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Price ₹ 45/-

# THE SIKH REVIEW

Vol. 74:02

Date of Publication: 1ST FEBRUARY 2026

No. 866



ਤਖਤ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਹਰਿਮੰਦਰ ਜੀ, ਪਟਨਾ ਸਾਹਿਬ

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Prof. Inderjeet Singh Bakshi  
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Prof. Mandeep Kaur Kochar (Mumbai)  
Mob: +91 98206 87605  
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Ms. Rosy Kaur Ahluwalia  
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A theological, educational and socio-cultural Monthly founded in 1953

Vol. 74.02

FEBRUARY 2026

No. : 866

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## MEDITATION

One Universal Creator God. By The Grace Of The True Guru

### ਬਾਣੀ ਸਧਨੇ ਕੀ ਰਾਗੁ ਬਿਲਾਵਲੁ

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[SGGS Pg. : 858]

### Translation\*

God! You protected the honor of a lustful man, who disguised himself as Vishnu to win the heart of a princess ( a Vishnu devotee who wanted only to marry Him). (That is Your magnanimous nature, O Enlightener of the world!) You even protected an impersonator and a lustful man. ||1|| If You will not erase the karma of my past actions (then why should I meditate on You)? Why seek safety from a lion if one is to be eaten by a jackal? ||1||Pause|| For the sake of a single raindrop, the rainbird (cries out) suffering in pain. What is the use of an ocean full of water, after the rainbird had dropped dead from thirst? ||2|| While my life (waiting for your blessings) has grown weary (from vices), and I shall not last much longer; how can I be patient? If I drown (in the vices) and die, and the boat comes along later, tell me, how shall I climb aboard? ||3|| I am nothing, I have nothing, and nothing belongs to me (save this humble servant in this life alone). Sadhana is your humble servant; now, protect my honor (by saving me from drowning in the ocean of vices). ||4||1||

Message: Even after committing very serious crimes, we should approach God in all humility and sincerely ask for His mercy, and we may be saved.

\*Translation by : Bhupinder Singh

## A Global Faith Trapped in a Local Identity: Rethinking Sikhi's Future

DR. DEVINDER PAL SINGH AND DR. BHAI HARBANS LAL\*

Sikhi is, by its very nature, a universalist spiritual tradition. Its scriptures speak in many languages; its founders travelled thousands of kilometres across continents; its message affirms that divine light pervades all beings without distinction of caste, nation, or culture. And yet, despite this expansive vision, Sikhi today remains predominantly confined to the Indo-Pakistani world and to Punjabi diasporic communities abroad. The paradox is striking: a religion built on global inclusivity appears limited in global reach.

However, the problem does not lie in Sikh theology, which is among the most open, egalitarian, and interfaith-oriented in world religious thought, but in the historical conflation of Sikhi with Punjabi ethnic culture. Over time, this fusion has unintentionally narrowed the religion's global accessibility. The result is that many non-Punjabi seekers admire Sikh principles yet hesitate to approach gurdwaras or engage deeply with the tradition, perceiving it as culturally bounded rather than universally welcoming.

### Theological Universality vs. Cultural Insularity

The foundation of Sikhi is unequivocally universalist. The Aad Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS) contains compositions not only from Sikh Gurus but also from Hindu bhagats, Sufi saints, and devotional poets from across social, linguistic, and geographical boundaries. The message of "Ik Oankar," the formless, all-pervading Divine, rejects exclusivism and affirms a shared human essence.

The SGGS itself is a multilingual spiritual anthology, integrating 10–16 languages and dialects across North India, Central India, Persia, and beyond. This linguistic

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\*E-mail : harbansl@gmail.com and c4usikhism@gmail.com

tapestry is not accidental; it is a profound statement that divine wisdom is not restricted to a single culture or language. Guru Nanak's extensive travels, traditionally believed to span nearly 28,000 kilometres, reinforce this vision. He adopted local dress, interacted deeply with diverse communities, and accepted multiple honorific names. Whether dressed as a Sufi fakir among Muslims or as a mendicant among yogis, he communicated in the linguistic and cultural idioms familiar to his listeners. Sikhi, as he lived and taught it, was not meant to belong to Punjab alone but to the world.

However, contemporary Sikh practice often moves in the opposite direction. Many gurdwaras abroad function not only as religious spaces but as Punjabi cultural hubs, complete with Punjabi language, Punjabi food, Punjabi music, and Punjabi social norms. While this is deeply important for preserving diaspora identity, it also creates unintended barriers for outsiders.

### **How Punjabi Nationalism and Diaspora Politics Narrowed the Sikh Lens**

The trauma of Partition, post colonial political struggles, and the challenges of migration compelled Sikh communities to rely heavily on cultural cohesion for collective survival. Over time, the Punjabi language, turban symbolism, diaspora political activism, and community institutions became tightly interwoven. This produced a strong ethnocultural Sikh identity that helped sustain communities but has also shaped global perceptions of the tradition.

The consequence is a widespread impression that Sikh identity is fundamentally Punjabi. Non-Punjabi seekers often assume that becoming Sikh requires adopting Punjabi customs, mannerisms, and even political narratives. In contrast, traditions such as Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity have developed culturally diverse expressions across continents, enabling them to grow globally without being tied to one ethnic form. Sikhi, however, is often perceived as a "complete cultural package," limiting its accessibility to those outside Punjabi heritage.

The issue is not an overemphasis on Punjabi culture, which in itself is a rich and vibrant tradition, but an underemphasis on Sikh universalism. The global image of Sikhi thus becomes framed more as an ethnic identity than a spiritual path open to all humanity.

### Gurdwaras and the Experience of Cultural Foreignness

One of the most substantial sociological barriers is the ethnic structure of most gurdwaras. Because they primarily serve Punjabi immigrant communities, their language of instruction, liturgy, announcements, kirtan, and interactions with sangat overwhelmingly favour Punjabi norms. Non-Punjabi visitors often feel like cultural outsiders, unsure how to participate or fearful of violating unspoken rules.

The following two practices exemplify this issue: (i) Sitting on the floor, though rooted in cultural tradition rather than scripture, is often difficult for the elderly or physically challenged, and alienating for those unfamiliar with it. (ii) Gender-segregated seating, a cultural rather than doctrinal practice, contradicts Sikh egalitarian values and confuses visitors who expect a more inclusive environment.

Such norms send subtle signals that Sikhi is embedded within Punjabi culture in ways that are not easily negotiable, even though Sikh doctrine does not require these practices.

### The Translation Problem

A second significant barrier is linguistic. While the Gurus communicated in multiple languages accessible to their audiences, modern Sikh institutions have not invested sufficiently in high-quality translations and explanatory materials for global seekers. The SGGS is often encountered only through Punjabi lenses, projected on screens in gurdwaras in Gurmukhi script or translated into English in literal, sometimes unintelligible forms that preserve Punjabi idioms.

For Sikhi to be globally accessible, scripture must be readable. Without precise translations in English, Spanish, French, Mandarin, and other world languages, the spiritual depth of the SGGS remains locked behind linguistic barriers. This contradicts the very example of Guru Nanak, who spoke in several dialects, interacted across cultures, and used locally intelligible language to convey his message.

### Symbolism and the Perception of Ethnic Restriction

The Sikh turban is another double-edged symbol. While spiritually profound, globally it is often perceived as uniquely Punjabi. Many seekers assume that becoming Sikh requires wearing Punjabi-style turbans, rather than understanding

head covering as a culturally adaptable practice. Cultural expression becomes mistaken for a theological mandate.

Media representations further reinforce this ethnic framing by focusing on Sikh political struggles, diaspora activism, or regional conflicts, overshadowing Sikhism's spiritual warmth, ethical clarity, and interfaith openness.

### **Recovering Nanakian Universalism: A Path Forward**

To make Sikhi visible and accessible outside the Indo-Pakistani world, the community must rediscover the intercultural genius of Guru Nanak. His example demonstrates that the form of presentation can change without compromising spiritual content. Sikhi must be allowed to express itself in African, East Asian, Latin American, and Western cultural forms, just as it once expressed itself in the idioms of medieval India, Persia, and Central Asia.

#### **This requires:**

1. Investing in high-quality global translations of the SGGS and commentaries.
2. Reforming gurdwaras into multilingual, intercultural spiritual centres rather than exclusively Punjabi hubs.
3. Publicly distinguishing Sikhi from Punjabi ethnicity, making clear that the turban, names, and practices can take culturally diverse forms without violating doctrine.
4. Empowering non-Punjabi Sikhs to contribute to leadership, liturgy, and teaching.
5. Revitalizing the Sikh mission as Guru Nanak practiced it, engaging with the world, not merely preserving cultural boundaries.

### **A Pragmatic Pathway**

Despite long-standing constraints framed by Maryada, some Gurudwaras have taken up initiatives that reflect a thoughtful, forward-looking evolution in Gurudwara management. These Gurudwaras have created dedicated, respectful spaces, such as a separate hall, for Gurbani-based lectures/talks and discussions, without compromising the sanctity of Guru Granth Sahib. These programs successfully engage Sikhs lacking Punjabi language skills, newly initiated non-Sikhs, and broader audiences. Structured seating, audio-visual support, and distraction-free sessions

enhance learning and accessibility. The consistent presence of a senior, experienced coordinator ensures discipline and continuity. While demanding careful planning, this model is both practical and scalable. It demonstrates that tradition and outreach need not be oppositional, but can coexist as a credible, positive step toward inclusivity and informed engagement.

### Conclusion

Sikhi is hard to find outside the Indo-Pakistani world, not because its theology is narrow, but because its global expression has become culturally narrow. Sikhi at its core is universal, inclusive, and profoundly humanistic. Recovering that essence, through language, pedagogy, institutional reform, and intercultural openness, will enable it to flourish as a truly global religion.

The task ahead is not to reinvent Sikhi, but to return to its original spirit, in which the divine message belonged not to one people but to all humanity.



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## Guru-Granth vs 'Guru-Panth'

GURPREET SINGH\*

### Abstract:

This article critically examines the contemporary slogan that the Guru-Granth and the Guru-Panth together constitute the Guru. It argues that this idea is doctrinally flawed and contradicts the core Sikh principle of Shabad-Guru, which affirms Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji alone as the complete and eternal Guru. Drawing upon Gurbani, Sikh theology, and historical context, the article shows that while collective leadership (Panj-Pradhani) has an important role in Sikh governance, it was never intended to confer Guruship upon the Sikh community or its representatives.

The paper exposes how legitimizing the elevation of the Panth to the status of Guru has enabled the validation of practices, edicts, and institutional authority that are inconsistent with Gurbani. By restoring the true meaning of Panth as the path shown by the Guru rather than a governing body, the article re-centers Sikh identity on obedience to the Shabad rather than human authority.

Ultimately, the article calls for a return to Gurbani-based Sikh living, where Sikhs function as Gursikhs guided by the Guru rather than claiming Guruship themselves.

### Introduction

“The Guru-Granth and the ‘Guru-Panth’ together forms the complete Guru” - this saying is now frequently heard from stages. This misleading idea is being repeated so often by Panthic scholars that it is gradually settling into the Sikh psyche. References to the 'Guru-Panth' are also found in the writings of the eighteenth-century Sikhs. It is necessary to challenge this notion born of ignorance, because for a Sikh nothing can be equal to the Guru, and the Sikh’s Guru is the Shabad —that is, only Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. The Guru is One and is perfectly complete:

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\*E-mail : Gp1699@yahoo.com

ਇਕਾ ਬਾਣੀ ਇਕੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਇਕੋ ਸਬਦੁ ਵੀਚਾਰਿ ॥

(Sggs Pg. 646)

*There is one Bani, one Guru, and one Shabad to contemplate.*

ਗੁਰੁ ਪੂਰਾ ਮੇਰਾ ਗੁਰੁ ਪੂਰਾ ॥

(Sggs Pg. 901)

*My Guru is perfect, perfectly complete.*

ਗੁਰੁ ਪੂਰਾ ਪੂਰੀ ਤਾ ਕੀ ਕਲਾ ॥

(Sggs Pg. 1339)

*Perfect is the Guru, perfect is His power.*

ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰੁ ਪੂਰਾ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਤਾਂ ਉਤਰੀ ਮਨ ਕੀ ਚਿਤਾ ॥੪॥

(Sggs Pg. 1003)

*Says Nanak: when one meets the Perfect Guru, the mind's anxieties depart.*

Confusion arises from doctrinal weakness.

The concept of the Shabad-Guru is unique and profound and can only be understood through deep reflection on Gurbani. Sadly, in Sikh life today, the space and time for Gurbani-vichaar is shrinking, which is why ideas that are not in harmony with Gurmat are taking root in Sikh psyche.

Human weakness has always been that following a physical leader (deh-dhaari) feels easier on the spiritual path, but in reality, it leads to exploitation. While no one doubts that Guru in human forms were conclusively ended in Sikhi, failure to grasp the depth of the Shabad-Guru concept leads people to make the 'Panth' itself into the Guru — which is simply another human form.

This doctrinal weakness is often justified by historical arguments. For example:

1) Guru Gobind Singh Ji received Khanda-di-Pahul from the Panj Pyare and, with the principle of "Aape Gur Chela," established them as equal to the Guru.

The creation of the Khalsa is indeed a unique chapter in human history, but it does not make the Panj Pyare equal to the Guru. Through this act, Guru Gobind Singh Ji entrusted ordinary Sikhs with the responsibility of spreading Sikhi and dismantled priestly authority. The Sangat may select five initiated Sikhs to administer Pahul, but this is a responsibility — not authority equal to the Guru. Even in Gurbani, the Guru asks for the dust of the Gursikh's feet, out of responsibility of Gursikh to spread the Naam ("Avrai naam japaave" ਅਵਰਹ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਾਵੈ), not because the Gursikh is equal to the Guru:

ਜਨੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਧੂੜ੍ਹ ਮੰਗੈ ਤਿਸੁ ਗੁਰਸਿਖ ਕੀ ਜੋ ਆਪਿ ਜਪੈ ਅਵਰਹ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਾਵੈ ॥੨॥ ਪਉੜੀ ॥ (Sggs Pg. 306)

*Nanak begs for the dust of that Gursikh who himself contemplates on the Naam and inspires others to do so.*

ਜਨੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਮਾਗੈ ਧੂੜ੍ਹ ਤਿਨ ਜੋ ਗੁਰਸਿਖ ਮਿਤ ਪਿਆਰੇ ॥੧॥

(Sggs Pg. 307)

*Nanak asks for the dust of those, who are like-minded dear Gursikhs.*

2) The Panj Pyare ordered Guru Gobind Singh Ji to leave the fort of Chamkaur.

This was a strategic military decision taken in a specific situation through collective counsel. It does not make the Panj Pyare equal to the Guru. Similarly, Guru Arjan Sahib accepted the advice of the Delhi Sangat regarding rejecting a marriage proposal for (Guru) Hargobind Sahib of Diwan Chandu's — but that did not make the Delhi Sikhs equal to the Guru.

When Guru Gobind Singh Ji made doctrinal decisions, he did not seek anyone's approval or advice. When he ended the line of human Gurus and bestowed Guruship on Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, he did not ask the Panj Pyare — because this is not the domain of the Sikhs; it belongs only to the Guru.

Yes, the Guru has given us the concept of Panj-Pradhani (collective leadership) for resolving Panthic matters. But Panj-Pradhani or Panj Pyare must take guidance from Gurbani — that is, from the Guru — not become the Guru itself.

### Need behind Deviation

Why does the Sikh, under the pretext of 'Guru-Panth,' wish to become the Guru? Some argue that Guru Granth Sahib imparts guidance while the 'Guru-Panth' carries out actions, and that teaching without action is meaningless — therefore both must be combined.

This is shallow thinking. Why can these actions be done as Gursikhs? Good collective decisions can be made as Sikhs — why claim Guruship?

The real reason is that Sikhs have felt need of certain actions and decisions which are not aligned with Guru Granth Sahib, 'Guru-Panth' is the product of this very need. Issuing 'hukamnamas' (fatwas) to silence scholars is part of this. Various institutions and sects try to legitimize anti-Gurmat practices under the name of Rehat Maryada.

That is why, despite being approved by the so-called ‘Guru-Panth,’ these Maryadas contradict one another and also contradict Gurbani.

Even the word “Panth” is being misused. In Gurbani, Panth means a path, not a body of people. Thus, the literal meaning of ‘Guru-Panth’ is the path shown by the Guru, not a group of initiated Sikhs. Those who walk on the path are Panthic; but they are not the Panth itself. A Sikh must walk on the Guru’s path, not declare himself the Panth:

ਬਿਨੁ ਗੁਰ ਪੰਥੁ ਨ ਸੂਝਈ ਕਿਤੁ ਬਿਧਿ ਨਿਰਬਹੀਐ ॥੨॥

(Sggs Pg 229)

Without the Guru, the panth is not known; how can one proceed?

