

WHO IS A SIKH?

AND
OTHER ESSAYS ON SEVERAL OTHER
NON-SIKH PUNJABI RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES
OTHER THAN HINDUS AND MUSLIMS



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*The heights great men reached and kept
were not obtained by sudden flight
But they while their companions slept
were toiling upward in the night*

Longfellow

*Lives of all great men remind us
we can make our lives sublime
and departing leave behind us,
foot prints on the sands of time*

Longfellow

*A Sikh should live his life
as ordained by his Guru.
keep away from liquor and tobacco
help the poor and defend the weak
and departing leave behind memories
which of his good deeds speak.*

Choor Singh

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to my friend, Professor Kirpal Singh for writing the foreword to this small book. I am also indebted to many other friends for reproducing their writings to make this book as comprehensive as possible in accordance with the title of this book.

Choor Singh

P R E F A C E

Sikhs to-day carry a variety of brand names. There are Khalsa Sikhs, Amritdhari Sikhs, Keshdhari Sikhs, Sahajdhari Sikhs, Nirankari Sikhs, Sant Nirankaris, who are quite separate and distinct from the former, Namdhari Sikhs, Radha Soamis and a very recent crop - the Blue-belt Brotherhood.

My grandchildren used to bother me, now and then, with questions pertaining to these different types whenever they came across these brand names in their reading. I found it difficult to explain orally the source and details of some of these uncommon sects or sub-divisions of the Sikh faith. Some of them are in fact not Sikhs at all although they pass off as Sikhs, e.g. the Sant Nirankaris. I decided to raid my small library, compile all relevant material I could find and publish it to satisfy inquisitive young minds. This pamphlet is the result of that effort.

Khalsa Sikhs and Amritdhari Sikhs are inter-changeable expressions and refer to those who have been initiated into the Order of the Khalsa, often referred to as the Brotherhood of the Pure, or the Khalsa Panth, established by Guru Gobind Singh, the last Sikh Guru with the famous initiation ceremony on the Baisakhi of 1699 which fell in that year on 30th of March. It is because "Amrit", (sacrament of the double-edged sword) was administered in the initiation ceremony, those baptised came to be known as Amritdharis.

The initiation symbolised a rebirth, by which the initiated were considered as having renounced their previous occupations (kirt nas) for that of working for God; of having severed their family ties (kul nas) to become the family of Gobind; of having rejected their earlier creeds (dharam nas) for the creed of the Khalsa; of having given up all ritual (karm nas) save that sanctioned by the Sikh faith. Five emblems were prescribed for the Khalsa. They were to wear their hair and beard unshorn (kes); they were to carry a comb (kangha) in their hair to keep it tidy; they were always to wear a knee-length pair of breeches (kachh) worn by soldiers of the times; they were to wear a steel bracelet (kara) on their wrist; and they were to be ever armed with a sabre (kirpan). In addition to these five emblems, the converts were to observe four rules of conduct (rahat), not to cut any hair on any part of their body; not to smoke or chew tobacco, or consume alcoholic drinks; not to eat an animal which had been slaughtered by being bled to death, as was customary with the Muslims, but to eat only jhatka meat, where the animal had been despatched with one blow, and not to molest the person of muslim women.

“Through the grace of Our Immortal True Lord,
To the entire Sangat at Kabul
The Guru will protect the Sangat
I am pleased with you all
You should take baptism by the sword, from Five Beloveds
Keep your hair uncut for this is a seal of the Guru
Accept the use of shorts and the sword
Always wear iron kara on your wrist,

Keep your hair clean and comb it twice a day
Do not eat Halal (Kosher) meat,
Do not use tobacco in any form,
Have no connection with those who kill their daughters
Or permit the cutting of their children’s hair
Do not associate with Meenas, Massands and Ram-raiyas
(Anti-Sikh cults)
Recite the Guru’s hymns
Meditate on “The Name of our Wonderful Lord.”
Follow the Sikh code of discipline
I give the entire sangat my blessing”.

(Signature of 10th Guru)

What is set out in the Guru’s Hukum-nama is fairly well known and is practised by the true Amritdharis. What is not so well known is that the Khalsa is a sovereign man, fit to provide true leadership and meaningful service to society. He must be a man of deep religious faith and humility and must be in possession of the power of arms to maintain his own integrity and to function truly in relation to society:

“All the virtues of heart and the excellence of mind:
These are the natural qualities of the Khalsa
This is to be a new and unique type of man,
Who bears arms and constantly lives in the presence of God;
Who strives and fights against evil with his gaze revetted to the stars
Such is the goal to achieve which the Khalsa has been ordained
And Lo. it is a well-armed and well-integrated Man.

(Gurpratapsurya Granth, Vol.1, p. 36)

Sikhism being a whole life system, it is the duty of the sovereign Khalsa to defend the weak and the oppressed, to challenge injustice and resist it, if necessary by force and not hesitate to lay down his life in defence of his faith. Those unwilling to take on these onerous duties in addition to adhering to the strict discipline of the

Amritdhari, chose to remain mere Keshdharis which is the second step towards becoming an Amritdhari. The first step is to become a Sahajdhari.

It will be seen that an Amritdhari Khalsa is expected to lead the life-of a Sant-Sepahi (a Saint-soldier). All Sikhs, in their heart, aspire such a glorious life. Many attempt it or make a go for it but few succeed. But that does not mean that we should not strive to reach the pinnacle of Sikhism by becoming and leading the life of a true Khalsa.

A Keshdhari Sikh is one who has the semblance of a Khalsa but for some reason has not opted to be initiated as an Amritdhari. Most of them abstain from taking Amrit out of fear of being able to comply strictly with the Rahat-Maryada, the code of discipline laid down for an Amritdhari. They comply with the other requirements of the Sikh faith such a Nam-Simran and Nit-name. They accept the Guru Granth Sahib as their living Guru and have no other scripture. They attend the Gurdwara regularly, join the sangat, and listen to Kirtan. They take part in the preparation and service of the langar, support the Gurdwara financially and render any other service required of them.

If you meet a Sikh in the street, especially outside India, it is sometimes difficult to fathom whether he is an Amritdhari or Keshdhari. In India, the Amritdharis can sometimes be seen wearing a small kirpan on their person. Before the second world war it was quite common to see Amritdharis in India wearing the long kirpan, (3 feet long). This is a rare sight these days and I have never seen any on recent visits to India.

Sahajdhari Sikhs are, as one meaning of the word "Sahaj" signifies, "those who take time", the halfway house to the hirsute form of Khalsa Sikhism. The word "Sahaj" also means "spiritual equipoise" which is an equally mandatory requirement for all Sikhs, even for the Khalsa. According to one view, "The sense of belonging to the Sikh community requires both the belief in the teachings of the "Adi Granth" and the observance of the Khalsa tradition initiated by Guru Gobind Singh and there is no such thing as a clean-shaven Sikh-- he is simply a Hindu believing in Sikhism". (Khushwant Singh in "A History of the Sikhs", Vol 2 page 303). This is an extreme view and I do not think it is correct.

In my view a person is a Sahajdhari Sikh if he accepts the teaching of the Sikh Gurus, considers the Guru Granth Sahib as his Guru, has no other scripture and does not worship anyone other than God. There are thousands of such Sahajdhari Sikhs and they are a credit to the Sikh Faith. Although turbanless and clean shaven, they can be recognised by the kara (steel bracelet) they wear on their right wrist. Who knows, someday they may well take Amrit and become full-fledged Khalsas. After all, becoming a Sahajdhari is the first step toward becoming a Khalsa.

On a recent golfing trip to Manila, I decided to visit the local Gurdwara. The taxi driver found it on Washington Avenue. A large double storey building. It was fully air-conditioned which meant that at one time there must have been a fairly large Sikh community there. An Akhand Path was going on but the reader of the Granth was a turbanless Sikh. He had a handkerchief on his head and was reading Gurbani very competently. Later, on the ground floor, on making enquires from the Keshdhari Secretary, I was informed that the reader of the Granth was a very committed Sahajdhari Sikh and that there were not enough Keshdhari Sikhs in Manila to make up a reading team entirely of Keshdharis. In the circumstances I saw nothing wrong in what I saw. The lesson to be learnt from what I saw is that we must not look down on Sahajdharis just because we are Amritdharis or Keshdharis. They are also travelling along the same path and although they may be a step or two behind us, hopefully they may also catch up with us someday.

We must not forget that even in the time of Guru Gobind Singh, some of his disciples and close associates like Bhai Nand Lal, the Court poet Saina Pati, the Dhadi Nath Mall who used to sing ballads at the Court of the Guru, did not take pauhal and become Amritdharis. They remained Sahajdhari Sikhs and nevertheless the Guru had high regard for them although they did not become Khalsas.

Another important point to note is that participation of Sahajdharis is provided for in the Sikh Gurdwaras Act of 1925 which vested control and management of the Golden Temple and all other historical Sikh shrines in Punjab in the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabhandak Committee, a representative body of the Sikhs which is now elected on adult franchise.

There is another category of Sikhs which defies classification. These are the Sikhs who went abroad, soon after the second world war, to England, America, Canada and some parts of Europe. They were mostly Amritdharis or Keshdharis but soon after their arrival in these distant lands, their attachment to tradition declined and the rate of apostasy arose for a variety of reasons. Some of the early arrivals could not get jobs as there was prejudice against their appearance and they reluctantly gave up the semblance of the Khalsa to earn a living. Others became clean shaven merely to ape the white man. And their descendants, the second and now the third generation, are mostly clean shaven. But what is noteworthy about them is that they all wear the kara (steel bracelet) on their right wrist, attend Gurdwaras, accept the Guru Granth Sahib as their Guru, have no other scripture, worship God only and marry according to Sikh rites by undergoing the "Anand-Karaj" ceremony. They are the ones who sing Raj Karega Khalsa most vociferously during the service at the Gurdwara and are the greatest supporter of Khalistan. They support Gurdwaras financially and in some places, in Canada and America they have built huge Gurdwaras. So what do you classify them as? In Sikh parlance, according to Rahat Maryada they are Patits (Renegades; those who have fallen by the wayside). There

is little chance of their ever taking Amrit.

There is no getting away from the fact that in the West, the practice of taking "pahul" and wearing the hair and beard unshorn is on the decline. This is admitted by most Sikh leaders and will be apparent to any shrewd observer.

The danger is that these clean-shaven men who claim to be Sahajdhari Sikhs and form the bulk of the sangat (congregation) in Gurdwaras in the West may slowly slide into Hinduism. The danger is very real because they have no knowledge of Gurbani, speak mostly English and have only a smattering knowledge of Punjabi. Some don't know even the names of all our ten Gurus of the Punjabi names of weekdays. Can they be classified as Sahajdharis when there is little chance of their ever becoming Keshdharis, leave alone their becoming Amritdharis. And yet if questioned about their identity, they claim to be Sikhs. As they believe in the Ten Gurus and the Granth Sahib and have no other scripture, they are Sahajdhari Sikh in accordance with the provisions of The Sikh Gurdwaras Act of 1925 of the Indian Legislature.

And what is the position to-day of the Sindhis? At one time, before the independence of India, when they were living in their home province, they were more Sikh than Hindu. "Today, dispersed over the Indian subcontinent, most of them have gone back to Hinduism. Even where they form compact communities as in Bombay, the altars of their temples display Hindu gods alongside the Granth, and Hindu ritual is fast displacing the Sikh. There are strong indications that with the passing of the present generation Sikhism will also pass out of the people of Sindh." (Khushwant Singh, Volume 2, page 303) Sindhis are now spread all over the world. Their regular attendance at Gurdwaras does not make them Sikhs. Nor do they claim to be Sikhs. They are the followers of Guru Nanak whom they worship as their Guru but do not accept the Khalsa tradition. There are of course exceptions. Take the case of Dr. Gobind Singh Mansukhani, one of the greatest scholars of Sikhism. He was an Amritdhari Khalsa and spent his whole life in promoting Sikhism.

What is fundamental is that you cannot claim to be a Sikh if you do not heed all the Ten Gurus of the Sikh faith, nor if you have a living guru. You cannot claim allegiance to one or a few of the Ten Masters and claim to be a Sikh. On this score, the Nirankaris, the Sant Nirankaris, the Radha Soamis, and the Namdharis, fail to qualify as Sikhs. In the result, only the Amritdhari, the Keshdharis and the Sahajdharis form the main Stream of the Sikh faith. These are merely the various steps up the ladder of Sikhism for there are no high souls or hierarchy in Sikhism. To become an Amritdhari Khalsa is to reach the pinnacle. What is even more important is to remain at the pinnacle all your life by living a truthful life in accordance with the Rahat-Maryada of the Khalsa.

Gurbachan Singh, the former Indian Ambassador in Switzerland, has put it in another way:

“The Khalsa are our post-graduates, Keshdhari Sikhs the degree holders, and the Sehajdharis (including apostates) are under-graduates. But, most importantly, none of them is to be excluded from the Sikh fold, for the Gurus’ message is too universal to be “cribbed, cabined and confined” within a narrow and exclusive domain: Sabhey sanjhi-wal sadain, tu kisay na disay bahara jio”

(The Sikh Review”, October, 1995)

FOREWORD

I grew up literally worshipping the ground on which this fascinating man walked. From the age of about 7, I became conscious of his stature: here was a Sikh gentleman who had done exceedingly well in the island Republic and was held to be a distinguished scholar and judge. No other Sikh, before or since, has held as high an office as Mr. Choor Singh, nor distinguished himself/herself in the byways of scholarship as our author has done.

In Singapore's Sikh community- a community which is small and close-knit and therefore one in which everyone gets to know what everyone else is doing! - there have been several men and women who have done much to enhance the Status and standing of the Sikhs. From the uniformed professions to the academia, Sikhs have excelled through sheer grit. Our genuine belief in the fundamental goodness of human nature, our enthrallment at the rich colours of life, our zest for the vibrant and the dynamic, our zeal in community affairs, our tireless efforts to do better - all of these add up to a commitment and dedication to doing well in the life, setting a good example, and providing a good foundation for the next generation.

With the new millennium has come a new global stage; one in which the young are caught in and among several distractions. Religious leaders everywhere are anxious that the young preserve and continue at least the basic traditions which the respective religious creeds accord. The same anxiety applies to the Sikhs and Sikhism. While the good judge has never assumed a religious role as such, the reverence which we have for him approximates that which we give to our more visible religious leaders. A true Sikh - By any definition - Mr. Choor Singh has served to play the role of a kind of **proxy** Sikh leader whose chief aim, it appears to be, is to keep alive the inspiring flames of the Sikh faith, a faith whose rich and complex 500 year history compels trust and adherence.

I am not qualified to comment on the crux of this most recent book by our author: but I am in a position to say that the putting together of the various essays in this small and delightfull book as well as the reflective comments and observations which Mr. Choor Singh has himself incorporated and made leaves us in awe. Our author is well past 90 years of age, a time when most would be blissfully resting on their laurels and enjoying the fruits of their toil. Not our good judge -he continues to write, to discuss, to initiate new projects, to insist on constant seeking after Truth and on the value of the **good** life-particularly as this is defined by the Sikh scriptures.

Mr. Choor Singh's erudite commentaries are for the learned to discuss and engage with, for us, the ordinary folk, it is his passion and unfailing willingness to persist in showing us the way to better knowledge and understanding which strikes home.

For me to be asked to write this Foreword is an exercise in humility; I am deeply moved and honoured by such a gesture, extended to me by a man who has always had my utmost respect. I have read and my mind has been enriched by this small book's remarkable foray into complex areas of faith, as well as definitions. I know many will read this book and have a million and one questions, comments and reflections of their own - this is exactly what a challenging book does. And WHO IS A SIKH is no different: the book invites engagement at many levels and it is to the author's great credit that the book combines passion, knowledge and commitment with a fine sense of responsible narrative. A book of this nature is never easy to write and even if we do not always agree with what it purports, our admiration for the author's energy and courage to publish it is not at all diminished; indeed it grows.

