤਿ ਅਘਾਵਨੁ ਹਰਿ ਕੈ ਦਰਸਨਿ ॥੧॥ ਹਰਿ ਸੰਗਿ ਰਾਤੇ ਮਨ ਤਨ ਹਰੇ ॥ ਗੁਰ ਪੂਰੇ ਕੀ ਸਰਨੀ ਪਰੇ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

The devotees are intuitively in love perceiving God with them day and night.

Conformance to God's commands is their way of life; God's presence gives them satisfaction.

Thus imbued, their mind and body blossom with the guru's guidance. [SGGS: 181]

God loves IT's devotees:

ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੋ ਭਗਤਿ ਵਛਲੁ ਬਿਰਦਾਇਓ ॥ ਕਰੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਾਲ ਬਾਰਿਕ ਕੀ ਨਿਆਈ ਜਨ ਕਉ ਲਾਡ ਲਡਾਇਓ ॥੧॥

It is God's nature to love IT's devotees. IT rears and pampers them like children:

[SGGS: 498]

Love between Spouses

In terms of closeness, the mother-child relationship is followed by that between the spouses. This is generally described only in terms of body relationship. For example, the Bible says:

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh (Genesis 2:24).

Similarly in Hindu parlance the wife is called ardhangni i.e. half the body. 'Ang' means a limb of the body. It is worth noting that in both cases it is the body relationship with importance given to the male body.

According to Gurmat, meaning the guru's counsel, loving husband and wife are two bodies but one soul - two souls that identify with each other to become one:

ਧਨ ਪਿਰੁ ਏਹਿ ਨ ਆਖੀਅਨਿ ਬਹਨਿ ਇਕਠੇ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਏਕ ਜੋਤਿ ਦੁਇ ਮੂਰਤੀ ਧਨ ਪਿਰੁ ਕਹੀਐ ਸੋਇ ॥੩॥

Wife and husband are not those who live together.

Only when their two bodies have one in spirit, they are called husband and wife.

[SGGS: 788]

True love between spouses is therefore spiritual; union of two spirits, and their merging to become one. This is the real meaning of love, i.e. two bodies and one soul.

Gurbani uses this close relationship as metaphor for that between the soul and God or the Supreme Soul. This is how. God resides in all creatures; IT gives soul to provide life to the body. The way husband and wife live in one house; God and soul are in the same body. Here again therefore there are two entities and one spirit.

Ego impedes Love

When two entities live together, there can be clash of egos. This causes differences between them. They are then so near and still so far. This applies to both relationships, i.e. of spouses and the God-soul. However, there is a difference. God is the Supreme Spirit, not a person and hence beyond this proclivity and it applies only to the soul. Human ego is well known. Gurbani elucidates.

ਧਨ ਪਿਰ ਕਾ ਇਕ ਹੀ ਸੰਗਿ ਵਾਸਾ ਵਿਚਿ ਹਉਮੈ ਭੀਤਿ ਕਰਾਰੀ ॥ ਗੁਰਿ ਪੂਰੈ ਹਉਮੈ ਭੀਤਿ ਤੋਰੀ ਜਨ ਨਾਨਕ ਮਿਲੇ ਬਨਵਾਰੀ ॥੩॥੧॥

The wife and husband reside together but a strong wall of ego develops between them.

The Guru breaks the wall of ego and the soul-wife unites with the Almighty-husband.
[SGGS: 1263]

Spiritual love is not experienced when one's mind is in grip of desires.

ਮੈ ਪ੍ਰੇਮੁ ਨ ਚਾਖਿਆ ਮੇਰੇ ਪਿਆਰੇ ਭਾਉ ਕਰੇ ॥ ਮਨਿ ਤ੍ਰਿਸਨਾ ਨ ਬੁਝੀ ਮੇਰੇ ਪਿਆਰੇ ਨਿਤ ਆਸ ਕਰੇ ॥

I have not tasted Your love because of lack of affection, my beloved; because

My mind's craving for other pleasures is never satiated; it ever expects more of them.
[SGGS: 451]

The soul contemplates and realizes that physical pleasures are transitory and connected with the body, which is perishable. It therefore needs to be alert to effect of desires:

How to repair broken Love

ਜਾਗ ਲੇਹੁ ਰੇ ਮਨਾ ਜਾਗ ਲੇਹੁ ਕਹਾ ਗਾਫਲ ਸੋਇਆ ॥ ਜੇ ਤਨੁ ਉਪਜਿਆ ਸੰਗ ਹੀ ਸੋ ਭੀ ਸੰਗਿ ਨ ਹੋਇਆ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥
Awake my mind, why are you idling carelessly?

Even the body that you were born with will not go with you. [SGGS: 726]

Some people think they can win love with gifts or sycophancy. Similarly, people believe making offerings or prayer obtain love of God. Japji Pauri 4 asks.

ਫੇਰਿ ਕਿ ਅਗੈ ਰਖੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਦਿਸੈ ਦਰਬਾਰੁ ॥ ਮੁਹੋ ਕਿ ਬੋਲਣੁ ਬੋਲੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਸੁਣਿ ਧਰੇ ਪਿਆਰੁ ॥

Question: Then what offering we should make to have vision of the Almighty? What words we should say by hearing which, God loves us?

ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਵੇਲਾ ਸਚੁ ਨਾਉ ਵਡਿਆਈ ਵੀਚਾਰੁ ॥

Answer: In the ambrosial hours of the morning, i.e. when the mind is free of other thoughts, contemplate on Divine commands – and conform to them day and night. [Japji Pauri 4, SGGS: 2]

Gurbani teaches how to heal a ruptured relationship, both spiritual and worldly.

ਕਵਣੁ ਸੁ ਅਖਰੁ ਕਵਣੁ ਗੁਣੁ ਕਵਣੁ ਸੁ ਮਣੀਆ ਮੰਤੁ ॥ ਕਵਣੁ ਸੁ ਵੇਸੋ ਹਉ ਕਰੀ ਜਿਤੁ ਵਸਿ ਆਵੈ ਕੰਤੁ ॥੧੨੬॥

Question: A soul-bride asks a question: What conduct, what qualities and what mantra/formula I should adopt.

What apparel/makeup I should wear, so that my spouse comes under my control, i.e. win love of the beloved. 126.

ਨਿਵਣੁ ਸੁ ਅਖਰੁ ਖਵਣੁ ਗੁਣੁ ਜਿਹਬਾ ਮਣੀਆ ਮੰਤੁ ॥ ਏ ਤ੍ਰੈ ਭੈਣੇ ਵੇਸ ਕਰਿ ਤਾ ਵਸਿ ਆਵੀ ਕੰਤੁ ॥੧੨੭॥

Answer: *Humility in dealings, virtue of forgiveness/tolerance and gem/sweetness of words as the mantra.*

Adopt this apparel/adornment, then the spouse will be under your control, i.e. shall do anything you like. 127. [SGGS: 1384]

Gurbani emphasizes humility by overcoming ego.

ਆਪੁ ਗਵਾਈਐ ਤਾ ਸਹੁ ਪਾਈਐ ਅਉਰੁ ਕੈਸੀ ਚਤੁਰਾਈ ॥ ਸਹੁ ਨਦਰਿ ਕਰਿ ਦੇਖੈ ਸੋ ਦਿਨੁ ਲੇਖੈ ਕਾਮਣਿ ਨਉ ਨਿਧਿ ਪਾਈ ॥

There is no better wisdom and smartness than to shed ego to win the beloved.

That day is fruitful when the Master casts the eye of grace

The bride feels blessed as if getting all the treasures. [SGGS: 722]

Gurbani emphasizes Faithfulness in Marriage.

ਜੈਸਾ ਸੰਗਿ ਬਿਸੀਅਰ ਸਿਉ ਹੈ ਰੇ ਤੈਸੇ ਹੀ ਇਹੁ ਪਰ ਗਿਹੁ ॥੨॥

As is company of the serpent, so is indulgence with another's spouse – it is poisonous. [SGGS: 103]

Again

ਢੂਢੇਦੀਏ ਸੁਗਾਗ ਕੂ ਤਉ ਤਨਿ ਕਾਈ ਕੋਰ ॥ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾ ਨਾਉ ਸੁਗਾਗਣੀ ਤਿਨ੍ਹਾ ਝਾਕ ਨ ਹੋਰ ॥੧੧੪॥

O married woman, if you are searching for happiness, there is something wrong with you.

One who is married does not look for happiness elsewhere. 114. [SGGS: 1384]

Message: God is within everyone; do not search elsewhere – conform to divine commands.

Love for the Beloved Cause

ਜਿਸੁ ਪਿਆਰੇ ਸਿਉ ਨੇਹੁ ਤਿਸੁ ਆਗੈ ਮਰਿ ਚਲੀਐ ॥ ਧ੍ਰਿਗੁ ਜੀਵਣੁ ਸੰਸਾਰਿ ਤਾ ਕੈ ਪਾਛੈ ਜੀਵਣਾ ॥੨॥

One should be ready to die for the cause one loves. It is shameful to live if the cause is lost. [SGGS: 83]

ਜਉ ਤਉ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਖੇਲਣ ਕਾ ਚਾਉ ॥ ਸਿਰੁ ਧਰਿ ਤਲੀ ਗਲੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਆਉ ॥ ਇਤੁ ਮਾਰਗਿ ਪੈਰੁ ਧਰੀਜੈ ॥ ਸਿਰੁ ਦੀਜੈ ਕਾਣਿ ਨ ਕੀਜੈ ॥੨੦॥

If you wish to play the game of love, then come my way with your head on the palm, i.e. be ready to die for the cause. And when you take a step on this path, do not hesitate to give your life if the need arises. 20. [SGGS: 1410]

Amrit Vela – An Auspicious Time for Chanting of Naam

TARSEM SINGH*

The eternal Guru Sri Guru Granth Sahib orders its adherents to practice Naam, initially by chanting and subsequently by meditating on it.

ਜਪਿ ਮਨ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਸਦਾ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ॥ ਹਲਤਿ ਪਲਤਿ ਮੁਖ ਉਜਲ ਹੋਈ ਹੈ ਨਿਤ ਧਿਆਈਐ ਹਰਿ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਿ
ਨਰੰਜਨਾ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

Chant, O my mind, the True Name, Sat Naam, the True Name. In this world, and in the world beyond, your face shall be radiant, by meditating continually on the Immaculate Lord God. [SGGS: 670]

The above quote also enlightens us about the gain in doing so.

An adherent would like to know about the most appropriate time for practicing Naam. The answer to the same is that for an adherent who has just learnt about Naam and intends to practice it, the idea of using any time to do so is good according to Gurbani.

ਸਿਰੀਰਾਗੁ ਮਹਲਾ ੩ ॥ ਜੇ ਵੇਲਾ ਵਖਤੁ ਵੀਚਾਰੀਐ ਤਾ ਕਿਤੁ ਵੇਲਾ ਭਗਤਿ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਅਨਦਿਨੁ ਨਾਮੇ ਰਤਿਆ ਸਚੇ
ਸਚੀ ਸੋਇ ॥ ਇਕੁ ਤਿਲੁ ਪਿਆਰਾ ਵਿਸਰੈ ਭਗਤਿ ਕਿਨੇਹੀ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਮਨੁ ਤਨੁ ਸੀਤਲੁ ਸਾਚ ਸਿਉ ਸਾਸੁ ਨ ਬਿਰਥਾ
ਕੋਇ ॥੧॥

SIREE RAAG, THIRD MEHL: *If one thinks about the time for devotional worship of the Lord, then what time can there be for devotional worship? By remaining night and day imbued with Naam, one becomes the embodiment of the True Lord, and obtains true glory. If someone forgets the Beloved Lord, even for an instant, what sort of devotion is that? One's mind and body remain cooled and soothed by the True Lord if not a single breath is wasted without Naam* [SGGS: 35]

But for a mature adherent, there is a specific and very valuable time that has been recommended by Gurbani and it is early morning.

Jap(u) composition enunciates about it as:

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ਆਖਹਿ ਮੰਗਹਿ ਦੇਹਿ ਦੇਹਿ ਦਾਤਿ ਕਰੇ ਦਾਤਾਰੁ ॥ ਫੇਰਿ ਕਿ ਅਗੈ ਰਖੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਦਿਸੈ ਦਰਬਾਰੁ ॥ ਮੁਹੇ ਕਿ ਬੋਲਣੁ ਬੋਲੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਸੁਣਿ ਧਰੇ ਪਿਆਰੁ ॥ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਵੇਲਾ ਸਚੁ ਨਾਉ ਵਡਿਆਈ ਵੀਚਾਰੁ ॥ ਕਰਮੀ ਆਵੈ ਕਪੜਾ ਨਦਰੀ ਮੋਖੁ ਦੁਆਰੁ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵੈ ਜਾਣੀਐ ਸਭੁ ਆਪੇ ਸਚਿਆਰੁ ॥੪॥

So, if God provides all the items then what can one offer in return, by which he might see the Darbaar, His Court? What words does one have to speak on hearing which His love is evoked? In the Amrit Vaylaa, the ambrosial hours before dawn, chant the True Name, and contemplate His Glorious Greatness. [SGGS: 2]

This time is known as Braham Mahurat, the auspicious time and has the importance because by this time the three parts of night when most of the persons are supposed to sleep, are over. In the last part of the night, transition to the dawn starts gradually and humans also go for the transformation to active mode. Generally, a healthy and normal human needs only six hours of sleep and taking that a person sleeps at 10 O'clock at night his body and mind have rested for the required time; hence both are fresh. Additionally, one's stomach is also light since food taken at night has got digested, and the person is ready for a transitional state of activity to utilize this time effectively.

When Guru Nanak settled at Kartarpur after ending his udasis (travels), he was observing this time himself; this is indicated by Bhai Gurdas as:

ਫਿਰਿ ਬਾਬਾ ਆਇਆ ਕਰਤਾਰਪੁਰ ਭੇਖ ਸਗਲ ਉਦਾਸੀ ਉਤਾਰਾ ॥.....

ਸ਼ੋਦਰ ਆਰਤੀ ਗਾਵੀਐ, ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਵੇਲੇ ਜਾਪੁ ਉਚਾਰਾ ॥

(Var 26/4)

Further, in the hymn below, Guru raises a question that whose name should be chanted in the early morning? The answer is also given; ਵਡੜੈ ਝਾਲਿ ਝਲੰਭਲੈ ਨਾਵੜਾ ਲਈਐ ਕਿਸੁ ॥ ਨਾਉ ਲਈਐ ਪਰਮੇਸਰੈ ਭੰਨਣ ਘੜਣ ਸਮਰਥੁ ॥੬੨॥

In the early hours of the morning, whose name should be chanted. Chant the Name of the Transcendent Lord, who is All-powerful to create and destroy. [SGGS: 1420]

It is to be noted that the environment has a great impact on the concentration of the mind. This can be realized from the impact of Ragas on mind; each Raga is to be sung at a particular time corresponding to the mood of the listeners; For illustration singing time of a few ragas is given below: time for singing Todi and Bhairo is morning, Raga Asa can be sung between morning to evening; Gujri is to be sung only upto 11O'clock; Raga Sarang is to be sung from 11 am-2 pm, Raga Kedara from 7- 10 pm and so on.

On this basis, one can say that at Amrit Vela mood of the seeker's mind matches, thereby providing the maximum efficiency for the chanting of Naam or meditation on it.

Moreover, for centuries humans' awakening and sleeping were synchronized with the rising and setting of the sun. Only with the invention of electricity, new entertaining means such as TV and the advancement of telecommunication, humans started extending their activities to mid night or even later. Thereby they mostly forgot some of the good aspects of life; one of them was not to utilize this very auspicious hour of the morning. The more the humans gets detuned from nature more they suffer, it is quite visible, but only humans have to contemplate it.

It is to be noted that the purpose of creating a human by God is to evolve to become a saint or a Gurmukh as per Gurbani, but instead of knowing it and working for it, he indulges in making merriments thus wasting his hard to get life.

Reverting back to the topic, it is to be noted that Guru Amar Das's remark illustrates the impact of not living as above;

ਮਹਲਾ ੩ ॥ ਲਾਹੌਰ ਸਹਰੁ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਸਹੁ ਸਿਫਤੀ ਦਾ ਘਰੁ ॥੨੮॥

The city of Lahore is as if under the wrath and is poisonous for its citizens since they remain indulged upto early morning in sensuous pleasure. [SGGS: 1412]

Gurbani reflects on the importance of meditation on Naam in the early morning and the situation of a man after the daybreak as:

ਸਲੋਕੁ ਮਃ ੧ ॥ ਸਬਾਹੀ ਸਾਲਾਹ ਜਿਨੀ ਧਿਆਇਆ ਇਕ ਮਨਿ ॥ ਸੇਈ ਪੂਰੇ ਸਾਹ ਵਖਤੈ ਉਪਰਿ ਲੜਿ ਮੁਏ ॥ ਦੂਜੈ ਬਹੁਤੇ ਰਾਹ ਮਨ ਕੀਆ ਮਤੀ ਖਿੰਡੀਆ ॥ ਬਹੁਤੁ ਪਏ ਅਸਗਾਹ ਗੋਤੇ ਖਾਹਿ ਨ ਨਿਕਲਹਿ ॥ ਤੀਜੈ ਮੁਹੀ ਗਿਰਾਹ ਭੁਖ ਤਿਖਾ ਦੁਇ ਭਉਕੀਆ ॥ ਖਾਧਾ ਹੋਇ ਸੁਆਹ ਭੀ ਖਾਣੇ ਸਿਉ ਦੋਸਤੀ ॥ ਚਉਥੈ ਆਈ ਉਘ ਅਖੀ ਮੀਟਿ ਪਵਾਰਿ ਗਇਆ ॥ ਭੀ ਉਠਿ ਰਚਿਓਨੁ ਵਾਦੁ ਸੈ ਵਰਿਆ ਕੀ ਪਿੜ ਬਧੀ ॥ ਸਭੇ ਵੇਲਾ ਵਖਤ ਸਭਿ ਜੇ ਅਠੀ ਭਉ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਮਨਿ ਵਸੈ ਸਚਾ ਨਾਵਣੁ ਹੋਇ ॥੧॥

SHALOK, FIRST MEHL: ***Those who praise the Lord in the early hours of the morning and meditate on Him single-mindedly, are the perfect bankers since they battle with the mind at the right time (early morning). In the second watch, the focus of the mind is scattered in all sorts of ways. So many fall into the bottomless ocean of worldly avocations; they are suffocated while drowning and they cannot get out of it. In the third watch, both hunger and thirst demand attention, and food is put into the mouth. That which is eaten becomes waste, but they are still attached to eating. In the fourth watch, they become drowsy, they close their eyes and enter deep sleep. Rising up again, they again engage in a struggle for earning food, it is as if they have set up the arena for this for 100 years. If all the hours, they live in fear of God, then all the times Lord is with them. O Nanak, when the Lord dwells within their minds, this is the true cleansing bath. || 1 ||*** [SGGS: 145-146]

Baba Shaikh Fareed points out the importance of early morning meditation thus:

ਫਰੀਦਾ ਪਿਛਲ ਰਾਤਿ ਨ ਜਾਗਿਓਹਿ ਜੀਵਦੜੇ ਮੁਇਓਹਿ ॥ ਜੇ ਤੈ ਰਬੁ ਵਿਸਾਰਿਆ ਤ ਰਬਿ ਨ ਵਿਸਰਿਓਹਿ ॥੧੦੭॥