### Guru’s task

Let us now look at the main functions of the Guru and ask whether any “Guru-Panth” can perform them:

ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਿਖ ਕੀ ਕਰੈ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਾਲ ॥ ਸੇਵਕ ਕਉ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਦਾ ਦਇਆਲ ॥

ਸਿਖ ਕੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਦੁਰਮਤਿ ਮਲੁ ਹਿਰੈ ॥ ਗੁਰ ਬਚਨੀ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਉਚਰੈ ॥

ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਿਖ ਕੇ ਬੰਧਨ ਕਾਟੈ ॥ ਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਸਿਖੁ ਬਿਕਾਰ ਤੇ ਹਾਟੈ ॥

ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਿਖ ਕਉ ਨਾਮ ਧਨੁ ਦੇਇ ॥ ਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਸਿਖੁ ਵਡਭਾਗੀ ਹੇ ॥

ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਿਖ ਕਾ ਹਲਤੁ ਪਲਤੁ ਸਵਾਰੈ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਿਖ ਕਉ ਜੀਅ ਨਾਲਿ ਸਮਾਰੈ ॥੧॥ (Sggs Pg. 286)

*The True Guru cherishes the Sikh.*

*He is forever compassionate to His servant.*

*The Guru removes the Sikh’s evil intellect.*

*Through the Guru’s Word, the Sikh utters the Naam.*

*The True Guru cuts the Sikh’s bonds.*

*The Guru’s Sikh turns away from vices.*

*The True Guru gives the Sikh the wealth of Naam.*

*The Guru’s Sikh is most fortunate.*

*The True Guru arranges both this world and the next for the Sikh.*

*Nanak: the True Guru cares for the Sikh with His very life.*

ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਦਾਤਾ ਨਾਮ ਕਾ ਪੂਰਾ ਜਿਸੁ ਭੰਡਾਰੁ ॥

(Sggs pg. 49)

*The True Guru is the perfect giver of the Naam, whose treasure is inexhaustible.*

ਬਿਨੁ ਸਬਦੈ ਭਰਮੁ ਨ ਚੁਕਈ ਨਾ ਵਿਚਹੁ ਹਉਮੈ ਜਾਇ ॥੬॥

(Sggs Pg. 67)

*Without the Shabad, illusion does not depart, nor does ego leave from within.*

### Conclusion

The True Guru is the divine treasury of Naam, which is divine virtues. Through the Naam, the Guru removes evil intellect and vices, and cuts the bonds of delusion. It is only through contemplation of the Gur-Shabad, one becomes free of doubt and ego.

Today, a large section of Sikh society is trapped in illusions and fake ritualism. From among these, the so-called ever-ready (tiaar-bur-tiaar) groups sometimes call themselves 'Dal Panth Khalsa' and at other times claim to be the 'Guru-Panth.' How can the Sikhi prosper by turning away from the Guru?

So let us learn to set our actions right as humble Gursikhs:

ਮਨੁ ਬੇਚੈ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕੈ ਪਾਸਿ ॥ ਤਿਸੁ ਸੇਵਕ ਕੇ ਕਾਰਜ ਰਾਸਿ ॥

(Sggs Pg. 286)

*One who sells his mind to the True Guru — his tasks are fulfilled.*



Gurpreet Singh GP (Bahrain) has varied interests and vast multicultural corporate management experience. Gurpreet Singh also created the 'Saakhi- Sikh History & Gurmat' mobile app, the first-ever audio-based app on short stories on Sikh History. He has written two thought provoking books in Punjabi, English & Hindi - ਸਿਖ ਦਾ ਇਕੋ ਵੈਰੀ , ਬਾਹਮਣਵਾਦ (Sole Enem180y of a Sikh, Brahmanism), And ਪੜੀਗਾਮੀ

ਸੰਕਿਆਂ ਤੋਂ ਸਿਰਜਣਾਤਮਕ ਪ੍ਰਸਨ ਵਲ (ਪ੍ਰਤਿਗਾਮੀ ਸੰਦੇਹ ਸੇ ਸੁਜਨਾਤਮਕ ਪ੍ਰਸ਼ਨ ਕੀ ਓਰ)।

More Details can be checked at his website: <https://www.sikhsaakhi.com/>

## ੴ - (Ik-Oan-kar) - Logogram on the Sikh Concept of God

DARSHAN SINGH BHAMRA\*

### Abstract:

"The Sikh symbol for Ik-Oan-Kar is widely reproduced. It is equally taken for granted, even overlooked by the uninformed, when it comes to a proper understanding of its meaning.

This article studies the meaning and public use of the logogram. It seeks and suggests an explanation of it, through the life of Guru Nanak (its creator), to present the fundamental message of the Sikhs.

To convey the Sikh faith better, the logogram could be transcribed publicly at Gurdwaras across the Sikh diaspora. This would provide enrichment for those of our own Sikh community, as well as the host nation."

The three Punjabi words are logograms arranged and connected to give the shape.

Thus, ੴ is often seen put on the external wall of a Gurdwara (Sikh temple). It is meant to be seen by all the visitors to the Gurdwara and the passerby by and also to know the divine message it carries from the Sikh Gurus. If it is just put there on the wall as is without any explanation, it has no meaning to the non-Gurmukhi readers or anybody else; the effort is futile. English is the language of the world; use it together with Punjabi to explain the logogram. Sikhism is the new religion of the world, founded by Guru Nanak (1469-1539), and the people wanted to know what it has brought that others have failed to achieve. Our youngsters are confused; they want to know exactly where the logogram has come from and what message it carries to the people of the other religions. This article will discuss these issues, and now that the Sikhs live in almost all the countries of the world, our youngsters must be fully equipped with the divine knowledge and the relevant Sikh history associated with it.

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\*E-mail : darshanbhamrauk@gmail.com

The logogram is the first part of the first Sikh Fundamental Statement on the concept of God produced and brought forward by Guru Nanak to the people of Sultanpur Lodhi in Punjab after enlightenment in 1499 AD. Guru Nanak, or Mystic Nanak, during his enlightenment, noticed that the explanation of God given by other religions was inadequate. His new statement describes God, as it should do, His nature, His character qualities, and His roles in man's life. It took its shape in Gurmukhi script as follows:

ੴ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੈ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥ ੧੦੫ ॥

**Transliteration:** - Ik oankaar sat naam kartaa purakh nirbhao nirvær akaal moorat ajooni saebhang gur parsaad.

**Translation:** - One Universal God, busy with the work of his creations (must be praised). His name is the Truth. Whatever he has created or is working on, he himself becomes a part of it. He is without fear, without hate or enmity. He is the Image of the Undying, beyond Birth, self-existent. He is the Guru, the Enlightener. He is full of gifts; men receive them through his grace and bounty.

It was indeed a big, bold step forward for Guru Nanak to bring it out amongst the different communities of India, which was ruled by the Mughals from Afghanistan, whose main task in India was to convert Hindus to Islam and loot Hindu temples for gold. Nanak had no fear from Mughals or Hindu authorities anymore; he boldly laid the foundation for the Sikh theology, and his followers began to call the statement the Mool-Mantra and assured them the Oneness of God, who is both transcendental and immanent, would encourage equality and create love among different communities of the town.

Considering only the logogram, ੴ read as Ik-Oan-Kar, of course, it does not tell much of God, but it is a good enough a bold starter of the Sikh religion. In fact, the Sikhs' holy book, Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji, begins with this statement. That is why the Sikhs put it on the wall of their Gurdwaras. The history of its formation, as I see it, began as this began this. Mystic Nanak, who was from Hindu parents, managed a government grain store in Sultanpur Lodhi, a Muslim town in Punjab, for some twelve years (1487-1499), when a group of Afghan Muslims falsely accused him of irregularities in the store. They wanted him out and the store to be managed by one of their own Muslim man. Nanak was shocked and realized, non-Muslims are called Kafirs -the infidels. The governor Daulat Khan, who knew Nanak well, had no way to save him; he had to lock him in a jail house for three days. The store was thoroughly

checked for inventory. The checkers informed the governor, the store was managed with utmost care, and there is nothing to talk about mismanagement and laundering food from the store, as it would knock down the truthfulness in Nanak. Nanak is a man of God, Bhai Mardana and Bhai Bala are his two colleagues and companions from their young age, and they helped him in the store management. The governor apologized, praised, and thanked Nanak for he himself was saved too. Nanak was released and asked to carry on with his work at the store as usual, but Nanak had something else to ponder on!

Nanak, being temporarily out of work and doing his usual morning walk by the river, came to his favourite resting place. The owner of the land knew Nanak well. Nanak sat and thought hard of his family, his job, his anger at the inequality of men, and shortcomings in the preaching of their religious ethos. He also thought of the adversaries and the task of how to bring the Hindu and Muslim communities together. With these thoughts in his mind, he took off his clothes and dived in the river, and as the history says, Nanak disappeared and stayed out of sight for three days. We learnt later that Nanak was with God, he got enlightened, he was told what he should do, such a work which brings peace and a harmonious situation in the country, and that he has the support of the Almighty.

As mentioned above, Nanak was not happy with the way the Muslim and Hindu communities were carrying on with their lives. He noticed the majority of people were not truly religious and that they needed to be preached to. Nanak regarded God as his spiritual teacher and that he must obey and carry on as intended and guided by him.

ਅਪਰਿਪਰ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਨ ਪਰਮੇਸਰੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਸੋਈ ਜੀਉ ॥੫॥੧੧॥ (SGGS Pg.599)

*aparanpar paarabraham paramesar naanak gur miliaa soiee jeeau ||5||11||*

Nanak says, "God is the Infinite, Transcendent Lord, the Supreme God, and I have obtained him as my Guru." -

Coming back to our discussion on the logogram 1k-Oan- Kar with respect to its arrangement and interpretation, my views are as follows. Guru Nanak noticed that the Hindu word "Om" or "a-u-m" for God has already been changed to "Onkar".

ਓਂਕਾਰ ਆਦਿ ਮੈ ਜਾਨਾ ॥ ਲਿਖ ਅਰੁ ਮੇਟੈ ਤਾਹਿ ਨ ਮਾਨਾ॥ (SGGS Pg.340)

*oankaar aadh mai jaanaa ||likh ar me Tai taeh na maanaa ||*

I know only the One, the Universal Creator, the Primal Being. I do not believe in anyone whom the Lord writes (creates into being) and erases (destroys).

For the same reason, Guru Nanak did not want to use the word “Om” in his logogram. Because the three-syllable sounds of “Om” or “aum” are further assumed by Hindus to represent the trinity of God Brahma, Brahma-the creator; Vishnu- the sustainer, and Shiva-the destroyer. God can only be one. You cannot have a Hindu God different from a Muslim God or vice versa. So, to clear confusion, Guru Nanak prefixed with number one (Ik), so that it says, God is One for ALL.

Ik. ----The number one symbolizes the importance of the belief in the oneness of God and the oneness of humanity (the belief that everyone is equal)

ਏਕੋ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਵਰਤੈ ਸਭ ਲੋਈ ॥ ਏਕਸੁ ਤੇ ਸਭ ਓਪਤਿ ਹੋਈ ॥੭॥  
 eko hukam varatai sabh loiee || ekas te sabh opat hoiee ||7||

The Command of the One Lord prevails throughout all the worlds. From the One, all have arisen.

Oan ---- “Oan” is God, and the word is taken as a derivative from the word “Om,” God is defined as follows:

ਵਡੇ ਕੀਆ ਵਡਿਆਈਆ ਕਿਛੁ ਕਹਣਾ ਕਹਣੁ ਨ ਜਾਇ ॥  
 ਸੋ ਕਰਤਾ ਕਾਦਰ ਕਰੀਮੁ ਦੇ ਜੀਆ ਰਿਜਕੁ ਸੰਬਾਹਿ ॥  
 vadde keeaa vaddiaaieeaa kichh kahanaa kahan na jai ||  
 so karataa kaadhar kareem dhe jeeaa rijak sa(n)baeh ||

The description of the greatness of the Great Lord cannot be described. He is the Creator, the Almighty, and the Beneficent One who provides sustenance to all living beings.

Kar----refers to God’s work and gifts; it is defined as follows:

ਕਰਿ ਕਰਿ ਵੇਖੈ ਸਿਰਜਣਹਾਰੁ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਚੇ ਕੀ ਸਾਚੀ ਕਾਰ ॥  
 karkar vekhai sirajanahaar|| naanak sache kee saachee kaar||

Having created the creation, the Creator Lord watches over it. O Nanak, True He is, True are His works.

Putting the meaning of all three words together, we can easily tell what the logogram says.

I will say this: “There is but one God, he is the Creator, the Almighty, and the Beneficent’s One who provides sustenance to all living beings. More so, He is always busy working for His creations.” Summarizing it further, or my guesswork from all the words in the Mool Mantra, leads me to say this:

“We should always meditate on Him for His grace and bounty”.

Finally, I might as well quote an incident which happened when an English-speaking person came to see one of our newly built Gurdwaras in London. The guide from the Gurdwara spent one hour explaining how the food in the langar hall was prepared and served. He had no time to tell anything about the teachings of the Gurus and the Sikh faith, except to show him the prayer hall. In the circumstances, a big write-up of Mool Mantar with an English translation would have helped him a lot, but none of the Gurdwaras I visited have this. Similarly, the logogram on the wall of all Gurdwaras, wherever they may be located, should be explained. One of the write-ups, I think, could take up the shape as follows:

ੴ -There is but One God; meditate on His grace and greatness. Says Guru Nanak

A part of the interpretation is derived from Nanak's saying on page 2.

ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਵੇਲਾ ਸਚੁ ਨਾਉ ਵਡਿਆਈ ਵੀਚਾਰੁ ॥ ( SGGS PG.02)

*amrit velaa sach naau vaddiaaiee veechaar||*

In the (Amrit Vaylaa), the ambrosial hours before dawn, chant the True Name, and contemplate His Glorious Greatness.

To end the article, I might as well let the readers ponder my observation. On the three walls of a Gurdwara in Southall, UK, everybody sees this written in bold letters:

ੴ (the logogram)

Gurdwara Siri Guru Singh Sabha Southall (written in Gurmukhi)

Gurdwara Siri Guru Singh Sabha (written as is in English)

If I may express my view on this Punjabi and English write-up I will say. To the non-reader of Gurmukhi or our youngsters and the British public, the logogram and the first line in Gurmukhi mean nothing to them. It has very badly missed Guru Nanak's divine message on the concept of God to the British public. England is a Christian country, but we have to be truthful, and they do not mind this. More so, they know the Sikhs very well. They fought with them in the two wars. The second line in English to the British community is superfluous; it just shows ego to the Sikh community. The write-up is on the wall of the Gurdwara, which we assume would be something divine, and the people with authority should have known this and had it explained in the language of the people.

The end, deluded by doubts, I have always had to ponder on.



## Princess Bamba Duleep Singh – the enigmatic heiress.

**The Last Torchbearer of the Legacy of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.**

**KBS SIDHU AND HS VIRK\***

### Abstract

This paper describes the story of the enigmatic Sikh princess, Bamba Duleep Singh, who was a rebel by nature and preferred to live in Lahore (instead of London), the capital of the Khalsa Raj of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, her grandfather. She was the longest living offspring of Maharaja Duleep Singh, who was deported to England and converted to Christianity. The authors discuss his marriage to Bamba Müller, the life and legacy of Princess Bamba, and her contribution to building a museum of rare artifacts of Darbar-e-Khalsa in Lahore Fort.

### **The Maharaja and an Egyptian Damsel: An Unexpected Union**

Maharaja Duleep Singh, the youngest progeny of the indomitable Maharaja Ranjit Singh, has had an everlasting imprint on the annals of Sikh history. His youth was entangled with the political designs of the British East India Company, culminating in the Punjab's annexation post the Second Anglo-Sikh War of 1849. Stripped from his cultural tapestry and coerced into Christianity, the British took him under their tutelage. His destiny intersected with Bamba Müller's—an exotic damsel—in Cairo, while he was enroute from India post his mother's ash immersion. This lady, sired by Ludwig Müller, a German banker, and Sofia, of Abyssinian (Ethiopian) descent, would soon adorn the title of his wife. Their intertwining fates became an emblem of history's unforeseen trajectories.

\*Ex-Special Chief Secretary, Govt. of Punjab, Chandigarh. E-mail: [kbs.sidhu@gmail.com](mailto:kbs.sidhu@gmail.com) and Professor of Eminence (Hon.), SGGS World University, Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab E-mail: [hardevsingh.virk@gmail.com](mailto:hardevsingh.virk@gmail.com)

The English authority that ruled over Cairo did not recognize Jewish marriages. Duleep brought Bamba back to England with his wife as he was deeply impressed by her piety, beauty, and reserve. Queen Victoria had unsuccessfully tried to persuade Duleep to marry a princess of Coorg (known as Kodagu in present day Karnataka), a Christian convert, who was kidnapped from India in the same way as Duleep Singh. Duleep Singh and the son of Queen Victoria, future King Edward, were best friends. Both enjoyed hunting and dining parties. Princess Bamba was a great favourite of King Edward, who was a frequent visitor to their home, Elveden Hall. When Bamba and her siblings became orphans, King Edward arranged for their life support and education in London through Arthur Oliphant, whose father was Duleep's trusted and loyal equerry. Bamba was intelligent as a student. She joined Somerville College, Oxford, and then went to the United States to study at Northwestern University Women's Medical School in Chicago. She completed three years of medical education with distinction till the university closed the school for reasons unknown. Bamba opted to return to Lahore instead of living in London.