I know that each and every member of Singapore's Sikh community wishes our respected Judge the very best in this latest of his many endeavours and I personally can only say, "Sir, if only most of us can realize just half of what you have shown can be achieved by a life dedicated to industry, scholarship and professional integrity, I say we have been successful."

It is with humility that I thank the good Judge for giving me this singular honour of writing this Foreword.

Professor Kirpal Singh
Singapore Management University
April 2004.

WHO IS A SIKH ?

WHO IS A SIKH ?

by

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These days it has become fashionable to apply two litmus tests to the definition of a Sikh. One is that of political correctness. We have all been to Sikh gatherings where, if your views fall even a hair short of an independent Sikh homeland, you are quickly branded "anti-Sikh." The currently precarious position among Sikhs of the well known writer Khushwant Singh is an example. It seems to me from my rudimentary understanding of Sikhism that the religion allows and even encourages a virtual rainbow of shades of opinions. This is true in theory, the practice often leaves one aghast.

If Zail Singh, the former Indian President is branded a quisling. I can understand. In his official capacity he issued the orders approving the invasion of the Golden Temple and many other gurdwaras in Punjab on Guru Arjan's martyrdom day in June 1984. His poor judgement and moral cowardice opened a new chapter on state terrorism against the Sikhs and brought India close to fragmentation. A sense of self-respect as a Sikh would have required that the papers he signed be of his resignation. But I am reminded that over the 500 years of our history many Sikhs in responsible positions have acted abominably. After the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919, Sikh religious leaders at the Akaal Takht honored the responsible General, Dyer. Almost 200 years ago, some Sikhs rulers sided with Muslim hordes against Sikh armies. Two years ago, some Sikhs of Delhi honored H.K.L. Bhagat, the man who may have masterminded the massacre of the Sikhs in 1984. The Sikhs have a right to be furious with these people but the fact that they were Sikhs cannot be denied.

In my view, if Khushwant or Patwant, respectable writers both, fail to publicly endorse the idea of Khalistan, that does not make them any less as Sikhs. You can be furious with them. You can call them misguided or misinformed and they can return the compliment, but to disavow them as Sikhs is grossly unfair. There are many honest Sikhs in that category-- General Aurora and Air Marshall Arjan Singh come to mind. Their anguish at how brutally and inhumanely the Indian government

has treated the Sikhs is not any less than yours or mine. How the personal lifestyles of these or any other people would stand scrutiny is a different matter indeed, but Sikhs should have other criteria for evaluating each other. And that would raise another question - who has the right and the competence to judge?

For many years Sikhs political leaders like Longowal or Simranjit Singh Mann sought a solution within the framework of the Indian Constitution. It is only now that Mann seems to have despaired of the notion of a unified Indian nation. Yet, no one can deny that his sacrifice in the cause of the Sikhs is clear and significant. Bhindranwale undeniably showed Sikhs how to die with dignity and honour. But in his short life he never raised the slogan for an independent Khalistan, though he has now become the inspiration for its struggle. This is because circumstances have changed. Whereas, only a few years ago it was possible for Sikhs to conceive of a productive life of dignity in India, now many have reluctantly concluded that it is not even a remote possibility. Some still cling to that hope for a variety of reasons. Human motives are complex, judgement difficult and often faulty.

Its been 45 years since Israel became a reality but even today not every Jew is for Israel. Similarly not every Sikh may see the argument for an independent Khalistan. But these are questions on which grown men may differ. People also change with time if they have room to grow. I will address the issue of Khalistan elsewhere but using a litmus test of political correctness to determine one's religious commitment is both irrelevant and perverse. If we find fault with the discernment or dedication of Khushwant or Aurora, let us open our doors to an ongoing dialogue with them and others like them. Both we and they might become the better for it. A political yardstick is entirely inappropriate to determine who is a Sikh.

The second acid test for a Sikh which has come in vogue particularly within the past ten years or so says: Do you as a male Sikh wear the preminent of the five Sikh symbols-- Long unshorn hair and a turban? In other words, are you visibly a Sikh? For obvious reasons this criterion has acquired major importance outside India. The question of who is a Sikh has fueled much debate. Historians like Mcleod who take a more scholarly approach have been accused of being selective in their interpretation. Sikh scholars understand the issue but because of their feelings for Sikhism, objectivity may suffer and their analysis become vulnerable. In the process, more heat than light is shed on the subject. I confess to being subjective and will pull in only selected historical events to buttress my view. Why? Because religion is a reality to which the historical intellectual analysis alone is ill-suited. Only in part can history and intellect measure the intuitive reality that transcends both. However, without the selective application of logic and reason, religion is quickly reduced to the levels of dogma and superstition.

The requirement that a Sikh be visibly so has merit. In India, if the small minority

of Sikhs opts not to look different from the majority surrounding them, they will quickly lose all independent identity and existence. They will then surely be engulfed by Hinduism and disappear from India just as Buddhism did. The oft-boasted tolerance of Hinduism is a myth which deserves closer scrutiny. If Christianity and Islam found roots in India, it was not because of Hindu tolerance, if any. Political power and patronage supported and nurtured them. Now that the rulers of India are predominantly Hindus, the fate of the Muslims and Christians is the same as that of any other minority such as the Sikhs - harassment and denial of basic rights. The history of how Buddhism was decimated in India is not a kind commentary on Hindu tolerance. St. Thomas who took Christianity to India is buried there but, thanks to the Brahmins, he did not die a natural death. How tolerant could Hinduism be of others if it treats almost half of its own believers as untouchables and its women as less than human? One only has to read the Laws of Manu to comprehend the dogmatic inhumanity of Hinduism to its own people. In every religion the followers fall short of the teaching but, in this case the teaching may be seriously flawed.

I recall that some twenty years ago, neither the President nor the Secretary of our new gurdwara in New York were recognizable Sikhs. They were good people, devoted to the cause and as proof of our tolerance, were elected. At about that time, some new arrivals had problems finding employment; the hiring company insisted that they report to work without their long hair or turbans. After a series of hearings and discussions, we won the point. But the issue was a watershed in our presence here. The opposing lawyer had the temerity to point out that since the senior officers of our gurdwara were without long unshorn hair, this symbol of Sikhism could not be very significant. Needless to say, we were on the defensive, our arguments disjointed and the Indian Consulate in New York least helpful. We were relieved to prevail but it was not a reassuring experience. I think sometime soon thereafter most gurdwaras in the United States made it a requirement that all office bearers be recognizable Sikhs.

Such a rule however, opens a Pandora's box. Now, if the differences are political or personal, it is easiest to attack a man at his most vulnerable aspect - his Sikh lifestyle. Because someone looks like a Sikh does not automatically turn him into a good one. Some Sikhs drink alcohol even if just a little and only socially. Many do not follow all of the requirements on completing their daily prayers. Others are businessmen with all the attendant temptations. Despite their best intentions, the personal or family life of many falls short of the Sikh ideal. A certain level of recognizable hypocrisy creeps into our lives and chinks (chasms?) appear between the teaching and our practice. After all, we are ordinary Sikhs on the road to becoming better ones but certainly no angels. And our gurdwara elections show how easy it is to attack and destroy a well intentioned man. The onslaught is always led by assailing a man's commitment to Sikhism and labeling him "antiSikh". I wonder what that appellation means. Should we even have elections in a gurdwara but how else should

we identify people for service to our community? But that is a different matter to be discussed another time, elsewhere.

I look at the Christians. They have over 250 denominations and some, Roman Catholics for instance, are most reluctant to even admit that the others are Christians nor would they cheerfully intermarry with them. In the early period of Christianity there were more than one Pope, each busy excommunicating the others. In the Jews where there at least three major denominations, the Conservatives recognize no Reform Jews. Even Hinduism has spawned many sects but Hindus are more tolerant of their own divisions perhaps because their theology is so vague and diffuse. Does time extract such a price from all religions?

I wonder if the young, vibrant religion of the Sikhs is headed the same way. Already there are signs of sects and denominations within Sikhism although the lines between them are not yet clearly or rigidly drawn. There are important doctrinal differences among some of them; for example, Namdharis seek guidance from a living person whom they recognize as Guru; whereas, the larger Sikh community following the directive of Guru Gobind Singh, recognizes *Guru Granth* as the repository of spiritual authority and the Sikh people speaking collectively as the voice of the Guru in temporal matters. Many Sikhs follow particular spiritual teachers and thus differ from others in minor practices but these idiosyncrasies are relatively insignificant. Our religion is young. Will there come a time when we will recognize three different kinds of Sikhs: Those who have been confirmed (*Amritdhari*) and have taken final vows to maintain all the requirements of the religion; those who look like Sikhs (*Keshadhari*), maintain long unshorn hair but have not taken the final vows (Amrit) of the Sikh lifestyle; and finally those who follow the time honoured tradition of Sikhs who like the Marrano Jews hide their identity, and are labeled Sehajdhari in the Sikh tradition? It is hoped that in time the Sehajdharis will follow the way of the Khalsa to become recognizable Sikhs just as the Keshadhari Sikhs will become more committed to become Amritdhari Sikhs. We have had Sehajdhari Sikhs as an important part of the Sikh community from the time that the Khalsa began over 300 years ago. Many Sikhs, including some associates and contemporaries of Guru Gobind Singh never opted to receive Amrit and become Khalsa, but they were not thought any the less for it. Bhai Nandlal for instance, never became Nand Singh nor did the Guru ask that he should.

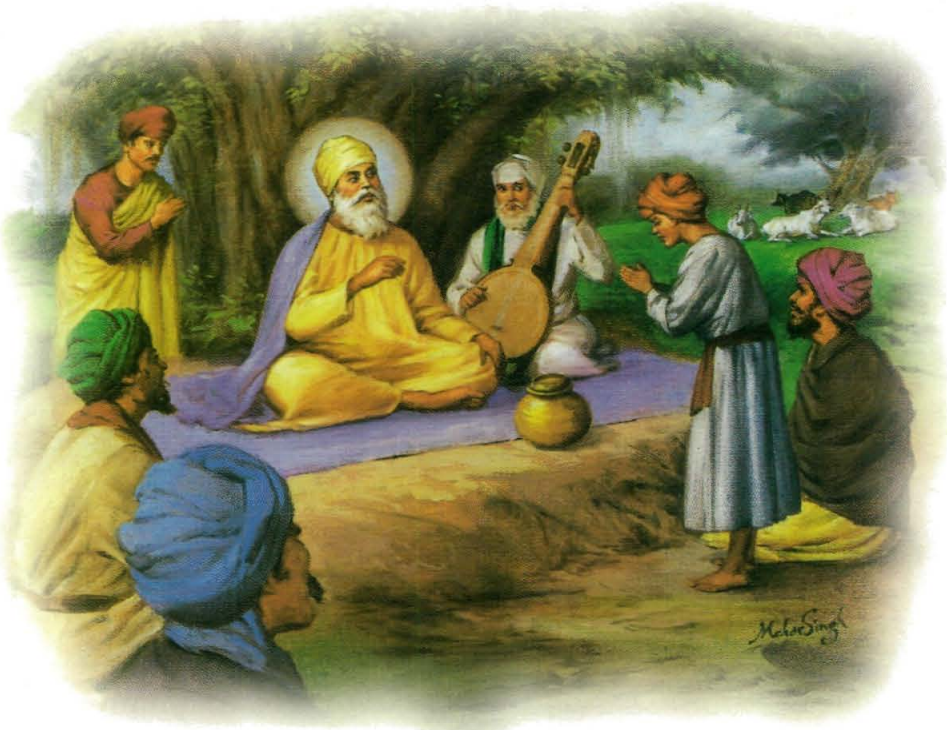
We need to look at one more category of Sikh, someone who once was either Amritdhari or Keshadhari and now, for some reason, is no longer a visibly recognizable Sikh. Such a Sikh will be labeled *Patit*. Rarely have the apostate (patit) Sikhs had an honorable place in our history; the patriot Bhagat Singh is a notable exception. And that is eminently fair. Sometimes we fail to make the necessary distinction between the Sehajdhari and the apostate, but it is critical. I have known apostate (patit) Sikhs resent the fact that though gurdwaras welcome them and

accept their services or money yet will not appoint or elect them to any office nor grant them any honour. I think this is as it should be. The doors of a gurdwara are open to anyone and no one, Sikh or otherwise is barred from service or attendance. However, the visibility of appointive or elective office carries with it a public responsibility with ramifications for the life of the community.

I recall a few telephone conversations I had with a Sikh young woman some years ago when I was still unmarried. Somebody thought we should know each other and gave me her number, so I called her. She was bright, witty, educated. After a few pleasant chats she asked: "Are you a modern Sikh?" I was taken aback. I realized what she wanted to know but I resented the implication that a long-haired keshadhari Sikh was somehow less than modern. My response was unfortunately equally thoughtless; "In the sense that I wear clothes when I go out on the street and know which fork to use at dinner, I guess I am not quite primitive and I operate in this modern world. Precisely what do you want to know?" I hope we will not fall into such a trap of dividing ourselves into modern and not-so-modern Sikhs like that young woman. I also believe how modern we are is determined by what is inside our heads and not the length of the hair upon them. I also trust that we will remain charitable towards those who fall short along the way. Already there are gurdwaras that cater primarily to one kind of Sikhs or another. And that it is unfortunate for it divides us further.

There is an obvious paradox and not a little hypocrisy when those who are not visibly Sikh or are inconsistent in their lifestyle want representatives who at least look like Sikhs. Though true, it is preferable this way. Ideally, all of us would not only profess virtue but also be virtuous. But that is not likely to happen. In an imperfect world vice will exist. Better to have a society where vices are at least publicly shunned rather than lauded. This way the gap between teaching and practice persists but an awareness of the ideal and some ongoing efforts towards it also remain. I agree with William Hazlitt that "He who maintains vice in theory has not even the capacity or conception of virtue." It is a choice between a world of conscious hypocrisy or cruel cynicism.