Fareed, you have not awakened in the early hours before dawn, you are dead while living. Although you have forgotten God, God has not forgotten you. || 107 || [SGGS: 1383]

ਪਹਿਲੈ ਪਹਰੈ ਫੁਲੜਾ ਫਲੁ ਭੀ ਪਛਾ ਰਾਤਿ ॥ ਜੋ ਜਾਗਿਨਿ ਲਹੰਨਿ ਸੇ ਸਾਈ ਕੰਨੋ ਦਾਤਿ ॥੧੧੨॥

The worship during the first watch of the night brings flowers, and the worship during the last watch of the night brings fruit. Those who remain awake receive gifts from the Lord. || 112 || [SGGS: 1384]

Hymns about the benefits of rising early

ਪਿਛਹੁ ਰਾਤੀ ਸਦੜਾ ਨਾਮੁ ਖਸਮ ਕਾ ਲੋਹਿ ॥ ਖੇਮੇ ਛਤੁ ਸਰਾਇਚੇ ਦਿਸਨਿ ਰਬ ਪੀੜੇ ॥ ਜਿਨੀ ਤੇਰਾ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਇਆ ਤਿਨ ਕਉ ਸਦਿ ਮਿਲੇ ॥੧॥

Those who receive the call in the last hours of the night, chant the Name of their Lord and Master. Tents, canopies, tent walls and carriages remain prepared and ready for them. Those who meditated on Your Name, O Lord, they get all these after being called || 1 || [SGGS: 989]

ਹਰਿ ਧਨੁ ਰਤਨੁ ਜਵੇਹਰੁ ਮਾਣਕੁ ਹਰਿ ਧਨੈ ਨਾਲਿ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਵੇਲੈ ਵਤੈ ਹਰਿ ਭਗਤੀ ਹਰਿ ਲਿਵ ਲਾਈ ॥ ਹਰਿ ਧਨੁ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਵੇਲੈ ਵਤੈ ਕਾ ਬੀਜਿਆ ਭਗਤ ਖਾਇ ਖਰਚਿ ਰਹੇ ਨਿਖੁਟੈ ਨਾਹੀ ॥ ਹਲਤਿ ਪਲਤਿ ਹਰਿ ਧਨੈ ਕੀ ਭਗਤਾ ਕਉ ਮਿਲੀ ਵਡਿਆਈ ॥੩॥

The Lord's Name wealth is like jewels, gems and rubies. At the appropriate time of the Amrit Vaylaa, the ambrosial hours of the morning, the Lord's devotees have their conscious lovingly centered on the wealth of the Lord. The devotees of the Lord have become weary by eating and spending the wealth of the Lord's Name, the seeds of which they implanted at the appropriate time of the ambrosial hours of the Amrit Vaylaa, but it never exhausted. In this world and the next, the devotees are blessed with the glorious greatness of the wealth of the Lord. || 3 || [SGGS: 734]

ਕਰਿ ਇਸਨਾਨੁ ਸਿਮਰਿ ਪੁਭੁ ਅਪਨਾ ਮਨ ਤਨ ਭਏ ਅਰੋਗਾ ॥ ਕੋਟਿ ਬਿਘਨ ਲਾਥੇ ਪੁਭੁ ਸਰਣਾ ਪ੍ਰਗਟੇ ਭਲੇ ਸੰਜੋਗਾ ॥੧॥

SORAT.H, FIFTH MEHL: After taking your cleansing bath and remembering your God in meditation, your mind and body have become free of disease. Millions of obstacles have been removed, in the Sanctuary of God, and good fortune has manifested. || 1 || [SGGS: 611]

The above shows that even taking a bath early morning is beneficial

ਬਾਬੀਹਾ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਵੇਲੇ ਬੋਲਿਆ ਤਾਂ ਦਰਿ ਸੁਣੀ ਪੁਕਾਰ ॥ ਮੇਘੇ ਨੇ ਫੁਰਮਾਨੁ ਹੋਆ ਵਰਸਹੁ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਧਾਰਿ ॥ ਹਉ ਤਿਨ ਕੈ ਬਲਿਹਾਰਣੈ ਜਿਨੀ ਸਚੁ ਰਖਿਆ ਉਰਿ ਧਾਰਿ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮੇ ਸਭ ਹਰੀਆਵਲੀ ਗੁਰ ਕੈ ਸਬਦਿ ਵੀਚਾਰਿ ॥੧॥

SHALOK, THIRD MEHL: *The rainbird chirped in the ambrosial hours of the morning before dawn; its prayers were heard in the Court of the Lord. The order was issued to the clouds to pour down mercifully. I am a sacrifice to those who have kept the True Lord enshrined within their hearts. O Nanak, through the Name, all are rejuvenated, by contemplating the Word of the Guru's Shabad. || 1 ||* [SGGS: 1285]

Above hymn brings out what the seeker, the rainbird gains out of the remembrance of God, arising before dawn, it brings out that rain of Naam at that hour.

ਸਲੋਕ ਮ: ੨ ॥ ਅਠੀ ਪਹਰੀ ਅਠ ਖੰਡ ਨਾਵਾ ਖੰਡੁ ਸਰੀਰੁ ॥ ਤਿਸੁ ਵਿਚਿ ਨਉ ਨਿਧਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਏਕੁ ਭਾਲਹਿ ਗੁਣੀ ਗਹੀਰੁ ॥ ਕਰਮਵੰਤੀ ਸਾਲਾਹਿਆ ਨਾਨਕ ਕਰਿ ਗੁਰੁ ਪੀਰੁ ॥ ਚਉਥੈ ਪਹਰਿ ਸਬਾਹ ਕੈ ਸੁਰਤਿਆ ਉਪਜੈ ਚਾਉ ॥ ਤਿਨਾ ਦਰੀਆਵਾ ਸਿਉ ਦੋਸਤੀ ਮਨਿ ਮੁਖਿ ਸਚਾ ਨਾਉ ॥ ਓਥੈ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਵੰਡੀਐ ਕਰਮੀ ਹੋਇ ਪਸਾਉ ॥ ਕੰਚਨ ਕਾਇਆ ਕਸੀਐ ਵੰਨੀ ਚੜੈ ਚੜਾਉ ॥ ਜੇ ਹੋਵੈ ਨਦਰਿ ਸਰਾਫ ਕੀ ਬਹੁੜਿ ਨ ਪਾਈ ਤਾਉ ॥ ਸਤੀ ਪਹਰੀ ਸਤੁ ਭਲਾ ਬਹੀਐ ਪੜਿਆ ਪਾਸਿ ॥ ਓਥੈ ਪਾਪੁ ਪੁੰਨੁ ਬੀਚਾਰੀਐ ਕੂੜੈ ਘਟੈ ਰਾਸਿ ॥ ਓਥੈ ਖੋਟੇ ਸਟੀਅਹਿ ਖਰੇ ਕੀਚਹਿ ਸਾਬਾਸਿ ॥ ਬੋਲਣੁ ਫਾਦਲੁ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਦੁਖੁ ਸੁਖੁ ਖਸਮੈ ਪਾਸਿ ॥੧॥

SHALOK, SECOND MEHL: *If one imagines the body of a man as the ninth continent of the earth, twenty-four hours a day, one remains engrossed with the materials of eight continents. Within the body, there is one Naam, the Name of the Lord with unlimited virtues, the nine treasures. O Nanak, only the fortunate ones search for Him and glorify Him by making the Guru their spiritual teacher.*

*** In the fourth watch of the early morning hours, those with awakened consciousness are filled with a great zeal for Naam, they have Naam within their mind, and at their lips, they have friendship with Gurmukhs within whom there is a river like flow of Naam. The Ambrosial Nectar is distributed there (in their company), and there the Grace of the Lord is granted. There, their bodies are made pure as in the case of gold put within the fire, and these are made to take the good colour of devotion. If the Jeweller casts His Glance of Grace, they are not put within the fire again. Throughout the other seven watches of the day, one's conduct has to be pure, and one should sit with the spiritually wise. There, contemplation about vices and virtues is carried out, and the capital of falsehood is diminished. There, the counterfeits are cast aside, and the genuine is cheered. Oh Nanak, (there one realizes) that lamentation about having pains and pleasures is futile since these are under the power of the Lord and Master. || 1 ||* [SGGS: 146]

ਚਿੜੀ ਚੁਹਕੀ ਪਹੁ ਫੁਟੀ ਵਗਨਿ ਬਹੁਤੁ ਤਰੇਗ ॥ ਅਚਰਜ ਰੂਪ ਸੰਤਨ ਰਚੇ ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮਹਿ ਰੇਗ ॥੧॥

The sparrows are chirping, and dawn has come; several waves are stirred in the minds (of saints). O Nanak, such wondrous spectacles (of Lord) are fashioned by the Saints (in their mind) in the love of Naam. || 1 || [SGGS: 319]

Lastly, the hymn describes the characteristics of a Sikh

ਮ: ਖ ॥ ਗੁਰ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਜੋ ਸਿਖੁ ਅਖਾਏ ਸੁ ਭਲਕੇ ਉਠਿ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਵੈ ॥ ਉਦਮੁ ਕਰੇ ਭਲਕੇ ਪਰਭਾਤੀ ਇਸਨਾਨੁ ਕਰੇ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਸਰਿ ਨਾਵੈ ॥ ਉਪਦੇਸਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਜਪੁ ਜਾਪੈ ਸਭਿ ਕਿਲਵਿਖ ਪਾਪ ਦੇਖ ਲਹਿ ਜਾਵੈ ॥ ਫਿਰਿ ਚੜੈ ਦਿਵਸੁ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਗਾਵੈ ਬਹਦਿਆ ਉਠਦਿਆ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਵੈ ॥ ਜੋ ਸਾਸਿ ਗਿਰਾਸਿ ਧਿਆਏ ਮੇਰਾ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਸੋ ਗੁਰਸਿਖੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਮਨਿ ਭਾਵੈ ॥ ਜਿਸ ਨੋ ਦਇਆਲੁ ਹੋਵੈ ਮੇਰਾ ਸੁਆਮੀ ਤਿਸੁ ਗੁਰਸਿਖੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਉਪਦੇਸੁ ਸੁਣਾਵੈ ॥ ਜਨੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਧੂੜਿ ਮੰਗੈ ਤਿਸੁ ਗੁਰਸਿਖ ਕੀ ਜੋ ਆਪਿ ਜਪੈ ਅਵਰਹ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਾਵੈ ॥੨॥

FOURTH MEHL: *One who calls himself a Sikh of the Guru, the True Guru, rising in the early morning hours, meditates on the Lord's Name. He makes efforts in the early morning and bathes and cleanses himself in the pool of nectar. Following the Instructions of the Guru, he chants the Name of the Lord, and all his sins and immorality are erased. Then, at the rising of the sun, he sings Gurbani, whether sitting down or standing up and meditates on the Lord's Name. One who meditates on my Lord with every breath and every morsel of food, that GurSikh becomes pleasing to the Guru's mind. That GurSikh unto whom my Lord and Master is kind and compassionate is made to listen to his teaching by the Guru. Servant Nanak begs for the dust of the feet of that GurSikh, who himself chants the Naam, and inspires others to chant it. || 2 ||* [SGGS: 306]

Further, the code of conduct for Sikhs which was produced under the collective wisdom of many prominent scholars and highly elevated souls of the time, recommends that

A Sikh should wake up in the ambrosial hours (three hours before the dawn, take a bath and concentrate his/her thoughts on One Immortal being, repeating the name of 'Waheguru' (Wondrous Destroyer of darkness).

Another logic which supports utilizing early morning for meditation is: one's mind is flexible to change itself according to the prevailing environment. Suppose one attends a marriage celebration party where the atmosphere is saturated with singing and dancing and happiness it adopts its mood to join the party and share the prevailing atmosphere, similarly, if one attends a comedy show where all are indulging in laughter, its mood will change to the occasion; but suppose after this one gets a news about the death of a friend, his mind, in no time become sad and sorrowful. Due to this a Sikh is asked to attend Saadh-Sangat, where a special aura exists/affects the mind. Accordingly this can

be seen by watching a devotee entering a Gurdwara and proceeding for obeisance in front of the eternal Guru, Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

Hence, in the same way, the atmosphere in the early morning is inviting a practitioner for meditation on Naam since it is conducive for the same. This was realized by Gurus and practiced and then recommended to be followed by Sikhs.

Besides, a Sikh has to evolve further to become Singh and then Khalsa, for which one has to undergo baptism for which one has to submit to Guru and presently to five loved ones. After becoming a Singh this way, he has to strictly follow the instructions given to him during the ceremony. One of these instructions is to be awake in the early morning and meditate on Naam. Additionally, one is to recite prescribed Gurbanis before dawn, in the evening and at the time of sleep. The total time one has to devote to God's remembrance is 240 minutes, being one-tenth of the 24 hours of day and night. It is taken as the time Daswandh besides contributing one-tenth of one's earnings. These prescribed Gurbanis contain hymns which are compatible with the mood at that particular time according to the prevailing environment. Japuji sahib and Jaap sahib Swaiya Patshahi daswin, chaupaie and Anand, sahib, are to be recited in the early morning before the rising of the sun; Rehraas sahib in the evening at the just setting of sun and Sohila sahib before sleep.

On the basis of the above, it becomes imperative for baptized Sikhs not to miss the early hour of the morning for the meditation on Naam and the recitation of prescribed *Nitnem Banis*. Generally, for other Sikhs this will help even to get up and recite the composition of Japuji Sahib, evolve them with the urge for becoming a Singh by undergoing baptism, which is a must for all the Sikhs and provide all the benefits as enlisted above. □

OUR APPEAL TO MEMBERS

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Guru Arjan Dev Ji: An apostle of Peace Sacrificed for upholding Equality

DR. CHARAN SINGH*

Guru Arjan Dev Ji, fifth Guru of the Sikhs was born in April 1563 in Amritsar and bestowed Guruship in September 1581, at the age of 18 years. He consolidated the community, which had started by Guru Nanak Dev ji, by providing it institutional and organizational base.

Contributions

Guru Arjan Dev Ji, in 1588, started construction of Harmandir Sahib, now famous as Golden Temple, in 1590, temple-pool or sarovar at Tarn Taran, in 1594 city of Kartarpur (in Jalandhar) and in 1603, city of Ramsar. The Harmandir Sahib, with doors in four directions symbolizing freedom of entry to all for spiritual discourse was unique for another reason too - foundation stone was laid by famous Muslim Sufi, Mian Mir. At Harmandir, in the sanctum sanctorum, Adi Granth was ceremoniously installed in 1604. The Adi Granth contained compositions of 5 Sikh Gurus, 15 Hindu and Muslim saints, and 15 Sikhs. The contributors to the Adi Granth consisted of spiritualists who came from different castes/walks of life – calico printer, royalty, cobbler, farmer, butcher, musicians, preachers/brahmins, masseur, water carrier, etc. This “mixed” compilation hurt sentiments of many orthodox spiritualists and therefore complaints were made to the then Mughal emperor, Akbar, who after satisfying himself rather made an offering to the Guru for having completed this unique task of finding universalism in diversity.

Compositions

Guru Arjan Dev Ji was himself a great philosopher, spiritualist and prolific poet. The focus of his compositions, more than two thousand, mainly in Hindi and Punjabi, contained in Sri Guru Granth Sahib, is on devotional love, union with God, and equality of all. Illustratively, sample his composition in famous Sukhmani or Apostle of Peace -

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References are page number of compositions of Guru Arjan Dev Ji, as contained in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. This article has drawn extensively from various sources, mainly The Encyclopedia of Sikhism (editor-in-chief: Harbans Singh), Punjabi University Patiala.

ਸਰਬ ਧਰਮ ਮਹਿ ਸ੍ਰੇਸਟ ਧਰਮੁ ॥ ਹਰਿ ਕੇ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਿ ਨਿਰਮਲ ਕਰਮੁ ॥
 ਸਗਲ ਕ੍ਰਿਆ ਮਹਿ ਉਤਮ ਕਿਰਿਆ ॥ ਸਾਧਸੰਗਿ ਦੁਰਮਤਿ ਮਲੁ ਹਿਰਿਆ ॥
 ਸਗਲ ਉਦਮ ਮਹਿ ਉਦਮੁ ਭਲਾ ॥ ਹਰਿ ਕਾ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਹੁ ਜੀਅ ਸਦਾ ॥
 ਸਗਲ ਬਾਨੀ ਮਹਿ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਬਾਨੀ ॥ ਹਰਿ ਕੇ ਜਸੁ ਸੁਨਿ ਰਸਨ ਬਖਾਨੀ ॥
 ਸਗਲ ਬਾਨ ਤੇ ਓਹੁ ਉਤਮ ਬਾਨੁ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਜਿਹ ਘਟਿ ਵਸੈ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ॥੮॥੩॥

*Of all dharams, best is: meditate and lead life free of vices; t is: erase the filth in mind
 in company of holy*

Of all efforts, best is: always chant the name of Lord in heart

Of all bani, life-giving bani is: to hear and chant with tongue, virtues of God

Of all places, best is: where Gods name abides. (SGGS: 266)

In another place, his compositions reflect the caring and protecting nature of God. For example – ਤਾਤੀ ਵਾਉ ਨ ਲਗਈ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਸਰਣਾਈ ॥ ਚਉਗਿਰਦ ਹਮਾਰੈ ਰਾਮ ਕਾਰ ਦੁਖੁ ਲਗੈ ਨ ਭਾਈ ॥੧॥
 – *Suffering does not touch those who are cared by God. I am protected from four sides by Gods circle, so pain cannot come near me (SGGS: 819).*

In one composition, Guru Arjan mentions about the merit of meditation – ਜਿਸੁ ਸਿਮਰਤ ਦੁਖ ਡੇਰਾ ਵਹੈ ॥ ਜਿਸੁ ਸਿਮਰਤ ਜਮੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਨ ਕਹੈ ॥ ਜਿਸੁ ਸਿਮਰਤ ਹੋਤ ਸੂਕੇ ਹਰੇ ॥ ਜਿਸੁ ਸਿਮਰਤ ਡੂਬਤ ਪਾਹਨ ਤਰੇ ॥੩॥ – *By meditating - home of sorrow is demolished; yama does not touch; dry becomes green; sunk stones start floating. (SGGS: 182)*

Guru Arjan's love for his beloved God is immense as he observes in one hymn - ਉਲਾਹਨੇ ਮੈ ਕਾਹੁ ਨ ਦੀਓ ॥ ਮਨ ਮੀਠ ਤੁਹਾਰੇ ਕੀਓ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥ - *I do not give blame to anyone else. Whatever you do is sweet to my mind. (SGGS: 978)*

Increasing Popularity of Guru Arjan Dev ji and Emperor

The preaching of universalism and spiritual equality of races, gender, castes were making Guru Arjan Dev ji very popular amongst the people in Punjab where he travelled extensively and engaged in social work. He would get wells dug during period of famine and was successful in persuading Emperor Akbar in relaxing land revenue in Punjab during difficult times. In 1605, the new Emperor Jahangir, unlike his liberal father, Akbar, was alarmed by the increasing influence of Guru Arjan and observed in Tuzuk-i-Jehangiri, that either Guru Arjan Dev Ji should be brought in the fold of Islam or put to death with torture. Accordingly, Guru Arjan Dev Ji was captured, taken to Lahore and tortured by end-May 1606. He was made to sit on red-hot burning plate, fire lit under the plate and hot sand poured on him. This continued for a few days and when his body was weak, full of

wounds and blisters, he was taken to river Ravi and ordered to take a dip in the cold fast flowing water.

The martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Ji, first of its kind in the subcontinent, distressed many. Guru Hargobind ji, succeeded as the sixth Guru of the Sikhs, at the young age of 11 years, established Akal Takht (Eternal Throne) opposite Harmandir Sahib, and started the practice of wearing swords and maintaining an army of foot soldiers and horseman.

Lessons from the Life of Guru Arjan Dev ji

The life span of 43 years of Guruji on planet Earth, 25 years of Guruship, and the unique sacrifice has many lessons for us, important of those being -

1. Universal Spiritual Message is needed by all humans, and that should be made available in simple words and language
2. Equality of all in front of God Almighty - no distinction of class, creed, race, gender
3. Merit and Objectivity in selection or decision making
4. Spiritual Steadfastness and upholding of Truthfulness
5. Surrender to Guru and God, and avail total protection

So, how do we celebrate the life and Sacrifice of Guru Arjan Dev ji, which was dedicated to the principle of Equality? The most important component of celebration must be spreading the message of Guru Arjan Dev ji across the world to make it a better place to live harmoniously and this responsibility is primarily that of the Sikhs.

Our Role and Responsibility

The unique sacrifice of Guru Arjan Dev Ji was on the high principles of Equality epitomized in his compositions, design of Harmandir and compilation of Adi Granth, which needs to be celebrated universally. Is the celebration of such a unique sacrifice by Chabeel sufficient? No, though on an average, on one single day of Shahidi Gurburab, according to an estimate, an expenditure of Rs 800 crore is incurred on distribution of sweet water, sharbat, in different cities of India in Gurdwaras, and individual stands. Is this huge expenditure by the community justified, leave aside huge crowds that disrupt traffic. Rather, alternative effective method of spreading the message of Guru Arjan Dev ji needs to be considered. Here are some submissions -

- a) Local, state, national and international Conferences on gender/racial/inter-faith Equality can be organized annually by Gurudwaras, Sikh schools/colleges/universities. The

richness of Guru Granth Sahib and the universality of message needs to be shared with non-Sikhs. It is important to share with many people as to how the universal message runs through the compositions of different spiritualists despite difference in time and doctrine: How Kabir and Parmanand sit on a similar philosophical platform in Guru Granth Sahib.

- b) Establishment of Sikh educational institutions, libraries and medical colleges/dispensaries associated with major Gurdwaras across the country serving the needy, without any discrimination.
- c) Organising debates on different channels on e-media about the message of life and sacrifice by Guru Arjan Dev ji. How teachings of Sikhi and practices of Guru Arjan Dev ji were universal, and ahead of time.
- d) Contributing articles in different print media, mainly vernacular, so that the objectivity of equality is spread across the world and discrimination in name of religion or caste/race and gender is discouraged.
- e) Material, standardised by SGPC, translated in different languages should be made available to disseminate the Universal message of Sikhi across the world.
- f) On Chabeel, as history reveals, langar is meant for devotees and hungry/needy spiritualists. Traditionally, in North Indian summer, jaggery sweetened water/lassi was normally served to devotees/sangat which can continue inside the Gurdwara. To serve outside the Gurudwara, to others than sangat/devotees, cool water arrangements for all months of summer for strangers/ passerby/onlookers could be considered.

Conclusion

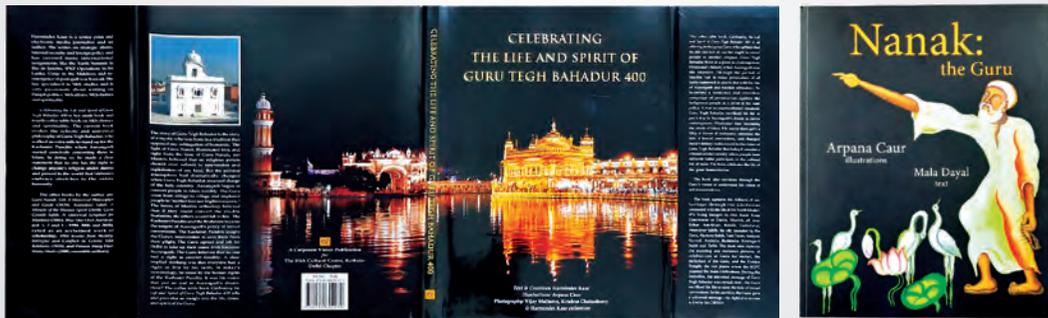
The spread of the universal message of Sikhism is the need of the hour in the world which is torn apart on account of differences in doctrines, color or gender. The Sikh Gurus believed in and preached universal brotherhood, fellowship or camaraderie, stressing upon a common objective for all human race of self-realisation. Guru Arjan stood for that principle of one big family and willingly sacrificed his life for upholding that principle steadfastly. To spread the message of universalism, we Sikhs have a duty towards the world community and we should not falter on that responsibility. The spread of universalism and realisation of unity within diversity will help make the world a harmonious place to live. □

The Sikh Cultural Centre – The Sikh Review

We are pleased to inform that to mark the
400th Birth Anniversary of – Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji
the following 'Special' publication have been released by us.

- Three issues of The Sikh Review monthly (May, June and July 2021) have been dedicated as '**Special Issues**' to mark the birth anniversary of the Ninth Guru. The issues are available – for reading and reference – on our website: www.sikhreview.org
- To mark the historical occasion a **Coffee Table Book** was launched in September 2021.

Earlier to mark the 550th Birth Anniversary of Guru Nanak special initiative was taken to educate children about the teachings of Guru Nanak through a beautiful and informative pictorial publication title: **Nanak The Guru**. The book was published in Punjabi, Hindi, English, Telgu, Tamil, Marathi, Oriya, Spanish and German languages, under sponsorship from philanthropists, and distributed among children free of cost. The book is available on the TSR website for worldwide readership.



The Coffee Table Book dedicated to **400th Birth Anniversary of - Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji** at a discounted price **Rs. 850/-** in India and **\$ 35** or **Rs. 2500/-** for Overseas (by Air Mail - including postal charges).

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Sri Guru Granth Sahib – A Universal Inter - Faith Scripture

*PROF. (DR.) SURJIT SINGH BHATTI**

The first version of the Scripture of the Sikhs was compiled by the Fifth Guru and was installed in Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, in 1604. It had spiritual verses (*Gurbani*) of the first five Sikh Gurus (Guru Nanak, Guru Angad, Guru Amardas, Guru Ramdas and Guru Arjan) and some other Saints. This Scripture was called *Pothi Sahib* or *Adi Granth*. Later, it was revised by Guru Gobind Singh, the 10th and last physically manifested Sikh Guru (by adding the verses of Guru Teg Bahadur, the 9th Guru, at Damdama Sahib, Talwandi Sabo, in 1706, and was given the present name *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* (SGGS), and the Status of An Eternal Guru.

SGGS composed and compiled by Sikh Gurus themselves

Teachings of Socrates (469-399 BCE) came to us from the writings of Plato (428-347 BCE). Some saints left no written record of their teachings; their followers collected their oral sermons later. The philosophy of Kung Fu-Tze, also known as Confucius (551-479 BCE), was published by his grandson later. The verses in SGGS, however, have been written by the Sikh Gurus themselves. Gurus selected the verses of other saints and bards that also inculcate respect for all religious scriptures, equality of all human beings, their liberty, the dignity of women, and upholding of human rights. Gurbani exhorts us to worship One Creator (*Naam Japo*), earn honestly (*Kirat Karo*) by the sweat of our brow, and render selfless service (*Sewa Karo*) with empathy, by sharing of our resources (*Dasvand* or one-tenth of our income) with others, especially the needy. (Free food, medicines, and oxygen, besides many other selfless services, were rendered by the Sikhs to thousands of people of all Faiths during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many organizations like *Khalsa Aid* Volunteers served millions during Earthquakes, Floods, and other natural calamities in the past. Among others, free orphanages like *Pingalwara* at Amritsar, free Dialysis Hospitals at Sikh Gurdwaras, as at Delhi, and Guru ka Langar Free Eye Surgery Hospitals (as at Soahana

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and Chandigarh) and *Sarbat da Bhala* Global Trust are only some of many such voluntary Services Centres set up by the Sikhs for people of all communities, as enshrined in their Holy Scripture, Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS).

One Script, though Different Languages

Throughout SGGS, only one simple (**Gurmukhi**) script has been used. However, common idioms and phrases from several other languages spoken in different parts of India, have been used. The main language was Punjabi, spoken mostly in Punjab and parts of Northern India. Words from *Lehndi* Punjabi (spoken now only in Pakistan), were used but its *Shahmukhi Script* was not used. Other languages in SGGS include Hindi, Apbhransh, Brajhasha, Marathi, Sindhi, Multani, Rajasthani, Kourvi, and Rekhta. Words from Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian have also been used. Adjectives commonly used for the One Creator (such as Ram, Hari, Krishan, Gopal, Brahma, Vasudeva, Murari, Thakur, Nath, and Allah, Rahim, Khuda) are frequently used in this Scripture.

SGGS as An Inter-Faith Scripture

The *Gurbani* hymns in SGGS are in melodious musical forms (*Raagas*) and their combinations (*Mishrit Raagas*), in harmony with the time of the day and the season. The purpose is to attune the human mind to Nature, in remembrance and gratitude of One Creator. The ultimate aim of SGGS is the *unification* of all human beings. There are many verses that emphasize the virtues of other forms of life, the flora and fauna, and the need to learn from their noble attributes. Protection of the ecological equilibrium of Nature is a recurrent theme, which the Gurus highlighted centuries before the present environmental disasters. The *diversity* and independence of all Faiths are celebrated in these compositions. The forced conversion of any person to the Sikh way of Life (*Sikhi*) or to another religion, is strongly opposed in SGGS.

Contributions of Saints and Bards of all Religions to SGGS

The spiritual verses of 15 other saints (*Bhagats*) and 11 bards (*Bhatts*) are also included in SGGS. They were from different regions, castes, and professions. Three of them were Muslims, five were Hindus and seven were from other castes. Some verses of two dedicated devotees, who played on the stringed musical instrument called *Rabaab*, also find a place in SGGS. Gurus and the musicians who accompanied them also played on other stringed instruments such as *Saranda*, and *Taus*. (Two verses by Guru Nanak are incorporated in SGGS, in recognition of the scholarship and the devotion of his constant companion during the Guru's odysseys.

Scientific and Rational Approach of SGGS

In SGGS, one frequently comes across many scientific expositions of physical phenomena. For instance, 'matter' has been shown to consist of atoms and as waves of energy that can enter the distant inter-planetary space in the *blinking of an eye* (possible only with speed comparable to that of light). The existence of millions of stars and galaxies had been mentioned in SGGS much before astrophysicists and astronomers came to discover them through telescopes and satellites. There are many hymns that describe how the universe was created from a very dense, compact 'cosmic egg,' just as the *Big Bang Theory* suggests now. *Gurbani* also speaks of the *space-time continuum* which is a corollary of Einsteinian Relativity. A logical and scientific approach is repeatedly advocated in SGGS, to eradicate superstitions and irrational blind beliefs.

The Sequence in SGGS

Gurbani verses in SGGS are arranged in three parts. The prayers for morning time (*Jap Ji*), afternoon (*Rehras*), and bedtime (*Sohila*) form the first 13 pages. The second part, from page 14 up to 1352, consists of musical compositions, which are methodically numbered so that no changes are possible subsequently. The verses in the *third* part, from page 1353 to 1430, are not in any musical form and are composed mostly by *Bhatts*, the Brahmin Scholars. All these verses focus on the praise and remembrance of One Creator, Truthful Living, Compassion, and Love for all living beings. They are based on the progressive, and rational philosophy of the Sikh Gurus that shuns all rituals.

Views expressed by some thinkers about SGGS are reproduced below.

Arnold Toynbee, a historian (In the Translation of SGGS as UNESO Publication)

"There can not be a better guide to humans as compared to Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji (which) inspires its followers to do their best, gives knowledge and deep insight to them in the name of the God ... and do good deeds. ... One hope for mankind is there in the form of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji which teaches us all God's message of love and gives direction to life".

Bertrand Russell (Philosopher, Mathematician (1872-1970) wrote :

"If some lucky men survive the onslaught of the third world war of atomic and hydrogen bombs, then the Sikh religion will be the only means of guiding them, ... it has the capability, but the Sikhs have not brought out in the broad daylight the splendid doctrines of this

religion, which has come into existence for the benefit of the entire mankind. This k their greatest sin and the Sikhs cannot he freed of it”

Pearl S. Buck, Nobel Laureate (Good Earth) wrote :

“I have studied the scriptures of the great religions, but I do not find elsewhere the same power of appeal to the heart and mind. ... They speak for the human heart and the searching mind. The hymns in Guru Granth are an expression of ... time and eternity; of temporal human body and its needs: of the mystic human soul and its longing to be fulfilled; of God and the indissoluble bond between them.”



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Human Rights – A Core Concern in Sikh Doctrines

[PART-I]

*DR. DEVINDER PAL SINGH**

Sikhism is the world's fifth-largest religion. It was founded during the late 15th century in the Punjab region of the Indian subcontinent. Its adherents are known as Sikhs. Currently, there are about 30 million Sikhs worldwide. Most of them live in the Indian state of Punjab. As per Sikh tradition, Sikhism was established by Guru Nanak (1469–1539) and subsequently led by a succession of nine other Gurus. Before his death, the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh (1666–1708), bestowed the status of Guru to the sacred scripture of Sikhs, *Adi Granth*, which is presently known as *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* (SGGS) [1].

The *Adi Granth* was first compiled by Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru, in 1604. Its second and final version has been the handiwork of Guru Gobind Singh, who added the hymns of his father, Guru Teg Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru [2], at Damdama Sahib, Talwandi Sabo, Punjab, in 1705. The holy Sikh scripture, SGGS, contains 1430 pages of text in poetry form. In addition to the hymns of the six Sikh Gurus and four Sikhs, it includes hymns composed by fifteen saints (Bhagats) and eleven poet laureates (Bhats) of the Guru's court. Muslims and Hindus, Brahmins, and "untouchables" all come together in one congregation to create a universal scripture. It is a compendium of mystic, metaphysical and religious poetry written or recited between the 12th and 17th centuries in the Indian sub-continent [3].

Sri Guru Granth Sahib, through its comprehensive worldview, offers a perfect set of values and an applicable code of conduct. Its cardinal message is addressed to the welfare of all humans irrespective of their caste, color, creed, culture, gender and religion. SGGS emphasizes love, respect, empathy, and acceptance of others' existence. It prohibits us from infringing on the freedom and rights of others. The life and works of the Sikh Gurus exemplify the practicability of these ideas. Their inter-faith dialogues highlighted that human unity and oneness could be achieved through tolerance, communication, and respect for others [4].

Besides a matchless elaboration of spirituality, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* enshrines a powerful expression of the message of revolutionary ideals of social welfare, human rights, multicultural distinctness, and religious freedom. In the present era, when the threats and

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fear of interfaith conflicts, military aggression, terrorism etc., have overpowered the human sentiments, the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib are even more relevant to resolve all these problems.

Human Rights

Human rights are benchmarks that recognize and protect the dignity of all human beings. These rights are essential to all humans, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, race, language, religion, or gender. They comprise the right to life and liberty, freedom of opinion and expression, freedom from slavery and torture, the right to education and work, and many more. Everyone is entitled to these rights without discrimination [5].

Sikh Gurus called for universal freedom and the establishment of the benevolent rule of justice for all. Their unique, revolutionary, and liberating philosophy of universal humanism emphasizes primal human rights, e.g., freedom, equity, dignity, and justice for all [6-8]. It also supplements our current understanding of human rights.

Right to Life

Right to life means that nobody, not even the Government, can try to end one's life. It also implies that the Government should take apt measures to safeguard life by making laws to protect all and, in some circumstances, by taking steps to protect the person if his/her life is at risk [5]. Sikh doctrines strongly endorse this view about the right to life for all. Sikh Gurus proclaimed that human life is precious as it is God's gift; thereby, nobody has the right to terminate it. Guru Amar Das states:

ਹਰਿ ਕੈ ਭਾਣੈ ਜਨਮੁ ਪਦਾਰਥੁ ਪਾਇਆ ਮਤਿ ਉਤਮ ਹੋਈ ॥
Har kai bhanai janam padarath paiea mat uttam hoie.

By the pleasure of the Lord's Will, the prize of this human birth is obtained, and the intellect is exalted. (M. 3, SGGS, p. 365)

Guru Nanak emphasizes that both birth and death happen as per the command of God. Thus, none has the right to interfere in this natural process.

ਜੰਮਣੁ ਮਰਣਾ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਪਛਾਣੁ ॥
Jaman marna hukam pachaan.

Understand that birth and death take place according to God's Will. (M.1, SGGS, p. 412)

Right to Food

The right to adequate food states that every man, woman, and child, alone or in a community, should always has physical and economic access to adequate food or means for its procurement [5]. According to Sikh doctrines, this right for accessibility of food to

everyone is a God-given right to all, so none should be devoid of this right. Guru Ram Das proclaims it as:

ਵਿਚਿ ਆਪੇ ਜੰਤ ਉਪਾਇਅਨੁ ਮੁਖਿ ਆਪੇ ਦੇਇ ਗਿਰਾਸੁ ॥
vich ape jant upaian mukh ape deie giras.

He (God) created the beings here (on Earth), and He also makes the food available to them. (M.4, SGGS, p. 302)

The Right to Water

Pure, clean, and good quality water is second only to oxygen as the most crucial nutrient for sustaining human life. It has an essential action in almost all primary functions of the human body. It regulates body temperature and carries oxygen and nutrients to cells. Water is a major component of blood and lymph. It greases the walls of the arteries, cushions joints, and is crucial for metabolic reactions. It regulates the body's temperature by absorbing heat produced by physical exercise and cell metabolism. It cleans the body tissues by removing wastes and toxins. Seventy percent of our body is water. It is essential for life. Without it, one would die within days. The average person requires from 1.5 to 3.0 liters of clean, unpolluted water daily. Without this, our bodies slowly become dehydrated. A dehydrated body is open to disease and degenerative conditions [9].

The right to water has been recognized as being derived from the right to an adequate standard of living. Therefore, it is implicitly contained in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It has also been recognized as a legally binding right in many national constitutions. The right to water includes the availability of sufficient water for personal and domestic uses, physical access within or near each household, affordability, and adequate quality of water [10]. Access to water is also an element of other rights. It can be essential to realize the rights to food and secure livelihoods for farmers or others who rely on water for their daily work. Water is a dire necessity for life to flourish. This crucial role of water is pointed out by Guru Nanak as;

ਪਹਿਲਾ ਪਾਣੀ ਜੀਉ ਹੈ ਜਿਤੁ ਹਰਿਆ ਸਭੁ ਕੋਇ ॥
Pahila pani jio hai jit haria sabh koe.

Firstly, water is fundamental to life. All living beings flourish by its usage. (M. 1, SGGS, p. 472)

Guru Amar Das asserts that water is essential for the perpetuation of life; without it, none can survive. He articulates:

ਇਹੁ ਜਲੁ ਮੇਰਾ ਜੀਉ ਹੈ ਜਲ ਬਿਨੁ ਰਹਣੁ ਨ ਜਾਇ ॥
Ih jal mera jio hai jal bin rahan na jae.