Born on a crisp September day in 1869 in London, Princess Bamba made her entrance as the eldest daughter of Maharaja Duleep Singh. Christened Bamba Sofia Jindan Daleep Singh, her name was a testament to both her maternal and paternal roots, embodying a bridge between the old and the new. Among several siblings, Bamba held a unique position. As time unfurled, while her siblings assimilated into the English nobility, Bamba, the elder sentinel, outlived them all. Sophia, her sister, often steals the limelight for her fierce activism in the British suffragette movement. Yet, Bamba's bearing, reflecting the intricate weave of their Sikh ancestry against the backdrop of a transforming Indian subcontinent, remains an understated chapter.

### **A Life Divided Between Two Worlds**

Upon her decision to venture to India, Princess Bamba felt the need for a dependable female confidante and caretaker, prompting her to place an advertisement in a newspaper. Responding amongst a flurry of interested candidates was Marie Antoinette, a Hungarian aristocrat with formal training in music and opera. Their mutual journey wove their fates together, alternating between Lahore and Simla, the British Raj's summer haven. Through Bamba's intervention, Marie and Umrao Singh Shergill— a Jat Sikh aristocrat— crossed paths, a meeting that quickly culminated in marriage. They subsequently settled in Budapest, where, in 1913, they

welcomed their daughter, Amrita Sheri, destined to become one of India's pioneering artists.

Meanwhile, Princess Bamba felt a continual pull to her ancestral lands, frequently traveling between England and India. Bamba was a rebel who wanted to liberate India. It is a rumour that she wanted to settle in India after marriage with some Sikh prince of the cis-Sutlej states or some scion of Sikh aristocracy related to her grandfather. But she failed in her mission as Sikh rulers and Sikh aristocracy were afraid of British ire if they married Princess Bamba, a rebel to the British Raj in India. Ultimately, she married Doctor DW Sutherland, Principal of King Edward College, Lahore, in 1915. Dr. Sutherland moved to Scotland, but Princess Bamba refused to leave Lahore, citing love for the country of her ancestors. She was widowed in 1939 in Lahore.

### **Legacy of Princess Bamba**

Bamba Sutherland died on 10 March 1957, in Lahore, surrounded by her friends. She refused to leave Lahore despite the partition in 1947, as she was against the division of the country into India and Pakistan. She was a revolutionary, a suffragette, and beloved to the Sikh community. Before her death, she visited East Punjab and met Master Tara Singh, the Akali leader. She also paid obeisance at the Golden Temple, which was gilded by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, her grandfather.

Bamba Sutherland left a large quantity of important historical items to her secretary, Pir Karim Bakhsh Supra of Lahore, who gave them to the Pakistani government to be put on display publicly. The collection consists of eighteen paintings, fourteen watercolours, 22 paintings on ivory, and several photos and other articles. The collection was sold to the Pakistani government, and it is kept in Lahore Fort. During December 2024, I visited the Princess Bamba Collection in Maharani Jinda Haveli of Lahore Fort. It has original paintings of the Lahore Darbar of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Duleep Singh, and his mother, Maharani Jindan, as prized possessions.

'Gulzaar', the former residence of Princess Bamba Sutherland in Model Town, Lahore, has been demolished and sold. But I made it a point to visit her tomb in "Gora Kabristan" (Christian cemetery) on Jail Road, Lahore. The tombstone reads: "Here lies in eternal peace The Princess Bamba Sutherland, the eldest daughter of Maharaja DALEEP SINGH and grand-daughter of Maharaja RANJIT SINGH of Lahore". The

Persian inscription on her gravestone translates to: "The difference between royalty and servility vanishes, the moment the writing of destiny is encountered.

If one opens the grave, None would be able to discern rich from poor.



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## Secularism and Ethical Values in the Later Mughal Emperors and Sikh Kingdoms: A Comparative Study

### PART-I

DR DALVINDER SINGH GREWAL\*

The concept of secularism includes the separation of religion from politics, ensuring equal treatment to all religions, and not giving any special status to any particular religion. Among the Mughal rulers, if Akbar is known objectively, Aurangzeb, Bahadur Shah, and Farrukhsiyar are known for their religious fanaticism and bigotry, evidenced by their forced conversions from other religions in the lust for expansion of Islam, for which torture became their main weapon. In contrast, among the Sikh rulers, Banda Singh Bahadur and Maharaja Ranjit Singh ruled for eight years and forty years respectively, but their attitude was famous for secularism and high ethical values, which is discussed here. The later Mughal emperors ruled with religious intolerance and wanton cruelty, religious persecution, and brutal atrocities in the Mughal state against Hindus and non-Muslims.

#### Mughal emperor Aurangzeb

Among them, Emperor Aurangzeb is infamous in this regard. Aurangzeb destroyed idols and temples and carried out a campaign of forced Islamic conversions. Countless Hindu temples were deliberately destroyed during Aurangzeb's reign, notable among them the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi and the famous Keshav Deo Temple in Mathura. These acts of desecration were aimed at suppressing Hinduism and establishing Islamic dominance, which is a visible proof of intolerance.

In April 1669, Aurangzeb ordered the governors of all the provinces to demolish the schools and temples of the infidels and to put an end to their teachings and religious practices. Some religious events of Hindus were prohibited. The celebration of Holi was stopped by royal orders issued on 20 November 1606.[1]

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\*E-mail : [dalvinder45@yahoo.co.in](mailto:dalvinder45@yahoo.co.in)

"Yesterday, Yakka Taj Khan and Mimar Masons brought before the emperor the details of the temples built on the banks of the lake of Hira, Rana, and said that there is another lakeside temple at a distance of about 5 kos. This was reported when Ruhullah Khan and Ekkataz Khan went to demolish the ancient temple, one of the rarest buildings of the era, in front of the Rana's palace. "20 infidels were sitting in front of the temple, who were killed. Then we broke all the idols. It was the temple of Jagannath Rai, built by Maharana Jagat Singh in 1652".[2] The Kalka Temple, dedicated to Goddess Kali, is a very old temple from the time of Emperor Ashoka, outside Delhi (and today in front of Nehru Commercial Centre and Okhla Railway Station).[3] Records show that a large number of pilgrims used to come here, who used to come from as far as Maharashtra. Aurangzeb ordered its destruction on 3 September 1667. He (Aurangzeb) came to know that a large number of Hindus gathered at the Kalka temple near Baharpule. Syed Faulah Khan was therefore ordered by the emperor to send a hundred workers to demolish the Kalka temple and other infidel structures in the neighbouring area, the report of which came back to the emperor after nine days: Syed Faulah Khan reports that in compliance with his orders, the Kalka temple was demolished, and a Brahmin who opposed its destruction was also killed. Shortly after Aurangzeb's death, the Kalka temple was rebuilt, which still stands today. Here, it is also necessary to mention the order concerning the destruction of the Kashi Vishwanath temple: "According to the order of the emperor, his officials demolished the temple of Vishwanath at Kashi".[4,5]

### **Cruelty in the Mughal Empire**

Non-Muslims were persecuted. Those who resisted payment of the Jaziya tax on non-Muslims faced severe penalties and, in some cases, even death.

Forced conversions: Non-Muslim Hindus, Sikhs, and other religions were under constant threat of forced Islamic conversions. This practice reached its peak during the reign of Aurangzeb.

Violence against non-Muslim men: Non-Muslim men bore the brunt of the brutality perpetrated by the Mughals. Murder and rape were commonplace.

Murder: In the midst of religious conflicts and rebellions, the Mughal forces committed excessive murder of non-Muslims. One of the most tragic incidents occurred during the rebellion of the Jats in Mathura in 1669, where thousands of non-Muslim men were brutally slaughtered.

**Torture:** The Mughals carried out horrendous tortures to extract wealth from non-Muslims. The death penalty was the most common form of punishment. Sawing into two pieces, tying on the nailed spinning wheel, killing in boiling water, burning by wrapping cotton around and putting it on fire, burning on a hot iron plate, and putting hot sand on the head, etc. Punishments were also given by chopping bodies into pieces and hanging on poles in public places, blackening faces and then taking out in public places on elephants, camels, horses or donkeys, beheading with a sword, etc.

### **Abuse of non-Muslim women**

Non-Muslim women, especially Hindu and Sikh women, suffered greatly. They were subjected to forced marriages after abductions, enslavement and conquests, and invasions by the Mughals. They were sold for a pittance in Ghazni and Kandahar markets, where they were put through numerous humiliations.

**Abduction and captivity:** Non-Muslim women were often abducted and forced to live a life of captivity. They often endured sexual abuse and were then kept in constant fear of death.

**Forced Marriages:** Many non-Muslim women were forcibly married off to Mughal soldiers or elites against their will, leading them to a life of subjugation and misery.

### **Protest and rebellion**

Despite the suffocating oppression, some Hindu and non-Muslim communities displayed remarkable resilience in the face of Mughal oppression. Marathas, Sikhs, Rajputs, and others fought fierce battles for freedom, fiercely defending their faith and culture. That is why the Mughal administration continued to act more cruelly against these three.

### **Violence against Sikhs**

They inflicted the most atrocities on the Sikhs, which the Sikhs mention in their prayers: "Those who dwelled on God's Name, shared their honest earnings with others, wielded sword in battlefield, distributed food in companionship, offered their heads at the altar of Dharma, were cut up limb by limb, skinned alive, boiled or sawn alive, but did not utter a sigh nor faltered in their faith, kept the sanctity of their hair until their last breath, sacrificed their lives for the sanctity of Gurdwaras; remember their glorious deeds and utter O Khalsa Ji, Waheguru.

The Singhs and Kaurs who courted martyrdom in the cause of religion and underwent unspeakable sufferings of being dismembered alive, scalped alive, broken on the wheels, sawed alive and boiled alive and those who made sacrifices in the service of the centers of the Sikh religion the Gurdwaras; but never wavered in their faith and remained steadfast in the cause of Sikhi to the last hair of their body and to their last breath, O, revered members of the Khalsa order, concentrate your minds on the glorious deeds of those, and utter, glory to Waheguru. The example each of these atrocities are given here: ""making to sit on burning iron plate and putting hot sand on the head (Guru Arjan Dev Ji), dismembering alive (Bhai Mani Singh), scalped alive (Bhai Taru Singh) broken on the wheels, (Bhai Subegh Singh and Shahbaz Singh) sawed alive (Bhai Mati Das) boiled alive (Bhai Diyala Singh) setting fire after wrapping in cotton (Bhai Sati Das) dismembered heads hung at the public places, taking around public places with blackened faces on elephants, camels, horses and donkeys (700 Sikhs captured with Banda Singh Bahadur), dismembering son and forcing son's heart into father's mouth (Baba Banda Singh's son's heart was put in his mouth after dismembering it) and throwing children up and then piercing alive on spears (the children of singhnis at Lahore were pierced on spears after throwing in air. The children were dismembered, and their parts were sawn into necklaces and put around the necks of their mothers.

### **Atrocities against women**

Rape, enslavement, selling in the markets of Ghazni, Kandahar, keeping in long confinement, forcing the prisoners to grind 1.25 maund of wheat every day, keeping them in suffocating confinement, not giving them enough food and water for survival, etc.

The Masir-e-Alamgiri records: Shahjahanabad: In the 'Dasturul Insha' of Muhammad Khan Qalandar, the Yar of the Mughal Army, and in the fifth Ruka of Ruqate Aminudaulah, it is written that on the very day that the followers of Nanak received the punishment for their misdeeds, the royal order was issued that the beards of all the Hindu Sikhs of the imperial army should be cut and the order should be made public in all the provinces. Within days, this was announced in all the princely states. In the imperial camps, this order took the form that when the chiefs of the army took the barbers along, they would mercilessly shave the beard of anyone they saw in the streets and markets using the dirty water, and remove their turban and robe. Office

bearers and other Hindus, who worked in the offices of the emperor and the princes, used to remove their beards at their homes and come to present themselves in front of their masters. The exercise grew more and more intense as the emperor approached Dera Lahore and issued orders for preparations for the ceremony of enthronement. (Dr Ganda Singh: Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, p. 130-131)

In March 1748, Mir Mannu, as soon as he became the governor of Punjab, issued orders that a reward of ten Indian rupees would be given to the person who brought a Singh's head. Prizes were also given to those who gave information about the whereabouts of Sikhs and their families. He deployed army patrols to bring the Sikhs to the jail in Lahore, where they were beheaded and their families sent to jail. It is believed that 2.5 lakh (2,50,000) Sikh women and men, youth, elderly, and children were killed here. The women were made to grind in the jail. Sikh women were further subjected to untold atrocities and told to either convert to Islam or face persecution. They were starved, given only a quarter of a loaf of bread and a bowl of water throughout the day to survive. Crying children were killed by piercing them with spears, and their babies were cut into pieces and placed in their throats as garlands. But the Sikh women kept their religion and faith unwavering and did not surrender to Mir Mannu and did not leave their religion. Gurdwara Shaheed Ganj Singhania still reminds us of this.

According to Dr. Hari Ram Gupta, Guru Gobind Singh fought many battles during the Mughal Empire in which more than 5,000 newly baptised Khalsa were martyred. 25,000 Sikhs died fighting the Mughals under the leadership of Baba Banda Singh. After the martyrdom of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur and his 700 Sikh companions, Abdus Samad Khan, the governor of Punjab from 1713 to 1726, massacred at least 20,000 Sikhs. His son and successor, Zakariya Khan (1726-1745), was responsible for martyring 20,000 Sikhs. About 10,000 Sikhs were martyred during the campaign known as Chota Ghallughara by Yahya Khan (1746-1747). In 1747, Yahya Khan's brother Shah Nawaz Khan massacred about a thousand Sikhs. His brother-in-law Muin-ul-Mulk (1748-53) massacred about 30,000 Sikhs. All of these murderers were Central Asian Turks. In 1758, Adina Beg Khan Punjabi Arain killed at least 5,000 people. Between 1753 and 1767, Ahmad Shah Abdali and his Afghan governors martyred about 60,000 people. Abdali's deputy, Najib-ud-Daula, also killed about 20,000 Sikhs. Public and petty officials massacred 4,000 Sikhs. On February 5 and 6, 1762, the Sikhs martyred about 30,000 of their Sikhs in two days at Kup-Ruhira near

Malerkotla, also known as Wada Ghallughara. [6] About two lakh Sikhs were martyred during the Mughal period.

#### **At the time of Sikh rule**

On the contrary, when Baba Banda Singh Bahadur (1670-1716) came into power, and thereafter Maharaja Ranjit Singh sat on the throne, all this time belonged to the kingdom of humility, secularity, and high moral and ethical values.

#### **Baba Banda Singh Bahadur (1670-1716)**

Taking instructions from Guru Gobind Singh ji to fight against oppression, to protect the poor, and to teach a lesson to the oppressors, Baba Banda Singh Bahadur started his campaign from Nanded and reached the Bagad area of Punjab, from where State of Haryana is today. The people in that area were frequently looted by some dacoit gangs at the behest of the Mughals. Baba Banda Singh Bahadur defeated the robbers and distributed the spoils of his conquest and the other booty among the poor there. The local people thanked Baba Banda Singh Bahadur Ji. Baba Banda Singh Bahadur explained his mission given to him by the Guru himself. He told them that he had come to help them to remove the shackles of the slavery of the Mughals and be independent, punish them for their atrocities, stop oppression, help the poor, and provide them suitable livelihood. The villagers accorded him a warm welcome on his arrival. When news of the Guru's dispatch of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur reached the Punjab, groups of Singhs started joining him in large numbers. As per Guru's instructions, Baba Banda Singh Bahadur proceeded to relieve Punjab from the tyranny of Wazir Khan. On the route, he crossed the Muslim town of Shahabad, a notorious town known for raping women. Baba Banda Singh Bahadur punished all the criminals and got the abducted women released and sent them to their homes respectfully. There, Baba Banda Singh Bahadur was informed of the oppressive and immoral rule of Qadam-ud-din, the Zamindar of Kapuri. Qadam-ud-din was notorious for horrific acts of violence, kidnapping young girls, and oppressing Sikhs and Hindus. Angered by his notorious behaviour, Baba Banda Singh Bahadur immediately attacked Kapuri. After killing Kadamb-ud-din and capturing his fort, he collected a large amount of booty and war material.

Now his next target was Sadhaura, ruled by Usman Khan, a dictator who had killed the Muslim saint Syed Pir Budhu Shah for helping Guru Gobind Singh during the Battle of Bhangani. Even otherwise, he was perpetrator of a crime against Hindus. Usman Khan slaughtered cows in front of Hindu houses and prevented Hindus from

participating in religious ceremonies. The people there were fed up with the tyranny of the ruler, so they, along with the farmers, joined the brave man and marched towards the city together with him. This angry mob killed the opposing Sheikhs and Syeds before executing Usman Khan. After the capture of Sadaura, the city was liberated from the oppressive control of Osman Khan. All lands were owned by Osman Khan, and the farmers were provided only with food while he collected all the rest. Without distinction of religion, Baba Banda Singh Bahadur made all cultivators zamindars and owners of the lands on which they were just cultivators.[6] Advancing further, Baba Banda Singh Bahadur attacked and defeated Wazir Khan of Sirhind and Chapar Chhiri and took over the entire northern Punjab. He then ordered that all lands under his command be owned by the tillers and accordingly got authority letters issued. He controlled Punjab for about 7-8 years, bringing peace and prosperity in the region with equality and justice, maintaining high ethical values with a secular mind.

