MANOHAR

THE KHALSA

SIKH AND NON-SIKH PERSPECTIVES

EDITED BY
J.S. GREWAL

This book demonstrates that historiography is a dynamic process. The five major Sikh writers analysed in the book present differences of factual detail, objectives and approach. If one glorifies the Khalsa as upholding the monotheistic tradition, another compromises the monotheistic tradition by bringing in the goddess. If one negates the egalitarian norm of the Khalsa social order, another valourizes its uncompromising sovereignty in the face of threat from the British.

Modern historians present no less divergent views. If one looks upon the Khalsa as the emergence of a new'nation', another minimizes their achievement in comparison with the British. If one tries to reconcile doctrinal sovereignty with political loyalty, another presents the Khalsa as serving the cause of Hindu nationalism. Still others can talk of the Khalsa as 'transfiguration' of the earlier Sikh tradition.

With its multiple perspectives on the Khalsa, this book introduces the subject in a manner that no single perspective can do. It should be of interest to those concerned with the Sikh tradition and its study, and also to those concerned with other religious traditions.

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Foreword

To celebrate the tercentenary of the institution of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699 the Institute of Punjab Studies decided to focus on how the event and its aftermath were reported and understood by the near extemporary and later Sikh writers and the modern historians of the Sikhs.

The treatment of this seminal development in the history of the Sikhs has varied from writer to writer due to the differences in their social background, predilections, objectives and approach. Like the Sikh movement, its understanding appears to have evolved with time in response to the changing historical contexts. This relative and progressive historical understanding comes out clearly from the treatment of the Khalsa by the writers taken up for study in this volume.

We are grateful to Professor J.S. Grewal for editing this volume for the Institute as much as for his substantial contribution to its text. I may take this opportunity to acknowledge formally our debt of gratitude to the 'foreign friends' of the Institute who have extended lasting support to its programmes.

INDU BANGA

Preface

The papers included in this volume were presented at a seminar on 'Near Contemporary and Later Perspectives on the Khalsa' which was organized by the Institute of Punjab Studies, Chandigarh, with financial support from the Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi, the Bank of Punjab, and the Punjab National Bank, Chandigarh. These papers fall neatly into two parts: the first consists of papers on five Sikh writers who wrote in Punjabi between the first decade of the eighteenth century and the first Anglo-Sikh War of 1845-6; the second part consists of six papers on historians who wrote in English after the First Anglo-Sikh War till about the mid-twentieth century. Among these historians are Hindu, Muslim, and Christian as well as Sikh; Punjabis and non-Punjabis; Indians and Europeans.

These perspectives on the Khalsa illumine the subject in a way that no single perspective can. However, the totality of the perspectives neither exhausts the subject nor does it illumine the subject satisfactorily. The constraints of the sources used and the purposes for which Sikh writers and the later historians wrote are reflected in their works. Their views were influenced by the historical situations in which they wrote. While reading these papers it is necessary to remember that the primary objective of each paper is to grasp the author's interpretation, with all its adequacies or inadequacies. In other words, the way to the history of the Khalsa lies in the historiography of the Khalsa. The merit of the volume lies in the multiplicity of viewpoints included here. The reader may become aware of the relative and haltingly progressive nature of historical knowledge which never becomes fixed or static. The process of historiography, like the process of history itself, is a dynamic process.

Several people helped in organizing the seminar, and in preparing the volume for press. I am grateful to all of them. Notable among them is Professor Indu Banga who was associated

with this work at all stages. Dr Reeta Grewal and Dr Veena Sachdeva made indispensable contribution to the organization of the seminar. No less important was the support from Sheena Paul, Anurupita Kaur, Kuldeep Kaur Grewal, Sukhvinder, Sasha and Charu. Much care was taken by Gulshan Graphics to prepare the typescript for the press. We are thankful to the publishers for their keen interest in this volume.

This volume is dedicated to the 'foreign friends' of the Institute of Punjab Studies.

J.S. Grewal

Introduction

J.S. Grewal

It was expected that the papers presented at a seminar on the Khalsa would have a certain degree of uniformity in approach. The invited scholars were requested to keep in mind a set of questions while analysing any particular work. Since there cannot be, and should not be, any hard and fast rules in interpreting a historical or literary work, it was underlined that the scholars had the freedom to adopt the best approach according to their lights. That some of the scholars found those questions relevant is evident from their papers.

What is perhaps more important is the relevance of those questions for the reader who may be able to better appreciate the papers in their light. With regard to the author of a work, it was suggested that it may be useful to know about his social background, education, occupation, his purpose for writing the work, the audience he aimed at, and the sources of his information and ideas. With regard to the contents of a work, a number of questions were to be kept in mind. What in its author's view was Guru Gobind Singh's purpose in instituting the Khalsa? Does the author discern any links between the earlier Sikh tradition and the Khalsa? What exactly was the procedure adopted by Guru Gobind Singh for instituting the Khalsa? What were his injunctions to the Khalsa regarding their way of life? Were any doctrines added to the pre-Khalsa doctrines and beliefs of the Sikhs? Did the Khalsa evolve any specific institutions or improve upon the existing ones? Did the Khalsa make any great achievements in the realms of politics, society and culture? What were the distinctive markers of the Khalsa? Are there any indications of the social background of those who joined the

Khalsa order? What was the attitude of the Khalsa towards one another, towards other 'Sikhs', and towards non-Sikhs? Is any other major concern of the author reflected in his work? It was not expected that answers to all these questions would be found in every work. Nor was it expected that every author would necessarily give the same answer to a question.

The main criterion for selecting these papers was whether or not the work analysed embodies a major or comprehensive presentation of the Khalsa tradition. It must be added that the papers not included in this volume also contain significant interpretations of one or more aspects of the Khalsa tradition. A statement about their central ideas is given in the sections that follow.

II

Analysing Chaupa Singh's *Rahitnama* edited by Shamsher Singh Ashok, Dr Gurnam Kaur makes the general statement that the extant *Rahitnamas* do not embody the Sikh spirit in its totality. They reveal the personal attitudes and inclinations of their authors. Therefore, they have to be assessed in the light of *Gurbani* and the writings of Bhai Gurdas which represent the true Sikh tradition regarding the Sikh way of life.

Chaupa Singh is said to have been closely associated with Guru Gobind Singh, acting as his *khidaw'a* at one time and becoming his Khalsa on the day of its institution. He claims to be his teacher, and the first to be baptized as the Guru's Khalsa. However, the *Rahitnama* attributed to him does not support the idea that Chaupa Singh presents the true *rahit*. His brahmanical background obtrudes in the *Rahitnama* to make it a contaminated record. A particular family of brahmans is shown to have played a very significant role in the affairs of the Gurus. Sati Das and Mati Das, for example, are presented as the only two Sikhs who stand by Guru Tegh Bahadur at the time of his martyrdom, and who court martyrdom. Guru Gobind Singh is presented as showing a special respect for brahmans. This is, however, contradicted by the Guru's own *savviya* in which he expresses his great regard and praise for the Khalsa irrespective of their social background. No particular caste had any special status for the Guru.

Chaupa Singh's *Rahitnama* presents the concealment of their faith by the Sikhs who were present with Guru Tegh Bahadur in Delhi at the time of his martyrdom as the reason for instituting the Khalsa by Guru Gobind so as to give a distinctive appearance to his Sikhs. This could not be the only reason, or even the main reason. The Sikh way of life enunciated in *Gurbani* emphasizes the importance of meditation on the Name, bath in the holy *amritsar*, and enabling others to turn to the Name. The appearance of the Sikh is also indicated in *Gurbani*: 'bearing your form complete, with the turban over your head' (*sābat sūrat dastār sirā*). The Sikh Panth already had a distinctive identity. This could only be reinforced; it could not be the reason for instituting the Khalsa.

Indeed, the purpose is indicated by Guru Gobind Singh himself: 'to spread *dharma* everywhere and to restrain people from evil'. The Khalsa was instituted in equipoise and not in anger. Chaupa Singh's description of the ceremony of *pahul* is contradicted by other Sikh sources. Chaupa Singh introduces caste distinctions for matrimony, allows Sikhs of the Sahajdhari category to use scissors to cut their hair, validates *charan-pahul* which had been replaced by the baptism of the double-edged sword by Guru Gobind Singh, and insists on discrimination against women. On the whole, thus, the *Rahitnama* attributed to Chaupa Singh does not represent the authentic *rahit* enunciated by Guru Gobind Singh and his predecessors.

III

Dr Kharak Singh has analysed the *Rahitnama* of Chaupa Singh edited and translated by W.H. McLeod and the one edited by Piara Singh Padam. Extensive references to a person's conduct in *Gurbani* and the *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas reveal that a distinct Sikh way of life had emerged by the end of the seventeenth century, with emphasis on internal and external *rahit*. The guidelines were not perhaps put together in a systematic manner. When Guru Gobind Singh instituted the Khalsa in 1699, detailed injunctions for the initiates were promulgated in view of their imperative need. However, no authentic record of his injunctions has survived. Though most of the extant *Rahitnamas* claim to have been written on the authority of Guru Gobind Singh, they

were actually composed later. Chaupa Singh's *Rahitnama* is no exception to this general rule. The question of approval by Guru Gobind Singh did not arise in any case.

Chaupa Singh was associated with Guru Gobind Singh as Chaupat Rai before the institution of the Khalsa. Kesar Singh Chhibber refers to his *Rahitnama* with 1800 injunctions. Therefore the extant *Rahitnama* attributed to Chaupa Singh was not his work. The colophon towards its end suggests that it was in fact written by Gurbakhsh Singh, son of Dharm Chand Chhibber who was the Guru's treasurer. The *Rahitnama* is one of the earliest however, and it is the most comprehensive among the available *rahitnamas*. The injunctions do not appear in any logical sequence but they cover personal and social behaviour, caste, *sangat*, the *Granth Sahib*, rituals, food, weapons and warfare, salutations, women's duties, travel and pilgrimage, false teachers, enemies of the Guru, and attitude towards Muslims, among other themes.

The early origin of the *Rahitnama* and the alleged or real closeness of its author to Guru Gobind Singh do not guarantee its acceptability. Large-scale interpolations are suspected to have been made. There are injunctions which contradict the doctrine preached by the *Granth Sahib* and by Guru Gobind Singh himself. The inclusion of two narratives is difficult to justify in a code of conduct. These narratives appear to have been introduced to promote the vested interests of brahmans in general and the Chhibber family in particular. The story of the worship of the *devi* by Guru Gobind Singh is clearly out of place. It has not been substantiated by researches and there is no justification for it in view of the statements of the Gurus, including Guru Gobind Singh, on gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon. Whereas the *Guru Granth Sahib* is profusely quoted in support of great many injunctions, no such authority is invoked for the suspected interpolations. It is unthinkable that Guru Gobind Singh should resort to *devi* worship and seek her blessings. Dr Kharak Singh cites fifteen quotations from the *Granth Sahib* to clarify the position of the Gurus on the goddess and her worship: she was not the supreme deity and her worship at best was futile. The attitude towards women and towards Muslims, as recommended in the *Rahitnama*, infringes the Sikh doctrinal position. Some injunctions come from the Hindu tradition which was actually

rejected by the Gurus, like doing *namskar* to the rising sun, rites prescribed in the *Shastras*, matrimonial ties in accordance with one's caste, immersing the ashes of the deceased in the Ganga, and perfoming the *shradh* ceremony.

The conclusion is inevitable. In its present form the *Rahitnama* of Chaupa Singh cannot be accepted as totally authentic. Nevertheless, it is a document of great significance and value; it is indispensable for a study of the Sikh *rahit*. It was supposed to be the *Hazuri Rahitnama* before it was 'corrupted'. Even the extant *Rahitnama* 'deserves, not neglect, but research to isolate the interpolations and to separate grain from the chaff'. In other words, there may be enough of grain in the *Rahitnama* of Chaupa Singh for the discerning eye of the scholar.

IV

Dr Harnam Singh Shan has analysed the *Guru Kiān Sākhiān*, using the text edited by Piara Singh Padam. This text was actually prepared by Giani Garja Singh from a copy of the work produced by Chhajju Singh Kaushik in 1869. Kaushik's work is said to be a transcription from Bhattakshri into Gurmukhi. The *Guru Kiān Sākhiān* was initially composed by Sarup Singh Kaushish in 1790 on the basis of entries made in the *vahis* preserved in his family. Sarup Singh presented the entries in a narrative form in Bhattakshri. The purpose of this exercise is not clear. The use of Bhattakshri indicates that it was not meant for general dissemination. Indeed, the manuscript remained in the family till it was transcribed into Gurmukhi in 1869. The sources said to have been consulted for this work may enhance its value, but the history of the manuscript is not very reassuring.

The *Guru Kiān Sākhiān* contains 112 *sākhīs*, but only three *sākhīs* have a direct bearing on the Khalsa: one relating to the call for heads, another to the ceremony of baptism, and the third to the *rahit* of the Khalsa. All the three themes are interrelated. Dr Shan has rendered these three *sākhīs* into English to underline the graphic character of the stories and their plausibility. These are as follows:

At the beginning of Sammat 1755 on a day before the Baisakhi day, Diwan Mani Ram was told to get five tents erected separately. Then Bhai Chaupat

Rai was asked to arrange for five he-goats to be brought in the evening and to get them tied, one in each tent.

Next day, on the Baisakhi day, early in the morning, the bards recited *Asa ki Var*. Then Bhai Mani Ram explicated one hymn from Sri Granth Sahib. Thereafter, the Tenth Master stood up, unsheathed his sword from its scabbard and pronounced: 'Brethren Sikhs! I need the head of a Sikh. Come quick and do not delay its offer.' He repeated this pronouncement thrice. Bhai Daya Ram, a Softi Khatri of Shalkot, came forward and stood in front of him. Guru ji stepped down from his throne, took him by his left arm, led him to the first tent and asked him to stand erect. He then ordered: 'Daya Ram! Hold this *Sri Sahib* (sword) and behead this he-goat with it.' Obeying the order, Daya Ram cut its head off with a single stroke. Outside, the *sangat* (congregation) heard from that direction a thud of the sword and the fall of a body. The blood streaked out of the tent and the whole assemblage observed it. Guru ji came out of the tent with his sword dripping blood and demanded another head. This time, Mohkam Chand, a calico-printer (*chhipa*) of Dwarka, stood up. Holding his hand, Guru ji took him to the second tent to cut off the head of the second he-goat. Seeing the streak of blood coming out of that tent, in the same manner, some Sikhs panicked, went to Mata Nanaki ji, and requested: 'Revered Mother! Please go and make Guru ji understand that he should not kill Sikhs without any rhyme or reason.' On the other side, Guru ji demanded the third head. This time Bhai Sahib Chand, a barber (*nai*) Sikh of Bidar, stood up. He was taken to the third tent and the same wonderful deed was performed in the same manner. When a head was demanded for the fourth time, a peasant (*jat*) named Dharam Chand, who belonged to Hastinapur, offered his head for the supreme sacrifice. At the fifth call, Himmat Chand, a water-carrier (*mehra*) of Jagannath Puri, stood up. From him, too, like the other four, a he-goat was got slaughtered by handing over the same sword (*kirpan*) to him.

Thereafter, all the five were brought out of the tents. Their hair were washed. After the bath, they were equipped with arms, endowed with five *kakaars*, and were dressed with double coloured turbans. The True Guru also dressed himself in the same attire. Along with them, he came back to the congregation. The audience was wonderstruck to see all that. Addressing the Sikh *sangat*, Guru ji said, 'Brethren Sikhs! when the First Master took the test of the Sikhs, Bhai Lehna alone came out steady and staunch. The True Master made him a part of his own body and renamed him Angad. This time five *marjeevare* Sikhs have proved their firmness in the faith and succeeded in this hard test. I elevate them as *Panj Piare*. Their names shall last till the sun and the moon, the earth and the sky, and the whole world last.' The Guru added, 'Brethren Sikhs! from now onwards, the Sikh congregation shall keep recalling their names in their prayers at both times. Whenever *karah prashad* is prepared and offered, their share shall be set apart, after

setting apart my share, before commencing its general distribution in the congregation.'

The Satguru then looked towards Bhai Chaupat Rai and said, 'Brother Sikh! Put this *charan pahul* in a metallic pitcher (*gagar*), drop it into the river Satluj, and bring the *gagar* back filled with fresh water. I have to prepare *khande ki pahul*.'

Guru ji asked Diwan Dharam Chand to bring a stone mortar, a steel bowl and the double-edged broadsword. Obeying the command, Diwan ji brought in the same.

The revered mother asked Bhai Kirpa Ram, 'What Guru ji is doing?' He said, 'Revered mother! Guru ji is preparing ambrosial nectar of the double-edged broadsword for administering it to the Sikhs.' The revered mother was deeply moved on hearing this. She instantly came to the Guru's presence with a lapful of *patasas*. Paying her obeisance to Guru ji, she poured the *patasas* from her lap into that bowl. The all knowing Guru ji did not look at her and continued with his recitation of *Japji* with full concentration. After reciting the sacred compositions of *Japji*, *Jaap Sahib*, *Sawayyas* and *Chaupai*, he stood up and performed the *ardas*. Concluding it with the prayer *tere bhāne sarbat dā bhalā*, he called out *fateh* and raised aloud the spirited chant of *Sat Sri Akal*.

The True Guru, then, dripped the ambrosial nectar five times, from the edge of the *khanda* into his own mouth, repeating each time the *fateh*, salutation of God's victory.

The True Guru, thereafter, holding the *khanda* in his right hand, said, 'This broadsword with the stirring of which I am going to give you the ambrosial nectar of steel, was endowed to me by the Immanent and Eternal Being (God) on his calling me from the mountain of Hemkunt. Keep it (its replica) under your short turban. With its blessing you will gain victory in every field of activity.

After this, he uttered the following three couplets in a roaring voice:

You are the Timeless
You are the goddess of death;
You are the Sword, and
You are the Arrow.
You are the Symbol of Victory,
You are the Almighty Hero of the world.

After uttering the above couplets, he looked towards the Five, Daya Ram and others, who were standing in front and watching with fixed gaze the bowl of nectar. Making them sit in the *bir-asan*, gave them the *pahul* of the broadsword. Then, starting at first from Bhai Daya Ram and going up to Bhai Himmat Chand, he made them drink three sips each of whatever nectar was

left in the bowl. Returning then from Bhai Himmat Rai and proceeding towards Bhai Daya Ram, he finished the nectar by letting them take two more sips each.

Assigning the word *Singh* first to his own name and then to the names of all the Five Chosen Sikhs, Guru ji called out *fateh* (the victory salutation) and raised aloud the spirited chant of *Sat Sri Akal.*

Thereafter, Guru ji pronounced, 'on your rebirth in the Khalsa Panth, your previous lineage, caste, creed, calling, customs, beliefs and superstitions etc. stand annulled from now onwards. Transforming you into the order of Khalsa, I have endowed you with the apparel of the Almighty God, you shall have to keep its honour. Before administering this nectar of steel, I bestow upon you *five kakaars.* Never put them away from your body even by mistake. I gave you, at the start, a blue *keski, kangha, kirpan, sarbloh ka kara* and white *kachhehra.* In the event of the loss or misplacement of any of these get the infringement pardoned in the *sangat* by going to *gurdwara* without any delay.'

'Now listen to the following four *bajjar kurahits* (grave transgressions) by the commission of any of which a Sikh becomes an apostate and cannot intermingle with the Sikh *sangat.* The first is the dishonouring of one's *rom* (hair) on any part of the body. The next are eating *kutha*, using tobacco and cohabiting with a Muslim woman. In the event of the infringement of any of these injunctions, you must get yourself pardoned and re-baptised with the nectar of the broadsword. Do not cherish any relation or communication with the five antagonists of the Panth, that is, the descendants and followers of Prithi Chand, Dhir Mal, Ram Rai, *masands*, and the clean-shaven. Whosoever from any of them comes to the *sangat* and presents himself for forgiveness for his omissions or commissions should be forgiven without any suspicion or hesitation. You shall not fix your faith, even by mistake, in any monastery, crematory, tomb or grave, but in God, the only One Timeless Being. I have blended you with gold. So do not harbour delusions and suspicions, differentiations and discriminations among yourselves.'

Addressing the audience, Guru Gobind Singh said, 'Brethren Sikhs! Neither frighten anyone, nor be frightened by anyone. Cherish faith only in God, the One Timeless Being. He alone will help you everywhere. Earn your livelihood through your own toil. Tender one-tenth of your earnings to the Guru's cause. Keep in home a cash-offering box in the name of the Guru. Regard a poor person's mouth as the Guru's cash-offering-box. Do not harbour suspicions, apprehensions and misgivings. No one is to listen to the calumny of the Guru. If someone indulges in that, try to make him understand its consequences with due patience. If he does not come to his senses, either do away with him or leaving him alone go elsewhere. Rise early in the morning, brush your teeth and have a bath. Meditate on God's Name and urge others to do so. Recite *Gurbani* and inspire or enable others to recite it.

Go to the *sangat* after the day-break. Wash your *kes* (long hair) every fourth day and comb them twice a day. Take good care of the *kes*, do not touch these with soiled hands and give them every respect. Avoid the company and association of the following five kinds of persons: (a) killers of female infants; (b) users of tobacco; (c) grabbers of others' money; (d) committers of sinful deeds after partaking nectar of the broadsword; and (e) traitors to the Guru.'

'Protect the poor. Accept the *bhadni's* daughter in matrimony but never give him yours even by mistake. Whoever will give him his daughter, he will not be able to intermingle with the *sangat-pangat*.'

'Regard another person's daughter as your own daughter and another man's wife as your mother. You are not to eye any woman with lust, except your own wife. After teaching Gurmukhi to your children, get them educated in other disciplines from whichever quarter their teaching could be arranged, without harbouring any misgivings. Go to Gurdwara Sahib two times, in the morning and in the evening. On joining the *sangat*, salute it with hands folded and by uttering *fateh* (God's victory). Do not eat or drink anything without first having *darshan* (sight) of the Guru and the *sangat*.'

After delivering this sermon regarding the code of conduct and conventions to the Five Beloved Ones—Bhai Daya Singh and others—Guru ji looked towards those Five who had been very eagerly waiting for their turn for offering their heads after Bhai Himmat Singh had offered his head at the fifth call. The inner-knower True Guru ji was intensely touched to think about their firm resolve for supreme sacrifice'. . . Guru ji said, 'Brethren Sikhs, on that occasion I needed the heads of only five *marjeevare* Sikhs. Your names will also last like those of the *Panj Piare*. I elevate you to the rank of *Muktas*.'

Guru ji asked Bhai Daya Singh to prepare *khande ki pahul* and administer it to those five. Obeying the command of Guru ji, the Beloved Five prepared the nectar of the broadsword and administered it to those five. As before, the appellation *Singh* (lion) was assigned to their names—Bhai Deva Ram, Bhai Ram Chand, Bhai Tehal Das, Bhai Ishar Das and Bhai Fateh Chand—and the code of conduct and conventions was also explained to them. The True Lord then spoke thus:

> He, whose mind is illumined night and day
> by the Light of the One Ever-awake
> and who never swerves from the thought of One God;
>
> He who is full of love for God and faith in Him
> and puts not, even by mistake, his faith in fasting
> and worship of the cemeteries
> crematories and sepulchres;

He, who recognizes only One God and not another,
and does not believe in pilgrimages, customary charities,
non-destruction of all forms of life,
penances and austerities;

And he, whose heart is illumined
by the Light of the Perfect One,
is to be worthily deemed as
a true member of the Order of the Khalsa.

After the initiation of the above-mentioned ten Sikhs, the following eleven Sikhs were also baptised: Dewan Mani Ram, Chitar Das, Bachitter Das, Ude Rai, Anik Das, Ajab Das, Ajaib Chand, Chaupat Rai, Dewan Dharam Chand, Alim Chand and Sahib Ram Kuir. After them, Rai Chand Multani, Gurbakhsh Rai, Gurbakhshish Rai, Kirpa Ram Datt, Subeg Chand, Gurmukh Das, Sanmukh Das and Amrik stood up. Along with them, Prohit Daya Ram, Barn, Ani Das, Lal Chand Pishauria, Rup Chand, Sodhi Deep Chand, Nand Chand, Nanoo Ram Dilwali and the residents of Sirhind—Hazari, Bhandari and Darbari—etc., received the nectar of broadsword and attained the rank of *singh* (lion).

The Baisakhi day thus passed on in giving and taking the nectar of broadsword. Next day, batches of *singhs* began to administer *khande ki pahul* to the *sangat* which had come from places outside Anandpur. Several more days passed like that, in giving and taking *khande ki pahul*.

There was no end to that spontaneous flow and uncanny fervour of the spirit.

Dr Shan maintains that the statement made in the *Guru Kiān Sākhiān* is not only 'the best and the completest' but also 'plausible and credible'. Plausible it is, perhaps a little too plausible. It is not easy to say that it is credible. If it is supposed to be based on *Bhattvahi* entries made by eyewitnesses, the statement has many loopholes. The year VS 1755 (AD 1698) is suspect as the year of the institution of the Khalsa. The five *kakaars* are also suspect for two reasons: first, the formulation appears too early, and second, the *kakaars* include *keski* but not *kesh*. In the standard formulation it is *kesh*, and not *keski*. The names of the Panj Piaras are enjoined to be mentioned in the *ardās* and *karāh parshād* is to be kept for them after the Guru's share before its general distribution. The *ardās* itself ends with *sarbat kā bhalā*; instead of the full salutation only *fateh* is mentioned on the assumption that those present are familiar with it; at the end is *Sat Sri Akal*. The *ardās* appears to be fully formed as in the twentieth century. A replica of the *khanda*

received by Guru Gobind Singh at Hemkunt is enjoined to be kept under the *keski*. This injunction is not mentioned in any *Rahitnama* if at all it was promulgated by Guru Gobind Singh. The word Singh is added to the Guru's name first and then to that of the Panj Piaras, but the Guru does not take *pahul* from them. The Panj Piaras are enjoined to discard their former creed, among other things. The assumption seems to be that none of them was a Sikh earlier. The five categories of people to be shunned by the Khalsa are mentioned twice: in each case they are different. The overlapping suggests different sources of information rather than something heard or recorded first-hand. Apart from Panj Piaras, five *muktas* are mentioned. Eleven more persons are included after the first ten initiates. All these elements raise more problems than some other accounts of the institution of the Khalsa. Therefore, what remain is the plausibility of the statement but not its credibility. A search for the original *Guru Kiān Sākhiān* is necessary before the present text is treated as authentic.

V

Dr Raijasbir Singh has analysed the *Umdat ut-Tawarikh* for Sohan Lal Suri's treatment of the Khalsa. Sohan Lal was the court chronicler of Ranjit Singh, and his father, Lala Ganpat Rai, had served Mahan Singh and Charhat Singh. Sohan Lal had good relations with the British too, and received land worth a thousand rupees for life after the annexation of the kingdom of Lahore to the British empire in 1849. Sohan Lal died in 1852 and his voluminous work was published posthumously in 1875 by the Arya Press, Lahore.

Sohan Lal Suri has all praise for Ranjit Singh and his rule. The Maharaja vanquished all his enemies and was unrivalled in generosity. He was considerate and forgiving towards his subjects. Sohan Lal prays that his throne may last for ever. But at the same time, he adds that nothing is static in this world.

In his account of the Gurus, Sohan Lal dwells on their miracles more than anything else. In the teachings of Guru Nanak, he underlines devotion to God, manual work, and disregard for religious differences. Apart from his miracles, Sohan Lal

underscores Guru Nanak's equal consideration for Hindus and Muslims. Guru Hargobind praises Jahangir to seek justice from him so that he may avenge the death of his father. The emperor hands over Diwan Chandu to the Guru. The cause of the battle of Kartarpur was Painde Khan's hostility to the Guru. Guru Gobind Singh wanted to avenge the death of his father. To prepare himself for this, he worshipped the goddess. The test of a competent brahman for invoking the goddess was whether or not he could make water in the well come out. *Hukamnāmas* were despatched to collect money required for the ceremony. At the end of the ceremony, the Guru heard a strange voice that he should grasp the sword and that all his wishes would be fulfilled. Henceforth the Guru became a *virakkat* and disbursed all his wealth and riches to the humble and the needy.

This was followed by enunciation of the *rahit*: not to cut hair, to wear a black dress, to protect the cow, to wear the tooth of a pig on one's arm, not to smoke, to eat *jhatka* meat, to kill the enemies of the faith. Sohan Lal's explanation of some of these injunctions reveals his view of the Khalsa. Keeping unshorn hair made them independent of the barber. Wearing a black dress meant that they need not wash it for a long time. Smoking the *hukka* made the person vulnerable to the enemy. Wearing the turban while taking a bath enabled the Khalsa to be ever prepared for the enemy. The baptism of the double-edged sword was introduced because the Udasis could not strengthen the foundations of the Sikh raj. *Amrit* was administered to five persons and the epithet Singh was added to their names. The Guru and the Khalsa came to have the same form. There is no reference to the call for sacrifice. The dismissal of the *masands* is mentioned later. They are said to have conspired to install Sahibzada Jhujar Singh on the *gaddi* instead of Guru Gobind Singh. For this and for other misdeeds they were punished indiscriminately.

After the battle of Muktsar, in which the forty *muktas* attain martyrdom, the Mughal emperor sends a goat to Guru Gobind Singh with his emissaries. The Guru slaughters the goat, saying that Mughal power was uprooted, and the rule of the followers of Islam would burst like a bubble. Very soon, a new rule would be established. The Mughal rule is equated with Islamic rule,

and the rule of the Khalsa is prophesied. Before his death, Guru Gobind Singh vests guruship in the *Granth Sahib* and commands his followers to obey Banda Bahadur who is commissioned to avenge the wrongs done by the enemies of the Guru. Banda is praised as a crowned head, and is referred to as 'Guru Banda'. His victories and martyrdom are mentioned but there is no reference to the conflict between the Tat Khalsa and the followers of Banda. He suffered none the less for deviating from the Guru's injunctions.

The martyrdom of Bhai Mani Singh is explained in terms of his violation of the body of the Granth Sahib and the consequent curse of Guru Gobind Singh. Accepting Zakariya Khan's invitation, Nawab Kapur Singh joins him in Lahore. The martyrdom of Bhai Taru Singh is an omen of the dark days that lay in store for Zakariya Khan. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia is presented as an individual leader without any connection with the Sarbat Khalsa or the Dal Khalsa. However, the Dal Khalsa was in existence at the time of Ahmad Shah Abdali, and it comprised a number of *sardars* including Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. Ahmad Shah Abdali failed to vanquish the Dal Khalsa. His various invasions offered an opportunity to the Khalsa leaders to come together to plunder and to conquer. People joined them because of the atrocities of the Mughals and Afghans. Sohan Lal refers to the coin issued by Jassa Singh Ahluwalia in the name of 'Jassa Kalal'. Ahmad Shah Abdali died of a wound which he received from a brick when he used gunpowder to destroy the Harmandar Sahib. After Abdali's departure from the Punjab in 1765, the Khalsa *sardars* passed a *gurmata* at Amritsar to occupy Lahore which they did under the leadership of Sobha Singh, Gujjar Singh, Lehna Singh and Charhat Singh.

On the whole, Sohan Lal Suri accords little importance to Sikh ideology and Sikh institutions in his account of the Khalsa. There are no running threads in his narrative and some vital facts are ignored. He does not appear to have made much effort to collect information on the history of the Sikhs preceding the period of Ranjit Singh. His account of the Khalsa has little merit in terms of authenticity, and presents a contrast to his careful recording of contemporary events.

VI

Dr Kirpal Singh refers to the close association of Ganesh Das and his ancestors with the government and administration of the Sikh rulers as the source of his interest in Sikh history. In his brief account of the Sikh Gurus in the *Char Bagh-i Punjab*, he refers to the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur as the result of Aurangzeb's tyranny. The Guru sacrificed his head but refused to disclose the secret of his spirituality. For Ganesh Das, Khalsa was 'a nation' consisting of the followers of Guru Gobind Sirgh who was in the line of Guru Nanak, the founder of the faith. The main interest of Ganesh Das was in the creation of the Khasa rather than the life of Guru Gobind Singh.

According to Ganesh Das, Guru Gobind Singh went to Naina Devi for meditation, and there he had the divine vision, exhorting him to create the Khalsa. In the midst of the divine light an angelic beardless figure (*amardi*) is saluted and praised by Guru Gobind Singh, and is addressed as *bhagwati*. 'God has given you the status of His Deputy', announced this figure, 'and sent you for Guruship so that you may guide the creation of God. He has directed you to invite your followers for *pahul* and make the unique faith known to them so that they may be blessed'. The Guru left Naina Devi carrying a naked sword and proclaimed: 'This is my Durga.'

Ganesh Das does not mention how 'the five' were selected but he does say that they were administered *pahul* and they were given the title of Khalsa. The names of only four of them are mentioned, and one of them is stated to be a brahman. Guru Gobind Singh received *pahul* from the five and declared that the Guru was the Khalsa and the Khalsa was the Guru. After this a thousand Jats, zamindars and others were administered *pahul*. They were all instructed in the Khalsa code of conduct. The epithet of Singh was added to their names. The Guru asked them to keep their hair intact and to discard the sacred thread: what they needed was the inner sacred thread. They were enjoined to wear arms and to use them to wrest rulership from the Muslims. The objective of Guru Gobind Singh in creating the Khalsa was to put an end to Mughal rule and to punish the tyrants. Ganesh Das tends to equate Mughal rule with Islam.

Dr Kirpal Singh lists over a score of the injunctions mentioned

in the *Char Bagh* regarding the *rahit* of the Khalsa. These injunctions relate to the external appearance of the Khalsa, food and drink, religious life, social obligations, and political duties. The close correspondence between the injunctions stated in the *Char Bagh* and the major Sikh sources indicates that Ganesh Das made painstaking efforts to collect his information. If it did not come from the contemporary Sikhs, it was probably acceptable to them.

Ganesh Das goes on to add that whoever received *pahul* from the Guru, his face became radiant. He considered himself the Khalsa and others his subjects or estate; he took to arms, and fought against the Muslims and the employees of the Mughal government to seize their wealth and power. This is Ganesh Das' way of saying that the Khalsa were meant to be sovereign and they attained sovereignty by the use of arms and with a firm faith in Guru Gobind Singh.

VII

Dr Tejwant Singh Gill has analysed the treatment of the Khalsa by Ernest Trumpp in his *Adi Granth*. Trumpp begins his commentary by evoking the precarious situation in which the Guru found himself on succession after the death of his father. In his view, the Guru's father was put to death for political reasons and it was justified on administrative grounds. Thus Trumpp ignores the ideological stance embedded in Sikhism.

Without entertaining intellectual doubts on any score, Trumpp moves forward with his bold but pejorative comments on Guru Gobind Singh's preoccupation with archery and hunting, linguistic proficiency, austerities practised for propitiating the goddess, Durga, the purpose of creating the Khalsa, the composition of the literary corpus which was not a part of the *Adi Granth*, travelling back and forth, retreating to the south, experiencing weariness and humiliation, the installation of the *Granth* as the future Guru of the Sikhs, and his death as if through deliberate manipulation.

In formulating his views on all these aspects, Trumpp maintains his pejorative stance in meaning, tone and tenor. This is partly due to the credence he placed on Muslim sources. But

he was not averse to Sikh sources. For example, he examines the compositions of the Guru himself. However, his conclusions are negotiated through his Christian faith, philological training, imperial assignation, and orientalist disposition. No doubt, he was able to demythologize the image of the Guru that embeds the common sense of the Sikhs in general and the good sense of their scholars and historians. At the same time, he failed miserably to historicize the image of the Guru. No wonder, his stance gets so anti-mythical that in the ultimate sense it seems to be the mirror image in a counter way of the mythical gloss.

Trumpp's orientalist bias compels him to read only gross meanings into the Guru's effort to gather his followers against intimidation from likely quarters. According to him, the Guru's aim was to wreak bloody revenge on the murderers of his father, to subvert the Muslim power totally and to found a new empire on its ruins. Trumpp goes to the extent of alleging that the Guru became an intrepid devotee of the goddess Durga. To propitiate the goddess, he not only practised severest austerities and made huge offerings, but also resolved to sacrifice one of his sons. When his wives opposed his resolve, he cut off the head of a disciple and offered it to the goddess.

Under the burden of his orientalist bias, to which his missionary zeal may have added an element of derision, Trumpp is very particular to depict the Guru as autocratic, vindictive and superstitious. In his view, the Guru was a blind devotee of the primordial goddess whom rites and rituals, offerings of valuable products and sacrifice of animals and living beings could assuage for visiting revenge upon the enemies and averting danger to his own person. However, the compositions of the Guru, which reflect his innermost self, tell a different story. In the devotional portions, particularly of the *Akal Ustat*, the Guru projects himself as the worshipper essentially of the Almighty. He beseeches God for protection to himself, his family and his followers. He seeks peace for the people at large and the elimination of his enemies. Decoding the Almighty as absolute, eternal and all-pervasive, he encodes in Him Time as well:

> In Time did Brahma assume a form
> In Time did Shiva come down below,
> In Time did Vishnu reveal himself,
> Of Time is all this wondrous show.

In the same vein, he further observes:

> That Time the Creator draws it out
> Creation takes its myriad shapes;
> And when again He draws it in
> Back into Him all forms relapse.

By Time, the Guru was referring to the flux dynamically animated by a spiritual principle. This was the primary meaning he gave to the term. Sometimes, it denotes death as well but in the overall scheme this was its secondary if not tertiary meaning.

The situation, in which the Guru resolved to institute the Khalsa was fractured by diverse pulls and pressures. Like a typical orientalist both charmed and intrigued by something exotic, Trumpp gives a graphic description of what transpired at Anandpur on the fateful Baisakhi day of 1699. According to him, *pahul* (baptismal drink) was prepared. Responding to the clarion-call of the Guru, five persons vounteered their heads. Majority of the people gathered were terror-stricken but the Guru initiated the chosen ones into the Khalsa. He enjoined upon them to wear the five insignia as a mark of their distinct identity. According to Trumpp, what impelled the Guru to this exotic but intriguing step was his resolve to separate his Sikhs totally from the Hindus. The Hindus had become an easy prey to Muslim invaders due to their caste divisions, which led to a rancorous feeling and did not allow the lower castes to bear arms. So, the Guru ordained to abolish the castes altogether, in order to put all on a footing of equality, and to admit people of all castes into the Khalsa. For Trumpp, this explains the preponderance of jats (peasants) to whom the higher castes did not take kindly.

Subjected to critical analysis and coherent evaluation, the views of Trumpp reveal that the Guru instituted the Khalsa as a distinct body mainly because the Hindus had become too effete to resist the Muslim onslaught. Otherwise an ardent devotee of the ancient deity, there was hardly any doctrinal difference to distinguish him from the Hindu ethos. If as a result of his dramatic and traumatic step, the lower castes became preponderant by driving out the higher ones, it was by accident rather than design. Underlying all this is the orientalist bias that life in the Orient was too gelatinous to experience any historical change.

Trumpp finds it contentious that the Guru kept his compositions separate from the *Adi Granth*. He wanted to reconstitute it by including his own compositions so that the feeling of meekness and humility it instilled in the minds of the Sikhs was offset. Here, under the burden of Christianity, Trumpp fails to appreciate the specificity of humility in *Gurbani*. Rather than grappling with the ethical and spiritual aspects of this overwhelming subject, he remains occupied with the anecdotal part. The Guru, contends Trumpp, tried to procure the copy of the *Adi Granth* to make additions. However, its custodians were opposed to any change. As a result, his compositions appeared in the *Dasam Granth* as a separate volume. As a matter of fact, the Guru did make a couple of changes in the *Adi Granth*. Apart from the *shlokas* of Guru Tegh Bahadur, he added a verse of his own written as a counterpoint to one of his father's. If he did not include his major compositions in the *Adi Granth*, it must have been due to some other consideration. When the time came to announce his successor, he chose the *Adi Granth*, thereby substituting the person with a scriptural Guru.

Rather than the female addressing the male, it is the *murid* (disciple) remembering his *mittar piara* (beloved friend) as the benevolent patron who is mentioned in the compositions of Guru Gobind Singh. This paradigm shift was the result of the Guru's forlorn struggle for a great cause that only an exceptional individual could launch, much to his discomfiture. Without the sustaining power of *gurbani*, he would not have been able to launch his valiant struggle. Little wonder, he bestowed guruship on the *Granth Sahib* though his own compositions marked an important paradigm shift. Trumpp seems to attribute all this to an erratic streak in his personality. Such a facile, rather unbecoming, judgement is the result of his orientalist bias and his missionary zeal: he looked at the apostles of other religions with derision if not downright contempt.

Trumpp's description of events of the post-Anandpur phase of the Guru's life contains the mark of a scandal. Such an attempt is very much a part of the orientalist mind that draws pleasure from the fanciful rather than the actual, the strange rather than the experiential, the exotic rather than the tragic. This was what Trumpp was after, describing how the Guru managed to die at

the hands of a young Pathan. He was the grandson of a *sardar* who had been killed by Guru Hargobind. Fully aware of this fact, the Guru enlisted him in his service. The moment he came into the presence of the Guru, he would provoke him, and taunt him for not behaving in a manly way. He also put into the young Pathan's head that a single thrust of the dagger that a Sikh had presented him that very moment was enough. The crux of all this is that the Guru had become not only sadistic but masochistic as well.

According to Trumpp, the young Pathan did what the Guru had desired him to do. While the Guru was asleep, he stabbed him and fled to escape the fury of the Sikhs who, however, captured him. When he was brought into the presence of the Guru, he praised him for being so brave and told the Sikhs to set him free. The wound healed in course of time. Trumpp believes that the Guru had resolved to die for that was what the Almighty had designed for him. He picked up a bow, and bent it with such force that the stitches broke asunder and the wound began to bleed. Then, he bestowed guruship on the Granth Sahib. In a situation in which celebration exceeded sorrow, he breathed his last, calmly reciting a couple of his own lines.

Trumpp regards the final phase of the Guru's life as a subterfuge. His Christian ethos taught him that a person, in face of such actuality, be he even a Christ, is more likely to cry out in solitude for having been forsaken by God. Under the burden of this ethos, Trumpp holds that the Guru died broken-hearted and weary of life far from the scene of his exploits. Supplementing this conclusion with the narrative of his death, Trumpp reads into the Guru's weariness, despair, disorientation and dementia if not derangement. For the common sense of the Sikhs and the good sense of the intelligentsia, this version of the Guru's death is unbearable. Even the hearing of it is very painful. But Trumpp was totally indifferent to the feelings and sentiments of the Sikhs.

VIII

Bhagat Lakshman Singh's works on Guru Gobind Singh and the Sikh martyrs are analysed by Prithipal Singh Kapur. He places

Bhagat Lakshman Singh squarely in the Singh Sabha Movement. He had become 'a staunch follower of Guru Gobind Singh who attracted him to the Khalsa creed'. He felt that Guru Gobind Singh had been misrepresented in most of the works published by European and Indian writers. They had focused on him at the political level only. The lasting contribution of Guru Gobind Singh towards human civilization was yet to be highlighted. The 'military achievements' of the Guru were only 'a chapter' of his life. He preached the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man to infuse true manliness into 'the hearts of the people of this land'. The creation of the Khalsa was linked to the larger concerns of Guru Gobind Singh.

The Hindus were in a deplorable state by the seventeenth century. Their places of worship were razed to the ground and they were not allowed to build new ones. Brahmanical excesses, superstitions and observances of caste prejudices took their own toll. The teachings of the first nine Gurus did have some impact but the rigid Hindu social code swayed the masses who firmly believed that an incarnation of God would appear to relieve them of their misery. Guru Gobind Singh sought to inspire the people with 'feelings of love, manliness and sacrifice'. He wanted them to rise against oppression. The alleged worship of Durga was meant only to demonstrate the futility of such superstitions. The whole episode was a hoax. Actually, the Guru's communion with God was the source of his commission to save humanity from sin and suffering. This was in conformity with the Sikh tradition. Guru Nanak had gone into seclusion, remained in communion with God, and was thereafter commissioned to be Guru.