This water is essential to my life; I cannot survive without water. (M. 3, SGGS, p. 1283)

Guru Ram Das states that water is one of the blessings bestowed upon us by the Creator. Therefore, it implicitly endorses the fact that each of us has a fundamental right to the accessibility of water to maintain our lives and good health.

ਸਭ ਜੀਉ ਪਿੰਡੁ ਮੁਖੁ ਨਕੁ ਦੀਆ ਵਰਤਣ ਕਉ ਪਾਣੀ ॥

Sabh jio pind mukh nak dia vartan kauo pani.

He gave all beings souls, bodies, mouths, noses, and water to drink. (M. 4, SGGS, p. 167)

Rights to Marry and have Family

Without any limitation due to nationality, race or religion, men and women of full age have the fundamental human right to marry and have a family. They are authorized to have equal rights as to marriage. The intending spouses shall enter marriage only with free and full consent [11-12].

In Sikhism, marriage is regarded as a sacral bond of mutual help to reach the pinnacles of worldly and spiritual life. It denotes a unity of mind and soul. It is a means to achieve spirituality. The fundamental goal of marriage in Sikhism is the union of both souls with the Almighty Lord. Therefore, the Sikh Gurus had very high regard for the institution of marriage, and they themselves entered matrimony. They asserted that marriage is not merely a social or civil contract but that its most ideal and highest purpose is the union of two souls so that they become spiritually inseparable. Guru Amar Das states:

ਧਨ ਪਿਰੁ ਏਹਿ ਨ ਆਖੀਅਨਿ ਬਹਨਿ ਇਕਠੇ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਏਕ ਜੋਤਿ ਦੁਇ ਮੂਰਤੀ ਧਨ ਪਿਰੁ ਕਹੀਐ ਸੋਇ ॥

Dhan pir ehi na aakhian bahan ikthe hoe. Ek jot due murti dhan pir kahiai soe.

Don't call them husband and wife, who merely sit together. A couple can genuinely be called husband and wife, who is consciously one (united) despite separate bodies. (M. 3, SGGS, p. 788)

The family is a fundamental and natural unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State. Family is also a primary social group in the Sikh community. Besides the endorsement of the right to marriage, family life has been encouraged by the Sikh Gurus. SGGS encourages Sikhs to live as a family unit to provide for and nurture children. Guru Arjan Dev states that one's birth in a family happens as per God's will.

ਜਾ ਤਿਸੁ ਭਾਣਾ ਤਾ ਜੰਮਿਆ ਪਰਵਾਰਿ ਭਲਾ ਭਾਇਆ ॥

Ja tis bhana ta jammia parvar bhala bhaia.

According to His (God's) Will, a child is born, in a blessed family. (M. 3, SGGS, p. 921)

ਮਾਤ ਪਿਤਾ ਭਾਈ ਸੁਤ ਬਨਿਤਾ ਤਿਨ ਭੀਤਰਿ ਪ੍ਰਭੂ ਸੰਜੋਇਆ ॥

Maat pita bhai sut banita tin bhitar parabhu sanjoia.

God has placed you among your mother, father, brothers, sons, and wife. (M. 5, SGGS, p. 77)

Thereby, Sikh doctrines advocate the God-given right to have a family life for everyone. Guru Arjan Dev articulates:

ਗਿਰਸਤੀ ਗਿਰਸਤਿ ਧਰਮਾਤਾ ॥

Girsati girsat dharmata.

The householders affirm their faith in family life. (M. 5, SGGS, p. 71)

Furthermore, he encourages us to maintain cordial relations with our family members and others too, to lead a peaceful life.

ਸੁਖਿ ਬੈਸਹੁ ਸੰਤ ਸਜਨ ਪਰਵਾਰੁ ॥

Sukh baishu sant sajan parvar.

O Pious ones! Sit in peace with the family and friends. (M.5, SGGS, p. 185)

Right to own things

In everyday life, we use many essential things that are ours. For example, everyone has the right to own property alone or jointly with others. None shall be arbitrarily divested of their property. It is a fundamental right because a person needs to be able to own what one wants without having it forcibly taken away. Without this right, one wouldn't be able to possess things [11-12].

Sikh doctrines emphasize that God has blessed us with the gifts of life and property. Guru Teg Bahadur states it as:

ਤਨੁ ਧਨੁ ਸੰਪੈ ਸੁਖ ਦੀਓ ਅਰੁ ਜਿਹ ਨੀਕੇ ਧਾਮ ॥

Tan dhan sampai sukh dio ar jih nike dham.

He (God) has given you your body, wealth, property, peace, and beautiful mansions. (M. 9, SGGS, p. 1426)

According to the Sikh Gurus, to deprive others of their rights amounts to injustice. Even to covet other's things or property is sin. Guru Nanak says:

ਹਕੁ ਪਰਾਇਆ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਉਸੁ ਸੁਅਰ ਉਸੁ ਗਾਇ ॥

Hak paraia nanka us suar us gaie.

To take what rightfully belongs to another must strictly be taboo as pork eating is for a Muslim and beef-eating is for a Hindu. (M.1, SGGS, p. 141)

Guru Arjan encourages us to repudiate what is rightfully others.

ਪਰ ਧਨ ਪਰ ਦਾਰਾ ਪਰ ਨਿੰਦਾ ਇਨ ਸਿਉ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਿ ਨਿਵਾਰਿ ॥
Par dhan par dara par ninda in sio parit nivar.

Others' wealth, others' wives, and the slander of others - renounce your craving for these. (M. 5, SGGS, p. 379)

Thus, Sikh doctrines strongly endorse the human's right to own things.

Right for Human Dignity

The cognition of innate dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all humans is the foundation of freedom, justice, and world peace. A human being's dignity is not only a fundamental right but constitutes the genuine basis of fundamental rights. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 1 states: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." Thus, human dignity isn't something that people earn because of their race, caste, class, social status, or any other distinction. All human beings are born with it. Just by being human, all people deserve respect. Human rights naturally spring from that dignity [13].

The concept of human dignity isn't restricted to human rights. For centuries, world religions have recognized human dignity as we now understand it. Most religions teach that humans are essentially equal on one account or another. In Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, it's because humans were created in the image of God, becoming children of God. Dignity is something that a divine being gives to people. In Catholic social teaching, this term is explicitly used to support the church's belief that every human life is sacred. In Hinduism and Buddhism, respectively, dignity is inherent because humans are manifestations of the Divine. In the Shvetasvatara Upanishad, it is stated, "He is the one God, hidden in all beings, all-pervading, the Self within all beings [14]. Buddhism begins with the understanding that humans are "rare" because they can make choices that lead to enlightenment. Our dignity arises from this responsibility and ability, uniting all humans in their quest [15].

One's dignity includes having a sense of control, making one's own decisions, experiencing hope and meaningfulness, feeling valued as a human being, and being in a treasured and nurturing environment. When everyone is equal, they are all equally deserving of basic respect and rights. Guru Ram Das emphasizes that God's essence is pervading

among us all. Thereby dignity is inherent as all humans are manifestations of the Divine. He states:

ਸਭ ਏਕ ਦ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟਿ ਸਮਤੁ ਕਰਿ ਦੇਖੈ ਸਭੁ ਆਤਮ ਰਾਮੁ ਪਛਾਨ ਜੀਉ ॥
Sabh ek darisat samat kar dekai sabh atam ram pachaan jio.

Look upon all with equality and recognize the Supreme Soul (God) pervading among all. (M. 4, SGGS, p. 446)

Thus, every human being has been granted dignity by God as a human right. When God has given that right, taking that right away or restricting it is a crime against humanity. The gist of freedom is that humans should not have sovereignty over humans. When someone dominates another person, it leads to the dignity loss for the other person. Such a person loses the opportunity for self-determination becomes a victim of hopelessness and worthlessness. The repressed person becomes a victim of the violation of his/her personal life. Such a situation enhances one's sense of disconnection and alienation. Baba Farid, a saint-poet of Sri Guru Granth sahib, opines that it is better to die than lose one's sovereignty. He states:

ਫਰੀਦਾ ਬਾਰਿ ਪਰਾਇਐ ਬੈਸਣਾ ਸਾਈ ਮੁਝੈ ਨ ਦੇਹਿ ॥ ਜੇ ਤੂ ਏਵੈ ਰਖਸੀ ਜੀਉ ਸਰੀਰਹੁ ਲੇਹਿ ॥
Farida bar paraiai baisna sa(n)ee mujhai na deh. Je tu evai rakhsi jio sarirahu lehi.

Fareed says: O Lord! do not make me live at the mercy of others. If this is my fate, it is better to let me die. (Shaikh Farid, SGGS, p. 1380)

Thus, Sikh doctrines strongly advocate the right to human dignity.

Right to Equality

The right to equality connotes the absence of legal discrimination based on caste, race, religion, sex, and place of birth. It ensures equal rights for all citizens. The egalitarian principle [16-17], as laid down by Guru Nanak, advocates all human beings' equality, regardless of gender or birth. It disapproves of all distinctions of caste and color. Guru Nanak vouched for the right to equality for all by raising his voice against demarcation based on religion, race, and gender. He urged treating everyone in the same respectful way. He articulates:

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਏਕ ਦ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟਿ ਕਰਿ ਦੇਖਹੁ ਘਟਿ ਘਟਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਮੇਈ ਜੀਉ ॥
Gurmukh ek darisat kar dekhhu ghat ghat jot samoi jio.

As Gurmukh (Guru oriented person), look upon all as equal; in each heart, the Divine essence is contained. (M. 1, SGGS, p 599)

ਜਾਣਹੁ ਜੋਤਿ ਨ ਪੂਛਹੁ ਜਾਤੀ ਆਗੈ ਜਾਤਿ ਨ ਹੇ ॥
Janhu jot na puchhahu jati agai jat na he.

Recognize God's essence within all and don't discriminate on the basis of social class or status. There are no classes or castes in the world hereafter. (M. 1, SGGS, p 349)

Guru Ram Das emphasizes unity in diversity by proclaiming:

ਏਕੋ ਪਵਣੁ ਮਾਟੀ ਸਭ ਏਕਾ ਸਭ ਏਕਾ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਬਾਈਆ ॥
Eko pavan mati sabh eka sabh eka jot sabaia.

All inhale the same air. All are made of the same clay. The life essence within all is the same. (M. 4, SGGS, p 96)

Bhagat Ravi Das, a saint poet of Sri Guru Granth Sahib denounces the class or caste division among people as:

ਕਾਇਮੁ ਦਾਇਮੁ ਸਦਾ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹੀ ॥ ਦੋਮ ਨ ਸੇਮ ਏਕ ਸੋ ਆਹੀ ॥
Kaim daim sada patisahi. Dom na sem ek so ahi.

God's Kingdom is stable, steady, and eternal. Therein none has second or third status; all are equal there. (Bhagat Ravidas, SGGS, p. 345)

In the egalitarian society as enunciated by Sikh Gurus, all are equal, the lowest to the highest, in the creed as in the race, in religious hopes and political rights. In this approach, women enjoy equal status with men. Sikh Gurus sought to release the people from the bondage of caste tyranny by emphasizing the unity of humankind. It has been given an explicitly social character through a series of measures adopted by the Gurus. The establishment of the institutions of Sangat (a corporate body of the devotees), Pangat (seating of the devotees in rows on the same level), Dharamsala (a place for public worship), Kirtan (collective singing of hymns) and Langar (community kitchen) has led a powerful movement to release people from the stranglehold of the ritualistic, caste-ridden, priest-dominated and a retrogressive social order. The establishment of the institutions of langar, pangat, sangat and dharamsal are outstanding examples of social equality among the Sikhs.



End of Part - I
[To be Continued]

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Master Tara Singh and the Partition of Punjab: How His Leadership Delivered East Punjab for India

NIRMAL KAUR* AND NIYATI CHOUDHARY**



“Kat ke deynge apni jaan, magar nahi deynge Pakistan.” We are prepared to give our lives, but not Pakistan. Legend has it that seventy-five years ago almost to the day Master Tara Singh, *kirpan* in hand, thundered these words from the footsteps of the Punjab Legislative Assembly in Lahore. The Muslim League’s fanatical and murderous campaign for Pakistan, which had been steadily intensifying since the 1945-46 elections, was about to reach its peak in Punjab.

The League’s drumbeat of direct action, rising throughout 1946, had escalated suddenly in Punjab in the weeks preceding Master Tara Singh’s defiant declaration in response to two events. The first was the decision, in late January 1947, by the coalition government of the province, headed by a Unionist Muslim and supported by Hindus and Sikhs, to rein in the Muslim League’s routine disturbances of public order. Above all, this meant trying to put an end to the League’s well-organised scheme of distributing smuggled weapons amongst its men.

In response, the League launched violent protests against the restrictions, aimed ostensibly at the government but in practice focused on intimidating Hindus and Sikhs into accepting their twin demands in relation to Pakistan: that such a state be created, and that the whole of Punjab (consisting of territory including present-day Indian Punjab, Haryana and Himachal) be given to this new state.

Second, and perhaps more significant, was the British announcement on 20th February 1947 that they would transfer power to Indians by June 1948 at the latest. This

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lent urgency to the hitherto slow-burning question of Punjab's future constitutional status—it became clear to all three major communities that they had very little time in which to persuade the British to come around to their respective points of view.

The Muslims, in particular, regarded the decision as declaring open season; they would from hereon repeatedly show their desire to settle the question of Pakistan by force of arms. In the closing days of February 1947, a Sikh policeman was mercilessly lynched in Amritsar by a mob of students affiliated with the Muslim League. The near-daily occurrence of violent marches; the stabbings and arson; the public exhortation to religious violence stunned the Hindus and Sikhs and laid bare the fragility of the outgoing system. On 3rd March 1947, only a few hours prior to Master Tara Singh's fierce exhibition in Lahore, the Muslim League succeeded in forcing the chief minister of the state (a Muslim, but not of the Muslim League) to resign.

The fall of the coalition government, which had included Master Tara Singh's Akali Dal and had opposed the creation of Pakistan, was regarded by the Muslim League as the removal of the last powerful resistance to the inclusion of Punjab in the proposed new state of Pakistan. Now that the Hindus and Sikhs were no longer in government in the province, the Muslim League was naturally confident that the state apparatus, manned largely by Muslims, would meekly allow their plans for Pakistan to be worked out. Importantly, the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946 had grouped the whole of Punjab in the Muslim-majority "Group B". This fed the Muslim League's claim that if the principle of creating an independent state for Muslims was itself to be accepted, the whole of Punjab (in which the Muslims enjoyed a slight majority overall) should go to this state.

Master Tara Singh saw the decision of the Muslim members of the coalition to withdraw as a deep betrayal; he appears to have clearly realised on that day that the fate of the Sikhs and Hindus of Punjab was now in their hands alone. He would have been confirmed in his cynicism a few days later when in the first large-scale bloodletting of the partition era in Punjab, at least 5,000 Sikhs were killed by Muslims in a one-sided massacre in and around Rawalpindi. The overwhelmingly Sikh villages of Thoa Khalsa, Choa Khalsa and Thamali—each large, with a population equal to that of a small European town—were entirely wiped out overnight. Master Tara Singh's ancestral house in the village of Haryal in Rawalpindi was also burnt down, and some of his relatives hunted down and killed. Hundreds of Sikhs and Hindus were slaughtered concurrently in Multan and Amritsar.

The failure of the government to respond to these one-sided attacks was equally striking: the police and district administrations were at best negligent and at worst complicit in the massacres—inaugurating a dismal pattern that would hold up through most of the year. It is worth noting here that even though Muslims constituted only the thinnest of majorities in the province, they composed over 70% of the police force and enjoyed similarly disproportionate representation in the civil administration.

The violence of March 1947, though blind in its fury, was motivated, as the British Governor put it, by the belief that “by exterminating non-Muslims now they [the Muslims] would make their districts a safe base for operations against the other communities in due course”. In other words, the carnage was conceived of as a way of strengthening the Muslims’ relative power (and, as importantly, impressions of it) in the course of the campaign for Pakistan.

It needs to be remembered that it was the British who were to ultimately decide whether India was to be partitioned and on what terms, authority that no one seriously disputed at the time. Almost all the events of this period, up until the independence of India (and indeed till the announcement of the Boundary Award on 17th August 1947), should therefore be viewed in terms of the impact they had, and were intended to have, on the calculations of the British.

Viewed from this perspective, Master Tara Singh’s statements and actions from the time Pakistan was first demanded in 1940 reveal a clear strategy to pressurise the British into safeguarding Hindu and Sikh interests in the face of a growing tide of Muslim supremacy. He firmly believed that as much as the British liked to invoke ideas of justice and fair play, the language they understood best was that of power. It was this realistic and pragmatic understanding that guided his approach to the question of Pakistan; it also stood in opposition to the largely quixotic approach of the Congress party.

Thus, when Master Tara Singh declared on 3rd March 1947 that the Sikhs would not quietly accept Muslim domination, he meant not only to warn the British and the League that Muslim violence would not always go unmatched. It was also a reminder to the effete leadership of the Congress Party, whose reins were now firmly in the hands of Jawaharlal Nehru, that, irrespective of the stand taken by it, the Sikhs of Punjab would, by whatever means necessary, fight a constitutional solution that left them stranded in a Muslim-majority country.

It had been Master Tara Singh's consistent position beginning 1940 that in the extreme event that India was to be partitioned on religious lines, the Sikh- and Hindu-majority areas of Punjab should be separated from the Muslim-majority areas of the state and be given to India. It was only after this position had been forcefully argued by Master Tara Singh that the central leadership of the Congress party endorsed this demand on 8th March 1947—up until then conventional thinking had dictated that any partition of Punjab would be so complicated as to render the idea impracticable.

In the months that followed the dastardly March riots, Master Tara Singh was to hold hundreds of public gatherings in which the demand for Pakistan was aggressively denounced. He would almost single-handedly mobilise, unite and strengthen the Sikhs in order to force the British to meaningfully consider Sikh interests. He would call for the formation and arming of Shaheedi Dals for the protection of Hindus and Sikhs and would work in tandem with Relief Committees set up by the RSS in order to prevent further one-sided massacres of non-Muslims. He would also forcefully rebuff last-ditch attempts by the Muslim League to inveigle the Sikhs into living on in Pakistan. Indeed, while he would not be able to prevent the creation of Pakistan, he would ensure that the Hindus and Sikhs of Punjab could secure for themselves a degree of justice against heavy odds.

II. Master Tara Singh was the foremost Sikh leader of pre-partition Punjab. Born into a Hindu family in Rawalpindi district in 1885, he was impressed at an early age by the teachings of the Sikh Gurus and sought initiation into the Sikh *Maryada* under Sant Attar Singh. In the tradition of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth guru of the Sikhs, he believed that the Sikh *Panth* was formed to provide a distinct identity to the best and bravest of society, whose highest duty was to protect *dharma* against domination and injustice. It was for this reason, in his view, that the Sikhs were to remain prepared to deploy armed force.

He came to be regarded as the tallest leader of the Akali Dal due to his unique ability to combine religious scholarship with pragmatic politics and his unrivalled spirit of public service. He similarly embodied for his students at once affection and discipline in the course of his work as a high school teacher; he was respectfully called “Masterji” long after he stopped teaching. Beginning in 1930, he served as President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) for over 15 years. By the time the movement for Pakistan began, all segments of Sikh society—including the princely rulers—and even Punjabi Hindus recognised the value of his leadership.