There seems a certain incongruity in a religion that derives its identity from a legislated act of a government--a Statute-- made into law when the British ruled India. The whole model of the government sanctioned Committee (SGPC) which manages historical gurdwaras deserves a closer look. At the end of his tenure, Guru Gobind Singh bestowed temporal Guruship on the Sikh Panth, the nation of disciples. None else but the Sikhs, meeting in mindful prayer and acting in an awareness of their heritage, can make the critical decisions on their identity and their future; no government, not even one of Sikhs should usurp that authority. The Sikhs will remain Sikhs only if what they decide is also consistent with their spiritual legacy and tradition. The Sikhs organized their heritage in a Code of Conduct which reached

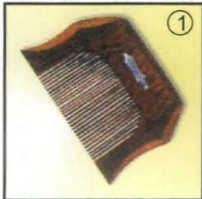
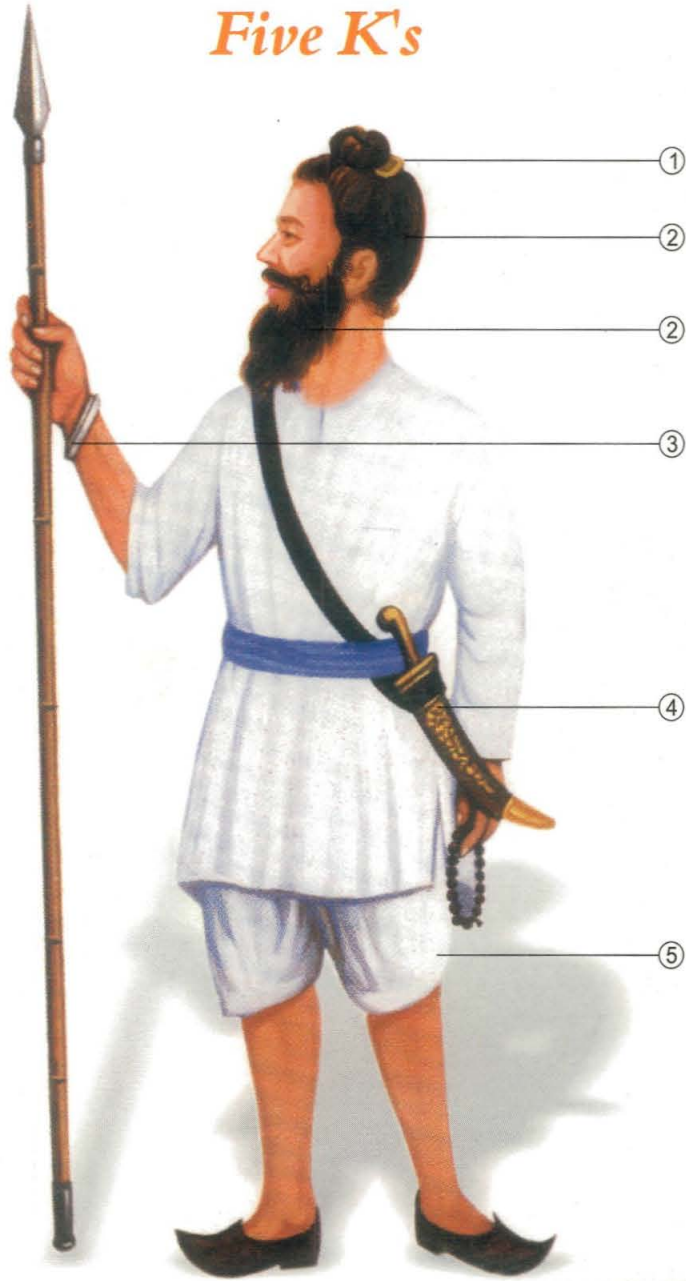


Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji founder of Sikhism



A granthi reading hymns of Sri Guru Granth Sahib

Five K's



Kangha



Kesh



Karra



Kirpan



Kashaihra



Sikh taking Amrit



Amritdhari Sikh

its final resolution in 1935; that document clearly chronicled how the Sikhs view themselves. And ultimately the definition of a Sikh has to be what the community has resolved.

At the individual level however, a Sikh is he who claims to be one, however incomplete, unpleasant or unacceptable he may seem to us. Our institutions and gurdwaras have to accept that. There is no hierarchy as in the Roman Catholic Church to dictate otherwise and that is all to the good. Although we all know that the private person may fall short of the ideal and we should remain merciful to private failings, we also perceive that the Sikh identity within the community assumes a public person which has ramifications for Sikhs everywhere. It is true that nothing unites us more than our love for our religion, nothing divides more than the practice of it. The dictates of man are not necessarily the will of God. There is real danger in mistaking one for the other.

The Problem of Sikh Indentity

By

W. H. McLeod

This book, entitled as above, is by a Christian missionary who taught for 13 years at the Christian Mission at Batala, Punjab. He is now a specialist in producing books on Sikhism with an anti-Sikh bias. Dr. W H McLeod has according to Justice Gurdev Singh "attacked most of the Sikh traditions, institutions and beliefs, questioned their validity and strives to create doubts about others" ("Perspectives on the Sikh Religion", pp 5, 8-9). He maintains on "friendly props and erroneous conclusions" that 'Sikhism does not deserve much consideration as it is only a rehash of a minor effete Hindu creed" and that Guru Nanak was not the founder of this religion "as he did not originate a new school of thought or set of teachings". McLeod has even gone to the extent of choosing not to accept the birth of the Khalsa and the five emblems and rules of conduct prescribed for it by Guru Gobind Singh himself on the Baisakhi of 1699," not because he finds any evidence to falsify it but by simply refusing to believe it," saying "Our knowledge of this (18th) century is still limited. Traditions abound but so too do compulsive reasons for skepticism. What we do know, however, indicates that traditions relating to the period of Guru Gobind Singh must be, in some considerable measure, set aside. The slate must be wiped clean and must not be reinscribed until we have ascertained just what did take place during the eighteenth century". ("The evolution of the Sikh Community", pp 16 - 18).

An eye-witness account of the creation of the Khalsa given by the Court poet, Saina Pati, in his book, "Sri Guru Sobha" and another eye-witness account by a totally independent witness, the news writer of the Mughal Court, Ghulam Muhia-Ul-Din, who was present there on the occasion (Macauliffe, "The Sikh Religion" Vol V page 94) have been rejected by McLeod out of hand. If this is not anti-Sikh bias, what else could it be?

This latest book of Dr. McLeod, "Who is a Sikh", is of 140 pages and is too long to be set out here in full. It has been condemned by Sikh scholars as politically motivated, the imperialistic design "being to disintegrate the Order of Khalsa" and to "re-define a Sikh so that a Hindu take over of the Darbar Sahib, the holiest shrine of the Sikhs,

and other Gurdwaras is rendered possible". The book was reviewed in "The Sikh Review" (August 1993 number) by Gurtej Singh, Professor of Sikhism; the review is reproduced here in full.

"Dr. W. H. McLeod's penchant for creating controversies where none exist must constitute a record of sorts. His latest book, Who is a Sikh, reveals him best at his trade. Of late, particularly since the ongoing political crisis in the Punjab, his writings have become conspicuous for their political content as well as disregards for established facts of history. Those who look for these distortions in the present work shall be amply rewarded.

All unbiased analysts of Hindu culture and behaviour, from Alberuni to Max Weber and Nirad C. Chaudhuri, are aware that it represents a unicentral, geocentred, exclusive and opinionated Society. Pluralism, the soul of co-existence, is totally alien to it. These traits have put it in direct social and political confrontation with other societies. Proper resolution of conflict involves recognition of autonomous status of about thirty other nations constituting the Indian sub-continent. Instead, Hindu India has consciously chosen to keep them in permanent subjugation as a prelude to final assimilation. But since the step has to be justified to the liberty-loving West, the argument that comes in handy is that Sikhism is just a sect of Hinduism and its quest for a separate identity is promoted as separatist under the influence of the Khalsa. It may be recalled that the argument seriously advanced by M.K. Gandhi was that the Muslims being descendants of converts from Hinduism were a part of the Hindu nation. In varying degrees the same is used against disadvantaged minorities in independent India. Like their predecessors, Mughals, Afghans and Britishers, the present rulers, have come to believe that Sikh temples must be brought under State control in order to contain the quest for separate identity. This is the true context of Dr. McLeod's book, a large part of which cannot otherwise be comprehended. One progressively realizes that he is projecting the post 1947 predicament ("debate has followed these line throughout the present century") coloured by imperialistic design to disintegrate the Order of the Khalsa.

The plan is to so re-define a Sikh so that a Hindu take over of Sikh shrines is rendered possible by a pseudo-democratic process. Punjabi Hindus who have denied their mother tongue in successive census operations since 1947, being considered capable of posing as Sikhs on the day of polling.

Immediate context is also relevant. It is based on two deliberate distortions. First one is a clever trick by which definition of a Sikh for the sole purpose of management of Gurdwaras is represented as defining all those who claim to belong to the faith and is then derided as "definition by legislation". The fact that, of the more than ten thousand Gurdwaras of the Punjab alone, only one hundred and thirty are managed by the SGPC, is omitted. So is the fact that participation of the Sahajdharis is

provided for in the Act. The second one, that the SGPC has usurped the exclusive right to define a Sikh, is a total inversion of facts. The SGPC drew up an authentic version of the Sikh code of conduct by consent of all the constituents of the Panth. It appointed a committee of known scholars on October 1, 1932. The committee invited and processed suggestions received from various shades of opinion from within and outside the country; the suggestions and the draft proposals were widely published. Almost every known opinion maker was involved in the exercise which finally concluded on January 7, 1945. Definition of a Sikh in Sikh Rahat Maryada is thus arrived at after due consideration. What sort of a scholar is he who can presume that the one proposed by him must prevail, in contradiction?

That is only the beginning. His definition of Sahajdharis is supported by no authority and is clearly inadequate as attainment of Sahaj or spiritual equipoise is equally mandatory for all Sikhs including the Khalsa. The insinuation that a well defined distinct group of Sahajdharis ever existed in confrontation with the Khalsa is totally wrong. Demonstrable fact is that by the free consent of all the constituents, Order of the Khalsa has assumed leadership of the Sikh Panth and has always borne responsibility to protect its interests. Sahajdharis may have felt themselves in no position to abide by the Khalsa rahat but have at no stage opposed it. They have held no ideals not equally dear to the Khalsa. Their opposition would be meaningless as Khalsa is a voluntary association and the rahat, or the ground rules, of it are freely accepted.

McLeod cannot pursue his thesis of differing identities so lightly. In addition, he will have to establish that he articulates a desire for preservation of threatened Sahajdhari identity and is not advancing the specious argument of a renegade or an agent of the Hindu cultural imperialism. In the absence of all that, we must hold that the entire emphasis of this book is totally misplaced.

Doctrinally, there is no possibility of conflict between Sahajdharis and the Khalsa, historically they have always (up to 1947) replenished the Khalsa ranks. The "persistent problem" of those who "observed multiple identities". agitates McLeod more than it has ever agitated the wearer of such apparel.

His discovery of a new constituent of the Sikh Panth, namely, the Hindu-Sikh is amazing, to say the least. The species is not known to history. The Mughuls, for instance did not know it either. It would be more tenable to suggest the existence of Jew-Muslims, Jew-Christians, as they at least have common scriptures and as Islam recognizes earlier Prophets. Sikh Gurus deny the scriptural value of Vedas, decry the possibility of God ever incarnating and squarely denounce the caste system. These are the basic doctrines of any share of Hinduism. How can a Hindu remain a Hindu if he heeds to the Guru? A Hindu who honestly claims to be a Sikh would be a living absurdity.

Before we go into the methodology of defining adopted by Reverend McLeod, we must note that he uses the epithet Tat Khalsa to designate leaders of Singh Sabha without explaining himself. Can the authority of “the liberal, the lax and the ambivalent” who constitute a majority in every dispensation, suffice to define who is a Christian or a Hindu? Could those who hold fast to the original doctrines of the faith be dubbed as “fundamentalists”? He does both of these unto Sikhs and Sikhism.

The author’s understanding of the essential nature of the Hindu caste system is wholly inadequate. When the Sikh Gurus deny its divine origin, its racial connotation, its pollution potential and its relevance to salvation, they are throwing it out lock, stock and barrel. These are the assumptions on which the system rests. Absence of marital relations between, say, white and black Americans does not mean that that society is practicing the caste system.

The variety of Namsimran he upholds has no place in Sikhism. Mere repetition of the Name is specifically condemned by the Gurus as of no avail; the age-old Hindu concept of the spiritual Potency and compulsively compelling power of mantras is emphatically abandoned by them. Suffice it to say that no Sikh theologian, from Bhai Gurdas to Sardar Kapur Singh and Sardar Daljeet Singh, agrees with him. It will be remembered that Guru Nanak exhorted the Siddhas to stop muttering Mantras and to join the struggle in the real world in order to qualify for salvation.

Being conditioned by the false concept, he is obliged to observe, “attributes of royalty” were added later to the status of Guru. That status is derived from the profound concept that God is the only True Sovereign. The concept is available in Sikhism from the day one. Erudite Bhattas whose Coronation Odes, composed on the occasion of the installation of the second to fifth Gurus form a part of the Guru Granth Sahib compiled in 1604 AD, belie McLeod conclusively.

He draws various distinctions between Guru’s message which he admits is cogent, clear and sophisticated and that of the Sants whom he labels as “ordinary people” and yet he continues to maintain that Sikhism is a part of the Sant tradition. That is possible if we totally forget that the Guru claimed Prophethood, took proper care to preserve and preach his doctrine, appointed a successor to continue his work and that his Panth is making history even today. Of no Sant and of no other Panth can this be said.

McLeod’s discussion of taboos of religion does not take into account that they never need yield to a rational justification or interpretation. In the banning of tobacco, halal or sexual relations with Muslims, he sees anti-Muslim bias at work. He forgets that only Gurus’ distinct orders could have made them an article of faith and not the ephemeral ground of historical antagonism with rulers paying lip sympathy to another great culture. If rationalization is to be sought, it has to be in terms of the

Sikh doctrine contained in the Guru Granth Sahib. It upholds sanctity of the institution of marriage and bans extramarital relations. Khalsa rahat stresses it only partly. Anti-halal taboo is in the context of the Guru resenting its imposition, as a symbol of political power's claim of sole access to spiritual truths. Tobacco can be considered Muslim by no stretch of imagination. The author's attempt at projecting such taboos as anti-Muslim, is untenable. The conclusion that he somehow desires to undo Guru's reconciliatory work and use taboos as a wedge between two great cultures, similar in so many fundamental ways, is inescapable.

One prominent feature of the book is the many loose ends the author leaves untied. Banda's dispute with the Tat Khalsa is made a capital of, but the eventual reconciliation and the acceptance of the Khalsa rahat by them is conveniently forgotten. Presumably, because such an event taking place amongst the contemporaries of the Tenth Guru would knock the bottom out of the theory being propounded in this book. Incidentally, Ranjit Singh was not proclaimed a Maharaja in 1801, as is clear from there being no mention of it in the Anglo-Sikh treaty of friendship concluded in 1806. Not the least interesting part of the book is where (p.74 paras 1 &2) he articulates Hindu perceptions without quoting a single source. He deems it highly relevant, although it is external criticism on behalf of unnamed representatives of a rival culture. This selective use of history makes his book a piece of motivated propaganda.

The book fails to work out the theological implications of Guru Nanak describing God as having unshorn hair. Had it been analyzed in the context of Sikh concept of Nam-simran, that is, the progressive realization of the virtues prophetically revealed to be attributes of God, McLeod would not have ascribed the practice of wearing the hair long to Jat cultural traits. Even otherwise the tradition of wearing the hair long can be traced to the hoary past of Indians in general. It appears to have continued into late medieval times. The last great Mughal who ordered the first general massacre of Sikhs after the execution of Baba Banda, also issued an edict requiring all state employees to shave off. The idea was to detect Sikhs who managed to survive under the cloak of State patronage. It is recorded that many Hindus committed suicide by jumping into wells to avoid suffering the indignity. The episode draws attention to two vital aspects contemporary Mughal administration was aware that the Khalsa wears the hair long because of deep rooted faith and the Hindus regarded the practice to be the hallmark of dignity.

The selective use of historical evidence is rampant in this small volume. A wrong date, and an unexpected style of writing, are deemed conclusive arguments to dismiss two Rahat Namas as spurious. In spite of "other features indicating an early date" of a document, the author arbitrarily assigns a convenient date with remarkable precision ("eighteenth or early nineteenth century") just before voicing a full throated lament at the absence of earlier documents. His preference for Chibber becomes comprehensible when he affirms, "portions of its prolific content can be

offensive to modern Khalsa taste", and that it emphasizes "menace posed by polluting Muslims". That a Brahmin is articulating the grievances of his parent community never occurs to McLeod. The use of B40 too falls into this category.

What is one to make of his inference that throughout history the general run of Sikhs have always considered themselves as Hindus, particularly if one knows that he is basing that inference on a single entry in one of the Janam Saakhis written by an unknown writer?

The book is also full to the brim of convenient of self-serving arguments which are casually dropped for the first time and are latter exploited as established facts. Institution of langar is introduced as an innovation by Guru Amar Dass, quite forgetting that Guru Nanak had himself set it up at Kartarpur, or that the existence of Guru Angad's langar, under the personal supervision of Mata Khivi is mentioned in the Guru Granth Sahib. The author also employs logical absurdities to buttress false arguments. His Jat theory has been exposed as one big conjective, yet he continues to cling to it by the fingernails. He is prepared to assume anything and everything to support the untenable thesis, but fails to see militancy writ large in Guru Nanak's message. Riddles such as, although the Muslims were freely employed in positions of authority during the Sikh rule, the Sikhs still held on to anti-Muslim bias, are hard to understand. One that must surely take the cake is found on pp. 73 - 74. He is arguing that the separate Sikh identity is contested by "many Punjabi Hindus who have no claim to formal affiliation with the Panth". Would it be worth mentioning if Jews or Christians objected to the separate identity of Muslims? McLeod is like the proverbial "bull in China shop" and is working overtime to ensure that reputation.