On April 1711, Rabi-ul-Awwal, Bhagwati Das Harkare's newsletter through Atishayula Khan, which came to the king's notice, stated that Nanak (Banda Singh) was in the town of Dera Kalanaur till the 1.9th of the month (April 26). He has promised and pledged that I am not hurting Muslims. Whichever Muslim turns to him, he (Banda Singh) takes care of him according to his daily wage and salary, and he is permitted to pray and recite the Khutba as he pleases. Five thousand Muslims have become his companions and are enjoying the Muslim religious call (baang) and namaz in the army of the Singhs. [7] (Ganda Singh, Banda Singh Bahadur, Sikh History Research Board, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Sri Amritsar 1964, p.122) □

**To be continued....**

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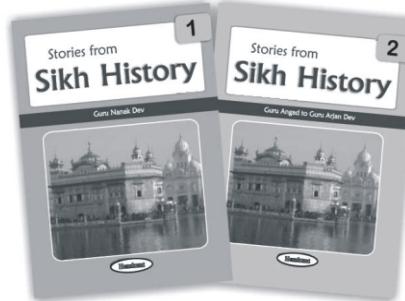
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## Redefining Sikh Identity: The Crisis Among Sikh Youth in the Digital Age

### PART-I

DR GURNAM SINGH AND DR JOGISHWAR SINGH\*

#### Introduction

This paper explores the silent yet pervasive identity crisis confronting Sikh youth in the modern world, particularly within the global Sikh diaspora. We define this crisis as a sustained condition of uncertainty and internal conflict regarding how Sikh faith, cultural heritage, and personal aspirations are integrated within contemporary social landscapes. It manifests in distancing from religious practice, confusion over cultural norms, ambivalence toward visible Sikh identity, and a search for belonging within non-Sikh value spaces.

Our argument is that this crisis can be understood only as the outcome of multifaceted social, economic, cultural, and institutional transformations. Key drivers include diasporic pressures and intergenerational gaps arising from ongoing migration, the homogenising influence of globalisation and consumer culture (including Bollywood's long-standing stereotyping of Sikhs), experiences of discrimination, processes of secularisation, and widespread language loss. At a deeper historical level, we witness the dislocation of the agrarian ethic and a vacuum of inspiring leadership within Sikh institutions. The consequences are profound, resulting in psychological distress, social withdrawal, weakened cultural transmission, and community fragmentation.

In terms of a way forward, we argue for a radical reimagination of Sikhi that balances the preservation of core ethics with the freedom for critical engagement. Alongside this, we propose practical measures such as creating safe exploratory spaces for intergenerational dialogue and radically reimagining parchaar to align with

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\*E-mail : jogishwarsingh@protonmail.com and Gurnam.singh.1@warwick.ac.uk

Guru Nanak's revolutionary, universalist vision, including confronting issues such as gender inequality, casteism, and the inclusion of minorities within the wider Sikh family. The challenge for Sikh leadership is straightforward: unless there is a genuine willingness to awaken from a long-standing state of denial and to recognise the profound sociological shifts caused by globalisation and digital culture, which will only intensify, there is little hope of arresting what is, for Sikhs, nothing short of an existential crisis.

### **The Nature of the Identity Crisis**

The identity crisis among Sikh youth resonates with Erik Erikson's framework of identity vs. role confusion, which constitutes a central psychosocial challenge of adolescence across modern societies (Erikson, 1968). Identity formation involves synthesising personal values, social expectations, and individual aspirations into a coherent self-concept. When this synthesis is disrupted, feelings of uncertainty, conflict, and disconnection emerge, aligning with Marcia's states of identity diffusion and moratorium (Marcia, 1966). Among diasporic Sikh youth, this crisis is compounded by the need to navigate hybrid identities—managing the tensions between the cultural norms of the “home” environment and those of the host society—resulting in forms of acculturative stress (Berry, 1997).

Jasjit Singh's (2012) research on young British Sikhs underscores how this negotiation often centres on religious nurture within the home, the role of extended family networks, and the influence of peer groups and social environments. His work illustrates that young Sikhs do not merely inherit religious identity; they actively negotiate it through selective participation, reinterpretation of tradition, and new forms of spiritual engagement, often shaped by the schooling environment and wider social attitudes toward visible Sikh identity.

An identity crisis, in this context, thus denotes a persistent sense of disorientation about what it means to be Sikh—how faith, culture, family expectations, physical appearance, and career ambitions cohere in a rapidly changing world. Among Sikh youth globally, the crisis manifests as:

- Distancing from religious practices

- Confusion regarding cultural norms (language, marriage, dress, food)
- Ambivalence about visible Sikh identity
- Conflict between familial expectations and personal choices
- Seeking belonging in peer groups or digital spaces detached from Sikh values

Traditionally, such crises were moderated through family, sangat, and local peer networks. However, contemporary transformations—especially digitalisation—have disrupted these structures.

### **The Digital Shift and the Attention Economy**

Digital culture has become one of the most significant forces shaping Sikh youth identity. Social media platforms are now primary arenas for identity construction and performance. Following Goffman's dramaturgical insights, these platforms encourage youth to cultivate idealised online personas, intensifying pressures of comparison, perfectionism, and conformity to globalised standards of beauty and success. This environment subordinates the ethics of Sikhi (kirt karo, vand chhako, seva) to aestheticized symbols. For many young Sikhs, identity becomes a consumable performance: stylised turbans, flags, weaponry, and tattoo motifs circulate widely as digital markers of belonging. Yet these often lack the depth to sustain identity during conflict or crisis.

### **Erosion of Traditional Solidarity**

Online sangat facilitated through platforms such as Basics of Sikhi and various diaspora-focused influencers has created new, digitally mediated spaces for religious learning, identity work, and communal connection. While these environments broaden access and empower individuals—particularly younger generations—the shift from congregational participation to online engagement also introduces several challenges.

First, it can result in fragmentation by displacing or diminishing participation in embodied, place-based community life, weakening traditional forms of collective practice.

Second, platform algorithms tend to privilege emotionally charged or ideologically rigid content, encouraging the formation of siloed interpretive communities and limiting

exposure to diverse perspectives within the panth. An associated danger here is the promotion of cultism, especially where such platforms are dominated by charismatic individuals.

Third, the visibility of Sikh identities online renders communities vulnerable to coordinated misinformation campaigns, targeted hate, and other forms of digital antagonism that distort discourse and undermine communal cohesion.

Taken together, these dynamics illustrate how digital cultures are reshaping Sikh identity formation as a transnational, contested, and deeply mediated process—one in which authority, belonging, and meaning are continually negotiated across both physical and virtual domains.

### **Migration and Diasporic Pressures**

Sikh youth navigating multiple cultural worlds encounter tensions between parental expectations and the norms of host societies. Parents, often shaped by radically different social realities, may fail to grasp the complexities their children face in Western contexts. Unrealistic expectations fuelled by social media, exploitative travel agents, fragmented labour markets, and misleading narratives from settled relatives contribute to disillusionment, sometimes pushing youth toward harmful behaviours.

Scholarship from *Young Sikhs in a Global World* (Jacobsen & Myrvold, 2011) shows that second-generation Sikhs interpret and negotiate these pressures dynamically. The contributors highlight the central role of family, home-based religious nurture, and community institutions in shaping identity. They also reveal that youth often deploy strategic agency—adopting, resisting, or modifying inherited traditions—to balance cultural expectations with global opportunities.

### **Globalisation, Media, and Consumer Culture**

Global media normalise lifestyles and aesthetics incompatible with traditional Sikh identity markers such as unshorn hair and turbans. Bollywood's historic mockery of Sikhs has substantially eroded the self-esteem associated with visible identity. Although portrayals have improved in recent years, superficial

representation persists, with Sikh characters frequently played by non-Sikh actors. This has contributed to shifting partner preferences and internalised stigma.

### **Discrimination and Safety Concerns**

Visible Sikhs continue to experience xenophobia, misidentification, and post-9/11 backlash. The memory of state-sanctioned violence against Sikhs in India (notably 1984) deepens fear and may push some toward concealing identity. Human vulnerability in the face of violence intersects with the Sikh tradition of martyrdom, creating emotional contradictions for youth navigating personal safety and communal ideals.

### **Secularisation and Changing Religious Practice**

Global trends of secularisation have reshaped religious commitment across many traditions. Among Sikh youth, this manifests as cultural 'Sikhness' without ritual observance, questioning of doctrine, and detachment from institutional authority. Sikh teachings, which challenge priestly control, ritualism, and superstition, pose a threat to entrenched religious hierarchies across traditions. This has historically spurred attempts to dilute Sikh distinctiveness through fabricated texts and ritual assimilation.

### **Family Dynamics and Intergenerational Gaps**

The weakening of extended family structures, accelerating urbanisation, and individualised lifestyles have disrupted traditional pathways of identity transmission. Values once embodied through communal living, seva, agrarian labour, and collective decision-making have diminished. Youth now seek meaning in isolation, disconnected from the moral frameworks that once grounded Sikh life.

Research by Jasjit Singh (2012) further shows that religious nurture is inconsistent, with young Sikhs often lacking structured guidance and relying on individualised exploration. This can both empower and destabilise identity formation, increasing confusion when institutional support is weak.

### **Education and Absence of Relevant Civic Spaces**

Schools and universities rarely incorporate Sikh history or culture, leaving Sikh youth feeling invisible in civic life. The aspirational imagery of Western success, amplified by social media, reinforces migration dreams and a symbolic detachment

from Punjab. Education systems in both Punjab and the diaspora often fail to cultivate intellectual depth, critical engagement, or Sikh ethical literacy.

### **Language Loss**

Punjabi and Gurmukhi proficiency continues to decline. This loss severs youth from the linguistic medium of Sikh scripture and cultural wisdom. Translation-heavy engagement is vulnerable to distortion, and parental neglect of Punjabi in the home exacerbates this disconnection.

### **Mental Health and Developmental Pressures**

Identity formation naturally induces anxiety during adolescence. In the Sikh case, this stress is intensified by the absence of meaningful role models and the persistence of ritualism. Many Sikh institutions—from the SGPC to local gurdwaras—remain bureaucratic, defensive, and ill-equipped to present Sikh philosophy as a vibrant, modern, universal path.

### **Dislocation of the Agrarian Ethic**

The erosion of Punjab's agrarian foundations—once central to Sikh ethical life—has devastated economic stability and social identity. Debt, environmental degradation, migration pressures, and farmer suicides have created deep moral despair, undermining the dignity historically associated with agrarian labour and its spiritual resonance.

### **Consequences**

The consequences of this identity crisis manifest across multiple levels of Sikh life. At a personal level, individuals may experience heightened psychological distress as they struggle to reconcile inherited traditions with contemporary pressures. This often feeds into patterns of social withdrawal, or conversely, into forms of high-risk assimilation in which young people distance themselves from visible markers of Sikh identity in pursuit of acceptance.

As these individual trajectories accumulate, they contribute to broader communal effects, the erosion of intergenerational transmission of language, cultural knowledge, and religious practice; the fragmentation of community structures that once provided

stability and coherence; and a gradual decline in the public visibility of Sikhs within pluralistic societies.

Ultimately, these shifts weaken the collective political voice of Sikh communities, whose ability to organise, advocate, and assert their rights depends on both cohesion and public presence. Such patterns are becoming increasingly evident across Sikh populations worldwide.



**To be continued....**

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## ਨਾ ਕੋ ਬੈਰੀ ਨਹੀ ਬਿਗਾਨਾ (Naa Ko Bairee Nehee Bigaanaa) The Whole Humanity Is My Friend

SOHAN SINGH\*

### Abstract

Cordelia Fine who has PhD in Psychology, writes; "Your brain is vainglorious, it deludes you. It is pig-headed, emotional. Oh, and it is also a bigot."

The aim of this Essay is to explore if we can turn our pig-headed and 'bigot' brain into a friendly one. A bigot is a narrow minded, prejudiced person.

### Introduction

It would be ideal if we could respect and extend the hand of friendship to everyone.

Sometimes we allow ourselves to become bitter and indulge in hate campaigns because of our experiences. To retaliate with hate and bitterness would do nothing but intensify the hate in the world. Along the way of life, someone must have enough of sense and morality to cut off the chain of hate. This can be done only by extending a hand of friendship and respect for the dignity of others.

Our effort should be through divine teachings- to eradicate all malice from our minds and look at everyone as our friend, as our own. We then, forsake all hate and bitterness as we do not see anyone as a stranger anymore.

Guru Arjan Sahib 's words of admonishment:

**Guru Arjan Sahib teaches us to befriend everyone, and not to see some as enemies and others as friends, when he says:**

ਬਿਸਰਿ ਗਈ ਸਭ ਤਾਤਿ ਪਰਾਈ ॥ ਜਬ ਤੇ ਸਾਧਸੰਗਤਿ ਮੋਹਿ ਪਾਈ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ॥

ਨਾ ਕੋ ਬੈਰੀ ਨਹੀ ਬਿਗਾਨਾ ਸਗਲ ਸੰਗਿ ਹਮ ਕਉ ਬਨਿ ਆਈ ॥੧॥

(SGGS pg. 1299)

\*E-mail: sohansinghsatnaam@gmail.com

*Bisar GAee Sabh Taat Paraaee .Jab Tae Saadhhhasangath Mohi Paaee*

*Naa Ko Bairee Nehee Bigaanaa Sagal Sang Ham Ko Ban Aaee ||*

**Translation:** I have forgotten all my jealousy of others since I have associated with virtuous people. No one is my enemy or a stranger now. I get along (fine) with everyone.

### TALK WITHOUT BAD INTENT

We can talk without any bad intent only if our minds/hearts are not harbouring any malice or bad intent. Teaching by Guru Angad Sahib elucidates this:

ਜੋ ਜੀਏ ਹੋਏ ਸੁ ਉਗਵੈ ਮੁਹ ਕਾ ਕਹਿਆ ਵਾਉ ॥

ਬੀਜੇ ਬਿਖੁ ਮੰਗੇ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਵੇਖਹੁ ਏਹੁ ਨਿਆਉ ॥੨॥

(SGGS pg. 474)

*Jo jee-é ho-éi so ugvai muh kaa kahi-aa vaa-o.*

*Beejaé bikh mangai amriti vaékhu éhu ni-aao.*

**Translation:** Whatever is in the mind, comes forth; -comes out-spoken words by themselves are just wind (Comes out through body language or Non-Verbal Communication-NVC). One sows seeds of poison yet expects/demands spiritual life-giving Nectar. Behold - what justice is this? -such a demand is unjust.

### Respect One and All

It is human nature to degrade those one sees as enemies or unfriendly people.

However, if we see everyone as of high status, and no one as low because of difference of opinion, we cannot be unfriendly, or hold grudges against them, for long. Guidance by Guru Nanak Dev Sahib:

ਸਭੁ ਕੇ ਉਚਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਨੀਚੁ ਨ ਦੀਸੈ ਕੋਇ ॥

ਇਕਨੈ ਭਾਂਡੇ ਸਾਜਿਐ ਇਕੁ ਚਾਨਣੁ ਤਿਹੁ ਲੋਇ ॥

(SGGS pg. 62)

*Sabh Ko Oochaa Aakheeai Neech N Dheesai Ko-ei.*

*Eikanai Bhaanddae Saajiai Eik Chaanan Thihu Lo-ei.*

**Translation:** Call everyone exalted; no one seems lowly- look upon everyone as of high status. The One Creator has fashioned all the vessels- created all the creatures, and His One Light/ Spirit pervades the three worlds- everywhere.

### Patience and Forbearance

Forbearance is the quality of being patient and being able to forgive someone or control yourself in a demanding situation. Teaching by Guru Arjan Sahib in Sukhmanee Sahib:

ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਕੈ ਧੀਰਜੁ ਏਕ ॥  
ਜਿਉ ਬਸੁਧਾ ਕੋਊ ਖੋਦੈ ਕੋਊ ਚੰਦਨ ਲੇਪ ॥

(SGGS pg. 272)

*Breham Giaanee Kai Dhheeraj aek.  
Jio Basudhhaa Koo Khodhai Koo Chandhan Laep.*

**Translation:** One who has knowledge of the Divine – Breham Giaanee- has a steady patience/ tolerance. Like the earth, which is dug up by one, and coated with sandal paste -with fragrance by another-the earth is not perturbed.

**Message:** Learn a lesson from the earth regarding patience/ tolerance and endeavour to be like a Breham Gianee.

### Change the Perception

There is a saying by Epictetus, a Stoic philosopher that is often quoted by psychologists and psychiatrists in their writings: “People are not disturbed by things (events, situations), but by their opinions about them.”

Derived from the above quote, is the current use of the term – ‘Perception.’ Perception is how we see and understand what occurs around us - and what we decide those events will mean. Our perception can be a source of strength or of great weakness.

We can see somebody as an enemy or change our perception and see the same person as a friend.

A wise person has said that: “A mind is like a bank. You withdraw what you deposit.”

Good analogy of the mind being a -bank. An ideal way to act on it would be to refrain from entertaining any negative thoughts about others, (do not deposit any negative feelings, impulses), and the outcome could be that you will see everyone as a friend. From the bank i.e. mind-withdraw unconditional regard for all.

Why not think like a Breham-Giaanee- One who has knowledge of the Divine- and be like the earth?

Even if someone digs the earth, the earth does not hold any grudge against that person.