Unlike the Congress, which set its face against the British effort in the Second World War, Master Tara Singh, out of a realisation of the importance of employment in the Indian Army for Sikhs, supported recruitment for the war. He accepted that the most realistic route to freedom lay in the offer for independence in return for Indian support for the war effort. In this, his views mirrored the realpolitik of Veer Savarkar, a leader with whom he shared a close friendship, and of the Hindu Mahasabha generally, who also saw merit in supporting the war for concrete guarantees of freedom at its end.

The conditions in which the Muslim League could transform itself in Punjab from a non-entity before the Second World War to a party that earned from the Muslims of the province a mandate for Pakistan in 1946 point to the short-sightedness of the Congress's approach and the wisdom in Master Tara Singh's pragmatism. Ishtiaq Ahmed, a Pakistani academic who, in his writings, has fairly accepted the mistake of partition, has attributed the growth in the acceptability of the idea of Pakistan in Punjab to the failure of the Congress to aid in countering the Muslim League's propaganda during this period. This failure was occasioned by the fact that the Congress's top leadership and most of its rank and file remained in prison for most of the war period due to their participation in the Quit India movement.

After the elections to the various legislative assemblies in India in early 1946, a delegation of UK Cabinet Ministers was tasked with building consensus on a constitutional arrangement under which power could be handed over to Indians. When the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946 lumped the whole of Punjab in Muslim-majority "Group B" and provided each "Group" with a recurring right of secession at intervals of ten years (the Muslim League would claim that the idea of Pakistan was thus "inherent" in the Plan), Master Tara Singh sent a letter of protest to the Secretary of State for India, Lord Pethick-Lawrence, of which a certain portion provides an indication of his nous during the partition years and is thus worth quoting:

"The Cabinet Mission recognises the 'very genuine and acute anxiety of the Muslims' ... But is there no 'genuine and acute anxiety' among the Sikhs lest they should find themselves subjected to a perpetual Muslim majority rule? If the British Government is not aware of the Sikh feelings, the Sikhs will have to resort to some measures in order to convince everybody of the Sikh anxiety, in case they are subjected to a perpetual Muslim domination."

Sikhs are in an outright majority in present-day Indian Punjab, but in 1946 they constituted only 15% of the province's population. However, they owned the most productive segments of the state's economy; they were also reputed for their martial prowess and formed a significant proportion of the British Indian army. The principal genius of Master Tara Singh lay in ensuring that these relatively minor advantages (compared against the general primacy enjoyed by the criterion of population) translated into a powerful voice for the Sikhs when it came to determining the future of Punjab. The harking back to the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh that had preceded British annexation of Punjab; the kirpan brandishing; the emphasis on the Sikhs' commitment to the war effort; and the rallying together of ultra-loyalist elements within the princely class and among those that had earlier constituted the Khalsa National Party in order to present a united stand: all of these strategies were aimed at strengthening the Sikhs' claim to greater prestige than their numbers appeared to justify.

Above all, it was the implication that the "highly virile" Sikhs would fearlessly resort to rebellion that pushed the British to accept the Sikh demand for the partition of Punjab as a necessary corollary of the decision to partition India. Given the overriding concern of the British to leave India in a condition orderly enough to not contradict their continuing claim to be a competent and global power, the threat of "counter-direct action" on their watch was a meaningful one, more so because of the particular characteristics of the Sikh faith. It was this vulnerability that Master Tara Singh so pointedly sought to leverage by reminding Pethick-Lawrence of the Sikhs' ability to convince the British of their "genuine and acute anxiety" at the prospect of finding themselves stranded in a Muslim state.

The extent to which Sikh warnings of civil war preoccupied British thinking in the period leading up to the decision to partition India and Punjab is shown in the internal correspondences of the British. As early as August 1945 (ie, prior to the elections for the Legislative Assembly) Governor Bertrand Glancy, in a report to the Viceroy on the "fanatical" electoral campaign of the Muslim League, thus described Sikh sentiment: "non-Muslims, especially Sikhs are not bluffing, they will not submit peacefully to a Government that is labelled 'Muhammadan Raj'."

On taking over from Glancy, Governor Evan Jenkins provided, in his first report to the Viceroy, a special description of Sikh power: "The Sikhs, in particular, could adapt the

techniques of their religious mass movements (in which the villagers join wholesale) to a political offensive.” The reference of course is to the long tradition amongst the Sikhs of forming ad-hoc groups, consisting of fighting-age Sikh men and known as *jathas*, for purposes that could be either purely spiritual or part-spiritual and part-military.

III. Admittedly, Master Tara Singh was not able to obtain for the Sikhs what he believed to be the optimal constitutional solution: keeping Punjab united in a closely federated India. Yet, within the constraints that resulted from an in-principle decision, taken at the national level, to create Pakistan, he succeeded in forcing acceptance of the second-best solution: a division of Punjab along religious lines, too.

It bears mention that the whole of Bengal had similarly been grouped under Muslim-majority “Group C” by the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946. It was Master Tara Singh’s early and doughty resistance against the inclusion of the non-Muslim-majority areas of Punjab in Pakistan that prompted Hindu leaders like Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and N.C. Chatterjee to launch a complementary campaign demanding the partition of Bengal on religious lines. This camaraderie between Masterji and leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha would continue after independence. (This is discussed in the final section.)

As important as Master Tara Singh’s demand of partitioning Punjab was his untiring pressure campaign, once the first demand was accepted, on a number of sub-questions on how the boundary between East and West Punjab was to be drawn up. The first sub-question centred on what measure of numerical strength was to be adopted. This was contestable because three separate communities lived in Punjab. The Muslim League had initially claimed that all areas where Muslims formed the single-largest community should be given to Pakistan. Such was Sikh outrage at this idea that the British specifically stated in their declaration of 3rd June 1947 (which announced the partition of India) that the starting principle for the partition of Punjab would be that areas in which Muslims formed an actual majority, and not merely a plurality, were to go to Pakistan.

The second sub-question related to the geographical unit to be considered in ascertaining contiguous majority areas. The Muslim League had first asked for the province to be divided broadly along divisional lines: three divisions (Rawalpindi, Multan and Lahore) being Muslim-majority for Pakistan and two (Jalandhar and Ambala), having a majority of Hindus and Sikhs, for India. This would have meant present-day Amritsar, Tarn Taran, Gurdaspur and Pathankot districts, which used to be in Lahore Division, went to Pakistan.

In January 1946 (ie, much prior to when it became clear that partition was indeed to take place), Viceroy Wavell, in a letter to Pethick-Lawrence in which he had considered the idea of partitioning Punjab on divisional lines, had stated that what stood in the way of such a neat demarcation (from the perspective of the British) was the importance of Amritsar to the Sikhs. Again, it was the belligerence with which Master Tara Singh and his associates protested the idea of divisional boundaries as the basis of partition that it was dismissed out of hand by the British.

Later, in its submissions before the Boundary Commission, the Muslim League would claim that the relevant unit should be the *tehsil*, on the basis of which Muslim-majority contiguous territory could be said to extend deep into the Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur districts. It was also the basis of Pakistan's more serious claim to Ajnala *tehsil* in Amritsar; Ferozepur and Zira *tehsils* in Ferozepur district; and all the *tehsils* in Gurdaspur district.

None of these claims would be accepted by Cyril Radcliffe. Instead, and most controversially, three out of four *tehsils* in Gurdaspur (including the strategically important Pathankot) were given to India. In addition, a substantial chunk of Muslim-majority Kasur *tehsil* of Lahore district was given to India. Compared with the "notional" boundaries that had been drawn up by the British in June 1947 for purposes of preliminary planning, the net gains for India were substantial.

These gains were directly linked to the success of Master Tara Singh's stand on the third sub-question, namely whether the Viceroy's declaration of 3rd June 1947 should be read in a way that reduced factors other than numerical majority to subsidiary status. The Sikhs had argued that ownership of economically productive assets and attachment to land and sacred sites should also be weighed commensurately.

It should be noted that in their emphasis on "other factors", the Sikhs had, in the political sphere, fought a solitary battle: Jawaharlal Nehru, in a meeting with Mountbatten on 11th May 1947, abandoned the criterion of property ownership that the Sikhs had been insisting on even though senior members of the viceregal staff themselves agreed that "it will be most unfair to both Sikhs and Hindus if the division of the Punjab is made merely on the basis of the incidence of population by ignoring all other factors such as the relative share of the various communities in the national asset, their relative contribution to the prosperity of the province. ..."

The Sikhs' insistence on the parity of "other factors" could not support the rather expansive proposed boundary up till the Chenab River, but it provided a justification and momentum against the preponderance of numerical majority. The result was that on most of the truly contentious issues, so characterised by Radcliffe, he accepted the Hindu-Sikh point of view. (One must also make a mention of the erudition with which the lawyer Sardar Harnam Singh presented the Sikhs' case before the Boundary Commission.)

There has been much speculation as to why the Boundary Award made the above determinations in favour of India, especially since Radcliffe himself provided little reasoning for them. Some insight is provided by the boundary earlier proposed by Viceroy Wavell in 1946 in the event of partition, which had included Gurdaspur district in India on the ground that if this was not done, Amritsar—which, as has been noted, he insisted would have to be given to the Sikhs—would be surrounded by Pakistan on three sides and its future defence thus compromised. (The presence of Gurdaspur district in India prevents Amritsar district from bulging out into Pakistani territory.) A similar consideration was voiced by Governor Jenkins in a report to the Viceroy on 15th June 1947, in which he stated that the Sikhs "were fairly well organised in the districts they thought critical, and it was quite likely they would refuse to go very far with Partition until they knew where the boundary would run."

These comments illustrate the simple fact that the Sikhs under Master Tara Singh were the most vehement and well-organised party on the boundary question—as the only community wholly concentrated in Punjab, they had the most at stake. The importance of their opposition and of their militant posture, however, can be obscured if one were to look at the working of the Boundary Commission as a purely juristic process, a pretence that the British sought to keep up till the end. But the process of ascertaining the boundary was by definition political. The submissions of the parties, as well as the opinions of the judges, spanned questions of history, military strategy, economics and religion, and there existed no precedent or formal standards on the basis of which the rival claims were to be assessed.

The extent to which politics seeped through the decision-making process is best illustrated by the partisan nature of the non-binding opinions of the four Indian judges (two Muslims, and one Hindu and Sikh each). Justice Munir's opinion, of which he devotes

large sections to martial-themed Sikh historical sources, for example, resembles more a polemic than a judgment. There is no reason to believe that Cyril Radcliffe (whose decision was the only effective one) did not also have the political reality in mind when he decided to award parts of Muslim-majority Gurdaspur and Kasur to India; if he was initially unaware of the Sikhs' unyielding belligerence, he would be served repeated reminders, both directly and through his consultations with British officials.

Ishtiaq Ahmed, a Pakistani author who has exhaustively researched the issue of the partition of Punjab, has suggested that "awarding the seven Muslim-majority *tahsils* to East Punjab was Radcliffe's idea of fair play in meeting, in some substantial measure, the Sikh demand to be consolidated in East Punjab". He goes on to state that such an "inference is plausible as the various public statements of the British government mention a consideration of the special status of the Sikhs." Impressions of the Sikhs' relative power, rather than abstract notions of fair play, are of course more likely to have influenced the British decision.

These successes, however, cannot make up for the fact that Partition marked a disaster for the Sikhs. Lakhs of Sikhs were murdered, raped and abducted; the Sikhs, being the most prosperous community throughout Punjab, also suffered the heaviest economic losses. It cannot be denied that Master Tara Singh pushed for a partition of the province despite knowing that no reasonable boundary could have prevented the large-scale displacement of Sikhs or immense losses of property and wealth on their part. Yet he asked the Sikhs to make these difficult sacrifices because he knew life in a country built on Muslim nationalism would result in the near-total destruction of the Sikh faith. In return, he did what he could to mitigate the losses of partition by delivering able and pragmatic leadership—leadership that has been vindicated by the direction Pakistan has taken in the past seventy-five years.

IV. It is a grave injustice that Master Tara Singh's firm opposition to Muslim rule over Punjab has been characterised by fellow Indians as irresponsible war-mongering. An article by A.G. Noorani in *The Frontline* magazine, for instance, makes the following gratuitous comment about Master Tara Singh's role during this period: "Sikhs were led by a man devoid of sense, who was to make a mess of things even after independence."

He is not alone in such criticism. Countless Punjabi Muslims, in interviews conducted by researchers, have cited Master Tara Singh's *kirpan* brandishing in Lahore as setting in

motion a chain of events that led to ethnic cleansing, perpetrated first by Muslims and later by members of all three communities. This was in fact the import of the submissions by the Muslim League's counsel, Zafrulla Khan, before the Boundary Commission. It is perhaps difficult for those unfamiliar with the proud character of Punjabis—Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims—to understand the significance of this one act. The *kirpan* is a ceremonial sword carried by Sikh males (the right to carry which was and remains protected by law) as a symbol of their martial vigour, and the simple act of unsheathing it publicly was commonly understood under the largely agricultural mores of Punjabi society as throwing down a challenge to settle disputes by force.

One therefore cannot deny that Master Tara Singh's bravado was designed to show intent, on behalf of all Sikhs, to commit violence in response to Muslim butchery. Viewed simplistically, and through the values of a society at peace, this posture is at least questionable—in most cases, an eye for an eye indeed leaves the world blind. Yet, on the eve of Partition, Punjab had ceased to be a society with normally functioning laws; it was a place where violent stasis reigned in all but name.

As has been noted in the earlier sections, the Muslim League had settled on bigotry, violence and intimidation as the principal instruments of its politics beginning the 1945-46 elections, ie long before Master Tara Singh's counter-declarations of bellicosity. He was in fact the main force behind the coming together of Unionist Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs in a coalition that formed the provincial government in 1946. He also enjoyed relationships of mutual respect with nationalist Muslims in the Khaksar and Majlis-e-Ahrar movements. In other words, Master Tara Singh had, for a sustained period and in good faith, first attempted to protect Sikh interests through ordinary political means.

Those who criticise his later militant posture ignore the fact that it was the Muslim League that had precipitated, by its actions from the 1945-46 elections through March 1947, a situation where the Sikhs had to rely on their own force to protect their safety and future status. In March 1947, the Muslim League forced Unionist Muslims into resigning their ministries, thereby defeating the ideal of communal co-governance and exposing Hindus and Sikhs to the partisan actions of the overwhelmingly Muslim administration. (It should be remembered that this marked the final straw for Master Tara Singh.) It is also notable that the Muslim League had been running a concerted and barely-concealed campaign to arm its supporters since at least mid-1946.

This insecurity was compounded by the British announcement on 20th February 1947 that they would leave by June 1948 at the latest—a decision which Governor Jenkins had called a “breakdown decision” that invited the communities of Punjab “to make real war upon one another”. The authority of the colonial government would rapidly decline after this point; it would now become impossible for the resource- and manpower-stretched British to convince Indians that violence would be met either with serious prosecution or with heavy retaliation. The anarchical state of affairs would become unavoidable after the events in Rawalpindi and Multan in early March 1947.

Given the prevailing situation, the choice confronting Hindus and Sikhs was tragically clear: either place their safety and future in the hands of the Muslims or resort to measures of self-help. That Master Tara Singh’s choice of the latter was contrary to ordinary norms does not show a lack of responsibility; rather the strength of his leadership shines through more clearly because of it.

This is not to say that the Muslims bear the entire blame for the partition-era violence. Hindus and Sikhs would prove themselves capable of equally horrific acts, especially in the period after 15th August 1947. It is, however, invidious to suggest equivalence between the Muslim League’s hateful and supremacist campaign for Pakistan and the decisions taken by Master Tara Singh to defend Sikh interests against it.

The *Shaheedi Dals* constituted by Master Taster Singh and the Relief Committees of the RSS would play crucial roles in deterring attacks on Hindu-Sikh localities in the major cities of West Punjab; in Lahore, for instance, armed Hindu and Sikh civilians would fend off Muslim mobs, directed by District Magistrate Muhammad Ghani Cheema, for just long enough to enable the evacuation of most non-Muslims to India. There can be no doubt that had it not been for the decision to arm and mobilise Hindus and Sikhs, and for credible demonstrations of the ability to retaliate, the pogrom in Rawalpindi would have been reprised countless more times.

That the Hindus and Sikhs recognised that their only hope lay in self-help is shown by the contrasting receptions accorded to Gandhi and M.S. Golwalkar, the then *sarsanghchalak* of the RSS, on their visits to Punjab during this period. In July 1947, while passing through Lahore on train, Gandhi was met with a barrage of hostile sloganeering by Hindus and Sikhs assembled at the railway station, in scenes reminiscent of his reception in Karachi in the aftermath of Bhagat Singh’s execution in

1931. Conversely, when M.S. Golwalkar had travelled to Punjab a few months earlier, he had been welcomed in Lahore, Multan, Lyallpur and Sialkot by throngs of thousands of impassioned Hindus and Sikhs.

The rare hostility with which Gandhi was treated can be understood by the fact that his nominee for Prime Minister of the interim government, Jawaharlal Nehru, did precious little to remind the provincial administration of its duty to protect Hindus and Sikhs; Nehru, in fact, had consistently resisted calls for the evacuation of Hindus and Sikhs from Muslim-majority areas. Nor for that matter did Nehru, despite his much-vaunted rapport with the Viceroy, advise against Mountbatten's last-ditch efforts to nudge the Sikhs into arriving at a compromise with Jinnah that would keep Punjab united. When, in May 1947 (ie, following a brief lull in the Muslim League's violence against Sikhs and Hindus), Master Tara Singh, at the request of the Maharaja of Patiala, met Jinnah and Mountbatten in Delhi, he listened patiently but did not even pause to consider the rather generous terms being offered by Jinnah late in the day. There was, of course, no question of Mountbatten going over the head of Master Tara Singh on this question.

Certain historians, perhaps more out of an obedience to the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty than out of respect for facts, have laboured to make the point that the Mountbatten-Nehru combination made crucial and intelligent decisions to secure the interests of India vis-à-vis those of Pakistan. It remains little mentioned in their histories that Mountbatten was, insofar as the Punjab is concerned, doing Jinnah's bidding. Similar motivations have perhaps guided them to suppress Master Tara Singh's sterling contributions to the unity of India and indeed to portray him as a menacing figure. □

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Footprint Legacy of The Sikh State in Kashmir

*DR JASBIR SINGH SARNA**

Maharaja Ranjit Singh conquered the Jammu region in 1800 CE. Firstly, the areas of Mirowal and Nirol were captured. Heads of these areas offered Nazranas (gifts) of rupees eight thousand to Sher-i-Punjab. When the Raja of Jammu learned that the Khalsa army was approaching, he immediately offered rupees 20,000 for food and meals for the Khalsa army. In exchange, Sher-i Punjab gave the Raja of Jammu a Khilat.

In 1819, Kashmir was conquered and brought under the Khalsa flag. Before the Sikh rule, the Afghans perpetrated countless unprecedented atrocities on residents, which were documented by a Muslim historian. Nine governors were appointed in Kashmir by Lahore Darbar from time to time. There are still some footprints of Sikh rule in Kashmir:

Foot Prints of Gurmukhi in Kashmir

Mehan Singh, Governor of Kashmir, laid out the extant pavilion in the paved courtyard of the Basant Bagh towards the river Jhelum. It has three inscriptions fixed on the western side of the platform, cut in Persian, Punjabi, and Hindi, on three extant white marble slabs, stating that the garden was laid out by Mehan Singh in 1835.