For building up his curious thesis Dr. McLeod has had to turn a Nelson's eye to several universally acknowledged doctrines of Sikh theology, and it speaks volumes for his disdain for facts, that he has done it with perfect equanimity. Guru Granth Sahib, the duly appointed Guru, is the only Sikh canon. He would put the Dasam Granth on the same pedestal notwithstanding the fact that it was not in existence until well after the demise of Guru Gobind Singh. It was compiled around the middle of the eighteenth century and the decision on its authorship, final form and status was consciously deferred by a collective will of the Panth. That is where the matter rests even today. It is, however, very clear that had Guru Gobind Singh intended that his bani should have canonistical value, he would have added it to Guru Granth Sahib, just as he entered the bani of his immediate predecessor. That is what Guru Arjan had done. No action of an individual or a group in history, or the pleadings of a pseudo historian, can every change that established fact.

Doctrinally, the Sikh Prophets have demanded absolute allegiance to what they preached, since it was the Will of God they revealed. As illustrated by the oft used

simile in Sikh theology, a Sikh must consider himself a dead-body and must completely surrender to the doctrine, as the body completely and finally accepts the grave - Guru being likened to the grave. In these conditions and in the face of the well settled doctrine that all Gurus are the same Nanak, how is it possible for anyone to claim allegiance only to one, or a few, of the Ten Masters? How can difference in preachings be at all assumed?

McLeod's main purpose of propounding the strange thesis becomes clear towards the end. It is simply to challenge the authority of the SGPC and to pave the way for handing over of Gurdwara management to Hindus, with the help of a spurious definition of a Sikh. He imagines that his generally lax Sikh friends will provide the necessary handle; in that, he is certainly mistake. But Reverend McLeod has perhaps discovered a devious method of ushering in an era of communal harmony which has eluded India for thousands of years. This can be achieved merely by employing the same methodology to define Indian Christians and Indian Muslims. If it is provided that whosoever desires to be taken for a Sikh, Christian or a Muslim should be regarded as such, the currently explosive Babri Masjid issue can be solved by the ballot, strife in Christian North-East and the Muslim struggle in Jammu and Kashmir can come to an end. Sentiments of those who rever Muslim Saints like Nigahia, Kabir, Nizamuddin Aulia, Sakhi Sarvar and Sai Baba of Shirdi, to name only a few, can be pressed into service. Suitable stratagem can be evolved to hand over the Churches to Hindu-Christian management. After all the theory that Jesus Christ spent the last years of his life preaching in India and finally rests in Kashmir, has already received much publicity, with suitable academic veneer. This can ensure him a permanent place as a great benefactor of the sub-continent and, maybe, that of an original genius. Such a status may be worth seeking, for he is never likely to pass off as an objective historian, though his books may cause a momnetary flutter in the circles which know next to nothing about Sikhism so far. The day is not distant when he will be "discovered".

Search for a Definition

by

Devinder Singh Chahal

There are many types of definitions of "Sikh" and "Sikhism" in various books, encyclopedias and dictionaries. It is a matter of great concern for the Sikhs that no correct definition of the terms "Sikh" and "Sikhism" has been given by any Sikh scholar or any Sikh institution so far. The irony of the fact is that words "Nanak" "Sikh", and "Sikhism", which have been explained invariably in almost all English to English dictionaries, are missing from the **English Panjabi Dictionary** published by the Panjabi University, Patiala. But to my surprise, the word "Christ" and "Christianity" were in there. So is the case with many other books published on Sikhism. Recently some books (**Sikhism - a Comparative Study of its Theology and Mysticism** (1979) by Daljit Singh, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi; **Sikhism** (1980) Edited by M.L. Joshi, Panjabi University, Patiala and **Perspectives on the Sikh Tradition** (1986) Edited by Gurdev Singh, Academy of Sikh Religion & Culture, Patiala, were published to represent real Sikhism and to remove the misrepresentations reported in other books. Although these books have given very good account of Sikhism, there was no attempt by any of the authors to define the terms "Sikh" and "Sikhism".

Man has made tremendous advances in the fields of science and technology during the last fifty years and we are progressing at a much higher speed than that of twenty years ago. Sikhism as the youngest religion, will be entering into the 21st Century soon, when it would be only six centuries old, to face the test of the time along with the other religions of the world. It is a pity that the Sikh scholars and institutions have failed to define even the most common terms "Sikh" and "Sikhism" accurately so far. There is a definition of "Sikh" given in Sikh Rahit Maryada (Codes of Conduct) issued by Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC). Amritsar which contains some redundancies.

It is time the Sikh scholars and institutions get together to define these terms accurately and guide the authors and publishers, especially of dictionaries and encyclopaedias to follow the precise and concise terms of "Sikh" and "Sikhism" in

their new editions. There is also a dire need of a special research project to work out a new and uniform Rahit Maryada to replace the old one and the others adopted by various Sikh institutions to serve their own purpose.

I have, in this article, taken the liberty, and some courage, to define "Sikh" and "Sikhism", the most difficult task. But I would like to emphasize that these definitions are not final but suggestive, for further research to coin the most appropriate ones. Before we start defining these terms with help of Gurbani, let us look into some of those already given by various scholars.

1. Encyclopaedia Britannica (1973) 14th edition. Vol. 20: page 505. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., Chicago, USA (By K.S. Abbreviations probably stand for Khushwant Singh).

"SIKHISM, an Indian religion combining Islamic and Hindu beliefs. founded in the late 15th century A.D. by Nanak, the first Guru (teacher)".

"The word "Sikh" is derived from the Sanskrit "Shishya" (disciple)".

"SIKHS" are disciples of their ten Gurus, some whose writings are compiled in the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh sacred books."

"An act of the Indian legislature defines a Sikh as one "who believes in the ten Gurus and the Granth Sahib".

Comments : These are incomplete definitions because important characteristics of "Sikh" and "Sikhism" are missing. Khushwant Singh, the author, assumes that the readers already understand the Islamic and Hindu beliefs to visualize what Sikhism could be. However, these are also incorrect terms.

2. **The New Encyclopaedia Britannica (1974)** 15th edition. (Reprinted in 1991). Vol 27 : page 281. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. Chicago, USA. (By K.S., Abbreviations probably stand for Khushwant Singh).

"Sikhism was a historical development of the Hindu Vaishnava Bhakti movement - a devotional movement among followers of the god Vishnu - that began in Tamil country and was introduced to the north by Ramanuja (traditionally, 1017-1137)".

"The word Sikh is derived from the Pali "Sikkha" or Sanskrit "Sisya", meaning "disciple". Sikhs are disciples of their Ten Gurus (religious teachers, beginning with Nanak (1469-1539) and ending with Gobind Singh (1666-1708)".

Comments In these definitions "the combination of Islamic beliefs" and "founded

by Nanak" given in the definition of the 14th edition of Encyclopaedia Britannica have been deleted and Sikhism has been brought closer to Hinduism in the 15th edition of Encyclopaedia Britannica, by the same author. It indicates that Khushwant Singh is now trying to amalgamate Sikhism into Hinduism by removing the Islamic belief from his previous definition given in the 14th edition of Encyclopaedia Britannica. probably, he has drawn the above conclusion from Sher Singh's work " **Philosophy of Sikhism (1944)** wherein it has been mentioned that Sikhism is an offshoot of Vaisnavite Hinduism; and from W.H. McLeod's work: **Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion (1968 &1976)** wherein theory of eclectic faith has been rejected and it is asserted that it is a branch of Hindu Vaishnavism (Quoted from the 15th edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1991) vol 27, pg 284)

3. **Crim, Keith, (General Editor) Abingdon Dictionary of Living Religions (1981)** Abingdon, Nashville, Tennessee, USA, page 688. (The portion on Sikhism is written by Khushwant Singh).

"**SIKHISM** is an eclectic faith combining the teachings of Bhakti Hinduism and the muslim Sufis".

"**SIKH** The Sikh Gurdwara Act of 1925 defines a Sikh "one who believes in the Ten Gurus and the Granth Sahib".

Comments: These definitions were also written by Khushwant Singh and he almost sticks to his first definition of the 14th edition of Encyclopaedia Britannica because, by eliminating the beliefs of Islam (Muslim Sufis) as he did in the 15th edition, the prominent features of Sikhism like monotheism and the rejection of idolatry and caste system, would be missing from the definition of Sikhism.

If we analyse the definitions given by Khushwant Singh it appears that, for him, the term "Sikhism" is so loose that he can change it any time according to whims without giving any consideration to what the Gurbani ("Sabad", hymns of Sikh Gurus) says.

4. **Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (197)** G. & C. Merriam Company, Springfield, Massachusettes, USA.

"**SIKH** (Hindi, lit, disciple): an adherent of a monotheistic religion of India founded about 1500 by a Hindu under Islamic influence and marked by rejection of idolatry and caste".

Comments : This definition also indicates the nature of eclectic faith combining Hinduism and Islam.

5. **Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language**

Unabridged (1976) G. & C. Merriam Company, Springfield, Massachusetts, USA.

“**SIKH** : an adherent of Sikhism.”

“**SIKH** : adj. 1. of, relating to, or characteristic of Sikhism
2. of, relating to, or characteristic of the Sikh.”

“**SIKHISM** : a radically monotheistic religion of India founded about 1500 in the Punjab and characterized by its worship of one deity, by its allegiance to sacred scriptures, and by its witness to a line of 10 personal gurus until the guruship was transferred in 1708 - Compare **Khalsa 2, Nanakpanthi.**”

Comments : This term is quite independent of having any bias from the already discussed definitions. Because it gives atleast some salient features of Sikhism. Most probably it is so because it was written by Khushwant Singh. But it has introduced two big divisions, Khalsa and Nanakpanthi, in it, which is against the basic tenets of Sikhism. It is clear from their definitions given as follows.

“**Khalsa** : 1 : the exchequer of an Indian state.
2 : a militant theocracy in the late 17th century and continuing today as one of the significant divisions of the Sikhs.”

Nanakpanthi : a member of major Sikh party distinguished by its primary emphasis on the peaceful tenets of Guru Nanak.”

6. **The Random House College Dictionary (1981) Random House, Inc. 201 E. 50th street, New York, N.Y. USA.**

“**SIKHISM** : the religion and practices of the Sikhs”.

“**SIKH** : a member of Hindu religious sect, founded in the Punjab 1500 by Guru Nanak as a reformed offshoot of Hinduism, refusing to recognize the caste system or the supremacy of the Brahmanical priests and forbidding magic, idolatry and pilgrimages.

Comments : These definitions make Sikhism as a reformed Offshoot of Hinduism.

7. **The shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Principles (1983) Clarendon Press, Oxford.**

“**SIKHISM** : the tents of the Sikhs”.

“**SIKH** : a member of military community belonging to the Punjab, where it was originally established as a religious sect by Nanak Shah in the early part of the 16th c.”

Comments: Here the Sikhs have been declared as a militant community.

8. **The Canadian Encyclopaedia (1958)** vol. III, page 1695. Publishers Edmonton. (Sikhism written by Norman Buchignani).

SIKHISM : a major world religion, arose through the teachings of Guru Nanak (1469-1538) in Punjab, India. Its adherents call themselves Sikhs (disciples)."

"Guru Nanak travelled widely and incorporated many ideas from the Hindu Sant (saint) tradition, some from the Hindu Bhakti (devotional) tradition and, indirectly, some from the Muslim Sufis into **his own distinctive theology**. He believed in monotheism and rejected Hindu notions of caste, idol worship and bodily mortifications, as well as the belief in salvation through ascetic isolation from worldly affairs. Nanak claimed that salvation was accessible to all through devotion to God and the maintenance of a moral, responsible and selfless everyday life. Nanak's ideas were elaborated by 9 subsequent gurus..."

Comments : It appears from this definition that Buchignani has tried to put as many real characteristics, e.g. major world religion, arose through the teachings of Guru Nanak; his own distinctive theology; salvation accessible to all; maintenance of a moral, responsible and selfless everyday life; Nanak's ideas were elaborated by 9 subsequent gurus, etc, of Sikhism as known to him. His definition seems to be much better than all others discussed here, although it has been mentioned that Guru Nanak incorporated some ideas from Hinduism and Islam, which is not true. However, we appreciate his efforts to disseminate some realities about Sikhism in Canada through the Canadian Encyclopaedia.

9. **Dr Santokh Singh Dharam** (Quoted from letter of Daljit Singh Jawa, Topeka, Kansas, USA published in World Sikh News. Vol. 7 (21) May 24, 1991, page 5.

"SIKHISM : A strictly monotheistic religion founded by Guru Nanak (1469 to 1535). It believes in one supreme being, the absolute timeless God, who pervades his creation and yet transcends it. It advocates repetition of Naam (God's name) as a means to attainment of the ultimate bliss. Sikhism is not a sect of Hinduism because it rejects the fundamental Hindu beliefs such as caste system, idol worship, pluralism and dualism".

"SIKH" : a follower of Sikhism. The word Sikh means disciple, a seeker of truth. Sikhs are disciples of their Gurus, Guru Nanak (1469-1535 AD) through Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) and Guru Granth Sahib, their holy scripture".

Comments : These are not definitions because these are descriptive in nature and also lack some of the most essential characteristics of Sikhism.

10. **Dr Karnail Singh** (Gurdwara Gazette, February & March, 1990, page 6)

“SIKH : As it were the world Sikh derived from the Sanskrit word “shisya” which is translated as disciple in English. Let us say that a Sikh is a disciple of the guru and tries to discipline his lower self into the higher. He is admitted into the community after a specific initiation ceremony”.

Comments : According to the rules for defining a term, it is not a definition at all. Because Dr Singh started to define with a phrase, “Let us say that”. And he was also not specific about “the Guru” e.g. which guru? In Sikhism there is no guru other than the ten Sikh Gurus (from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh) and the “Sabad” (hymns of Sikh Gurus) i.e. Aad Guru Granth Sahib.

11. **Some Observations by the Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh.**

Recently the Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh has observed same trends (similar to those recorded above) in some books on Sikhism especially those written by W.H. McLeod. Some of the misrepresentations are being reproduced from a booklet, **“Some Recent Publications on Sikhism - An Evaluation (1990)”**, Published by this Institute, as follows:

“The first in the series, which set this unfortunate trend, was the statement that it was misleading to call Guru Nanak the founder of Sikh religion, as he did not originate a new school of thought or set of teachings. This observation has been the base of similar other views that Sikhism is a part of the Bhakti tradition, being an amalgam of the Vaishnava and Nath systems, or an offshoot of the Vedantic thought in the Upanishads. Another scholar has even concluded that it would be unpatriotic and unspiritual for the Sikhs to try to maintain a separate identity from that of the Hinduism. In short, the independent ideological base and identity of Guru Nanak’s religion have been questioned and denied.

In the same strain, it has been asserted that the Gurus did not speak with one voice, and that the ideology of Guru Nanak was quite different from that of Guru Gobind Singh. A thesis has appeared that Guru Gobind Singh resorted to the mythology of the goddess because of the needs of militancy, which could not be supported by the ideology of the Guru Granth Sahib or the earlier Gurus.

In the line with the foregoing, it has been argued that Sikh militarisation was the result of large scale influx of Jats in the Sikh fold during the time of the later Guru, and that many of the features of Sikhism like egalitarianism and symbols like “keshas” and “kirpan”, were adopted by the Sikhs because these were features of the Jat cultural pattern. A virtual endorsement of this view was made in a paper which says that Sikhism may be spoken of as a rural religion, and that, when dealing with beliefs,

rituals and practices of the Sikhs - be they religious or political - it is always worthwhile constantly to remind ourselves that we are fundamentally dealing with peasantry, and world view of this social class has historically always been very different from other social classes. It has also been recorded that the Jats bewail the fact that the Gurus did not confer Guruship on any Jat”.