On the first day, Guru Gobind Singh asked his followers to volunteer themselves at the altar of *dharma*. The call was given with a naked sword in hand. When the five volunteers stepped forward one by one, goats were slaughtered in a closed tent. The baptismal rite was performed on the day of Baisakhi in 1699. *Amrit* and *karah parshad* were served to all the five out of the same vessel to demonstrate that they had renounced caste prejudices. They were all brothers and members of one church called the Khalsa. They were to preach brotherhood of man and believe in one God. Guru Gobind Singh took *pahul* from the

five, equating the Khalsa with the Guru and the Guru with the Khalsa. The baptism of the sword was a baptism of the spirit at the same time. The Khalsa blossomed as friends of the weak and the defenceless and as foes of the strong and the oppressive. They became conscious that they were God's soldiers. Their identity was distinct. Bhagat Lakshman Singh asserts that Guru Gobind Singh rejected the *Vedas* and the *Puranas* as much as the *Quran*.

At the same time, Guru Gobind Singh stood for toleration and coexistence: 'we are sons of the same heaven and jewels of the same mine. We are mutual friends, no one is a stranger.' The Khalsa is the one 'in whose heart burns the light of the Perfect One, and who discards fasts and idol as well as tomb worship'. This view of the Khalsa served as a corrective to the impression that the Khalsa was created to fight for the protection of Hindus or to fight against the Muslim or Mughal oppression alone. In fact, the hill rajas, the brahmans and khatris were all opposed to the Khalsa.

Bhagat Lakshman Singh was not interested in details of the Khalsa *rahit*. Apart from baptism and the appellation of Singh, he mentions carrying of arms and wearing of garments suited to the life of a soldier. The Khalsa were to eschew tobacco and other intoxicants in any form. Bhagat Lakshman Singh accepts the credibility of the frequently quoted statement of Ghulam Muhiyuddin (Bute Shah) in his *Twārīkh-i Punjab* as the actual speech of Guru Gobind Singh because of its conformity with the reformist's version of Guru Gobind Singh's injunctions.

Within a decade of his *Short Sketch of the Life and Work of Guru Gobind Singh*, published in 1909, Bhagat Lakshman Singh produced his *Sikh Martyrs*, though it was actually published in 1928. Banda Bahadur does not figure in his account of Sikh martyrs. Probably he did not represent the Khalsa ethos exemplified by men like Bhai Tara Singh, Baba Deep Singh and Baba Gurbakhsh Singh, or by events like the *ghallughāras* of 1746 and 1762 which involved the sacrifice of a large number of Singhs. In this work too, Bhagat Lakshman is keen to recall the general spirit of the Khalsa. He quotes Guru Gobind Singh: 'Temples, mosques are the same, all men are alike'; 'all are of the same form and are made by One, the same Being'. Nowhere

does Guru Gobind say that the Great God was 'partial to the Khalsa'. Sikhism stood for tolerance. It would tolerate 'any system of belief if it allowed freedom of worship and drew closer to one another and to their common Divine'. The whole world was the home of the Sikh Gurus and the universe their country. Thus, Bhagat Lakshman Singh was keen to highlight the uniqueness of the Khalsa, the universality of its message, and the catholicity of its attitudes.

IX

The papers included in this volume speak for themselves. It may be reiterated that they relate to major interpretations of the Khalsa tradition by both Sikh and non-Sikh writers. The latter includes not only Indian but also Western writers.

The first work, Sainapat's *Gursobha*, appeared in 1711 after Banda Bahadur had temporarily established sovereign rule. Looking forward to a time when Khalsa rule would be established, the author praises Guru Gobind Singh for instituting the Khalsa as a religio-political order. Koer Singh's *Gurbilas Patshahi Das* was composed in 1751 when Sikh leaders had begun to occupy pockets of territory in the province of Lahore. The author looks forward to the establishment of Sikh rule after countless sacrifices had been made. He introduces the episode of Durga in justification of the political aspirations of non-kshatriyas in order to widen the appeal for political struggle.

Kesar Singh Chhibber produced his *Bansāvalīnāma Dasān Pātshāhiān Kā* in 1769 when Sikh rule had been established in nearly the whole of the province of Lahore and in pockets of the Delhi province. He sets himself up as a mentor of the new rulers, brahmanizing the Khalsa tradition for legitimizing Sikh rule. Both Bhai Santokh Singh and Ratan Singh Bhangu wrote in the early 1840s when some of the Sikh rulers had accepted British suzerainty and the only sovereign Sikh state, the kingdom of Lahore was threatened by the British. While Bhai Santokh Singh tried to understand the Khalsa tradition in a social environment which was predominantly Hindu, Ratan Singh Bhangu valorized the tradition for the defence of Sikh sovereignty.

Writing after the first Anglo-Sikh War, J.D. Cunningham depicted the process of Sikh history from Guru Nanak, through

the institution of the Khalsa, to Maharaja Ranjit Singh as the emergence of a nation that demanded appreciation and deserved sympathy. Syed Muhammad Latif wrote about the Sikhs around 1890 when British imperialism was at its height and appeared to be the greatest achievement of human history. All earlier ages seemed to be more or less flawed. Latif's treatment of the Khalsa was further flawed by his own identification with the Muslim community, though he professed to be impartial. Over two decades later, Khazan Singh wrote in defence of the Khalsa tradition against writers like Latif and Trumpp. At the same time he made loyalty to the rulers an integral part of the Sikh tradition. The Khalsa opposition to Mughal rule was justified only because of injustice and oppression.

Archer was a liberal American missionary, interested in a 'comparative study' of religion. In 1946 he attempted to present Sikhism and the Khalsa in the context of world religions like Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. His appreciation of the Sikh tradition was built into his approach, though his work contains many factual errors and misconceptions. Indubhushan Banerjee's scholarly work on the evolution of the Khalsa makes the Khalsa tradition subservient to 'Hindu nationalism'. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh were intimately linked with the historiographical tradition of the Singh Sabha Movement as well as modern historical scholarship. Their interpretation of the Khalsa tradition can be seen as a contemporary Sikh perspective on the Khalsa.

The treatment of the Khalsa in the works of the second half of the twentieth century is a major theme of historiography, deserving a detailed study. It is clear, however, that this historiography has been considerably influenced by the perspectives presented in this volume. Indeed, these perspectives are likely to enable the reader to assess and appreciate contemporary historiography with a heightened awareness of the way in which the purposes, information, ideas, and attitudes of the historian influence his work.

CHAPTER 1

Praising the Khalsa: Sainapat's *Gursobha*

J.S. Grewal

It is generally believed that *Sri Guru Sobha Granth* was composed in 1711 by Sainapat who lived at the court (*darbār*) of Guru Gobind Singh for more than a decade. Written within three years of Guru Gobind Singh's death, it can be regarded as a contemporary work. It was based partly on personal observation and partly on hearsay and poetic imagination.[1]

Sainapat uses the terms *kathā*, *sākhī* and *upmā* as well as *sobha* to characterize his narration. Presumably, his purpose was to depict the remarkable deeds of the Tenth Master in loving admiration as an act of devotion.[2] The reader cannot miss the broad chronological order in which events are presented. The author was probably familiar with the autobiographical *Bachittar Natak*. His own work can be regarded as biographical, but he was deliberately and highly selective in his presentation of events.

He possibly depended on the *Bachittar Nātak* for the pre-Khalsa account, but there is a bare reference to Guru Gobind Singh's stay at Makhowal for several years before he moved to Paonta. The battle of Bhangani is given in detail, celebrating the martial prowess and triumph of Guru Gobind Singh. His immediate return to Kahlur and the founding of Anandpur as well as the detail of the battles which follow seem to have been based on the *Bachittar Nātak*: the battle of Nadaun in which

Guru Gobind Singh fought against the Mughal *faujdār* Alif Khan on request for help from Raja Bhim Chand of Kahlur; the unsuccessful campaign of Dilawar Khan's son (the *khānzāda*) against Anandpur; the participation and death of Sangatia and seven other Sikhs of Guru Gobind Singh in the battle of the hill chiefs against Husain Khan. Sainapat merely alludes to the other wonderful deeds (*kautak*). The pre-Khalsa account is covered in less than fourteen pages and there is hardly any information in this part of the work which is not given the *Bachittar Nātak*.[3]

Indeed, the conception of Guru Gobind Singh's mission is also drawn from the *Bachittar Nātak*: 'to extirpate the wicked and to raise the pious' (*dusht bidāran sant ubāran*). As in the *Bachittar Nātak* so in the *Sri Guru Sobha*, there is divine sanction behind the mission: it was entrusted to Guru Gobind Singh by God.[4] However, Sainapat's presentation of the mission is of crucial significance. In the *Bachittar Nātak*, there is no mention of the Khalsa; in the *Sri Guru Sobha*, the mission is realized through the Khalsa. What was implicit becomes explicit. The 'Nirmal Panth' created by Guru Nanak and his successors becomes manifest as the 'Khalis Panth' of Guru Gobind Singh. The Keshdhari Singh served as the cornerstone of this stable and everlasting structure. The 'Khalis Panth' was not to be concealed after its manifestation. It was to suffer no dimunition. Those who sought refuge in it shall suffer no sorrow. They shall attain to liberation.[5]

On Baisakhi day (the year is not mentioned), when the Sikh *sangats* converged on Anandpur from all sides, Guru Gobind Singh made (his conception of) the Khalsa manifest to the Sikhs gathered on the bank of the Satlej. Many of them became Khalsa but others lost their equanimity.[6] One of the injunctions of Guru Gobind Singh was directed against the Masands: they were to be excommunicated to abolish their mediacy between the Guru and the Sikh. The *sevak* was enabled to meet the true Guru as water mingles with water. The (Sikh) world was purified by the removal of the Masands.[7] Sainapat leaves no doubt about this primary connotation of the Khalsa: by removing all the Masands the Guru made all the Sikhs his Khalsa.[8] Henceforth offerings to the Guru were not to be sent through the Masands.[9] As the Sikhs of Delhi explained to the local Mughal officials, the Guru had *nāibs* (like the Mughal emperor) who were called *masands*;

they were dismissed and all Sikhs became the Khalsa of the Guru.[10]

Direct affiliation with Guru Gobind Singh carried the implication that anyone who followed another *guru* was not to be treated as a Sikh. Gobind Singh was the only true Guru.[11] In the *Sri Guru Sobha*, Guru Gobind Singh enjoined the Sikhs not to have any association with 'the five'.[12] The author assumes that the reader is aware of them. Two of these five groups of people are mentioned by Sainapat: the followers of the Masands and of the Sikhs who cut their hair (*kesh*). The other three were the followers of the rival claimants to guruship: the Minas or the followers of Prithi Chand (and his descendants), the followers of Dhir Mal (and his descendants), and the followers of Ram Rai (and his successors). Logically, the Sikh *sangat* gets redefined for Sainapat. It consists of those Sikhs who became the Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh and those fortunate ones who sought refuge in the Guru.[13] The Sikhs who remained steadfast in their dedication to the Guru were instrumental in making the Khalsa manifest. The Sikhs of yesterday became the Khalsa of today by demonstrating their steadfastness. What remained concealed (*gupt*) till yesterday became manifest (*pargat*) today.[14]

As noted already, one category of people with whom the Khalsa were not to have any association were those who shaved their heads. This was the reverse of the positive injunction that the Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh should keep their *kesh* unshorn. Logically, the customary rite of *bhaddar* was to be discarded: it was no piety (*dharm*), it was merely a delusion (*bharm*) to perform this rite even on the death of one's parents. 'Do not perform *bhaddar* O'my Sikhs, do not touch your head with a razor.'[15] The Guru himself was *keshdhār*.[16] That keeping unshorn hair was of crucial importance is evident from the dispute between the Khalsa and the others on the question of keeping the hair uncut.[17] Unshorn hair was an essential part of the Khalsa *rahit*. The infringement of this *rahit* made a *khalsa* a *khulāsa*.[18]

The Khalsa were administered baptism of the double-edged sword (*khandae ki pahul*) by Guru Gobind Singh to make them powerful in 'all the ten directions'.[19] The epithet Singh was added to their names. It is extremely significant to note that Sainapat begins to identify the Sikh with the Khalsa and the Khalsa with the Singh. Transitional phrases like 'Khalsa Sikh' and 'Khalsa

Singh' are interesting in this context.[20] Equally important for the Khalsa was to wear arms. Sainapat often uses the expression 'the five arms' (*panch hathiār*) of the Khalsa. At one place these five arms are identified as the matchlock, the bow and the arrow, the spear, the sword, and the dagger.[21] The word used for the sword is *talwār*. Elsewhere, it is referred to as *shamshīr*.[22] Not that the Singhs did not use other arms: there is a reference to the use of guns from the fort of Anandgarh.[23] More than one weapon was used as *kotah hathiār* in close, hand to hand, fighting.[24] However, the weapon *par excellence* of the Khalsa is the sword (*teg*)[25] or the *bhagauti*.[26]

The wearing of arms was not a ritual; they were meant to be used. How else would the demons (*asur*) be slaughtered or the wicked (*durjan*) be killed? The Khalsa were to meet the crisis (*sankat*) by resort to arms.[27] To wear arms was a religious duty of the Khalsa. Conversely, arms were to be used for the cause of righteousness (*dharm kaj*).[28] Discarding all worldly greed, the Khalsa were to adopt kindness (*daya*) and righteous conduct (*dharm*).[29] Since the Khalsa Panth became manifest with divine sanction, by joining the Panth the Sikhs became *Wahiguru ji ka Khalsa*.[30] Their victory being tantamount to divine victory (*Wahiguru ji ki fateh*).[31]

The injunctions of Guru Gobind Singh for the Khalsa constituted their *rahit* and its infringement called for corrective punishment (*tankhah*).[32] However, Sainapat does not catalogue all positive or negative injunctions. Among the strongest negative injunctions were those against the use of *hukka*,[33] *bhaddar* and association with the excommunicated groups. Similarly, among the positive injunctions only the most salient are explicitly mentioned: unshorn *kesh*, baptism of the double-edged sword, the epithet Singh, wearing of arms, especially the sword, and adoption of *Wahiguru ji ka khalsa, Wahiguru ji ki fateh*.

In the *Sri Guru Sobha* there is no explicit reference to a call for heads but the author leaves the reader in no doubt that the seal of Khalsahood was fighting unto death. After the battle of Nirmoh, for example, when the dead body of Sahib Chand was cremated, Sainapat remarks that he became 'Khalsa' by sacrificing his life; his fortune became perfect.[34] Similarly, Sahibzada Ajit Singh 'drank the cup of love' on the battlefield of Chamkaur and Guru Gobind Singh observed: 'Today he has become a Khalsa

in the court of the True Guru.'[35] Though Sainapat does not use the word *shahīdī* but he is not far from the conception of martyrdom. In fact, 'the cup of love' implies that the Sahibzada died fighting for a righteous cause and, therefore, as a martyr. Khalsahood, thus, carried the implication of martyrdom.

For Sainapat the Singhs are not merely soldiers. They represent the association of true Sikhs (*sat sangat*).[36] They worship the only True Lord[37] and follow the only true Guru. They sing the praises of God in the true congregation (*sat sangat*) and pray to God for the boon of the Name. They remember God and meditate on him.[38] They meditate on the Name.[39] They are the *sant-jan* who cultivate the love of God. Their congregation is *Sant Sabha*. They seek refuge only in God.[40] The crooked and the false do not join the true association of the Khalsa. Having turned their back to the Guru[41] they are bereft of the Guru's grace.[42] Those who overcome their pride and seek refuge in the *sants* (Khalsa), have God's grace.[43] Those who receive the gift of the Name are able to live in accordance with the divine order (*hukam*).[44] The pure ones (*khālis*) meditate on the Name and become Khalsa. They attain to liberation.[45] So strong is Sainapat's support for the Khalsa that, by contrast, others appear to be non-believers (*dehrias*).[46] Those who leave the Guru have no place to go to.[47] The Guru's injunction against the use of *hukka* and the cutting of hair is juxtaposed with the cultivation of love for the Khalsa *sangat*. That is how the Khalsa should live his faith.[48]

II

Sainapat does not see any contradiction between the religious faith of the Khalsa and their temporal power. When the Chief of Kahlur challenged Guru Gobind Singh to either pay tribute (*dām*) or leave Anandpur, otherwise he would be attacked, the Guru was displeased, but he was concerned about both authority and power (*tej* and *rāj*). Therefore, he sent a message that the hill chief could take Anandpur at the point of the spear.[49] When Guru Gobind Singh returned to Anandpur after it was first evacuated the Khalsa flocked to him and 'conquered' the neighbouring villages. Furthermore, they asked the people of other villages to make voluntary offer of payment (*bhet*). If they submitted they were spared; if they refused, they were plundered.

This led the hill chiefs to believe that 'the rule of Guru Gobind Singh was established in all the four directions'.[50] When the hill chiefs asked him to leave the territory, he simply prepared for war.[51]

Sainapat dwells on the first siege and battle of Anandpur after the institution of the Khalsa, extolling their prowess. Failing to seize Anandpur, the hill chiefs resort to a stratagem: they request the Guru to leave Anandpur temporarily as grazing land for cows. Guru Gobind Singh goes to Nirmoh where he is attacked by the hill chiefs assisted by the Mughal *faujdār* of Sirhind. In the battle of Nirmoh the Khalsa Singhs demonstrate their supremacy on the field of battle. The imperial troops are forced to retreat after intense fighting for twenty-one hours. In another battle on the banks of the Satlej, the 'Turks' are repulsed. Guru Gobind Singh crosses the river and is warmly received by the Rao of Bisali.[52] He witnesses a battle between the Khalsa and the army of Kahlur. Sainapat attributes the latter's defeat to the firm faith of the Khalsa. The hill chief is forced to submit; Guru Gobind Singh returns to Anandpur and constructs the fort of Anandgarh.[53]

Describing the second battle of Anandpur, Sainapat refers to the *dal* of the Khalsa attacking the army of the hill chiefs. Helpless, they approach the Mughal emperor for help. The Mughal and Pathan soldiers from Lahore, Jammu and Sirhind converge on Anandpur. Some are killed and others are forced to retreat. Realizing that the Singhs cannot be defeated in battle, the hill chiefs decide to lay siege to Anandpur. Facing an acute shortage of food and water, the Singhs are killed in their attempts to raid enemy supplies. Guru Gobind Singh assures the starving people that the crisis would soon be over. The 'Sikhs', however, believe that there is no harm in evacuating Anandgarh. The Guru asks them to accept the responsibility for the consequences and they sign an agreement (*tauhad*). The treasury is distributed among the Singhs and each one takes five weapons and Anandgarh is evacuated.[54] It is important to note that Sainapat talks of the Khalsa and the Singhs as a collective entity in war and peace.

The two youngest sons of Guru Gobind Singh are captured by the enemy and taken to Sirhind. Like their grandfather, Guru Tegh Bahadur, they refuse to accept Islam; and like him, they preserve their *dharm* in the Kali Age.[55] Besides being the sons of

Guru Gobind Singh, the Sahibzadas were also 'Singhs' and they were willing to drink 'the cup of love' as martyrs.

The Singhs defeat the 'Turks' in another battle before Guru Gobind Singh sends with Daya Singh and five other Khalsa a letter for Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb is informed that Guru Gobind Singh would have come personally had the imperial officials not broken their solemn promises given earlier, moreover, there were many *faujdārs* and *qiladārs* along the route to the south lying in wait to obstruct his passage. They add that Aurangzeb should issue orders to his functionaries. Subsequently, a mace-bearer (*gurz-bardār*) is sent with an imperial order (*farmān*). Accompanied by armed Singhs, Guru Gobind Singh leaves for the Deccan in his full regalia and splendour. In Rajasthan, the Singhs subsist on supplies offered to them voluntarily, or on plunder, and are victorious in a battle fought for two days and two nights. Hearing the news of Aurangzeb's death, Guru Gobind Singh decides to go to Delhi.[56]

Prince Muazzam (Bahadur Shah) had written from Delhi requesting Guru Gobind Singh to help him in the war of succession against Prince Azam. 'Have no doubt in your mind', wrote Guru Gobind Singh, 'regard the *rāj* as certainly yours.' Satisfied, Bahadur Shah is victorious in the battle of Jajau and ascends the throne. Sainapat valorizes Azam implying that Bahadur Shah was victorious because of the blessings of Guru Gobind Singh who reaches Delhi after the battle.[57] Passing through Mathura and Brindaban, Guru Gobind Singh reaches Agra. Accepting the invitation of Bahadur Shah, the Guru appears in the court fully armed. The emperor expresses his gratitude to him and offers a *khilat*, together with an aigrette and a bejewelled medallion. Bahadur Shah leaves for Rajasthan and some time later Guru Gobind Singh follows him.[58] Like Bahadur Shah, Guru Gobind Singh visits Ajmer, Jodhpur, Udaipur and Chittor (where Sahibzada Zorawar Singh is engaged in a battle). Crossing the Narbada and the Tapti, Guru Gobind Singh meets the emperor before he leaves for Nander. At Nander, he is attacked and wounded by a Pathan whom he kills. The Pathan's two accomplices are killed by the Singhs. Guru Gobind Singh breathes his last many days later. At midnight he awakens the Singhs and bids them farewell saying' *Wahiguru ji ki fateh.*

There are a few more points to be considered in Sainapat's

presentation of the Khalsa. The dominance of the Khalsa among the Sikhs was neither sudden nor smooth. There was resistance to the new *rahit* at many places. Sainapat cites the example of Delhi. When the Sikhs of Delhi who were in Anandpur at the time of Baisakhi returned to the city, they informed the Sikhs of the new *rahit*. The *sangat* of Delhi accepted the *pahul*, but the khatris and brahmans refused as they did not wish to discard some of their old customs for fear of losing their social status. For Sainapat, it was a test of their faith, that is, loving devotion to the Guru. For him, there was no difference between the Guru and the Khalsa sangat. A khatri who had cut his hair was expelled from the congregation and excommunicated. A Sikh who shared food with him was asked to explain his conduct. He confessed his fault and prayed to be forgiven by the *sangat* and was redmitted into the fold. According to Sainapat, for those who understand, 'the true Guru and the *sangat* are one and the same'; the *sangat* can punish and forgive. Some time later, another case of infringement of the *rahit* came up before the *sangat* and the guilty along with his associates were expelled from the congregation. They consulted others and decided to hold a fair in Darapur Bazar. On the plea that no written injunction had come from the Guru they justified infringement of the new *rahit*.[60]

The matter did not end there. When no *bhaddar* was observed on the death of a particular Sikh, it was decided that no one should have any dealings with 'the defaulter'. The panchas gave a call for the *bazar* to be closed. The Sikhs approached the officials who issued orders to open the *bazar*. The panchas made a counter-representation and bribed the officials. Some of the Sikhs were arrested; others were insulted. In this situation, God showed his grace. The officials on their own ordered the shops to be opened. Both the sides were reconciled. The defaulters presented themselves before the *sangat* and sought forgiveness for their sins and were taken back into the fold. Those who submitted a written apology were permitted to seek the Guru's *darshan*. Thus, the authority of the Khalsa Sangat was established in Delhi. What happened in Delhi was not exceptional as similar occurrences took place in other cities.[61]

At the beginning of his work, Sainapat lists the names of the true Guru: Nanak, Angad, Amar Das, Ram Das, Arjan, Hargobind, Har Rai, Har Krishan and Tegh Bahadur. Sainapat makes the additional comment about Guru Tegh Bahadur that he saved the

whole universe; he sacrificed his life for the sake of *karm-dharm*. He saved *sarab dharm*, especially *tilak-janju* and *dharmsal*. After him, Gobind Singh became the true Guru.[62] Sainapat reinforces the unity of guruship by addressing the Master (*prabhu*) as: You are Guru Nanak, you are Guru Angad, you are Guru Amar Das, Ram Das are you; you are Guru Arjan, you are Guru Hargobind, you are Guru Har Rai, Har Krishan are you; as the ninth Patshahi you demonstrated your power in the Kali Age, and Tegh Bahadur *jagg-chādar* are you; as the tenth Patshah you are Sri Guru Gobind Singh, who has come to save the world.[63] What would happen to Guruship after Guru Gobind Singh? An answer has been given by Sainapat in the lifetime of Guru Gobind Singh: the Guru and the Khalsa sangat are one; there is no difference. A day before Guru Gobind Singh died, the Singhs asked him specifically: 'What would be your form?' He replied, 'All I have to do is with the Khalsa; I have bestowed my form on the Khalsa.' 'The Khalsa are my form and I am close to them. My eternal abode is the Khalsa'. Likewise, the true Guru is in the *shabad* and in the *bāṇi*.[64]

Towards the end, Sainapat visualizes the re-appearance of Guru Gobind Singh when he would ride with the Khalsa, holding the sword in his hand, and destroy the wicked hosts of the enemy. The refrain of the *savviya* that follows is: *Garh Anand pher basavengay* (they will re-establish Anandgarh).[65] However, this does not end Sainapat's work. He adds that the light of God shines in the whole universe and within everyone. He is the master of all, and no other. He is the true object of worship. Remember him with love in your heart and meditate on the Name. There is no liberation without the Name. Meditate on the *shabad*. Serve the true Guru. There is no liberation without the Guru. The perfect Guru is in the *sangat*. Take refuge in the true *sangat*, the source of peace and knowledge.[66] Obviously, the Khalsa of Sainapat is a fraternity armed to fight for temporal power as a part of its religious duties.

NOTES

1. *Sri Guru Sobha*, ed. Shamsher Singh Ashok, Amritsar: SGPC, 1967, pp. 1-8.
2. Ibid., pp. 9-10.
3. Ibid., pp. 15-28.

4. For an analysis of the *Bachittar Natak*, see J.S. Grewal. *Sikh Ideology, Polity and Social Order*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1996.
5. *Sri Guru Sobha*, pp. 11-13.
6. Ibid., p. 29.
7. Ibid., p. 30.
8. Ibid., p. 33.
9. Ibid., p. 34.
10. Ibid., p. 53. The term *khalsa* is mentioned in some of the *hukamnamas* of Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh, both before and after the institution of the Khalsa. Sainapat appears to be right in looking upon direct affiliation with the Guru, that is, without the mediacy of a Masand, as the primary connotation of the Khalsa. In the *Dabistan-i Mazahib*, written much before the time of Guru Tegh Bahadur, there is an explicit statement that they who become Sikhs through the mediacy of the Masand or his *nāib* are known as *meli* or *sahling*. *Mākhaz-i Tawārīkh-i Sikhān*, ed. Ganda Singh. Amritsar: Sikh History Society, 1949, pp. 34-5.
11. *Sri Guru Sobha*, p. 32.
12. Ibid., pp. 31-40.
13. Ibid., p. 30.
14. Ibid., p. 31.
15. Ibid., p. 33.
16. Ibid., p. 41.
17. Ibid., pp. 43-4.
18. Ibid., p. 47. The word *tankhah* for corrective punishment appears in the *Sri Guru Sobha*, which clearly shows that the *rahit* was meant to be taken in all earnestness.
19. Ibid., p. 33.
20. Ibid., pp. 66, 73, 76, 77, 78, 80, 81, 84, 85, 105.
21. Ibid., pp. 61, 81, 86, 103.
22. Ibid., p. 60.
23. Ibid., p. 76.
24. Ibid., p. 87.
25. Ibid., p. 41.
26. Ibid., p. 108.
27. Ibid., p. 30.
28. Ibid., p. 12.
29. Ibid., p. 33.
30. Ibid., pp. 33, 53.
31. Ibid., pp. 105, 131.
32. Ibid., pp. 40-1.
33. Ibid., pp. 31, 33.
34. Ibid., p. 63.

35. Ibid., p. 90.
36. Ibid., p. 34.
37. Ibid., p. 29.
38. Ibid., p. 35.
39. Ibid., p. 36.
40. Ibid., p. 36.
41. Ibid., p. 37.
42. Ibid., p. 38.
43. Ibid., p. 39.
44. Ibid., p. 39.
45. Ibid., p. 43.
46. Ibid., p. 35.
47. Ibid., p. 35.
48. Ibid., p. 42.
49. Ibid., p. 57.
50. Ibid., p. 75.
51. Ibid., p. 76.
52. Ibid., pp. 63-9.
53. Ibid., pp. 70-1.
54. Ibid., pp. 75-82.
55. Ibid., pp. 83-94.
56. Ibid., pp. 95-112.
57. Ibid., pp. 113-16.
58. Ibid., pp. 117-22.
59. Ibid., pp. 123-31.
60. Ibid., pp. 42-50.
61. Ibid., pp. 51-6.
62. Ibid., pp. 10-11.
63. Ibid., pp. 14-15.
64. Ibid., pp. 132.
65. Ibid., pp. 136-8.
66. Ibid., pp. 139-55.

CHAPTER 2

Compromising the Khalsa Tradition: Koer Singh's *Gurbilas*

Gurtej Singh

Koer Singh provides a few autobiographical details in his work, *Gurbilas Patshahi Das*. He was influenced by Bhai Mani Singh's sermons and interpretation of history for a considerable portion of his work which may be regarded as the first historical work of its kind.[1] He started writing after being relieved from service, probably administrative service.[2] His statement that he was baptized as a Sikh at a late stage in life and was a 'Sikh only in name'[3] may be regarded as a candid confession in view of the nature of the present work and his life in service. Veiled references to his earlier names, Srikant Hari and Bishan Hari,[4] indicate that he was perhaps a devout Vaishnava before his conversion under the influence of Bhai Mani Singh.[5] Significantly, the old name is used in the earlier part of the book, and only at the end he refers to himself as Koer Singh Kalal. He gives AD 1751 as the date of the completion of his work.[6]

Koer Singh avows his debt to Bhai Mani Singh and claims that, generally, he is merely summarizing the Bhai's discourses in his work. Regarding the creation of the Khalsa, he claims that he is repeating them in detail.[7] This does not mean, however, that Bhai Mani Singh was his only source of information. The verbatim use of a couplet and a quartet from Sainapat's *Guru Sobha*, and the use of the *Bachittar Nātak* has been noted by Fauja Singh.[8] In his account of battles, Koer Singh relies heavily

on the latter and the *Zafarnāmah*. Some of his verses in Punjabi suggest imitation of portions included in the *Dasam Granth*.[9] The *Sarbloh Granth* has also been used.[10] A substantial part of his work was based on eyewitness accounts received through his association with the Khalsa. His description of the creation of the Khalsa, the siege of Anandpur Sahib, the martyrdom of Bhai Mani Singh, the Guru's meeting with Bahadur Shah, and his last days at Nander appear to be based on eyewitness accounts.

Koer Singh was a learned man. The choice of *brajbhasha*, the use of about thirty metres of poetry attuned to musical modes, and the capability to handle all the nine traditional moods are evidence of his formal training in composing poetry. His knowledge of Puranic legends, basic classification in Indian literature, musical instruments and hunting animals, his comprehension of political situations and theory, and his familiarity with diplomatic and administrative processes are a tribute to his learning.[11] Because of his Hindu background, he was particularly at home with the numerous gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon, and his understanding of their intricate relationships and complex dealings with anti-gods is indeed impressive. He uses this information profusely, with great resourcefulness. He is familiar with the tenets of Islam, and displays insight into its basic political theory. His poetry is intrinsically good, and his prose, of which there are a few specimens, is direct, precise and forceful.

Though Koer Singh professes to write for affording spiritual solace to holy men and salvation to listeners, and he is aware that his work would be recited at religious congregations, service (*seva*) is not his only objective for undertaking the work.[12] There is little doubt that he was familiar with the concept and value of history as a contemporary discipline. The scope and approach of his work suggest that he was not a casual composer but a serious writer, conscious of the value and worth of his work. He sets out to write a complete biography of Guru Gobind Singh, focusing on his earlier life as well as his last days. If some of the dates are wrong, others are substantially correct. What is more important is his interest in chronology. His primary purpose was to compile a powerful work of history which, besides being a monument to his learning, should continue to influence Sikh society on the threshold of political power. He hoped that his

phenomenal hatred of Muslims would spread. Koer Singh aspired to be an influential writer at a turning point in Sikh history and hoped to manipulate the fast emerging power relationship to the greatest advantage of 'Hindus'. His professed dependence on Bhai Mani Singh was calculated to enhance the acceptability of his work to the Sikh society at large.

Philosophically, Koer Singh's position is at least equivocal. He appears to have embraced Sikhism without ardour, almost as a matter of policy, remaining deeply rooted in his ancestral faith. It is apparent from his analysis of the Khalsa order that he clearly discerned the contradistinctions between Hinduism and Sikhism, but he was unable to subscribe exclusively to one or the other. His treatment of the myth of Durgapuja by Guru Gobind Singh is partly an expression of the dichotomy that prevailed in his mind. His sympathy for Guru Gobind Singh transcends the natural fondness of a writer for the subject of a biography. He had genuine admiration for the warrior Guru and was intellectually convinced about his approach, but the pull of his own past was equally strong. His liking for the 'new ship' (*pot navin*), which does not completely enthuse him personally, is a true commentary on the status of Sikhism for him. He remained a convert of convenience. His deep hatred of Muslims[13] goads him to support an order most likely to bring about their political downfall. Such an approach was likely to be of immense advantage to both Sikhs and Hindus. The devastating effect of Muslim rule on Hindu fortunes is ever present in his mind.[14]

It is an essential element of Koer Singh's political strategy to project the Gurus as incarnations of God, despite their own unequivocal denunciation of the belief. His devotion to Guru Gobind Singh as God is deep and moving; belief in *riddhis* and *siddhis* follows as a natural consequence. He asks to be forgiven by the Guru for not realizing that he was God and not human.[15] Koer Singh accepts the Guru as 'God's incarnation'. He records at least half a dozen miracles, believes in the miracle-working powers of the Gurus, and contrives situations which illustrate the miraculous feats. The power to work miracles, according to him, is the conclusive proof of the Gurus' divine status. Guru Tegh Bahadur is portrayed as affirming that even his domestic servants possess miraculous powers. Guru Gobind Singh is made to support a similar proposition. The Gurus are portrayed as

having performed miracles.[16] Significantly, when confronted with the question in relation to actual events in the Gurus' lives, Koer Singh does not hesitate to confirm that they emphatically denied having miraculous powers. Guru Tegh Bahadur is repeatedly asked to perform miracles on pain of death but he firmly upholds that only God has such powers,[17] denigrates miracle-working as a despicable pretence of equality with God, and affirms that 'miracle is a grossly vulgar demonstration by the excessively proud'.[18] Similarly, when Guru Gobind Singh accurately shoots an arrow at a distance ordinarily not possible and is suspected of having worked a miracle, he promptly allays the suspicion.[19]

Koer Singh's position on the subject of miracles, though complex, cannot be regarded as contradictory or untenable. To do that would be to confess inability to comprehend his peculiar perception. His ultimate political purpose, the overwhelming need to effectively challenge the legitimacy of Muslim rule, is dependent upon the single factor of his acceptance of the Guru as God, unrestrained by the laws of nature. Plausible demonstration of miraculous powers was necessary, as Hindu and Muslim believers in opposing camps were to be respectively inspired and demoralized. Ultimately, miracles serve as heraldic devices and instruments of announcing change in the location of sovereign power. They are not merely a matter of evidence, or even of faith.

Koer Singh's depiction of events leading to the death of the last two Gurus has to be understood in the light of the need to maintain consistency in his stance over miracles. In the context of their being God, the possibility of violation of their will had to be non-existent. Consequently, Guru Tegh Bahadur voluntarily decides to court martyrdom.[20] Willingly he goes to Agra, reveals himself, and remains in prison though demonstrably fetters and bars cannot hold him. Since no Mughal sword can affect him, he asks a follower to behead him.[21] Similarly, Guru Gobind Singh is made to engineer his own murder. He is depicted as taking pains at cultivating and sufficiently motivating the would-be assassin.[22] The procedure was clearly a logical necessity. Exaggerated accounts of battles, in which a single person annihilates millions, have to be understood in terms of the omnipotent Guru exercising his absolute power over life and death.

The Guru's image of a liberator of the oppressed has the strongest appeal for Koer Singh Kalal, a wine-distiller by profession, reckoned as the lowest caste in the traditional system. The casteless character of the Sikh society is greatly emphasized by him. One of the main objects of the new *pahul* ceremony was to establish a freely inter-dining casteless brotherhood, sharing common aspiration to political power.[23] He regards equality to be the cardinal virtue of the Khalsa order [24] and analyses its egalitarian character in great detail. People of different persuasions and castes adopt the Khalsa way. Both Hindus and Muslims were acceptable as the Khalsa, provided they abjured previous beliefs. Koer Singh does not fail to notice that even Chandals had become Sikhs.[25] He points out that caste status was formally repudiated by abandoning the sacred thread on initiation.[26] The Hindu rajas of the hills refuse to join the Guru's fraternity because he had effaced the four *varnas* 'by the ceremony of *amrit* and the obligatory code of conduct'. It was unthinkable that 'the twelve high castes should dine with seven lowest of the low'.[27] The Mughal view is refracted through Bhikhan Khan who reiterates: 'foolish *jats*, oil-pressers, *bhats*, *labanas*, *chamars*, *banias*, *aroras*, *bhatias*, tailors, carpenters, untouchables and all other low castes such as wine-distillers, goldsmiths, *arains*, *khosans* and *chaulas*, who do not know how to hold a spear, comprise his army'.[28] Koer Singh provides the caste-wise break-up of the 'first beloved ones', the twenty-five who were next initiated and the forty martyrs at Chamkaur, showing that they belonged overwhelmingly to castes regarded as low.[29] He highlights the prowess of the Guru's casteless army in battles against the traditional high caste armies of the hill rajas and the Mughals; they confidently face superior numbers, fight against heavy odds, and prove themselves to be invincible.

Koer Singh is anxious to establish the authenticity of his crucial chapter on the creation of the Khalsa. Ascribing the information to Bhai Mani Singh,[30] he claims not to be withholding any detail.[30] Elsewhere he is content to give only summaries. The intimate detail of the first *amrit* ceremony leaves no doubt that the narrative owes its origin to one who thoroughly understood its various aspects with a penetrating insight, with all their far-reaching implications clearly worked out.

The abolition of the *masand* system is described by Koer

Singh as the very first step towards the formal launching of the Khalsa order. He says that the Guru 'first set his house in order'.[31] On inquiry and inspection, the Masands were found to be misappropriating funds meant for maintaining the common kitchen. They had not rendered accounts since the time of Guru Hargobind and haughtily refused to comply when called upon to do so. They were found to be depraved, greedy and arrogant. Their oppressive behaviour and callous exploitation of the Sikhs, especially the poor and the simple whom they were supposed to serve, moved the Guru. He adequately exposed their crimes against the Sikh *sangat*. He eventually abolished the institution, going to the extent of physically liquidating the worst amongst the Masands.[32]

The code of conduct for the Khalsa enjoins them to shun the Masands who appropriated the reverence rightly due to the *Adi Granth*. Koer Singh refers to the *Granth* as the Guru Granth and to the *panth* as the Guru Panth.[33] For the final ceremony of *pahul*, along with the five chosen ones, the Guru emerges from the tent in the style of a friend and an equal, symbolically repudiating the superior claims of guruship.[34] The declaration that the guruship was henceforth merged in the Khalsa Panth is emphatically and repeatedly made.[35] When the Guru requested the first five to initiate him as the sixth member of the Order of the Khalsa, they were embarrassed 'to admit him as disciple'.[36] The Guru urged them to believe 'without doubt that a true Sikh is equal to the Guru'.[37] The formal investiture of the Granth as Guru had naturally to await the end of his own term and was one of the last acts of the Guru.[38]

The key to the author's character, and consequently to that of his work, lies in his intense hatred of Muslims. Hopes of and prayers for their ruination are the most numerous to come across.[39] The root cause, no doubt, was their political domination. Koer Singh was sensitive to the disabilities suffered by the Hindus on that account and the consequent harm done to their religion and culture.[40] Guru Tegh Bahadur is seen as an implacable foe of both Mughal intolerance and political power. The Khalsa had come within a measurable distance of political success by the time he compiled his work. It was entirely to his liking to interpret the life and mission of Guru Gobind Singh as centred on the single point of resistance to Mughal domination. Probably, this

understanding of the Guru's work prompted him to embrace Sikhism. Paramount in his mind was the necessity to gather support for the militant Khalsa, so seriously engaged in the task of destroying the Mughal power.

Koer Singh had to contend with the traditional belief that political power was the exclusive privilege of a specified caste.[41] He points out that Sikh society transcends castes. He presents the Khalsa as a dedicated body of inspired individuals who relentlessly spearhead a movement for self-rule in the cause of amelioration of the downtrodden and the underprivileged.[42] He looks upon the Khalsa Panth as a 'unique institution, the like of which has never been seen before'. He believed that it would 'outlast earth, sky, stars, moon, air and water'.[43] He approves of the Khalsa theory which seeks to vest political power in the lower castes in preference to the traditional high caste.[44] It is explicitly stated that brahmans and kshatriyas were not the legitimate inheritors of political power. But the Khalsa, representing the people at large, was.[45] The essential element in the invitation to the hill rajas was to repudiate the humiliating vassalage of the Mughals, and to assume political power on behalf of the masses.[46] Koer Singh underscores the democratic element in the constitution of the Khalsa.

If emphasis is laid on a startlingly novel theory of legitimacy to confront Muslims, who wielded political power, the absolute imperative to uphold pluralistic society is implicit in the express condition to dispense even-handed justice.[47] God is the ultimate repository of sovereignty, authorizing the exercise of power on the necessary condition of upholding absolute freedom of worship. When a political executive vitiates the trust by repudiating its obligations, and consequently hinders spiritual growth, it loses legitimacy. Revolution becomes necessary to re-establish the divine purpose. But before it is undertaken, high personages like Gurus and saints must demonstrate, by courting martyrdom, that the state has indeed become antagonistic to the basic needs of even the most cultured of its citizens. The wronged masses must weld themselves into a spiritually inspired political society in order to overthrow the unjust state and to seize political power. The revolution has to be led by a highly motivated and committed leadership voluntarily subscribing to a rigid spiritual and moral code, such as the one prescribed for the Khalsa on

the administration of *amrit*. The *hukamnamas* issued to all Sikhs asking them to take *pahul* suggest that the Khalsa order was to be a broad-based society.[48] Strict moral and social code prescribed for the Khalsa leaves no doubt that the Guru's aim was to create a committed and cohesive force firmly wedded to upholding righteousness.[49] It is significant that 'when Banda formally became a Sikh, only then were weapons entrusted to him'.[50] Koer Singh insists that the objective of the Khalsa was sovereignty and not any inferior status.[51] Guru Gobind Singh would not return to Anandpur Sahib as a concession, but he promised to do so on the strength of his arms.[52] Elaborating on the revolutionary intent of the Order of the Khalsa, Koer Singh records the Guru's last advice to the Khalsa: 'Hear O Sikhs! this is the tradition: I did not come to Bahadur Shah as a suppliant, since no mere mortal can be my benefactor; the guarantee of your good is in your own power.'[53] This involves great hardship for those who take up the cause, but eventually leads to felicity.[54]

A popular tale, which was to become current in Sikh literature, has been harnessed by Koer Singh to portray his theory. Apart from making the position intelligible to a people accustomed to a particular idiom, the tale wards off the laws of treason. It keeps pace with the level and content of contemporary political awareness. Unless approached from this angle, it is likely to be dismissed as an evidence of Koer Singh's inability to comprehend the historical process. It simply states that Guru Nanak (as God) entrusted political authority to Babur when the latter offered submission. The condition was that he and his descendants must do justice to all manner of people. The trust was repudiated, particularly when Aurangzeb undertook to destroy Hinduism. Guru Tegh Bahadur then courted martyrdom for the purpose of resuming political power. It is also prescribed that 1,25,000 Sikhs would be required to sacrifice their heads in order to overthrow the unjust power.[55]

Koer Singh turns his attention to Hindu abhorrence for the wielding of weapons by the lower castes. He appears to have felt the necessity of modification in the interests of preservation of Hindu culture. He seeks to rationalize the position by relating the tale of Durgapuja by Guru Gobind Singh. It will be useful to recall the essential features of this story. With the object of destroying Muslim rule it was decided to obtain the blessings of

the goddess Durga from whom even the principal gods of the Hindu pantheon derive physical strength. Dattanand, a brahman of Ujjain who, significantly, is not reconciled to Muslim domination, alone is reputed to be capable of conducting the ceremonies to a successful culmination. Eventually 10,000 brahmans from important religious centres are invited to participate in the worship.[56]

The ceremony, which was to take four years, commenced in 1685 on the banks of the Ganga. During the first three years, the tale goes, the Guru did not participate in the worship. The venue is then shifted to Naina Devi. At the end of the fourth year, the *devi* appears and formally presents to the Guru the double-edged sword with which she had slain the invincible demon-kings Sumbh and Nisumbh. At the conclusion, the Guru expresses his gratitude to Baba Batha, the leader of Kashmiri brahmans, who is showered with presents before he takes his leave. Nearly Rs. 4,00,00,000 is the computed expenditure on the ceremony.[57]

Among the subsidiary features of the myth note may be made of those which are particularly useful to Koer Singh. He represents the Guru as personally deciding to hold the ceremony and as participating in the Durgapuja in its last phase. The principal gods and goddesses of the brahmanical pantheon are made to worship the Guru after the *devi* has appeared. They also offer weapons and other items, which he would later prescribe as mandatory symbols of the faith for the Khalsa.[58]

The imaginary story is contrived simply as a message to and for the consumption of the Hindu masses. They are to believe that all the gods and goddesses of the brahmanical pantheon, including Durga, have sanctioned the use of arms to the Khalsa, consisting of shudras and other classes normally excluded from the use of weapons and the consequent exercise of power. The Khalsa were destined to succeed and, in the interest of the preservation of Hinduism, they deserved wholehearted support.