Nagarkhana-Sikhan:

Located in the heart of buildings along the Jammu Kashmir Archives. Its architecture resembles the arches of Darbar Sahib Amritsar. Polished black stones are utilised in its construction. Situated in Shergarh Fort, Srinagar.

Sheikh Bagh:

The garden was laid out by Sikh Governor Sheikh Ghulam Mahi-ud-Din (1844–1846) near the locality of Amira Kadal. The actual site of the garden is now occupied by the Church Mission School, Christian Cemetery, Court, Shopping Centers, etc. After the death of Sheikh Ghulam, he was buried in the Ziratgah of Makhdum Sheikh Hamza, Srinagar, Kashmir.

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Shaheed Bunga, Barzala-Baghat, Srinagar:

A fierce battle took place on June 12th, 1841 on the banks of the Doodhganga rivulet near Rambagh between the Mutineer Sikh soldiers (mostly Kashmiri and Punjabi Sikhs) and Dogra/Gorkha regiments. The Khalsa troops in Lahore manifested uneasiness for their brethren in Kashmir and were anxious to march for their relief. Raja Gulab Singh Dogra, therefore, decided to make a short work of it and ordered his four battalions and a thousand Gorcharas to launch an attack with heavy and continued fire. More than 400 Mutineers achieved martyrdom and a few escaped to Lahore. There, it was rumoured that Raja Gulab had slaughtered the Khalsa as if they had been Afghans. "Shaheed Bunga Gurdwara" erected in their memory.

Gurudwara Pehli Patshahi, Hari Parbat, Srinagar :

After visting some Muslim Shrines and Hindu temples, Guru Nanak Sahib stayed, for somedays, inside the Hari Parbat hill. With the consent of Emperor Jehangir, the foundation stone of the Gurudwara was laid by Guru Hargobind Sahib with his own hands in 1620 CE. A Bir of SGGS was brought from the city and installed in this small gurdwara. During Sikh rule, some Gursikhs found and built this Gurudwara, which was designed by Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa.

Gurdwara Nanaksar Mattan :

Guru Nanak Sahib stayed near Mach Bhawan. At the instructions of Guru ji, a Dharamshala was built by Pandit Mukanda, Pandit Braham Das, Kamal Faqir, etc. at this site. During the Afghan reign, Sardar Gurmukh Singh (Member of the Council of Noor Din Bambazi, Governor of Kashmir) constructed a splendorous Gurudwara in 1766 AD. During Sikh rule, Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa constructed seven small gurdwaras on the three sides of twin springs in which seven birs of SGGS were installed. There were 84 rooms associated with these gurdwaras. During the reign of Maharaja Partap Singh Dogra, all these Gurudwaras were removed from 1905 to 1909 AD. Nowadays, only one gurdwara is seen on the right side of the spring, near Surya Mandir.

Sheikh Imam-ud-din (1819-1859)

He succeeded his father, Sheikh Ghulam Mohu-ud-din, as governor of the Sikh province of Kashmir in 1845. He had earlier served under Kanvar Nau Nihal Singh and had in 1840 assisted his father in the campaign against Mandi. He resides at Shiekh Bagh house on the back side of Gurudwara Singh Sabha, Amira Kadal, Srinagar, where later on the PWD department was functioning, but nowadays, CRP companies occupy all the

buildings. After his death, he was buried near Hari Parbat along with inscriptions, close to the grave of Makhdum Sahib.

Governor Mihan Singh:

Mihan Singh (1834–1841) was known for his loyalty, efficiency as an administrator, and ability to make major decisions. He had served under the famous military commander, Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa. With his intelligence and extraordinary capacity, he sorted out all the issues of Kashmiris. His main achievements were Dastur-ul-Amal (Twarikh-I-kashmir), Agricultural improvements, Poultry Farming, peace, Re-establishment of Shawl Industry, Establishment of Dharmarth department, Suppression of Galwans, Foundations of Shergarh Fort, Basant Bagh etc. He was residing in a splendour bungalow, where today the Deputy Commissioner's Srinagar Office is located. On the bank of the river Jhelum, behind Mihan Singh's house, a beautiful garden is located.

Gurdwara Chinar Baba Nanak Srinagar:

After climbing down from the peak of Shankaracharya, Guru Nanak sat on the banks of the Dal lake and ardently gazed at the lotus flowers that have been growing in the Dal lake since ancient times. That is the reason why lotus flowers are frequently mentioned in the bani of Guru Ji. From there, Guru ji came and sat under the Chinar tree, near an ancient well, where Guru ji began his meditation. This historic shrine was called 'Gurdwara Chinar Baba Nanak'. However, after Guru Nanak Ji's elder son Baba Sri Chand (1494–1643) started spreading the thoughts of Sikhism under this tree during his Kashmir visit, it became famous as 'Chinar Baba Sri Chand'. Shri Chand ji came here to gain expertise in Persian, Sanskrit, Sharda, etc. in the institution of Pandit Purshotam Das in Srinagar. Bhai Kamliya, Bhai Gonda etc., were also present with him. Many people became followers of Baba ji in Kashmir. The Kashmiri Sikhs constructed some pilgrimage rooms and shops in 1904. One Udasi Mahant, Harnam Das Langra, came to Kashmir in 1932 and informed Dogra Raja Partap Singh about this Gurdwara. With the help of the government, Mahant Harnam Das became the custodian of this historic shrine.

Sikh Coins:

Maharaja Ranjit Singh also continued in his kingdom the same coin which was minted at Amritsar. In 1819, Kashmir was incorporated into the Khalsa state. Coins from various countries and kings were in circulation in Kashmir at that time.

As Kashmir was a major trading center, various coins were in circulation and merchants came from far and wide to trade. During the Sikh rule in Kashmir, the Sikhs

introduced their own coin, which included Maharaja Ranjit Singh's "Sone de Mohar," which contained "MaseRati," pure gold. The inscription on the front was like rupees and the letters were Gurmukhi, but on the other side was written *Waheguru ji*. '*Waheguru ji*'. '*Waheguru ji* three times.

The Nanak Shahi' rupee was also called the Nanaki rupee in Kashmir. The '*Sone de Mohar*' was made in the Amritsar mint, the price of which was equal to the 'Nanakshahi' of fifteen rupees. But from then on, it started to be made from the mint of Kashmir. The 'Nanakshahi' rupee was an important coin of the Sikh state. One such coin is still in the museum in Srinagar, Kashmir. In Persian, the words are engraved on one side: *Zarb, Kashmir, 1876, Bikrami* On the other hand, *Digh wa Tegh Fateh wa Nasrat Bedrang, Yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh* has also been found on coins that had a Gurmukhi inscription. Normally, the script on coins was Persian, but Hughel had discovered one with Gurmukhi engraved on both sides. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was so pleased with S. Hari Singh Nalwa's conquest of Kashmir that by a special order, he gave Nalwa the great right to issue a coin in his name in Kashmir. According to this order, S. Hari Singh Nalwa issued a coin bearing his name, which was minted at Srinagar. On one side of the coin was engraved in Persian letters 'Sri Akal Sahai' 'and 'Sammatt 1878' and on the other side was inscribed 'Hari Singh' 'Yak Rupee', below. □

“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.



A Critique of 'Hope' and 'Desire' in the Sikh Religion

*Hardev Singh Virk**

There is a well known proverb: "*Hope sustains life*". Let us hope that neuroscience finds the verity of this age old proverb. Hope is defined as a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen. Its equivalents are aspiration, anticipation, optimism and eagerness. The Cambridge dictionary gives its meaning as follows: "*to want something to happen or to be true, and usually have a good reason to think so*".

Research indicates that hope can help us manage stress and anxiety and cope with adversity. It contributes to our well-being and happiness and motivates positive action. Discussions of hope can be found throughout the history of philosophy and across all Western philosophical traditions, even though philosophy has traditionally not paid the same attention to hope as it has to attitudes like belief and desire. Almost all major philosophers acknowledge that hope plays an important role in regard to human motivation, religious belief or politics.

All religions provide a ray of hope for their followers. Hope has been a blessing in disguise. It is an inbuilt characteristic of human nature. The humanity evolved to the present stage based on hope despite the dictum: "survival of the fittest". Hope is linked to desire and expectation. If desires are not fulfilled, one becomes pessimist. The difference between hope and desire is palpable. In Sikh religion, the term used for "hope" is "*aas*" which can be interchangeably used for hope and desire. In Sikh scripture, Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS), hope and desire are juxtaposed. Human prays to God with a hope that his desires will be fulfilled but it depends upon the grace of God to accept his prayer.

In Christianity, we find references to hope in several chapters (Books) of the Bible. In tough and uncertain times, it can be difficult to look beyond what's currently happening in your life and see the light at the end of the tunnel. Whether you're going through a big life change, a hard time for your family, or personal health concerns, an optimistic frame of mind can help you see a difficult challenge as an opportunity for gratitude. When you're feeling low, try to find the silver linings in your hardships. The Bible is also a great place to find scripture that sparks hopefulness. We quote some of our favorite verses about hope as follows:

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Jeremiah 29:11: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Romans 12:12: "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer."

Psalms 147:11: "The Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love."

Proverbs 23:18: "There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off."

Romans 15:13: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

A Peep into the Sikh Way of Life: In Sikhism, 'Chardi Kalaa' is the Punjabi term for aspiring to maintain a mental state of eternal optimism and joy. Sikhs are ideally expected to be in this positive state of mind as a sign of their contentment with the will of God (*bhana*), even during the times of adversity. As a young boy in High School, I experienced a change in my life from riches to rags. The circumstances were created by a family feud which devastated my dreams in life. However, I got solace from my deep faith in the Sikh scripture and its universal message of hope.

My readings into SGGS gave me moral strength to face the upheavals of my life. The Guru gives a clear cut formula to get rid of worries in life by making an honest effort [SGGS, M.5, p.522]:

ਉਦਮੁ ਕਰੇਦਿਆ ਜੀਉ ਤੂੰ ਕਮਾਵਦਿਆ ਸੁਖੁ ਭੁੰਚੁ ॥
Udam karedia jio tu(n) kamavdia sukh bhunch.

Make the effort, and you shall live; practicing it, you shall enjoy peace.

ਧਿਆਇਦਿਆ ਤੂੰ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਮਿਲੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਉਤਰੀ ਚਿੰਤ ॥੧॥
Dhiyadia tu(n) parabhu mil Nanak utri chint ||1||

Meditating, you shall meet God, O Nanak, and your anxiety shall vanish. ||1||

Sikh religion has a view of life which differs from other Indian religious traditions. For example, Guru Nanak rejected the asceticism being practiced by Siddh-Nath-Yogis in his debate known as Siddh Goshit in SGGS. He advocated the life of a house holder who earns his livelihood by dint of hard labour and shares the fruits of his earnings with needy persons in the society. Sikh Gurus were highly critical of those who exploited the poor and lived as parasites. There were no restrictions imposed on the life style of followers. On the contrary, it was recommended to get liberated by leading a disciplined life of joy and merriment [SGGS, M.5, p. 522]:

ਨਾਨਕ ਸਤਿਗੁਰਿ ਭੇਟਿਐ ਪੂਰੀ ਹੋਵੈ ਜੁਗਤਿ ॥
Nanak satgur bhetiai puri hovai jugat.

O Nanak, meeting the True Guru, one comes to know the Perfect Way.

ਹਸੰਦਿਆ ਖੇਲੰਦਿਆ ਪੈਨੰਦਿਆ ਖਾਵੰਦਿਆ ਵਿਚੇ ਹੋਵੈ ਮੁਕਤਿ ॥੨॥

Hasandia khelandia painandia khavandia viche hovai mukat. ||2||

While laughing, playing, dressing and eating, he is liberated. ||2||

Guru Nanak promoted a work culture in his followers which was based on a three step formula: “Kirat karo, vand chhako and Naam japo” which translates to “earning by honest means, share your earnings with the needy, and meditate on qualities of God”. This mode of liberation is unique compared with other Indian traditions [SGGS, M.1, p. 1245]:

ਘਾਲਿ ਖਾਇ ਕਿਛੁ ਹਥਹੁ ਦੇਇ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਰਾਹੁ ਪਛਾਣਹਿ ਸੇਇ ॥੧॥

Ghaal Khaae Kishh Hathhahu Dhaee || Naanak Raahu Pashhaanehi Sae ||1||

One who works for what he eats, and gives some of what he has. O Nanak, he knows the Path. ||1||

A Critique of Hope and Desire in the Sikh Scripture (SGGS): A Sikh is advised to follow the Gurmat, the path laid out by the Gurus. If he follows it, all his hopes and desires get fulfilled. My reading of the SGGS convinced me that ‘hope’ and ‘desire’ must be in tune or compatible, otherwise ‘desires’ can dominate the mind and prove overwhelming and disastrous in the long run. There need to be equilibrium between hopes and desires. The quotes from SGGS give an insight to the idea of ‘hope’ in Sikh religion:

ਆਸ ਮਨੋਰਥੁ ਪੂਰਨੁ ਹੋਵੈ ਭੇਟਤ ਗੁਰ ਦਰਸਾਇਆ ਜੀਉ ॥੨॥

[SGGS, M.5, p. 104]

As manorath puran hovai bhetat gur darsaia jio. ||2||

His hopes and desires are fulfilled, when he gains the Blessed Vision of the Guru's Darshan. ||2||

The ultimate hope of a Sikh is to merge with Supreme Reality (God) and this is fulfilled by the grace of God [SGGS, M.5, p.105]:

ਕਰਿ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਸੰਗਿ ਮਿਲਾਇਆ ॥

Kar kirpa parabh sang milaiaa.

Showering His Mercy upon us, God has united us with Him.

ਆਵਣ ਜਾਣ ਰਹੇ ਵਡਭਾਗੀ ਨਾਨਕ ਪੂਰਨ ਆਸਾ ਜੀਉ ॥੪॥੩੧॥੩੮॥

Avan jan rahe vadbhagi Nanak puran asa jio. ||4||31||38||

Our comings and goings have ended, and through great good fortune, O Nanak, our hopes are fulfilled. ||4||31||38||

The hopes can be fulfilled by regular meditation [SGGS, M.5, p.263]:

ਪੁਭ ਕੈ ਸਿਮਰਨਿ ਪੂਰਨ ਆਸਾ ॥

Parabh kai simran puran asa.

In the remembrance of God, hopes are fulfilled.

It may look strange that Sikh religion has a unique viewpoint on the idea of hope in the life of a Sikh. It is recommended that hopes and desires should not become 'wishful' thinking which impedes the progress of life. One should follow the three step formula of Sikhi as commended by Guru Nanak.

ਆਸਾ ਮਨਸਾ ਮੋਹਣੀ ਗੁਰਿ ਠਾਕੀ ਸਚੁ ਬੋਲੁ ॥

[SGGS, M.1, p.59]

Asa mansa mohni gur thaki sach bol.

The enticements of hope and desire are quieted by the Guru, whose Word is True.

ਆਸਾ ਮਾਹਿ ਨਿਰਾਸੁ ਬੁਝਾਇਆ ॥

Asa mahi niras bujhaia. [SGGS, M.1, p. 154]

In the midst of hope, the Guru teaches us to live above hope and desire.

ਆਸਾ ਮਨਸਾ ਦੇਉ ਬਿਨਾਸਤ ਤਿਹੁ ਗੁਣ ਆਸ ਨਿਰਾਸ ਭਈ ॥

[SGGS, M.1, p. 356]

Asa mansa dou binasat trihu gun aas niras bhiee.

Hope and desire have both been dispelled; I have renounced my longing for the three qualities.

ਮੇਰੇ ਮਨ ਅਹਿਨਿਸਿ ਪੂਰਿ ਰਹੀ ਨਿਤ ਆਸਾ ॥

[SGGS, M.3, p.29]

Mere man ahinis pur rahi nit aasa.

O my mind, day and night, you are always full of wishful hopes.

Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh religion, gave a clarion call to humanity not to crave for happiness which ultimately leads to sorrow. Life needs to be lived in equipoise. Pain and pleasure are intermingled in life. Peace comes to those who follow the Shabda, the wisdom of the Guru as enunciated in Sikh scripture [SGGS, M.1, p.57]:

ਆਸ ਅੰਦੇਸਾ ਦੂਰਿ ਕਰਿ ਇਉ ਮਲੁ ਜਾਇ ਸਮਾਇ ॥੩॥

As andesa dur kar ieo mal jaie samaie. ||4||

Let your hopes and anxieties depart; thus pollution is washed away. ||4||

ਸੁਖੁ ਕਉ ਮਾਗੈ ਸਭੁ ਕੋ ਦੁਖੁ ਨ ਮਾਗੈ ਕੋਇ ॥

Sukh kao magai sabh ko dukh na magai koie.

Everyone begs for happiness; no one asks for suffering.

ਸੁਖੈ ਕਉ ਦੁਖੁ ਅਗਲਾ ਮਨਮੁਖਿ ਬੂਝ ਨ ਹੋਇ ॥

Sukhai kao dukh agla manmukh bujh na hoie.

But in the wake of happiness, there comes great suffering. The self-willed manmukhs do not understand this.

ਸੁਖ ਦੁਖ ਸਮ ਕਰਿ ਜਾਣੀਅਹਿ ਸਬਦਿ ਭੇਦਿ ਸੁਖੁ ਹੋਇ ॥੫॥

Sukh dukh sam kar janiahi sabad bhed sukh hoe. ||5||

Those who see pain and pleasure as one and the same find peace; they are pierced through by the Shabad. ||5||

Bhagat Kabir in SGGS seems to be in consonance with Guru Nanak when he rejects the idea of having wishful thinking of attaining a place in heaven. He ordains his followers to rely on the Will of God and desist from false hopes in life:

ਜਬ ਲਗੁ ਮਨਿ ਬੈਕੁੰਠ ਕੀ ਆਸ ॥ ਤਬ ਲਗੁ ਹੋਇ ਨਹੀ ਚਰਨ ਨਿਵਾਸੁ ॥੩॥ [SGGS, Kabir, p.325]

Jab lag man baikunth ki aas. Tab lag hoe nahi charan nivas. ||3||

As long as the mind is filled with the desire for heaven, he does not dwell at the Lord's Feet. ||3||

ਹੋਨਾ ਹੈ ਸੋ ਹੋਈ ਹੈ ਮਨਹਿ ਨ ਕੀਜੈ ਆਸ ॥੧॥

[SGGS, Kabir, p.337]

Hona hai so ho?i hai maneh na kijai as. ||1||

Whatever will be will be, so don't get your hopes up in your mind. ||1||

Guru Arjun, the fifth Guru of the Sikhs, who compiled the Sikh scripture (SGGS) in 1604 and installed in Harmandir Sahib, known as Golden Temple now, reaffirms the message of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh religion, in no uncertain terms. The lesson is crystal clear for the followers of the Sikh religion to have faith in the grace of God who is capable of fulfilling all hopes of his devotee.

ਉਤਰਿ ਜਾਇ ਤੇਰੇ ਮਨ ਕੀ ਪਿਆਸ ॥ ਪੂਰਨ ਹੋਵੈ ਸਗਲੀ ਆਸ ॥

[SGGS, M.5, p.179]

Utar jae tere man ki pias. Puran hovai sagli aas.

The thirst of your mind shall be quenched, and all hopes shall be fulfilled.