In sum, a careful examination of these definitions indicates that Sikhism has been defined either as an eclectic faith (Combining Hindu and Islamic beliefs), a reformed sect of Hinduism, or a military community, founded by a Hindu under a Islamic influence. Various authors have given different dates for Guru Nank. The correct dates are 1469-1539 AD.

Causes of Such Misrepresentations

It also appears from the above definitions that it seems to be beyond the ken of the authors, or writers, to understand and interpret the Gurbani in its reality and entirely define Sikhism. According to Daljit Singh’s analysis (in his book on page vii) of this problem, it is due to the following reason :

“As the Indian tradition comprises a large heterogeneous variety of systems, there is a general chauvinistic tendency to regard Sikhism as a part and parcel of it”.

In the same context it is interesting to note another chauvinistic tendency in the following passage from the “Foreword” written by Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, President, Sahit Akademi, national Professor of India in Humanities for a book, **Guru Nanak : Founder of Sikhism (1969)** written by Dr Trilochan Singh and published by Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee Delhi.

“.....and Guru Nanak built up and organised during his lifetime a very important religious persuasion which was broad-based on the foundations of Vedantic Monotheistic “Jnana” and Puranic Bhakti. **The faith preached by Guru Nanak was nothing new for India**, it was basically the old monotheistic creed of the ancient Hindus as propounded in the Vedas and the Upanishads - the Vedanta with its insistence upon “Jnana” or knowledge of the One Supreme Reality. And this monotheistic basis was fortified, so to say, to put the matter in a simple form by “Bhakti” or Faith as inculcated in later Puranic Hinduism. **The Sikh Panth was nothing but a reformed and simplified “Sanatana Dharma” of medieval times**”.

It is pity that a noted Sikh Scholar, Dr Trilochan Singh, and the well-established Sikh institution, Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Delhi failed to notice and allowed to be published the above profanatory and derogatory statements about Guru Nanak and Sikhism in the “Foreword” written by Dr Suniti Kumar for the above book of

Dr Trilochan Singh.

But according to M.A. Macauliffe such chauvinistic tendencies seem to be calculated ones to amalgamate Sikhism into Hinduism, as is apparent from his following observations.

“Truly wonderful are the strength and vitality of Hinduism. It is like the boa constrictor of the India forests. When a petty enemy appears to worry it, it winds round its opponent, crushes it in its folds, and finally causes it to disappear in its capacious interior. In this way, many centuries ago, Hinduism on its own ground disposed of Buddhism, which was largely a Hindu reformation; in this way, in a prehistoric period, it absorbed the religion of the Scythian invaders of Northern India; in this way it has converted uneducated Islam in India into a semi-paganism; and in this way it is disposing of the reformed and once hopeful religion of Baba Nanak. Hinduism has embraced Sikhism in its fold; the still comparatively young religion is making a vigorous struggle for life, but its ultimate destruction is, it is apprehended, inevitable without State support.” (M.A. Macauliffe, 1978 (1893). **The Sikh Religion**. S. Chand & Company Ltd. New Delhi, page LVII).

The brief survey on the definition of Sikhism also showed that there is a general tendency to equate it with Hinduism. Why it is so? One good reason could be, as opined out by Khushwant Singh in the **Abingdon Dictionary of Living Religions** (page 688), is as follows; “Since all the Sikhs” ten gurus and the vast majority of those who accepted their teachings were Hindus, the influence of Hinduism on the development of Sikhism was preponderant. “Here I would like to point out that had the Hindu followers of the ten Sikh Gurus followed their teachings in its reality and entirely, then there would have not been preponderant influence of Hinduism on Sikhism.

Now it become very clear that the causes of such misrepresentations are due to the fact that those followers who did not follow the real Sikhism, and those writers who did not represent Sikhism in its proper perspective, were unable to understand and interpret the Gurbani of Sikh Gurus in its reality and completely.

Moreover, it is also assumed that did so because they could not free their minds from the shackles of Hinduism.

My Definition : Before we define any term we should bear in mind as to what is definition? Definitions is : **a word or phrase expressing the essential nature (characteristics) of a person or a thing**. If we look back to the previously discussed definitions, it clearly indicated that these definitions lacked the essential characteristics of Sikhism and were also composed of misrepresentations and distortions of the reality. Therefore, these definitions are not only incomplete but also incorrect.



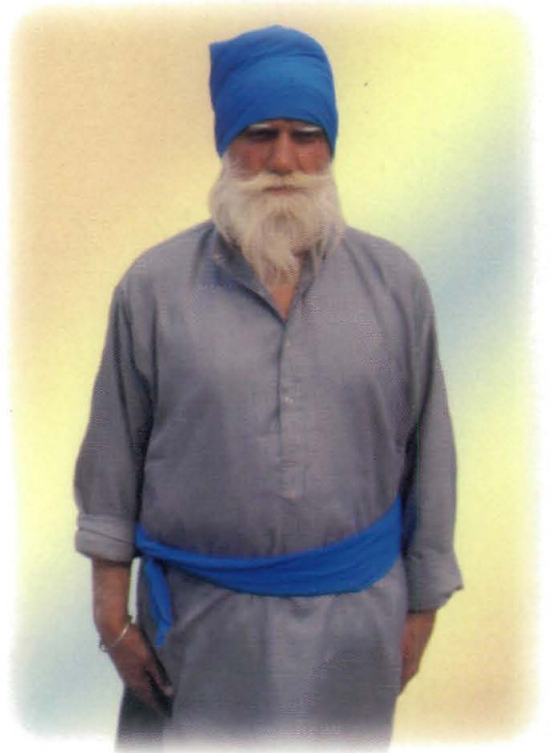
Nihang- c. 1860 by G. Western



Nihang



Nirankari Baba Dyal Ji



Sikh- Blue Belt



Radha Soami Maharaj Shiv Dyal Ji



Radha Soami Maharaj Charan Singh



Namdhari Maharaj Jagjit Singh Ji



Namdhari Sikh

Bases for Defining “Sikh” And “Sikhism”.

For defining these terms we have to base our views on the Gurbani (Sabad”, hymns of Sikh Gurus) embodied in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS) by the Fifth Nanak, Guru Arjan Sahib and the Tenth Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh and its interpretation in its reality and completely. And we have to follow this rule strictly because any other publication or information would create serious problems to portray the real concept of these terms. There is already such an example Bhagwant Singh Sidhu, Advocate General, Punjab, has tried to prove that the Sikhs are Hindus and there is no difference between Sikhism and Hinduism in his book. **Chorahe Te Khlote Sikh** (1985) (in Punjab), Dhanwant Singh and Co., 26 Yadavindra Colony, Patiala. He based this concept by using Bani which was not incorporated into the AGGS, by using Bani not written by the Sikh Guru, and also by misrepresenting the Gurbani of Sikh Gurus.

The Sikh Gurus have clearly defined and explained what the Gurbani is :

“Bani Guru, Guru hai Bani
Vich Bani amrit sare”

(SGGS, 982)

“Satgur ki Bani Sat Sarup Hai
Gurbani baniye...”

(SGGS, 304)

That is why I have confined myself for defining these terms by using Gurbani of Sikh Gurus which has been incorporated into the SGGS by the Fifth Nanak, Guru Arjan Sahib, and the Tenth Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh. Moreover, while quoting the Gurbani from the SGGS, we should be very diligent to interpret its real Philosophy. To do so, we should keep our mind free from the old and strongly rooted convictions and by keeping in view the knowledge of all sciences known today. I may add here that there were very few Sikhs even during the time of the Sikh Gurus who could interpret the Gurbani in its reality and entirely as conveyed by them (Gurus). It is evident from this verse of Gurbani

“Sacha sabad sachi hai Bani
Gurmukh virlai kinai pachhani”

(SGGS, 1044)

Macauliffe also made a similar observation as early as 1893 in his book on page LVI

as follows "The dialects and languages of the Gurus are now largely forgotten. There are no readable or trustworthy commentaries or translations of their compositions in any language, and the Sikhs find it difficult or impossible to understand them."

Therefore, it is very important that the Gurbani Should be interpreted properly before defining or writing on Sikhism.

Origin of the Word "Sikh":

Before defining the terms "Sikh" and "Sikhism", we must trace the origin of the word "Sikh". The word "Sikh" is very old one which has been extensively used in the Gurbani. It means one who follows the advice of Sikh Gurus. It also means as "advice".

"Guru Satgur ka jo Sikh akhai so bhalke
uth (i) Har Nam dhiyavai"

(SGGS. 305)

"Gursikh mit chalho Gurchali Jo Guru kahe
soi bhal manho Har Har katha nirali"

(SGGS. 667)

This Sikhs Gurus did not use Sanskrit for writing their bani, instead they used the language which was spoken by the people so that could easily understand what the Gurbani means to them. The word "Sikh" was used in the same form and meanings during the time of Buddha (563?-483? B.C.) as was used in the Gurbani. Thus the word "Sikh" was in use at least about six centuries before the birth of Christ. When the Buddhists wrote their sacred book in the language spoken by the people at that time, they named their sacred book as "**Pali**". Consequently the language used in their sacred book became to be known as "**Pali**". Keeping this fact in view I shall call that language as "**Ancient Panjabi**" because it was the same language which was spoken in the erstwhile Punjab with various dialects at the time of Buddha and is still being spoken in the divided Punjab at present with various dialects. The "Ancient Panjabi" word "Sikh" is still being used in both the Punjabs (India and Pakistan) in the same form and meanings as it was used before and during the time of Buddha and then during the time of Sikh Gurus.

It was only recently that the language spoken by the people of erstwhile Punjab started to be called as "Panjabi". The Muslims started to penetrate into the Indian subcontinent through Persia by 700 AD and by 1030 they extended their rule over Indus valley and the whole of Punjab. (**The Last Two Million Years (1974)**) The

Reader's Digest Association, NY). Therefore, it is evident that the name "Punjab" (Panj = five+ **ab** = rivers, water), a Persian word, was given to the "Land of Five Rivers" by the new settlers, Persians, not very long time ago i.e. around 700 AD. Thus the language spoken by the people of that area started to be called as "Panjabi" and the people of this area were also called as "Panjabi" by these new settlers, the Persians.

Sanskrit was never a spoken language of the people because it was meant only for the elite and the Brahmins. It is estimated that Sanskrit was synthesized in the erstwhile Punjab by Paninni around about 400 B.C. from the language spoken by the people of the erstwhile Punjab i.e. "Ancient Panjabi" Paninni also prepared the grammar of this newly synthesized language, **Sanskrit** (**Sans** = perfect + **Krit** = to adore or to arrange). As the Sanskrit was a grammatically arranged language, therefore, it is evident that the so-called Prakrit via sophisticated name given to the "**not grammatically arrange language**" i.e. **Ancient Panjabi** by the pro-Sanskrit scholars. In other words "Prakrit" is an antonym of "Sanskrit", and a synonym of "Ancient Punjabi" word Shisya from the commonly spoken. Therefore, it is clear that Pannani synthesized the word "Sikh" of "Ancient Panjabi", the language of that time. There is long list of Panjabi words being spoken today which are very similar to those of "Prakrit" ("Ancient Panjabi") and "Pali" (which were spoken before Sanskrit came into existence) and also to those of Sanskrit (which shows similarities of Sanskrit with Panjabi) (**Panjabi Te Hoar Bhashawan (1970)** (in Panjabi) Bhasha Vibhag, Patiala) to prove the above thesis. Therefore it is absolutely wrong to say that the word "Sikh" was derived from Sanskrit word "Shisya". as is quoted in many books, encyclopaedias and dictionaries by many scholars. In fact, it is just the reverse i.e. The word Shisya was derived from "Ancient Panjabi" word, "Sikh", which was spoken as early as 600 B.C. i.e. at least 200 years before the Sanskrit was synthesized.

It is interesting to add here that Barth (Quoted by P. Masson- Oursel, H.D. WilliafliGrabOwSka, and P. Stern. **Ancient India and Indian Civilization (1934)** Routledge Kegan Paul Ltd, London) gave convincing documents that the great epic, Mahabharata, (and Vedas) were written as early as 3102 B.C. or more correctly about 800 B.C. If it is so, then the language of these sacred books could be the language spoken at that time i.e. "Ancient Panjabi" or the so-called "Prakrit" because Sanskrit was not evolved by that time (it was evolved only about 400 B.C.) The language of the erstwhile Punjab. Later on, these sacred books were translated into Sanskrit to keep them confined to the Brahmins.

Definition of "Sikh" in Rahit Maryada of SGPC

To discuss the definition given by the SGPC it is necessary to reproduce here the original definition in Panjabi to understand its English translation properly :

“A woman or a man who believes in one Almighty, ten guru Sahiban (from Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji to Sri Guru Gobind Singh Sahib), Sri Guru Granth Sahib and Bani and advice of ten Gurus Sahibans and the Amrit or Dashmesh ji, and does not accept any other religion, is a Sikh”.

The above definition of “Sikh” is the best one given by any Sikh scholar or a Sikh institution so far. This definition was coined by a committee of most eminent Sikh theologians of 40’s after having many sittings and discussions. The draft of the Sikh Rahit Maryada prepared by this committee was submitted to the SGPC on the 7th January, 1945 and recommended some additions and deletions in it. According to the recommendation of the committee, the SGPC accepted (approved) this draft on the 3rd February, 1945 with some additions and deletions. It is not clear from the available literature what additions and deletions, recommended by the committee, were made in this draft.

However, there are a few apparent redundancies in this definition, which can be amicably settled. For example “A woman or a man” could easily be replaced with “One” or “A Person”. “Bani and advice of ten Gurus Sahibans” is not a correct statement in this definition because all the ten Sikh Gurus did not write the Bani. It could also be easily modified. Another statement, “does not accept any other religion” is redundant, since the believer in Gurbani automatically would not accept any religion other than Sikhism.

Proposed Definition of “Sikh”

SIKH “One, who believes in One Almighty, the ten Sikh Gurus (From Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh) and their Bani (which was incorporated into the Aad Guru Granth Sahib by the Fifth Nanak, Guru Arjun Sahib, and the Tenth Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh), the Amrit-system of the Tenth Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh, is a Sikh”.

Defining “Sikhism”

SIKHISM is a religion based on philosophy given in the Gurbani revealed by the Sikh Gurus (Which is incorporated into the Aad Guru Granth Sahib by the Fifth Nanak, Guru Arjun Sahib, and the Tenth Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh).

The above short definition is based on the following verses from Gurbani:

“Sikhi sikhya Gur-Vichar
Nadri karam langhai paar”.
(SGGS-465)

But the above definition does not give the salient characteristic of Sikhism, which

must be included into a self-contained definition. Therefore, the following definition of "Sikhism" has been coined according to the Gurbani of the Sikh Gurus :

Proposed Definition of "Sikhism"

Sikhism founded by Guru Nanak (1469-1539): is believing in the One and Only Almighty, who never incarnated Himself into any form, and cannot be structured into any form; living under the command of His "hukums" (rules created by Him to control the life and the Universe), leading a truthful worldly life in humility, without egoism and in equality, realizing His Being, the Naam, to achieve salvation without falling into any ritual; and the Amrit-system of the Tenth Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh. All the characteristics used to define "Sikhism" have been taken from the Gurbani of Sikh Gurus, which was incorporated into the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) by the Fifth Nanak Guru Sahib and by the Tenth Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh., The superscripts on all the above characteristics refer to the verse of Gurbani from the AGGS and the page with the succession number of Guru Nanak as "Mahla" (M) e. g. M5 means Fifth Nanak, Guru Arjun Sahib. There could be many more appropriate verses from Gurbani which could be cited to support the above characteristics of the term, Sikhism. And there are also possibilities that I might have omitted some important characteristics in this definition.