A careful reading of *Gurbilas* would convince the reader that this indeed was the underlying purpose of the book. The philosophical-cum-mythical stance adopted by Koer Singh, together with the fact that he was the first writer to mention it, justifies the temptation to ascribe the origin of this tale to him. There is the further possibility of the Kashmiri brahmans at whose request Guru Tegh Bahadur had courted martyrdom being the

source of this myth. The honour bestowed upon their leader, Baba Batha, who was treated at par with Dattanand, the master of ceremonies, at the conclusion of Durgapuja suggests that they assigned a prominent role to themselves in the proceedings as reported.[59]

The essential clue to a proper understanding of Koer Singh's *Gurbilas* lies in his political purpose. Shorn of its Hindu features, it can provide a complete code of conduct for the Khalsa. This can be taken as a measure of Koer Singh's attempt at a compromise between the Hindu and Khalsa traditions.

NOTES

1. Koer Singh, *Gurbilas Patshahi Das*, ed. Shamsher Singh Ashok, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1968. Henceforth referred to as *Gurbilas*.
2. Ibid., p. 208. His knowledge of court procedures, military and civil administration, location of important administrative and religious centres, and functions of executive and judiciary indicate his background of a government functionary. Ibid., pp. 214 & 261.
3. Ibid., p. 295.
4. Ibid., pp. 23, 47, 99.
5. Ibid., pp. 17-18. Significantly, he considers the Gurus to be incarnations of Vaishnava gods. Ibid., p. 19.
6. Ibid., p. 295.
7. Ibid., pp. 123, 128, 295.
8. Ibid., p. 294.
9. Ibid., pp. 4, 5. Cf. ibid., p. 203 with Sainapat, *Sri Guru Sobha*, ed. Ganda Singh, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1967, p. 80. The improbable tale of the Guru's marriage in Rajasthan is perhaps also taken by Koer Singh from *Sri Guru Sobha*.
10. *Gurbilas*, pp. 23, 148-52, 203.
11. Ibid., pp. 137, 173, 200-1, 257.
12. Ibid., pp. 92, 262.
13. Ibid,, pp. 19, 30, 33, 72, 142, 143, 184, 220, 229, 248, 278, 332.
14. Hatred of Muslims is an obsession with Koer Singh. Ibid., pp. 18, 24, 25, 29, 39, 43, 44, 67, 68, 182.
15. Ibid., pp. 28, 48, 162, 163, 184, 253.
16. Ibid., pp. 16, 23, 29, 49, 70, 184.
17. Ibid., pp. 20, 27, 54, 59, 60, 66, 183, 184.
18. Ibid., pp. 29, 43, 51, 52, 54, 57, 68, 96, 98.
19. Ibid., pp. 46, 52.
20. Ibid., pp. 46, 52, 55, 73.

21. Ibid., pp. 16, 49, 50, 155, 160.
22. Ibid., pp. 44, 45, 58, 59.
23. Ibid., pp. 59, 117, 277, 278.
24. Ibid., pp. 106, 107, 136.
25. Ibid., pp. 55, 59, 91, 92, 106, 114, 115, 125, 131, 132, 134, 136, 137, 138, 139, 143.
26. Ibid., pp. 33, 34, 107, 136, 143.
27. Ibid., pp. 61, 135.
28. Ibid., pp. 64, 132.
29. Ibid., pp. 114, 115, 117, 125, 137, 138.
30. Ibid., pp. 85, 86, 90, 129, 134, 196.
31. Ibid., pp. 123, 133.
32. Ibid., pp. 26, 112, 122, 123, 124, 125, 129, 138, 150, 153.
33. Ibid., pp. 38, 124, 125, 130.
34. Ibid., pp. 44, 130.
35. Ibid., pp. 48, 131, 133, 134, 138.
36. Ibid., p. 128, 24.
37. Ibid., pp. 58, 61, 130, 131, 132.
38. Ibid., pp. 60, 132.
39. Ibid., pp. 29, 39, 61, 67, 68, 130, 132, 133, 182.
40. Ibid., pp. 28, 48, 100, 284.
41. The fundamental Hindu objection to the shudra wielding weapons, the ultimate instruments of political power, can best be understood with reference to Arthur Coke Burnell, tr., *The Ordinances of Manu*, ed. Edward W. Hopkins. New Delhi: Orient Books Reprint Corporation, 1971. 'Defence of the people' was the exclusive privilege of the kshatriyas. Ibid., p. 12.
42. *Gurbilas*, pp. 50, 94, 129, 131, 133, 135, 138, 139.
43. Ibid., pp. 14, 134, 142, 152.
44. Ibid., pp. 139, 140.
45. Ibid., pp. 56, 59, 132, 181.
46. Ibid., pp. 132, 138.
47. Ibid., pp. 57, 93.
48. Ibid., pp. 109, 136.
49. Ibid., pp. 65, 127, 132.
50. Ibid., pp. 66, 281.
51. Ibid., pp. 99, 181, 182.
52. Ibid., pp. 31, 83, 85.
53. Ibid., pp. 64, 281.
54. Ibid., pp. 149, 150, 196.
55. Ibid., pp. 16, 20, 30, 39, 49, 55, 57, 71, 72, 93, 223, 282.
56. Ibid., pp. 103, 104, 109.
57. Ibid., pp. 108, 113, 121, 133, 136.

58. Ibid., pp. 103, 121, 144.
59. Ibid., pp. 103, 133, 136. Some of the Kashmiri *pandits* adopted the Khalsa way of life. Among them was Kirpa Ram who is said to have died fighting in the battle of Chamkaur as Kirpa Singh. Ibid., pp. 75, 80, 81, 90, 133, 134.

CHAPTER 3

Brahmanizing the Tradition: Chhibber's *Bansāvalināma*

J.S. Grewal

Rattan Singh Jaggi refers to two opposing evaluations of Kesar Singh Chhibber's *Bansāvalināma Dasān Pātshāhiān Kā* in manuscript: one based on extreme scepticism and the other bordering on credulity. None of these is regarded by him as a balanced view. In fact, no serious study of the work could be made in the absence of a printed edition. The primary purpose of its publication, therefore, was to make the text easily available to scholars.[1]

Expressing his own view of the character of this work, Jaggi refers first of all to its title, and the alternate title of *Kursināma.* Both of these are appropriate for a work dealing primarily with genealogies. Chhibber refers to himself as a brahman Sikh of Jammu and claims that his ancestors were closely connected with the Sikh Gurus. His grandfather, Dharm Chand, was the *toshkhānia* of Guru Gobind Singh, and his father, Gurbakhsh Singh, had served Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devi before he went to Ramdaspur with Guru Gobind Singh's maternal uncle, Kirpal Singh, and served as a *dārogha.* Furthermore, Dharm Chand's brother, Sahib Chand, had served as Guru Gobind Singh's *dīwān*; their father, Durga Mal, had been the *dīwān* successively of Guru Har Rai, Guru Harkishan and Guru Tegh Bahadur. Sati Das and Mati Das, who were executed in Delhi as the only companions of Guru Tegh Bahadur, were Durga Mal's nephews.

Kesar Singh Chhibber completed his work in 1769 at the age of about seventy. Jaggi naturally infers that Kesar Singh was born around 1700. But Kesar Singh does not claim to have seen Guru Gobind Singh. He was in Delhi with his father before they both went to Ramdaspur in the 1720s. It is not clear when Kesar Singh left Ramdaspur for Jammu. There is no indication that he participated in any armed conflict against the Mughal administrators. By the time he completed his work, Sikh rule had been established over a large part of the Punjab.

Jaggi regards a few features of Chhibber's *Bansāvalināma* as significant. His interest in dates appears to be the result of a special effort on his part. However, the accuracy of his dates is open to question. They should be critically examined. In any case, the majority of the dates relate to the lives of the individuals who find mention in the work rather than to any important events of history. Chhibber's interest is primarily in 'the lives', which would explain his interest in the chains of kinship as well. It is in connection with dates that he refers to the use of a *vahi* in the possession of his family at Jammu, which was destroyed in a fire. Jaggi drives home the point that Chhibber heavily depended on what he had heard from others.

Chhibber makes the explicit statement that Guru Gobind Singh bestowed Guruship on the *Granth Sahib*. Jaggi regards this statement as an important feature of Chhibber's work. According to Chhibber, a new recension of the *Adi Granth* was prepared by Guru Gobind Singh in 1696. This, in Jaggi's opinion, contradicts the generally held view that the recension known as the *Damdami Bir* was prepared by Guru Gobind Singh in 1706.[2] Similarly, in contradiction to the generally held view that it was Guru Angad who made use of the Gurmukhi script current, Chhibber attributes this invention to Sri Chand.[3] Another significant feature of Chhibber's work, according to Jaggi, is his distinction between *Sikhi* and *Singhi*. He also refers to four categories into which Guru Gobind Singh divided the Sikhs. In Jaggi's opinion the observations made by Chhibber on the post-Guru period enhance the value of his work for researchers.

Jaggi points out that Chhibber's work does not possess any poetic merit; it consists of mere versification rather than poetry. At places, it acquires the tone of a *rahitnama*. Though Chhibber claims that he composed the work for his own gratification, his

purpose in writing the *Bansāvalināma* is not clear. Finally, Chhibber resorted to the Puranic tradition, and tended to relate the Sikh Gurus to that tradition.

II

The contents of the *Bansāvalināma* reveal that Kesar Singh Chhibber was possibly a religious man but not a man of letters. He was familiar with the *Adi Granth*, the *Gita*, the *Bhogal Purana*, the *Ramayana* of Tulsi Das, the *Bala Janamsakhi* and some of the compositions attributed to Guru Gobind Singh. There is no indication that he was familiar with Sainapat's *Guru Sobha*. The form of the *Bansāvalināma* is neither that of a *Janamsakhi* nor that of a *Gurbilas*, or a *Rahitnama*.

Despite its title, the *Bansāvalināma* cannot be treated as a work of genealogy. Chhibber states that he initially started his work to provide an exposition of a verse in the compositions of Guru Nanak. This professed purpose has actually little to do with the work. His assumption that he understood *Gurbani* better than others around him is nevertheless important. It gets linked with the claim that his ancestors were closely connected with the Gurus. His understanding of the *bāṇi* and his links with the Gurus were a proof of his piety, of his being a good Sikh. His work was meant to demonstrate that he understood the Sikh faith and the Sikh tradition better than many others. He is emphatic that he was not seeking patronage from any Sikh ruler. But this purpose cannot be ruled out.

Through this work Chhibber wanted to reveal his knowledge of the Sikh Gurus and the Sikh tradition. In an attempt to make his work inclusive rather than selective, he tended to relate everything that he knew, from hearsay or from texts. The heterogeneity of his work appears to spring from his desire to reveal his knowledge as a mark of his nearness to the Gurus and his understanding of their message.

The *Bansāvalināma* is divided into fourteen chapters (*charans*). The last chapter, spread over 61 printed pages, discusses the state of the Sikhs in the author's own time. The eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth chapters deal respectively with Banda Bahadur, Jit Singh and Mata Sahib Devi, but cover only

17 pages in print. The first ten chapters, devoted to the ten Gurus, number 168 pages in print. Of these 168 pages, 71 are devoted to Guru Gobind Singh alone. Strictly speaking, the account of Guru Nanak covers only five pages.

Chhibber provides a clue to his short treatment of Guru Nanak: any one interested could turn to the *Janamsakhis* of Guru Nanak for detail. But no such information was available for Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjan, Guru Hargobind, Guru Har Rai, Guru Harkrishan and Guru Tegh Bahadur. Chhibber admits that some of the chapters are long while others are short, and this is primarily due to his tendency to relate all that he knew. He was certainly interested in the lives of all the ten Gurus, but his interest was not confined to them. Indeed, nearly one-third of his work deals with the post-Guru period.

That Chhibber's interest was not confined to the *bansāvalīs* of the Gurus may be illustrated with reference to what he has to say about Guru Nanak.[4] Giving an exposition of the origin and extent of the universe in terms of the Puranic tradition, Chhibber comes to a point that can be regarded as the beginning of the Surajvanshi Raghuvanshis, the family to which belonged Raja Dashrath and his sons Rama, Lachhman, Bharat and Shatrughan. The descendants of the latter four were the Bedis, the Trehans, the Bhallas and Sodhis, that is, the Khatri *gots* to which belonged Guru Nanak, Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das and Guru Ram Das (and his successors up to Guru Gobind Singh). Taking his cue from the *Bachittar Nātak*, Chhibber elaborates the legend according to which the Bedis had promised in an earlier *yuga* to return the gift of kingship they had received from the Sodhis. That was why guruship (the equivalent of kingship) passed on from Guru Nanak to Guru Ram Das, through Guru Angad and Guru Amar Das, and stayed in the Sodhi family of Guru Ram Das.

Chhibber's work traces the immediate ancestry of Guru Nanak up to his grandfather, San Pat, who was born in Sammat 1475 (AD 1418) and married Mata Banarasi at the age of thirteen in Sammat 1488 (AD 1431). In Sammat 1497 (AD 1440) San Pat's eldest son, Kalyan Das, was born; the younger Lal Chand was born in Sammat 1500 (AD 1443). At the age of eleven in Sammat 1508 (AD 1451) Kalyan Das married the daughter of Hari Ram, a Khatri

whose subcaste is not mentioned because Chhibber could not recall it. San Pat died in Sammat 1517 (AD 1460). Guru Nanak was born in Sammat 1526 (AD 1469) in the village of Talwandi of Bhoi, a Bhatti Rajput. The ancestral occupation of Kalyan Das was shopkeeping; he was the first in the family to become a *patwāri*. He had left his father's village for Talwandi. At this point, Chhibber refers to a *janampatri* which contained all the facts. Though a variant reading refers to Miharban, according to Jaggi, the source of Chhibber's work is a *Bala Janamsakhi*. In any case, Chhibber mentions the night of the full moon of Kattak as the time of Guru Nanak's birth, conforming to the Bala tradition.

At the age of fourteen, Guru Nanak went to Sultanpur with Jai Ram, his sister's husband. He remained immersed in the stream called the Vaein for three days and emerged with a message (received from God). In Sammat 1540 (AD 1483), he was married to the daughter of Mula, a Chona Khatri of Pakhkhoke Randhawe. His elder son, Sri Chand, was born in Sammat 1551 (AD 1494), he was the incarnation (*avtār*) of Gorakhnath. The younger son, Lakhmi Das, was born to 'Mata Sulakhani'. Both sons were born after Guru Nanak gave her two *laungs* (and not due to any physical union between them). Guru Nanak soon set out with Bala and Mardana to see 'other countries'. Sri Chand practised celibacy. Lakhmi Das was married at the age of eight in Sammat 1560 (AD 1503) to the daughter of a Sial Khatri. Guru Nanak returned from his first *udāsi*, and lived at home for four months. During his second *udāsi*, Mardana died in the city known as Khurme and in accordance with his wishes, he was cremated. In Sammat 1582 (AD 1525), Guru Nanak took up residence in Kartarpur on the banks of the river Ravi, and in Samnat 1594 (AD 1537), Guru Nanak revealed to Angad, who was on a pilgrimage to the goddess, a vision of the goddess whereupon he returned home. He served Guru Nanak for two years with great devotion and received the cloak of guruship from him in Sammat 1596 (AD 1539).

Lakhmi Das and Sri Chand remonstrated with their father for bestowing upon a contemptible shopkeeper the important office of guruship which rightfully belonged to them. Guru Nanak told them that guruship was a burden placed on Angad's head, while his own descendants were given the boon of 'horses, eagles

and power'; even their dogs would be worshipped. However, this did not placate them and Guru Angad submitted to them that he was their servant. Guru Nanak's cremation and other rituals were performed by brahmans, including the recitation of the *Garura Purana*. When all the traditional rites had been performed, the sons of Guru Nanak decided to retrieve the cloak of guruship from Guru Angad. On Sri Chand's demand, Guru Angad gave up the cloak but neither Lakhmi Das nor his son Dharam Chand could lift it. When Guru Angad was asked to lift it, he easily did so. This reconciled the Bedis to his succession, and the mark of guruship (*tikka*) was applied on his forehead. Nevertheless, he stayed at Kartarpur for only four months and moved to Khadur.

Lakhmi Das died at Katarpur in Sammat 1612 (AD 1555), and he was succeeded by his son Dharam Chand (born in Sammat 1572/AD 1515) who was married in a family of Passi Khatris in Sammat 1584 (AD 1527). He performed his father's *kirya karam* as prescribed in the *Shastras*.

On the whole, though much of the information provided by Chhibber relates to the family of Guru Nanak, his ancestors as well as his sons and grandsons, there is enough information that is not related to genealogies.

III

In Chhibber's treatment of Guru Hargobind, the information on genealogies is overshadowed by other kinds of information. Born to Mata Ganga, the wife of Guru Arjan, on 21 Har, Sammat 1647 (AD 1590), Hargobind was married at a young age (the printed Sammat 1607 is obviously incorrect) before his father attained martyrdrom in Sammat 1663 (AD 1606), having remained on the *gaddi* for twenty-three and a half years. Guru Hargobind's first wife, 'Mata Madodari', belonged to a Suri Khatri family. At this point Chhibber digresses from tha main theme and discusses incidents related to the enmity of Mughal administrators and their Khatri collaborators with Guru Arjan, Guru Ram Das and Guru Amar Das. He refers to them as *tattay-khattay* (Muslims and Khatris) at several places in his work.

There was an enemy within the family too: Guru Arjan's elder brother Prithi Chand, referred to as Prithia by Chhibber. After

the death of Guru Arjan, in which Prithia was implicated, he refused to recognize Hargobind as the Guru. He began to woo the Sikhs so as to get recognition of his claim to guruship. After performing all the customary rites, Guru Hargobind settled in village Rahela in Sammat 1664 (AD 1607) and renamed it Sri Hargobindpur. He considered the idea of meeting the Mughal emperor in Delhi to seek justice, but was advised against it by Bhai Gurdas and other prominent Sikhs. Nevertheless, in Sammat 1667 (AD 1610), after contracting a second marriage in a family of Lamma Khatris, Guru Hargobind travelled to the Ganga and proceeded to Delhi. Prithia came to know of his visit to Delhi and he contacted the Sahi Khatris of Lahore, the old enemies of Guru Arjan. Presumably on their behalf, some Puri Khatris of Delhi worked against Guru Hargobind and he was imprisoned in the fort of Gwalior.

Nur Jahan cautioned Jahangir against imprisoning a *faqir*, but to no immediate effect. A few weeks later, the emperor fell ill and was unable to pass urine. He was treated by a Sikh *hakīm* who was not able to cure him and pleaded helplessness against the spiritual powers of *faqirs*. The emperor ordered the release of all those imprisoned in Gwalior. However, Guru Hargobind refused to leave the fort as he felt that he had not received justice from the emperor. He was summoned by the emperor. When he appeared before the emperor, he found the Sikh *hakīm* there. Guru Hargobind instructed him to give something to the emperor for his ailment. With the Guru's blessings, the emperor was completely cured. After hearing Guru Hargobind's plaint, he immediately issued an order to the governor of Lahore that Guru Hargobind's demands be met. The governor of Lahore handed over the Sahis to Guru Hargobind. The head of the family, Chandu, confessed that he had been misled by Prithia to work against Guru Arjan. With the sole exception of a daughter-in-law, the entire Sahi family was put to death. Prithia's son Miharban went to meet the Guru but he refused to see Miharban. After founding Kartarpur, Guru Hargobind moved to Ramdaspur in Sammat 1668 (AD 1611).

The Puris of Delhi continued to be hostile to Guru Hargobind. They reminded Jahangir of the Guru's promise to send gifts of pearls on regaining his property. The emperor sent his soldiers to the Guru, but he dodged them and went to Kashmir. The Puri

Mutasaddis remained active in Delhi and the emperor ordered his *ahadīs* to bring the Guru to his court. The Sikhs paid some money to the *ahadīs* who returned to Delhi. On Nur Jahan's advice, the emperor decided not to pay heed to the enemies of Guru Hargobind. On his return from Kashmir, the Guru contracted his third marriage with a girl of a Marwaha Khatri family of Goindwal. Her parents had brought her to Guru Hargobind in the hope that he would accept her.

Guru Hargobind's eldest son, Gurditta, was born to 'Mata Madodari' in Sammat 1663 (AD 1606). Gurditta's real brother, Ani Rai, was born in Sammat 1672 (AD 1615). Mata Mahadevi Marwahi gave birth to Surat Singh and Atal Rai (the date given as Sammat 1663 is obviously incorrect). Before he accepted Mata Kaula as his fourth wife, Guru Hargobind evinced an interest in martial activity. He told the Sikhs not to bring any more offers of marriage. His only daughter Bibi Viro was born to Mata Nanaki Lamma in Sammat 1674 (AD1617) and her real brother, Tegh Bahadur, was born in Sammat 1678 (AD 1621). This was the time when Guru Hargobind began to enlist paid soldiers, and took to hunting. He authorized any five Sikhs of a local congregation (*sangat*) to initiate a willing person into the Sikh faith through the ceremony of *charnamrit*. Many persons adopted Sikhism. They were instructed to associate themselves with the Sikhs of the Guru only. Atal Rai revived a dead child and Guru Hargobind rebuked him for it and he gave up his life. In Sammat 1682 (AD 1625), Guru Hargobind decided to get Bibi Viro married into a Bhalla family but due to the animosity of the close relations of the Sahis of Lahore he left Ramdaspur for Kartarpur where Viro's marriage was solemnized. The marriages of Gurditta and Surat Singh were also solemnized at Kartarpur. Around this time, Guru Hargobind prepared to defend himself against any aggressor which explains why he refused to accept yet another offer of a bride in Sammat 1683 (AD 1626). However, she was accepted by Gurditta without the knowledge of his father. Guru Hargobind was enraged when he learnt of this but he blessed the bride that her progeny would receive great gifts. Ani Rai was married in Sammat 1684 (AD 1627).

The battle of Kartarpur was fought in Sammat 1687 (AD 1630) against Painde Khan, the erstwhile commandant in the employment of Guru Hargobind. He had fallen out with the Guru

over the issue of a rare white eagle which belonged to the Guru but which was appropriated by Painde Khan's son-in-law, Chiman Khan. Painde Khan decided to support Chiman Khan in the hope of securing a *jāgīr* by gifting the rare bird to the emperor. With the support of the Mughal governor of Lahore, Painde Khan launched an attack on Kartarpur, but was killed in the battle. Chiman Khan took over command of the force, but was also killed. Guru Hargobind was decisively victorious. He dismissed all his Muslim employees; he decided to leave the plains for the hills and went to Kiratpur.

In Sammat 1688 (AD 1631), Gurditta's wife gave birth to a son who was named Dhir Mal. Another son, Har Rai was born to Gurditta's second wife. Surat Singh's son, Deep Chand was born in Sammat 1690 (AD 1633). Guru Hargobind decided to pass on the mantle of guruship to Gurditta, also known as Baba Gurditta, because of his physical and moral strength. He revived a dead cow and was rebuked by Guru Hargobind, whereupon he decided to end his own life. In Sammat 1692 (AD 1635), Guru Hargobind bestowed guruship on his younger grandson Har Rai instead of his other grandson Dhir Mal or his sons. The reason for this was that Guru Hargobind had blessed Har Rai's mother before she married Gurditta. Guru Hargobind himself lived for three years after Har Rai was installed as the Guru. According to Chhibber, Guru Hargobind died in Sammat 1695 (AD 1638)[5] at the age of forty-eight.

The foregoing paragraphs clearly reveal that Kesar Singh Chhibber's interest in the Guru Hargobind's family is overshadowed by his interest in his activities, including political activity. This interest becomes more prominent in his treatment of Guru Gobind Singh. His interest in genealogies is virtually replaced by his interest in the chronology of the events in Guru Gobind Singh's life.

IV

Guru Gobind Singh was born in Patna on the Triveni in Sammat 1718 (AD 1661). The brahmans named him Gobind Rai.[6] Two years later he was taken to the river Beas (Bakala) where he lived for three years. He then went to Makhowal and learnt Gurmukhi and Persian from Munshi Harjas Rai; in Sammat 1726

(AD 1669), his training in the use of arms commenced. In Sammat 1730 (AD 1673), at the age of twelve, he married Sundari. Two years later, Aurangzeb summoned Guru Tegh Bahadur and rather than renounce his *dharm* he gave up his head. When his head was brought to Makhowal, Guru Gobind Singh performed the last rites in accordance with the *Shastras*. Then he began to practise austerity in seclusion to destroy the Turks. He heard the heavenly voice that he should grasp the double-edge sword.

Guru Gobind Singh came out of his seclusion and asked Pandit Devi Ditta about the auspicious time for ascending the throne of Guruship. The sacred mark (*tilak*) was applied to his forehead at the time of accession. When Guru Gobind Singh called for the Chhibber Sikhs, Sahib Chand and Dharam Chand presented themselves. He instructed Chaupa Singh (his old *khidāwa*) to bring *saropas* for the two Chhibbers: Sahib Chand was appointed as the *dīwān*, and Dharam Chand as the *toshakhānia*. *Saropas* were also given to the Masands who were present on the occasion, and sent to those Masands and Bhais who were absent. They were all told to visit Makhowal at the time of Baisakhi. A large number of Sikhs attended the Baisakhi *mela* in Sammat 1733 (AD 1676).[8]

Pandit Devi Ditta used to conduct the *Mahabharata kathā* every day. When he reached the point where Bhim hurled elephants at the enemy, Guru Gobind Singh wanted to know how he had acquired such exceptional strength. Devi Ditta told him that all the *Vedas*, *Puranas* and *Shastras* were unanimous on the view that the source of strength and power was *jagghom*. Guru Gobind Singh wanted to know whether devi Ditta could make Bhavani appear in person. The latter expressed his helplessness but informed him that the brahmans of Kashi and Kashmir could perform such a feat. Guru Gobind Singh decided to test the brahmans and, invited them to a meal. He offered a sum of money to those who would eat meat, and increased the amount on various occasions. Eventually, only three brahmans refused to eat meat: Hari Das, Har Bhagwan and Lachhi Ram. Guru Gobind Singh ordered them to be hanged if they continued to be adamant. Secretly, however, he had instructed the executioners to bring them back if they were willing to die. They were brought back and Guru Gobind Singh washed their feet

and drank the *charnāmat*. They were told that they had passed the test of being true brahmans.[9]

In Sammat 1734 (AD 1677), Guru Gobind Singh collected all the material needed for the *hom* and instructed Dharam Chand to spend Rs. 10,000 and send all the material to the temple of Mata Naina Devi. Prominent brahmans were contacted: Bishanpal came from Kashi with a hundred of his students, Shivbakar came from Kashmir and many others including the three who had refused to eat meat were invited. Gurbakhsh Singh (the son of Dharam Chand and the father of Kesar Singh Chhibber) brought materials worth Rs. 10,000 from Delhi. Sahib Chand sent his son Charan Das to Bajwara to procure 10,000 white robes. The brahmans were told that they had to make 'the Mother' (*mātā*) appear. When they informed the Guru that they would try but could give no guarantee, they were told to go back. The brahmans observed a fast for three days and discovered that Kalakdas could perform such a feat. They informed Guru Gobind Singh that the brahman Kalakdas in a temple (*thakurdwara*) of Gujarat could make 'the Mother' appear.[10]

Kalakdas came, not because he wanted any material reward but because he looked upon Guru Gobind Singh as an *avtār*. When he was informed about the *hom*, he said that it called for a continuous *āsan* of forty days. When Guru Gobind Singh expressed his willingness to do so, Kalakdas asked him why he wanted to see the goddess. 'To destroy the wicked', the Guru replied. Kalakdas remarked that the goddess would destroy the wicked but the Guru would be accountable to Akal Purakh. Guru Gobind Singh told Kalakdas that Akal Purakh had sent him to destroy the wicked. Kalakdas suggested that Guru Gobind Singh should achieve this end by instituting a *panth*. He argued that the Guru was *nirlep* and *nirvair*. Therefore, he should raise a *panth* so that he would not be accountable to Dharam Rai for destroying the wicked who, too, were created by Akal Purakh. Guru Gobind Singh approved of the idea.[11]

Since the new *panth* was established to secure political power, it necessarily had to be armed. The goddess would remit the obligation of wearing the sacred thread (*janju*) and the sacred mark (*tilak*), and a special symbol could be given to the *panth* by Guru Gobind Singh. Kalakdas told the Guru that when his

panth would come into power, sin (*pāp*) would also raise its head. When sin makes its appearance, the *panth* would be held accountable by Dharam Rai. Pondering over this, Guru Gobind Singh asked Kalakdas to solve the problem. The Guru was committed to destroy the wicked but not to abandon the *panth* to Dharam Rai. Kalakdas told him that since sin was inseparable from *rāj*, the only solution was to make some room for sin in the *panth*.

Guru Gobind Singh conceived of the *panth* as consisting of four categories to confine sin to only one of these. The three constituents which were placed under the protection of Akal Purkh were the *didāri*, the *muktay*, and the *murīd* Sikhs. The *didāris* were those who lived in the Guru's presence and worshipped with him. The *muktay* Sikhs were those who adhered to their faith in spite of persecution by the Turks. These two categories would establish political power. The rulers who remained detached in the midst of *māya* and viewed all their possessions as the gift of the Guru, belonged to the category of *murīds*. Sin was confined to the fourth category, the *māiki* Sikhs who, as rulers, would be lost in *māya*.[12]

According to Chhibber Guru Gobind Singh held that he had three fathers and two mothers. Guru Tegh Bahadur was his natural father, Guru Nanak was his father as the Guru and Akal Purkh was the father of his light (*jot*). Similarly, Mata Gujari was his natural mother and Mata Mansa as the bestower of intelligence and wisdom was also his mother.

The wicked people were to be extirpated because of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom, and the Sikhs who committed sins were to be consigned to hell because of Guru Nanak. The Sikhs of the Guru were to be differentiated from the rest of the world and only those who followed the Guru's *rahit* would be his true Sikhs. On Kalakdas' advice Guru Gobind Singh wore a new sacred thread (*janju*) and prepared himself for the *hom*.[13]

Guru Gobind Singh sat inside a tent with Kalakdas, Shivbakar and Bishanpal. Outside the tent 10,000 brahmans chanted praises of the goddess and behind them were Sikhs reciting *shabad-kirtan*. Behind them were the servants and soldiers to prevent anyone from entering the enclosure for forty days. Only Guru Gobind Singh and Kalakdas observed a fast till the end of the *hom*. On the fortieth day, Kalakdas announced that the goddess

would appear: whatever the wish of the Guru, it would be fulfilled. Guru Gobind Singh then seventeen years old wished that his *panth* should prevail in the world. Suddenly, there was a great illumination and the goddess appeared carrying weapons in all her eight hands. Because of the blinding light Guru Gobind Singh could get only a glimpse of the goddess. Kalakdas, however, stretched out his hands and she placed a double-edged sword in his hands. Had Guru Gobind Singh offered his head to the goddess, Kalakdas would have brought him back to life and blessed him to live for a hundred years.[14]

Guru Gobind Singh instructed Sahib Chand and Dharam Chand to distribute white robes among the brahmans and to give them *dān*. Pandit Devi Ditta, however, refused to accept the robe and *dakhna* sent to him, on the plea that despite being the pandit of the sacred place (*dhām*) he had not been invited along with the other brahmans. Guru Gobind Singh realized his mistake and composed the *Savviya*, '*jo kichhu lekh likhiō*', ending with the statement that all Chhatris are created by brahmans. A new robe was sent to Devi Ditta and he was invited to sit alongside Kalakdas, Bishanpal, Shivbakar, Lachhi Ram, Har Bhagwan and Harjas on a high dais. In their praise, Guru Gobind Singh composed the *Savviyas* starting with '*sev kari inhi ki bhāvat*' and '*judd jītai inhi ki prasād*'. Devi Ditta apologized for his show of pride and sought forgiveness, saying that Guru Gobind Singh was the perfect *avtār* of Vishnu. Guru Gobind Singh talked highly of the power of *tap* and added that he could neither perform it as a Chhatri nor could he renounce his domestic responsibilities. His wish was to die fighting on the battlefield. All the brahmans acknowledged that Guru Gobind Singh was pre-eminent among the Chhatris: only he could protect the sacred thread (*janju*) and the sacred mark (*tikka*).[15]

Chhibber states that there were four *varnas*, four *dharmas*, and four *ashramas*. The observance of *varna-dharma* was the test of social respectability. The khatri who wielded the double-edged sword, the brahman who acquired knowledge, the Sikh who conducted himself in accordance with the wishes of the Guru, and the woman who thought of none other than her husband were all praiseworthy. The bards (*charans*), too, praised Guru Gobind Singh for his magnanimity. He had decided to establish the *panth* of righteousness (*dharm*) and whoever

joined the *panth* would be saved from Dharam Rai. His *panth* would be the true association (*sangat*) in which Vishnu would dwell all the time. On hearing this, Guru Gobind Singh proclaimed that whoever equated him with God would fall into the pit of hell as there was no doubt that he was God's servant (*dās*). He added that the brahmans were the masters (*thakur*) and the khatris their servants (*chākar*). A true khatri acknowledges the brahman as his superior; his duty (*dharm*) was to fight and to give alms (*dān*) to brahmans. Present on the occasion were all the ten great branches (*jāts*) of brahmans: five of the north and five of the south. They praised Guru Gobind Singh before they departed.[16]

Kalakdas stayed back and asked Guru Gobind Singh what he proposed to do about guruship. The Guru replied that guruship would come to an end. Guru Nanak had thought of ten bodies (*jāmās*). Since Guru Gobind Singh had decided to destroy the wicked, he would institute a *panth*. Kalakdas remarked that the *panth* would not unite against the enemy and added that one of the seven *charanjīts* was in the south. Guru Gobind Singh was aware of this and said that the person referred to would obey his orders and fight against the wicked enemy. Shortly thereafter, Kalakdas left and Guru Gobind Singh returned to Makhowal.[17]

Kirpal Singh, the maternal uncle of Guru Gobind Singh, accompanied by Sahib Chand, Dharam Chand and a number of Sikhs asked Guru Gobind Singh to explain the meaning of his statement that he was not God but only God's *dās*. The Guru explained that his physical frame was subject to annihilation and all which was destructible was *māya*. *Māya* could not be equated with God who is not subject to destruction. Having said this, he cleared all the doubts of the Sikhs.[18]

In Sammat 1742 (AD 1685), Guru Gobind Singh married Jito at 'Lahore', a township raised for the purpose near Makhowal itself. In Sammat 1745 (AD 1688), Mata Sundari gave birth to Jit Singh. When Guru Gobind Singh moved to Paonta with his army, Raja Fateh Singh was offended and he decided to wage a battle. There were numerous casualties on both sides. In Sammat 1746 (AD 1689), Guru Gobind Singh left Paonta and founded Anandpur, and in the following year, Mata Jito gave birth to Jujhar Singh. Fighting broke out between the Jaswals and Katoches and Guru

Gobind Singh supported one side. However, when the Rajas made peace with the Turks. Guru Gobind Singh withdrew his support and returned to Anandpur.[19]

In Sammat 1750 (AD 1693), Guru Gobind Singh resolved to institute a separate *panth*. He decided that the Sikhs should not observe *bhaddan*. This was a concession from the goddess because it was difficult to observe the *rahit* of *janju*, *tikka*, *bhaddan* and *kirya* in times of war. As a distinguishing symbol, the Sikhs would not cut their hair (*kesh*); and it would be obligatory to carry arms and to bear the name Singh. Also, they would wear the blue dress of Mata Kali and fight to the finish against the Turks.[20]

In Sammat 1753 (AD 1696), Mata Jito gave birth to Jorawar Singh. *Hukamnāmas* on the new *rahit* were dispatched to the Masands. When Dhir Mal was asked to send the *Granth* he refused, saying that if Gobind Singh had become the Guru, he should get a new *Granth* prepared. Guru Gobind Singh had a copy of the *Granth* prepared and he also produced a *Granth* of his own. There were several categories of Sikhs: the followers of Dhir Mal, Ram Rai and the Minas. There were the Masands who did not spare even the daughters and sisters of the Sikhs. Guru Gobind Singh cautioned them to mend their ways but they did not heed his advice.[21]

It was in Sammat 1754 (AD 1697) that Guru Gobind Singh decided to give a distinct symbol to the *panth* to differentiate it from all others, just as Prophet Muhammad had done. The new *panth* was created to avenge the execution of Guru Gobind Singh's father and to spread the true faith (*dharm*) by wiping out sin. Distinct from both Hindus and Musalmans, the third *panth* was created to wage war for the cause of righteousness. Guru Gobind Singh ordered Chaupa Singh to bring water in a clean vessel and stirred it with a dagger (*kard*) while the *Japuji* and the *Anand* were recited. On Diwan Sahib Chand's suggestion that sugar be added to it for taste, Dharam Chand was asked to bring some *patāshas*. These were added to the water and it was stirred again. This water was called *pahul*. Chaupa Singh was told to sit down and to place his right hand over the left. *Pahul* was poured into his palm thrice and he was asked to drink it and to recite *Wahiguru ji ka Khalsa, Wahiguru ji ki fateh*. Five or seven other Sikhs were similarly given *pahul* at that time. This rite of initiation was prescribed for others as well.[22]

A code of conduct (*rahit*) was promulgated for the *keshdhāri panth*. The Sikh of the Guru was enjoined to do no evil deed, have no connection with Musalmans, fight for the cause of righteousness, not visit prostitutes and love his own wife, abstain from alcohol and tobacco, not indulge in gambling or stealing. He should be part of the true congregation (*satsang*) and cultivate love for the sacred word (*shabad-bāṇī*). He should earn an honest living and observe *nām*, *dān* and *asnān*. He should love other Sikhs but none of the enemy. He should share his food with others. He should neither discard his faith (*dharm*) nor follow the path of renunciation (*bairāg*). He should have faith only in his Guru and serve no *sādh* or *sant*. Such a Sikh should attain to liberation. Indeed, he who joins the Guru's *panth* attains to liberation, and becomes the means of liberation for his family.[23]

V

Mata Jito gave birth to Fateh Singh in Sammat 1755 (AD 1698). The issue of the Masands arose again. A Masand named Chaito failed to deliver to the Guru what a rich widow had sent with him, giving her forged receipts. This came to light when she met the Guru. Chaito was ordered to hand over the things to the Guru, but the other Masands made a common cause with him in self-interest. They were confident of the support of their followers. Since they refused to appear before the Guru, he ordered them to be brought by force. Some of them were beaten; others were thrown into boiling cauldrons. Only those who ran away or went into hiding escaped death. Guru Gobind Singh sent *hukamnāmas* to Sikh *sangats* that they should not associate with the Masands and their followers. At the same time, the Sikhs were ordered not to associate with the Dhir Mallias, the Ram Raiyas and the Minas. The entire Sikh *sangat* was the Guru's Khalsa. They were asked to bring *golak* and *dasvandh* personally and to observe the *rahit*. The Khalsa of Akal Purkh thus became purified, cleansed of all sin or blemish. Such *hukamnāmas* were sent far and wide through special messengers.[24]

Two categories of Sikhs were to be treated somewhat differently. A brahman Sikh was to be accorded special respect and consideration. He could oblige other brahmans not to oppose

the Sikhs, and thereby ensure an increase in their numbers. However, the entire code was not obligatory for a Sikh in the service of the government: he could help other Sikhs in all matters connected with his office. But even in his case, several obligations were not abrogated: he could not use tobacco, observe *bhaddan*, kill a female child, cut his hair, or associate with the five excommunicated groups.[25]

Mata Jito died in Sammat 1757 (AD 1700). All the last rites, including *kirya* were performed in accordance with the *Shastras*. But none of the sons of Guru Gobind Singh, who were all *keshdhāri*, performed *bhaddan*. Grieved, Guru Gobind Singh lost weight and observed continence. Some Sikhs offered him a new bride but he did not accept her. On their insistence, she was allowed to serve the Guru. She remained unmarried. In Sammat 1758 (AD 1701), Guru Gobind Singh's *Samundar Sagar* was consigned to the river. Only a few leaves were retrieved by some Sikhs. Another *Granth*, the *Avtār Līla*, was composed and as it was not bound its leaves were lost in a battle. In Sammat 1755 (AD 1698), the Sikhs had asked Guru Gobind Singh if the two *Granths* could be bound together. The Guru told them that the *Adi Granth* was the Guru and the other *Granth* was his 'sport'. Hence, it should remain separate from the *Adi Granth*.[26]

A large number of Sikhs attended the Baisakhi gathering (*mela*) at Anandpur in Sammat 1759 (AD 1702). They carried with them many gifts and offerings. Raja Hari Chand took a fancy to a beautiful bird and he wanted to possess it. But it was taken by Sahibzada Fateh Singh. Raja Hari Chand approached the chief of Kahlur and they consulted the Katoches and the Hindurias. They decided to approach Aurangzeb to oust Guru Gobind Singh from the hills.[27]

Guru Gobind Singh resolved to hand over rulership to the *panth* in Sammat 1760 (AD 1703). All the four *varnas*—khatri, brahman, sud, vais—were represented in the *panth*. Rulership could be passed on to the ones chosen by the goddess. Guru Gobind Singh ordered the Sikhs to offer their heads to the goddess. Five Sikhs volunteered: two zamindars, one Arora, a khatri and a tarkhan. This was how rulership was passed on to the shudras: what was done by the goddess could not be undone.[28]

Thousands of Sikhs joined the Baisakhi gathering at Anand pur in Sammat 1761 (AD 1704). They were instructed in the *rahit*. Among other things, they were told to discard *janju*, *tikka*, *dhoti* and *chauka*, and not to consider *varna* and *jati* while entering into a matrimonial alliance. Since the Sikhs did not disregard *varna* and *jati*, and a brahman contracted a relationship with a brahman and a khatri with a khatri, they raised this issue with Guru Gobind Singh. He clarified that all the four *varnas* belonged to the *panth*, and their *dharm* was not to be obliterated. Guru Tegh Bahadur had sacrificed his life to protect the *janju*. Otherwise Aurangzeb would have converted all Hindus to Islam. A Sikh of the Guru was enjoined to carry arms and to live in accordance with the *Granth*; it was not obligatory for him either to wear or to discard the sacred thread. It was left to the individual's discretion.[29] As for matrimony, a Sikh should contract relationship with a Sikh, keeping in mind the position of the other party. A Brahman Sikh should contract relationship with a brahman Sikh, and a khatri Sikh with a khatri Sikh. The relationship of *sikhi* was common to all Sikhs, but matrimonial ties were peculiar to each *varna*. Chaupa Singh was asked to reduce all the injunctions of the *rahit* to writing. He compiled a *rahitnāma* comprising 1,800 entries. Copies of it were signed by Guru Gobind Singh.[30]