### **Do not Entertain Negativity**

Negativity is a learned behaviour, and because of it, consciously or without being aware, we could be harbouring resentments, anger, and grudges against others. It is worth remembering that the past is a place of learning, not for living.

Do no live in the past implies -that we learn from our mistakes and move on with life, and not keep grudges, resentments, and negative emotions stored in our minds-like deposits in a bank. To ensure that we do not harbour any grudges, we need to cleanse our minds.

Exhortation by Guru Arjan Sahib:

ਮਨ ਅਪੁਨੇ ਤੇ ਬੁਰਾ ਮਿਟਾਨਾ ॥

ਪੇਖੇ ਸਗਲ ਸਿਸਟ ਸਾਜਨਾ ॥

(SGGS pg 266)

*Munn Apunae Thae Buraa Mittaanaa.*

*Paekhai Sagal Srisatt Saajanaa.*

**Translation:** One who eradicates malice from within his or her own mind. - withdraws negative emotions from the mind /bank. Looks upon the whole existence as his or her friend-deposits affection and unconditional regard towards all in the mind/bank.

This requires us to live in the present moment and be aware of our habitual thoughts with an aim to refine them. If automatic negative thoughts crop up in the mind, do not give them any air, slowly they will fade. Or consciously change your perception of the person, or situation.

### **Endeavour to be a Better Person**

Good or bad judgements are made by our mind; so, if possible, refrain from forming bad or negative judgements- or perceptions- of others, if you want to keep your inner peace and not sully your pristine nature.

ਦਾਨਸਬੰਦੁ ਸੋਈ ਦਿਲਿ ਧੋਵੈ ॥  
*Daanasband soee dil dhovai.*

(SGGS pg 662)

**Translation:** One who cleanses his or her mind / heart (of impurity) is wise.

Epictetus, a Greek philosopher, asks us to 'renounce externals and attend instead to our own character, cultivating it and perfecting it so that it agrees with nature, making it honest and trustworthy, elevated, free.' Epictetus. p.8

Guru Arjan Sahib calls a person who eradicates evil (negative judgements or perceptions of others) from within, a 'warrior' and explicitly asks us to get rid of negative thoughts and evil intentions:

ਬੀਰਾ ਆਪਨ ਬੁਰਾ ਮਿਟਾਵੈ ॥ ਤਾਹੂ ਬੁਰਾ ਨਿਕਟਿ ਨਹੀ ਆਵੈ ॥  
 ਬਾਧਿਓ ਆਪਨ ਹਉ ਹਉ ਬੰਧਾ ॥ ਦੋਸੁ ਦੇਤ ਆਗਹ ਕਉ ਅੰਧਾ ॥  
 (SGGS pg 258)

*Beeraa aapan buraa mittaavai. Taahoo buraa nikatt nehee aavai  
 Baadhiou aapan hau hau bandhaa. Dos daet aageh kau andhaa.*

**Translation:** One who eradicates evil from within is a brave warrior -becomes good natured and as a consequence- evil does not come near him or her.

Humans are trapped in their own ego-self-importance, and self-centredness- and being trapped in their own ego, place blame on others.

### Conclusion

To be able to see everyone as a friend, we need to perfect our own selves regularly. This requires us to work to refine our habitual thoughts, and work to clamp down on destructive impulses.

Each one of us can have Inner Peace, and collectively, have Peace in the world if we perceive everyone as a friend and by extension, the whole humanity as a family. This requires us to practise Guru Arjan Sahib's exhortation -no one is a stranger; no one is an enemy...

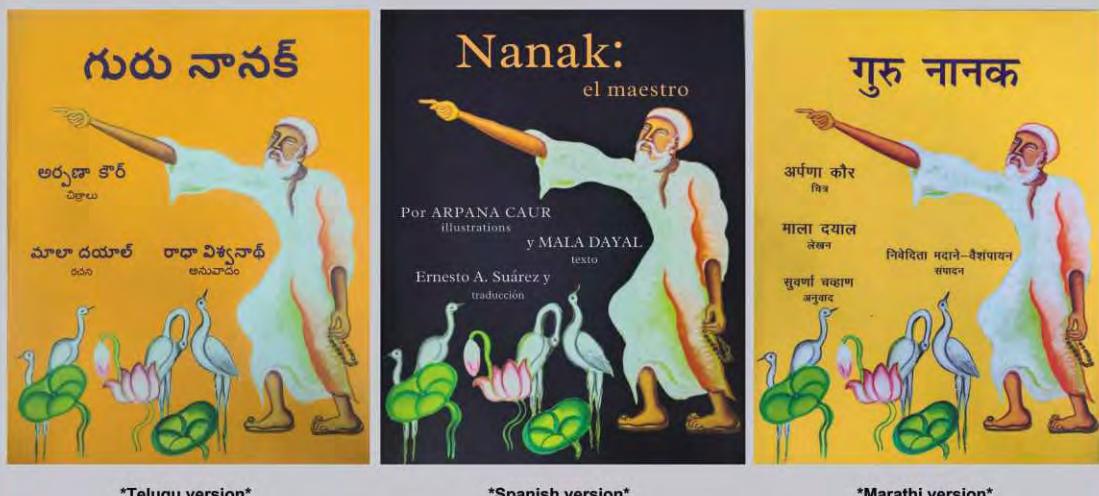
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1. Cordelia Fine, *A Mind of its Own*
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## The Sikh Cultural Centre - The Sikh Review

*Guru Nanak Dev Ji's ideology centered on the oneness of God, equality of all humans regardless of caste, creed, or gender, and the importance of earning an honest living, sharing with others, and meditating on the divine name to achieve spiritual liberation.*

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, Telugu, 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.



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### The Sikh Cultural Centre, The Sikh Review

116, Karnani Mansion, 1st floor, 25A, Park Street, Kolkata - 700 016

Email: [sikhreview@gmail.com](mailto:sikhreview@gmail.com)

Phone No.: 033-22299656 / 033-45050980, Mobile: +91 93310 35297/91477 15610/99037 01011

### The Sikh Cultural Centre, Delhi Chapter Partap Singh DIG (Retd)

C-1/1366, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi-110070

Email: [partapsingh011@gmail.com](mailto:partapsingh011@gmail.com) Mobile: +91 93132 90538/+91-11-47562755

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## **Baru Sahib: The Harmony of Education, Spiritual Enlightenment and Eternal Peace - Reflections from an Inspirational Visit and a Soulful Diary.”**

**PROF. (DR.) MANDEEP KAUR KOCHAR\***

### **Abstract:**

This reflective diary captures an inspirational visit to Baru Sahib, Himachal Pradesh, an institution where spiritual enlightenment harmoniously blends with modern education. Rooted in the visionary legacy of Sant Baba Attar Singh Ji and nurtured through the Kalgidhar Trust, Baru Sahib stands as a beacon of holistic learning and selfless service. The article highlights the unique integration of academic excellence, Gurmat values, and community welfare across Akal Academies and Eternal University. Through firsthand experiences with teachers, students, and soulful Gurubani recitals, the narrative reveals how spirituality cultivates discipline, compassion, and leadership. Emphasis is placed on women's empowerment, social transformation, and the spirit of 'Seva' embedded in daily life. Ultimately, the visit emerges as a journey of inner awakening, reaffirming education as a powerful tool for peace, purpose, and service to humanity.

My recent visit to Baru Sahib in Himachal Pradesh was nothing short of a grand experience, a super visit that left me inspired and spiritually uplifted. I had always been aware of Baru Sahib, its serenity, its spiritual legacy, and its academic contribution to the society. Somehow, I never found the opportunity to visit the place & know more about it in person. Yet, long before my physical journey began, a connection was already been formed. You all must have seen and heard very small children wearing white attire and playing 'Tantti Saaza walla kirtan', very pure heartwarming voices,

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\*E-mail: [mandeepkochar1982@gmail.com](mailto:mandeepkochar1982@gmail.com)

soul-stirring melodies that carry an innocence capable of silencing the mind and awakening the heart. It was through these divine connections that I first felt drawn towards Baru Sahib. Those young voices, guided by tradition and devotion, inspired me and my family deeply and planted a longing that words could not fully express. When I finally set foot in Baru Sahib, it felt less like a first visit and more like revisiting a place I had already known through sound, spirit, and inspiration.

Baru Sahib, widely known as the “Valley of Divine Peace,” brings together deep spirituality, modern education, and universal harmony in the serene foothills of the Himalayas. From the moment I arrived, I was struck by its calming atmosphere. Walking through the campus, I felt embraced by a sense of purpose and unity that seemed to echo from every corner of the valley.

It's a Historical Place of Meditation and Vision. Baru Sahib's story begins with the vision of Sant Baba Attar Singh Ji, who dreamt of a '*Himalayan Tapo Bhoomi*', a sacred land for meditation and education, where young minds would be trained in both spiritual and scientific knowledge. This vision became reality through his devoted disciple, Sant Teja Singh Ji, who formally founded Baru Sahib and the Kalgidhar Trust in 1956. What began as a simple ashram very soon expanded into a sprawling educational and spiritual campus. The Kalgidhar Trust started its first Akal Academy at Baru Sahib in 1986 with only five students. Baba Iqbal Singh ji, considered the modern torchbearer of this noble mission, has transformed the vision into reality by expanding Akal academies.

Today, it's an educational powerhouse, an International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary School, and a fully affiliated Cambridge & CBSE middle and high school. This expansion demonstrates the commitment to blending modern academics with spiritual values. During my visit on the 39th Foundation Day, I experienced firsthand how the children are encouraged to grow intellectually and morally, guided by compassionate teachers who inspire their curiosity.

The Eternal University at Baru Sahib, established in 2008, is educating girls with Higher education and empowering them with a mission to serve society. The university

offers undergraduate, postgraduate, and PhD programs in fields ranging from engineering to public health. Walking through the campus, I was deeply moved by how this place nurtures young women to become leaders, scholars, and compassionate professionals. The focus on women's empowerment beyond education makes Baru Sahib not just an institution but a movement for social transformation. The daily practice of martial arts for girls goes far beyond classroom teaching.

We noticed that the 'Kalgidhar Trust' manages hospitals, orphanages, homes for widows, spiritual academies for women, De-addiction Centers, and numerous charitable initiatives. When I visited the campus, I saw how deeply the idea of 'Seva' (selfless service) is woven into daily life practices. Whether it was witnessing community service by the children or speaking to staff involved in welfare programs, I felt the power of collective goodwill driving this entire place. This year, the contribution of 'Kalgidhar Trust' and their volunteers for supporting the farmers of Punjab (post floods) for rehabilitation and assurance was around the clock and commendable.

One of the most enriching aspects of my visit was listening to Gurubani sung by children and teachers at the Gurdwara. Their voices carried a deep love for spirituality and heritage. It was not just music; it was an expression of their inner peace, discipline, and faith. I joined them, even for a short while, in prayer and reflection; those moments will remain imprinted in my heart. The experience made me appreciate how spirituality nurtures strength and resilience in these young minds.

What truly made my visit super special was the bonding with the teachers and children, who are the 'Heart of Baru Sahib'. The in-service and pre-service teachers welcomed me with warmth and openly shared their experiences of nurturing students. I felt a sense of unity and shared purpose when interacting with the children, who displayed innocence, curiosity, and heartfelt devotion. Their enthusiasm during learning sessions and Gurubani recitals was contagious. Baru Sahib's unique approach merges spiritual teachings with modern education. Students receive conventional academic instruction, alongside moral teachings and Gurmat principles,

preparing them for leadership and service in the world. The focus here is not only academic excellence, but the cultivation of empathy, resilience, and purpose. During my stay, I could see how this balanced method fosters confidence and humility in students, shaping them into compassionate citizens. I genuinely enjoyed every moment spent among them.

The impact of Baru Sahib's mission radiates across Northern India. With over 130 Akal Academies serving around seven states, teaching 60,000 children, and hundreds of students from underprivileged backgrounds receiving free education, the institution has transformed countless lives. In addition, the Kalgidhar Trust's welfare efforts, including vocational training, healthcare, and community service, uplift families and rural communities. It's truly inspiring to see how a vision has grown into a resource of hope for so many.

As I left Baru Sahib, I carried with me not just memories, but a transformed mindset of commitment and assurance of a stronger attitude of service to society. The peace of the valley, the devotion of the children, the wisdom of the teachers, and the beauty of Gurbani re-designed my outlook and my experiences looped into something much deeper than a simple tour.

The values I witnessed, their humility, compassion, dedication, and inner peace, continue to inspire me. Truly, my visit to Baru Sahib was grand, and the lessons I learned echo in my heart, almost every day.

Almighty bless me with a stronger conviction to serve the society with compassion....Amen !!



**FOR BASIC KNOWLEDGE,  
BOLD COMMENT READ**

**The Sikh Review**

## The Mission Within: How Sahibzade's martyrdom Transformed Two Teens

DR. GURMANPREET KAUR\*

### Abstract:

This article explores the inner transformation of two modern teenagers, Gunjeet Kaur and Raman Singh, whose lives revolve around comfort, glamour, and impulsive self-expression. Their perspective shifts dramatically when their father guides them through the spiritual and historical legacy of the Sahibzaade, the young sons of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, whose martyrdom embodies courage, discipline, and unwavering values. Through reflective dialogue and teachings drawn from Gurbani, the siblings confront the emptiness of ego-driven living and discover the deeper meaning of fearlessness, surrender, and truthful living. The narrative illustrates how the Sahibzaade lived the essence of "Shabad marho phir jeevo, sad hi ta phir maran na hoee (ਸਬਦ ਮਰਹੁ ਫਿਰ ਜੀਵੁ ਸਦ ਹੀ ਤਾ ਫਿਰ ਮਰਣੁ ਨ ਹੋਈ ॥)" demonstrating that true life begins when the ego dies, and spiritual awareness awakens. By the end of their father's "mission within," the teens move from superficial thrill-seeking to a renewed understanding of purpose, self-discipline, and spiritual strength. This story highlights how Sikh history and Gurbani can guide contemporary youth toward inner awakening and value-based living.

Gunjeet Kaur and Raman Singh, precocious teen siblings born in a busy city, come from a renowned, luxurious family that is also enriched with the values of Sikhi. Siblings inhabited attitude like most of the budding teens: self-focused, rebellious, impulsive, emotional, unsteady, fragile, ego-centric, identity – based, but a transition come in their character when they learn about the life journey of Sahibzaade that a true teen strength isn't being reckless, impulsive or ego-driven heroism, but courage, discipline, sacrifice, and unwavering values.

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\*E-mail: gurmankaur926@gmail.com

The month of December was going by, and in this chilling weather, Gunjeet Kaur and Raman Singh insisted that Father plan a trip. But Father asked in a bit of a taunting way, Do you both by any chance have any plans to attend the Gurmat Samagam held at the nearby gurudwara? Do you know that the martyrdom days of Sahibzaade are beginning from tomorrow! In return, both reacted, Oh come on, Father, we know it, so what? Now you want us to spend our holidays by ending up in a gurudwara! No way! Father asked: Why not? What's the problem? I wonder why you guys don't have any issue when spending 3-4 hours in a theatre watching a damn movie in which nothing is real, not the character, not the story, everything is a mere imagination. Just a fantasy! Raman Singh replied: we enjoy it.

Father said: Then you guys should be afraid of yourselves that enjoy seeing fakeness. It's a threat to morality, I must say. Both replied: Everybody does, Father. The argument ends with Father being disheartened. To make his kids analyze the fact that to shape their teen life into productive, structured, peaceful, and fruitful, they must learn through the journey of young baba's rather than being a shallow follower. So, on the very next day, he asked his kids to be prepared for special-mysterious-night time – mission. Both Gunjeet Kaur and Raman Singh were excited to hear that, and the clock rotated to 10:0 pm, and the family gathered. The beginning takes place with Father asking Gunjeet Kaur,

Father: What is your perspective on life?

Raman Singh: Live life to the fullest. Do everything with no barriers, no limitations. To show off my success to people, flaunting my cool dude life. You know.

Father responded with a smiling face, asking the same question to Gunjeet Kaur, and her reply reflected a similar attitude, one life – eat, chill, have fun, party around, etc.

Father: Well. Actually, I'm in a dilemma. There is a thing which keeps on pounding in my brain, why Chaar sahibzaade, enriched with the successor throne, abundance of necessities, fulfilled with everything one aspires for, choose to sacrifice their life, accepted torture, harsh manhandling, tormented in brutal ways, even butchered like they were some sort of animals, still choose to stand firm for what? Where do people actually find ways to live when they are accepted to die at such a young age? What you got to say about that? Was it destined?

This made them speechless and bombarded with thoughts. Silence fell into the room.

Father continued explaining, know, why Sikhi is unique? Because it's the only spiritual path that maps your journey toward spiritual living.

You know what actually truthful living is? Or even why I'm emphasizing it? Because the life you wanna live, full of joy and glamour and money and fame, etc., only makes you ego-centric, fierce, inhumane, and a person without values, morality is living dead. These people have no idea that what happiness is?