Some scholars may object that I have not used bani of Guru Gobind Singh in defining these terms. I did so intentionally due to the following two reasons:-

1. There is a lot of controversy about the bani of Guru Gobind Singh as to which one is the real bani written by Guru Gobind Singh (See **Sehje Rachio Khalsa, 1988** (in Panjabi), by Harinder Singh Mehboob, published by the Author, Khalsa College, Garhdiwala, Hoshiarpur, pages 639-789); and
2. My study indicates that Guru Gobind Singh carried out the mission of Guru Nanak and he did what was already laid out in the Gurbani of Sikh Gurus which was incorporated into the Aad Guru Granth Sahib by the Fifth Nanak, Guru Arjun Sahib, and by himself. While adding the Gurbani of Ninth Nanak, Guru Teg Bahadur, the Tenth Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh, could have also added his own bani in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib, but he did not do so. Why? I guess nobody knows so far. Nevertheless, I think he did not do so because he was simply giving a practical shape to the whole philosophy of Guru Nanak which was already well elaborated by Guru Nanak and the subsequent Gurus. The Sixth Nanak, Guru Hargobind Sahib did not write any Gurbani but he was the first Guru who initiated to put into practice the philosophy of Guru Nanak. However, it was the Tenth Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh, who completed the mission of Guru Nanak.

The Amrit-system The last characteristics, "the Amrit system" of the definition was

developed by the Tenth Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh, from the sum of the whole philosophy of Guru Nanak to give a distinct and unique Characteristics to Sikhism. Some of the verses of Sikh Gurus which have been taken from the AGGS on which the philosophy of Amrit-system was formulated by the Tenth Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh, are as follows (Many more examples could be cited to support the above thesis)

“Sabad” (words, advice) of the Sikh Gurus is an Amrit (elixir) for the Sikhs
(SGGS : 35)

A Sikh is he who follows the advice (sabad) of the Sikh Gurus
(SGGS: 667)

Casteism is unacceptable (SSGS: 83 & numerous other contexts)

To be ready for self sacrifice while treading on the path of truth laid out by the Sikh Gurus
“All the virtues of heart and the excellence of mind :
“Jau to prem khelan ka chau
Sir dhar tali, gali meri ao”
(SGGS. 1412)

To protect the personal honour and rights
“je jivai pat lathi jai
Sab haram jeta kichh khai”
(SGGS. 142)

Rejection of aggression as well as fear psychosis :
“Bhae kahoon ko det nahe
Nehe bhae manat aan
(SGGS. 1427)

Integral principle of humility having the power to cut the fetters of slavery and to keep peace based on justice:
“Bal hoa bandhan chhutey
Sabh kichh hot upaye.
(SGGS. 1429)

No differentiation between the rulers and the ruled; and the teacher and the taught
“Tu ape Gur chela hai
gun vich de tujhe dhiyahei”
(SGGS. 750)

Establishment of Benign Sovereignty (Halemi Raj)
(SGGS. 74)

“Sabh sukhah vurthiya
Eho hoa Halemi Raj jio
(SGGS. 74)

Right to rule given only to those who do justice
“Takht bahe takhtey ki Laik”
(SGGS. 1088)

Creation of Quintumvirate of Panj Pyaras and bestowing on them the spiritual and temporal powers to establish the Halemi Raj (Benign Sovereignty).

To give substance to this philosophy the discipline of 5 Ks: Kesh (uncut hair) Kangha (comb), Kirpan (sword), Kachh (short drawers) and Kara (iron bracelet) is imperative.

Note:

*This essay has been reproduced,
with permission, from “The Sikh
Review”, May 1994 Number.*

NIRANKARIS

By
Khushwant Singh

During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Hindus of western Punjab and Derajat came under the influence of Sikhism. A few accepted the Pahul and joined the Khalsa fraternity; most others continued to describe themselves as Hindus but gave up the worship of Hindu gods and the recitation of the Vedas, instead reading the Granth and joining Sikh congregations at the gurdwara. Among these Hindus there grew a custom of bringing up atleast one son as a Keshdhari Sikh. This half-Hindu, half-Sikh community belonged to the Khatri, Arora, or Bania castes. They continued to marry within their castes regardless of the change in their religious beliefs.

Dyal Das (d.1855), a bullion merchant of Peshawar, belonged to this Hindu-Sikh community. He condemned idol worship and making obeisance and performing Brahmanical ritual. The positive aspect of his teaching was that God was formless - Nirankar (hence the futility of worshipping idols or "saints"); consequently he described himself as a Nirankari. He coined the phrase

Dhan Nirankar
Deh dhari sabh khwar

Praise be to the Formless creator;
Worship of mortals is of no avail.

Dyal Das soon acquired the status of a guru and gathered around him disciples who, like him, described themselves as Nirankaris. They ran into opposition first from Hindu Brahmins and, after Dyal Das moved from Peshawar to Rawalpindi, from the Bedi descendants of Guru Nanak, who had a large following in the district. The Nirankaris were ostracised by both the Hindus and the Sikhs and had to build their own places of worship. The biggest was raised on the banks of the stream Layee four miles outside Rawalpindi. When Dyal Das died, his sandals became an object of veneration. They were placed on an altar alongside the Granth, and the temple on the Layee was named after him as Dayalsar. It became the headquarters of the

Nirankari sect.

Dyal Das was succeeded by the eldest of his three sons, Darbara Singh. Darbara Singh built new centres (biras) for the Nirankaris and began the practice of issuing encyclicals (hukumnamas) for the instruction of his followers. His chief contribution was to standardise ritual connected with births, marriage, and deaths, These rituals were a departure from the Hindu tradition in as much as they were based on the Granth and not on the Hindu sacred texts. Darbara Singh (d. 1870) was succeeded by his youngest brother, Rattan Chand (d. 1909) and Rattan Chand by his son Gurdit Singh (d. 1947). The present head of the Nirankaris is Gurdit Singh's son, Hara Singh.

Various estimates of the number of the sect have been made. The Nirankaris themselves claim a following of nearly 100,000 comprised mainly of non-Jat Sikhs and Hindus of the Arora Zargar (goldsmith) and Kshatriya castes. Until 1947, their influence was restricted to Sikh and Hindu communities of the North West Frontier Province and Kashmir. After the partition of India, Dayalsar was abandoned, and the centre was shifted first to Amritsar and then to Chandigarh, the new capital of East Punjab.

The differences between orthodox Sikhism and the Nirankaris are limited to the latter's worship of Gurus other than the ten recognised by the Sikhs. Nirankaris style Dyal Das and his successors with honorifics such as Sri-Satguru (the true guru) and Sri Hazur Sahib (his holy eminence.) They also disapprove of the militant Khalsa.

The Nirankaris are fast losing their separate identity and may, within a few decades, merge back into the Hindu or Sikh parent body. The importance of the movement lies largely in the fact that it initiated ceremonial rites which inculcated among the Sikhs a sense of separateness and thus checked the process of their absorption into Hinduism.

Note:

*Reproduced, with permission,
from Khushwant Singh's "A History
of the Sikhs," Volume 2, page 123.*

Though Baba Dayal was able to attract a number of followers known as "Nirankaris" because of his belief in one Nirankar and followed the Sikh ceremonies at birth, death, marriage and other social norms of the Sikhs, yet his movement did not make a wide impact on the Sikh masses because of the lack of education amongst them.

WHO IS A SIKH?

NAMDHARIS

By

Khushwant Singh

The Namdhari sect was founded by Balak Singh, of village Hazro in the north-west frontier region. Balak Singh had been inspired by the sermon of one Jawahar Mal, who preached the virtues of poverty and denounced the rich as godless. Balak Singh followed suit by exhorting his followers to live simply and practise no religious ritual other than repeating God's name or nam (hence namdhari). It was Balak Singh's personality more than the substance of his sermons that induced his followers to look upon him as a reincarnation of Guru Gobind Singh. Before Balak Singh died he chose one of his most ardent disciples, the carpenter Ram Singh, as his successor. The headquarters of the Namdharis shifted from Hazro to Rain Singh's village Bhaini in Ludhiana district.

Ram Singh introduced some changes in the forms of worship, appearance, and form of address which distinguished his followers from the rest of the Sikhs. Following his example, his disciples chanted hymns and, like dancing dervishes, worked themselves into a state of frenzy and emitted loud shrieks (kuks) they came therefore to be named Kukas. The Kukas wore only white handpun cloth; they bound their turbans in a style of their own (flat across the forehead instead of forming an angle); they wore necklaces of woollen rosaries; They carried staves in ~their hands; and they greeted each other with Sat Akal Purakh instead of the customary Sat Sri Akal. Although most of the Kukas came from the poorer classes of Ramgarhias, Jats, cobblers, arid mazhabis, Ram Singh made them feel as if they were the elect -the Saintly Sant Khalsa- while the others were mlecha (unclean). Ram Singh issued hukumnamas to his followers which embraced ethical, social, hygienic, as well as political matters.

Ram Singh's religious discourses began to have a political flavour. When he administered pahul, besides the usual sermon delivered on such occasions, Ram Singh spoke of the wickedness of the Sikh princes and landowners; of the assumption of guruship by the Bedi and Sodhi descendants of gurus; of the wickedness of idolatry and casteism. Despite his criticism of many Hindu practices, Ram Singh

became an ardent protector of the cow.

Ram Singh had separate gurdwaras built for his followers. He appointed subas (governors) who collected funds which were remitted to Bhaini. He arranged for the training of young men in the use of weapons and built up a paramilitary organisation. The Kukas had their own postal runners to carry secret messages.

By 1863 Ram Singh had a well-knit following of several thousands. A new version of the Sau Sakhi was circulated. It prophesied the rebirth of Guru Gobind Singh in the person of one Ram Singh, carpenter of village Bhaini, who would resurrect the Khalsa, drive the English out of Hindustan, and establish a new Sikh dynasty. Ram Singh ordered his followers to assemble at Amritsar for the Baisakhi festival to listen to a special proclamation. The fact that this was exactly what Guru Gobind Singh had done at Anandpur when he baptized the Khalsa could not have been lost on the Kukas.

Ram Singh arrived at Amritsar and found the city bristling with police. He was unable to make the proclamation. On his return to Bhaini, he was served with a notice forbidding him to leave the village. He complained that he had been victimized by "government bodies, Brahmins and many other people..." Ram Singh remained under surveillance till the government had assured itself that the Kukas would cause no disturbance.

On the Dussehra festival in autumn of 1867, Ram Singh visited Amritsar with nearly 3,500 of his followers. He was received with honour at Harimandir and other shrines and initiated over 2,000 Sikhs, including members of some well-to-do families of Zamindars. By this time Ram Singh had acquired, without any volition on his part, the status of secular leader. He travelled with a bodyguard of soldiers and held court every day.

He exchanged presents with several ruling chiefs and sent a mission to Nepal.

Kukas who had been fed on prophecies of a Sikh re-surgence could not remain quiescent for too long. But when it came to making an issue, they fastened on a matter which barely touched the sentiments of the Sikh masses, viz. protection of cows. And on this issue too they chose to vent their spleen on Muslim butchers rather than on the English. Their collision with the authorities came as a result of their attempt to stop the slaughter of kine.

Kuka fanatics murdered some Muslim butchers and their families in Amritsar and later at Raikot (Ludhiana district). For these crimes, eight Kukas were hanged and others sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. The government reimposed orders restricting Ram Singh to his village and forbade the assemblage of Kukas at religious festivals. But Kuka passions had been inflamed, and on the Maghi festival in January

1872, they flocked in the hundreds to Bhaini. Speeches were made extolling the heroism of the men who had been hanged. It was also bruited about that the time prophesied by the Sau-Sakhi for the restoration of Sikh power was at hand. Ram Singh had some difficulty in persuading his followers to return peacefully to their homes. However, one band decided to ignore their guru's advice and to attack Malerkotla, a Muslim state where slaughter of cows was permitted.

On the way to Malerkotla the gang raided the house of the Sikh zamindar of Malaudh to acquire arms. They were engaged by the zamindar's retainers and, when they entered Malerkotla, by the state constabulary. L. Cowan, the deputy commissioner of Ludhiana, joined the pursuit and captured 68 of the band. Cowan sent a note to his commissioner, T.D. Forsythe, and without any formality blew up 66 of the prisoners by tying them to the mouths of the canons.

After some years in goal, Ram Singh was allowed to receive visitors as well as to communicate with his followers. Once again he toyed with the idea of fermenting revolution in the Punjab. His followers discovered more copies of the Sau Sakhi predicting a Russian invasion of India and the founding of the dynasty of Ram Singh. Ram Singh sent an emissary to Russia to elicit help, but the mission produced no results. He also realised that the Sikhs were unwilling to revolt against their rulers. Ram Singh gave up hope and in his later days lost faith in the prophecies fabricated by his enthusiastic followers. His later letters from goal show clearly that he did not consider himself a guru but a rapati (mouthpiece) of the guru. Occasionally, when the way he had been treated made him angry, he invoked the aid of his guru (and strangely enough, of the Hindu goddesses of destruction (Sakti, Bhagwati, Jagdamba) to rid the land of the filthy cow-eating whites.

Ram Singh died in Rangoon in 1885 and was succeeded by his younger brother Hari Singh. Hari Singh was not allowed to move out of Bhaini for the 21 years he was guru. On his death in 1906, he was succeeded by his son Pratap Singh (d. 1961), who was, in his turn, succeeded by the present head, Jagjit Singh.

No reliable figures of the numbers of Kukas have been compiled. They have two centres, one at Bhaini and the other at Jiwan Nagar near Sirsa in Hissar district. They publish four journals, of which the Satyug, a weekly paper in Gurmukhi, is the oldest and the most widely circulated.

The Kukas are a distinct sub-sect who maintain little intercourse with the parent Sikh community. They have their own gurdwaras and only on rare occasions deign to join Sikh religious processions. They do not intermarry with Sikhs unless the party concerned accepts their persuasion.

The Kukas, nevertheless, more strictly adhere to the puritanical faith of Guru Nanak

and Guru Gobind than other Sikhs. Their gurdwaras are not ostentatious, and their worship is devoid of the elements of idolatry (rich canopies and coverings over the Granth, waving of censers, etc.) which have become common practice in orthodox circles. And the Kukas themselves lead austere lives; they wear the simplest of clothes and observe a rigid code of conduct; they are punctilious in attending service in their gurdwaras and in observing the taboos of food, drink, and personal deportment. They also have a place in the history of the freedom movement of India. Ram Singh was the first man to evolve non-cooperation and the use of Swadeshi (indigenous goods) as political weapons. The boycott of British goods, government schools, law courts, and the postal service and the exhortation to wear only hand-spun cloth (Khaddar) which Ram Singh propagated in the 1860's were taken up again sixty years later by Mahatma Gandhi.

Note:

Reproduced, with permission,
from Khushwant Singh's "A History
of the Sikhs", page 127.

Baba Ram Singh enjoined his followers the worship one God through prayer and meditation. The Rehatnama (moral code). prepared and enforced by him exhorted all his followers to be engaged at all times in the worship of God. He also preached against social evils such as the caste system, female infanticide, early marriage and barter of daughters in marriage popularised the simple and inexpensive Anand marriage. His teachings had a wide appeal amongst the Sikh masses. The British viewed the growing popularity of his mission with serious concern. His mission was marked by teachings of righteousness, toleration and mercy and yet some of his followers lost their head. In a fit a religious frenzy they committed excesses which resulted in a clash with the Government.