In Sammat 1762 (AD 1705), the rajas arrived along with the army of Turks sent by Aurangzeb under the command of Rustam Khan and Dilawar Khan. Guru Gobind Singh knew that the rajas had an eye on his wealth. Therefore, he consigned all the gold and goods worth Rs. 17,32,735 to the river. Cloth worth Rs. 4,35,250 was set on fire. Battles were fought every day. Pamma, the *wazīr* of Raja Hari Chand, offered safe evacuation. Guru Gobind Singh was aware of his evil intentions but the Sikhs were not. The Guru agreed to send women with boxes full of shoes and stones to expose Pamma. They were attacked. When accused of the attack, the rajas attributed it to outsiders. They gave an oath in writing, as did Rustam Khan and Dilawar Khan. Against Guru Gobind Singh's better judgement, the Sikhs insisted on evacuation. In the darkness of the night, Mata Gujri's carriage lost its way. Accompanied by the two younger Sahibzadas, she was taken to Nawab Wazir Khan at Sirhind by the Ranghars of

village Saheri. Guru Gobind Singh went towards Ropar, pursued by the army of the rajas.[31]

In the battle of Chamkaur, Jit Singh and Jhujar Singh fought courageously. On the third day of the battle, Jhujar Singh died fighting. Jit Singh slew Raja Gaj Singh. Sangat Rai, a khatri Sikh, put up a brave fight. Gulab Singh and Sango Singh, the sons of Guru Gobind Singh's sister, repulsed the Chandel horsemen and the troops of the Turks before they were slain. Quoting the *Bachittar Nātak*, Chhiber states that Sango killed Najabat Khan and Kripal wielded his staff skilfully. Jit Singh, too, died fighting. Guru Gobind Singh now decided to leave Chamkaur. Accompanied by four Sikhs, two of them *keshdhāri* and two *sahajdhāri*, he entered the camp of the Turks amidst cries of *Hindu bhāga, Hindu bhāga*. While the Sikhs fought his pursuers, Guru Gobind Singh reached Machhiwara. From there he went to Dinpur where he was joined by four or five Sikhs who had survived the attack on Chamkaur. They recounted the deeds of others. Guru Gobind Singh praised the Sikhs who had died fighting at Chamkaur and told the survivors to ask for a boon. They requested that the paper on which the Sikhs had put their signatures to disown the Guru at Anandpur before its evacuation be torn. Their wish was granted.[32]

Meanwhile, Suchcha Puri persuaded Nawab Wazir Khan not to spare the two younger Sahibzadas and they were executed at Sirhind. Jorawar Singh was nine years old and Fateh Singh was seven and a half. Suchcha Puri was related to the Sahis, the old enemies of the Guru. Mata Gujri consumed poison and died. From Dinpur, Guru Gobind Singh went to Muktsar, but the Turks pursued him. He moved to Kangar where he composed 1,400 couplets. Daya Singh Sobti agreed to carry this compilation to Aurangzeb. He dressed himself as a *hājī* and placed the book over his head as if it were the *Quran*. He was able to meet Aurangzeb at Aurangabad. The latter accepted the book with great veneration, but when he began to read it, he died of shock.[33]

Guru Gobind Singh sent a *hukamnāma* to the Khalsa in the army of Bahadur Shah at Kabul. They informed the prince that the throne had been given to him by Guru Gobind Singh. He expressed his gratitude and left Kabul to fight against his brother, the rival contender for the throne. He emerged victorious.[34]

Guru Gobind Singh went to the country where Lachhman Das *charanjīt* lived in the guise of a *bairagi* in a *thakurdwara* with a disciple. The Guru held consultation with Sahib Chand, Dharam Chand, Darbari and Gharbari, Kripal Singh and Nand Chand. The question he put before them was: 'Who should be asked to bear the burden of guruship?' They submitted that he himself knew better. Guru Gobind Singh proposed the name of the *bairagi* who was a detached *charanjīt*. They approved of his choice. Guru Gobind Singh then went to the garden surrounding the *thakurdwara*, and placed a cot on the seat (*āsan*) of the *bairagi*. When the *bairagi* entered the garden, he was asked to sit on the cot but he sat on the floor. Guru Gobind Singh told the four Sikhs who had accompanied him to leave them alone. They had a private discussion. Following this, the *bairagi* bowed to him, took *pahul* and became a staunch Sikh. Entrusting the burden to him, Guru Gobind Singh moved on.[35]

At Burhanpur, the Sikhs were instructed to go to Delhi. Mata Sundari did not wish to go because she was missing her son Jit Singh. A Sikh named Jit Singh was standing there. Guru Gobind Singh told Mata Sundari that she could take Jit Singh to Delhi. She accepted him as her son and left for Delhi with the other Sikhs. From Burhanpur, Guru Gobind Singh travelled to Nander. There he encamped in a graveyard to the chagrin of the Turks. Guru Gobind Singh told them that this place had belonged to him. To substantiate his claim, he dug out a *ganga-sāgar* and a *chauki* from under the grave, and pointed out that this sacred place had been misappropriated by the Turks. A township was founded there.[36]

Guru Gobind Singh resolved to give up his physical body. He began to incite the sons and grandsons of Painde Khan, who were in his service, that the murder of one's ancestors should be avenged. The Guru appointed them as his personal bodyguards so that they could attack him. One of them attacked Guru Gobind Singh with his dagger. But he was slain by the Guru with his sword. Guru Gobind Singh had his wounds dressed. When Bahadur Shah learnt of the incident, he sent his personal *hakīms*. They dressed his wounds and were handsomely rewarded before they left.[37]

Guru Gobind Singh asked the Sikhs to arrange five maunds

of sandal wood (*chandan*) as if he wanted to perform a *hom*. He also instructed them to bring some bows. Despite their protests, he tested the bows and the wounds opened up. Guru Gobind Singh bled profusely. In their anxiety, the Sikhs asked him who would look after the *sangat*. Guru Gobind Singh told them: 'The *Granth* is the Guru, and take refuge in Akàl. The Guru is the Khalsa and the Khalsa is the Guru.' They were told to follow the *rahit* of the Guru and to believe in none other than Wahiguru. They talked for several hours, before his light mingled with the light of Akal Purkh. His body was cremated before day break. The date was Kattak Sudi Panj in Sammat 1766 (AD 1709).[38]

VI

Chhibber's work reveals his respect for Banda Bahadur who is referred to as Guru Banda Sahib or Guru Sahib Banda. He invoked the idea of revenge to secure the support of those who professed to be Sikhs. When Sirhind was captured, even the daughters and daughters-in-law of Suchcha Puri were humiliated and ill-treated. Chhibber justifies this by explaining that the deeds of one generation affect the fate of another. Banda Bahadur avenged the atrocities perpetrated by the Turks on the Sikhs though he lost his own life. He represented the sword of Guru Gobind Singh. Chhibber adds that he did not hesitate to punish those Sikhs who, with the acquisition of power, had become unjust. The Guru's injunction for the ruler was to be just. In Sammat 1775 (AD 1718), Banda Bahadur was besieged in Gurdaspur. Many Sikhs were put to death because of their sins. Banda Bahadur was captured and taken to Delhi along with hundreds of other Sikhs. They were executed in batches of five every day but no one recanted and betrayed his faith. Banda Bahadur, too, courted martyrdom. All these martyrs were reborn and became rulers in Chhibber's time. Banda's *rāj* lasted for nine and a half years. Many Sikhs referred to him as the eleventh *pātshāhi*.[39]

Chhibber devotes a separate chapter to Jit Singh, the adopted son of Mata Sundari. Sikhs used to attend their court (*darbār*) in Delhi. Jit Singh once ordered a Muslim *faqir* to be thrown into a

well and all the Muslim *faqirs* of Delhi made a representation to the emperor against Jit Singh. His *dera* was plundered but no woman was humiliated. Jit Singh went into hiding in the house of a *kalāl* who betrayed him. When he was being taken to be tried, he died of fright. His son, Hathi Singh, fled from Delhi to Mathura. According to Chhibber, Jit Singh exercised guruship in Delhi for sixteen years, with large number of followers known as Jit Mallias.[40]

When Mata Sundari died, the Sikhs began to attend the *darbār* of Mata Sahib Devi who advised them not to organize Diwali and Baisakhi gatherings in Delhi. The underlying reason was to forestall a situation similar to the one that had led to Jit Singh's death. A decision was taken to hold these gatherings at Amritsar. In Sammat 1784 (AD 1727), Kirpal Singh arrived in Amritsar and made new arrangements with the assistance of the *panchas* of the town. Gurbakhsh Singh Chhibber (Kesar Singh's father) was appointed as *dārogha* of the *go-khāna*, *karkhāna*, and the *khazāna*. Arrangements for regular *ardās* and *sadā-barat* were made with the new sources of income.[41]

After finalizing all the arrangements, Kirpal Singh returned to Delhi, and Chaubanda arrived in Amritsar with his followers. There were three categories of Sikhs in the town: the Jit Mallias, the Bandais (in the Jhanda Bunga), and the Akal Purkhias (in the Akal Bunga). All were keen to acquire control of the sacred place. The watchword of the Akal Purkhias was *Wahiguru ji ki fateh*, and that of the Bandais was *Fateh darshan*. Bhai Kahn Singh tried unsuccessfully to resolve their differences. The number of the Akal Purkhias began to increase. In Sammat 1788 (AD 1731), Mata Sahib Devi died. By that time, Kirpal Singh had also passed away. In Amritsar, the Akal Purkhias triumphed over all others. As individual Sikhs of any consequence had died, the *panth* now held the field.[42]

Talking of contemporary Sikhs, Chhibber relates an incident involving a Mazhabi Sikh who posed as a Sandhu Jat and dined with Sikh Jats. However, he was discovered, humiliated and hanged by Bhai Kahn Singh much to the satisfaction of all the Sikhs in Amritsar. They were asked to keep the incident a secret lest the Turks should interfere.[43] In another incident, however, the Turks were involved. Some Sikhs forcibly took *shahtoot* from Chuhar Mal Ohri's orchard. His son lodged a complaint in Lahore.

The Chaudhari of Patti accompanied by Diwan Har Sahai and Aslam Khan, the *subedār* of Lahore, arrived in Amritsar. The Sikh gathering was attacked and the town was besieged. The Sikhs assaulted the Turks after Har Sahai was struck by lightening. Aslam Khan was forced to retreat. Chhibber comments that Wahiguru protects his Sikhs. Therefore, the Sikhs of the Guru should practise *dān*, *punn* and *dharm*. They should not associate with a Musalman, man or woman.[44]

The Turks returned to set up a *thāna* at Amritsar, and began to persecute the Sikhs. Majha was scoured for Sikhs and they were killed. In Sammat 1793 (AD 1736), the Turks marched from Lahore to Amritsar, they killed many Sikhs and laid siege to the town. Chhibber, 'a small boy', was with his father in Amritsar at that time.[45] He praises the Sikhs for going without food for days rather than eating impure food. It was due to their merit (*tap*, *bhajan* and martyrdom) that the Turks were eventually destroyed. Bhai Taru Singh was among the eminent Sikh martyrs.[46]

A Sikh who associated with Musalmans was considered an enemy of the Guru because the Turks had killed thousands of Sikhs and had not even spared the young sons of Guru Gobind Singh. The injunction of the Guru was to kill all *mlechh*. Chhibber rues that *sikhi* ended with the death of Nawab Kapur Singh in Sammat 1803 (AD 1746), having remained an integral part of *singhi* for forty-eight years. Chhibber recounts the atrocities committed by the Turks, including the desecration of *amritsar* in Sammat 1793 (AD 1736), and the execution of Bhai Mani Singh and Bhai Tara Singh. There was no compatibility between the Turks and the Sikhs: 'We read *Pothi-Granth*, the *Shastras*, *Vedas* and the *Puranas*; they observe circumcision and fasting, and read the *Quran* and other books.' The Sikhs should follow the *Guru Granth Sahib*. The Sikh of the Guru should avenge himself on the enemies of the Guru. If he is not in a position to do so, he should at least have no association with them.[47]

Chhibber's explanation of Bhai Mani Singh's martyrdom is interesting. The Bhai gave no cause for offence to the Turks and yet he was hacked to pieces. He arrived in Amritsar in Sammat 1782 (AD 1725) and collected the scattered leaves of Guru Gobind Singh's *Avtār Līla Granth* including some pages carrying the Guru's signature. He had them transcribed. However, he made the mistake of excluding the *Bhagat Bani* from the *Adi Granth*

and bound the rest of the *Adi Granth* and the *Dasvin Patshahi da Granth* together. When a humble Sikh saw this bound volume he inquired why the Bhagats had been excluded. Offering an explanation Bhai Mani Singh said that the Bhagats were servants of the Guru and, therefore, they could not sit with him. Hearing this, the Sikh said that if the master adopted the servant as a child and nurtured him as his own, would Bhai Mani Singh ask the servant to go away? Bhai Mani Singh was silenced by this reply. Since the Sikh had uttered words to the effect that Bhai Mani Singh deserved to be hacked to death for infringenent of a tradition sanctified by the Guru, Bhai Mani Singh prayed that he may preserve his faith when his body was cut into pieces. The Sikh reassured him that his *sikhi* was firm. Many years later, Bhai Mani Singh was taken to Lahore and his body was cut into pieces limb by limb; his faith was affirmed.[48]

At several places in his work, Chhibber underlines the unity of guruship from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh, treating them as the embodiment of one single spirit and light. Nevertheless, he talks of the tenure of guruship of Banda Sahib for nine years, of Jit Singh for sixteen years, and of '*Guru ke ghar di*' for twenty-five years.[49] That explains why he has devoted separate chapters to Banda Bahadur, Jit Singh and Mata Sahib Devi.

Of the four categories of Sikhs, two are easy to define: those who lived with the Guru (*didāri*) and those who were willing to die for the cause of righteousness (*muktay*). Contemporary Sikhs fell into two categories. The *murīd* Sikhs recognized the *Granth* (as their Guru), served the *sikh*, the *sant* and the *sādh*, and looked upon their wealth and power as a gift from Wahiguru. The mere possession of wealth and power, thus, did not make them *māiki*. The *māiki* were those who forgot the Guru on acquiring rulership, did not serve the *sādh*, the *sant* and the *sikh*, and had no love for the *Granth*. They attributed their success to themselves and forgot the bestower of rulership. Chhibber underlines the inexorability of the law of *karma* to induce the rulers to do good deeds.[50]

Chhibber was not optimistic about the future. He invokes the authority of the *Adi Granth* to forecast the increasing influence of the Kali age. All distinctions of *varna* would be demolished as described in the *Bhogal Purana* too. There would be no *sat*,

tap and *dharm*. The *Shastras* and the *Vedas* would speak the language of the *mlechh*. There were already signs of the Kali age. Just as Hindus had gone over to the Musalmans earlier to safeguard their mundane interests, so also the Musalmans were coming over to the Hindus. Both sides had adopted evil conduct. When the *Quran* was current, there could be no *sikhi*. The Sikh of the Guru should not discard his *dharm*; he should flee from sin and *adharm*. Each *yuga* had its own peculiar *dharm*. For the Kali age, it is the *dharm* of the *Atharva Veda*.[51]

Towards the end of his work, Chhibber accords great importance to the Guru and, therefore, to *Guru Granth*. The Guru is God; in fact, higher than God. The Tenth Master handed over the *gaddi* of guruship to the *Granth Sahib*. Therefore, the *Granth* is manifestly the Guru and one who turns away from the *Granth* is lost for ever. One should follow the teachings of the *Granth* to the best of one's capacities. The Sikhs should not recognize any other authority. The younger *Granth* was compiled in Samvat 1755 (AD 1698). Despite a request from the Sikhs, it was separated from the *Adi Granth*. No one knows the reason for this. But Guru Gobind Singh did regard his *Granth* as very dear to him. Therefore, both the *Granths* should be regarded as the Guru. Only he who follows them is a true Sikh.[52]

VII

It is clear from the foregoing sections that Chhibber's account of Guru Gobind Singh is detailed, and he provides many dates and dwells on kinship. But the authenticity of this information cannot be accepted as established. To give only a few examples, he places the death of Guru Gobind Singh in 1709. Banda Bahadur was still alive in 1718. Sango Shah, the son of Guru Gobind Singh's sister, who had died fighting at Bhangani, is associated with the battle of Chamkaur. Chhibber's detail is impressive merely because of its plausibility. More often than not, its authenticity is dubious.

The episode of the goddess is the most detailed incident in Chhibber's account of Guru Gobind Singh and yet there is no proof of its authenticity. The goddess granted a boon to enable Guru Gobind Singh to create the Khalsa and yet there is no single

event in Chhibber's account that can be viewed as marking the institution of the Khalsa. The goddess is invoked in 1678. Guru Gobind Singh decides to establish a separate *panth* in 1693. *Hukamnāmas* on the new *rahit* are sent to the Masands in 1696. The rite of *pahul* is introduced in 1697 when the new *rahit* is promulgated for *keshdhāris*. The Masands are punished and removed in 1698. The five volunteers offer their life to the goddess on the Guru's call in 1703.

Chhibber tries to establish an essential link between the Khalsa and the goddess. Apart from the boon that the *panth* of Guru Gobind Singh would destroy the wicked Musalmans, the blue dress of the Khalsa also comes from the goddess. She relaxed some obligations of *kirya-karam* to accommodate the Khalsa. Virtually, she chose the five potential martyrs whose martyrdom and piety are instrumental in bringing about political change. It is she who bestows *rāj* on the shudras.

The episode of the goddess underscores the importance of the brahmans. Only they can perform *hom*, and not the Sikhs. They are given preference over Sikhs. They create Chhatris and they are acknowledged as superior to Chhatris. Only a brahman can make the goddess appear, and without her aid Guru Gobind Singh, or his Sikhs, cannot overpower their enemies. Kalakdas shows Guru Gobind Singh the way to avoid accountability to God and how to accommodate sin in his *panth*. Wealth and riches can be sanctified by the Guru, but not power. Kalakdas throws hints about the institution of guruship in the future. He points to the role that Banda Bahadur could play after Guru Gobind Singh.

Chhibber looks upon Guru Nanak as the fountainhead of Sikhism and does not find any difference between him and his nine successors. They all represent one and the same light. No rival claimant to guruship is acknowledged. The followers of Prithi Chand, Dhir Mal and Ram Rai are excommunicated by Guru Gobind Singh. Nevertheless, Chhibber refers to the duration of guruship of Banda Bahadur, Jit Singh, Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devi. Chhibber does refer to the Khalsa as the Guru but makes no reference whatever to their authority in any situation. He is emphatic about the *Adi Granth* as the Guru but he brackets with it the *Granth* of the Tenth Master.

Chhibber's attitude towards the *Granth of the Tenth Master*

is very significant. As we noticed earlier, he refers to two *Granths* composed by Guru Gobind Singh: the *Samunder Sāgar* which was consigned to the river, and the *Avtār Līla* which was lost in a battle presumably after the evacuation of Anandpur. At the time of Guru Gobind Singh's death there was only one *Granth*, that is, the *Adi Granth*. Much later, Bhai Mani Singh collected the scattered leaves of the *Granth* or *Granths* of Guru Gobind Singh, had them transcribed, and bound them with the *Adi Granth*. Where was the *Granth of the Tenth Master*? Chhibber takes its existence for granted though his own account does not support its existence. Besides the *Bachittar Nātak* and the *Savviyas* of Guru Gobind Singh, Chhibber was familiar with the literature on Chandi. This could serve as the base for introducing the entire range of brahmanical literature as authoritative. In any case, Chhibber brackets with the *Granth Sahib* not only the works attributed to Guru Gobind Singh but also the *Vedas*, the *Puranas*, and the *Shastras*.

Brahmanization of the Sikh tradition had serious implications for Chhibber's presentation of the Khalsa. He does talk of the *kesh*, the *pahul*, the epithet Singh, the injunction to carry arms, and several other items of the Khalsa *rahit*, the five volunteers, the boon of rulership, the end of personal guruship, and the vesting of guruship in the Khalsa and the *Adi Granth*. But he discusses them in a manner that imparts no significance to them. The *kesh* are an alternative to *janju* and *tikka*. But his attitude towards *janju* and *tikka* is ambivalent. The *pahul* remains unconnected with the five volunteers (and, therefore, with the idea of *ape gur-chela*). Instead of looking at *singhi* as subsuming *sikhi*, Chhibber views *singhi* as an adjunct of *sikhi*.

Further, Chhibber draws a clear distinction between *sikhi* as a religious faith and the practice of *varna-dharma* in the social sphere. Consequently, the ideal of equality gets shorn of all its social meaning. The *varna* norms of commensality and connubium reintroduce the principle of inequality. It is not surprising that Chhibber looks for special privileges for the brahman Sikhs. The Sikh tradition of one single ethical principle for all members of the Sikh social order is negated by Chhibber. Portraying the Khalsa as a political spearhead of the goddess, he appears to present an anti-thesis of the Khalsa as an egalitarian socio-political and moral order based on the monotheistic

conception of Divinity. Whether consciously or unconsciously, Kesar Singh Chhibber makes a consistent and an earnest attempt at brahmanizing the Khalsa tradition.

NOTES

1. Kesar Singh Chhibber, *Bansāvalināma Dasān Pātshāhiān Kā*, ed. Rattan Singh Jaggi, *Parkh*, ed. S.S. Kohli, Vol. II, Chandigarh: Panjab University, 1972. Jaggi's Preface.
2. By now recensions of what is called the *Damdami Bir* are known to have been prepared before 1706.
3. The invention of the Gurmukhi script is generally attributed either to Guru Angad or to Guru Nanak himself.
4. Chhibber, pp. 1-15.
5. Ibid., pp. 56-73.
6. In the *hukamnāmas* of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the name given is Gobind Das and not Gobind Rai.
7. Chhibber, pp. 99-101.
8. Ibid., pp. 101-2.
9. Ibid., pp. 102-4.
10. Ibid., pp. 104-5.
11. Ibid., pp. 107-10.
12. Ibid., pp. 110-12.
13. Ibid., pp. 112-13.
14. Ibid., pp. 113-16.
15. Ibid., pp. 116-19.
16. Ibid., pp. 119-22.
17. Ibid., pp. 122-3.
18. Ibid., pp. 123-4.
19. Ibid., pp. 124-5.
20. Ibid., pp. 125-6.
21. Ibid., pp. 126-7.
22. Ibid., pp. 128-9.
23. Ibid., pp. 129-30.
24. Ibid., pp. 130-2.
25. Ibid., pp. 132-3.
26. Ibid., pp. 134-6.
27. Ibid., pp. 136-7.
28. Ibid., pp. 137-8.
29. Ibid., pp. 142-3.
30. Ibid., pp. 146-7.
31. Ibid., pp. 148-50.

32. Ibid., pp. 151-2.
33. Ibid., pp. 153-4.
34. Ibid., pp. 155-6.
35. Ibid., pp. 156-7.
36. Ibid., pp. 157-8.
37. Ibid., pp. 162-3.
38. Ibid., pp. 163-4.
39. Ibid., pp. 170-8.
40. Ibid., pp. 178-81.
41. Ibid., pp. 182-4.
42. Ibid., pp. 184-6.
43. Ibid., pp. 187-8.
44. Ibid., pp. 189-90.
45. If Kesar Singh was a young boy in 1736 he could not have been born around 1700. Or, it may be that he was confused about the time of the event.
46. Ibid., pp. 190-3.
47. Ibid., pp. 193-7.
48. Ibid., pp. 135-6.
49. Ibid., pp. 197-8.
50. Ibid., pp. 199-201.
51. Ibid., pp. 202-6.
52. Ibid., pp. 115, 177

CHAPTER 4

Re-asserting the Tradition: Santokh Singh's *Suraj Prakash*

Gurtej Singh

Bhai Santokh Singh lived from 1788 to 1843, a period which saw the rise of Sikhs to political eminence in the Punjab. He was connected with some of the old Sikh families which played a prominent role in the politics of the times. He spent many years in the company of and at the court of Bhai Udai Singh and Bhai Lal Singh, the chiefs of Kaithal, who were descendants of Bhai Bhagtu, a Sikh of the fifth Guru. Dial Singh and his son Gurbakhsh Singh, who later founded the Kaithal state, had been in attendance at the court of Guru Gobind Singh. The rulers of Kaithal, known as Bhais, were traditionally entrusted with the duty of administering *amrit* to the descendants of the Rajas of Patiala, Nabha and Jind. Santokh Singh had access to all the information that was required to codify the *amrit* administration ceremony and the code of conduct connected therewith. His mentor Giani Sant Singh had written a treatise on the concept and tradition of the administration of *amrit*.

Bhai Santokh Singh was an initiated Khalsa, and his father Deva Singh was also a duly initiated Khalsa. He sometimes presided over the *amrit* administration ceremony.[1] As a Khalsa, he took his code of conduct, comprising the initiation vows, seriously. While at Buria he married Ram Kaur of Jagadhari in defiance of the caste notions concerning marriage. She belonged to a subcaste which, traditionally, would not have allowed her

to be married into the subcaste of Bhai Santokh Singh. According to Bhai Vir Singh, the last remains of Bhai Santokh Singh and his wife were not sent to Hardwar, in contradiction to the widely prevalent Hindu custom. At Kaithal, Bhai Santokh Singh took strong exception to the conversion of a minor Sikh boy to Hinduism by a powerful *sādhu* against the wishes of the boy's parents. He threatened migration to get the boy restored to his parents, and to his faith. His account of the *amrit* ceremony, the code of conduct and the connected vows were no empty rhetoric. He appears to have lived by them.

Bhai Santokh Singh wrote an exegesis of the *Japuji*, under the title of *Garabganjani*, on the request of Bhai Lal Singh. This work reveals his religious views and his strong commitment to them. The main purpose of this work was to refute the preposterous assumptions of Anandghan who had written an exegesis of the *Japuji* in 1795, and had imposed a long list of six Hindu *gurus* on Guru Nanak. On account of such an approach, contemporary Sikh scholars had unanimously rejected Anandghan's work as highly distasteful. The *Garabganjani* was completed in 1829.

Bhai Santokh Singh had the great advantage of knowing and meeting some of the people who were familiar with the events and personalities of the most notable period of Sikh history. There were hundreds who could relate what eyewitnesses had told them about events and persons. Vivid memories of the times of Guru Gobind Singh and Banda Bahadur were available.[2] His intellectual lineage is equally impressive. His mentor, the warrior saint Giani Sant Singh, was the son of Bhai Surat Singh who was taught by Gurbakhsh Singh whose mentor was Bhai Mani Singh.[3] Along with his five sons, Bhai Mani Singh was among the first twenty-two Sikhs who received *amrit* at the first ceremony presided over by the Tenth Guru. As noted earlier, Giani Sant Singh had produced a treatise on *amrit*,[4] which makes Santokh Singh's views on the Khalsa and the administration of *amrit* peculiarly important.

Santokh Singh was a linguist,[5] a scholar, a theologian, a poet and a good prose writer—an awesome combination for any age. He was well versed in Indian and Semitic religious traditions. He had access to all the known works and had the means, because of political patronage, to obtain information. He appears to have

exploited every opportunity that came his way. The sheer volume of his writings would place him amongst the most formidable scholars of any period.

Very little is known about the early life of Bhai Santokh Singh. Bhai Vir Singh has traced his birth to the year 1788. He was born at Nur-di-Sarān, a historic village near Tarn Taran. Bhai Bota Singh, the well known martyr, also belonged to this village. The name of Bhai Santokh Singh's mother is known.[6] He received his education at Amritsar under Giani Sant Singh.[7] The next piece of information on him relates to his sojourn in a small Sikh state at Buria where he lived from 1813 to 1823, and was largely engaged in writing. His first book *Namkosh*, alternately titled *Amarkosh*, is a Hindi translation of Amar Sinha's *Amarkosh*, the oldest and the most celebrated vocabulary of the Sanskrit language. The finishing touches to this work, according to the prevalent custom, were formally given at Amritsar in 1821. Bhai Santokh Singh was already collecting material for his *Sri Guru Nanak Prakash* which, too, was completed at Buria on 15 October 1823. He appears to have started the tradition of reciting and expounding it in the afternoon gatherings at the Buria Gurdwara. This mode of transmission of information remained prominently in vogue for a century, and continues to be practised at places. For a whole century, his works remained the most influential compositions for the practising Sikhs, seekers, scholars, lay persons as well as writers on the Sikhs and Sikhism.[8]

For two years or so Bhai Santokh Singh lived in Patiala at the court of Maharaja Karam Singh who ruled from 1813 to 1845. The period of his stay provides an insight into the situation of the Sikh rulers of the time, and the relations between Hindus and Sikhs. Bhai Santokh Singh was not well looked after primarily due to the hostile brahmanical influence on the Maharaja. He resented that a status commensurate with his intellectual attainments was denied to him. Consequently, he left Patiala for the comparatively insignificant state of Kaithal which was ruled by Bhai Lal Singh, a connoisseur of art and literature. It was at Kaithal that he completed his translation of Balmiki's *Ramayana* in 1834. He largely adheres to the text and renders it faithfully into the popular language of the day from the original Sanskrit.[9] He also takes the liberty to add certain verses in praise of the Gurus to signify that Sri Rama is not the object of his veneration.

His desire appears to be to introduce Sikhism and the Sikh Gurus to the Hindus and to make them realize the deep debt of gratitude they owed to the Sikh Gurus: 'He is a base ungrateful wretch and the epitome of ingratitude who is born a Hindu and does not acknowledge the great debt he owes to the Guru.'[10] He also utilized the opportunity to include a history of the rulers of Kaithal in the translation. In 1834, Bhai Santokh Singh completed his translation of the *Atam Puran* from Sanskrit. It is a treatise connected with *Vedanta*. Unfortunately, the translation is no longer available. It was in simple *sadhubhasha* narrative, as is apparent from a surviving extract.[11]

Bhai Santokh Singh composed his *magnum opus*, the *Gurpartap Suryoudai Granth*, also known as the *Suraj Prakash Granth*, in which he merged his earlier work, the *Guru Nanak Prakash*. He probably began work on it in 1834, though there is evidence to suggest that he had composed several parts of it earlier. It is clear from internal evidence that he continued the practice of reciting his composition to the audience in the Gurdwara at the time of the evening congregation even during the period of its compilation.[12] In those days Kaithal was known as the 'second Kashi' and over a thousand households of learned brahmans flourished there. According to the evidence of Gopal Singh Sadhu, who was a student of Bhai Santokh Singh,[13] he was distrusted and derided by the Hindu population of Kaithal when he was composing the *Suraj Prakash*. It is apparent that he composed this work in an atmosphere of extreme hostility. There is internal evidence as well that he was under tremendous stress while working on the *Suraj Prakash*[14] due to the strong influence exerted upon him by the hostile forces. Bhai Santokh Singh repeatedly alludes to this in his work. His prayers to ward off the evil influence become increasingly fervent as he approaches the life of Guru Gobind Singh and the creation of the Khalsa.[15] His brahmanically inclined son, Ajay Singh, is believed to have compelled him at the point of the sword to include the Durga episode in the *Suraj Prakash*. On its completion in 1843, he undertook a thanksgiving visit to Sri Darbar Sahib at Amritsar. It is reported that he was honoured at the Akal Takht for his work. At Amritsar, he also presented a copy of the work to Giani Sant Singh shortly before he was murdered at the behest of Hira Singh Dogra.

II

Bhai Santokh Singh had taken upon himself to write a history of personages who represented a new tradition, a new social force, and preached an original spiritual discipline giving birth to a new and different society. They were not Semitic prophets with a clearly defined, rigidly laid down, definitive vision of Reality. They were also not Hindu incarnations, born in a myth of indeterminate antiquity, relevant only to a particular people in a limited geographical area. They were not spiritual leaders seeking to secure the well-being of their followers either exclusively in this world or in the other. In short, they represented a phenomenon which was astonishingly original, without a parallel or precedent in human history. Santokh Singh had the stupendous task of making the phenomenon simultaneously intelligible to the scholar, the seeker and the common man. Of great relevance was the spiritual transformation brought about by the Gurus. Bhai Santokh Singh had to introduce the *gurmukh* who was later given the designation of the Khalsa. As a biographer, he had not only to sum up that unique prophethood with unusual and deep concern, but also to relate it to people's worldly hopes, their life in society, their moral well-being and spiritual and political aspirations. He had to make it meaningful and enlightening for the proverbial 'ignorant masses' steeped in political and spiritual slavery. He took his duty seriously. Since his audience belonged to a society which had remained petrified and enslaved for long, with minds conditioned by their social and spiritual milieu, he had to adopt unusual methods to make the Sikh Gurus and Sikh philosophy intelligible to them. It is in this society, and on such a complex subject, that Santokh Singh was eminently successful.[16] His interpretation became the source of intellectual and spiritual nourishment for a great majority of the Sikhs, and he ruled the Sikh mind for a whole century.[17] He continues to be the source of Sikh doctrine and history for the scholar and the lay person alike.

As was usual with historians, poets and writers of that age, Bhai Santokh Singh made his creed clear at several places in his writings. All his creedal statements, and they abound, are unambiguous and unequivocal. It is apparent from them all that, in accordance with the orthodox Sikh belief and practice, he

was a worshipper of the one omnipotent God, Akal Purkh.[18] He recognized the ten Gurus as one and all of them as manifestations of God.[19] He accepted the *Guru Granth* as the 'eternal' embodiment of the *shabad*, as a form and essence of the ten Gurus and, of course, of God[20] or His Name, which according to Sikh theology are identical.

His concern for a separate Sikh identity is direct, intense and profound. In this context, his exegesis of the *Japuji* becomes relevant. Written in reaction to Anandghan's interpretation, it was a way of resisting the attempt to project the Sikh faith as a sect of Hinduism. The comments of Bhai Santokh Singh reveal his firm belief that Sikhism is an original sovereign dispensation and superior to all faiths. He also believes that the sects emanating from Brahma, Shiva, Vishnu and other gods are condemnatory of each other and are mutually exclusive. In his opinion the 'faith of our True Guru who is without enmity', stands out in contrast. He is critical of Anandghan and his kind who aim at 'interpolation of the Sikh faith'. He says, 'they themselves will be let down in the effort they are making and no believing Sikh will entertain their views even in a dream'.[21] He specifically repudiates Anandghan's view that the goddess Chandi was Guru Gobind Singh's *guru*. He reiterates the original Sikh doctrine to refute Anandghan. The Gurus have acknowledged that the One 'Who is the same from beginning to end, is our Guru'.[22] Regarding his personal beliefs, he asserts that he is a Sikh of the Gurus and so he wishes to be known.[23]

Santokh Singh's theory of guruship is integral to his understanding of the Khalsa Panth. It conforms to the original propounded by the Gurus. He believes that all the ten Gurus were in essence one, and that the same light shone in all of them. Similarly, he holds very clear views on the status and salience of guruship. All the Gurus were so much a part of the Supreme Reality that they may be regarded as the Reality itself. He repeatedly refers to the individual Gurus as God (Bhagwan, Brahma).[24] 'The Guru is the image of the Creator. All powerful in every way and capable of creating and destroying the creation.'[25] The Guru 'is the one like whom there is no other in the world. Indra and other gods obey him'.[26] In relation to the Guru, Sharda and other gods and goddesses are like servants.[27] When the Guru requests the five initiated ones to initiate him into the Order of

the Khalsa, they reply, 'You are the Lord of the three worlds and all gods and demons worship you. Air and water take orders from you.'[28] This view of the Guru in Sikh thought, faith and doctrine is upheld by Bhai Santokh Singh.

Bhai Santokh Singh's assessment of the period immediately preceding the creation of the Khalsa has great significance. He observes that the Hindus and Muslims were equally hostile to the Sikhs, and violently discouraged them from even visiting the Guru. Wherever there was an opportunity to overpower groups of pilgrims, they did not hesitate to confront them with arms and engage them in battle.[29] At the cost of risking their lives, the Sikhs would pay a visit to the head of their religion.[30] They were victims of extreme intolerance and aggression of both Hindus and Muslims. Much before he created the armed Khalsa, the Guru was obliged to instruct the *sangat* to sport arms like the army,[31] and to defend themselves. The Sikhs regarded both Hindus and Muslims as their enemies.[32]

Bhai Santokh Singh points out that the mission of the Gurus was to create a 'third panth', distinct from the paths of Hindus and Muslims, the Semitic and Indian religions. He believed this to be divinely ordained: 'Well did the Akal Purkh do in creating the third way.'[33] Immediately prior to asking the first five to administer *amrit* to him, the Guru declared that 'to create the *panth* is the order of the Lord of the world'.[34] Guru Tegh Bahadur told Aurangzeb that his design of converting all peoples to one religion, namely Islam, was contrary to the will of God who favoured plurality.[35] According to Santokh Singh, a situation lacking plurality is a complete disaster.[36]

After the initiation ceremony, the Guru instructed the Khalsa not to offer any allegiance to holy men, persons of other faiths performing miracles or to their kings, and to dismiss all notions of subservience to Hindus or Muslims.[37] The Khalsa was instructed not to revere the objects and concepts held in high esteem in other faiths: 'Tombs, mausoleums and many *panths* exist but the Khalsa must exhibit discerning mind and hold none in reverence.'[38]

Open proclamation of the faith by an individual was an integral part of the Sikh religion from the earliest times.[39] Due to the openness advocated by the Gurus, every one knew where they stood in relation to a Sikh. This was in sharp contrast to the

practice of many sects which deliberately concealed their faith and kept the *gurmantar* a closely guarded secret. An open declaration of faith was a part of the Gurus' attempt to create a society of socially and morally responsible individuals. Bhai Santokh Singh asserts that, on hearing that the Sikhs of Delhi did not want to be identified as Sikhs after the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh took a firm decision to impart a distinctive look to his *panth*. Visible identity was not merely a result of but also an important reason for the creation of the Khalsa.[40] A part of the code of conduct prescribed by the Guru for the Khalsa stemmed from a promise made two and half decades earlier.

Bhai Santokh Singh is very emphatic about the political aspect of the Khalsa. Empowering the politically deprived was among the important reasons for the creation of the Khalsa. To the lineage-conscious rajas, who refused to take *amrit* for fear of surrendering political eminence, the Guru says, 'the Khalsa will increase and attain to sovereignty'.[41] Politically, the Guru was striving to create an egalitarian society. He declares it to be his aim to entrust political power to the lowest of the low in caste estimation: 'I will accept being called a friend of the poor only when I raise them to rulership.'[42] The widespread Sikh belief in the prophecy of *hanne hanne mīr* (a king is every saddle) can be appreciated in this context. The Guru clearly spells out his political vision: the Khalsa was to aim at 'a society of kings'.[43]

For Bhai Santokh Singh, the immediate aim of creating the Khalsa was to assume sovereign political power. 'On seeing the third unique religion in the world the enemy apprehended disaster (and realized that it will) snatch the political power.'[44] The Hindu rajas were aware that the powerful Khalsa would attain to sovereignty.[45] They considered the Khalsa as a serious threat to their pre-eminence.[46] The hill kings instructed Qazi Salardin, their advocate, to brief the emperor that after taking *amrit*, the lowly Jats did not acknowledge the emperor as their ruler.[47] The Qazi was asked to explain graphically that even those who served the Turks without any wages and led their lives in awe of Islam, now take 'the *amrit* stirred by the double-edged sword, wear weapons and, by the grace of their Guru do not accept the kings as rulers'.[48] The 'constant handling of weapons' and the 'abjuring of cowardice' are the two important articles of

the Khalsa code of conduct."[49] Bhai Santokh Singh thus prescribes the pursuit of sovereign status as an essential article of faith and an integral part of the code of conduct for the Khalsa. He envisages three separate and distinct religious entities in India: Hindus, Muslims and the Sikhs. He emphasizes that the Sikhs will overpower the others.[50]

Understandably, Hindu rituals and ceremonies have no place in Sikhism. 'The Khalsa repeats the name of One Who is Deathless and recognizes no other.'[51] To highlight the futility of wearing the sacred thread he relates a story. The Guru once needed a thread to tie his sword to the scabbard. Bhai Daya Singh broke off his sacred thread and gave it to the Guru. On being urged by his companions to retain the thread, he replied that it was futile to wear it according to *gurmat* and quoted the injunction of Guru Nanak in *Var Asa*. 'It was self-delusion that prevented me from abandoning it earlier, the Guru's view on the subject has always been clear', he said. The matter was brought to the Guru who ruled that any one who asks a Sikh to wear the thread would be committing a grave religious misconduct. The Guru thereafter decreed that refusing to abide by the ways of the world, the Khalsa should claim a unique status of a totally different being. It should adopt a unique code of conduct different from and better than that of the Hindus and Muslims.[52] It is highly significant that Bhai Santokh Singh, while discussing the three religious entities in India, places Hindus and Muslims on the same pedestal and invariably considers the Sikhs as different from both.[53]

The non-Hindu nature of the Khalsa is apparent from the reaction of those who did not take *amrit*. They refused on the ground that adopting the Khalsa way meant a clean break with the Hindu past. "They have relieved themselves of the caste system and have adopted the pride of rulers', the dissenters complained of the Khalsa.[54] 'Why should we abandon the tradition of the *shastras* and how can we not believe in the caste system?', they asked.[55] Differences based on caste were not to be tolerated as a part of the Khalsa discipline. All four *varnas* were to merge in one formidable solidarity on the partaking of *amrit*.[56]

In a variety of ways, the author brings out the continuity of the new Order of the Khalsa with the earlier teaching of Sikhism. One aspect of the creation of the Khalsa is the restoration of the pristine purity of the faith. Providing another equally profound

insight into the Guru's mind, Bhai Santokh Singh says that he wanted to 'again purify the *sangat*'. The intention was to rid the *sangat* of evil practices. He wanted to fathom 'the extent to which it had imbibed Sikhi' and on the result 'of such investigation, he wanted to base the emergence of the unique Order of the Khalsa'. This was what engaged his mind at the time of the creation of the Khalsa.[57]

Another important object of the Guru, according to Bhai Santokh Singh, was to heal the internal schism in the Sikh *panth*. He is obviously referring to the one caused by the Mina, the Dhirmallia, the Masandia and the Ramraia sects. Significantly, those who kill infant girls, an evil practice prevalent among the upper caste Hindus, are included among the accursed orders.[58] The Guru prohibited the Khalsa from maintaining social relations with those belonging to these sects. He recalls the words of the Seventh King to the effect that 'the Guru's ship had developed many fissures'.[59] He contemplated that, though the factional leaders had their axes to grind, 'the entire *sangat* owed allegiance to the Guru and it was his duty to provide adequate protection to it'.[60]

Regarding the ceremony related to the creation of the Khalsa, Bhai Santokh Singh makes a very significant side comment. The Guru set up a very 'pleasing and costly tent surrounded by costly crimson screens in gold thread and brocade. The tent poles were made of gold and were capped by decorative gold tops. Extremely white diamonds shone all around.'[61] This description was meant to convey the impression that it was no ordinary meeting. It was planned as a state event of great political and spiritual significance. The arrangements were at par with a coronation function. The slection of a spiritual successor to the ten prophets and a political sovereign is indicated. At the conclusion of the *amrit* ceremony, the declaration made conforms to the indications given earlier. 'Like Guru Angad you have preserved the seed of Sikhi in this world. Recognize these five as fully competent to save the *sangat*. They are just like me without the smallest difference', the Guru announced.[62] Bhai Santokh Singh understands that the Khalsa was officially proclaimed the successor Guru on the occasion of the *amrit* ceremony. It came to inherit the spiritual grandeur of prophethood.[63] 'Now I

establish you Guru, as Guru Nanak had created Guru Angad', says the Guru,[64] again emphasizing the continuity in Sikh tradition.