ਹਰਿ ਸੰਗਿ ਰਾਤੇ ਪੂਰਨ ਆਸ ॥੨॥ [SGGS, M.5, p.201]

Har sang rate puran aas. ||2||

One who is attuned to the Lord, sees all his hopes fulfilled. ||2||

ਜਿਉ ਭਾਵੈ ਤਿਉ ਰਖੁ ਤੂੰ ਸਚਿਆ ਨਾਨਕ ਮਨਿ ਆਸ ਤੇਰੀ ਵਡ ਵਡੇ ॥੩੩॥੧॥

[SGGS, M.5, p.317]

Jio bhavai tio rakh tu(n) sachia Nanak man aas teri vad vade. ||33||

If it pleases You, then save me, True Lord. Nanak places the hopes of his mind in You alone, O greatest of the great! ||33||

To conclude, Sikh religion does not guarantee fulfilling of 'HOPE' if the followers go astray from the path of Gurmat laid down by the Sikh Gurus. This path entails "*Kirat karo, vand chhako and Naam japo*" which translates to "earning by honest means, share your earnings with the needy, and meditate on qualities of God". Hopes and desires are fulfilled by the grace of God.

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Christian Invasion of Punjab: Major Demographic Change Imminent

[PART - 1]

Santokh Singh Bains*

It was a bright and sunny day at Dhanoor village in Ludhiana district of Punjab. After travelling in a special bus, some 25 to 30 Christian evangelists arrived at this village. As usual, they started distributing pamphlets which stated: "Join us, we will take you on the path to God." The missionaries offered jobs and money for converting to Christianity. They were really astonished when Gurmail Singh and some other elderly observant Sikhs confronted them and asked them to leave the village immediately.

A video showing the Christian evangelists in the village had gone viral. Former Delhi Akali leader Manjinder Singh Sirsa shared this video with several journalists. The video was shown on Rajat Sharma's prime show 'Aaj Ki Baat' on the night of October 13, 2021.

The former Delhi Akali Dal leader told India TV that Punjab-based Christian missionaries have been trying to lure the state's Sikh youths by offering to arrange visas and getting them settled in the USA or Canada. He further said that such Christian evangelists are very active in most of Punjab's districts.

This is not the first time when Christian missionaries' nefarious activities in Punjab have been revealed. Various newspapers and magazines have been reporting their highly objectionable functionings throughout the state since quite some time. Way back in 2011, India Today had published a very informative article titled "*Wake Up Call for SGPC – Christian Missions mushroom across Punjab*" in its issue dated May 9, 2011. In December 2014, The Times of India and The Indian Express reported conversions of Dalit Sikhs to Christianity in Punjab on a massive scale; these newspapers also reported that over 8,000 Christians had become Sikhs again. Huffington Post and Tribune have also covered news regarding converts from Sikhism from time to time. In 2017, an exhaustive Punjabi article titled "Punjab Vich Vigadde Sikh-Isai Sambandh' by Dr. Harbhajan Singh was

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published (two instalments) in Punjab Times (a Punjabi weekly published from USA) in their issues dated August 12, 2017 and August 19, 2017. In its July 2020 issue, Cultural and Religious Studies published Dr. Kulbir Kaur's scholarly article titled "Searching for a New Identity: Christianity, Conversion and Dalit Sikhs."

From time to time, Asia Samachar, an online English newspaper published from Malaysia, has published interesting and informative articles concerning the problem of religious conversions of Sikhs to Christianity in Punjab. The article titled *The Rise of Christianity in Panjab* by Gurmukh Singh was published in Asia Samachar on January 31, 2020. It was followed by another article titled *Christian Invasion of Punjab : A Major Demographic Change in Offing* by Santokh Singh Bains in Asia Samachar dated November 9, 2021. The third article titled *Christianity's onward march in Punjab; need for a strategic response* by Rishpal Singh Sidhu was published on November 26, 2021. A letter dated 20 December 2021 on the subject of *Unethical Conversion of Sikhs in Punjab* was sent to SGPC President Harjinder Singh Dhama by Global Sikh Council which is a confederation of National Level Sikh Organisations from all over the world; this letter addressed to the SGPC President was duly published in Asia Samachar dated December 24, 2021.

Causative Factors

Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, had said: "Those who belong to the lower of the lowest class, Nanak is with them and has nothing to do with the so-called elite. Wherever there is any effort to take care of these lowest of the lowest, The One Creator, God bestows the choicest blessings." The Guru had preferred Bhai Lalo's coarse bread over Malik Bhago's sumptuous dishes.

To rid the society of the scourge of deeply embedded casteism, Guru Amar Das had popularized Langar (common kitchen). He gave clear instruction that anyone coming to see him must first dine with others in the common kitchen. Even Emperor Akbar had to take his food with the common people before he was permitted to have an audience with the Guru.

Through the creation of the Khalsa Order, Guru Gobind Singh made a frontal attack on casteism. The Panj Pyare were from different castes: Bhai Daya Singh (Khatri), Bhai Dharam Singh (Jaat), Bhai Himmat Singh (Water Carrier), Bhai Mohkam Singh (Tailor), and Bhai Sahib Singh (Barber).

"With the virtual establishment of their sovereignty in the plains of central Punjab, Sikhs slowly reverted to their traditional village life, with farming as their main occupation, the

low caste Sikhs resumed their old role of scavenging, leather craft, weaving and field labour; they were no longer the outcastes they had been. But the Sikh people really could not free themselves from the shackles of their origins and the dominance of Hindu customs and practices, including those which were in direct contravention to the teachings of their Gurus. With the passage of time, the malpractice of ill-treating the low castes started once again. Majority of the sufferers of this cruelty were the socially weak and backward sections of the Sikh society..." (Col. Bhupinder Singh).

Jat Sikhs, the land owning class in Punjab, have been humiliating and suppressing Dalit Sikhs in all possible ways. They are not allowed to enter several gurdwaras which are controlled by Jat Sikhs. Sometimes, Dalit Sikhs are not allowed to take Guru Granth Sahib for marriages of their relatives. Similarly, their requests to use gurdwaras' utensils and bed sheets for their functions are often denied. In some villages, Dalit Sikhs are not allowed to use the Shamshan Ghats (Cremation Ghats) which are used by Sikhs of upper castes.

Due to their extreme poverty, many Dalit Sikhs are unable to provide good education for their children. But Christian missionaries promise access to good education for the children if the parents come forward to embrace Christianity. According to the staff of St. Francis Convent School located at Fatehgarh Churian in Gurdaspur, their organization annually spends Rs 90 lakhs for providing children with free or subsidized education. Out of the school's 3,500 students, 400 pay almost nothing. Soniya Massih from Nawa Pind says: "My kids study here for a paltry sum of Rs 200 to 300..."

Sikh political and religious leaders of Punjab have miserably failed to come to the aid of Dalit Sikhs. Prakash Singh Badal, Sukhbir Singh Badal and Amarinder Singh could have done a lot for the uplift of Dalit Sikhs but obviously their priorities were different. Charanjit Singh Channi, Punjab's present Chief Minister who is a Dalit Sikh from Ramdasia community, has also done practically nothing for the welfare of Dalit Sikhs of Punjab.

Very cunning and shrewd Christian missionaries regard poverty as a gift from God for them because poor people can easily be lured to embrace Christianity, No wonder they approach poor Dalit Sikhs and offer them money if they convert. Some Dalit Sikhs are extremely poor and they are also in need of some money very urgently; they don't mind converting if they can get a good amount of money immediately. Christian missionaries also promise to cure them from their chronic illnesses, protect them from evil spirits, and save their souls from the fires of hell.

Due to the absence of proper Dharam Parchar by SGPC, there is wide-spread apostasy amongst young Sikhs of Punjab. According to one estimate, about 70 percent of Sikh youths in Punjab are Patit. Many of these Patit Sikhs get easily convinced to adopt Christianity.

There is no dearth of fake Babas and Sants throughout Punjab. Due to their widespread reach, Sikhs' faith in their own religion has weakened. Hence, Christian preachers usually find it easy to motivate Sikh followers of different Deras to convert.

There is a craze among young Sikhs of Punjab to go to the Western countries like the USA, Canada and the UK. Many Christian missionaries promise to arrange the visas for them if they convert.

The male- female ratio in Punjab is so bad that many Sikh men of marriageable age find it very hard to get suitable brides. Christian evangelists sometimes promise to find suitable brides for such Sikh men if they embrace Christianity.

Deceptive, Immoral & Objectionable Methods

Crafty Christian missionaries have been using very deceptive, immoral and objectionable methods to get new converts. Churches are being built in rural areas of Punjab which outwardly look like gurdwaras. The Sikh words 'Satguru' and 'Waheguru' are being used for Jesus Christ. The Sikh terminology is shamelessly used by them to confuse poor and uneducated Dalit Sikhs. The words like 'Gurbani,' 'Khalsa,' 'Satsang,' 'Sangat,' 'Simran,' 'Kirtan,' and 'Ardas' are regularly used by Punjab-based Christian missionaries. Christian hymns are being sung like Gurbani Kirtan. The symbols of Sikhism are used to confuse and convert rural Sikhs

Converted men and women are no longer called John, David, Edward, Mary, Helen or Alice; now they are allowed to keep Sikh Names ending with 'Singh' or 'Kaur.' Even some Christian missionaries use 'Singh' or 'Kaur' in their names. Men are permitted to wear turbans if they so desire. As is the practice in gurdwaras, women are encouraged to cover their heads when they are inside churches. Men, however, are permitted to enter churches without covering their heads.

To confuse poor and illiterate Sikhs, a religious body was formed in November 2019 by the name of Shiromani Church Parbandhak Committee. Strangely, Albert Dua, a member of the Punjab State Minority Committee and President of the Christian United Federation, defended the name (Shiromani Church Parbandhak Committee) of the Christian religious body.

Words and lines from the Sikh scriptures are frequently misquoted to influence prospective converts. The highly misleading Christian literature in Punjabi language is widely distributed in rural areas of Punjab. Films and videos are produced to degrade Sikhism and portray Christianity as a superior religion. 'Sikh Contextual Gathering' and 'Sikh Punjabi Music' are two such films.

Far-sighted Christian missionaries are cleverly using Punjab's cultural markers like *Gidde* (a folk dance performed by Punjabi women), *Tappe* (a musical form) and *Boliyan* (sung couplets) in praise of Jesus Christ.

Punjab-based Christian evangelists have succeeded in popularizing the following song: *Har mushkil de wich, mera Yeeshu mere naal naal hai. Baap wangu karda fikar, te maa wangu rakhda khyaal hai* (Jesus is with me through all my problems. He worries for me like a father and cares for me like my mother).

Christian missionaries bring hundreds of poor and illiterate Dalit Sikhs to their prayer meetings on the false promise of curing all kinds of ailments including infertility and cancer. The paid actors talk about how they were cured after embracing Christianity. Innocent and simple-minded Sikhs then donate generously for prayers to Jesus for getting cured. Also, they get mentally prepared for adopting Christianity.

Sabu Mathai Kathettu, a Christian evangelist, wrote a book assessing Christian evangelical work in Punjab. The book was published by the Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (ISPCK), an apex protestant institution in India with global connectivity. This book provides not just a historical account but also the theological position and methodology for conversion of Sikhs to Christianity. Punjab-based Christian missionaries consider this book very useful for adopting suitable strategies aimed at converting Dalit Sikhs to Christianity.

Preaching Christianity at Darbar Sahib Complex

Many foreigners visit the Golden Temple in Amritsar from time to time. It is generally believed that they come to the holy Sikh shrine to pay their obeisance. But unfortunately that's not always the case.

In July 2017, three very beautiful and fair-skinned South Korean women were seen in the Darbar Sahib Complex. They approached a Sikh woman and asked her name and age. Thereafter, they shamelessly asked her if she would like to embrace Christianity; they also offered to pay a good amount of money if she agreed to convert. When the Sikh

woman tried to see the book which one of the three South Korean women was carrying, one of them slapped her and snatched back the book.

When some SGPC staff members and police arrived there, the South Korean women wrote an apology letter and promised not to come again to Darbar Sahib Complex to seek converts.

It is quite possible that young and beautiful foreign women still visit Darbar Sahib Complex and approach young Sikh men and women, offering them cash and other inducements like getting attractive foreign brides or grooms for them, and arranging to get the visas for them for USA, Canada or UK, and then getting them settled in the concerned country. Many young Sikhs, particularly Patit Sikhs, may easily fall into their traps and thus get converted to Christianity.

Besides Darbar Sahib Complex, young and attractive Christian women evangelists may also be visiting other important gurdwaras of Punjab for their nefarious designs. SGPC as well as gurdwara managing committees of other important gurdwaras located in Punjab, therefore, need to be very vigilant.

Rapid Christianization in Punjab

In recent times, churches have mushroomed in villages across Punjab. Just in the two districts of Amritsar and Gurdaspur, there are about 700 churches now. In other districts also, the number of churches is growing phenomenally. The Christian population in the state is increasing at an alarming rate on a daily basis. According to some Christian evangelists, about 10 per cent of Punjab's present population is Christian. They are privately talking about turning Punjab into a Christian majority state in near future.

Harbhajan Singh had converted from Sikhism to Christianity in 1986. Now, he is the Pastor of Open Door Church which is one of the largest buildings in the small village of Khojewala. This church has baptized more than 2,800 persons so far and many others are awaiting baptism.

After his conversion to Christianity, Gulshan Singh Labhana became a Christian missionary. He is now addressed in his YouTube video clips as Gulshan Singh Bishop or Rev. Gulshan Singh Labhana of the Labhana Church Holy Society.

Pastor Gursharan Kaur Deol and 'Prophet' Bajinder Singh (a rape accused) are using fake miracle cures and other deceptive methods on a massive scale to convert poor and uneducated Dalit Sikhs to Christianity.

'Apostle' Ankur Narula started with only 3 followers in 2008. By 2018, the number of his followers increased to 1.2 lakh. He claims that his followers now number about 4 lakhs.

John Dayal, Secretary General of the All India Christian Council, says that there is a new openness to Christ in Punjab. He further says: "Punjab has had a traumatic 20 years. Currently there is ... joblessness, drug addiction, easy money, and division between Hindus and Sikhs. In search of a path, people are turning to Christ..."

Dozens of 'pastors,' 'prophets,' and 'apostles' are running the conversion business in Punjab without any fear. Some of them have thousands to lakhs of followers, thus making crores of Rupees. They sometimes grant franchises to others for their conversion business. Many peddlers enter the fray every month because this is probably the most lucrative business in Punjab today!

□

End of Part - I

[To be Continued]

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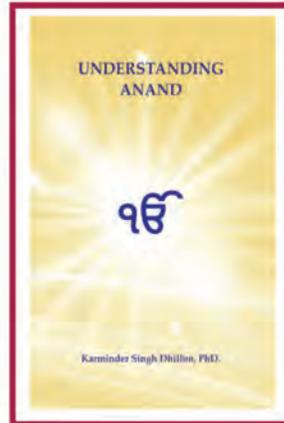
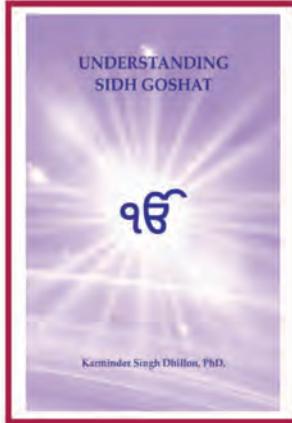
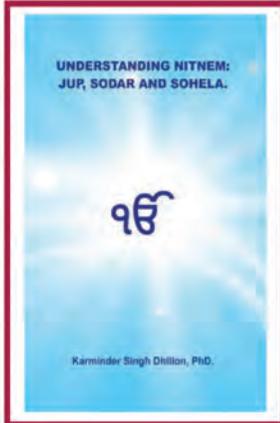
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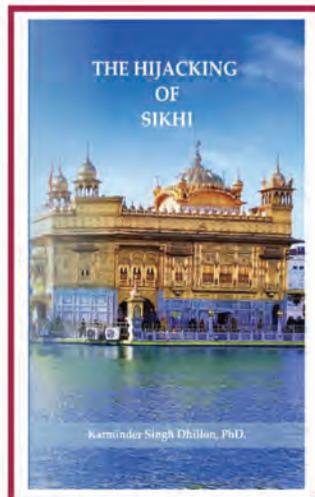
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A Tribute to Elder Brother Late S. Kuljit Singh [Sept 27, 1925 – Feb. 16, 2019]

COL. AVTAR SINGH (RETD.)*

My elder brother, S. Kuljit Singh, who passed away in Chappaqua, Westchester County, New York on February 16, 2019, was a father figure to me. He was eight years old, and I was just one and a half years old when our father, S. Kartar Singh, died. My father had a flourishing business in construction materials at Nankana Sahib. There were ten shops, spanning the distance between two streets in Manhattan. Everything was there: hardware, paint, wood and steel, cement, lime, aggregate, sand, and so on.

After my father's death, there were three widows in the house. Our mother, grandmother, and our Bhua Ji, Virran Valee. She had been widowed at a young age, had been mistreated by her in laws and had come to live with her brother. She was a very intelligent and foresighted lady and proved a pillar of strength for the family, in later years.

The ladies did not know what to do. My father had a stepbrother named Sant Singh, who lived in Patoki, a town near Lahore. He was poor financially. Once the father had gone to see them, he found his young son roaming around. When asked why the boy was not in school, "I cannot afford it," was the response. The father brought the young boy with him, named Manohar Singh. He stayed with his mother for six years, passed his matric test, and was then sent back to his family.

The ladies thought of calling them back to stay with them and sit at the shops. This would have double benefits, his family will gain and the ladies will have someone dependable to run the shops and provide them with regular income. S. Sant Singh came with his family. The arrangement agreed was that "profits will be split half and half".

Money, they say, is many wonderful things. One who has not seen any when he suddenly finds plenty turns his head. That is what happened to them. They bought two houses for themselves and drained the shops of their equity. As far as ladies were concerned, there were always a bundle of excuses. The cement got set. We had this loss and that. The ladies called some relatives again to intervene.

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It was then agreed that irrespective of the amount of profit or loss a certain fixed amount would be paid to the ladies every month. Unfortunately, the agreement was not honoured. Eventually, Bhua ji asked our Mom (Kesar Kaur) to go to Lahore for studies for a year, which she did and passed some Anglo Vernacular Education Exam. This enabled her to teach class 6th students history maths and punjabi. She joined as a teacher at the Khalsa Girls High School at Nankana Sahib. This provided regular income to the ladies to run the house.

As soon as my elder brother passed his Matric (Grade X) in 1941 the ladies wanted him to sit at the shop and take care of the business, but big brother will have none of it. He wished to continue his education in Lahore. The ladies neither afford nor desire it. Brother will have none of it.

He rebelled, left the house, and went away to a God forsaken place called Makhdoom Pur, west of Multan. It was a jungle (forest) area inhabited mostly by forest contractors. The ladies did not know what to do. They searched everywhere but had no clue. Two months later, Brother was brought back by a well-wisher suffering from a severe bout of typhoid. Typhoid in those days was a deadly and fatal disease.

He was nursed back to health. During this period, he was also made aware of the situation in the house and stressed the urgent necessity for him to sit in the shop and take care of his father's business. It was early 1942 then. Things improved in the house but Mom continued to teach at the school.