RADHA SOAMIS OF BEAS

By
Khushwant Singh

The founder of the Radha Soami sect was a Hindu banker, Shiv Dayal (1818-1878), of Agra. Shiv Dayal was greatly influenced by the teachings of the Adi Granth, and he propounded a doctrine which contained elements of both Hinduism and Sikhism. He described God as the union between radha (symbolising the soul) and Soami, the Master; hence himself as a worshipper of Radha Soami. Shiv Dayal attracted a following of Hindus and Sikhs and became the first guru of the sect. On his death the Radha Soamis split into two: the main centre was at Agra; a branch started by the Sikh disciple Jaimal Singh (1839-1913), was on the bank of river Beas, not very far from Amritsar.

The Beas Radha Soamis soon became independent of the Agra centre and had a succession of gurus—all Sikhs—of their own. On Jaimal Singh's death, one of his disciples, Sawan Singh Grewal, an engineer, became the head of the Punjab Radha Soamis. Sawan Singh enlarged the Beas centre and named it Dera Baba Jaimal Singh. During Sawan Singh's tenure, the number of Beas Radha Soamis increased rapidly. Besides Sikhs, who formed the nucleus, they included Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, and Christians. Sawan Singh (d. 1948) was succeeded by Jagat Singh, a retired professor of agriculture. After a short term of three years, Jagat Singh (d. 1951) nominated Charan Singh Grewal (a grandson of Sawan Singh) as his successor. Under Charan Singh's leadership - he is an educated man with great charismatic charm - the Beas Radha Soamis have grown into a community of substantial proportions over 100,000 followers assemble to celebrate the birthdays of their gurus. They claim the adherence of a million men and women of different nationalities and denominations.

The Beas Radha Soamis have some basic differences with orthodox Sikhism. They believe in a living guru, who initiates the disciples, who there upon become guru bhais or guru bahins (brothers-in-faith or sisters-in-faith) and greet each other with the words "radha soami" Radha Soami temples do not have the Granth Sahib but only a raised platform where the guru sits deliver a discourse. They have no kirtan because they believe that music diverts people's minds from the meaning of the

hymns to the simple enjoyment of sound. And, although the Radha Soami gurus of Beas as well as their Sikh adherents remain Keshadhari, they do not believe in pahul (baptism) nor in the militant vows of the Khalsa.

Although the Radha Soami owe much Sikhism - their guru's discourses are largely drawn from the Adi Granth - it would be wrong to describe them as a sub-sect of Sikhism. Their only justification for treating them along with other Sikh religious movements is their close resemblance to the sahajdharis. The sahajdharis nominally accept the teachings of all the ten gurus and keep up the fiction that in due course they will be baptised as the Khalsa. The Radha Soami only accept the teachings of the first five gurus contained in the Adi Granth and reject the rest. The Radha Soamis present a new version of Sahajdhari Sikhism. Their faith has considerable attraction for the religiously inclined educated classes, for the Hindu-oriented Sikh, and the Sikh-oriented Hindu.

Note:

*Reproduced, with permission,
from Khushwant Singh's "A History
of the Sikhs", Volume 2, Page 125*

THE BLUE-BELT BROTHERHOOD

By
Choor Singh

The fraternity of Keshdhari Sikhs one sees wearing a blue cloth belt similar to a Kamar-Kasa is of fairly recent origin. For want of a better name I shall call it, "The Blue-Belt Brotherhood". It was founded by Sant (holy man) Harnam Singh Ji (1877-1980) in Kila Sobha Singh in the Sialkot District of pre-partition India: The exact date of the formation of this Brotherhood is not known. After the partition of India in 1947 the head-quarters of this movement was shifted to Naushera Majja Singh in the Gurdaspur District of Punjab. The head-quarters is known as "Gurdwara Dera Sant Maharaj Harnam Singh Ji".

Personal Experience

Sant Harnam Singh Ji was always addressed by his followers as "Maharaj". This writer had the good fortune of having had Sant Ji's Darshan on many occasions. I first met Sant Ji in the early 1950s on the first floor of Sardar Sardul Singh Narula's shop in High Street, Singapore. A prayer meeting with a Kirtan session was held there and I was a guest of Sardar Sardul Singh.

In November, 1953 I had a prayer meeting cum Kirtan Session in my house at 512, Dunman Road, Singapore. Sant Ji graced the function with his attendance. Later, at a similar function at the house of my cousin sister at 18, Monk's Hill Terrace, Singapore, Sant Ji was again kind enough to grace the function with his attendance. In those days, Sant Ji was dressed in white clothes and did not wear the blue Kamar Kasa. It seems that the blue Kamar-Kasa and the blue head-gear which they call Chacuta, which we see some members of this movement now wearing came into use sometime in 1967.

I had darshan of Sant Ji again, many times, on his visits to Singapore, mostly at the residence of Sardar Pritam Singh Bajaj. Sant Ji sermons (discourses) were short and revealing. Kirtan was performed by a younger member of his Jatha and Katha (discourse on gurbani) was done by another elderly Sant, a member of his Jatha. The memory I carry of Sant Harnam Singh Ji is of a kind, venerable old man who did not stand on dignity and would readily accept an invitation to attend a prayer meeting and grace the house of even a poor man.

There is no doubt that Sant Harnam Singh Ji led a saintly life and by advice and example helped many others to tread the straight and narrow path to reach or become nearer to God.

At a recent dialogue with a few prominent members of the movement in Singapore I was informad that in his younger days. Sant Harnam Singh Ji had leanings towards the Namdhari movement. This was long before he acquired a following of his own. These prominent members, graciously and readily, agreed to answer some very specific and pertinent questions posed by me regarding this brotherhood for which I am grateful.

At this dialogue I had the pleasure of Meeting Sant Satnam Singh Ji, a visitor from India. He was addressed by those present as "Sant Ji" and was attired in the fashion of the Brotherhood. He disclaimed being their leader but from the respect accorded to him, it was obvious to me that if he was not their present leader, he was certainly a very prominent member of their Community. He visits Singapore with his retinue quite regularly from the Dera of the fraternity in the Gurdaspur District of Punjab.

In my view it is desirable to put on record the information given during the dialogue on some very relevant matters pertaining to their Brotherhood which were the subject of my questions.

Guruship

On the question of Guruship I was informed that the members of the Brotherhood accepted and believed in the teachings of all the Ten Masters of the Sikh faith. They considered and accepted the Guru Granth Sahib as their Guru and did not have any other scripture. It is not true that Sant Harnam Singh Ji was their living Guru as contended by some. It was claimed that Sant Harnam Singh Ji was their spiritual leader, adviser and consultant on spiritual matters. However, I pointed out that I had seen members of their fraternity prostrate before Sant Harnam Singh Ji, a veneration normally accorded by a Sikh to the Guru Granth Sahib only. I was assured that there is Video Tape recording of Sant Harnam Singh Ji delivering a sermon in which he stated that he was a Sikh of the Guru and had acquired his spirituality from the Granth Sahib - a statemant which clearly refutes any perception or inference by others that he was a guru.

Present Spiritual Leader

Sant Harnam Singh Ji did not appoint a successor nor has any person claimed his Gaddi (spiritual Throne). I was informed that when Sant Ji felt that his end was near, he instructed an attendant to place 31 cents before the Guru Granth Sahib, made obeisance in the direction of the Granth Sahib and told those present that he was

returning his spirituality to the Granth Sahib from where he had obtained it and further that whoever wanted it could have it from the Granth Sahib in the same manner as he had obtained it.

I was informed, sometime back, by the late Sardar Sardul Singh Narula, a very ardent follower of Sant Harnam Singh Ji, that when Sant Ji expired he was neither cremated nor buried in the proper way. An under-ground chamber was prepared and Sant Ji's body was placed on a sofa in a sitting position, as if he was alive and was in samadhi (trance). The Chamber was then sealed.

Cremation

The fraternity believes in the cremation of a dead body and practices it. In one case in Singapore there was a burial. It was on the specific instructions of Sant Harnam Singh Ji for special reasons which were not disclosed. Sant Harnam Singh Ji was present in Singapore when this took place. I attended this funeral and saw the body being buried. To the credit of their faith in Sant Ji, there was on his advice, no crying or wailing on the part of all members of the deceased's family.

Special Blue Cloth Head-Cover and Kamar-Kasa

On the very crucial question of why some members of the community adorned their head with a special blue cloth cover instead of the normal turban worn by Sikhs, in addition to a blue cloth Kamar-Kasa, the basic explanation was that it was the attire of Sikhs in the days of the Sikh Gurus. Reliance was placed on passages in a Janam Sakhi of Guru Nanak, and other passages found in a Sau-Sakhi, in the Vars of Bhai Gurdas and in Gurbani. Quotations of the above mentioned passages were not rendered but great reliance was placed on the following passage quoted from Guru Nanak's Janamsakhi by Bhai Bala :

Jab Jiosee Ek Waran
Thub Hosee Neela Rang
Banni Such Khudai Dee
Kahe Nanak Shah malang

It was also claimed that :

1. Blue Kamarkasa started by Sant Harnam Singh Ji in 1967 is nothing new for Sikhs. From the time of the sixth Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji to the time of the tenth Guru Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the Guru ji and Sikhs tied the Kamarkasa. Even now the Nihang sikhs still wear the Kamarkasa.
2. The Blue colour signifies neutrality. We are taught non-interference in any political

movements and to shun away from any religious fundamentalism.

3. Respect and tolerance for all religions and practices.
4. Abstaining from drugs, liquor and all intoxicants as preached by Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji.
5. Determination to keep unshorn hair, which is the basic tradition of Sikhism.

Strength of the Brotherhood

It was claimed that the total membership of the Brotherhood was in the region of 50,000 Members were mostly to be found in Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi and Poona.

Was Membership on the wave?

This was denied. I suggested that membership of the fraternity in Singapore appeared to be on the decline. It was claimed that membership was steady and more or less constant. The perception could be due to all members not being visible in the Gurdwara.

Reluctance to attend Gurdwaras

It was admitted that some members do not attend Gurdwara. The basic reason advanced for the reluctance of some members to attend Gurdwaras was their perception of being unwelcome. They felt that there was some resentment against them by the mainstream of Sikhs for their being differently attired. I assured them that this was not true. What most Sikhs do want to know is the reason for their being differently attired and once this is explained, the reason for resentment, if any, will disappear.

At present the member have a weekly prayer meeting in the house of a member.

Some members do attend the Sunday Dewan at the Katong Gurdwara. Adorned in their usual attire, They are most welcome.

Rehat Maryada

The Blue-belt Brotherhood has its own Rehat Maryada which is in force amongst the members. It was laid down on the instructions of Sant Harnam Singh Ji. A copy of the Rehat Naina will be found in Appendix "A".

The salient points of this code of conduct are :

1. To arise early and have kesi-ashnan everyday. After drying to comb it and wear a Nila Chacuta (blue piece of cloth) on the head and a blue cloth Kamar kasa.
2. The hair on any part of the body should not be removed.
3. The beard should not be tied.
4. Every person should learn Gurmukhi.
5. Always wear white clothes.
6. Wear clothes made of Khaddar cloth (home-spun cotton).
7. Jewelry should not be worn.
8. Wear Punjabi clothes.
9. Always speak the truth.
10. Liquor, tobacco, drugs, and meat should not be consumed or used.
11. Every morning, after a bath, the daily prayers consisting of Japji Sahib, Jaap Sahib, Anand Sahib and Sukhumani Sahib should be recited.
12. At sun-set, Rehras Sahib and Arti Sohila should be recited every day.
13. The bani of the Guru Granth Sahib should be treated as Guru.
14. Don't think ill of others.
15. Do not hurt the feelings of others.
16. Address others with respect.
17. Do not wear, carry or use arms.
18. Respect the right of others. To usurp the right of others is to drink poison.
19. Always repeat the name of God. Pray to God for forgiveness. This Rehat Nama was brought into force in 2035 on the instructions of Sant Maharaj Harnam Singh Ji

ਅਬ ਰਹਿਤ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ ਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ

ਪਿਛਲੀ ਰਾਤੀਂ ਉਠ ਕੇ ਸੇਲਾ ਗੜਵਾ ਲਜਾਇ ਕਰ ਮੈਦਾਨੇ ਜਾਣਾ। ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਟੋਆ ਪੁੱਟ ਲੈਣਾ। ਜਿਧਰੋਂ ਹਵਾ ਆਵੇ ਉਧਰ ਮੂੰਹ ਕਰਕੇ ਬੈਠਣਾ। ਜੰਗਲ ਬੈਠ ਕੇ ਮਿੱਟੀ ਪਾ ਦੇਣੀ ਤੇ ਸਰੀਰਕ ਸਫਾਈ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਮਿੱਟੀ ਨਾਲ ਅਤੇ ਫਿਰ ਜਲ ਨਾਲ ਕਰਨੀ। ਦੋ ਵਾਰੀ ਗੜਵਾ ਮਾਂਜਨਾ। ਸ਼ਹਿਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਮਿੱਟੀ ਨਾ ਮਿਲੇ ਤਾਂ ਸਾਬਣ ਤੇ ਜਲ ਨਾਲ ਸਫਾਈ ਕਰਨੀ। ਦਾਤਨ ਕਰਨੀ। ਜ਼ਰੂਰੀ ਵਿਹਾਰ ਹੋਵੇ ਜਾਂ ਸਰੀਰਕ ਵਿਲ ਹੋਵੇ ਤਾਂ ਪੰਜ ਅਸ਼ਨਾਨਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਢਾਈ ਚੁਲੇ ਜਲ ਦੇ ਕੇਸੀਂ ਪਾਏ। ਬਸਤਰਾਂ ਤੇ ਜਲ ਛਿੜਕ ਕੇ, ਗੁਰੂ ਪਾਸੋਂ ਬਖਸ਼ਸ਼ ਮੰਗਣੀ।

ਕੇਸਾਂ ਸਮੇਤ ਅਸ਼ਨਾਨ ਕਰਨਾ। ਅਸ਼ਨਾਨ ਕਰਕੇ ਜੰਗਲ ਵਾਲੇ ਬਸਤਰ ਬਦਲ ਲੈਣੇ। ਅਸ਼ਨਾਨ ਕਰਕੇ ਕੇਸ ਕੱਜ ਕੇ ਕਛਹਿਰਾ ਬਦਲਣਾ। ਇਕ ਪਹੁੰਚਾ ਲਾਹੁਣਾ ਤੇ ਦੂਸਰਾ ਪਾਉਣਾ। ਜੇ ਭੁਲ ਹੋ ਜਾਵੇ ਤਾਂ ਸੰਗਤ ਕੋਲੋਂ ਬਖਸ਼ਾਉਣਾ। ਚਿੱਟੇ ਪਰਨੇ ਨਾਲ ਕੇਸ ਹਰੇ ਕਰਨੇ। ਕੇਸ ਹਰੇ ਹੋ ਜਾਣ ਤਾਂ ਕੰਘਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਨੀਲਾ ਚਕੂਟਾ ਸਜਾਣਾ। ਨੀਲਾ ਕਮਰਕੱਸਾ ਬੰਨ੍ਹਣਾ। ਕੇਸ ਪਿਛੇ ਨੂੰ ਖੁਲ੍ਹੇ ਰਖਣੇ। (“ਈਸੇ ਸੰਗਤ ਸਿਖ ਮਮ ਸੰਗਤ ਪੀਛੇ ਕੇਸ” ਸੋ ਸਾਖੀ) ਦੇ ਵਕਤ ਕੰਘਾ ਕਰਨਾ। ਬਿਰਾਜਨ ਸਮੇਂ ਖੱਦਰ ਦਾ ਪਰਨਾ ਬੰਨ੍ਹਣਾ। ਕਮਰਕੱਸਾ ਲਾਹੁਕੇ ਚੀਤਾ ਕਰਨਾ। ਚੀਤੇ ਪਿਛੇ ਜਲ ਵਰਤਣਾ। ਪੰਜ ਅਸ਼ਨਾਨਾ ਕਰਨਾ।