NOTES

1. Bhai Santokh Singh, *Shri Gur Pratap Suraj Granthavali*, ed. Bhai Vir Singh, Amritsar: Khalsa Samachar, 1954, p. 137.
2. Bhai Santokh Singh relates the well known tale concerning Kahan Singh Lepni at the time of the Tenth Guru and states that he heard it from one Sujan Singh of Lahore who was an eyewitness. He also quotes Bisakha Singh, the son of Kahan Singh. Ibid., verse 5144. At another place, he quotes Bhai Ram Koer, an eyewitness to the first *amrit* ceremony. Ibid., v. 5056. He claims to have met the two sons of the Rani of Raipur and the descendants of Pir Buddhu Shah. These are just a few of the many such instances.
3. Ibid., p. 91.
4. Ibid., p. 92
5. It is evident from his works that besides several dialects of Punjabi such as Hindi, Pothohari, Lehndi and Pahari, Santokh Singh was proficient in Sanskrit, Braj, Persian and Arabic.
6. Ibid., v. 4499.
7. Ibid., v. 4499.
8. Ibid., pp. 77-9.
9. Ibid., p. 130.
10. Ibid., p. 131.
11. Ibid., p. 134.
12. Ibid., pp. 144-5.
13. Ibid., p. 148.
14. Ibid., vv, 4455, 4500.
15. Ibid., pp. 147-51.
16. Ibid., p. 79.
17. Ibid., p. 79.
18. Ibid., p. 162.
19. Ibid., p. 162.
20. Ibid., p. 164.
21. Ibid., p. 165.
22. Ibid., p. 166.
23. Ibid., pp. 166-7.
24. Ibid., v. 4388: *likhi patrika gur bhagwan.* Ibid., v. 4558: *kalghidhar satgur bhagwan.* Ibid., v. 4667: *lakhi brahma roop hai jaise.*
25. Ibid., v. 5300: *gur kartar roop hwai aiyo. Sarbkala samrath bal bhari, siraj sangharak sristi sari.*

26. Ibid., v. 5351: *jeh sam jag mahin avar na beea ... indra adi jis aais mahin.*
27. Ibid., v. 4789.
28. Ibid., v. 5059.
29. Ibid., v. 4927.
30. Ibid., v. 4927: *avai darshan ki kar aasa. Nahi kal ko dharai trasa.*
31. Ibid., v. 4927: *saina ke sam shastar sajai.* 30.
32. Ibid., v. 4925.
33. Ibid., v. 5227: *bhali nibahi purakh ne keeo teeja log.*
34. Ibid., v. 5059: *panth ke rachan ko hukam jagdeesh hai.* 5.
35. Ibid., v. 4411: *poorab hindu turk jag doe, ab te teen janiai hoe.*
36. Ibid., v. 4411: *chhai jati ekta anekta bilai jati.*
37. Ibid., v. 5058: *pir patshah je karamati je apar panth, hindu ke turk hoon ki kaan ko mitai hai.*
38. Ibid., v. 5058: *gor marhi ar panth aneka, aan na manai rakh bibeka.* 43.
39. The fourth Guru equates people who conceal their faith with 'evil men, sinners and murderers'. *Guru Granth*, p. 651.
40. Santokh Singh, v. 4521: *Sri Gobind Singh sun kar aise, garjat bole jaldhar jaise. 'is bidh ko ab panth banavon, skal jagat me bahu bidtavon. Lakhon jag ke nar ik thain, tin mahin mile ek Sikh jai, sabh me partham pachanio pare, ralle na kuohun kosihun kare.*
41. Ibid., v. 5033: *vadhe khalsa pavai raju*; also, v. 4968.
42. Ibid., v. 5034: *jab deenan te raj karaun, deen bandh gur ta din kahaun.*
43. Ibid., v. 5033: *avneeshan ker samaju.*
44. Ibid., v. 5058: *teesra mazhab jag dekh ke ajab mahan, bairee ke gajab pario chheenai thakurai hai.*
45. Ibid., v. 5279: *bali khalsa le thakurai.*
46. Ibid., v. 5253: *pragatio khalsa satr bhari.*
47. Ibid., v. 5027: *patshai raja nahi ganai.*
48. Ibid., v. 5249: *jo turkan ke banat bigari, hute din rahe nit anusari. So khande ki pahul lai ke, shastran apne sang sajai ke, so patshahan ko patshahoo, gur partap na badat kahoo.*
49. Ibid., v. 5058.
50. Ibid., v. 5092: *hindu turkan ke hoe nath.*
51. Ibid., v. 5066: *ek akal akal kahante. Ankh tare nahin apar rakhante.*
52. Ibid., v. 5095: *hindu turk doban te niari, dharhe khalsa rahit suchari. Jagat kan taj hoe nirala, gurmat dhare ride bisala.*
53. Ibid., vv. 5092, 4925.
54. Ibid., v. 5065: *jati pati te bhai nirale, rajan sam hankar bisale.*
55. Ibid., v. 5064: *shatran reet nem kyoun torhen, jat pat ko kim ham chhorhen.*
56. Ibid., v. 5058: *jat pat ko bhed na koi, char varan acvaih ik hoi.*

57. Ibid., v. 5046: *pun sodhan sangat gur chahat. Parkhan sikhi beech umahati. Khojan kar kar panth chalavan. Ajab khalsa karo upavan. Ride manorath ko dhr aise.*
58. Ibid., vv. 5057-8.
59. Ibid., v. 5035: *gur jahaj phootio bahu rahu.*
60. Ibid., v. 5053: *sagri sangat hamre sharni, uchit rachh tis ki ham karni.*
61. Ibid., v. 5046: *pun tamboo ik ruchir lagaio, bahut darb jis oopar laio. Deeragh chahun dish tani kanat, lal rang ki shabhat banaat. Tanke chanani lagi chaun or, resham zari lagi jis dor. Kalas chob kanchan ke bane, damkat heere ujjal ghanne.*
62. Ibid., v. 5053: *rakhio sikhi beej jag Angad guru saman. Sabh sangat ke taarbe samrath bhe ih panch, mohi saman tin bhed rahio na ranch.*
63. Ibid., v. 5053: *mum sarup ab tum bhai haun bha tumhe sarup. Brahm gyan didh ride hwai pad at leen anoop*; also, v. 5058.
64. Ibid., v. 5059: *guru khalsa karon mai abi jaise guru Nanak ji Angad ko keenio.*

CHAPTER 5

Valorizing the Tradition: Bhangu's *Guru Panth Prakash*

J.S. Grewal

Ratan Singh Bhangu completed his work, the *Guru Panth Prakash* in the Bunga of Shiam Singh at Amritsar in 1841. Bhai Vir Singh chanced upon a copy dated 1858 that appeared to have been prepared in haste. He corrected what he regarded as the mistakes of the copyist and published it in 1914. He came upon another manuscript of 1866 and used it to make improvements in the second edition in 1939. He chose to give the title *Prachin Panth Prakash* to this work, presumably because the *Panth Prakash* of Giani Gian Singh was already known to the readers of Punjabi.[1]

Bhangu expected his work to be read and recited. The faith of the reader and the listener was expected to become firm. All their wishes would be fulfilled. The listener would fight valiantly in battle and join the company of martyrs.[2] This function of the work was not unrelated to the purpose for which it was composed. Colonel Ochterlony and Captain Murray were keen to obtain accurate information on the Sikhs, and Bhangu was anxious to provide this information. He was sure of misrepresentation by sources hostile to the Sikhs. He was particularly keen about one specific issue: the real source of Sikh sovereignty. Probably, he perceived a threat to this sovereignty in his own times.

At the very outset, Bhangu invokes the help of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh to enable him to write on 'the creation'

(*utpatī*) of the Khalsa.[3] Obviously, the creation of the Khalsa and the issue of sovereignty were inseparable for Ratan Singh Bhangu. This linkage carried the implication that the Khalsa never submitted to the Mughals.

The perfect and the true Guru created the *panth* for war (*juddh*) because sovereignty (*pātshāhī*) cannot be attained without armed struggle.[4] Sovereignty was necessary because the Mughal rule had lost its *raison d'être*. Bhangu believed that sovereignty had been conferred on Babur by Guru Nanak, the lord of both temporal and spiritual power (*mīrī* and *pīrī*), because of his disapproval of Afghan rule. However, Babur and his descendants were to rule beyond seven generations only if they did not oppress the followers of Guru Nanak.[5] This condition was infringed first by Jahangir who came under the influence of *mullas* and *qāzīs*. He played false with Guru Arjan but used the agency of a khatri (*dīwān*) to assign the blame to him. Shah Jahan converted many Hindus to Islam. Aurangzeb persisted in his hostility towards the Gurus. He called Guru Har Krishan to Delhi where the latter ended his life.[6] Because of Aurangzeb's persecution of Hindus Guru Tegh Bahadur willingly sacrificed his head for the sake of *dharma*.[7] There was no longer any moral justification for Mughal rule.

The roots of Mughal rule dried up when Aurangzeb executed Guru Tegh Bahadur. Guru Gobind Singh decided to take up the sword to cut down the tree of the sovereignty of the 'Turks'. He did not need rulership for himself because as a successor of Guru Nanak he was far superior to any earthly ruler. In fact, like Guru Nanak, he could bestow *pātshāhi* on others. He initially considered the Rajput rajas but they would not be willing to become Sikhs. Therefore, he turned his attention to the poor Sikhs who belonged to the lower castes or even to people outside the *varnas*. When they were told to take up arms against the 'Turks', they were struck with fear. 'We are sparrows and they are hawks', they said. 'Can the lamb ever kill the wolf? Can the deer ever kill the lion?'. The Jats, the Nais and the Tarkhans, who were not used to arms, were no match for the Mughal and Pathan soldiers. Guru Gobind Singh was aware that this attitude was due to *charan-pahul* which encouraged them to be peaceful (*shānt*) and induced kindness (*daya*) in them. This had to be changed.[8]

II

To make the Sikhs an awesome group, it was necessary to introduce a new form of initiation, the baptism of the double-edged sword (*khande pahul*); to make their appearance warlike, it was necessary to wear *kesh* and turban and to adopt the name 'Singh' which was used by Chhatris. Every Khalsa horseman would then become a sovereign ruler. Steeled through the baptism of the double-edged sword, they would be always ready to use *khandā*. They would bow to none except the True Sovereign. They should not believe in evil spirits, or in Gugga Pir and Sakhi Sarvar (Sultan); they should not wear *dhoti*, the sacred thread and the sacred mark; they should all dine together. With this idea, Guru Gobind Singh chose an auspicious moment to select at Kesgarh five *bhujangis* belonging to five different *jats*: a Khatri, a Jat, a Chhimba, a Nai, and a Jhiwar.[9] The Guru himself prepared *pahul* by adding sugar to water and stirring it with a double-edged sword, while reciting the *prithm bhagauti pauri* to invoke the help of his nine predecessors, the *Batti-Savviyas*, and the most forceful stanzas of the *Chandi-Bani*. The *pahul* was sprinkled on the eyes of the five and over their heads five times before they were asked to taste it. At the same time, they were told to shout *Akal Akal* and *Wahiguru ji ki fateh*. They drank from the same bowl to demolish all distinctions. They were instructed to discard the notion of the four *varnas* and the four *ashramas*, together with the sacred thread and the sacred mark.[10]

Guru Gobind Singh instructed them not to have any connection with the Minas and the Masands.[11] To associate with the Ram Raiyas, the killers of female infants, and the smokers of *hukka* was degrading. They should contribute to the Guru's *golak* according to their capacity, and serve *karah* to the Khalsa. They should wear *kachhehras* and turban, and remain devoted to the *Guru Granth*. They were enjoined to recite the *Japuji*, the *Jāp*, the *Anand*, the *Rehras* and the *Chandi-Bani* in the morning and evening; to tie the turban twice every day, to take care of their weapons twenty-four hours; to drink *sudha* and to go ahunting; to eat *jhatka* mutton and not touch *kuththa* meat; to take care of the *kesh* and never cut it; to discard traditional rites and to concentrate their thoughts on the feet of the Guru; and to give

corrective punishment (*tankha*) to those who tread the false path. Just as he had administered *pahul* to the five *bhunjangis*, so he received *pahul* from them in the same manner. That was why he was known as *ape gur-chela*: he himself was both the Guru and the disciple at the same time. Just as Guru Nanak had become the disciple of Guru Angad, Guru Gobind Singh became the disciple of the Khalsa.[12]

Bhangu says that the Khalsa began to increase from the very day of its creation. The Sikhs were administered *pahul* and became Singhs in groups of five to raise the daily number to fifty or even a hundred. They were sent in all directions and appointed *mukhtiars* everywhere, particularly at places associated with the Gurus, like Amritsar and Patna. Written instructions were sent to all Sikh *sangats* to be baptized by the double-edged sword. As representatives of the Guru, the five *bhujangis* were entitled to administer *pahul* to others. The offerings received by the Gurdwaras were placed at the disposal of the Khalsa: they sent to the Guru whatever they could save. The *sangats* were also asked to go to the Guru to become *tejdhāri* through the new baptism to subdue the 'Turks'. Satisfied with the creation of the Khalsa, the Guru asked them which territory they would like to rule. They asked for the Punjab. The Guru advised them to increase their numbers first and then to rise in arms against the rulers.[13]

III

Meanwhile, the Singhs began to plunder the villages around Anandpur. The hill chiefs who were defeated in an open battle, approached the Mughal emperor to represent that the Guru was increasing his resources to put an end to Mughal rule. He styled himself as 'the true king' to imply that Aurangzeb was a mere pretender. Aurangzeb was alarmed. Eventually, Anandpur was besieged by the combined Mughal and hill forces. Guru Gobind Singh was keen to stay on but the people wanted him to evacuate the town. He failed to convince even his mother that the enemy was only deceiving them by promises of safety. He asked the people to sign a written statement that they were not his Sikhs. However, the Singhs refused to sign any such paper and resolved to remain with the Guru and to go with him. Most of them died

fighting. The Sahibzadas Jhujar Singh and Zorawar Singh also attained martyrdom (*shahīdī*).[14]

Guru Gobind Singh left Chamkaur with the help of Ghani Khan and reached Dina in the Tappa of Kangar where he was joined by the Singhs. The younger Sahibzadas had been betrayed by a brahman cook of the Guru to Jani Khan and Mani Khan, the Ranghars of Morinda, who took them to Sirhind. Suchcha Nand, the Diwan, prevailed upon Wajida (Wazir Khan) to slay them. The Malerkotla Afghans, however, refused to perform such a heinous act. The Sahibzadas were told to embrace Islam. When they refused, they were butchered in the open court. Their grandmother died of shock on hearing the news. The slaughter of the Sahibzadas led to the ruin of the 'Turks'. The Malerkotla Pathans became firmly rooted because of their refusal to be a party to Wazir Khan's crime.[15] At Dina, Guru Gobind Singh wrote a letter to Aurangzeb and sent it through Daya Singh. The emperor died on reading this letter containing admonition and advice in addition to an account of the battles.[16]

An increasing number of Singhs joined Guru Gobind Singh before the battle of Muktsar. Forty of them resolved to fight unto death one by one. Two of them were still alive, though severely wounded, when Guru Gobind arrived. Their only request to the Guru was to tear the paper disowning the Guru which they had signed at Anandpur. After granting their wish, Guru Gobind Singh moved to Talwandi Sabo. Many Sikhs received *pahul* from him, including a few Sodhis and Tilok Singh and Ram Singh, the ancestors of the Phulkian chiefs. The place came to be known as Damdama and the Guru's Kanshi because the Guru had lived there and had continued his literary activity. Having stayed there for nine months and nine days, Guru Gobind Singh moved towards the south.[17]

IV

Ratan Singh Bhangu accords much importance to the time of Banda Bahadur. We may note only the most significant aspects of his *sakhis* related to Banda. Guru Gobind Singh was warned by Mahant Jet Ram at Dadu Dwar against Narain Das Bairagi of Nander who enjoyed tormenting holy men. The warning, however, had the opposite effect. Guru Gobind Singh was

determined to meet Narain Das and to guide him to the right path. All the supranatural powers of Narain Das failed to work against the Guru and he submitted in all humility: 'I am your *banda*; I am your Singh and you are my Guru.' He was informed that the Sikh faith was sharper than the double-edged sword. Banda made repeated requests for the Guru's order. He was assigned the service of subduing Sirhind and the surrounding hills with the support of the Singhs. That guruship had been bestowed upon them is clear from the statement: 'there is no difference between them and me; I am with them and they are with me'. Baba Binod Singh, Baba Kahn Singh, Daya Singh and Baj Singh, among others, were sent with Banda. He was told that he would be happy as long as he made the Singhs happy. He was one of them, and not superior to them. All the prayers of the five Singhs would be answered.[18]

Banda reached the Punjab accompanied by the Singhs. There was an enthusiastic response to his call. The first to join him were the Banjara Singhs, followed by the Malwa Singhs who were closer, and eventually by the Majhail Singhs who were opposed by the 'Turks' on their way. Samana was the first place to be sacked, followed by Sadhaura and Banur. The Singhs then defeated the Malerkotla Pathans in a battle near Ropar. Chhatt was plundered before Wazir Khan was defeated in the battle of Chappar Chiri and put to death. Baj Singh was appointed the Diwan of the Sarkar of Sirhind and two of his brothers were made *thānadārs*. A *thānadār* of Pail punished a Ram Raiya Masand who was hostile to the Singhs. Malerkotla was not plundered but its inhabitants had to hand over their wealth. Fateh Singh became the head of the Malwa Singhs and was appointed to Hissar, with the title of Nawab. Many of the *parganas* of the Sarkar of Hissar were occupied. Banda conquered the Doaba and the upper Bari Doab with the support of the Singhs. Serveral *thānas* were established in the fortresses. The call to prayer could not be heard from Panipat to Patti and Pathankot. Banda subdued Kahlur and remained active in the hills for three years.[19]

In relation to Banda's early activity, Bhangu emphasizes the motive of revenge, the strong support received by him from the Khalsa and the establishment of a sovereign rule. In his account of Banda's activity in the hills, his supranatural powers are

emphasized. Bahadur Shah was reluctant to act against Banda, but he was pressed by the *mullas* and *qāzīs*. He looked upon Banda as the slave of that Guru who had bestowed *pātshāhi* on the emperor. He thought of writing to Banda that they were both Sikhs of the Guru. Banda agreed to leave the Punjab and retain only the hills. Bahadur Shah reached Lahore but only to die there. His grandson, Farrukh Siyar who ascended the throne, was initially inclined to follow the mild policy of his grandfather. But when Banda was temporarily imprisoned in Kullu, Farrukh Siyar was persuaded to recover territory from the Singhs. Banda retaliated and killed the three Afghan *faujdārs* who were active on behalf of the Mughal emperor. The 'Turks' approached Mata Ji in Delhi and she agreed to send a *hukamnāma* to Banda under the Guru's seal. But he refused to submit. He declared that he was not a Sikh but a Bairagi, and that he was capable of establishing his own rule.[20]

This alienated the Khalsa from Banda. Mata Ji wrote to them that the Guru had given 'service' to Banda and not *pātshāhi*. Indeed, the true king had bequeathed *pātshāhi* to the *panth*. Banda, on the other hand, thought that he would establish his own rule and treat the Singhs as his servants. He wanted to replace the Khalsa by his own *panth*. He replaced the blue dress with a red one, coined the slogan *Fateh darshan* instead of *Wahiguru ji ki fateh*, introduced a vegetarian diet in place of meat, and the Vaishnava way of *chauka* instead of the *sarbangi* tradition of the Khalsa in which all the four *varnas* intermingled. Banda proclaimed himself the Guru; consequently, many Khalsa left him and decided never to trust him. Banda thought of eliminating the Khalsa before seizing Lahore. A part of the Khalsa defeated him. The others remained in Amritsar, and vowed never to compromise their objective of sovereignty.[21]

The 'Turks' made an all-out effort against Banda, appealing to the religious sentiments of Muslims through their religious leaders. A message was sent to Banda that all Muslim *pīrs* and *faqirs* wanted to pay homage to him. Banda was deceived and allowed the enemy to come closer to him. The Turks lulled him further by informing him that the Mughal emperor had decided to issue a *farmān*, conferring all the hill areas on him. Meanwhile the Mughal forces surrounded him. His followers urged him to fight an open battle but he preferred the safety of the fortress.

His followers repulsed an attack. However, 4,000 of them could not withstand the might of 4,00,000 'Turks'. They were prepared to die fighting. The 'Turks' suffered immense losses and decided to starve Banda to submission. Eventually, he was captured, locked up in a cage and taken to Delhi along with his followers. He was blinded, tied with a rope to a horse, and dragged on the ground till he died. This mode of death Banda had devised for Wazir Khan and this was the way in which Farrukh Siyar met his end later.[22]

Bhangu lists a number of reasons for Banda's downfall: first he annoyed Mata Ji; second, he lost the status of a celibate; third, he lost the power to fly; fourth, he was deprived of the advantage of the *pothi* which gave him occult knowledge and power; fifth, he spoke ill of the Guru; sixth, he displeased the Khalsa Panth; seventh, he established his own *panth*; eighth, he killed a female infant; ninth, he had received *siddhi* without earning it; and last, he stopped earning merit. Bhangu makes a clear distinction between magical power exercised temporarily for a particular purpose and spiritual power attained through intense devotion to be exercised throughout one's life. In short, Banda fell because he deviated from the path set for him by Guru Gobind Singh. Banda's political failure was the fallout of his moral failure. Bhangu extols the bravery of the followers of Banda, but he leaves no doubt that the ultimate victory had been prophesied for the Khalsa.[23]

V

The followers of Banda were bound to go down before the Tat Khalsa who were deceived neither by Banda nor by the 'Turks' in their single-minded dedication to the Guru's cause. After Banda's downfall, his followers wanted to remain separate and to increase the strength of their *panth*. Their conflict with the Tat Khalsa was inevitable. Baba Kahn Singh, who had separated himself from Banda, invited the Khalsa to Amritsar. During a festival, the Banda-panthis asked for a share of the offerings. They were, however, told that they had no valid claim as they did not belong to the Khalsa Panth. At another gathering, they came in greater numbers and encamped near the Jhanda Bunga.

The 'Turks' were interested in creating a rift between the Sikhs. They incited the followers of Banda against the Tat Khalsa. The Bandais asked for half the share of the offerings. Both sides were willing to fight over the issue. On advice from seniors, they agreed to leave the decision to God. Papers of both sides, with *Fateh Guru* written on one and *Fateh darshan* on the other, were thrown into the pool. The piece with *Fateh Guru* floated up to the surface and the other sank to the bottom of the pool. Some of the Singhs who had remained with Banda deserted the Bandais and joined the Tat Khalsa. But the verdict of the 'papers' was not accepted by the Bandais. A wrestling match at the Akal Bunga, between Sangat Singh Kalal of the Bandais and Miri Singh, son of Baba Kahn Singh, of the Tat Khalsa, was also decided in favour of the latter. The Bandais were told to leave but they refused. In the fight that followed, all the armed Bandais were killed. The others either fled or joined the Khalsa. Bhai Mani Singh occupied the place where the Bandais had installed their *gaddi*. Amritsar came under the undisputed control of the Tat Khalsa.[24]

Ratan Singh Bhangu draws clear boundaries not only between the Tat Khalsa and the Banda-panthis, but also between the Tat Khalsa and the followers of Gulab Rai, the grandson of Guru Hargobind. He claimed to be the Guru, and purchased 60 *ghumaons* of land in Anandpur to occupy the *gaddi* of Guru Gobind Singh; he administered *charan-pahul* instead of baptism by the double-edged sword, and was generally hostile to the Khalsa. He had a miserable end.[25]

Similarly, Gangushahi Kharak Singh believed that the Sikh *sangat* had become a widow because no Sodhi Guru was on the *gaddi*. Claiming to be the Guru, he tried to lure even the Khalsa. While he offered blessings and boons, the Khalsa offered constant struggle (*dangā*). Whereas the Khalsa claimed victory, Kharak Singh asserted that they had been defeated. He also contested the claim of the Khalsa that the prayers offered by the five Singhs were efficacious. Once when he tried to convert a Singh through *charan-pahul*, a Kumhar Singh of Delhi, named Mihar Singh, appeared on the scene with about ten armed Singhs. Mihar Singh, a *bhujangi*, was opposed to the Ram Raiyas and the Gangushahis. He would sing the Guru's *shabads* and play on the *rabab*. He

would offer *ardās* and proclaim *Guru fateh*. Carrying a staff in his hand, he wore a sword, the blue dress, including a *kachhehra* of a yard and a quarter of cloth. He was afraid of none. He associated with the *sangat* of the Tenth Guru and shunned the Minas and the Masands as well as the killers of infant girls. He demonstrated to the people that the prayers of the five Singhs were efficacious, not the booms of Kharak Singh.[26]

Gangu had been blessed by Guru Amar Das but his successors became hostile to the Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh. Similarly Hindal of Jandiala had been blessed by the Guru but his descendants were hostile to the Khalsa. In fact, Hindal produced a *janamsakhi* in which Guru Nanak was portrayed as a servant of Raja Janak in a previous life and Hindal himself as his son-in-law, like Sri Rama. In other ways too he tried to demostrate that he was superior to Guru Nanak. Hindal's followers were known as Niranjanias and not Sikhs. His grandsons substituted Kartar for Wahiguru. They associated with Musalmans and ate with the Sultanis, that is, the devotees of Sakhi Sarvar. Harbhagat Niranjania was instrumental in the killing of many Singhs by the Mughal administrators. Kirpal and Dayal assisted Ahmad Shah against the Khalsa. Dayal Das' son Sharan Das was a reprobate drunkard who had no regard for the *sangat*.[27] In Bhangu's account of the opponents of the Khalsa, the differences are not merely political. Matters related to belief and practice sharply differentiate between the Khalsa and the others.

The Tat Khalsa or the *bhujangi* represents Bhangu's ideal Singh. He strictly observes the *rahit*. He wears the blue dress and carries arms. He is devoted both to the Guru and *Gurbani*. He is true to his word. He fights in the van. He is not afraid of death and does not submit to the 'Turks'. He upholds the claim of sovereignty. He helps the oppressed. He venerates the *sangat* like the Guru and is always keen to serve the Khalsa. He cannot hear denigration of the Singhs. He holds his *kesh* dearer than his life. He is intent upon *dharm-juddh*. He bathes in the pool of his Guru instead of the Ganga or the Jamuna. He hears only the Guru's *shabad* and does not meditate upon Rama or Krishna. Above all, he remains a celibate and devotes his entire life to the service of the *panth*. He is the stuff of which martyrs are made.[28]

VI

Martyrdom was in a sense the most important aspect of the Sikh tradition for Ratan Singh Bhangu. Guru Tegh Bahadur sacrificed his life for the good of others (*parsuarth*): he saved the *dharm-karam* of Hindus.[29] The story of the brahmans approaching Guru Tegh Bahadur for protection in the face of persecution by Aurangzeb, particularly in Kashmir, reinforces the deliberate resolve of the Guru to sacrifice his life. His refusal to embrace Islam and his strategy to have his head severed saved not only the *dharm-karam* of the Hindus, but also his own.[30] Tara Singh became a martyr, upholding the ideal of sovereignty in opposition to the supporters of the Mughal administration and Mughal rule. Against overwhelming odds, not once did he think of escaping. In fact, he inspired twenty-two other Singhs to join him. He followed the example of Guru Tegh Bahadur: he sacrificed his life but did not give up his resolve.[31] Bhai Mani Singh tampered with the body of the *Granth* and the *sangat* declared that his own limbs would be separated in the same way. He requested the *sangat* to pray that his faith may not suffer (*sikhi sabat rahae*). When he was finally arrested, not only did he decline to pay any money, but he also refused to accept Islam. He offered his limbs to be chopped into pieces till his head was severed as one piece. Reciting the *Sukhmani* all the time, he felt no pain. He was hailed as the *sardār* of *shahīds*, the prince of martyrs.[32]

There are numerous examples of martyrs in the *Guru Panth Prakash*. Bota Singh was enraged when he heard someone saying that no Singh was to be seen around. He announced his presence by collecting duty on the highway to Lahore and died fighting, along with a Ranghreta Singh, against a large contingent of the Mughal troops. His martyrdom upheld the ideal of sovereignty.[33] Sukha Singh, a Tarkhan, joined hands with Mahtab Singh to slay Massa Ranghar in the Golden Temple which he was desecrating, he took a dip in the holy bath at Amritsar as a challenge to the Mughals, killed an Afghan in a duel, and died fighting in search of Ahmad Shah Abdali on the battlefield.[34] Bhai Taru Singh, who was dedicated to his faith and the Khalsa Panth, did not fear death and he died with his *kesh*.[35] Bhai Mahtab Singh consciously decided to court martyrdom along with Bhai Taru Singh.[36]

Ratan Singh Bhangu expounds his own philosophy or metaphysics of martyrdom. When Guru Tegh Bahadur gave up his life for the sake of *dharm*, cries reached the true court and the Master shifted the *pirs* and prophets of the Turks from the Sach-Khand to the rear of the court. From that moment, the *pātshāhi* of Delhi began to decline and the power of the 'Turks' began to diminish.[37] It is in this context that Tara Singh said that his deliberate sacrifice would be held against the Turks.[38] Bhai Mani Singh became the *deodidar* of the Sahibzadas after his martyrdom.[39] Bota Singh visited the *dera* of the *shahīds* who held the *pīrs* and *paighambars* in siege.[40] When the Singhs of Padhana suggested to Bhai Taru Singh that they would kill the *ahadīs* to secure his release, he told them that the Gurus had sacrificed their lives for the Sikhs and, since he belonged to their *panth*, he would prefer death to escape. The Gurus had made great sacrifices to save the *panth* in order to destroy the 'Turks'.[41] After his martyrdom Bhai Taru Singh would go to the Divine Court to seek redress against the 'Turks'.[42] Bhai Mahtab Singh sought martyrdom for the same purpose.[43] After Bhai Taru Singh's martyrdom, the wise said that the reign of the Mughals would not survive.[44] Even the Prophet would be consigned to hell if he attempted to intercede on behalf of the Nawab. When he was ailing and he invoked the aid of *pīrs* and *paighambars*, the Singh *shahīds* inflicted greater pain on him.[45] Only the Khalsa could relieve his pain.[46] The honour of the Khalsa Panth was saved, but the 'Turks' were disgraced. Bhai Taru Singh was taken to Sach-Khand in a procession of *shahīds*. Like Bhai Mani Singh on the right, Bhai Taru Singh became a *deodidar* of the Sahibzadas on the left. The *pīrī* of the *pīrs* was destroyed. All one's wishes were granted through vows of offering to Bhai Taru Singh Shahid.[47] Indeed, all one's wishes were fulfilled through offerings at a *Shahidganj*.[48]

In this connection, it is significant to note that the Khalsa Panth raised *deburas* on the various sites of martyrdom. Bhangu refers to a *gurmata* by which a *darbār* was constructed on the site where the younger Sahibzadas were slain in Sirhind. After holding a *dīwān*, a *takht* was raised and five weapons were placed on it to be worshipped like the Guru. A Singh was deputed to look after the place. The *Panth* made generous offerings and

all their wishes were fulfilled. *Rababis* were appointed for regular recitation of *shabads*. In this way, the *dehura* was rejuvenated. Revenues were used for the maintenance of the Gurdwara.[49] A *Shahidganj* was constructed by the Singhs on the spot where Nihang Gurbakhsh Singh and his martyr companions were cremated in Amritsar after their defence of the Harmandar against the Afghans. Nihang Gurbakhsh Singh was taken to Sach-Khand by Bhai Mani Singh and Bhai Taru Singh, and was persuaded by the True Guru to be born again as the King of Kings, to exercise supreme authority over the Khalsa. He was born as Ranjit Singh.[50]

According to Ratan Singh Bhangu, the fact and the concept of martyrdom were central to the Khalsa tradition. A martyr (*shahīd*) by definition was a Khalsa who was always ready to lay down his life not for any personal gain but for the sake of the oppressed, the Sikh faith and the Sikh Panth. The idea of sovereignty as closely associated with martyrdom had originated with Guru Nanak and had been passed from one successor to another. Guru Arjan, Guru Har Krishan, Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh, whose four sons attained martyrdom, put this idea into practice.[51] The moral triumph of the martyr strengthened the position of the Khalsa vis-a-via God and weakened the position of their adversaries. Consequently, martyrdom enhanced the power and sovereignty of the Khalsa on the earth. The martyrs being close to the Guru and God could fulfil the wishes of those who made earnest supplication to them. This provided the basis for prayers offered at a *Shahidganj*.

VII

With or without martyrdom, the idea of sovereignty is underlined by Bhangu throughout his work. The idea that Guru Gobind Singh had prophesied *mīrī* or *pātshāhi* for every Khalsa horseman is reiterated elsewhere.[52] Sovereignty could not be attained without armed struggle; therefore, the Khalsa were prepared to fight and to die fighting.[53] Indeed, *dangā* was their *jāt* and *got*; they could not survive without *dangā*.[54] The Khalsa could not be defeated because they were destined to rule.[55] *Dangā* is the means to sovereignty; it leads to martyrdom.[56] The Khalsa were not prepared to accept *nawābi* because *pātshāhi* in the future

had been bestowed upon them; they would establish *takhts* wherever they occupied land.[57] The claim of sovereignty was sustained by the trust of the Khalsa in the prophecy of Guru Gobind Singh; they could be indifferent to suffering in the hope of *pātshāhi*.[58] They could stake their lives in the belief that if they died they would go to heaven and if they survived they would attain *pātshāhi*.[59] For Bhangu, sovereignty was built into the very institution of the Khalsa.

The belief of the Khalsa in the prophecy about sovereignty was a part of their general faith in the words of the Guru. The prophecy that 'ploughs drawn by donkeys shall be witnessed at Sirhind before long' encouraged the Khalsa to attack the city despite their small numbers and they emerged victorious.[60] The Guru had prophesied that a dog from Kabul would be instrumental in destroying the Mughals. The invasion of Nadir Shah appeared to be a fulfilment of that prophecy. The time had come, they thought, for the triumph of the Khalsa.[61] What was said by Taru Singh could be countered by none except the Khalsa. This was because Taru Singh was a *sant* and, therefore, closely allied with the Guru.[62] In a desperate situation, the only treasure of the Khalsa was *gurbachan*, i.e. the words of the Guru.[63] The Guru had said that the brave who fight dauntlessly in battle attain sovereignty; and every Singh was ready to fight against 1,25,000 men.[64] The Guru had also said that the *panth* would increase despite all odds.[65] The words of the Guru never remain unfulfilled.[66] It was on the basis of this faith that the Khalsa approached the *Guru Granth* for guidance and blessings (*vāk*).[67]

Bhangu takes it for granted that guruship was vested in the *Granth* at the end of the line of the ten Gurus. The Khalsa read and recite the *bāṇi* of the *Guru Granth*, and worship it as others worship Lord Ganesh.[68] They do not consult anyone for an auspicious time (*mahūrat*): they listen to the *vāk* of the *Guru Granth*. The *Granth* for them is the true body of the Guru. Therefore, the Sikh *sangat* asks for the true *vāk*. They are gratified when the Guru assures them of triumph in their campaign against the Afghans of Kasur.[69] The *Guru Granth* was their ultimate refuge in all situations.[70] Bhangu nowhere talks of the *Dasam Granth* or the *Granth of the Tenth King*. He makes it clear that the recension of what is now known as the *Adi Granth* is the Guru.

He refers to the presence of Amritsari and Damdami recensions during the *ghallughara* or the great carnage of 1762. Both these were recensions of the *Adi Granth*.[71]

The importance accorded by Ratan Singh Bhangu to 'the five' has already been discussed. When Subeg Singh approached the Khalsa on behalf of the Mughal governor of Lahore, the Khalsa asked the five *bhujangis* to impose *tankha* on him. When Kapur Singh accepted the *khilat* brought by Subeg Singh with the title of Nawab, Kapur Singh got it sanctified by placing it at the feet of the five *bhujangis* before donning it.[72] Before Sukha Singh engaged a Durrani in a duel, Charhat Singh requested the five Singhs to offer *ardās*.[73] The Guru had told the Khalsa that he would reach wherever the five Sikhs joined hands in prayer.[74] The five Sikhs have the same power as *Gurbani*.[75] The prayer of the five Sikhs is heard in the true court.[76]

Similarly, the Guru is present in the *sangat*. There is no difference between the Guru and the *sangat*: the Guru is the *sangat*, and the *sangat* is the Guru.[77] What is true of the Panth is true of the *sangat*.[78] The power of the Guru is in the Panth.[79] The *sants* who change the age (*jugg*) are the Khalsa. The Guru is the Khalsa and the Khalsa is the Guru; there is no difference between the Guru and the Khalsa.[80]

VIII

Belief in the doctrines of *Guru Granth* and *Guru Panth* and the concept of *gurmata* go together. Ratan Singh Bhangu uses the word *matā* for the decisions of Sikhs and non-Sikhs alike.[81] The word *gurmata* is reserved for the resolutions of the largest possible number of the Khalsa, generally at the Akal Takht. There is a general statement that the Khalsa used to visit Amritsar at the Diwali and the Baisakhi after their campaigns in the country, to listen to the Guru's words in the Harmandar, to hold *dīwāns* at the Akal Bunga, to adopt *gurmatas* and to administer justice.[82] On Baisakhi day in 1760, a brahman of Kasur approached the *dīwān* of the Khalsa at the Akal Bunga to seek redress against the Afghans of Kasur who had forcibly taken away his wife. The Khalsa adopted the *gurmata* to sack Kasur and to give justice to the brahman.[83] For the sack of Sirhind, the *gurmata* was adopted

in the field.[84] The *gurmata* to oppose Ahmad Shah Abdali on his return from Sirhind in 1766 was also adopted presumably outside Amritsar.[85] Significantly, the occupation of territories by the Khalsa was based on a *gurmata* at the Akal Bunga. The first Singh occupant of any territory was not to be dislodged. Consequently, the smaller *sardārs* occupied small territories in villages and the bigger *sardārs* occupied large territories, including cities and towns. Those who reconciled the subject people struck firm roots but those who alienated them were soon dislodged. In the case of an unfair ejection, the *misl* to which a *sardār* belonged would intervene in favour of the first occupant.[86]

All *gurmatas* served as a source of cohesion among the Khalsa and of their concerted action. Ratan Singh Bhangu talks of *misls*, each under a single leader but with more than one *sardār*. He also talks of the Buddha Dal and the Taruna Dal, each consisting of five *misls*. When they were together, as at the time of the *ghallugharaa* of 1762, they constituted the Dal Khalsa. Association at all levels was voluntary. Therefore, each individual had a say in all matters of common interest. The *sardārs*, as leaders of voluntary followers, wielded greater influence in *gurmatas*. The feelings of the ordinary members, however, could not be easily ignored. Bhangu does not fail to mention the clash of egos and self-interest among the Khalsa but he is more emphatic about the moral force of the *gurmata*. A direct statement or a casual phrase reveals the general organization of the Khalsa in action.[87]

IX

The manager of the Wazir Hind Press which published the *Prachin Panth Prakash* in 1914 observed that nearly all the dates of important events mentioned by Ratan Singh Bhangu correspond to those given by Muslim historians,[88] to imply that Bhangu's dates are generally correct. However, a few of his dates are quite problematic, like the creation of the Khalsa in 1695, the death of Banda Bahadur in 1721 and the death of Bahadur Shah in 1729. Bhangu's concern for dates does not appear to arise from any concern for chronology. He places events in time and space but not in a chronological order. Generally, he relates *sākhīs* in response to questions posed by Captain Murray and, therefore,

he moves back and forth in time. He does not provide a connected narrative of Sikh history, or even of the Khalsa. What gives a certain degree of unity to his work is the basic question: How did the Khalsa become sovereign? The publication of his work in 1841 could partly be due to his perception of a threat to sovereign Sikh rule from the British.

The peculiar form of the *Prachin Panth Prakash* may have something to do with the sources of his information. Bhangu was familiar with the *Guru Granth* and some of the compositions attributed to Guru Gobind Singh. There are quotations from the *Bachittar Nātak*, the *Zafarnāma* and a work entitled the *Chandi-Astotar*. Bhangu refers the reader to an old *janamsakhi* and the *Gurbilas* of Sukha Singh for further information. Most of the time, however, he eagerly provides additional information. This information came from his father and mother, his ancestors, the venerable old Sikhs and others.[89] In other words, the main source of Bhangu's work was oral information and tradition. Therein lies the significance of his work, with all its strengths and limitations. There is some hearsay, which the author points out, and there is much graphic detail which could come ultimately from first-hand observation. Not only action but also sentiments, beliefs, ideas and emotions come into play to make the *Prachin Panth Prakash* a rare kind of document. It embodies an understanding of the Khalsa tradition by a respectable member of the Khalsa who was deeply religious in his feelings and acutely political in his outlook on the world. This, in itself, is a telling comment on the Khalsa of his times and of the days of his ancestors.

NOTES

1. *Prachin Panth Prakash*, ed. Bhai Vir Singh, New Delhi: Bhai Vir Singh Sahit Sadan, 1993 (called 'new edition' but actually a reprint). Preface, pp. 471-2.
2. Ibid., pp. 470-1.
3. Ibid., pp. 15-20.
4. Ibid., p. 40. The Khalsa are referred to as 'the third Panth', the other two being Muslim and Hindu.
5. Ibid., pp. 272-85. For *mīrī* and *pīrī* associated with Guru Nanak, ibid., p. 279.
6. Ibid., pp. 285-6.

7. Ibid., p. 34.
8. Ibid., pp. 41-2.
9. Ibid., p. 43. Bhangu does not mention how the five were chosen. At another place, however, he refers to the call for heads, and the five Sikhs who offered themselves were given the status of *shahīds*, ibid., pp. 176-8.
10. Ibid., pp. 43-4. Belief in gods and goddesses and worship of popular deities was discarded by Guru Nanak, ibid., pp. 26, 31.
11. Bhangu places the removal of the Masands after the creation of the Khalsa. Ibid., pp. 49-50.
12. Ibid., p. 44. The event is placed by Ratan Singh Bhangu on the Baisakhi day but in Sammat 1752 (AD 1695).
13. Ibid., pp. 45-7.
14. Ibid., pp. 51-7.
15. Ibid., pp. 58-64.
16. Ibid., pp. 72-3.
17. Ibid., pp. 67-72.
18. Ibid., pp. 74-82.
19. Ibid., pp. 83-118.
20. Ibid., pp. 119-30.
21. Ibid., pp. 130-5.
22. Ibid., pp. 138-62.
23. Ibid., pp. 141-2.
24. Ibid., pp. 161-9.
25. Ibid., pp. 170-5. Gulab Rai was encouraged by Bahadur Shah to assume guruship, ibid., p. 172.
26. Ibid., pp. 178-81.
27. Ibid., pp. 183-7.
28. These traits are praised by Ratan Singh Bhangu in the individual Singhs who dedicated their lives to the cause of the Khalsa Panth.
29. Ibid., pp. 34.
30. Ibid., pp. 34-8. Bhangu occasionally uses the term Hindu to include the Sikhs as well but here he is explicitly talking of the *dharm-karam* of Guru Tegh Bahadur.
31. Ibid., pp. 187-98.
32. Ibid., pp. 222-7.
33. Ibid., pp. 243-4.
34. Ibid., pp. 246-57, 334-6.
35. Ibid., pp. 258-72, 289-302.
36. Ibid., pp. 287-9.
37. Ibid., p. 39. The ideas of sin (*pāp*) and blame (*dosh*) become associated with the unjust actions of the rulers and their representatives in this context, ibid., pp. 37, 39.
38. Ibid., p. 189.

39. Ibid., p. 227.
40. Ibid., p. 246.
41. Ibid., pp. 270-1.
42. Ibid., p. 287.
43. Ibid., pp. 287-8.
44. Ibid., p. 291.
45. Ibid., pp. 292-3.
46. Ibid., pp. 294-5.
47. Ibid., pp. 301-2. The *Shahidganj* of Sikh martyrs presents an alternative to worship at the places of Muslim *shahīds* like Sakhi Sarvar.
48. Ibid., p. 353.
49. Ibid., pp. 409-10.
50. Ibid., pp. 414-25.
51. Ibid., p. 271. Guru Gobind Singh held a unique position insofar as he 'saved the *panth* at the cost of his family (*ansh*). Ibid., pp. 39-40. The idea of slaking Chandi's thirst for blood once she was awakened operated at a different level. This could be done not only through martyrdom but also by slaughtering the enemy. References to Chandi in the work of Ratan Singh Bhangu do not compromise the Khalsa belief in One God. Ibid., pp. 151.
52. Ibid., pp. 131, 199, 201.
53. Ibid., pp. 136, 330.
54. Ibid., p. 156.
55. Ibid., p. 167.
56. Ibid., p. 188.
57. Ibid., p. 213.
58. Ibid., p. 303.
59. Ibid., pp. 325, 420.
60. Ibid., pp. 220-1.
61. Ibid., p. 229.
62. Ibid., p. 294.
63. Ibid., p. 365.
64. Ibid., p. 313.
65. Ibid., p. 362.
66. Ibid., p. 379.
67. Ibid., p. 387.
68. Ibid., pp. 417-18.
69. Ibid., pp. 387-9.
70. Ibid., p. 298.
71. Ibid., p. 369. Bhangu does not refer to any compilation at Talwandi Sabo. He refers to the Damdama at Anandpur also. Indeed, several recensions of the *Granth* from the pre-Khalsa years are known. It is not necessary, therefore, to maintain that Guru Gobind Singh prepared the first recension of the *Granth* at Talwandi Sabo.