Everything's a show-off, a flaunting. But if you really analyse that we get to live once and one should live a joyous life, then I will present to you how actually we are meant to live through the lens of Gurbani. Sahibzaade's journey of martyrdom is a living example to learn how to live. As teens, they showed the world that true bravery rises from a pure heart, not from years lived. In an age where teens seek role models, the Sahibzaade shine as eternal heroes – fearless, principled, and unwavering even in childhood. They teach us that even the smallest shoulders can carry the strongest courage. They teach us: How to live in awe of the Almighty. In Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji, it's written that,

ਜਿਸੁ ਪਿਆਰੇ ਸਿਉ ਨੇਹੁ ਤਿਸੁ ਆਗੈ ਮਰਿ ਚਲੀਐ ॥

ਧ੍ਰਿਗੁ ਜੀਵਣੁ ਸੰਸਾਰਿ ਤਾ ਕੈ ਪਾਛੈ ਜੀਵਣਾ ॥੨॥

(SGGS, Pg. 83)

Meanings: if your love for the divine is true, then surrender your ego, mind, fear, and attachments before him. Let the ego die, fear die, worries die. Walk fully surrendered with love and trust.

And how we will attain this position, for that, in Guru Granth Sahib ji, it is stated that

ਸਬਦਿ ਮਰਹੁ ਫਿਰਿ ਜੀਵਹੁ ਸਦ ਹੀ ਤਾ ਫਿਰਿ ਮਰਣੁ ਨ ਹੋਈ

(SGGS Pg. 604)

“Shabad marho” (ਸਬਦਿ ਮਰਹੁ) means let your ego, desires, and inner negativity die through the guidance of the Divine Word (Shabad/Gurbani). “Phir jeevo” (ਫਿਰਿ ਜੀਵਹੁ) means after this inner death, you gain a new spiritual life. “Sad he” means “forever” / “eternally”.

When one “dies” in the Shabad (ego dies and spiritual awareness awakens), there is no more death, meaning: No spiritual death, No rebirth, Freedom from the cycle of life and death, and Eternal union with the Divine. “Let your ego die through the Divine Word; then you are reborn into eternal life, and you will never suffer death again.”

The Sahibzaade: Sahibzada Ajit Singh, Jujhar Singh, Zorawar Singh, and Fateh Singh, perfectly lived the message of this Gurbani line. “Shabad marho” — Their ego and fear died in the Shabad. The Sahibzaade were raised in the Shabad of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, where Fearlessness, Truth, Dharma, and complete surrender to Waheguru were already part of their being. They did not act from ego or personal desire. They acted from Gurmat and divine obedience, which is the essence of “Shabad marna.” “Phir jeevo sadh he” (ਫਿਰ ਜੀਵੁ ਸਦ ਹੈ) — They gained eternal spiritual life. Their physical bodies were attacked, but they became spiritually immortal.

Sahibzada Ajit Singh and Sahibzada Jujhar Singh achieved martyrdom in battle at a young age. Sahibzada Zorawar Singh and Sahibzada Fateh Singh embraced martyrdom with unimaginable courage inside the cold walls of Sirhind. Their eternal life is remembered by the entire world — This is exactly what “jeevo sadh he” (ਜੀਵੁ ਸਦ ਹੈ) means. “Taa phir maran na hoye” (ਤਾ ਫਿਰ ਮਰਣ ਨ ਹੋਈ) — Such souls do not truly die. Their physical death was not the end. Gurbani says: Those who give up ego and live in the Shabad never truly die.

This is seen in the Sahibzaade: Their naam, valour. They stand for righteousness. Their sacrifice to guide generations. They are not remembered as victims — They are remembered as immortal warriors, Baba Banda Singh Bahadur's inspiration, the eternal sons of Khalsa Panth.

In this way, the Sahibzaade embody the Gurbani message that: True death is when the ego dies. True life is when the soul becomes one with the Divine. Such souls never die; they become eternal.

And second foremost thing, which one can learn from Baba's life is how to live fearlessly. The aforementioned facts map the route to the destination of becoming fearless. Bhagat Kabir ji says,

ਕਬੀਰ ਜਿਸੁ ਮਰਨੇ ਤੇ ਜਗੁ ਡਰੈ ਮੇਰੇ ਮਨਿ ਆਨੰਦੁ ॥

ਮਰਨੇ ਹੀ ਤੇ ਪਾਈਐ ਪੂਰਨੁ ਪਰਮਾਨੰਦੁ ॥੨੨॥

(SGGS, Pg. 1365)

“That death, which the world fears, brings joy to me.”

Why? Because this is not the death of the body — It is the death of: ego, fear, attachment, and ignorance. This “death” leads to freedom. So Kabir Ji is in bliss.

They all describe the same spiritual stage: When the ego dies, and a person becomes one with the Divine. Then physical death loses all meaning. This is why:

Gurbani says “taa phir maran na hoye” (ਤਾ ਫਿਰ ਮਰਣ ਨਾ ਹੋਈ) — no more death.

Sahibzaade showed in their lives that true warriors never die. Kabir Ji says the death the world fears gives the saint joy.

This is the stage of fearless bliss (Anand Avastha). The Sahibzaade reached the state that Kabir Ji describes: Their ego’s death happened before physical death. So when the moment of martyrdom came, the world saw “death.” But they experienced anand, meaning union with the Divine, fearlessness that rises from Shabad.

As the night grew deeper, so did the silence in the room. Gunjeet Kaur and Raman Singh, who only hours ago spoke about life as a playground of thrill, glamour, and impulse, now found themselves standing at the crossroads of their understanding. Their father had not scolded them, nor forced them toward devotion; he simply held up a mirror polished with the lives of the Sahibzaade, Gurbani, and eternal truth.

For the first time, they realized that being young is not equal to being careless, and being modern is not equal to being hollow. The Sahibzaade were their age, yet their hearts were mightier than armies, their minds sharper than swords, and their spirits unshakeable. They had everything the world runs after: comfort, status, privilege, yet they chose values over vanity, courage over comfort, sacrifice over selfishness.

The Gurbani teachings illuminated what true living means: To let the ego die so the soul can truly live; to fear not the end of the body but the death of conscience. To understand that the bravest are not those who break rules, but those who rise above themselves.

Gunjeet Kaur and Raman Singh understood that the real “mission” their father planned was not a journey outside, but a journey within. A journey from impulsiveness to awareness, from shallow thrill to purposeful strength, from ego-driven choices to value-driven living.

The Sahibzaade showed them that greatness doesn’t wait for age, and fearlessness doesn’t require experience; only requires a pure heart aligned with truth.

With softened eyes and humbled breaths, the teens finally felt what their father wanted them to feel: That life becomes meaningful not when we chase the world, but when we discover ourselves through the wisdom of our faith.

That night marked the moment they stepped out of childhood noise and into the light of understanding, carrying forward not just the story of the Sahibzaade but the very spirit of Sikhi that transforms, strengthens, and awakens. □

## Remembrance Day: Beyond the Poppy Honouring the Unfulfilled Promise to Sikh and Indian War Families

PROF. DR. LAKHINDER SINGH\*

### Abstract:

This article argues that while the United Kingdom has increasingly honoured Sikh and Indian soldiers through public memorials and ceremonial recognition on Remembrance Day, symbolic gestures alone remain insufficient. Over 1.5 million Indians in World War I and 2.5 million in World War II served the British Crown, with Sikh soldiers disproportionately represented on the front lines. Yet thousands of their families, especially rural widows, never received the pensions or support promised to them. The article calls for UK authorities, Indian-origin MPs, and the diaspora to pursue overdue justice through accessible pension pathways, outreach, and equitable compensation for these long-neglected war families.

### A Call for Justice and Accountability from the United Kingdom

Every year in November, the United Kingdom observes Remembrance Day and Remembrance Sunday, dedicating solemn remembrance to the Armed Forces members who have died in the line of duty since World War I. We are genuinely grateful that the British people and authorities have increasingly paid tribute to Sikh soldiers, culminating in the erection of statues across the UK in remembrance of Sikh sacrifices in both World Wars.

However, while this symbolic recognition is valued, the Sikh and Indian diaspora must ensure this honour extends fully and practically to the hundreds of thousands of soldiers from the subcontinent who paid the ultimate price.

The observance must move beyond symbolic tribute and social media posts, and reach into the concrete realm of justice, recognition, and financial support for the families whose loved ones fought and died for the Crown, but never came back.

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\*E-mail: [lakhinders@gmail.com](mailto:lakhinders@gmail.com)

The Unquantified Sacrifice: Defending the Line and the Silent Villages  
India's Staggering Contribution in Numbers  
**The scale and ferocity of the Indian contribution to both World Wars remain profoundly understated:**

- World War I: Over 1.5 million Indians served, with approximately 74,000 losing their lives.
- World War II: Over 2.5 million Indians served, forming the largest volunteer army in history, with over 87,000 fatalities.

Sikh soldiers, in particular, were heavily over represented in combat units, earning immense bravery awards and playing pivotal roles in theaters from the Western Front and Gallipoli to North Africa and Southeast Asia. Their loyalty and courage fundamentally altered the course of these conflicts.

#### **Historical Details: From Ypres to the Deserts of Africa**

Indian troops were often deployed to the most dangerous and strategically crucial fronts:

- The Western Front (1914-1915): The arrival of the Indian Corps in Europe was critical, and Sikh regiments were pivotal in defending the vulnerable Ypres Salient, effectively holding the line when British reserves were exhausted. Many young soldiers tragically perished in the muddy, cold trenches, suffering severely from the lack of suitable equipment and the experience required during European winters.
- Acts of Valour: Indian soldiers earned 13 Victoria Crosses (VC), the highest military award for gallantry in the First World War.
- Global Operations: Units fought globally, from the Middle East to the North Africa Campaign and the gruelling Burma Campaign.

The emotional impact of this service is still felt in the homeland. One can go into almost any remote village in Punjab and ask families to learn that almost from every family, some grandparents or great-uncles were gone in the World Wars, and they never came back. This widespread, yet unrecorded, loss demands attention.

#### **The Unfulfilled Promise: Lack of Awareness and Rural Access**

While the fallen were honoured by war memorials, the commitment to their immediate families often failed to materialize, particularly after 1947. Today, decades later, a significant issue persists: the pervasive lack of access and knowledge regarding due pension benefits and welfare funds.

1. **Geographic and Logistical Isolation:** The majority of these soldiers originated from remote, rural villages. These communities had virtually no access to official channels, government communications, or formal banking/pension structures necessary to lodge claims.
2. **Lack of Awareness and Literacy:** Many of the widows were illiterate and were simply never informed of the existence of war widows' funds or the complex bureaucratic steps required to claim them. Consequently, these families never asked for such benefits because they were uninformed and illiterate.
3. **Historical Inequity:** Concerns remain that the historical pension structures provided to Indian war widows were often not equivalent to those provided to widows of UK-born servicemen, even when adjusted for historical costs.

For many families, the sacrifice was total: They never came back, and the promised financial support never arrived, leaving them to face economic hardship in silence.

- **The Call to Action: A Job for Our Representatives**

Our remembrance cannot stop at symbolism. We must use this occasion to push for concrete systemic change.

We specifically request UK-based Indian Members of Parliament (MPs) and activists to work on this issue and carry out this job for poor families in India.

1. **Active Advocacy:** We must pressure the UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) and relevant governmental bodies to establish a clear, accessible, and unbureaucratic procedure for families in India to claim historical, outstanding pension benefits.
2. **Outreach and Research:** The diaspora should fund and support focused outreach initiatives in the specific rural regions of India from which these soldiers were recruited, informing the surviving elderly dependents of their legal rights.
3. **Equity Review:** Lobby for a full review to ensure that any outstanding pensions paid today are justly calculated to account for historical inflation and the true value of the sacrifice.

Remembrance Day is a moment for introspection. It is time we acknowledge that true honour requires more than symbolic recognition; it demands the fulfillment of the promises made to the families whose loved ones fought and died for the Crown, but never came back. □

## **Interview of Hazoori Ragi Bhai Sahib Sarabjeet Singh 'Laadi'**

**BHUPINDER SINGH\***

Bhai Sahib was in Houston in connection with the 2025 Guru Nanak Ji's Parkash Purab celebrations. This interview took place on November 09, 2025. The responses to the questions have been slightly edited for brevity, clarity, and better reading flow.

1. Q - How did your musical journey begin?

A – My musical journey started with my own family. Both of my parents were as well as grandparents were connected (as amateur singers) with devotional sacred music. So, at birth, when I opened my eyes, I heard music, Keertan compositions, and even witnessed musical ambience.

2. Q - Who were your biggest influences growing up?

A – My father was the earliest and the biggest influence on me. His name is Sardar Bakshish Singh. He was an Electrical Engineer, retired from the Punjab State Electricity Board.

3. Q - What was the first instrument you learned to play?

A – It was Tabla (percussion) and Harmonium. My first teacher was my father. Even my mother was an accomplished Keertan Singer and guided me as well.

4. Q - Tell me about your musical training?

A – I started learning Tabla from Ustad Tilak Raj in 1983. However, my formal musical training started in 1987 with Tabla Ustaad Bhajan Lal Srivastava. It was special training that I received from him.

5. Q - Was there a moment when you knew music would be your career?

A – I started learning vocal singing from Bhai Sahib Boota Singh Hanspal in 1988. After that, I learned vocal singing from Ustad Baldev Krishan. After training under

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\*E-mail: [singhbo@gmail.com](mailto:singhbo@gmail.com)

these two teachers, my father took me to Shiromani Raagi Bhai Balbir Singh for higher education in vocal singing. He trained me in several areas of singing, such as raagas, Gurbani, music compositions, and other aspects of singing, honing my skills for 22 years to become a complete Keertania. At his suggestion, I started taking education from Ustad Ravi Bali Ji as well in 1999. Simultaneously, I was learning from Bhai Sahib Balbir Singh Ji and Bali Ji. The musical learning journey continues. Listening to music is my hobby, and it has become an inevitable part of my life, without which I cannot be, what I am.

6. Q - How has your background shaped your music style?

A – My singing style has been influenced by many singers, as they have contributed to the evolution of my singing style. To name a few, as Ustad Gulam Ali (famous Gazal singer), Ustad Amir Khan, Pandit Bhim Sen Joshi, and Ustad Rashid Khan. In Tabla, Ustad Zakir Hussain and Ustad Abdul Sitar Tari have influenced me. All these people have influenced and shaped my singing style, and the following masters have also shaped my singing:

Bhai Samund Singh Ji

Bhai Bakshish Singh Ji

Bhai Harjinder Singh Srinagarwale.

I love listening to playback singers Lata Mangeshkar, Asha Bhonsle, Mohamad Rafi, Manna Dey, and Suman Kalyanpur. However, the contribution of my parents in taking me where I am today in the Keertan world cannot be expressed in words.

7. Q - Tell me about your experiences with Guru Nanak Dev Ji's unique path of singing to pass his spiritual message and bring about transformation within?

A – In Guru Nanak's unique method towards devotional worship, singing praises of the Almighty is the supreme method. In Indian traditions, there are nine (9) types of devotional worship, and Keertan is the finest form and at the top of these nine types.

This methodology involves conveying through Raagas and Gurbani simultaneously. It results in inner transformation towards the Almighty when we

connect singing with the praises of the Almighty. We experience an immersion in the Shabad, making us forget time and the “Flow.”

## 8. Q - Do you remember your first live performance?

A—Yes! I do it very vividly. I sang a shabad at the age of five (5). It is a Vaar by Bhai Gurdas, and the words were:

ਗਰ ਬੈਠਾ ਅਮਰ ਸਰਪ ਹੋਇ ਗਰਮਖਿ ਪਾਈ ਦਾਤਿ ਇਲਾਹੀ॥ (Bhai Gurdas Vaar 1,46)

“Guru Baithhaa Amar Saroop Hoi Guramukh Paaee Daathh illaahhee |.”

Translation: Having received the celestial gift from Guru Angad, the Guru, in the form of Amar Das, was seated.

I sang after my father had performed this Keertan.

9. Q - How has becoming the Keertania at Sri Harmander Sahib impacted your career?

A – Because of the “Mehima” of Sri Harmander Sahib and the sheer volume of devotional singing that has taken place here from the times of the Gurus, has permeated the atmosphere there. As a result, it has a significant impact on the emotional state of singers and the listeners as well, as both get emotionally elevated.

10. Q - When you are performing Keertan in Sri Harmander Sahib, how do you feel inside?

A – A feeling of immense blissfulness emanates from within. I also get a similar feeling when performing in front of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, as Keertan is food for the soul.

## 11. Q - What was your most memorable performance?

A—A performance becomes memorable when we connect with the Almighty along with the audience in front of us. It does not always happen. The transformation within is very sublime, with only a feeling of bliss remaining within; a sense of time and place disappears, as well as all our worries and concerns.

12. Q - What do you think about the role of music in improving the well-being of listeners?

A – In society, there are negative traits such as murder, rape, killing, loot, plunder, cheating, and others. But when people sing and listen, it makes that inner connection, they all experience inner transformation, becoming like the manifestation of the Almighty.

13. Q - What will be your advice be to the parents and children about the significance of music and Gurbani in life?

A – Parents should involve kids in Gurbani, Keertan, music, painting, and other forms of fine arts, as all these activities can enhance their personality development. The pressure from school and social media, plus electronic devices, is more ever-present now. But the distractions are there in the past and will be there in the future as well. However, those who become committed will definitely derive the benefits.

14. Q - How do you connect with your audience?

A – We, as a group, always aim for a superior performance according to Gur Marayada. We even try to fulfill the listeners' requests of reciting various Gurbani Shabads so they can really connect with them.