Seeing Brother at the shop, the old suppliers came forward to supply goods on credit. Uncle S. Dharam Singh of Churkana Mandi, who was a friend of the father, came forward to lend some money. He and my father had been in jail together during the Akali movement. He was a very well-to-do Arthia (Crops Commission Agent) at Churkana Mandi. Things moved like this till Sept. 1947.

Partition of India was announced on August 15. Nobody had expected Nankana Sahib to go to Pakistan. It was the first week of September. My brother and I had gone to Gurdwara Janam Astahn for Matha Teko. A platoon of Sikh soldiers who were being repatriated from Pakistan to India had also come there for the purpose. My brother requested the Subedar Sahib (today I know his designation) in charge of the platoon to take me along and drop me anywhere on the other side of the border. After some hesitation, the officer agreed and dropped me off outside Amritsar.

I spent my first night in free India in an empty gunny bag. In the morning, I started walking towards the town and came to Khalsa College, which had been turned into a big refugee camp, where I got something to eat, a blanket and a place to share in a tent.

I walked to Harmandar Sahib and saw for the first time an inspiring view of the Golden Temple and the complex. I stayed the day there, ate in the langar, and walked back to college in the evening. This became my daily routine.

Our mother (Bhabi Ji) had gone to Lyall Pur (now Faizalabad) to attend her niece's marriage in June 1947 and had gotten stuck there. One day, I met Bhabi Ji at Harmandar sahib. This was the happiest day of my life. Meanwhile, my brother was able to send his wife, son and our Dadi ji in an SGPC truck to Amritsar. S. Narian Singh, M.A., was the Manager at the Janam Asthan and other Gurdwaras Sahib. The family had very good relations with him.

The Brother himself loaded whatever he could on a bullock cart and started the journey on foot to India as part of a caravan. They took 21 days for a journey which should have taken 6 days. On the way, they were attacked by Muslim mobs regularly. There was heavy rain and resulting mud and slush. Floating dead bodies in the water makes it unfit to drink. Finally, they reached Ferozpur and then Amritsar.

At Amritsar, meantime, Bhabi ji met an old friend of hers, Harpal Kaur, who was the Principal of Khalsa Girls High School at Nankana Sahib. She was the only daughter of a rich and influential land lord family in East Punjab. She was then working as Commandant of the abducted girls' recovery set up where Muslim girls recovered from their abductors in India were housed before being sent to Pakistan and Hindu girls recovered from Pakistan were housed before being handed to their families. She offered Bhabi ji the job of being in charge of the kitchen and stores, which she accepted. Bhabi ji was working there when I met her.

Since Bibi Harpal Kaur, the Commandant, knew me well from my childhood, I was allowed to stay at the camp though I was 14 and a half years old at the time. However, this did not last long. Fingers were raised about my stay in the camp. So Bhabi ji had no option but to send me away to Kanpur.

It is sad that Hindu girls were not accepted by their parents because they had spent time with their abductors. A few strong-hearted ones converted to Sikhism and others willingly to Islam.

The brother went away to Kanpur with his brother-in-law, S. Sharam Singh, who was working in a mill in Kanpur. Each mill worker had a one room with verandah allotted to him.

Half the verandah served as the kitchen space. Bharjai Ji, Mrs. Harwinder Kaur, along with Tejinder, who was 10 months old at the time, and Mrs. Sharam Singh, were sent to Sukal Bazar, a small town in Bara Banki district in U.P.

My brother and Sharam Singh started going from village to village on bicycles, selling clothes in retail. Each had six bales of cloth tied to the bicycle carrier. At night, we three slept in the half verandah. I had nothing to do the whole day except waste my time. One day, my brother asked me to go and sit in a class so I would not forget whatever I had learned in Matric. I went to Christ Church College but could not go past the doorman of the principal's office. Then I went to BNSD (Bishambar Nath Sanatan Dharam) Intermediate College.

There are some personalities who leave an everlasting impression on you. One such man was Mr Khanna, a tall gentleman of wheatish colour who always wore a white turban. I stood in front of his door. He thought I was a student at the college. He asked me to come in. I said I wanted to sit in the class. Who are you and what have you done? Sir, I am a refugee boy and have passed my matric from Punjab University at Lahore in the high first division.

You have to sit in the first year of college. But I cannot allow you to sit in the class unless you are a student. Sir, please make me one. Do you realise it is January now and the exams are in mid-March? You will fail. I have already lost a year. It makes no difference. Come in July when the new session starts. But sir, I want to sit in a class now.

He rang the bell, and asked the clerk to give me an admission form, which I filled out. Mr. Khanna wrote on it, Admit, and gave it to me back. I came back to him again. What is it now?

The clerk is asking for a lot of money, and I have no money. I am a refugee boy who does not have his father. Where do you stay? "Gumti" (the name of the place in Kanpur where we were staying) and "How will you come?" "Sir, I will somehow hire a bicycle and come." But it is too far away, "Mr. Khanna said."

I do not know what came to his mind. Can you pay for your food? Impulsively, I said "Yes." I will admit you to the college and the hostel. I have waived all charges. I thanked him and came out.

Thanks to our science teacher, Master Dara Singh, at the Khalsa High School at Nankana Sahib, the fundamentals were very clear. Soon, I became a favourite student of our Physics Professor, Mr. Tandon. The same thing happened in chemistry and maths.

The math teacher was another Mr. Tandon. In English, I was poor, and I could not follow a word. They were lecturing on Shakespeare, which was way above my head.

I took the exams and scored 60 in Maths, 55 in Physics and 50 in Chemistry. In English, I failed with less than 20. I was promoted to a second year. In the second year exam, I scored 100% in Maths, 96% in Physics and 94% in Chemistry. In English, I got 50 marks out of 150. Just the pass marks. I must have been given some grace marks.

I went back to Amritsar with my result. Bhabi ji said there used to be an engineering school at Raksul which has now come to Gurdaspur. Why don't I go there? When the Principal at Gurdaspur School saw my marks, he asked, "Why do you want to be an Overseer?" What should I do? Get a degree in engineering by enrolling in an engineering college. Where are they? Aligarh, Banaras, Calcutta, etc.

Meanwhile, my brother and Bhabi ji had moved to Saharanpur. Bhabi ji started teaching at the local Khalsa School while my brother joined his brother-in-laws, S. Sharam Singh and Jaswant Singh, in the hardware business. Things were moving OK. I received my acceptance at the Banaras Hindu University Engineering College (BENCO). I needed Rs. 500 to go to college there. It was a substantial sum at the time. He sold his stake in the shop for the sum, gave me the money, and left for Delhi with his wife and two sons.

Who will do this for his brother, as my brother, S. Kuljit Singh, did for me? He was a father figure in the development of my career.

The family stayed in a one-room apartment at the Tibia College Hostel in Delhi, which had shared bathrooms and latrines. Mother also arrived from Saharanpur to join them. She took a job at the Khalsa girls' school in Lodhi Colony. She will have to change three buses to get to the school.

In Delhi, the brother started supplying ballast to the railways. He will leave the house at 6 AM, go to the quarry, get blasting done, have rocks broken into ballast by manual labour, fill the railway wagon, and get it passed and accepted, and come home again at 7 in the evening. It was very hard work for him.

Bhabi ji and my brother supported me in my college education. Because of my academic performance, I was able to obtain a scholarship and a fee waiver, but the first year was financially challenging.

I would sum-up that what I am today, I owe it to him, my elder brother—S. Kuljit Singh.



Humboldt Research Award for DU teacher



Delhi University scientist Professor Inderjit Singh has been conferred with the prestigious Humboldt Research Award 2022. In addition, the ecologist is invited to undertake research in collaboration with German scientists. The award includes the prize money of 60,000 Euro (Rs 49 lakh approx.) with the possibility of further support during the prize winner's life.

Singh, a plant ecologist at the department of environmental studies at the university, focuses his research on understanding how plant species become invasive and cause harm to the environment. An interdisciplinary multifaceted attempt with global coverage to understand ecological- evolutionary processes of non-native invasive plants achieving success and influencing native communities.

Singh has global research collaborations and has published more-than 100 papers in most reputed journals. He has been previously awarded the Whittaker Distinguished Ecologist Award by the Ecological Society of America in 2015.

Speaking to TOI, Singh said; "It is good to see your work being recognised," adding that in Germany he will continue to work on plant invasion. "My research will continue to be on the chemistry of plant invasion. Why exotic plants are successful and how the chemistry leads to the success".

Courtesy: Sunday Times of India

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Panjab University alumnus Amandeep Singh Gill appointed as UN chief's Envoy on Technology

Senior Indian diplomat and Panjab University alumnus Amandeep Singh Gill beat a crowded field to become effectively the UN Secretary-General António Guterres's first Envoy on Technology. He replaced Italian and EU diplomat Maria-Francesca Spatolisano who was in an acting capacity for the past five months pending the selection of a full-time envoy.

Selection criteria for the job were stiff, with many of the skills sought not in the armory of conventional diplomats. Launching its hunt for a full-time envoy on January 27 this year, the UN had sought a person experienced in multi-stakeholder approach for policy development, possessing a solid understanding of the UN as well as strong familiarity with the Internet architecture and infrastructure.

Gill made the cut because of the familiarity with the subject. He co-led Guterres's High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation for two years and is serving as the head of a UN-funded collaborative project on digital health and AI in Geneva. He was India's Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva (2016-2018).

A Bachelor of Technology in Electronics and Electrical Communications from Panjab University, Chandigarh, Gill joined the diplomatic service in 1992. Besides stints in Tehran and Colombo, he has largely specialised in disarmament, strategic technologies and international security affairs. He was also involved with the National Task Force on AI and the Group of Governmental Experts on emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapon systems.

A UN panel in 2019 had asked for a tech envoy who “could identify over-the-horizon concerns that need improved cooperation or governance and work with UN member states, civil society and businesses to support compliance with agreed norms”.

Gill will advise the senior UN leadership on key trends in technology, so as to guide the strategic approach on such issues. He will also serve as an advocate and focal point for digital cooperation so that all stakeholders will have a first port of call for the broader UN system, said the Association for Progressive Cooperation which backed the setting up of this position. The APC sees the Tech Envoy’s role as central to promoting improved coordination and synergy among different spaces and processes concerning Internet governance and global digital cooperation.

Courtesy: Tribune News Services

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

SGPC objects to appointment of non-Sikh as MD of Punjab & Sind Bank

SGPC chief Harjinder Singh Dhani on Thursday raised an objection to the appointment of non-Sikh as managing director and chief executive officer of Punjab & Sind Bank (PSB).

Swarup Kumar Saha was recently appointed as the head of the PSU lender by the central government.

The Shiromani Gurdwara Par-bandhak Committee (SGPC) chief said that PSB was established in 1908 as a dream of an independent bank of Sikhs.

“This bank (PSB) is known as Sikh bank and only a Sikh should be appointed at its top post. A consensus was also reached in this regard with the government at the time of nationalisation of this bank, but sadly it is not being implemented in spirit,” said Dhani.

Even before the appointment of Saha, the Sikh traditions were not followed and now, it has been done again, the SGPC president said and appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to consider appointing a Sikh as the MD and CEO of the bank.

Courtesy: The Tribune

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Hargun Kaur Matharu of Pune is the all-India ICSE Class 10 topper.



All-India Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE) topper Hargun Kaur Matharu, from St Mary's School, Pune, secured 99.8 per cent in the exams. She was at her younger sister's birthday party on Sunday when she got to know about the results.

“Consistency is the key. I have not yet decided what I want to pursue but I'm very interested in science, engineering and robotics,” said Matharu.

ICSE results were announced on Sunday and the pass percentage was 99.97 per cent.

Pune also bagged the second rank as Shivani Deo secured 99.6 per cent and is the second national rank holder. The third rank holder from Pune is Bhargava Kollapalle who secured 99.4 per cent marks in the exam.

Matharu's mother Sukhvinder Kaur Matharu is a banker and her father Dev Singh Matharu is an IT professional.

“Because of the first semester, we had an idea of the exam. But the all-India ranking was completely unexpected. I feel that the most important part is classroom learning and we have experienced teachers. Once we understand the topic in school, preparing becomes very easy,” said Hargun.

Dev Singh Matharu, her father, said that she has always been a bright student.

“We never forced her to get good marks as we believe that learning is more important than marks. But she has done exceptionally well. We are very proud of her. She has been active in robotics and other extracurricular activities. She was also the head girl last year. She has ruled out medicine and is planning to take a JEE course. She is yet to decide what she wants to do in the future but I am confident that she will make the right decision,” said Singh.

This year a total of 231,063 candidates appeared for the examination out of which 125,635 boys and 105,369 girls passed the examination.

By Namrata Devikar
Courtesy: Hindustan Times



Book Title : My Caste- My Shadow- Translated from Punjabi by
T.C. Ghai
Book by : Balbir Madhopuri
Published by : LG Publishers Distributors, Delhi - 110 091
: Pages : 118 -- Price: Rs. 295/-

A Review by Prof. Harpreet Kaur*

The book namely, '*Meri Chonvi Kavita*' penned down by Balbir Madhopuri earlier has been translated into English by T.C. Ghai with finesse enabling the readers of English language to have access to the enriched collection of selected poems of a renowned writer. Balbir Madhopuri, a well-known literary figure has won international acclaim for his autobiography *Changiya Rukh* (The Lopped-off Tree) written in Punjabi; later translated into many languages with its popular English version, '*Against the Night*' published by Oxford University Press in 2010.

The wondrous recreation in English by T.C. Ghai from the compendium of Balbir Madhopuri's Punjabi poems expresses the inherent meaning of the poems undeniably. The underlying essence of the anthology of the poems is a mirror to humiliation, suffering and plight of the so-called lower castes at every stage in their lives. The inherent practice of exploitation based on birth ascribed status has gripped our society completely and any attempts to shed it seems to be insufficient and rather, negligible. His own narratives arouse the emotions of the readers compelling them to get rid of this discriminating hydra-

*Principal, Mata Sundri College for Women, University of Delhi

headed monster present in the society. In 'Sanskrit', he laments the rigid mindset of the high-caste Hindus who are not ready to come out of this fixed restricted mindset and regime. The poems are dialogical engaging the readers in this exchange of ideas. The Extract included in the book namely, 'Being a Tenant' from *Changiya Rukh: Against the Night* provides an evocative connotation to the exclusion that is transcribed in the collection of poems.

The poems also illustrate Balbir Madhopuri's rustic background and his closeness to the serene natural surroundings, which is transcribed in his poetic expressions of various phenomena of nature bringing solace to the readers. The wide spectrum of nature is depicted in the vicissitudes of landforms and vagaries of weather and nature in its opulent shades like blossoming flowers, twinkling stars, lush green velvety grass, flying insects, floating ducks and swimming fishes etc. are imageries that finds realistic and vivid exemplification in this collection.

He desires to instill essential humanitarian values into the people and in the poems like, *Against the Wind*, a lot of inexplicable things are elaborated and explained in a naturalistic manner. The metaphor of an insect that flies in the rainy season to meet its end in the burning flames is described as superior to one that staggers and crawls and is crushed under the heels connoting that meeting one's higher purpose in life despite all odds is superior than inaction. The moments of silence are the times when one reflects and introspects about oneself, near relations, broken relations, close friends etc. and this is time when the real purpose of life can be contemplated and one is impelled to be determined to stick to one's resolve. The poem on *Life* radiates his opulence and optimism towards life that is in a constant state of flux and despite all odds wants to blossom like a bud or sprout like a sapling in mud.

His poems grant fundamental dignity to the women and this is depicted in poems which have mention about mother, wife, daughters etc. and this discourse envisions an ethical treatment and a dignified status to them in the torturous environs of the family and the society.

The deteriorating social and political conditions of Punjab during the era when Sikh militancy on the rise in the decades of 1980s and where arms and carnage were the ways of life instead of farming, is outlined in his poems with a heavy heart but despite this

decline, the poet hopes a fresh wave and 'Waiting for a Cool Breeze' reiterates his optimism. *Sunshine and Shade* that tread parallel to each other are juxtaposed with parallels of the wings of duck that remains dry despite being immersed deep in water and of how the fruit-bearing branches of a tree bend in humility but how a stiff tree has to yield with the force of the wind and sways.

This poetry, in short, categorized as Dalit literature depicts the plight of the vulnerable groups whose experience in our cultural milieu is totally different. They are not only subjected to futile practices that had been embedded in the historic milieu deeply but their plight in the modern circumstances has become more pervasive and insidious. The menacing caste-driven atrocities, social embarrassment, humiliation, exclusion, subordination and psychological abuses that they are subjected overtly or covertly are cumulative factors leading to horrifying instances in the unequal social order and such episodes of ill-treatment from the life of the author are eye-opener to one and all, laying urgent need to herald a open and democratic society, which still seems to be elusive.

The poet's own personal experiences make the illustrations even more effective and stimulating, pulling the strings of hearts of the readers. The anecdotal mention of various mythological and historically popular figures like, Banda Singh Bahadur, Farhad, Eklavya, Shakuni, Narad, Mirza- Sahiban etc. corroborate and substantiate the underlying currents of thought spontaneously and vividly. The poet desires that his poetry should have a direction and provide meaningful guidance to the people and hopes to inspire others despite being 'dark-skinned' that has an explicit message for the society. And the English version by T.C. Ghai recreates the same intense emotions and delivers humanitarian message to awaken society towards stimulating Dalit consciousness.

□

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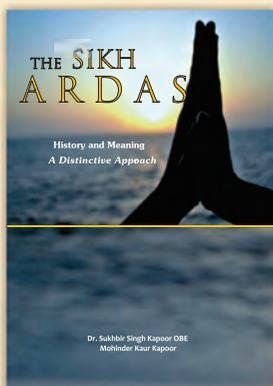
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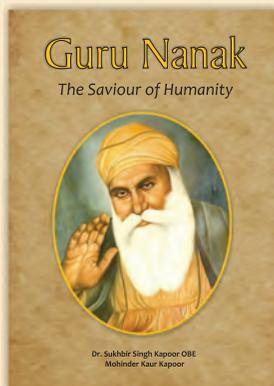
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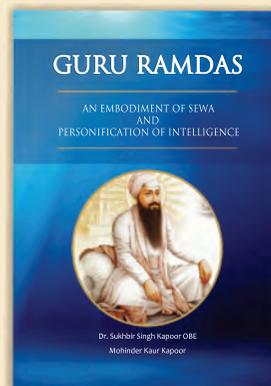
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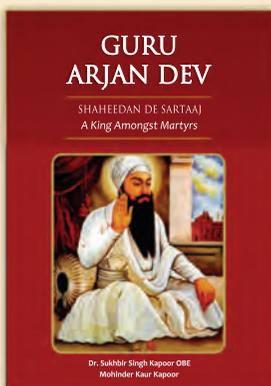
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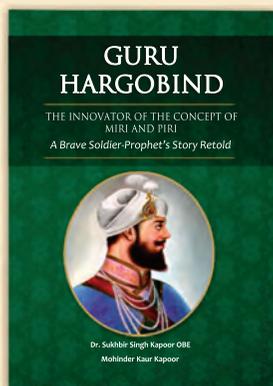
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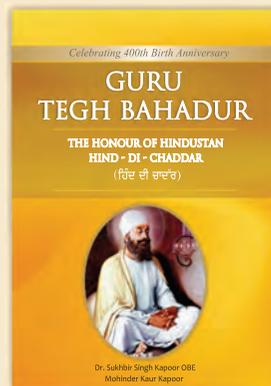
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