72. Ibid., pp. 212, 214.
73. Ibid., p. 253.
74. Ibid., p. 295.
75. Ibid., p. 297.
76. Ibid., p. 298.
77. Ibid., p. 223.
78. Ibid., p. 295.
79. Ibid., p. 443.
80. Ibid., p. 297.
81. Ibid., pp. 222, 270, 297, 318, 320, 328, 440.
82. Ibid., p. 1.
83. Ibid,. pp. 385-91, 416.
84. Ibid., p. 405.
85. Ibid., p. 430.
86. Ibid., pp. 399-400.
87. Ibid., pp. 364, 368, 401, 412, 457, 458, for instance. It is interesting to note that Bhangu does not include the Phulkians in the *panth*, and they do not constitute a *misl*; they could become rajas but not *sardārs* or *pātshāhs*. Ibid., pp. 440, 441, for instance.
88. Ibid., Preface to the first edition.
89. Ibid., pp. 15, 24, 27, 46, 49, 50, 64, 135, for instance.

CHAPTER 6

Emergence of a Nation: The Khalsa for Cunningham

J.S. Grewal

Cunningham's *History* opens with the following statement:

> During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of the Christian era, Nanak and Gobind, of the Kshattriya race, obtained a few converts to their doctrines of religious reform and social emancipation among the Jat peasants of Lahore and the southern banks of the Sutlej. The 'Sikhs', or 'Disciples', have now become a nation; and they occupy, or have extended their influence, from Delhi to Peshawar, and from the plains of Sind to the Karakoram mountains.[1]

He goes on to add that less than one-third of the people between the Jamuna and the Jhelam had embraced Sikhism. They were concentrated in Majha and Malwa.[2] In Malwa, the Sikh population was unmixed. Around Bhatinda and Sunam, it was said, that 'the priest, the soldier, the mechanic, the shopkeeper, and the ploughman are all equally Sikh'.[3] There were also some 'poor and contemned races' who regarded themselves as 'inferior members of the Sikh community'. Another group of people represented in the Sikh community were the Khatris and Aroras. Besides being enterprising merchants or frugal tradesmen, they had become 'able governors of provinces and skilful leaders of armies'.[4]

Cunningham estimated the gross population of Sikhs at 1,250,000 to 1,500,000, including men, women and children. Almost all of them belonged to Singh families. He was aware of sectarian and social lines of division among the Sikhs, particularly

between the Singhs (Khalsa) and the non-Singhs (Khulasa), but 'the warlike Singhs of the tenth king' had become 'predominant in the Punjab'.[6] Within their dominions in particular the Sikhs continued to make converts.[7] Indeed,

> A living spirit possesses the whole Sikh people, and the impress of Gobind has not only elevated and altered the constitution of their minds, but has operated materially and given amplitude to their physical frames. The features and external form of a whole people have been modified, and a Sikh chief is no more distinguishable by his stately person and free and manly bearing, than a minister of his faith is by a lofty thoughtfulness of look, which marks the fervour of his soul, and his persuasion of the near presence of the Divinity.[8]

In language and everyday customs the Sikhs resembled the Hindus but 'in religious faith and worldly aspirations' they were wholly different from other Indians. The difference was more fundamental than the similarities.[9]

The dominance of Singhs in the Sikh community was in consonance with the objective of Guru Gobind Singh that the Khalsa alone should prevail.[10] Sikh Raj was in consonance with his objective of subverting the Mughal empire.[11] Guru Gobind Singh's mission in the *Bachittar Nātak* 'to extend virtue, and to destroy evil' has divine sanction.[12] His followers extend the idea to 'the goddess-mother of mankind' for blessing his mission.[13] The great object of his mission, as made known to his followers, was to worship the omnipotent God alone, to discard distinctions of caste so that all became one, to accept *pahul* out of one vessel, to destroy the Turks, to neglect the graves of saints, to abandon the customs, temples and sacred rivers of Hindus, to discard the sacred thread, and to forsake occupation, family, belief and ceremonies (*kritnash*, *kulnash*, *dharamnash* and *karamnash*). Whereas the twice-born, the brahmans and the kshatriyas, murmured and many took their departure, 'the contemned races' rejoiced over this proclamation.[14]

Guru Gobind Singh poured water into a vessel and stirred it with 'the sacrificial axe, or with the sword rendered divine by the touch of the goddess'. His wife brought confections of five kinds. These were mixed in the water. A portion of it was sprinkled upon the five faithful disciples—a brahman, a kshatriya and three shudras. The Guru hailed them as 'Singhs', and

declared them to be the Khalsa. He himself received *pahul* from them and became Gobind Singh, saying, that hereafter whenever the five Sikhs should assemble together, there he would also be present. All social distinctions, as much as the solace of superstition, were eradicated. But the Khalsa needed some common bonds of union. These were provided by the new form of initiation by five of the faithful, worship of the One Invisible God, honouring the memory of Guru Nanak and his transanimate successors, the watchwords of *Wahiguru ji ka Khalsa* and *Wahiguru ji ki fateh*, reverence for only the *Granth*, bathing in the holy pool at Amritsar, keeping unshorn hair, adding 'Singh' to their name, devoting their energies to steel alone, wearing arms, waging war and fighting in the van. Guru Gobind Singh excluded the three sects of dissenters from all intercourse—the Dhirmallis, the Ram Rais and the Masandis. He denounced the 'shaven' and the category of people who killed their infant daughters.[15]

II

Guru Gobind Singh's design of founding a kingdom of Jats upon the waning glories of Aurangzeb's dominions does not appear to Cunningham 'to have been idly conceived or rashly undertaken'. Shivaji had roused the slumbering spirit of the Maratha tribes and converted rude herdsmen into successful soldiers to become a territorial chief in the very neighbourhood of the emperor. Guru Gobind Singh had the advantage of having added religious fervour to the warlike temper of Jats.[16] However, Cunningham was aware that the evidence at his disposal did not provide a clear picture of events after the institution of the Khalsa. This was partly due to his assumption that the *Bachittar Nātak* was composed at Damdama (Talwandi Sabo) as a part of 'the Book of the Tenth King'. Malcolm's account of the post-Khalsa events and the evidence of the *Siyar al-Mutakhirin* did not provide a consistent or coherent view of this phase. Consequently, Cunningham's own account remains rather garbled.[17]

In his account, Cunningham refers to the siege of Anandpur by the Mughal forces, the increasing desertion of Guru Gobind

Singh by his followers, the evacuation of Anandpur, the battle of Chamkaur and the heroic death of his two elder sons, the execution of his two younger sons at Sirhind, the battle near Muktsar, the admonitory letter to Aurangzeb, and the Guru's consent to meet the emperor. After Aurangzeb's death, Bahadur Shah summoned Guru Gobind Singh to his camp and treated him with respect. The Guru received 'a military command' in the valley of Godavari, seeing in the imperial service 'a ready way of disarming suspicion and of reorganizing his followers'. He selected the daring Banda as his instrument but the Guru himself was not 'fated to achieve ought more in person'. He was killed at Nander in 1708 by the sons of a Pathan who had been slain by the Guru. Before his death his disciples asked him who would inspire them with truth and lead them to victory when he was gone. Guru Gobind Singh 'bade them be of good cheer'; he was about to deliver the Khalsa to God, the never-dying. 'He who wishes to behold the Guru, let him search the *Granth* of Nanak. The Guru will dwell with the Khalsa; be firm and be faithful; wherever five Sikhs are gathered together there will I also be present.'[18]

Cunningham comes to the conclusion that though Guru Gobind Singh did not live to see his own ends accomplished, he effectually roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people, and filled them with a lofty although fitful longing for social freedom and national ascendancy—'the proper adjuncts of that purity of worship which had been preached by Nanak'.[19] For Cunningham, thus, Guru Gobind Singh's achievement was closely linked with what Guru Nanak had done.

III

The age of Guru Nanak was marked by a spiritual re-awakening. He carried this development further in a way that distinguished him from its precursors and laid a firm foundation for the work of Guru Gobind Singh:

> Ramanand and Gorakh had preached religious equality, and Chaitan had repeated that faith levelled caste. Kabir had denounced images, and appealed to the people in their own tongue, and Vallabh had taught that effectual devotion was compatible with the ordinary duties of the world. But these

good and able men appear to have been so impressed with the nothingness of this life, that they deemed the amelioration of man's social condition to be unworthy of a thought. They aimed chiefly at emancipation from priestcraft, or from the grossness of idolatry and polytheism. They formed pious associations of contented Quietists, or they gave themselves up to the contemplation of futurity in the hope of approaching bliss, rather than called upon their fellow creatures to throw aside every social as well as religious trammel, and to arise a new people free from the debasing corruption of ages. They perfected forms of dissent rather than planted the germs of nations, and their *sects* remain to this day as they left them. It was reserved for Nanak to perceive the true principles of reform, and to lay those broad foundations which enabled his successor Gobind to fire the minds of his countrymen with a new nationality, and to give practical effect to the doctrine that the lowest is equal with the highest, in race as in creed, in political rights as in religious hopes.[20]

Guru Nanak was distinguished from others by his conception of God, the idea of grace, the universality of his message, his insistence on moral life and his renunciation of renunciation. He invokes the Lord as the one, the sole, the timeless being; the creator, the self-existent, the incomprehensible and the everlasting. God is likened to Truth, which was before the world began, which is, and which shall endure for ever, as the ultimate idea or cause of all we know or behold. He has seen numberless Muhammads, Vishnus and Shivas come and go; what really avails is the knowledge of God. Only they can find the Lord on whom the Lord looks with favour. Good works and righteousness of conduct are necessary for being worthy of God's grace.[21] Guru Nanak rendered his mission applicable to all times and places, yet he declared himself to be but the slave, the humble messenger of the Almighty, making use of universal truth as his sole instrument. He did not claim for his writings, replete as they were with wisdom and devotion, the merit of a direct transcription of the words of God; nor did he say that his own preaching required or would be sanctioned by miracles.[22] Guru Nanak 'extricated his followers from the accumulated errors of ages, and enjoined upon them devotion of thought and excellence of conduct as the first of duties'.[23] His comprehensive principles were religious and moral in their immediate effect; the continuity of their operation was ensured by his choice of Angad as the Guru, in preference to Sri Chand who became the founder of

'the Hindu sect' of Udasis, 'a community indifferent to the concerns of this world'.[24]

Cunningham states that 'the Sikhs fully believe the spirit of Nanak to have been incarnate in each succeeding Guru'. Each succeeding Guru made his own contribution towards the development of the Sikh community. Guru Angad committed to writing 'some devotional observations of his own', remained true to the principles of his great teacher and bestowed 'his apostolic blessing' upon Amar Das who was an assiduous follower. Guru Amar Das declared that the passive and recluse Udasis were 'wholly separate' from the active and domestic Sikhs. Guru Ram Das dug the tank called *amritsar* and founded Ramdaspur.[25]

Guru Arjan clearly perceived how the teachings of Guru Nanak were applicable 'to every state of life and to every condition of society'. He made Amritsar the formal seat of his followers and compiled the *Granth* to give them a definite rule of religious and moral conduct; he appointed agents to collect offerings from the Sikhs spread all over the country. The Sikhs became accustomed to a regular government. Guru Arjan became famous among saints and holy men; the finance-administrator of Lahore approached him with the proposal of his daughter's betrothal to his son; and the rebel Prince Khusrau approached him for help. Represented as a man of dangerous ambition by Chandu Shah, Guru Arjan was fined and imprisoned by Jahangir. He died in 1606 due to 'the rigours of his confinement'. The principles of Guru Nanak took a firm hold on the minds of Guru Arjan's followers.[26]

Guru Hargobind grasped the sword and boldly led his followers to oppose and overcome provincial governors or personal enemies. This distinguished the Sikhs from all Hindu sects. The Sikhs became 'a kind of separate state within the empire'. During the mild ministry of Guru Har Rai and his peaceful supremacy, many individuals joined the movement and rose to eminence later. Guru Har Krishan died at the age of eight but he nominated Tegh Bahadur as his successor. In 1675, Guru Tegh Bahadur was put to death 'as a rebel'. His example 'powerfully aided in making the disciples of Nanak a martial as well as a devotional people'. This background enabled Guru Gobind Singh to bestow upon the Sikhs 'a distinct political existence'; he

inspired them with the desire to be 'socially free and nationally independent'.[27]

IV

Cunningham views the career of the Sikhs after Guru Gobind Singh as an index of his 'preparations and means'. They gathered round Banda to enable him to put to flight the Mughal authorities in Sirhind and to slay its governor. With the support of the Khalsa, Banda occupied the country between the Jamuna and the Satlej. When Banda was hard-pressed in his new stronghold, a zealous follower, disguised like the leader, allowed himself to be captured and Banda 'withdrew with all his followers'. The Sikhs were formidable during the reign of Farrukh Siyar. Abdus Samad Khan was hard put to subdue them. After the fall of Gurdaspur, when Banda was taken to Delhi for execution, the accompanying Sikhs contended among themselves for priority of martyrdom. Banda himself was tortured to death. Cunningham's comment on Banda's failure is significant:[28]

> He did not perhaps comprehend the general nature of Nanak's and Gobind's reforms; the spirit of sectarianism possessed him, and he endeavoured to introduce changes into the modes and practices enjoined by these teachers, which should be more in accordance with his own ascetic and Hindu notions. These unwise innovations and restrictions were resisted by the more zealous Sikhs, and they may have caused the memory of an able and enterprising leader to be generally neglected.

Cunningham is emphatic that the tenets of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh had taken root in the hearts of the people. After Banda's fall, the peasant and the mechanic nursed their faith in secret and the more ardent clung to the hope of revenge and speedy victory. The sincerity of their common faith provided the bond of union among them. Though slowly and irregularly, the Sikhs responded to the changing circumstances on the basis of their perceptions. Opportunities came their way through the political events of the times. During the invasion of Nadir Shah, they collected in small bands and plundered both the stragglers of the Persian army and the wealthy inhabitants fleeing towards the hills. Despite losses through persecution or martyrdom, they began to increase their resources. During the invasion of Ahmad

Shah Abdali they built a fort close to Amritsar. What is more, the emergence of a new power in the state was proclaimed by founding the Dal Khalsa or the army of the theocracy of the Singhs.[29]

The year of Ahmad Shah Abdali's triumph at Panipat also saw a decisive development in the political career of the Khalsa. The Dal Khalsa assembled at Amritsar to perform their ablutions and to adopt a regular *gurmata*. On its basis, action was taken against Jandiala and Malerkotla. This was followed by the *ghallughara* or the great disaster. But the Sikhs were not to be subdued. They received daily accessions of numbers. Their leaders were ambitious of dominion and of fame. Their efforts were directed against Kasur, Malerkotla and Sirhind. They had little difficulty in evicting the Afghan governor from Lahore. The chiefs then assembled at Amritsar and proclaimed their own sway by striking a coin with an inscription to the effect that Guru Gobind Singh had received from Guru Nanak grace, power and rapid victory (*deg, tegh* and *fateh*).[30]

Cunningham saw the relevance of the faith of the Khalsa for their polity as well:[31]

> Every Sikh was free, and each was a substantive member of the commonwealth; but their means, their abilities, and their opportunities were various and unequal, and it was soon found that all could not lead, and that there were even then masters as well as servants. Their system naturally resolved itself into a theocratic confederate feudalism, with all the confusion and uncertainty attendant upon a triple alliance of the kind in a society half-barbarous. God was their helper and only judge, community of faith or object was their moving principle, and warlike array, the devotion to steel of Gobind, was their material instrument. Year by year the '*Sarbat Khalsa*', or whole Sikh people, met once at least at Amritsar, on the occasion of the festival of the mythological Rama, when the cessation of the periodical rains rendered military operations practicable. It was perhaps hoped that the performance of religious duties, and the awe inspired by so holy a place, might cause selfishness to yield to a regard for the general welfare, and the assembly of chiefs was termed a 'Gurmatta', to denote that, in conformity with Gobind's injunction, they sought wisdom and unanimity of counsel from their teacher and the book of his word.

The federate chiefs partitioned their joint conquests equally among themselves, and divided their respective shares in the same manner among their own dependants. There was no fixed

constitution, however, and the interests of individuals played some role in the changing pattern of relations. Nevertheless, present in the mind of every Sikh was a full persuasion of God's grace.[32]

The confederacies called *misls* were unequal in power and resources but there was a tendency to treat them at par with one another. The religious element of Sikhism was represented peculiarly by a group of men which did not form a regular confederacy. They were the soldiers of God, known as the Akalis, who wore a blue dress, a bracelet of steel and claimed for themselves a direct institution from Guru Gobind Singh:[33]

> The Akalis formed themselves in their struggle to reconcile warlike activity with the relinquishment of the world. The meek and humble were satisfied with the assiduous performance of menial offices in temples, but the fierce enthusiasm of others prompted them to act from time to time as the armed guardians of Amritsar, or suddenly to go where blind impulse might lead them, and to win their daily bread, even single-handed, at the point of the sword. They also took upon themselves something of the authority of censors, and, although no leader appears to have fallen by their hands for defection to the Khalsa, they inspired awe as well as respect, and would sometimes plunder those who had offended them or had injured the commonwealth.

V

Cunningham does not see the end of Sikh spirit with the end of the rule of the confederacies. The *raison d'être* for the system of confederacies vanished. Born to comparative power and affluence, the descendants of the founders gave rein to their grosser passions. Confederacy was replaced by a monarchy. In the words of Cunningham:[34]

> The genuine spirit of Sikhism had again sought the dwelling of the peasant to reproduce itself in another form; the rude system of mixed independence and confederacy was unsuited to an extended dominion; it had served its ends of immediate agglomeration, and the 'Misals' were in effect dissolved. The mass of the people remained satisfied with their village freedom, to which taxation and inquisition were unknown; but the petty chiefs and their paid followers, to whom their faith was the mere expression of a conventional custom, were anxious for predatory licence, and for additions to their temporal power. Some were willing to join the English, others were ready to link their fortunes with the Marathas, and all had become jealous of Ranjit Singh, who

alone was desirous of excluding the stranger invaders, as the great obstacles to his own ambition of founding a military monarchy which should ensure to the people the congenial occupation of conquest. In truth, Ranjit Singh laboured, with more or less of intelligent design, to give unity and coherence to diverse atoms and scattered elements; to mould the increasing Sikh nation into a well-ordered state or commonwealth, as Gobind had developed a sect into a people, and had given application and purpose to the general institutions of Nanak.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh, for Cunningham, adopted the obvious characteristics of the impulse given by Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh and turned them to the purposes of his own material ambition. He directed into a particular channel a power which he could neither destroy nor control. As a ruler:[35]

He took from the land as much as it could readily yield, and he took from merchants as much as they could profitably give; he put down open marauding; the Sikh peasantry enjoyed a light assessment; no local office dared to oppress a member of the Khalsa; and if elsewhere the farmers of revenue were resisted in their tyrannical proceedings, they were more likely to be changed than to be supported by battalions. He did not ordinarily punish men who took redress into their own hands, for which, indeed his subordinates were prepared, and which they guarded against as they could. The whole wealth and the whole energies of the people were devoted to war, and to the preparation of military means and equipment.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was an absolute monarch in the midst of willing and obedient subjects. He did not assume the powers of a despot:[36]

He was assiduous in his devotions; he honoured men of reputed sanctity, and enabled them to practise an enlarged charity; he attributed every success to the favour of God, and he styled himself and people collectively the 'Khalsa', or commonwealth of Gobind. Whether in walking barefooted to make his obeisance to a collateral representative of his prophets, or in rewarding a soldier distinguished by that symbol of his faith, a long and ample beard, or in restraining the excesses of the fanatical Akalis, or in beating an army and acquiring a province, his own name and his own motives were kept carefully concealed, and everything was done for the sake of the Guru, for the advantage of the Khalsa, and in the name of the Lord.

For his government, Ranjit Singh used the term 'Khalsa'. His seal carried his name along with 'Akal Sahai', i.e. 'God the helper'.

During the time of Cunningham it was usual to attribute the superiority of the Sikh army to the labours of the French generals. But, in his view, the Sikh owed his excellence as a soldier to his own hardihood of character, the new spirit of adaptation and the feeling of 'a common interest and destiny implanted in him by his great teachers'. The French generals were fortunate in having 'an excellent material to work with'. They made a good use of their means and opportunities.

> They gave a moderate degree of precision and completeness to a system already introduced; but their labours are more conspicuous in French words of command, in treble ranks, and in squares salient with guns, than in the ardent courage, the alert obedience, and the long endurance of fatigue, which distinguished the Sikh horsemen sixty years ago, and which pre-eminently characterize the Sikh footman of the present day among the other soldiers of India.[37]

Significantly, Cunningham saw a resurgence of the Khalsa in the army *panchayats* of the early 1840s. The Sikhs were proud of their armed forces 'as the visible body of Gobind's commonwealth'. The troops were generally obedient to their officers but the position of a regiment, a brigade, a division, or of the whole army, in relation to the executive government, was determined by a committee, or an assemblage of committees, called the *panchayat*, i.e. 'a jury or committee of five, composed of men selected from each battalion, or each company, in consideration of their general character as faithful Sikh soldiers, or from their particular influence in their native villages'. Thus, 'the Sikh people were enabled to interfere with effect, and with some degree of consistency, in the nomination and in the removal of their rulers'.[38] Cunningham was aware of the self-interest of the mercenaries and the ability of unscrupulous men to exploit them, but his emphasis is on the patriotic concern of the army for the Sikh commonwealth. Thus, Jawahir Singh was put to death 'as a traitor to the commonwealth'.[39]

The indomitable courage of the Sikh soldier was revealed in the first Anglo-Sikh War. In the battle of Sobraon, for example, 'no Sikh offered to submit, and no disciple of Gobind asked for quarter'.[40] When the Sikh soldiers were finally paid and disbanded, they showed 'neither the despondency of mutinous rebels nor the effrontery and indifference of mercenaries, and

their manly deportment added lustre to that valour which the victors had dearly felt and generously extolled'.[41] They looked upon their defeat as 'the chance of war'. Despite this humiliation, 'they inwardly dwelt upon their future destiny with unabated confidence'. Immediately after the war, Cunningham visited Anandpur and observed a strong feeling of trust in the future. The grave ministers at 'the chosen seat of Gobind' stated with assurance that 'the pure faith of the Khalsa was intended for all countries and times'.[42]

VI

Writing in the late 1840s, Cunningham was familiar with the works of John Browne, William Forster, John Malcolm, H.T. Prinsep, and H.H. Wilson, among others. These works were based largely on later sources and only marginally on Sikh sources. The English translations of the *Dabistan-i Mazahib* and the *Siyar al-Mutakhirin* were also available to Cunningham. He was aware of the inaccuracies or contradictions in the works of his predecessors but there was no way of discarding them altogether. Relying on them, therefore, was not an asset. In fact, many of his errors can be traced to the works of his predecessors. Cunningham was familiar with portions of the *Adi Granth*, 'the Book of the Tenth King', the *Vārs* of Bhai Gurdas, and the two *Rahitnāmas*. This, in theory, was a great advantage. Indeed, much of Cunningham's appreciation of the Sikh faith can be attributed to his understanding of Sikh religious literature.

However, familiarity with Sikh sources does not necessarily make a non-Sikh historian appreciative of Sikhism. Cunningham had lived among 'the Sikh people' for a period of eight years during a very important phase of their history. 'He had intercourse, under every variety of circumstances, with all classes of men'. He believed that his personal experience was an 'advantage' in the composition of his work.[43] The principal object of his *History* was 'to give Sikhism its place in the general history of humanity'. He constantly endeavoured 'to keep his readers alive to that undercurrent of feeling or principle which moves the Sikh people collectively, and which will usually rise superior to the crimes or follies of individuals'.[44] Cunningham's study of the Sikh

sources and his experience of the Sikh people appear to have converged in his appreciation: 'the Sikhs are converts to a new religion, the seal of the double dispensation of Brahma and Muhammad: their enthusiasm is still fresh, and their faith is still an active and a living principle'.[45]

In the final analysis, Cunningham stands apart from his predecessors essentially because of his positive appreciation of Sikhism as an integral part of his general outlook on the role of religious ideas in history. He was different from the Deists who had no positive appreciation even for Christianity as an established religion. He was different from the Evangelicals who had little respect for non-Christian religions. He was a 'liberal' Christian who understood the relative merit of Sikhism because it appeared to have entered history in a significant way. Haltingly but clearly, he saw the operation of Sikh ideas, ethics and attitudes in the history of the Sikhs from the time of Guru Nanak to the first Anglo-Sikh War, looking at the Khalsa as the culmination of the earlier Sikh movement and as the starting point for the later history of the Sikhs. In this, he is close to the Sikh writer, Ratan Singh Bhangu. As a Christian critic disapprovingly put it, Cunningham wrote his *History* as a Sikh would write it. This may be taken as a measure of Cunningham's empathetic identification with the Khalsa.[46]

NOTES

1. Joseph Davey Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs*, Delhi: S. Chand & Co., 1955, p. 1.
2. Ibid., p. 8.
3. Ibid., p. 9.
4. Ibid., p. 13.
5. Ibid., p. 301.
6. Ibid., p. 81 n.
7. Ibid., p. 16.
8. Ibid., p. 75.
9. Ibid., p. 76.
10. Ibid., p. 63.
11. Ibid., p. 60.
12. Ibid., pp. 61-2.
13. Ibid., pp. 62-3.

14. Ibid., pp. 63-4.
15. Ibid., pp. 65-6.
16. Ibid., p. 68.
17. Ibid., pp. 68-74.
18. Ibi.d, p. 74.
19. Ibid., p. 75.
20. Ibid., p. 34.
21. Ibid., pp. 38-9.
22. Ibid., p. 40.
23. Ibid., p. 41.
24. Ibid., pp. 41-3.
25. Ibid., pp. 43-6.
26. Ibid., pp. 46-9.
27. Ibid., pp. 50, 51, 53, 55, 56, 58-9, 80.
28. Ibid., pp. 79-80.
29. Ibid., pp. 83-5.
30. Ibid., pp. 86-94.
31. Ibid., p. 94.
32. Ibid., pp. 95, 96.
33. Ibid., pp. 99-100.
34. Ibid., pp. 119-20.
35. Ibid., p. 151.
36. Ibid., pp. 151-2, n 1.
37. Ibid., pp. 153, 157.
38. Ibid., p. 216.
39. Ibid., p. 245.
40. Ibid., p. 284.
41. Ibid., p. 289.
42. Ibid., p. 290, n.
43. Ibid., preface to the first edition.
44. Ibid., author's preface to the second edition.
45. Ibid., p. 11.
46. J.S. Grewal, 'Cunningham as a Historian of the Sikhs', in *From Guru Nanak to Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1972, pp. 123-37.

CHAPTER 7

Under the Shadow of Colonial Rule: The Khalsa for Latif

Radha Sharma and Harish C. Sharma

British imperialism was at its height when Syad Muhammad Latif published the *History of the Panjab* in 1891. At that time he was an Extra Judicial Assistant Commissioner in the Punjab Government, a Fellow of the Panjab University, and a member of the Bengal Asiatic Society. His book was presented to Queen Victoria, and the title of Khan Bahadur was conferred upon him in 1892.

Muhammad Latif was a great admirer of the British empire. For him, there was 'probably no story at once so grand, so romantic, and so pregnant with instruction, as that of the British conquest of India and the progress of the British Nation in the East'.[1] The history of the Punjab from the earliest times to his own day was a change, 'from an age of barbarism to an age of enlightenment'. The blessings of British rule in the Punjab could be appreciated in the light of its condition half a century earlier. Even the great Mughals presented an instructive contrast to the British in India. Under the Mughals, 'corruption, degradation and treachery stalked openly through the land. Confusion and disorder of every kind ran riot over the length and breadth of the empire.' 'Honour, justice and position were bought and sold. The rulers of the land were sunk in voluptuousness and pollution of the most revolting description, and immersed in an abyss of enfeebling debauchery.' Furthermore, the money extracted from

the poor *raiyat* was wasted on feasts, pageants and shows, on glittering trappings for horses, and on richly caparisoned elephants. The cost of foolish pomp of every conceivable description was added to the sumptuous salaries and allowances of a multitude of idle attendants, singers, musicians, dancing girls and crowds of sycophants and impostors.[2]

The British, on the other hand, were unrivalled among the nations of the world for their benevolence and sympathy with mankind. They were destined by Providence to rule over a vast empire 'to vindicate its honour, to shelter God's people, to protect the weak, to punish the tyrant, to do away with the darkness of ignorance, to diffuse the light of learning, and to fulfil its great mission in the world'.[3] Indeed, 'the good of the nations' was committed to the care of the British. There was complete religious freedom for Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in the British empire. Justice was impartially administered for the Nawab and the peasant alike. The people were happy, contented, loyal and prosperous. The prosperity of the country was the only true source of wealth for the British.[4]

The Victorian age was unrivalled in history. The Christian, the Jain, the Hindu, the Buddhist, the Muslim and the Sikh equally shared the bounty of the reign; they were equally protected by the laws instituted under the beneficent rule of the Queen Empress. Latif invited his fellow countrymen to appreciate the blessings of the Victorian age:

> Witness the blessings of religious toleration and of freedom enjoyed by the meanest subject, a state of things unparalleled in any other country under the sun, the liberty of the press, the efforts of the Government to prevent pestilential diseases, to check famines and to improve conservancy in towns and villages. Witness the unexampled generosity which has placed within the reach of the humblest inquirer after truth the accumulated treasurers of western learning. Witness the great improvements our country has made in her municipal institutions. Witness the mighty undertakings for the defence of the empire, which, in reality, means the defence of your liberty and honour, and the protection of your lives and property.[5]

Latif advised the young men of his times to fear God, love mankind and honour the empress. The fame and strength of the British rulers lay in the massive schemes undertaken by them for the good of the people, and identification of their interests with the

interest of the people. The people, in turn, should respect their rulers, look upon the lowest of their rank as their protector and master, and serve them heartily.[6]

The conquest of the Punjab by the British was amply justified. The British were compelled to take up arms because of the aggressive policy adopted by the Sikhs towards the paramount power. 'The country was conquered; but, generosity prevailing over policy, the victors restored to the recognised heir to the throne the territories which they were entitled to hold by right of conquest.' Again, however, the treaty was violated by Sikh ministers and the Darbar, and the Khalsa army rose up in arms.[7] The Sikhs brought about their downfall by their own acts. They were treated by the victors with consideration and generosity. A vigorous policy coupled with conciliation achieved great victories of peace. Latif believed that even the Sikhs were satisfied with British rule in the country of the five rivers. 'With a manly and calm resignation, the disciples of Gobind, beaten in a fair fight, cheerfully submitted to their conquerors.'[8]

Evidently, one aspect of the *History of the Panjab* was to provide strong support for British rule in the Punjab. Apart from formal students and the learned public he hoped to find readers among 'the friends of civilization' and 'English progress'.[9] There was a great need for such a work 'in the interests of my countrymen'. Under the benign rule of England, India had changed from 'a waste land, full of thorns and brambles, to a verdant garden, resplendent with bright and fragrant flowers'. The pre-British history of the Punjab was marked by 'insecurity and spoliation' in contrast with the 'profound and unbroken peace enjoyed during the British period'.[10]

The works of Malcolm, Prinsep, McGregor, Cunningham, Carmichael Smyth, Steinbach, Lawrence, Osborne and Griffin related to the history of the Sikhs and made no mention of the pre-Sikh period. The first part of Latif's *History of the Panjab* discusses the early period up to the Muslim invasions. The second part deals with the Muslim period, which is the longest part of his work. Only the third part focuses on the rise of the Sikhs.

In his general history of the Punjab, Latif does not devote much space to that part of the history of the Sikhs which has the closest bearing on the institution of the Khalsa: the Sikh Gurus, Banda Bahadur and the political organization of the Sikhs in the

eighteenth century. What is even more important, he did not consult any primary sources for his treatment of the Khalsa. He claims, nevertheless, that he has something new to say about the rise of Sikh religion and Sikh power.[11]

Latif claims to have acted on the motto that a work of history should contain 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but truth'.[12] His objective was to narrate the facts 'in their true colours, no matter to what particular nation or creed they related'. In professing impartiality between various nationalities and various creeds related to the history of the Punjab, Latif appears to assume that facts speak for themselves and the unquestioned assumptions of the historian do not enter his interpretation. He was inclined to ascribe greater credibility to Muslim rather than Sikh sources even in relation to Sikh history.

II

Latif views the age of Guru Nanak as a period of Hindu-Muslim strife. Great 'jealousy and hatred' existed in those times between the Hindus and the Muslims, and the whole non-Musalman population was 'subjected to persecution' by the Muslim rulers.[13] What was needed was 'reform, toleration, and enlightenment'.[14] On the authority of the *Siyar al-Mutakhirin*, Latif states that Guru Nanak received his education from a Musalman named Syad Hasan who was thoroughly versed in Muslim law books. At a later stage, Guru Nanak engaged in a religious discourse with Behram (Ibrahim), a descendant of Baba Farid.[15] According to Latif, Guru Nanak believed in the holy mission of Muhammad, admitting that he was the messenger of God sent to instruct mankind and to lead them to the path of righteousness. Unlike Muhammad, he never claimed that what he himself preached was inspired or revealed to him from heaven. Guru Nanak believed in the unity of God and was opposed to the worship of images.

Guru Nanak advised Muslims and Hindus to act upon the truths of the *Quran* and the *Puranas*. He devoted his energy towards eliminating religious and social differences which had sprung up between Hindus and Muslims. He was successful in reconciling them both.[16] The Muslims believed that Guru Nanak

was a true follower of the Prophet. When he breathed his last, both Hindus and Muslims laid claim to his body to perform funeral rites, and dispute arose between them. Eventually, they agreed to throw his body into the river. On removing the sheet with which it had been covered, they found that his body was not there. Instead, there were some flowers. The Muslims took half of the sheet and buried it; the Hindus burnt the other half which fell to their lot.[17]

The tenets of Guru Nanak were misunderstood by his zealous followers who turned into band of warriors from a host of *faqirs*.[18] On this point Latif reinforces his view by stating elsewhere in his account of Guru Nanak:

> The doctrines of this great Hindu reformer have been handed down in the famous book called the 'Granth', or holy book, written by himself. It is called the *Adi Granth*, to distinguish it from the second part, composed by Guru Govind, a successor of Nanak, who greatly modified the tenets of his predecessor, and infused into his followers ideas of war and conquest, turning them from peaceable subjects into a contentious tribe.[19]

Latif underlines the importance of Guru Nanak's decision to install one of his disciples and to declare that his own spirit was present in the disciple's body who should be regarded as Nanak himself. Had it not been for this foresight, Sikh religion would have sunk into oblivion, like many others. Guru Angad studiously followed the path paved by Guru Nanak for his successors.[20] Latif underscores the role of Guru Ram Das in founding the town of Amritsar at a central spot. This laid the foundation of the future greatness of the Sikhs as a nation, for they were able to rally at a common place of worship.

> Peaceful in spirit and gentle in their behaviour, following yet the mild and pure tenets laid down by their first leader, they learnt to unite together and to foster and engender those feelings of brotherly love which tended to strengthen the national tie, and paved the way to the formation of a commonwealth on true patriotic principles.[21]

The character of the Sikh community began to change under the leadership of Guru Arjan. First, succession to the *gaddi* became hereditary, 'which materially contributed to the growth of the Sikh power, for hence forward the Guru was looked upon by his disciples not only in the light of a spiritual guide, but also as

a worldly lord and a ruling sovereign'. He was the first Guru to lay aside the rosary and the garb of a *faqir*; he wore costly attire and converted the saintly *gaddi* of his pious predecessors into a princely rostrum. He maintained a large retinue, fine horses and elephants, and lived in splendour. By compiling the *Granth*, he gave a religious code to his followers, uniting them by a common religious tie. He established a system of taxation and appointed deputies for making collections from his followers throughout the country. He sent his disciples to foreign lands for trade to increase his resources.[22]

Latif attributes the martyrdom of Guru Arjan primarily to the enmity of Chandu Shah, the finance minister at Lahore, whose daughter was not accepted by Guru Arjan for his son. Chandu Shah vowed to destroy the Guru. On the minister's representation Guru Arjan was charged with treason for having offered prayers for the success of the rebel Prince Khusrau. Emperor Jahangir wished to extort a large sum of money from Guru Arjan which he was unable to pay. Consequently he was tortured to death.

> The death of Guru Arjan is a great turning point in the history of the Sikh nation, for it inflamed the religious passion of the Sikhs, and it was at this time that those seeds of hatred of the Musalman power were sown which took such deep root in the minds of all the faithful followers of Nanak.[23]

Guru Hargobind combined the qualities of a warrior, a saint, and a sportsman. He enjoyed hunting and eating meat. He was the first Guru to set up a military system, arming his followers and preparing them for action in the field. He surpassed his predecessors in splendour. He secured the confidence of Jahangir, obtained possession of Chandu Shah, and dragged him through the streets of Amritsar with a rope round his feet. The Guru's warlike temper led him to enter the service of Jahangir as a military leader. But he admitted criminals and fugitives into his service, and failed to pay the balance of the heavy fine that had been imposed upon Guru Arjun. He was imprisoned in the fort of Gwalior for twelve years. Showing compassion, Jahangir ordered his release but not because of the demonstrations of the Sikhs. After Jahangir's death, Guru Hargobind entered the service of Shah Jahan and became friendly with Dara Shukoh. Nevertheless, he faced new difficulties with the imperial

government and he was compelled to offer armed resistance. He was victorious in battles and was looked upon by the Sikhs not only as a divine messenger but also as a hero, an accomplished swordsman, and a thorough master of the art of war. Towards the close of his life he retired to the hills.[24]

According to Latif, Guru Tegh Bahadur also lived in splendour and had 1,000 armed horsemen in his employ. He became a regular freebooter in the Punjab after his return from the eastern provinces. He was said to have taken to a predatory career and to have laid waste and plundered the whole country between Hansi and the Satlej. Like a Muslim fanatic named Adam Hafiz, Guru Tegh Bahadur provided ready asylum to all fugitives from the Mughal state. Aurangzeb took notice of these activities and urged the Guru to embrace Islam. He was subjected to physical torture when he agreed neither to perform miracles nor to embrace Islam. He was executed in 1675 on the charge of rebelling against the Mughal government. Though the Sikhs never attained any real degree of power as a nation, Guru Tegh Bahadur set an example which contributed in no small degree to make his disciples a martial people. During the latter part of his life, he manifested kingly rather than priestly aims, and transformed inoffensive quietists into fanatical warriors.[25]

III

Guru Gobind Singh was fifteen years of age at the time of his father's death. Being surrounded by enemies on all sides, he retired to the mountains on either side of the Jamuna, and occupied himself with the chase and archery, hunting tigers and the wild boar. He lived in seclusion and devoted himself to study and reflection till the age of thirty-five. However, he never forgot his father's death. Motivated by a strong feeling of revenge he matured his plans to transform the very character of the Sikh Panth.