15. Q - How can Keertan relate to the younger generation?

A – We must make short clips or reels on lessons relating to – Gurbani, Raagas, Notations, Singing Practice, this is how we connect with Shabad and Gurbani. In addition, we must make efforts to connect with the youth through virtual media apps like Zoom and Facebook. However, the benefits will accrue to those in the future who:

Practice hard with perseverance and diligence.

Those endowed with musical inclination.

Blessed with Guru's Grace (Guru Dee Mehar).

Blessings of the elders and seasoned.

Thank you, Bhai Sahib Ji, for taking the time from your busy schedule to answer these questions. I am hoping that the deserving individuals will surely benefit from the guidance that you are sharing with me in the form of answers. □

## Water in the Spiritual Vision of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib: A Symbol of Life, Purity, and Divine Reality

DR JASBIR SINGH SARNA\*

### Abstract:

Water (ਪਾਣੀ) in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS) is not merely a physical necessity but a profound spiritual symbol reflecting the essence of Divine Reality. It signifies purity, humility, sustenance, and the mystical union of the soul with God. This study examines the theological, metaphysical, and ethical dimensions of water as portrayed in the SGGS. Drawing upon direct quotations from Gurbani and supported by Sikh scholars' interpretations, this paper explores how water emerges as a pivotal metaphor shaping Sikh spirituality, ecological consciousness, and devotional practice.

**Keywords:** Water, Gurbani, Sikh Theology, Spiritual Symbolism, Divine Grace, Ecology.

### Introduction

The Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS), the eternal Guru of the Sikhs, employs natural elements extensively to convey spiritual truths. Among these, pani (water) holds a special place, appearing in multiple contexts — cosmological, ethical, and mystical. Water is revered as a vital force of creation, a purifier of impurities, a metaphor for humility, and an image of the ultimate spiritual merger between the individual soul (jīv ātmā) and the Supreme Being (Paramātmā). As Dr. Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh observes, "Nature in the Sikh scripture is a manifestation of the Divine; its elements are not inanimate but are living presences revealing the Creator" (Singh, *The Feminine Principle in the Sikh Vision of the Transcendent*, 1993).

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\*E-mail: [jbsingh.801@gmail.com](mailto:jbsingh.801@gmail.com)

This paper systematically examines the multidimensional role of water in the SGGS, illustrating how water's physical, symbolic, and theological aspects enrich Sikh thought and practice.

## 1. Water as the Primordial Element of Creation

The SGGS presents a cosmology where water is integral part to the birth of life.

ਪਵਣੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਪਾਣੀ ਪਿਤਾ ਮਾਤਾ ਧਰਤਿ ਮਹਤੁ ॥

(SGGS Pg. 8)

Guru Nanak Sahib in Japji Sahib outlines the order of creation:

ਪਾਤਾਲਾ ਪਾਤਾਲ ਲਖ ਆਗਾਸਾ ਆਗਾਸ ॥ ਓੜਕ ਓੜਕ ਭਾਲਿ ਥਕੇ ਵੇਦ ਕਹਨਿ ਇਕ ਵਾਤ ॥ ਸਹਸ ਅਠਾਰਹ  
ਕਹਨਿ ਕਤੇਬਾ ਅਸੁਲੁ ਇਕੁ ਧਾਤ ॥ ਲੇਖਾ ਹੋਇ ਤ ਲਿਖੀਐ ਲੇਖੈ ਹੋਇ ਵਿਣਾਸ ॥

(SGGS Pg. 5)

Paataala paataal lakh aagaasaa aagaas.Orak orak bhaal thaké véd kahan ik vaat.Sahas athaarah kahan katébaa asuloo ik dhaat.Lékhaa hoé ta likeeæ lékhæ hoé viñaas

(There are nether worlds beneath nether worlds, and hundreds of thousands of heavenly worlds above.The Vedas say that you can search and search for them all, until you grow weary.The scriptures say that there are 18,000 worlds, but in reality, there is only One Universe. If you try to write an account of this, you will surely finish yourself before you finish writing it.)

The creation is founded upon air, water, and fire — fundamental elements woven together by the Divine's command (Hukam). Water, thus, is not a passive substance but an active agent in the Divine orchestration of the cosmos.

## 2. Water and the Divine Immanence

Water in Gurbani is not separate from the Divine but is an embodiment of God's immanent presence. The entire creation, like water itself, flows from and returns to the One:

ਆਪੇ ਆਪੁ ਉਪਾਏ ਪਤੀਨਾ ॥ ਆਪੇ ਪਉਣੁ ਪਾਣੀ ਬੈਸੰਤਰੁ ਆਪੇ ਮੇਲਿ ਮਿਲਾਈ ਹੇ ॥੩॥

(SGGS Pg. 1020)

Aapé aap upaaé pateenaa. Aapé paun paanee bæsantar aapé maile milaaee hé. ||3||

(You Yourself created the Universe, and You are pleased. You Yourself are the air, water and fire; You Yourself unite in Union. ||3||)

Such expressions highlight the Sikh theological principle of Ik Onkar — the unity and omnipresence of the Divine.

### 3. Water as a Metaphor for Purification and Inner Cleansing

While physical water cleanses external dirt, Gurbani stresses the need for Naam (Divine Name) to cleanse the mind and soul:

ਸਚੁ ਮਿਲੈ ਮੁਖਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਭਾਵਸੀ ॥

ਕਰਸਨਿ ਤਖਤਿ ਸਲਾਮੁ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਪਾਵਸੀ ॥੧॥

(SGGS Pg. 143)

Sach milae mukh naam sahib bhaavsee.

Karsan takhat salaam likhiaa paavsee. ||1||

(Those who attain the True Lord and chant His Name are pleasing to the Lord. They worship the Lord and bow at His Throne. They fulfill their preordained destiny. ||1||)

This analogy emphasizes that true purity is achieved through inner spiritual transformation, not mere ritualistic bathing.

### 4. Water as the Soul's Journey and Merging with the Divine

Gurbani frequently uses water imagery to describe the soul's longing for, and eventual union with, God:

ਜਲ ਤੇ ਉਠਹਿ ਅਨਿਕ ਤਰੰਗਾ ॥ ਕਨਿਕ ਭੂਖਨ ਕੀਨੇ ਬਹੁ ਰੰਗਾ ॥

ਬੀਜੁ ਬੀਜਿ ਦੇਖਿਓ ਬਹੁ ਪਰਕਾਰਾ ॥ ਫਲ ਪਾਕੇ ਤੇ ਏਕੰਕਾਰਾ ॥੨॥

(SGGS Pg. 736)

Jal té oothéh anik tarangaa. Kanik bhookhan keené baho rangaa.

Beej beej dékhio baho parkaaraa. Fal paaké té ékankaaraa. ||2||

(Countless waves rise up from the water. Jewels and ornaments of many different forms are fashioned from gold. I have seen seeds of all kinds being planted - when the fruit ripens, the seeds appear in the same form as the original. ||2||)

The impermanence of the individual self (tarang — wave) mirrors the ultimate dissolution into the eternal ocean of Divine consciousness.

## 5. Rain, Water, and the Gift of Divine Grace

Rainwater, nourishing and life-giving, symbolizes God's mercy (kirpa). Without this grace, the spiritual life withers:

ਬਿਨੁ ਪਾਣੀ ਡੁਬਿ ਮੂਦੇ ਅਭਾਗੇ ॥

ਚਲਦਿਆ ਘਰੁ ਦਰੁ ਨਦਰਿ ਨ ਆਵੈ ਜਮ ਦਰਿ ਬਾਧਾ ਦੁਖ ਪਾਇਦਾ ॥੧੩॥ (SGGS Pg. 1063)

Bin paanee dub mooé abhaagé.

Chaldiaa ghar dar nadar na aavæ jam dar baadhaa dukh paaidaa. ||13||

(The unfortunate people drown without water, and die. When they depart from the world, they do not find the Lord's door and home; bound and gagged at Death's door, they suffer with pain. ||13||)

Here, water is linked to the need for Divine nurture for spiritual growth — human effort (karam) must be accompanied by Divine benevolence.

## 6. The Ethical and Ecological Vision of Water

Guru Nanak's vision encourages living in harmony with nature. Water is seen not as an exploitable commodity but as sacred sustenance. Modern Sikh environmentalists draw upon this theology to advocate for water conservation and environmental justice.

Gurbani emphasizes the equality that water symbolizes:

ਨਾਲਿ ਇਆਣੇ ਦੋਸਤੀ ਵਡਾਰੂ ਸਿਉ ਨੇਹੁ ॥

ਪਾਣੀ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਲੀਕ ਜਿਉ ਤਿਸ ਦਾ ਬਾਉ ਨ ਬੇਹੁ ॥੪॥ (SGGS Pg.474)

Naal iaané dostee vadaaroo sio néhu.

Paanee andar leek jio tis daa thaao na théhu. ||4||

(Friendship with a fool, and love with a pompous person, are like lines drawn in water, leaving no trace or mark. ||4||)

This statement suggests a universal interconnectedness rooted in a shared divine essence.

## 7. Water in Sikh Ritual and Practice

Although Sikhism rejects ritualistic purification practices, water plays a role in certain communal and practical contexts:

- Amrit (baptismal nectar) in the Khanda-di-Pahul initiation ceremony is prepared using clean water stirred with a double-edged sword (khanda) while reciting Gurbani.
- Sarovars (holy pools) surrounding Gurdwaras (e.g., Amritsar, Taran Taran) symbolize the spiritual aspiration for inner purity and reflection.

However, the emphasis remains not on mere physical immersion but on transforming one's consciousness through remembrance of God (Simran) and service (Seva).

### Conclusion

Water, within the spiritual and poetic vision of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib, serves as a profound and versatile symbol. It is life-sustaining yet transient, purifying yet elusive, humble yet immensely powerful — much like the Divine Itself. By contemplating water, Sikhs are reminded of their dependence on Divine grace, the need for humility, and the ultimate goal of merging with the eternal.

Furthermore, water's sacred status fosters an ecological ethic in Sikhism, compelling followers to respect, preserve, and protect the environment. As human society today faces unprecedented water crises, the timeless teachings of the SGGS about water's sanctity and symbolism offer both spiritual insight and practical guidance.

Thus, water flows not only through the earth but through the verses of Gurbani — a continuous stream reminding humanity of its origin, journey, and destiny in the embrace of the Divine. □

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## From Diplomacy to Devotion: The Life and Legacy of Sardar Bhagwant Singh Dilawri (1930–2026)

MANDEEP SINGH PURI\*



Sardar Bhagwant Singh Dilawri (also spelt Dalawari), a former Indian Foreign Service officer who renounced a life of privilege to serve humanity, passed away peacefully on 4th January 2026 at the age of 95. In accordance with his lifelong convictions, he donated his entire body for medical education and research to the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGI), Chandigarh—his final act of service.

To the thousands inspired by his life, he was simply “Papa ji.”

By conventional measures, Papa ji’s early life was marked by distinction and success. As a member of the Indian Foreign Service, he moved through global capitals and diplomatic circles. Yet beneath outward achievement lay a deep restlessness. In the late 1960s, he entered a period of profound inner turmoil, questioning the meaning and purpose of his life.

The turning point came on 10th October 1970, when he heard Gurbani at Gurdwara Bangla Sahib. What followed was not fleeting comfort, but a lasting spiritual awakening. He later reflected that the Guru’s Word revealed a simple truth: fulfilment lies not in position or recognition, but in loving and serving those most deprived of dignity, affection, and respect.

Inspired by the universal message of the Guru Granth Sahib and by Mahatma Gandhi’s principle of loving others as oneself, Papa ji took premature retirement from the

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\*E-mail: [mandeepsingh.puri@gmail.com](mailto:mandeepsingh.puri@gmail.com)

Indian Foreign Service. At the invitation of Dr. Shivaji Patwardhan, he joined the Vidarbha Maharogi Seva Mandal at Tapovan, Amravati, where he found his true calling.

At Tapovan, among people afflicted with leprosy—many abandoned by society—Papa ji became family to those who had none. Over the years, he devoted himself to more than 1,200 patients and their children. Each morning, he personally dressed their wounds, often saying that he was not merely bandaging bodies, but washing away his own sins.

For Papa ji, service was worship. He believed Gurbani was not meant to be admired intellectually, but lived through action. Under his guidance, Tapovan grew into a self-sufficient institution where healed patients were empowered with skills, livelihoods, and restored self-respect.

Papa ji's seva was not confined to his hands alone—it also flowed through his pen. Just as he placed bandages on physical wounds each morning, his writing worked quietly as a balm for inner wounds. His words carried the same compassion, discipline, and clarity that marked his daily service.

In his writings, Gurbani was never theoretical. It emerged from lived experience, shaped by years of service, suffering, and surrender. In books such as *\*Living for Harmony and Peace: A Personal Testament\** and *\*Experienced Truth of the Master's Word\**, he showed how spiritual principles could be translated into everyday living, rooted in humility, seva, and high moral character.

He consistently stressed that being a Sikh was not merely a matter of identity or ritual, but of high moral character grounded in truthful living. Integrity of thought, word, and action, he believed, was inseparable from spiritual practice.

Beyond Tapovan, Papa ji was a respected speaker at inter-faith conferences, where he emphasised the unity underlying all spiritual traditions. He viewed awards and honours as distractions, preferring to be known simply as a servant of Guru Nanak.

At the spiritual centre of his life was Amritvela. For decades, without interruption, he performed daily Kirtan from 4:30 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. In 2020, he shifted to Mohali, leading Amritvela sangat at Gurdwara Karta Purakh Niwas. After relocating to Delhi in 2007, he continued morning kirtan at Gurdwara Sujan Singh Park for 13 years.

Over time, devotees joined these Amritvela satsangs remotely from across India and from countries including the United States, Australia, and Germany, forming a quiet global community rooted in remembrance and humility.

Among those closest to Papa ji was Sunita, his adopted daughter, who stood by him for many decades. Deeply shaped by his values, she continues to embody his virtues through a life dedicated to selfless seva.

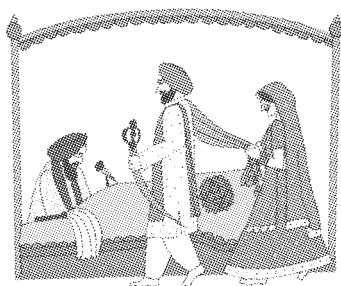
In death, as in life, Sardar Bhagwant Singh Dilawri chose service over self. He leaves behind no material inheritance, yet his legacy lives on in the countless lives he healed, uplifted, and transformed.

To many, he will forever remain Papa ji—a soul whose life itself became an offering.

**Note :**

S. Bhagwant Singh Dilawari ji has been a regular contributor to The Sikh Review and remained an Editorial Advisory Board Member for a long duration. He was a guiding spirit in his deliberations for all age groups. The Sikh Review team pays their respectful homage to this noble soul and prays to Waheguru to rest his soul in peace." □

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In view of the global readership, **The Sikh Review** is publishing Matrimonial Column in its every edition to extend co-operation to Gursikh families - living across the world – In search for a suitable Gursikh Match for their grown up children.

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## The Confluence of Pen and Camera: Sardar Jaiteg Singh Anant

DR. JASBIR SINGH SARNA\*



Sardar Jaiteg Singh Anant (1946-2025), a distinguished resident of Canada, is a renowned Sikh intellectual, scholar, columnist, and a connoisseur of artistic expression.

His editorial craftsmanship is profoundly insightful and imbued with deep significance, while his expertise in design techniques is unparalleled. He firmly believes in discipline, relentless effort, and unwavering dedication. A distinctive aspect of his life is his ability to channel his emotions and aspirations through an articulate and impactful medium of expression. His commitment to the shared Punjabi heritage offers a refined and evolved perspective on cultural continuity. Remarkably, he remains deeply rooted in his ancestral legacy, never straying from his cultural moorings. His creative outlook is marked by bold thematic undertones, making his work both evocative and thought-provoking.

Jaiteg Singh Anant plays a pivotal role in preserving and promoting traditional values and cultural ethos. In many ways, he serves as an ambassador, bridging the cultural and literary heritage of both East and West Punjab. His intellectual pursuits align with the noble objective of guiding the future trajectory of Punjabi civilization. As a symbolic representative of spiritual truth, he unravels the profound narratives embedded in human history and cultural discourse. His artistic vision is underscored by a meticulous thought process and a profound engagement with innovative ideas. This analytical depth and brainstorming acumen foster the exploration of novel intellectual possibilities. It is for this very reason that I affectionately refer to Jaiteg Singh Anant as the Confluence of Pen and Camera.

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\*E-mail : [jbsingh.801@gmail.com](mailto:jbsingh.801@gmail.com)

In the literary realm, Jaiteg Singh Anant has significantly enriched Punjabi literature through his prolific contributions. His works include *Jan Parupkari Aaye*, *Sirdar*, *Kala de Wanjare*, *Beniyaaz Hasti*, *Ustad Daman*, *Mehak Samundar Paar*, *Panchanad*, *Ragmala Nirnaya*, and *Bhai Randhir Singh Simriti Granth*, among others—comprising over eighteen notable publications. Additionally, he has made substantial contributions in the domain of historical narratives, including *Ghadari Yodhe*, *Ghadar Lehar di Kahani*, and *Bhai Sahib Bhai Randhir Singh Duara Ghadar di Goonj*.