(“ਮਦੁ ਕੇ ਛੇਡੇ ਉੱਚ ਰਹਿਤ ਚੀਤੇ ਪਾਛੇ ਅੰਭ ॥ ਮਲ ਤਿਆਗੇ ਤੇ ਮਿਰਤਕਾ ਕਰ ਪਦ ਪਾਣੀ ਕੰਜ ॥” -ਸੋ ਸਾਖੀ)

ਨਾਸਕਾ ਦੀ ਮੈਲ ਜਲ ਨਾਲ ਸਾਫ ਕਰਨੀ। ਸੰਗਤ ਵਿਚ ਬੈਠਿਆਂ ਮਲੀਨ ਹਵਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਤਿਆਗਣੀ। ਬਾਹਰ ਜਾ ਕੇ ਜਾਂ ਗੁਸਲਖਾਨੇ ਜਾ ਕੇ ਤਿਆਗਣੀ। ਬਾਅਦ ਵਿਚ ਪੰਜ ਅਸ਼ਨਾਨਾ ਕਰਨਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਤਾਂ ਚੁਲ੍ਹਾ ਜ਼ਰੂਰ ਕਰਨਾ। ਜੇਕਰ ਬੇਵੱਸ ਤਿਆਗੀ ਜਾਵੇ ਤਾਂ ਸੰਗਤ ਕੋਲੋਂ ਬਖਸ਼ਾਉਣਾ। ਕੇਸਾਂ ਦੀ ਬੇਅਦਬੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰਨੀ। ਸਾਬਤ ਸੂਰਤ ਰਹਿਣਾ (ਇੱਕ ਰੋਮ ਕੱਟਣ ਦਾ ਸੋ ਗੁਰੂ ਮਾਰਨ ਜਿੰਨਾ ਪਾਪ ਹੈ)। ਦਾਹੜਾ ਖੁਲ੍ਹਾ ਰਖਣਾ। ਨੰਗੇ ਸਿਰ ਚੀਤਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰਨਾ ਤੇ ਨਾ ਹੀ ਜੰਗਲ ਜਾਣਾ। ਪਰਸ਼ਾਦਾ ਕੇਸ ਕੱਜ ਕੇ ਛਕਣਾ।

ਰਹਿਤ ਦੀਆਂ ਵਸਤਾਂ-ਗੜਵਾ, ਗਲਾਸ, ਸੇਲ, ਆਸਣ, ਸਿਮਰਨਾ (ਮਾਲਾ) ਰਖਣਾ। ਹੱਥ ਵਾਲੇ ਪਰਨੇ, ਕੁੜਤੇ, ਪਜਾਮੇ, ਨੀਲੇ ਕਮਰਕੱਸੇ, ਨੀਲੇ ਚਕੂਟੇ, ਚਿੱਟੇ ਪਰਨੇ ਦੋ ਦੋ ਅਤੇ ਕਛਹਿਰੇ ਤਿੰਨ ਰਖਣੇ। ਅਸ਼ਨਾਨ ਕਰਕੇ ਬਦਲ ਲੈਣੇ। ਗੁਰਮੁਖੀ ਅੱਖਰ ਸਭ ਨੇ ਪੜ੍ਹਨੇ। ਚਿੱਟੇ ਬਸਤਰ ਪਾਉਣੇ। ਖੱਦਰ ਦੀ ਵਰਤੋਂ ਕਰਨੀ। ਗਹਿਣਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਪਾਣਾ। ਪਹਿਰਾਵਾ ਦੇਸੀ ਰਖਣਾ। ਸੱਚ ਬੋਲਣਾ। ਸੁੱਚ ਰਖਣੀ।

(“ਜਾ ਕੀ ਰਹਿਤ ਨਾ ਜਾਣੀਐ, ਗੁਰ ਮੰਤ੍ਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਚੀਤ। ਤਾ ਕਾ ਭੋਜਨ ਖਾਈਐ, ਟੁਟੇ ਹਰਿ ਸਿਉਂ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਿ ॥”)

ਮਾਸ, ਸ਼ਰਾਬ, ਤਮਾਕੂ ਨਸ਼ਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਵਰਤਣਾ। ਅਸ਼ਨਾਨ ਕਰਨ ਤੋਂ ਬਾਅਦ ਆਸਣ ਵਿਛਾ ਕੇ ਚੌਕੜਾ ਮਾਰ ਕੇ ਨਿਤਨੇਮ ਕਰਨਾ। ਜਪੁ, ਜਾਪੁ, ਅਨੰਦ ਸਾਹਿਬ, ਅਤੇ ਸੁਖਮਨੀ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦਾ ਪਾਠ ਕਰਨਾ। ਸੂਰਜ ਅਸਤ ਹੋਣ ਸਮੇਂ ਰਹਿਰਾਸ, ਆਰਤੀ ਸੋਹਿਲਾ ਰੋਜ਼ ਪੜ੍ਹਨਾ। ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀ ਦੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਰੂਪ ਕਰਕੇ ਮੰਨਣੀ।

“ਬਾਣੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੁਰੂ ਹੈ ਬਾਣੀ ਵਿਚਿ ਬਾਣੀ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਸਾਚੇ ॥

ਗੁਰੂ ਬਾਣੀ ਕਹੈ ਸੇਵਕੁ ਜਨੁ ਮਾਨੈ ਪਰਤਖਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਿਸਤਾਰੇ ॥ ੫ ॥”-(ਪੰਨਾ ੯੮੨)

ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਕੰਠ ਨਾ ਹੋਵੇ ਤਾਂ ਕੰਠ ਕਰਨੀ। ਸੋਧ ਕੇ ਪੜ੍ਹਨੀ। ਘੱਟ ਤੋਂ ਘੱਟ ਪੰਜ ਪੰਜ ਪਉੜੀਆਂ ਜਪੁ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਅਤੇ ਅਨੰਦ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੀਆਂ ਜ਼ਰੂਰ ਪੜ੍ਹਨੀਆਂ। ਮਨ ਕਰਕੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਦਾ ਬੁਰਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਚਿਤਵਨਾ। ਜ਼ਬਾਨ ਕਰਕੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਨੂੰ ਦੁਖਵਾਨਾ ਨਹੀਂ। ਸਭ ਨੂੰ ਸਤਿਕਾਰ ਨਾਲ ਜੀ ਕਰਕੇ ਬੁਲਾਵਨਾ। ਹੱਥਾਂ ਪੈਰਾਂ ਕਰਕੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਨੂੰ ਮਾਰਨਾ ਨਹੀਂ। ਸ਼ਸਤਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਵਰਤਣਾ। ਕੂਕਰ ਨੂੰ ਸੇਲ ਨਹੀਂ ਮਾਰਨੀ। ਪਰਾਇਆ ਹੱਕ ਬਿਖ ਸਮਾਨ ਸਮਝਣਾ।

ਮ: ੧ ॥ ਹਕੁ ਪਰਾਇਆ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਉਸੁ ਸੂਅਰ ਉਸੁ ਗਾਇ ॥

ਗੁਰੂ ਪੀਰੁ ਹਾਮਾ ਤਾ ਭਰੇ ਜਾ ਮੁਰਦਾਰੁ ਨ ਖਾਇ ॥ (ਪੰਨਾ ੧੪੧)

ਸਚੇ ਗੁਰੂ ਪਾਸੋਂ ਬਖਸ਼ਸ਼ ਮੰਗਣੀ। ਹਰ ਵਕਤ ਭਜਨ ਵਾਹੁ ਵਾਹੁ ਕਰਨਾ। ਸਮੇਂ ਦੀ ਹਰ ਵਕਤ ਉਡੀਕ ਰੱਖਣੀ।

ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੀ ਦਾ ਹੁਕਮ ਹੈ:-

“ਮਿਥਿਆ ਨਾਹੀਂ ਰਸਨਾ ਪਰਸ ॥ ਮਨ ਮਹਿ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਿ ਨਿਰੰਜਨ ਦਰਸ ॥

ਪਰ ਤ੍ਰਿਅ ਰੂਪੁ ਨ ਪੇਖੈ ਨੇਤ੍ਰੁ ॥ ਸਾਧ ਕੀ ਟਹਲ ਸੰਤਸੰਗਿ ਹੇਤ ॥

ਕਰਨ ਨ ਸੁਨੈ ਕਾਹੂ ਕੀ ਨਿੰਦਾ ॥ ਸਭ ਤੇ ਜਾਨੈ ਆਪਸ ਕਉ ਮੰਦਾ ॥

ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਬਿਖਿਆ ਪਰਹਰੈ ॥ ਮਨ ਕੀ ਬਾਸਨਾ ਮਨ ਤੇ ਟਰੈ ॥

ਇੰਦ੍ਰੀ ਜਿਤ ਪੰਚ ਦੇਖ ਤੇ ਰਹਤ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਕੋਟਿ ਮਧੇ ਕੇ ਐਸਾ ਅਪਰਸ ॥”-(ਪੰਨਾ ੨੭੪)

ਵਲੋ:- ਸਾਧ ਸੰਗਤ ਗੁਰਦਵਾਰਾ ਡੇਰਾ ਸੰਤ ਮਹਾਰਾਜ ਹਰਨਾਮ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ
ਨੁਸ਼ਹਿਰਾ ਮੱਝਾ ਸਿੰਘ (ਗੁਰਦਾਸਪੁਰ)

ਦਾਸ :- ਭਗਵਾਨ ਸਿੰਘ

ਮੈਨੇਜਰ ਟਰੱਸਟ

ਗੁ: ਡੇਰਾ ਸੰਤ ਮਹਾਰਾਜ ਹਰਨਾਮ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ

ਨੁਸ਼ਹਿਰਾ ਮੱਝਾ ਸਿੰਘ (ਗੁਰਦਾਸਪੁਰ)

ਫੋਨ ਨੰ: 1

[ਇਹ ਰਹਿਤਨਾਮਾ ਬਸੰਤ-ਪੰਚਮੀ ਸੰਮਤ ੨੦੩੫ ਨੂੰ]
[ਮਹਾਰਾਜ ਜੀ ਦੇ ਹੁਕਮ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਜਾਰੀ ਕੀਤਾ ਗਿਆ।]

It will be seen that there is a specific direction not to wear, carry or use arms such as a kirpan which an Amritdhari Sikh is enjoined to be armed with. Nor is there any mention in the Rehat Nama of the requirement to be Amritdhari. In the circumstances members of this brotherhood would appear to be peace loving Keshdhari Sikhs and those who comply with the requirements of their Rehat Nama would appear to be better Sikhs than most of us.

What does it matter if they wear a blue turban and a blue Kamarkasa. To some this may appear to be a misguided practice. But then who are we to tell them not to do so, when, in the worship of God and reverence for Gurbani, they are far ahead of most of us. What is more, they are only a step away from becoming full fledged Amritdhari Khalsas. They should be treated by all Sikhs as brothers in faith and there should be no resentment against them for appearing to be different in their attire.

Punjab is noted for producing Sants (holy men). Every District and practically every village has a Sant. There is no objection to having a Sant as a spiritual adviser or consultant. It is also appropriate that Sants, indeed all holy men, should be treated and regarded with respect. However, if you claim allegiance to a Sant, consider him as your guru, prostrate before him and figuratively put him on the same pedestal as the Ten Masters of the Sikh faith, then in my opinion, you are disqualifying yourself from being considered a Sikh in the true sense of the word because any one who has a living guru, other than the Granth Sahib, is not a Sikh. That, I believe, is the litmus test of Sikhism.

SANT NIRANKARIS

By

Professor Harbans Singh

The Sant Nirankaris are a recent phenomenon and they have nothing in common with the Nirankari sect of the Sikhs, except for the name. They are not even a schism split from it, although the founder, Buta Singh (1883-1944), was once a member of the Nirankari Durbar at Rawalpindi. Upon being asked to quit the Durbar for a misdemeanour, he raised a group of his own. He was succeeded by Avtar Singh, who after the partition of India, in 1947, migrated to Delhi and set up a centre there. Over the years, he recruited and commanded a considerable following among Sikhs, Hindus and other. He was succeeded by his son, Gurbachan Singh. Gurbachan Singh's son, Hardev Singh, is now the leader of the Sant Nirankaris.

“These Sant Nirankaris have no affiliation with any of the established Sikh religious traditions. They have nothing in common with the Sikh religion and have no connection with it. Unlike Sikhs they welcome to their fold people from all feligions. In this way, they form a freemasonry of faiths held together by the charisma of the leader, who is believed to be the reincarnation of God. As Gurbachan Singh once proclaimed: “The responsibilities assigned from time to time to prophets like Noah, Rama, Krishna, Moses, Christ, Mohammad, Kabir, Nanak and Dayal have now been put on my shoulders by my predecessor Baba Avtar Singh. In Sant Nirankari writings, he was claimed to be the Deity, the creator of this entire universe, its sustainer and master. The beliefs of present day Sant Nirankaris are quite different from those of Baba Dial Das, the founder of Nirankari Durbar at Rawalpindi.

“The Sant Nirankaris originally based their teachings on Sikh scriptures but their leader Baba Avtar Singh composed his Avtar Bani and Yug Pursh. Some Passages in both books are regarded as blasphemy against the Sikh Gurus and the Granth Sahib. Their founder, Baba Dial Das has preached against the growing tendency of Sikhs to revert to Hindu practices like idoltry, Brahmin rituals, and pilgrimage to the Ganges. The Baba stressed the Sikh doctrine that God could not be described because he was formless. Nirankari means formless. The movement split and heresy crept in. Nirankaris started to revere their founder and his successor as Guru, inspite of

Guru Gobind Singh's pronouncement that he was the last living Guru. They forgot their founder's stricture against idols and even worshipped his sandals but most offensive of all to orthodox Sikhs was the Avtar Bani which Nirankaris considered as their sacred literature. Their decreasing reverence to the Granth Sahib of the Sikhs, coupled with their belief in their living Guru and their own Avtar Bani have made the Sant Nirankaris extremely unorthodox in the eyes of the Sikhs nurtured on the doctrines of the Granth Sahib.

"In November 1973 a Hukumnama was issued from the Akal Takhat declaring the Nirankaris are socially ostracised by Sikhs. Since then Sikhs and Nirankaris have not been on good terms; the relationship became antagonistic and many clashes erupted between them.

The Sant Nirankari leaders have always preached their faith through the vocabulary and symbols of Sikhism. But with their native bias, they never cease from attempting to distort many of its cherished ideals and institutions. Imitation breeds obliquity. The word Nirankari itself is borrowed from the Sikh chronicles. The Founder, Guru Nanak was referred to by them as Nanak Nirankari - believer in God, the Formless. "Nirankari Baba" is the title the Nirankari leader has appropriate unto himself. He retains his Sikh form, as did his predecessors. In imitation of Guru Gobind Singh's Panj Piare (the Five Beloved of Sikh history), he has created his Sat Sitare (Seven Stars). The names of venerable members of the leader's family and Sikh personages from history are assigned to followers. Among them Mata Sulakhani (Guru Nanak's wife), Bebe Nanaki (Guru Nanak's sister), and Bhai Buddha and Bhai Gurdas, two primal figures of Sikhism, both regarded highly in Sikh piety. Peculiarly Sikh terms, such as Satguru, Sangat and Sache Padshah, the title which the Sikh came to use for the Gurus, in contrast with Padshah and Badshah representing secular emperors, have been appropriated by the Nirankaris. Their religious book, a collection of Punjabi verse, copiously quoted, but with a deliberate slant. The purpose invariable is disapprobation of the Sikh way of life. Sikh Scriptures are quoted and expounded openly to suit the Nirankari. The Nirankaris of Delhi were clandestinely encouraged by Indian *Government to cause* ideological confusion amongst the sikhs. "During Indira Gandhi's regime Nirankaris were Known to be receiving financial help from secret Government funds not open to audit or scrutiny by Parliament ("Indian Express", April 25th, 1980).

Note:

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"The Sikh Review, June 1994
Number, Page 27*