The violent and miserable end of the martyred Guru, and his last injunctions, had made such a strong impression on the mind of Govind, that he longed to wreak vengeance on the murderers of his father and the persecutors of his race, and became the inveterate and irreconcilable enemy of every Mohamedan. He called upon his followers by all the ties and feelings which

were dear to them; he urged them in defence of their injured honour and manhood; he conjured them in the name of their murdered Guru, promising them rewards both in this world and the next, to exchange their ploughs and rosaries for swords and daggers. He used all the eloquence of his persuasive genius in demonstrating to them that this was now the only means by which they could hope to regenerate their fallen race. Awakening his countrymen to a new and noble life, and arousing their latent energies to a sense of common duty, he blended the undaunted courage of the soldier with the enthusiasm of the devotee, and inspired the peaceful ploughman with ideas of military glory and national aggrandizement. Composed in mind and matured in experience, he resolved to reform religious corruptions and to put an end to social abuses and depradations. Being acknowledged as the Sat Guru of the Sikhs, his well stored mind conceived, for the first time, the noble idea of transforming the degenerate Hindus into an aspiring race and of moulding the Sikh nation into a religious and military commonwealth.[26]

Latif is emphatic that Guru Gobind Singh invoked Durga, the special object of his devotion. On advice from a brahman of Kashi, he performed a *hom* at the top of the Naina Devi hill. When the goddess appeared he was terror stricken, and presented his sword to her as a token of homage and she left a mark on its handle. The brahman said that it was a good omen, but added that the rite had remained incomplete because of the Guru's fear at her appearance. The flaw could be remedied by offering one of the Guru's sons as a sacrifice to Durga. The Guru's mother refused to allow any of his sons to be sacrificed, so the brahman suggested that a Sikh could serve as a substitute. Guru Gobind Singh gave a call for heads, and five Sikhs offered themselves. One of them was immediately decapitated and his head was thrown into the burning fire. Durga appeared in her armed state and said: 'Go; thy sect will prosper in the world.'[27]

On this occasion the rite of initiation called *pahul* was introduced. It was 'no innovation' because it was 'a renovation of the old Sikh rite' which had long ceased to be observed. One more faithful Sikh was added to the four volunteers and *pahul* was administered to all five of them. They were hailed as Singhs or lions, and declared to be the Khalsa, or the purified. Then the Guru himself was administered *pahul* in the same way, and exclaimed that 'the Khalsa arose from the Guru and the Guru from the Khalsa. They are the mutual protectors of each other.' In his *Rahmat Nama*, he assured his followers that those who

wished to see the Guru would behold him in the Khalsa. At the same time, it was declared that a true follower of the Guru should not be without five things: *kanghā*, *kachha*, *kadā*, *kesh*, and *kirpān*.[28]

Guru Gobind Singh now embarked on his great enterprise: to remodel 'the Hindu religion' and to abolish 'the distinctions of caste'. He asked every Sikh household of four adults to spare two for service under him. In less than a fortnight, 80,000 Sikhs flocked to Makhowal. Guru Gobind Singh addressed them from a golden Chair. 'God must be worshipped, said he, in truthfulness and sincerely, and no material resemblance must degrade him.' God could be beheld by the eye of faith in the general body of the Khalsa. The Guru declared that he had been sent as 'a messenger of the Lord, the inheritor of the spirit of Nanak, transmitted to him as one lamp imparts its flame to another, to save and liberate the Khalsa and to unite all Sikhs in one common chain of brotherhood'. They were all equal, and no one was greater than another. The brahman, the chhatri, the vaishya and the shudra must all become one. 'All must eat from the same table and drink from the same cup; caste must be forgotten, the idols destroyed, the Brahman's thread broken, the graves of the so-called saints abandoned; and the *Quran* torn to pieces.' To adopt the true religion of the True Guru, the Khalsa must abandon and forsake hereditary occupation, family ties and affection, religious beliefs or a belief in the transmigration of souls, ceremonies and social ties. Some of the brahman and chhatri Sikhs deserted the Guru, but the lower orders of the Hindus flocked to his banner for initiation.[29]

The Khalsa were enjoined to dedicate themselves to arms, to wear a blue dress and shun red clothes, and to refrain from using tobacco. They were expected to greet each other with *Wah Guru ji ka Khalsa*; *Sri Wah Guru ji ki fateh*. The blue dress was meant to give the Sikhs 'a distinct national character'. The prohibition on cutting the hair was in opposition to the brahmanical practice of keeping the head carefully shaved. The other institutions were meant to create vowed soldiers with a sense of duty to the order of the Khalsa. Guru Gobind Singh became an object of adoration. His followers worshipped him like a deity.[30]

Guru Gobind Singh organized his followers into troops and established forts along the hills between the Satlej and the Jamuna, and military posts and strongholds on the plains. He supported the hill chiefs in their revolt against the imperial government. An attack made on his position by 'the Mahomedan forces' was repulsed, he subdued the surrounding country, extending his conquests as far as Rupar. This caused anxiety both to the hill chiefs and 'the Mohamedan government'. The imperial forces defeated the Guru and besieged him in the fort of Makhowal. His mother and two of his sons escaped to Sirhind where Kuljas, the Diwan of Wazir Khan, produced them before him. Being 'an orthodox Mohamedan' he spared their lives: the Muslim law 'forbids the slaughter of unbelievers who are minors or belong to the female sex'. Kuljas, however, harboured a personal grudge against Guru Gobind Singh and he prevailed upon Wazir Khan to kill the Guru's mother and his sons. When they were asked what they would do if they were set free, they gave a haughty and hostile reply. Wazir Khan agreed to their execution. 'The boys were accordingly put to death by Kuljas.' Their grandmother died of grief.[31]

The followers of Guru Gobind Singh abandoned him, and he escaped to the fort of Chamkaur accompanied by only forty men. At Chamkaur, his other two sons and their mother Sundari were slain before his eyes. He escaped in disguise in the darkness of the night along with five of his followers. He was helped by two Pathans, Ghani Khan and 'Name Khan', on promise of a munificent reward. They took him to Pir Muhammad, a *qāzī*, who had been the Persian tutor of the Guru. The Sikhs who had deserted him returned to him. With 12,000 fighting men he defeated an imperial army of 7,000. The Guru constructed a tank on the battlefield and named it Muktsar, i.e. 'the tank of emancipation'. From Muktsar he went to Malwa where he built a spacious house for himself, and named it Damdama. The place came to be associated with learning.[32]

From Damdama, Guru Gobind Singh moved to Sirhind. The Sikhs wanted to burn the town to ashes, but the Guru reminded them that the town was not responsible for the death of his sons. Towards the close of Aurangzeb's reign, Guru Gobind Singh lived peacefully at Anandpur. However, Aurangzeb was anxious

about him and issued an order, summoning the Guru to his presence. Guru Gobind Singh kissed the royal *farmān* and placed it on his head as a mark of respect. He told the messenger that he regarded himself as 'a dependent and vassal of the "King of Kings" and that to obey his majesty's command would be an honour to him'.[33] He composed a poem in Persian vividly describing the hardships he had suffered at the hands of the imperial government. He despised death and was in fact weary of his life; he feared no one, and was willing to die. But if he died, his death would be avenged. This poem was sent to Aurangzeb and he was pleased with its contents. He gave reassurance and the Guru set out to meet him. On his way to the south he heard of Aurangzeb's death in 1707.[34]

When Guru Gobind Singh reached the Deccan, Bahadur Shah had ascended the throne of his ancestors. The new emperor received the Guru with respect, showered valuable gifts on him, and appointed him to the command of 5,000 men in the army, 'thus utilizing the services of an insurrectionary leader to the benefit of the State'. During his sojourn in the Deccan, Guru Gobind Singh killed a Pathan who had used intemperate language to demand payment for the horses sold to the Guru. The sons of the Pathan seized an opportunity to plunge a dagger into the Guru's stomach. They were apprehended by the Sikhs but the Guru forgave them. The wound was dressed and it began to heal. The Guru, however, has resolved to end his life. He bent a strong bow with all his force and the wound began to bleed. It was stitched again but the Guru remained restless. At Nander, he informed his followers that the hour of his death was approaching. Grief stricken they asked him in as to who would guide them after him. He answered that he would entrust the Khalsa to the care of God. 'The *Granth* shall support you under all your troubles and adversities in this world, and be a sure guide to you hereafter.' The Guru shall dwell in the Khalsa and 'wherever there shall be five Sikhs gathered together, there shall the Guru be also present'. He mounted the funeral pyre, uttered a *savaiya*, closed his eyes in prayer, and died while performing his devotions.[35]

In Latif's estimate, Guru Gobind Singh combined in his person the qualities of a religious leader and a warrior. 'He was a lawgiver

in the pulpit, a champion in the field, a king on his *masnad*, and a faqir in the society of the Khalsa.' The *Adi Granth* was 'confined to instilling into the minds of the Sikhs a spirit of meekness and humility'. Guru Gobind Singh believed that 'the passive conservatism' of his predecessors was not suited to the times. Therefore, he instituted a new code of law which infused a spirit of valour and inflamed his followers with zeal for deeds of heroism in the field. Thus Guru Gobind Singh,

> laid the foundation stone of that vast fabric which the Sikh nation was, not long after, enabled to build on the ruins of the Mahomedan power in the Panjab and emancipated his tribe from foreign thraldom and persecution, giving it the character and rank of a military nation.[36]

Guru Gobind Singh instituted the State Council (*gurmata*) which met at Amritsar. He founded 'a political community of no mean order' and taught a vanquished people 'how to obtain political ascendancy and national freedom'. He transformed undisciplined Jats into a body of conquerors and a political corporation.[37]

The *Rahitnāmah*, or the book of Guidance, composed by Guru Gobind Singh describes in detail the modifications introduced by him in the institutions of Guru Nanak. The Sikhs were forbidden to follow the doctrines of the *Vedas*, the *Shastras*, the *Puranas* and the *Quran*. They were not to seek the advice of maulavis and pandits; they were not to perform *shradh* or ceremonies associated with the dead; they were to discard the sacred thread, the rosary, and the top knot (*bodi*); they were not to worship tombs or places of cremation; they were to feed none but their own people; they were not to recite the *Vedas* on occasions of joy or sorrow; they were not to associate with the descendants of Dhir Mal, the followers of Ram Rai, the Minas, the Masands, or with atheists, or Jains. An infringement of the code made them liable to fine. The *Granth* was to be recited on occasions of marriage and death. The bones of the dead, if not carried to the Ganga, were to be thrown into the environs of Amritsar which were as holy as the Ganga.[38]

Since it was Guru Gobind Singh's intention to modify the code of Nanak, he sent his men to the Sodhis of Kartarpur to bring the *Adi Granth* signed by Guru Arjan. When the Sodhis refused to give the *Granth*, Guru Gobind Singh composed a new *Granth* at Damdama in 1696 under the title of the *Daswan*

Badshah ka Granth or *The Book of the Tenth King*. It aroused the dormant energies of the Sikhs and urged upon them the necessity of leading an active and useful life. It also described the wiles of women and the heroic deeds of warlike men to instil ideas of military glory and national honour and ascendancy in the reader.[39]

Latif refers to the dissolution of the institution of the Masands and their excommunication. He refers also to Guru Gobind Singh's use of a couplet of Sa'di of Shiraz to convince a young man that 'a person may not break his worldly ties and yet be dear to God'. With this, Latif's account of Guru Gobind Singh ends.[40]

IV

Before his death at Nander, Guru Gobind Singh had formed an acquaintance with Banda, and they had become 'intimate friends'. Banda was persuaded to take *pahul*, and he became the 'most staunch ally and adherent' of Guru Gobind Singh. He was not selected for succession to guruship but it was declared that the Sikhs would look upon him as their 'leader and protector.' The Guru's dying injunctions to Banda were that 'he should remain a warrior, and avenge the blood of his father, as well as of his innocent sons'. He was given five arrows as emblems of victory. 'Banda received the arrows with profound reverence, and solemnly promised to obey the commands of the dying Guru.'[41]

Banda issued orders to the Sikhs in the name of Guru Gobind Singh to prepare for hostilities and to come together for 'overthrowing the Mohamedan rule'. The Sikhs flocked to his banner and he 'assumed the title of Guru'. They ravaged the country far and wide, plundering the people and laying waste the villages and towns. Wazir Khan was defeated and killed in a battle near Sirhind. Banda entered the city to seek revenge. He issued orders that all its inhabitants be put to death. They were butchered, bayoneted, strangled and hanged. Several other places were similarly devastated.[42]

Latif underscores the atrocities of Banda Bahadur in his short career of revolt against Muslim rule. 'Though bravery is a qualification which is highly meritorious, and in all cases one which is handed down to posterity, yet the audacious achievements of this monster are an exception to the rule. His triumphs

are not remembered as heroic acts, but as malicious and cold-blooded atrocities.' Banda's ruling passion was to spill 'Mohamedan blood'. His memory was held in detestation by Sikhs as well as by Muslims. His policy was diametrically opposite to that of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. Sikhs who did not accept his innovations were tortured and killed. Instead of the blue dress, which Guru Nanak had ordered them to wear, he instructed his followers to wear a red one. The war cry of *Wah Guru ji ka Khalsa. Wah Guru ji ki fateh* was replaced by *fateh dharm, fateh darsham*. He enjoined his followers to abstain from meat. The Akalis were opposed to all these innovations; they preferred to die as martyrs rather than adopt the new modes of life and change the tenets of their great Guru. On Banda's death all the institutions of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh were restored.[43]

The motive of revenge was so important for Latif that it figures in his final assessment of Banda Bahadur. He was devoid of all the superior qualities of his illustrious predecessor, and had nothing to commend his memory to posterity, save an undaunted spirit:

> Govind's selection of Banda, as his successor, does not appear to have been the result of any very great opinion he had formed of his piety, or of his ability to propagate the religion of which he had been so long the leader, but rather to have been made with a view to his avenging the death of his father and his two sons, for which purpose he could not have singled out a better instrument than this ruthless bloodsucker.[44]

Latif's chapter on the political organization of the Sikhs begins abruptly with the sentence: 'On the departure of Ahmad Shah from Hindustan in 1761, disorder and confusion prevailed throughout the Panjab. He assumes that Ahmad Shah Abdali was the formal successor of the Mughals in the Punjab, and that the power of the Sikhs before his time was not worth serious consideration. The absence of a regular government, and the turmoil in the country in the wake of the commotion at Panipat increased the power of the Sikhs. Ahmad Shah was not perturbed about the mayhem. His governor at Lahore was no more than the commander of an outlying post. The Sikhs grew increasingly daring and rapacious. All the principal *sardārs* appropriated lands for themselves, built strongholds and fastnesses for defence

against 'the Musalman invasions' and to serve as bases of military operations against their opponents. These active measures contributed vastly to the resources of the Sikhs. Before long, the independent Sikh *sardārs* became complete masters of their own districts to exercise power 'for the benefit of the clan to which they were respectively attached'.[45]

'The various clans under their respective chiefs were leagued together, and formed a confederacy'. This confederacy, according to Latif, was the *misl*. It carried the implication that the chief and followers of one clan were equal to those of another. The *misl* was an organization of all the principal chiefs who were equal among themselves. It was aptly termed a theocracy because the chieftains administered the country according to the law laid down by the founder of their religion, and they were bound by this law to aid one another in support of their religion and country, a law which they scrupulously obeyed. The chieftains needed a leader for united action. This leadership was provided by the spiritual head of their church. This personage was appointed, from time to time, by the popular voice of the Khalsa. 'A national league was also established at Amritsar by the Akalis.'[46]

It was the duty of this convention (presumably the 'league'), aided by their spiritual preceptor in the interpretation of the *Dasvan Badshah ka Granth*, to look after the administration of home and foreign affairs; to organize and plan expeditions; to avert national danger, and to educate the people in the doctrines of their religion. All booty was equally divided among the chiefs, and they in turn subdivided a portion of it among their dependants. The warriors received their pay from a national fund 'to which they contributed by means of plunder and fraud'. They were at liberty to abandon their profession, or to transfer their military allegiance from one chief to another. The bolder among them established their own parties. 'Those who were fortunate enough to raise large and powerful bands were acknowledged as independent chiefs, by their compatriots, while those who were less successful, amalgamated their retinues with those of other chiefs.'[47]

Latif underlines the faith of the Khalsa in Guru Gobind Singh. They attributed all their victories to him. They firmly believed that his spirit led them against the enemy.

Whether they plundered, robbed, killed, mutilated or committed any other species of outrage upon their enemies, they invariably called upon the name of Govind. For Govind they fought with the utmost fanaticism; for Govind they died with the calmest resignation. As Singhs, or lions, they lived, fought and died, and, as Singhs, their memories are cherished by their successors.'[48]

The Sikh rulers were not well disposed towards Muslims because the Muslim rulers had committed atrocities against the Sikhs. When the Sikhs rose to power, Muslims were employed in the most menial capacities. The most honourable profession for them was agriculture in which they were allowed to engage only as tenants. They were persecuted in every conceivable manner. Their mosques were converted into pigsties and their men became swineherds. Their grandest shrines were utilized as magazines and arsenals. Muslims offered their prayers secretly in dilapidated mosques; they dared not pray aloud 'for fear of their enemies falling upon and annihilating them'. They were forbidden to eat beef because the cow was regarded as the most sacred animal by the followers of Guru Gobind Singh. Even the Mazhabi Sikhs, i.e. Muslim converts to Sikhism, fared little better than Muslims. They were not appointed to any post of trust, and were treated slightly better than serfs. The majority of the well-to-do Muslims migrated into the British territory where they were allowed to freely practise their religion. Under the control of the Khalsa, subjects like religion and politics were not allowed to be discussed. Whatever the other aspects of Sikh rule in the Punjab, it spelt disaster for Muslims.[49]

V

Syad Muhammad Latif professed to pursue 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but truth'. Such declarations of intentions do not make the historian immue from errors of fact, or from misinterpretation. Some of Latif's errors can be traced to his 'authorities', but not all. For instance, he places the town of Kartarpur founded by Guru Nanak in the Jalandhar Doab, confusing it with the town founded later by Guru Arjan. Latif makes this error in spite of his sources. Similarly, he confuses Bidhi Chand with 'Baba Buddha' who is viewed as a notorious freebooter converted to Sikhism by Guru Hargobind. Kiratpur is

referred to as 'Kartarpur' by Latif. He maintains that Guru Gobind Singh stayed at Paonta for almost twenty years. Discussing the *Rahmat Namah* of Guru Gobind Singh, he mentions *kard* instead of *kara* as one of the '5 ks'. He talks of Mata Sundari's death at Chamkaur. One of the two Pathans who helped Guru Gobind Singh is referred to as 'Name Khan' instead of Nabi Khan. He refers to Guru Gobind Singh's visit to Sirhind, his return to Makhowal, and his meeting with Bahadur Shah for the first time in the Deccan. These may seem to be minor mistakes, but they reflect Latif's careless attitude towards his sources.

Latif uses Cunningham's characterization of Sikh polity as 'theocratic confederate feudalism' but his understanding of Sikh polity is far different from that of Cunningham. Latif's own account of the political activity of twelve *misls* as distinct units contradicts his conception of the *misl* as a theocracy, and even as a confederacy. His view of the early Sikh rule as anti-Muslim is not based on the evidence of his predecessors, or any other credible evidence. It appears to be rooted in his own identification with the Muslims in general and the Muslim ruling class in particular. The political change from Mughal or Afghan rule to Sikh rule automatically dislodged the Muslim ruling class. Instances of Muslims being employed in administration by the Sikh chiefs are known. Muslim Chaudharis and Muqaddams could not be, and were not, displaced from their hereditary positions. There is concrete evidence that grants given to Muslims by the earlier rulers were confirmed by the Sikh rulers as a matter of routine. The court of the *qāzī* continued to dispense justice under the Sikh rule at many places.

Latif's identification with Muslims, coupled with his familiarity with Muslim lore and Persian sources, could induce him to give a new tilt to the evidence in the works of his predecessors. Latif's emphasis on Guru Nanak's education by Syad Hasan, his discourse with a learned descendant of Shaikh Farid, his belief in the holy mission of Muhammad as the messenger of God, the impression of Daulat Khan Lodhi that Guru Nanak was a Muslim because he forbade idolatry, acknowledged the unity of God and believed in the mission of Mahammad, and Latif's assumption that Muslims in general looked upon Guru Nanak as a true follower of the Prophet and took half of the sheet to bury it—all

these 'facts' tend to present Guru Nanak as near allied to Islam.

Latif refers to the Mughal state as 'Mohamedan'. Since he thinks in terms of religious communities as monoliths, his view of the relation of the Mughal state with the Sikh Gurus carries its own peculiar import. Akbar grants a piece of land to Guru Ram Das on which he raises the Harmandar in the midst of the 'pool of immortality' (*amritsar*). Strongly impressed with the Guru's sympathy for the poor cultivators, Akbar remits a year's rent. The primary responsibility for the death of Guru Arjan is that of Chandu Shah and not that of Jahangir. The emperor hands over Chandu Shah to Guru Hargobind for punishment. Jahangir takes the Guru in his service, and so does Shah Jahan. Dara Shukoh is friendly with the Guru. In spite of the fact that Guru Har Rai supports Dara, Aurangzeb treats his son Ram Rai with distinction. After 'the account given by a wonder loving people' about Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom, Latif adds that 'it is more probable that the Guru was executed as a rebel against government'. The person responsible for the murder of the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh is Kuljas, the Diwan of Wazir Khan, and not Wazir Khan himself. Aurangzeb is willng to personally meet the Guru and to do justice to him. Bahadur Shah gives a *mansab* of 5,000 to Guru Gobind Singh. Though the young Pathans wounded the Guru, he does not die of the wound. Latif does not say so but if Aurangzeb took action against Guru Tegh Bahadur as a political rebel and Kuljas was responsible for slaying the Guru's sons, there was hardly any justification for Banda Bahadur's vengeance against Muslims who, on the whole, turn out to be more sinned against than sinning.

From Latif's treatment of the institution of the Khalsa it is clear that he accords almost exclusive importance to the motivation of revenge. The changes brought about by Guru Gobind Singh are seen as the result of that primary motive. The episode of Durga is presented by Latif without the slightest degree of scepticism, emphasizing the point that a Sikh was sacrificed to Durga. Guru Gobind Singh's address to the large gathering is situated after the selection of the potential martyrs and the administration of *pahul* to them. Latif's observation about the building of fortresses from the Satlej to the Jamuna, and of strongholds in the plains, has no basis. A part of the description

of the battle of Bhangani, which is missing in Latif's account, is presented in connection with the Guru's battle with the chiefs of Kahlur and Hindur. Guru Gobind Singh is depicted as a willing vassal of the Mughal emperor. Nevertheless, he uses the following inscription on his seal: *Deg-o tegh-o fateh o nusrat bedirang, yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh.* 'By the favours of that glorious God, Govind Singh received from Nanak the Guru (spiritual guide), hospitality, sword (valour), victory and success undoubted.' This inscription was used by Banda Bahadur on his seal, and not by Guru Gobind Singh. Paradoxically, Latif portrays Guru Gobind Singh as a potentate, and Banda as a mere rebel against the Mughal emperor.

Latif's intention to be truthful need not be contested. It is quite clear, however, that he fails to present a correct, a cogent or a consistent interpretation of the Khalsa. He does not see the institution linked in any significant way with the earlier Sikh tradition, but he does see it intimately linked with what followed. Like many of his predecessors, he viewed the institution of the Khalsa as a new phase in Sikh history. The period of the political struggle of the Khalsa against the Mughals first and then against Ahmad Shah Abdali appears to have no meaning for Latif. His interpretation of the Khalsa cannot be regarded as an improvement upon his predecessors. In fact, it is much less adequate. His fascination for the Victorian age and his identification with Muslims as a community are serious obstacles in his way towards a sound or even a fair historiography.

NOTES

1. Syad Muhammad Latif, *History of the Panjab from the Remotest Antiquity to the Present Day*, New Delhi: Eurasia Publishing House, 1964, p. iii.
2. Ibid., p. xi.
3. Ibid., p. xii.
4. Ibid., pp. xii-xiv.
5. Ibid., p. xv.
6. Ibid., pp. xv-xvi.
7. Ibid., p. v.
8. Ibid., p. iii.
9. Ibid., p. vii.
10. Ibid., p. vi.

11. Ibid., pp. vii-viii.
12. Ibid., p. vi.
13. Ibid., p. 240.
14. Ibid., p. 241.
15. Ibid., p. 242.
16. Ibid., p. 246.
17. Ibid., p. 248.
18. Ibid., p. 246.
19. Ibid., p. 247.
20. Ibid., p. 250.
21. Ibid., pp. 252-3.
22. Ibid., pp. 253-4.
23. Ibid., p. 254.
24. Ibid., pp. 255-7.
25. Ibid., pp. 259-60.
26. Ibid., p. 261.
27. Ibid., pp. 261-2.
28. Ibid., pp. 262-3.
29. Ibid., pp. 263-4.
30. Ibid., p. 264.
31. Ibid., pp. 264-5.
32. Ibid., pp. 265-7.
33. Ibid., p. 267.
34. Ibid., pp. 267-8.
35. Ibid., pp. 268-70.
36. Ibid., pp. 270-1.
37. Ibid., p. 271.
38. Ibid., pp. 271-2.
39. Ibid., p. 272.
40. Ibid., p. 273.
41. Ibid., p. 274.
42. Ibid., pp. 274-5.
43. Ibid., pp. 280-1.
44. Ibid., p. 281.
45. Ibid., pp. 281, 290.
46. Ibid., p. 290.
47. Loc. cit.
48. Ibid., p. 291.
49. Loc. cit.

CHAPTER 8

Reconciling the Tradition to Colonial Rule: Khazan Singh

Veena Sachdeva

The *History and Philosophy of the Sikh Religion* by Khazan Singh was published in 1914. At that time, he was an Extra Assistant Commissioner. This work was reprinted in two parts.[1] The first part, entitled *History of the Sikh Religion*, provides the life histories of the ten Gurus, and deals with Banda Bahadur, the Tat Khalsa, the *misls*, as well as Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his successors. The second part, entitled *Philosophy of the Sikh Religion*, focuses on the religion of the Sikhs in all its evolutionary phases. The Khalsa is discussed in great detail, covering almost one-third of the volume.

Khazan Singh claims to have consulted almost all the major works on Sikh religion and Sikh history written by Sikh and non-Sikh historians. For him, the works of English and Muslim historians were 'biased, partial, defective and misleading'. Their authors were not free from ignorance. From the religious point of view these works contained much that was incorrect; being based on misunderstanding, they were characterized by misinterpretation, misconstruction and 'favouritism to the conservative classes'.[2] The works of Sikh historians like Giani Gian Singh and Bhai Santokh Singh were useful but there was a great paucity of 'true, authentic and orthodox' works. Khazan Singh's professed purpose was to give a 'truer, fuller and more systematic account' of the Sikhs in 'a more interesting and readable form'.[3]

I

According to Khazan Singh, Guru Gobind Singh made his idea of creating the order of the Khalsa known to brahman priests.[4] They suggested that a grand *hom* be performed to obtain the blessings of Durga for this purpose. The Guru had no faith in Durga, or any other goddess, but agreed to the idea so that 'their objections might be removed and they might be convinced of the absurdity and futility of their whims'.[5] He performed the ceremony on a hill close to Naina Devi. Khazan Singh describes the ceremony in detail. When the goddess did not appear, the head priest suggested that the sacrifice of an important person, like the Guru's eldest son, would please the goddess. When the Guru hinted that the priest himself was more important than anyone else, he fled. The Guru threw all the material for the *hom* into the fire pit, and declared that the sword in his hand was the symbol of power destined to destroy the oppressors.

After this, Guru Gobind Singh wrote to his Sikhs 'in all the countries' to reach Anandpur. He held a grand *darbār* on the first day of Baisakh in 1699 and gave the dramatic call for 'immediate immolation' of five Sikhs. This '*novel* and excellent mode was adopted for the test and selection of true and sincere Sikhs'.[6] The five who offered themselves to be sacrificed were taken inside the tent one by one where five goats were beheaded to give the impression that the volunteers were slain. The chosen five were: Bhai Daya Ram, a Khatri Sikh of Lahore; Bhai Dhanna, a Jat; Bhai Himmat, a Jhiwar (water carrier); Bhai Sahib Ram, a barber; and Bhai Mohkam Chand, a Chhipa (calico printer).[7]

The 'chosen five', known as 'the five beloved', were dressed in white clothes, with short breeches and a sword in hand. They were initiated with *amrit* prepared by using a double-edged sword (*khandā*). They were directed to prepare *amrit* in the same way to initiate the Guru. When they expressed their inability, the Guru imparted his spiritual light to them and declared that they were equal to him in all respects and that there was no difference between them and himself.[8] Thereafter, twenty-five more Sikhs accompanied by four Singhs stepped forward to prepare *amrit*. Khazan Singh adds that if *amrit* is not prepared by the five Singhs, the rite is neither 'valid nor efficacious'.[9] At other places thousands accepted the initiation

and joined the Khalsa Panth. Guru Gobind Singh had proclaimed the five faithful volunteers to be 'Singhs' and named himself Gobind Singh' instead of Gobind Rai. Khazan Singh points out that 'Singh' literally means lion.[10] He uses the term Singh, or Khalsa, for the Sikh consistently in his work.

Without using the term *rahit*, Khazan Singh spells out the new injunctions for the Khalsa: the five entered into a covenant to obey all the commandments of the Guru and to lead their lives in conformity with the rules laid down by him'. They were to eat and drink out of the same vessel, thus discarding caste and religious prejudices.[11] The ideals of high morals, principles of truth, righteousness, rectitude, patriotism and duty was impressed upon them.[12] Charity to the poor, infirm and the helpless was enjoined. Every Khalsa was required to contribute to the 'National Treasury' one-tenth of his earnings. Any deviation from these norms made the offender liable to certain penalties according to the nature of the offence. Some negative injunctions were also announced, as against theft, cheating and gain through any unlawful means. The consumption of *kuththa* (*halāl* meat) and tobacco, cohabitation with a Muslim woman, and shorn hair made the offender liable to immediate excommunication from the brotherhood. They could be readmitted only by re-initiation.[13]

Another important injunction related to the dissolution of the institution of Masands. Khazan Singh refers to the Masands as tithe collectors; they and their deputies had become obnoxious in relation to the Sikhs. They began to treat the Sikhs harshly for the collection of taxes and embezzled gifts intended for the Guru. Their intolerable practices were presented to the Guru in the form of a play. Guru Gobind Singh understood the object of the play and dissolved the institution. The deputies were excommunicated and those who were found guilty of cruel treatment were 'thrown into *dungeon* or killed by being thrown into boiling oil or otherwise suitably punished'. The Singhs were now required to offer the Guru whatever they conveniently could at the time of their pilgrimage.[14]

Besides the Masands, Khazan Singh regards four other classes as obnoxious; mixing with them was sure to lead to great evils. Therefore, association with them was to be avoided. Three of these four classes were the Minas or the descendants and followers of Prithi Chand, the Dhirmallias or the descendants

and followers of Dhir Mal, and the Ram Raiyas or the successors and followers of Ram Rai. The fourth class comprised the '*Sirgums* or the Sarevras, a sect of atheists in India'.[15] The excommunication of these classes did not mean that they could not be admitted to the order of the Khalsa if they genuinely desired to be initiated.

Khazan Singh mentions the 'five articles' which the initiated should have on his person and refers to them as 'emblems of national distinction'.[16] Keeping the *kesh* intact is a sacred trust and duty imposed by God. For the daily cleanliness of hair, it is indispensable to carry a *kanghā* (comb). *Kirpan,* for Khazan Singh, is a weapon of offence and defence which one should carry for self-protection. *Kaḍa* or iron bracelet is a national emblem of a circle of truthfulness and other high morals. It also serves a defensive purpose in times of war against a sword cut; it should be worn on the right arm. *Kachha* or short breeches is excellent as a part of military uniform, convenient both in times of war and peace.[17]

Guru Gobind Singh's purpose for instituting the Khalsa was to create a martial spirit among his followers. He wanted his Khalsa to free the country from the oppression of Muslim rulers; to defend the people against oppression and to exterminate the oppressor, making them capable of undertaking both offensive and defensive operations.[18] Guru Gobind Singh's chief objective was to ensure peace which was essential for spiritual advancement.[19] Khazan Singh adds that disturbance and unrest distract attention and prevent one from engaging in divine worship. At the same time, the Guru wanted his Khalsa to teach a lesson to the rulers so that they would not meddle with the religion of their subjects and forcibly convert them to the state religion. In short, Guru Gobind Singh sought to train and equip the Khalsa as warriors to protect their 'civil rights'.[20]

Shortly before his death, Guru Gobind Singh placed a coconut and five *paise* before the Holy Scripture and declared it to be the spiritual Guru for the guidance of the Khalsa.[21] The discontinuance of the system of the living Guru was ordained to keep the Khalsa intact and free from evils. Guru Gobind Singh bestowed the office of guruship on five Singhs at Chamkaur and authorized them to adjudge and remit the penalty of a transgressor. He emphasized that no single member would ever claim that office.[22] It was

proclaimed that an assembly of five Singhs was competent to act as the leader of the Khalsa while at the same time, the Holy Granth was declared to be the successor of the tenth Guru as the spiritual guide.

For links between the Khalsa and the ealier Sikh tradition, Khazan Singh refers to Guru Gobind Singh giving the broad and general institutions of Guru Nanak an aim and precision. He talks of the nine Gurus having the divine light of Guru Nanak; the tenth Guru vested that light in the Khalsa and raised his followers to the same spiritual level as himself.[23] In fact, the successors of Guru Nanak had gradually prepared the people for the adoption of the Khalsa faith.[24] Khazan Singh further adds that if Guru Nanak had taken the sword in hand, his mission may not have been so successful and if Guru Gobind Singh had remained passive without resorting to the sword, the faith may have become extinct. The Gurus admirably interpreted the needs of the time and Guru Gobind Singh became the champion and saviour of the poor and the oppressed.[25]

II

Khazan Singh does not appreciate the period of Banda Bahadur, though he has devoted a separate chapter to him. Banda Bahadur was not admitted into the Khalsa order because Guru Gobind Singh did not deem it advisible to initiate him with *pahul*. Guru Gobind Singh gave Banda five arrows and various other weapons to wear and deputed him to bring all the oppressors to book and protect the Khalsa.[26] While imparting to him his spiritual power, he strictly enjoined upon him the following rules, among others: (*a*) he should not initiate a new religion of his own; (*b*) he should not allow himself to be called Guru; and (*c*) he should always live in brotherly love and peace with the Singhs.[27]

Twenty-five Singhs were told to accompany him. Guru Gobind Singh issued edicts to the Singhs in the Punjab to join him. With the support of the Khalsa, Banda Bahadur exterminated all those who had deceived Guru Gobind Singh. He plundered Sunam, Ghuram, Daska, Shahbad, Sadhaura and Chhat and occupied the 'province' of Sirhind and the fort of Rahon. The Khalsa (and the widows of Guru Gobind Singh) supported Banda Bahadur

as long as he observed the rules laid down by Guru Gobind Singh. When he deviated, they issued an edict for his excommunication on the following grounds: (*a*) contrary to Guru Gobind Singh's mandate, he had initiated his own religion; (*b*) the Singhs were called Bandai; (*c*) he substituted *charan pahul* for *khandā pahul*; (*d*) he called himself the eleventh Guru of the Singhs; (*e*) he invented *Fateh daras* instead of *Fateh Wahiguru ji ki*; (*f*) he displayed pride and arrogance and wanted to rule over the Singhs instead of considering himself as their brother and equal; and (*g*) he wore the royal dress which was against the Guru's orders.[28] On receipt of the edict, the true Singhs, known as the Tat Khalsa, distanced themselves from Banda Bahadur. For Khazan Singh, the execution of Banda Bahadur was a just punishment for the violation of his sacred promise to the Guru.[29]

After the execution of Banda Bahadur, the Tat Khalsa came to the fore. Khazan Singh discusses the Tat Khalsa in a separate chapter. He refers to the conciliatory measures adopted by the Muslim rulers to appease them.[30] He also provides details of the measures adopted by the Mughal governors and officials to eliminate the Khalsa. At the same time, he discusses the courage and bravery shown by Bhai Mani Singh, Bhai Tara Singh, Bhai Taru Singh and the 'Singhs from Bikaner' who had killed Massa Ranghar.[31] These persecutions failed to root out the Khalsa. The death of one prepared many for sacrifice. When they were outlawed and proscribed, they left their homes to live in jungles. When an opportunity offered itself, they came out of 'their lairs like lions', chastising all those who persecuted them. They availed of every opportunity to increase their resources by plundering royal treasuries. For instance, in the 1720s they seized the treasury on its way from Chawinda to Lahore, Kasur to Lahore and at Sarai Nuruddin near Tarn Taran.[32] Again, in the late 1730s, when the treasury of Nadir Shah was on its way to Kabul, the Singhs plundered it. When Ahmad Shah Abdali was returning to Lahore from Delhi in 1757, the Singhs plundered his baggage as well.[33]

The Khalsa not only enhanced their resources but also increased their numbers and strength. In order to stand on a firm footing, they evolved an organization for their concerted action.[34] The first example of this was seen in 1726. When the governor of Lahore sent a large army to hunt down all the Singhs in the Punjab, they organized themselves in 'small groups' and

succeeded in laying waste numerous villages.[35] In the 1730s, when it became difficult for the Khalsa to live together as a single unit because of their growing numbers, they divided themselves into two divisions: the Taruna Dal or the young army and the Buddha Dal or the *veteran* army. The Buddha Dal included many old *sardārs* like 'Nawab Kapur Singh, Jassa Singh'. They remained chiefly in Amritsar. The Taruna Dal was further divided into five groups (*jathās*) and travelled towards Rajputana.[36]

The Dals of the 1730s developed into *misls* in 1759. At this stage Khazan Singh refers to only nine *misls* in the area between the Indus and the Satlej. He does not refer to *misls* on the other side of the Satlej. It was only in 1763, when the whole country between the Satlej and the Jamuna was occupied and partitioned by the Singhs, that he talks of twelve *misls* and discusses them in separate chapters.[37]

The Khalsa lost no time in declaring their sovereignty. In 1765, the governor of Lahore (Kabuli Mal) was ousted by the Bhangi *sardārs* who partitioned it among themselves. The chiefs assembled at Amritsar and 'proclaimed their own supremacy and the prevalence of their faith'. They struck a coin bearing the following inscription:

Deg O Teg O Fateh O Nusrat Bedirang
Yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh.[38]

The Khalsa finally succeeded in overthrowing the supremacy of the Mughals and the Afghans in the Punjab. On the ruins of the Mughal empire, these confederations raised their own respective dominions and divided practically the whole of the Punjab into 'separate independencies'.[39] This happened 'within 66 years' of of Guru Gobind Singh's death.[40]

Each chief of the *misl* was bound to aid the other against a common enemy. All affairs pretaining to state or religion were carried out by Gurmatas, 'the resolutions of a cabinet-council'. These resolutions were strictly adhered to. Khazan Singh does not feel the necessity of Sarbat Khalsa for adopting a resolution. For him, an assembly of five orthodox Singhs could pass the resolution called Gurmata. He makes no reference to the other institutions of the Sikhs: neither the Dal Khalsa nor *rakhi*. The whole system of Sikh confederacies, for Khazan Singh, 'resolved

itself into a theocratic feudalism or Khalsa Commonwealth'.[41] Though he talks of a Sikh state, he makes no reference to its government, or administration, or policy.

For Khazan Singh, 'Ranjit Singh's life forms a distinct era of its own in the annals of the Khalsa'.[42] Therefore, while discussing 'Sukarchakia Misl', he does not mention Ranjit Singh and has devoted a separate chapter to him. He refers to Ranjit Singh's conquests of Lahore, Amritsar, Batala and other places. In April 1801, Ranjit Singh convened a grand *darbār* at Lahore to formally assume the title of 'Maharaja' or the 'Raja of Rajas'. He established a mint, issued his own coin bearing the inscription: '*Deg, Tegh and Fateh*', and the reverse contained his name, the date and place of minting.[43] Ranjit Singh restored peace and order in the Punjab. Codes of civil, criminal, revenue and executive laws were framed and introduced. Religious toleration was sanctified. Khazan Singh seems to be appreciative of the rule of Ranjit Singh but not the method in which it was established. He discusses in detail the way in which Tara Singh Dallewalia, Sada Kaur, Fateh Singh Ahluwalia and Hari Singh Nalwa supported Ranjit Singh in establishing his rule and how he ill-treated them and their families. For the author, Ranjit Singh had based his actions on dishonesty, deception, treachery and oppression. This was the main reason why his state fell shortly after his death.[44]

Khazan Singh has no sympathy for the 'incompetent successors' of Ranjit Singh, and talks of their reign being marked by anarchy, intrigues, counter-intrigues and treason. He did not approve of the rise of Tej Singh and Lal Singh (the brahmans). 'When such characters became both military and administrative heads of the Khalsa Commonwealth, its ruin and destruction was inevitable.' He refers to their treachery in the Anglo-Sikh War. However, Khazan Singh commends the Khalsa army which fought with 'unprecedented valour and bravery'. The war was lost because of the treachery of the leaders.[45]

III

Khazan Singh's concern with the issues of his times is reflected in four chapters dealing with *amrit* or the baptism of the Khalsa, the *rahit*, the 'Guru of the Khalsa after Guru Gobind Singh', and the 'income from offerings'.[46] It is interesting to note that he adds

a number of injunctions which seemed to be relevant for his times.'[47] He also discusses in detail the significance of 'five articles', and provides rational justification for the negative injunctions.

Khazan Singh was aware of the presence of the so-called *gurus* and schismatic schools within the Khalsa. These 'pseudo-Gurus are the embodiment of selfishness and so to speak, traitors to the Khalsa cause as well as a great hindrance to the accomplishment of the sacred mission of Guru Nanak'. If they were allowed to continue, the Khalsa would gradually 'vanish away from the earth'. Guru Gobind Singh had nipped the evil in the bud by raising all the Khalsa to the same level as himself. 'Any such claims now must be rejected.'[48] Khazan Singh emphasizes that income from offerings should never be used for personal purposes. Every man should earn his livelihood through hard work and manual labour.

Finally, it is interesting to note that Khazan Singh shows great appreciation for British rule. The British restored order, established good, benign and constitutional government, proclaimed religious toleration and general peace. The rule of non-interference in religious matters was introduced and enforced. Order and peace were restored and rampant violence and bloodshed came to an end. There was peace all over the land instead of the oppression and anarchy which had plagued the country for many centuries.'[49] Wanting the Sikhs to be loyal to the British government Khazan Singh says, 'the law of the Sikh Gurus strictly enjoins loyalty to the crown and fidelity and when any Singh may be found guilty of disloyalty or infidelity he must have fallen from the faith of the Gurus'.[50] Radical in religion, Khazan Singh was extremely conservative in politics: loyalty to the Guru and the government went hand in hand.

NOTES

1. *History and Philosophy of the Sikh Religion*, vol. I, Patiala: Department of Languages, Punjab, 1970, p. i.
2. Ibid., vol. I, p. 24.
3. Ibid., vol. I, p. ii.
4. Khazan Singh uses the term Khalsa sect here. At other places, he uses the terms Khalsa religion, Khalsa Panth, and also Khalsaism, ibid., vol. I, pp. 174, 216, 232; vol. II, pp. 287, 332, 338.

5. Ibid., vol. I, pp. 174-5.
6. Ibid., vol. II, p. 230.
7. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 229-30.
8. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 233-4.
9. Ibid., vol. II, p. 234.
10. Ibid., vol. I, p. 177, n.
11. The Singhs became totally new beings of the same spiritual parents, with Guru Gobind Singh as the father and Mata Sahib Kaur as the mother of the Khalsa. Ibid., vol. II, p. 235.
12. Ibid., vol. II, p. 233.
13. Loc. cit.
14. Ibid., vol. I, p. 179.
15. Ibid., vol. I, p. 284.
16. Ibid., vol. II, p. 277.
17. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 277-8.
18. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 230-1, 237-8; vol. I, p. 177.
19. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 235-6.
20. Ibid., vol. II, p. 236.
21. Ibid., vol. II, p. 265.
22. Ibid., vol. II, p. 263.
23. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 263, 333.
24. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 228-9.
25. Ibid., vol. II, p. 48.
26. Ibid., vol. I, pp. 212-13.
27. Ibid., vol. I, p. 213.
28. Ibid., vol. I, p. 225.
29. Ibid., vol. I, p. 234.
30. Khazan Singh refers to a *jagīr* of Rs. 51,000 for the old and aged Singhs and imperial service on a handsome salary to young ones. Ibid., vol. I, p. 227. This *jāgīr* was given to the Tat Khalsa during the lifetime of Banda Bahadur and was confiscated after his death. He also refers to another *jāgīr* worth Rs. 1,00,000, together with a *khilat* and the title of Nawab given in 1733 to the Khalsa, and confiscated in 1735: ibid., vol. II, p. 243.
31. The metaphysics of martyrdom that appealed to Bhangu is absent from Khazan Singh's treatment.
32. Ibid., vol. I, pp. 239-40.
33. When Nadir Shah heard of it and received reports about the Khalsa and their exploits, he told the governor of Lahore that they were destined to rule the country. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 243-4.
34. Ibid., vol. I, p. 255.
35. Ibid., vol. I, p. 238.
36. Ibid., vol. I, pp. 243-4.
37. Ibid., vol. I, pp. 264, 272-308.

38. Guru Gobind Singh received *Deg, Tegh, Fateh* and unfailing victory from Nanak: ibid., vol. I, p. 271.
39. Ibid., vol. II, p. 244.
40. If we count correctly, it comes to 57 years.
41. Ibid., vol. I, p. 272, n. Khazan Singh talks of 'the five' because 'Guruship was vested in five Singhs by Guru Gobind Singh'.
42. Ibid., vol. I, p. 308.
43. Ibid., vol. II, p. 245.
44. Ibid., vol. I, pp. 312-19; vol. II, 245-51.
45. Ibid., vol. I, pp. 327-8.
46. Ibid., vol. I, p. 328; vol. II, 250-1, 257-86.
47. The learning of Gurmukhi and the acquisition of knowledge, and avoidance of *juth*, uncleanliness, fraud, intrigues with another's wife, boring of the nose or ears of children, infanticide, and selling of daughters are recommended by Khazan Singh: ibid., vol. II, pp. 280-6.
48. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 268-76.
49. Ibid., vol. I, p. 334; vol. II, 249-50, 332-3, 342-3.
50. Ibid., vol. II, p. 256.

CHAPTER 9

In the Comparative Context: Archer's *Sikhs*

Jaswant Kumar Sharma

John Clark Archer was an American missionary specifically interested in education. He arrived in India at the age of twenty-five and worked as an educational missionary in Jabalpur for about five years from 1907 to 1912.[1] In the late 1930s he visited the Punjab, especially Lahore and Amritsar, and interacted with Bhai Jodh Singh in 1937. He was probably in the Punjab for sometime during the war years.[2] His book on the Sikhs was published by Princeton University Press in 1946 under the title of *The Sikhs in Relation to Hindus, Moslems, Christians and Ahmadiyyas.*

Archer continued to evince interest in the Sikhs after the publication of his work. In 1946, he saw the recension of the *Granth* at Kartarpur, believed to be the original recension prepared by Guru Arjan. Archer underlined its importance and advocated its textual study.[4] When he died in 1957 at the age of seventy-five, after his retirement from the Divinity School of the Yale University as Professor, he was regarded as 'one of the best-known authorities on the religions of Asia, particularly India'. He had published a few books on religion in general, missionary education and mystical elements in Islam.[4] As a missionary, he was opposed to the idea of establishing in Asia 'a distinctly American God'. The message of Christianity, he asserted, should be made adaptable to 'the minds of men

everywhere'.[5] Archer was a relatively liberal Christian in his religious outlook, and his interest in the study of comparative religion was a reflection of this outlook.