One of his most distinguished works, *Ramgarhia Virasat*, holds an exceptional place in global Sikh historiography. It stands as a pioneering Coffee Table Book that meticulously documents the legacy of the Ramgarhia community, offering a rich visual and literary account of its cultural and historical contributions. This work is a remarkable feat in the realm of heritage documentation, adorned with exquisite illustrations and printed with artistic grandeur. It encapsulates rare and invaluable narratives, presenting them as an aesthetic bouquet of historical and cultural jewels. Given its meticulous research and captivating presentation, this book is a treasure that adorns every prestigious library.

Recently, Jaiteg Singh Anant has also garnered acclaim for his outstanding video documentation on Sardar Ram Singh, the mastermind behind a significant Ramgarhia architectural heritage project. This video has been widely discussed and appreciated, further solidifying his stature as a multifaceted scholar and artist.

Jaiteg Singh Anant, a journalist of repute and a sensitive literary intellect, rendered distinguished service to the world of letters through his principled and insightful engagement with contemporary issues. His close association with literary circles and his unwavering commitment to truth enriched both journalism and creative discourse. He passed away on 31 December 2025, leaving behind an enduring legacy of integrity, intellect, and friendship. His relentless pursuit of literary and cultural excellence will undoubtedly leave an indelible mark on Punjabi scholarship and heritage. □

Dr. Kashmir Singh Ji

Interpretation of Article 25 of the Constitution and Sikh Identity

I have gone through your detailed article on Article- 25 of Constitution in Sikh Review (January issue). For long time the Sikh leaders have been demanding amendment in this. I appeared before Constitutional Review Commission headed by Justice Venkatachaliah and I have read the recommendation of the Commission in this Act In order to give the Sikhs as a separate religion status like Hindus and Christians. Till today none of the recommendations of that Commission have been accepted by successive Central Governments. I moved a Private Member Bill to amend the Act quoting that recommendation. But I could not get it discussed in the House because the Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh did not approve the amendment. After my retirement in 2010 it has never again been moved in the Parliament.

I am not a Legal expert but feel that this Clause B of the Act has become redundant after passing of National Minority Commission Act in the Parliament in 1996. The Sikhs, Christians, Muslims and Buddhist were declared religious Minorities. Under this Act I became the first Chairman of the Commission being a Sikh in 2003 i.e. is clear verdict that Sikhs are not Hindus. You have mentioned Supreme Court Judges observations regarding 25 Act but inspite of that the present Govt. has declared Jain Community as a Minority Community.

I feel there was no need of you to mention that inspite of S. Hukam Singh and S. Bhupinder Singh Mann declaration, not to sign on the Constitution as a protest of the Sikh Community, other three Sikh Members did put their signatures. They were not representing the Sikh community.

**Tarlochan Singh, Ex-M.P**  
Former Chairman  
National Commission Minorities.  
Dated : 9th January 2026

Observations By The Editor-

In the light of Full clarity given by S. Tarlochan Singh ji, Part-11 of the Article on the subject stands withdrawn.

**S. Partap Singh DIG Retd.**  
Editor-in-chief

★★★★★

Ek Ong Kar –

Playing A Different Game

Your article in Sikh Review January edition narrates the story of Dheer Mal who inspite of being Satguru's brother played such conspiracy. You have very rightly projected Guru Tegh Bahadur's devine personality for the benefit of the readers. All the Shalok's of Guru are a true and lasting lesson for entire humanity. I have many times urged the Sikh institutions that these Shalokas should be published in various world languages. But we prefer long processions.

May Satguru bless you.

**Tarlochan Singh, Ex-M.P**

Former Chairman  
National Commission Minorities.

Dated : 9th January 2026

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## Won't swear to the King: Sikh lawyer forces Canada to drop monarch oath



Sikh lawyer Prabhjot Singh (Waring) forced Canadian courts to end a century-old monarch oath, arguing it violated religious freedom, triggering a landmark ruling with nationwide impact.

forced Canadian courts to end a century-old monarch oath, arguing it violated religious freedom, triggering a landmark ruling with nationwide impact.

A Sikh lawyer from a small village in Punjab has triggered a landmark legal shift in Canada, forcing the country's highest court to scrap a century-old requirement that compelled professionals to swear allegiance to the British monarch.

Prabhjot Singh, who hails from Waring village in Punjab's Sri Muktsar Sahib district, challenged the mandatory oath to the Crown, arguing that it violated his Sikh faith. His case led Canadian courts to rule that no individual can be forced to take an oath to the monarch in order to practise a profession.

Born in Canada in 1987, Prabhjot Singh completed his law degree and sought admission to the bar in Alberta. However, he refused to take the oath of allegiance to King Charles, saying that as a Sikh of Guru Gobind Singh, he could not place anyone above his Guru.

"I am a Sikh of Guru Gobind Singh. I cannot consider anyone greater than my Guru," Prabhjot Singh argued, making it clear that he was willing to practise law but would not take the oath.

At the time, Alberta required all new lawyers to swear allegiance to the monarch as a condition for admission to the bar. While similar oaths exist in other provinces, most either make them optional or allow alternative affirmations. Prabhjot Singh maintained that the requirement forced him to choose between his faith and his profession, amounting to a violation of his constitutional right to freedom of religion.

His initial challenge was dismissed by a lower court. Prabhjot Singh then escalated the matter, eventually reaching the Supreme Court of Canada after filing his case in 2022. On December 16, 2025, the Alberta Court of Appeal ruled in his favour, holding that the mandatory oath breached the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and ordering the province to change the requirement.

In its ruling, the court revisited a legal practice dating back to 1912 and concluded that allegiance to the monarch could no longer be a mandatory condition for holding a position or entering a profession. The judgment marked a significant shift in Canadian constitutional practice.

The decision has brought relief not only to Prabhjot Singh and his family but also to others who objected to the oath on religious or personal grounds.

Back in Waring village, residents expressed pride that a Sikh youth from their community had brought recognition to the village, Punjab, and India. Villagers said Prabhjot Singh has lived in Canada for many years but has remained deeply rooted in Sikh values since childhood. His family, they said, is a devout Gursikh family.

"Prabhjot Singh, whose roots trace back to village Waring in Sri Muktsar Sahib, challenged a century-old legal practice in Canada on the basis of his Sikh faith. Born in 1987 and recently qualified as a lawyer, he refused to take an oath in the name of King Charles, stating that as a Sikh of Guru Gobind Singh, he cannot place anyone above his Guru.

After his plea was rejected by a lower court, Prabhjot took the matter to the Supreme Court of Canada, which overturned a law in place since 1912. The court ruled that taking a monarch's oath will no longer be mandatory for holding public office or practicing law.

The landmark verdict has been widely welcomed, bringing relief not only to the Sikh community but to many others as well. Back in his ancestral village, pride runs high as residents say Prabhjot has brought honour to Punjab and India by standing firm for his faith and constitutional rights.



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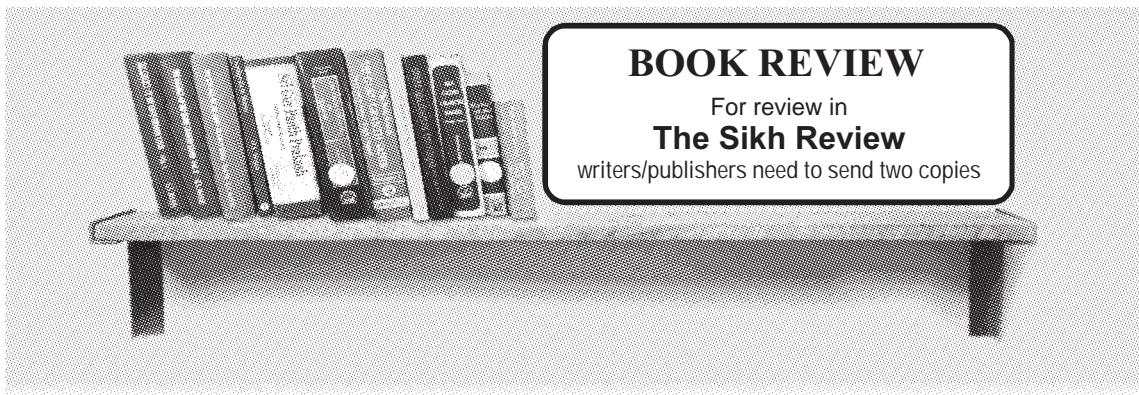
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Express races to hearts. In a world where everything comes with a price tag, Sachkhand Express is a moving reminder: real luxury is sharing. Next time you're on a train, imagine if this was the norm.





<b>Book Title</b>	: <b>MYSTIC ECHOES: Stories Rooted in Sikh Spiritual Realms</b>
<b>Author</b>	: <b>Dr. Devinder Pal Singh, Toronto</b>
<b>Publisher</b>	: <b>Center for Understanding Sikhism, ON, Canada</b>
<b>Publication Year</b>	: <b>First Edition 2025</b>
<b>Pages</b>	: <b>213</b>
<b>Price</b>	: <b>US\$9.99 (Paperback)</b>
<b>ISBN-13</b>	: <b>9798284845394</b>

**A Review by Prof. Hardev Singh Virk\***

Dr. Devinder Pal (DP) Singh joined the Physics Department in 1983 as an Ad-hoc Lecturer to teach Physics and complete his doctorate degree in Physics (Acoustics). I found him as a dedicated teacher and researcher. Upon moving to Canada as an immigrant, he initiated a new venture, the “Center for Understanding Sikhism”. A similar organization, the “Institute for Understanding Sikhism,” was established in 1999 by Dr. D. S. Chahal in Montreal. I was perplexed as to why a hardcore physicist was meddling in Sikhism. My curiosity was satisfied after reviewing his book, “Science and Sikhism: Conflict or Coherence.” I started rating him as one of the greatest exponents of Sikhism (Sikhi) in the modern age.

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\*E-mail: [hardevsingh.virk@gmail.com](mailto:hardevsingh.virk@gmail.com)

The Foreword "A Sacred Mirror: Seeing Ourselves Through Sikh Narratives" has been written by Bhai Harbans Lal, Ph.D., D. Litt (Hons). I used this Foreword as my launching pad to understand the contents of "Mystic Echoes". Bhai Lal appreciates the technique used by D. P. Singh: "It brings the living essence of Gurbani into our day-to-day existence. These are not abstract theological exercises, nor are they simply nostalgic tales of rural life. Instead, they are powerful spiritual parables, immersive narratives that reveal how the universal truths embedded in Sikh teachings manifest in the hearts, struggles, and transformations of everyday people".

The author introduces his UNIQUE work in the Preface "Bridging the Temporal and the Timeless" as follows: "The stories in Mystic Echoes: Stories Rooted in Sikh Spiritual Realms emerge from the convergence of profound spiritual reflection, lived experience, and the enduring resonance of Sikh philosophy. They are not merely works of fiction, but narrative expressions of spiritual truths rooted in the teachings of the Sikh Gurus". Further, D. P. Singh explains the relevance and importance of chosen topics: "Each story in Mystic Echoes is an attempt to explore a specific spiritual theme from within the Sikh tradition: Naam (Divine Name), Hukam (Divine Order), Haumai (Ego), Maya (Worldly Illusion), Raza (Divine Will), Sunn (Primal Void), Sahaj (Equilibrium), Bhaau and Bhae (Devotional Love and Reverent Fear), Nadar (Grace), Wismad (Wondrous Bliss), Anhad Naad (Unstruck Melody), Chautha Pad (Fourth State), Dasam Duar (Tenth Gate), Panj Tat (Five classical elements), and Daya (Compassion) among others.

I would like to summarize the key points of 20 Chapters in a few paragraphs, rather than discussing the contents of each Chapter. In Chapter 2, "Echoes of Naam", Manpreet asks his grandpa, "Babaji, why do you waste your time with all these rituals?" The answer given by his grandpa, on page 23, did not clarify his doubts: "Words are never just words, beta," Harnam replied, opening his eyes. "When your mother scolded you as a child, did those words not sting? When your teacher praised your work, did those words not lift your spirit? Words carry power, and the divine Name, Naam, carries the greatest power of all." Ultimately, grandpa

gives his final opinion about Naam based on his personal experience: "Perhaps what you need is not an explanation," Harnam said thoughtfully, "but an experience."

In all Chapters, the author has used this technique to bring home the truth of Gurbani concepts. I used to listen to some prominent exegetes (kathakars) of Gurbani, including Sant Singh Maskeen. They all use parables/stories to explain the meanings of Shabdas. D. P. Singh has perfected this technique by introducing parables to teach Gurbani concepts to the new generation, who are not frequent visitors to Sikh shrines called gurdwaras. In my view, this technique will be useful only if the younger generation is tuned to Gurbani; otherwise, parables will be devoid of any meaning as a narrative.

In Chapter 6, the author beautifully explains "Bhaau and Bhae: the subtle difference". He wants to teach a lesson using a parable regarding the 'New Light Khalsa'. "They study Sikh philosophy but with modern interpretations. They believe some of our traditions are outdated and need revision to be relevant today." The arguments of Giani Ravinder Singh, supporter of 'New Light Khalsa', represent the approach of new generation: "Ravinder spoke of bhaau (divine love) as the only necessary element of Sikh spirituality, dismissing bhae (divine fear) as a concept misunderstood and corrupted by traditional interpretations. The 5 Ks are symbolic, not literal requirements", Ravinder asserted confidently. "The Gurus intended them as metaphors for spiritual qualities, not physical tokens." The author elaborates these concepts using a dialogue between grandpa Harjit and his grandson, Gurpreet to convince him. At the end of discussion, Gurpreet concludes: "I realized that understanding bhae (divine awe), actually deepens bhaau (divine love). They're not opposing forces but complementary ones."

The author tries to establish his technique of using parables to explain other important concepts of Gurbani, for example, Hukam (Divine Order), Haumai (Ego), Maya (Worldly Illusion), Raza (Divine Will), Sunn (Primal Void), Sahaj (Equilibrium), Nadar (Grace), Wismad (Wondrous Bliss), Anhad Naad (Unstruck Melody), Chautha Pad (Fourth State), Dasam Duar (Tenth Gate), Panj Tat (Five

classical elements), and Daya (Compassion) among others. In almost all chapters, the parable opens in some rural area of Punjab, and the author tries to weave around a scenario of discussion, generally between the grandpa and the grandson, to bring home the truth. The author attempts to integrate many short parables into a full-fledged story ascending from temporal to spiritual realms.

In Chapter 15, "The Unstruck Melody", or "Anhad Naad" in Gurbani, the author describes how Jograj Singh cures his grandson, Kamal, by using the melodious "Anhad Naad" emanating in the precincts of Harmandir Sahib in the ambrosial hours, during singing of celestial hymns of Gurbani. Jograj explains its secret to Gagan, his granddaughter, that human ears cannot hear it. He further elaborates: "Our Guru Nanak Dev Ji spoke of it as the divine melody that resonates within all beings. Sometimes, when our earthly senses fail us, our soul's hearing becomes more acute." The story concludes with Jograj telling the secret to Gagan: "The unstruck sound speaks most clearly to those whose worldly attachments have been severed. Kamal's grief took him to a place beyond ordinary consciousness, where the cosmic vibration could reach him directly."

Chapter 17, "Sacred Balance," opens with the story of a village in the Kangra Valley of Himachal Pradesh. Baba Harnam Singh is a devoted Sikh of the Guru living in a village of the Kangra valley. He believes what Gurbani emphasizes in Sri Guru Granth Sahib: "To harm nature is to harm the Divine presence within it". He leads a protest (morchha) against the "Horizon Developments Company", which has been granted a sanction by the local government to develop a residential colony in the forest area by cutting trees. Ultimately, he won this morchha through his persistent efforts to save the environment, proclaiming to his village lads the Gurbani dictum: "Guru Nanak Dev Ji taught us that there is divine light in all creation," he began. "The same Creator that made us made every tree, every animal, every drop of water. When we protect nature, we honour that divine connection."

At the end of the book, the author gives an elaborate Glossary to explain the meanings of Punjabi terms used in the text. All Chapters follow a similar pattern and style, which is unique to the author. I consider it a new experiment in the exegesis of Gurbani. Its success and failure will depend on the circumstances in which the Sikh

institutions and Gurdwaras adopt the new innovations to operate in future. I also wish the author would reduce the length of these parables so that the reader does not lose his/her focus. D. P. Singh has developed confidence in using English as a medium of preaching, which surpasses my comprehension. I wish him success in this new venture. In the present era, ruled by science and technology, with "Echoes of digital Dawn", another excellent publication of D. P. Singh, I believe he is a rising star on the horizon of Sikh spirituality, enshrined in the pages of Guru Granth Sahib, the living Guru of the Sikhs. The book under review is available on Amazon.com at a reasonable price.



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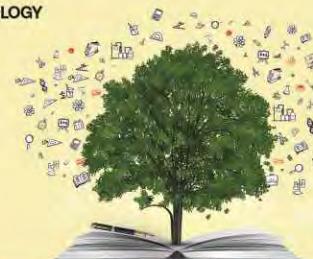
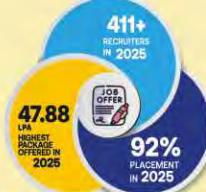


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