While devoting much attention to the Sikhs and their religion, Archer viewed his work as essentially a study in comparative religion. The Sikhs of India, according to him, had preserved among themselves 'a hardy tradition of religious and political activity'. Their movement had originated in an earnest and hopeful effort towards the reconciliation of Hindu and Islamic orders and ideas in India. However, their religion and their institutions 'developed somewhat at variance from initial purpose, and Sikhism became an independent and conspicuous order of its own'. It was therefore worthy of comparison with Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity. The five centuries of Sikh history provided many lessons in human thought and action which had a lasting value and often had a direct bearing 'upon the major problems of comparative religion'. Archer was aware that he was the first writer to undertake 'comparative appraisal'.[6]

Numerous studies of the Sikhs had been undertaken and the materials for study were increasingly accessible. Archer refers to the bibliography of Ganda Singh's *Banda Singh Bahadur* as 'the fullest bibliography yet published in a book'. The sixty-five English titles in this bibliography, included the notable works of J.D. Cunningham, M.A. Macauliffe, and Khazan Singh. Ganda Singh did not mention Ernest's Trumpp's *Adi Granth*, Lajwanti Ramakrishna's *Les Sikhs*, N.K. Sinha's *Rise of Sikh Power*, Ganda Singh's *History of the Gurdwara Shahidganj*, Bhai Jodh Singh's *Gurmati Nirnay*, and Teja Singh's *The Psalm of Peace*. In the body of his work, Archer refers to the works of John Malcolm, H.T. Prinsep, L.H. Griffin, and Syad Muhammad Latif. He was familiar with a wide range of historical and scholarly literature on the Sikhs. His own translation of the *Japuji* reveals that he was successful in mastering the language of the *Adi Granth*.[7]

Archer viewed the *Japuji* as an epitome of the *Adi Granth*. He concluded that Guru Nanak purposed the superiority of 'the way of truth' over the way of 'knowledge' and the way of 'works'. In fact, the way of truth was superior to the way of *bhakti* as well. The inspiration, support, and destination of *bhakti* could be realized in the True Name. In other words, the *bhakti marg* was the true way if pursued in the True Name. In the words of

Archer, Guru Nanak purposed, though not deliberately, 'a fourth way of salvation, more instrumental and more effective than anyone or all of the other three'.[8] The early records represent Guru Nanak as eschewing politics. 'And yet, there was something in him, in his movement and in his times as he affected them which was destined to be tested by political affairs of state.'[9]

II

Archer's chapter on 'The Khalsa of Gobind Singh' begins with Guru Hargobind and ends with Banda Bahadur. Obviously, Archer saw the developments of this period as interlinked. Guru Hargobind was only about ten years old when he assumed the office of guruship. According to Archer, Sikhism had achieved 'sufficient solidarity to treat the Guruship more symbolically'. Guru Hargobind was conscious of the fact that he was the son and successor of a martyr who had advised him to be adequately armed. The Sikh attitude was not exactly aggressive but the principle of mutual antagonism between the Sikhs and the Muslims was well established. However, before any overt hostilities broke out between them, Guru Hargobind served Jahangir on a hunting expedition. He was not averse to eating meat. He completed the Akal Takht which had been started by Guru Arjan. Guru Har Rai supported the unsuccessful Dara Shukoh, and had to send his son Ram Rai as a hostage to the court of Aurangzeb. Ram Rai pleased the emperor by substituting the word *be-īmān* for *musalmān* in a verse of Guru Nanak. He was repudiated by the Sikhs, and his younger brother, Harkishan, was appointed as the Guru.[10]

The career of Guru Tegh Bahadur was significant. Donning the mantle at the age of forty, he rallied about him 'many thousand warlike men and filled the office boldly'. Archer refers to the Sikhs engaging in outrage at that time. When the Kashmiri brahmans complained of forcible conversion to Islam, Guru Tegh Bahadur doubted that the Sikhs could muster force 'enough for an overt military expedition'. Therefore, the Sikhs declined the request of the brahmans for armed intervention. Nevertheless, Guru Tegh Bahadur personally met Aurangzeb who looked upon the Guru as a rebel against the government. He was arrested as a public enemy and was probably tried as an 'unbeliever'. The

trial ended with a verdict of death sentence and he was publicly executed. His death passed into legend. Both his life and death, had political and religious significance. The orthodoxy of Aurangzeb and Sikhism remained clearly incompatible. Guru Tegh Bahadur's writings refer to Hindu scriptures as having foreshadowed the advent of the religion of the True Name, 'making Sikhism the fulfilment of Hindu India's own search for God'. His writings also indicate an affinity with Vaishnavism, and yet his Hari, Brahma, Narayana and Rama represent the one Lord who destroys fear, removes folly and is 'the friend of the friendless and the saviour of all men'. This was stated more explicitly by his son and successor.[11]

Guru Gobind Singh became a champion of the lowly people of the North and an irreconcilable foe of Muslim rule, 'affording Sikhism opportunity for further integration and ultimate expansion'. He was only fifteen years old when his father died but he was 'imbued with the consciousness of mission'. He awaited the day of revenge for more than twenty years. At that time there was widespread restlessness in the country. Archer refers to the activities of the Marathas and the Jats in this connection. Meanwhile Guru Gobind Singh hunted the wild boar and the tiger, welcomed recruits to his gradually increasing forces and drilled them in martial exercise, mastered his inheritance of legend and religion, attended faithfully to his devotions as a Sikh, studied some Persian, read Hindi and received 'ambassadors' occasionally from the hill chiefs with whom he could discuss possible alliances. The Guru and the Sikhs did not declare war openly. 'There was still great caution in the movement, but the Khalsa was nonetheless in process of formation, the shadowy state was ready to take form.'[12]

In 1699, Guru Gobind Singh was forty years old, mature, seasoned and resourceful, with an enhanced sense of divine assistance in the discharge of his sacred duty, and enjoyed the confidence of countless followers and the general public. On Baisakhi he summoned all the Sikhs and announced that the goddess Durga herself had bestowed her blessings upon his enterprise. According to Archer, Guru Gobind Singh concentrated on Durga as the special object of his worship. This neither surprised nor alarmed the Sikhs. Durga was a deity familiar to all Indians. 'She was probably Teg Bahadur's own deity on

occasions.' Guru Gobind Singh knew the value of appeal to her. He did not find 'anything in her worship necessarily incongruous with Sikhism'. He enlisted the help of Pandits in her worship, offering hundreds of pounds of *ghee*, raw sugar and molasses. 'This in itself did not make Gobind Singh a Hindu.' The title of Khalsa for the state did not make him a Muslim. 'He was proceeding with some independence and sound judgment of his own.'[13]

Instituted on the Baisakhi day in 1699, the Khalsa was supposed to become 'the instrument of Sikh development'. Archer refers to the dramatic way in which the Khalsa was instituted. The Guru called for sacrifice to Durga 'if the Sikh cause were to be successful'. Five men responded to the call and they were led into the tent one by one. Each time a goat was slaughtered. The five who offered themselves became 'the immortal nucleus of the Khalsa'. The test of loyalty which they endured had a great impact on all the Sikhs who were present. Nevertheless, something more continually effective was needed if the Sikh cause was to prosper permanently. What Guru Gobind Singh did was manifold. Several unifying factors were meant to make 'the Khalsa Sikhs unique, without any necessarily violent departure from their whole tradition'. He instituted a baptismal rite, *pahul*; the assumption of a new name, Singh; the adoption of tangible symbols of membership; the five *kakkas*; a communion with the sipping of nectar, *amrit*; and a managing committee, the *panchayat*. The five volunteers were baptized first and then *pahul* was administered to all. All drank from the same vessel, thereby demolishing all caste distinctions. The five in turn administered *pahul* to Guru Gobind Singh and Mata Jito. Nearly 20,000 persons were baptized on this occasion.[14]

A committee of five began to direct the affairs of the community at Anandpur in an emergency and they were empowered to conduct Gurdwara services. 'This set a precedence for Sikhs in imitation of an ancient Hindu administrative custom.' A saying became current among the Sikhs that 'where five of them were met together there the guru was also'. Archer is somewhat sceptical about the *kakkas* being linked with the initial ceremony at Anandpur, 'although we may suppose that they are the result actually of some development out of that occasion'. These five items or symbols were *kesh*, *kangha*, *kara*, *kachh*, and *kirpan*.

These have since been for every Singh the marks of his membership of the Khalsa.[15]

From the beginning, Guru Gobind Singh committed the Khalsa to the exercise of arms, pledged them never to turn their back upon the enemy and never to surrender. He did not overlook the earlier elements of the Sikh faith. He set a personal example in devotional observance and urged the Khalsa specifically to worship God, to practise ablution and prayer, to read the sacred scriptures, to avoid any semblance of idolatry, to avoid cemeteries and cremation grounds, and to abstain from eating meat prepared as prescribed by the Muslim law. The Khalsa were to protect the weak and give assistance to the poor. They were enjoined not to have any dealings with false Sikhs and their descendants. Not all these issues could have been discussed on Baisakhi day in 1699. Guru Gobind Singh had mentioned some of them earlier—and others later. They could be taken as the ingredients of Guru Gobind Singh's constitution. Undoubtedly, an imposing order was instituted that was 'adequately free, on the whole, of contaminations from Hinduism and Islam'.[16]

The early period of Khalsa was one of fiery trial and their activities brought them into the public eye. It soon became apparent that this 'revival', possibly 'a third religion', was anti-Muslim. Aurangzeb took serious notice of it. The Khalsa attracted a motley crowd of sweepers, scavengers and other groups which were socially despised, and many outlaws. They attained a new dignity through membership in this virile and hopeful order. 'Perhaps Jat stock predominated—and Jats were then inspired by the notion of a kingdom of their own.' They were men of sturdy frame and stolid mien 'who could be very active in the fervour of religious consecration'. Some of the hill chiefs pledged their support. Guru Gobind Singh actively allied with the rebel chief of Kahlur, and launched an offensive against some of the hill chiefs like those of Nahan and Nalagarh who were Aurangzeb's allies.[17]

Aurangzeb sent forces under the governors of Lahore and Sirhind against Guru Gobind Singh. In view of their strength, he did not risk an open battle. Some of the weaker Sikhs deserted him, and others were dismissed for their cowardice. The faithful few were counselled flight. His immediate family, with the

exception of his eldest sons, fled southward. They suffered losses en route; the two younger sons were captured and taken to Sirhind where they were executed. Guru Gobind Singh, his elder sons, and hundreds of the most faithful and the hardiest retreated from Anandpur and took refuge at Chamkaur, 'one of their hill forts'. The Mughal forces besieged Chamkaur and the Sikhs suffered heavy casualties, including the sons of Guru Gobind Singh. Guru Gobind Singh escaped under cover of the night. Disguised as a Muslim *darvesh* he reached the sandy tract of Bhatinda where many of his Sikhs rejoined him. A Mughal force was defeated in a battle at Muktsar. For a few years, until the death of Aurangzeb, Guru Gobind Singh and his Khalsa were left undisturbed.[18]

Aurangzeb summoned Guru Gobind Singh to appear before him in Delhi. In defiance, the Guru wrote his famous *Zafarnama*, reproaching the emperor for his false dealings, bad faith and heinous crimes. He rehearsed the merits of the Sikh religion and the Khalsa, assuring the emperor that they would one day take vengeance on him for his atrocities against the Khalsa and for his abuse of the country. While he was awaiting the emperor's response he ensured that the Khalsa were organized and active, busied himself in his literary pursuits. Archer refers here to the *Jap*, the *Akal Ustat* and the autobiographical *Bachittar Natak*. Guru Gobind Singh also collaborated with several of his more learned associates in an abridgement of Hindu Puranic writings, which he entitled *The Twenty-Four Avataras*. Archer adds that Guru Gobind Singh had 'accepted with approval the earlier *Adi Granth*'. A scriptural succession was thus established in a sense. His own *Jap* reinforced the gist of Guru Nanak's *Japuji*. The additions which Guru Gobind Singh made to the *Adi Granth*, mainly the compositions of Guru Tegh Bahadur and a *dohra* of his own, did not alter the general temper of the Sikh tradition. The Bhatinda phase was 'inevitably a most significant contribution to Sikh history'. During this armed truce, a literary reconstruction of the guruship took place in spite of Guru Gobind Singh's own conception of himself 'as the divine instrumentality of progress in his time'. He did not attribute divinity to himself. Rather, he emphasized the power and sovereignty of God. With all the military ardour in his own compositions, he exalted the

devoted worship of the True Name above warfare. He had a theology distinct from war, and his favourite epithet for the True Name was Akal, the Timeless.[19]

In the *Bachittar Natak*, Guru Gobind Singh presented 'an apologia' for his own career. He had been very much impressed by the role of Rama and Krishna, and may have realized that they were once ordinary mortals who played their part at a time of special need. In *bhakti* theology, God becomes uneasy to see his saints 'in distress'; he is ever ready to aid them 'beyond what even the occasion might require'. Guru Gobind Singh could well believe himself called to such an opportunity, as one born in a time of stress. He was aware that 'he came from providential stock and had a special mission to perform'. He counted much on his Sodhi lineage, as Jesus counted on descent from David.[20]

When Bahadur Shah ascended the throne, Guru Gobind Singh served him and accompanied him to the south. Bahadur Shah was willing to conciliate the Sikhs and Guru Gobind Singh probably saw 'a chance to disarm any lingering suspicion that the Sikhs were essentially a hostile sect and bent upon any forceful conversions to their own order'. Perhaps, he was still in Mughal service when he died. There is some evidence, however, that Guru Gobind Singh withdrew from Bahadur Shah's service and went to Nander where he held 'partisan conference with many of his followers including a certain Banda'. Perhaps, Guru Gobind Singh decided to wage war against the Mughals. It is likely that he was slain by a grandson of Painde Khan who had been killed by Guru Hargobind.[21]

Banda laid claim to guruship. The question may have been raised at the 'conference' where Banda was present. Guru Gobind Singh's sons had been slain and there were no blood claimants in the line. But, the Khalsa, with its governing *panchayat*, was there. Banda may have been made leader of the Khalsa 'but the line of personal gurus had reached an end'. Guru Gobind Singh was unquestionably 'the ablest man the Sikhs had yet produced, probably the most learned of them all up to the time of his death and certainly the ablest administrator'. There was no man of similar experience and comparable ability among the Sikhs to take his place. Therefore, the transition from Guru Gobind Singh to Banda and the reconstruction of subsequent Sikh history was important for Archer.[22]

Without minimizing the importance of the Khalsa, who were more or less invisible at the time of Guru Gobind Singh's death, Archer emphasizes the importance of the scriptural Guru. The Sikh community was divided broadly into two categories: the Keshdharis and the Sahajdharis. All were loyal to the Gurus, including Guru Gobind Singh, but there were shades of difference in their esteem of them. All were committed to the *Adi Granth* and did not object to its enlargement when, in 1734, the writings of Guru Gobind Singh, under the title of the *Granth of the Tenth Guru*, were added to the *Adi Granth*. The *Granth* as a whole, or either part, the *Adi* or the *Dasvan*, became supremely influential in the Sikh community. Its essential gospel assumed control. What it revealed of *hukam* assumed authority above any person, any order, and even any book. The *hukam* theology became expressive of 'the common consciousness, whereby the Sikh religion was perpetuated'.[23]

The extensive scale of Banda Bahadur's activities indicated that Guru Gobind Singh had carefully laid his plans and left behind him a well-trained nucleus for continued warfare. 'There was momentum, in other words with which Banda Singh could carry on.' As an illustration of the great devotion of the individual Singhs to the ideal of the Khalsa, Archer refers to an incident mentioned by Khafi Khan: when the mother of a soldier condemned to death brought the emperor's pardon 'the son bitterly accused her of misrepresentation, renewed his pledge of loyalty to the Khalsa and took his sentence'. Furthermore, Archer suggests that a more sympathetic explanation of the situation was needed than that presented by Muslim historians like Khafi Khan. Summarizing the career of Banda Bahadur as given by Ganda Singh in his *Banda Singh Bahadur*, Archer concludes:

> Banda was to all Moslems, of course, an 'unbeliever', was a 'dog' to Sunnis, an 'imposter' to Shi'i mullas, an 'untouchable' to Hindu brahmans, a 'rebel' to the Mughal government itself, and he was to many disaffected Sikhs, mostly sahajdharis, only a 'false guru'. But to Khalsa Sikhs, the Singhs, especially, he is now remembered as a man of valor, cool in the face of death, a champion of the cause of sweepers and pariahs but one who found favor with the well-born, also, a leader who would himself have chosen to propagate the faith by persuasion rather than by force of arms, a Sikh who 'led a pure life, true to the rahit' or 'code', of the Khalsa, who never cut his hair, never used tobacco or ate *halal* (unlawful meat), who was never guilty

of immoral intercourse with women (although he may have wanted, at one time, a second wife while the first still lived), and whose defeat at last in warfare was not due to any defect in himself or in the cause he led, but the overwhelming odds against him.[24]

The death of Banda Bahadur left the Sikhs without a widely recognized leader. The question of guruship was 'still somewhat indeterminate'. However, the doctrines of the *Granth* as the Guru and the Khalsa as the Guru were gradually taking shape.

III

In the early decades of the eighteenth century, the Khalsa were split into fragments which had some political significance coupled with other elements which were more exclusively religious. The followers of Banda differed not only from ordinary Sikhs, but also from the Khalsa. Whereas the ordinary Sikhs were allowed to resume their normal life in villages, some of the followers of Banda as well as the Khalsa, continued to suffer martyrdom. The failure of the Bandais to secure control of Amritsar was 'more decisive in their fortunes than any idiosyncrasies of garb or diet or domestic management'. The Sikhs who controlled the Darbar Sahib were uncommonly conspicuous. With the waning of the glory of Anandpur, Amritsar became the central city. There were several other groups in competition with the Khalsa: the Handalis, the Ramraiyas, the Minas or the followers of Prithi Chand, the Dhirmalias, the Masandis, the Nanakpanthis, the Udasis, the Nirmalas, the Sewapanthis, as well as the Akalis who were also known as Nihangs or Shahids. The last category constituted the most important group. War and religion were by no means incompatible for them; they were all soldiers of 'the Timeless' God—'as if he had said to them that sooner or later under certain circumstances his loyal subjects must resort to war'. They established control over Amritsar. They saw themselves as the chosen heirs of the tradition of Guru Gobind Singh. Politics came to the fore and Sikhism as a religion began to build 'a house of state' in which all ties with Islam were severed and those with Hindus were disregarded.[25]

From the middle of the eighteenth century, bands of Sikhs representing various parties were seen everywhere in the Majha

and the Malwa. Even when a price was on their heads, many members of these bands offered prayers at the Darbar Sahib in Amritsar. They also suffered at the hands of Ahmad Shah Abdali As their bitterness towards the Muslims intensified, so did their strength. In 1764, a committee of the Akalis called a *gurmata*, or a diet, in Amritsar 'to proclaim the independence of the Sikh state and religion'. This was the seal of a larger and more inclusive unity among the Sikhs, a representative assembly sitting as a committee of the whole (*sarbat*) and taking counsel (*mata*) in the name of God or the Guru. This was a *gurmata*, a theocracy. Diversity remained, but there was an effective leadership by a party, rather than by a single individual, and God himself was the Guru. 'Sikh unity was at this time that of emergency and action, rather than that of theory and culture'. In the movement as a faith there was theory but there was no culture adequate to afford it a unified expression. All Sikhs recognized the *Adi Granth*. However, the authority of the *Book of the Tenth Master* was limited to the Singhs. Unity of action came by way of parties, bands and ranks called *misls* or 'equals'. Archer refers to the Ahluwalia, Bhangi, Dallewalia, Faizullapuria, Kanhiya, Nakkai, Nishanwala, Phulke, Ramgarhia, and Sukarchakia *misls*.[26] He notes,

> To an outside observer before the close of the eighteenth century Sikhism was a loose collection of misls and sirdars, of panths and mahants, and the Sikhs all together were a small minority of the total population. Politics among them were more apparent than religion; in fact, politics and warfare had, it seemed, preserved religion, which otherwise might not have lasted in the abstract. But the close observer would have seen that this loose confederacy was, nonetheless, dominated by an ideal, a most compelling factor, none other than the ideal of the Khalsa—and religion was one, perhaps the chief, of its ingredients, and within the province of religion there were considerations of human character and conduct. The men of action who were meeting the emergency moved in a field so large and varied that no less than a three-fold standard should be applied to its appraisal, namely, politics, religion and morality.[27]

Maharaja Ranjit Singh gave Sikhism 'a state'. His own religion was scarcely more than form; it was what he made it, political and diplomatic, an affair of man and not of God. Nevertheless, he was punctilious in worship, listened daily to readings from

the *Adi Granth*, honoured the True Name, and regarded the Khalsa above himself. In his official signature he styled himself Akal Sahai or 'God-helper'. He completed the temples of Amritsar and Taran Tarn, and erected religious buildings in Lahore and elsewhere. His Sikhism had a Hindu flavour, 'perhaps more pronounced with him than the Hindu features of any former leader'. He celebrated Hindu festivals, visited Hindu holy places and gave financial aid to them, and countenanced *sati* among the Sikhs. But he was not responsible for the state of Sikhism.[28]

However, Maharaja Ranjit Singh could not escape personal responsibility for morality. He took undue liberty in office. His sexual license, for example, was largely personal and 'not in the manner of the Khalsa'. License was by no means common with the peasantry. There was no *pardah* among the Sikhs. 'In the open fields and on the threshing floors many sturdy, unveiled women, usually of Jat descent, worked beside their men and kept their chastity.' Promiscuous in sex affairs, the Maharaja was immoral in some other ways too. He was addicted to liquor and *bhang*, both of which were commonly used by the rank and file of Sikhs. The Akalis abstained from liquor. All Sikhs refrained from smoking. Sikhism under Ranjit Singh fell far short of realizing its ideal. His great omission was morality. Even the Khalsa had not been realized 'in terms commensurate with the larger plan of Gobind, which held in delicate balance considerations of politics, morals and religion'. The Maharaja 'really sealed the Khalsa's doom'.[29]

At the death of Ranjit Singh there were three aspects of Sikh power : the political state with civil authority centred in Lahore, the faith with its ritual centred in Amritsar, and the army. An uneasy balance of these three elements of power was disturbed by the army which responded to the spirit of Guru Gobind Singh, the very founder of the Khalsa and the organizer of its military forces. His spirit became actually more real and authoritative among the troops than the *Granth Sahib* itself. This army ideal could unite both officers and men. The army of the Khalsa, by means of its *panchayats*, assumed control in a militant democracy. The army and the state were soon at war with each other. Two civil factions in the state were in competition for control, and the stage was set for an armed confrontation. The weak state of Lahore tried to save itself by despatching the restless

army to foreign lands. But there was a limit to foreign conquest. Meanwhile the British became increasingly aggressive in their policy of extending their political control over large parts of India. The Sikhs knew what lay in store for them. The army of the Khalsa crossed the Satlej in December 1845. This amounted to a declaration of war, leading eventually to dismemberment of the state established by Ranjit Singh. With the rise of the British, the Khalsa entered a new period of their history.[30]

IV

According to Archer, no great movement in the history of religions was ever merely accidental. Sikhism was expressive of something in the very life of India which made it a unique expression of Indian history. The form it took was measurably in harmony with the legacy of Guru Nanak and his intention. Towards the end of his life, specific leadership had become his chief concern. Instead of nominating any of his sons, he chose one of his disciples as his successor. Guru Angad and his successors worked out their heritage in the light of their understanding of the intention of Guru Nanak. Archer refers to their work, significantly, as 'a heritage of swords'.[31]

Guru Angad realized the responsibility of a definite commission and charged himself with fulfilling its detail. He immediately undertook two tasks : an enlargement of the kitchen, and the formulation of a language. Guru Nanak himself had made the public kitchen a distinctive feature of the Sikhs, inviting guests and friends to eat with him and his disciples 'as one family, regardless of race, wealth, sex, caste, occupation or religion'. He enlarged his ministry and many Jats and some of the poorer folk who were practically 'without the pale' joined him. Guru Angad was intimately connected with Gurmukhi. He borrowed and invented an alphabet for writing the language in which Guru Nanak had given expression to his ideas. Did he mean to make the early Sikhs a separate community? Archer's response to this question is not without significance. A distinct and independent alphabet was formed to put on record 'words with peculiar meaning in Sikh usage'. Guru Angad's efforts gave rise to 'Gurmukhi as a new language of religion'.[32]

Guru Amar Das gave further emphasis to the development of

Sikhism as 'something more than a mere sect of Hinduism'. Faced with the question of *sati*, he denounced it and gave it a figurative spiritual interpretation, which possibly paved the way for widow remarriage. One of his most notable compositions was *Anand*, commonly recited at weddings. With more of *anand* (joy) than of *udas* (sorrow), Sikhism was saved from mere negative asceticism.[33]

Guru Ram Das founded Ramdaspur. The site was granted by Akbar and it was associated with Rama. But the pool or *talau* held a peculiar significance for the Sikhs. It was called Amritsar or the 'water of immortality'. Nevertheless, its atmosphere had a HIndu tinge. Guru Arjan came into a large inheritance and under him Sikhism began to assume 'more definite proportions as an actually new community'. He became the greatest of the early leaders and 'the fashioner of a second sword'. Amritsar became his capital and its permanence was established as 'the central home of Sikhism'. Guru Arjan's era was 'a momentous time of turning in Sikh fortunes, a time of utter transformation in the mission of the Sikhs. Sikhism was tending to become a church within Hindu-Muslim setting, a movement within non-Brahmanical Hinduism, an order by the side of ecclesiastical Islam, and a state within the empire of the Mughals'. For the Sikhs, 'matters creedal, ritual, financial, political and social became public issues in a special sense'. Guru Arjan's noblest achievement was collating the *Granth Sahib* 'into compact, coherent form, and its elevation as authoritative scripture'. It began to occupy the centre of the Harmandar. Just as the Hindus had their *shastras* and the Muslims their *kitab*, the Sikhs came to have their *granth*, a book of selected, authoritative sayings. The compilation of the *Granth* was a process indicative in itself of what Sikhism was to be. Guru Arjan's Sikhism provided men a fuller light and opportunity to realize the True Name.[34]

There were matters of importance other than ritual and scripture which Guru Arjan had to deal with. Finance was one of his concerns. A church and even a state were virtually in the process of formation. Therefore, Guru Arjan called upon every adult Sikh to contribute one-tenth of his gross income to support the kitchens, the sanctuaries, and the office of the Guruship. Tithe-gatherers were appointed under a Masand or supervisor,

and a public reckoning was made every year at the time of the Baisakhi festival. This was not merely provision for finance: 'Sikhs were getting acquainted with and practicing self-government.' Then there was trade to be attended to. Guru Arjan encouraged it as 'a means of wealth and power'. He himself engaged in trade; foreign trade brought converts as well as profit. Uninhibited by any taboo in connection with foreign travel, the Sikhs travelled freely everywhere.[35]

There were political considerations too, with their own social and religious implications. The outer, larger world of the Mughals took increasing notice of the Sikhs. There was no open conflict between the Sikhs and the Mughals during Guru Arjan's time, but his martyrdom in 1606 'might have been indirectly connected with Mughal rule'. Even during the reign of Akbar, two of his ministers had tried to impose tribute on the Sikhs. It was a political move, but nothing came of it. The episode of Prince Khusrau had greater consequence as it led to a major crisis. Guru Arjan was fined for his association with the rebel prince, and imprisoned shortly afterwards. He was tortured to death in the fort of Lahore, becoming 'the first martyr of the Sikhs'.[36]

For Archer the martyrdom of Guru Arjan was not the cause of transformation within Sikhism. More important was the development which had already taken place.

> Sikhism was actually during the guruship of Arjun in the way of becoming a militant religion, with something of political significance in consequence. It was not the martyrdom alone of Arjun which made Sikhs warlike—nor was it, we may add, the death of Jesus on the Cross which made among Christians the Church militant. In both instances the martyr's garments were parted among bystanders, garments which thereafter, with little stretch of the imagination, could be woven into a martial fabric. No, not the martyrdom itself; Sikhs were slowly getting organized and as an organism they came to be confronted by some circumstantial need of war. 'Formless' religion, of course, cannot wage war! But formlessness was giving way, perhaps, to a communal consciousness. A new gospel thus becomes embodied, and when offices arise and officials fill them, the 'church' is organized and visible, and becomes custodian of the cherished services and sacrifice and of the ideals which at first inspired them. The Church becomes as visible as any civil state and may often find itself in competition with it—or, it may seek to be itself the State.[37]

V

In retrospect it can be seen that Archer aimed at interpreting the information and ideas of his predecessors in a meaningful way. Paradoxically, his work is marked by insightful observations mixed with factual errors and misconceptions. At the outset, he accepts the formulation offered by a number of his predecessors that Guru Nanak's movement was aimed at reconciliation of Hindu and Islamic ideas and orders. Archer discovers, however, that Sikhism developed into an independent order. He himself admits later that Guru Nanak advocated 'a fourth way' of liberation which was more effective than the other three, and that there was something in him and his movement which was destined to become political. The later development of the movement was measurably in harmony with Guru Nanak's intention and his legacy.

Guru Angad enlarged the community kitchen and developed Gurmukhi 'as a new language of religion'—a new script for the language of Guru Nanak. Guru Amar Das made important contributions to the domestic and social life of the Sikhs. Guru Ram Das instituted *amritsar* which during the time of Guru Arjan became the 'second sword'—the first being the True Name. A new community assumed definite proportions with Sikhism becoming a 'church' within a Hindu-Muslim setting. With the compilation of the *Granth*, the Sikhs followed a book, like Hindus and Muslims. New enterprises demanded more finances which, in turn, called for new organization resulting in experience of self-government. The Sikh 'church' was becoming a state within the Mughal empire. The Mughal state was bound to take notice of this new community. The martyrdom of Guru Arjan was linked with what had gone before.

That Archer's errors can be traced to his predecessors is evident from his reference to Guru Hargobind serving Jahangir, the Akal Takht having been established by Guru Arjan, warlike men surrounding Guru Tegh Bahadur and indulging in outrage which made him a rebel in the eyes of Aurangzeb, Guru Gobind Singh remaining inactive for over twenty years and worshipping Durga before instituting the Khalsa, Chamkaur as a hill fort of Guru Gobind Singh, Guru Gobind Singh composing the *Jap*, the *Akal Ustat*, the *Bachittar Natak*, and the *Chaubis Avtar* at

Damdama Sahib, and accepting service under Bahadur Shah. It is not surprising that factual errors obliged Archer to misconceive certain situations, or to misread certain texts. An apt example is the situation of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom and the content of his compositions: Archer makes him a Vaishnava and a Shakta at the same time.

Despite these errors and misconceptions, Archer has great insight because of his understanding of the linkages between religious ideology, institutions, and the social order. Like J.D. Cunningham, Archer kept a close watch on continuities of ideas, institutions, and ethos in changing historical situations. For him, the Khalsa were not a departure in Sikh history but a significant development, even a kind of fulfilment of the earlier movement. Similarly, some of Guru Gobind Singh's decisions were operative during the eighteenth century and he was a source of inspiration till the end of Sikh rule in the Punjab. It is in this context that Archer underscores the importance of the ideas of the *Granth* as the Guru and the Khalsa as the Guru, the role of 'the five' and *gurmata*, and the attitude of the army *panchayats* in the 1840s. Archer was unique among western historians of the Sikhs to underline the role of *amritsar* in Sikh history in general and of the Khalsa in particular. Above all, Sikhism as the creed of the Khalsa as much as of the pre-Khalsa Sikhs was for Archer comparable with religions like Islam, Christianity and Hinduism. This made Sikhism also distinct as a system of religious beliefs, practices and attitudes.

NOTES

1. *The New York Times*, Monday, 8 July 1957. A photocopy of this news item was sent to the author by Professor R. Lawrence Moore of Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.
2. John Clark Archer, *The Sikhs in Relation to Hindus, Moslems, Christians, and Ahmadiyyas*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1946, 'Preface', p. viii.
3. J.C. Archer, 'The Bible of the Sikhs', *The Review of Religion*, 1949.
4. *The New York Times* mentions *Faiths Men Live By*; *Youth in the Believing World*; *Mystical Elements in Mahommad*; and *A New Approach in Missionary Education*.
5. *The New York Times*.

6. Archer, *The Sikhs*, 'Preface', p. vi.
7. Ibid., p. 119.
8. Ibid., p. 133.
9. Ibid., pp. 106-7.
10. Ibid., pp. 172-82.
11. Ibid., pp. 182-7.
12. Ibid., pp. 187-91.
13. Ibid., pp. 191-2
14. Ibid., pp. 192-5.
15. Ibid., pp. 195-6.
16. Ibid., pp. 196-7.
17. Ibid., pp. 197-9.
18. Ibid., pp. 199-200.
19. Ibid., pp. 200-3.
20. Ibid., pp. 203-5.
21. Ibid., pp. 207-8.
22. Ibid., pp. 208-9.
23. Ibid., pp. 209-10.
24. Ibid., p. 219.
25. Ibid., pp. 221-31.
26. Ibid., pp. 231-6.
27. Ibid., pp. 236-7.
28. Ibid., pp. 238-43.
29. Ibid., pp. 243-6.
30. Ibid., pp. 250-60.
31. Ibid., pp. 134-5.
32. Ibid., pp. 136-9.
33. Ibid., pp. 139-41.
34. Ibid., pp. 140-51.
35. Ibid., pp. 152-3.
36. Ibid., pp. 153-6.
37. Ibid., p. 169.

CHAPTER 10

In the Service of Hindu Nationalism: Banerjee's *Evolution*

Indu Banga

Indubhusan Banerjee's *Evolution of the Khalsa* can be regarded as one of the most influential scholarly works of the twentieth century. Almost three generations of scholars and postgraduate students in Indian universities have depended upon Banerjee's two volumes on Sikh history. As he says in the Preface to the first edition of volume I, he divided the work into two volumes only for the sake of convenience. The first volume, published in 1936, covers the period up to 1604 when the *Adi Granth* was completed and 'the peaceful evolution of Sikhism practically came to an end'.[1] The second volume, published in 1947, opens with 'the execution of Guru Arjan' and 'the beginning of armed resistance' under Guru Hargobind. Banerjee devotes 134 pages to Guru Nanak, 138 pages to his eight successors, and 120 to Guru Gobind Singh. Discussion of the first and the last Guru covers three chapters each while only three chapters are devoted to the remaining eight Gurus. One chapter in volume I, entitled 'Ideals and Institutions', dwells mainly on guruship, *sangat* and *masands* and provides the context for Guru Gobind Singh's 'reforms'.

I

Banerjee's work may be approached with the following questions: What does he say about what happened on Baisakhi

of 1699? What in his view was the purpose of instituting the Khalsa? What linkages does he see with the earlier and post-Khalsa developments in Guru Gobind Singh's career? It is prudent to begin with the existential situation of the author and his purposes and sources.

The second edition appearing posthumously in 1963 carried a 'note on the author' written by his friend and colleague, Anil Chandra Banerjee, who later produced an historiographical essay on Indubhusan.[2] Born in 1893 in 'a highly respectable and cultured Brahmin family' of Dacca district, Indubhusan Banerjee completed his postgraduate education in the town of Dacca. In 1916, he secured a First class First in Master's in history. In 1921, he was awarded the prestigious Premchand Roychand scholarship and obtained his doctoral degree in 1939. He had joined the Calcutta University in 1919 as a lecturer in the newly established postgraduate department of history. He rose to become Reader and Head of the Department, and Asutosh Professor of Medieval and Modern Indian History in 1948, a position he held till his retirement in 1955.

Banerjee 'belonged to that vanished generation of devoted scholars who accepted the advancement of learning as the mission of life at the call of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee'.[3] Understandably, he dedicated the first volume of his study to the memory of Asutosh Mookerjee who had appointed him as lecturer primarily to teach Sikh history, and on whose suggestion later, Banerjee 'took up investigations' leading to his work on Sikh history.[4] Significantly, as the Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University, Sir Asutosh had made a special provision for the teaching of Sikh, Maratha and Rajput history. It was at his instance that Indubhusan Banerjee was appointed for teaching Sikh history, S.N. Sen for Maratha history, and R.C. Majumdar for Rajput history.[5]

The three young lecturers appear to have been motivated to focus upon the politico-cultural resistance to Islam and the Mughals by the Sikhs, Marathas and Rajputs. These three areas of the so-called 'nationalist' historiography highlighted Muslims as the 'other' and the Sikhs (along with the Rajputs and the Marathas) as the sword-arm of the 'Hindus'.[6] Obviously, Sir Asutosh's vision had been influenced by the concerns of Hindu

nationalism of his day.[7] Banerjee assiduously subscribed to its ideology. He may have been conditioned also by his own upbringing and education in the Muslim majority East Bengal. His high caste background and a 'deeply religious temperament'[8] could have a bearing on what he calls his 'line of approach'.

II

In the 'introduction', spread over twenty-one pages, Banerjee presents his hypothesis and assumptions that run through the entire work. Guru Nanak belonged to 'the great family of religious teachers who arose in the 15th and 16th centuries'.[9] Together with Ramanand, Kabir and Chaitanya, he constituted 'the party of reform' in an age of 'constant strife', 'moral decadence' and 'ignorance'. They 'all agreed as to fundamentals', with only some 'differences in detail'.[9] 'Gradual detachment' from Hinduism was said to have been effected as a result of the initiatives taken by the first four successors of Guru Nanak. By 1604, the 'Sikh Panth' had come to acquire 'a more or less definite meaning' and centralized organization.[10] With the response to the 'execution' of the fifth Guru began the process of transition to militarism. It was well suited to the warlike traits of Jats who had joined the Sikh Panth in large numbers. The ninth Guru also fell a victim to 'religious bigotry'. It was in this context of 'Muslim persecution' that Guru Gobind Singh instituted the Khalsa, finally imparting, according to Banerjee, a 'circumscribed' and 'sectarian' character to Sikhism.[11]

That Banerjee's hypothesis conditioned his attitude towards his predecessors is evident from the annotated bibliography. He professes to be Joseph Davey Cunningham's successor, but remains preoccupied with 'correcting' Cunningham's interpretation and treatment which he says was 'out of date' at many places and required 'revision', especially in the earlier chapters.[12] Cunningham's view that 'the system of Nanak had some such original distinctiveness which alone could provide the basis of a nation' was 'hardly tenable'.[13] Nevertheless, Cunningham is quoted extensively by Banerjee. Among his own contemporaries, Banerjee draws heavily upon the 'monumental' works of Macauliffe and Bhai Kahn Singh, but rejects their

assumptions regarding the distinctiveness of Sikhism. Banerjee maintains that in trying 'to make reparation to the Sikhs for the insults which Trumpp offered to their Gurus and their religion', Macauliffe has not been 'always fair to Hinduism and the Hindus'.[14] While referring to Bhai Kahn Singh's *Mahan Kosh* as a work of the 'highest importance', Banerjee regards *Ham Hindu Nahin* as 'not of much historical value'.[15] For the same reason, Teja Singh's works are only partly appreciated: his thesis on the *Growth of Responsibility in Sikhism* studying the early Sikh community was 'hardly acceptable' to Banerjee.[16] At the same time, he finds Jadunath Sarkar 'not very-well informed' and 'unnecessarily offensive to Sikh sentiment'.[17] Banerjee describes William Irvine as 'invaluable' because of his reference to the contemporary Persian chroniclers.[18] The other writers are dismissed on one or another ground: James Brown, John Malcolm, William McGregor and Gokal Chand Narang for their 'cursory' or 'superficial' treatment; Syad Muhammad Latif and Ernest Trumpp for their 'anti-Sikh bias', though the latter could be referred to 'with caution'.[19]

Banerjee's approach to his sources reflects the tension between his assumptions and the accepted canons of historical research. Challenging the 'advocates of Persian literature' (presumably Sarkar), he rightly maintains that 'for a true perspective on Sikh history', a study of Sikh literature is essential. He depends mainly upon the *Adi Granth*, the *Vārs* of Bhai Gurdas, the *Bachittar Nātak*, Sainapat's *Guru Sobha*, Sukha Singh's *Gurbilas Patshahi 10*, and Santokh Singh's *Nanak Prakash* and *Suraj Prakash*. He makes considerable use of Bhai Kahn Singh's *Gurmat Prabhakar* and *Gurmat Sudhakar*. However, among the works not found useful for 'the account of the Gurus' are Ratan Singh Bhangu's *Prachin Panth Prakash*, Giani Gian Singh's *Tawarikh Guru Khalsa*, and the *Gurbilas Patshahi Chhevin*. Among the valuable non-Sikh Persian sources are Mohsin Fani's' *Dabistān-i Mazāhib* and Sujan Rai Bhandari's *Khulāsat ut-Tawārīkh*. The useful English sources are Ibbetson's *Punjab Castes* and Rose's *Glossary of Tribes and Castes*. Banerjee appears to rely largely on English translations of the Persian and Gurmukhi sources.[20] Although he had learnt the Gurmukhi alphabet, he did not feel confident about his linguistic competence.

III

In his description of what transpired on Baisakhi of 1699, Banerjee draws largely upon Macauliffe who, in turn, quotes extensively from Butay Shah. Supplemented by information from Sukha Singh and Cunningham, this account contains the following well known features:[21] the Guru asking all his followers to be present on Baisakhi; the huge gathering at Keshgarh; the call for volunteers to lay down their life; five men coming forward successively in response to each call; the killing of goats by the Guru in the tent; the 'Panj-Piaras' being presented in a new dress; preparation for baptism of the double-edged sword; giving *amrit* to the five-beloved; the new salutation and the appellation 'Singh'; the five 'ks'; the four watchwords; and finally, the initiation of Guru Gobind Singh himself by the cherished-five. Furthermore, the Guru excommunicated the 'dissentient sects' and the Masands on this occasion, and prohibited the consumption of tobacco. Banerjee also mentions the consternation caused by these proceedings and the reluctance on the part of brahman and khatri Sikhs to come forward and accept the new baptism. This made the leadership of the Jats and the low castes inevitable.

Banerjee dwells at some length on the 'new' features. He regards the *pahul* of the double-edged sword as the 'diverging point' not only in the career of Guru Gobind Singh but also in the history of Sikhism. Its adoption in place of the Guru's toe (*charan pahul*) signified the substitution of the 'old ideal of humility and surrender' by a new one of 'self-assertion and self-reliance'.[22] He also says that 'the introduction of *pahul*' amounted to 'the simultaneous abolition of pontifical Gurushíp'. With this, 'the leadership of the community was left to the community itself'. Through this 'revolutionary' step, 'the spiritual leadership of the community' also came to be vested in the *Guru Granth Sahib*.[23] Thus, Banerjee thinks that personal guruship ended with the institution of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh. Also, he sees 'no historical reason' for the excommunication of the *bhaddanīs* (those who performed ritual shaving of the head) and *kuḍimārs* (perpetrators of female infanticide), mentioned by Cunningham.[24]

Among the other 'new' developments, the tenth Guru is said to have obliterated 'all distinctions of caste and creed' for the

first time,[25] categorically rejecting 'beliefs, rituals or ceremonies that implied the recognition of anything but the One True Lord'.[26] The suggestion here is that the situation was somewhat indeterminate under the earlier Gurus. In the first volume, Banerjee is at pains to prove that Guru Nanak did not reject the caste and the other hallmarks of the Brahmanical system like Sanskritic scriptures, pilgrimages, ritual charities and renunciation.[27] This position obliges Banerjee to discount the idea of social commitment in the message of Guru Nanak, and to ignore the political undertones in his Bāṇī.[28] Guru Tegh Bahadur's concern for the oppressed and the persecuted is also glossed over.[29] Concern for the downtrodden is attributed to Guru Gobind Singh for the first time. He is said to have created the Khalsa 'to assist the weak, the helpless and the oppressed' on the one hand, and 'to extirpate the tyrants' on the other.[30] The Guru 'exalted military life above everything else'.[31] Indeed, 'we breathe a new spirit' in the Khalsa, 'marked by the clear assumption of a more positive role in human affairs'.[32] In this new ideology, 'soldierly qualities received the foremost place', and dependence on God practically amounted to 'a dependence on the Sword'.[33]

IV

At the same time, Banerjee is not entirely oblivious of the linkages with the past. He maintains that 'though the ideology was new', 'the structure was built on the old'.[34] He is at pains to refute Jadunath Sarkar's assertion that Guru Gobind Singh 'converted the spiritual unity of the Sikhs into an instrument of political advancement' as a result of which they 'became mere *soldiers*'.[35] Banerjee points out that the tenth Guru had not 'in any way given up the essentials of Guru Nanak's teaching'. Among the elements of 'the old Sikh spirit' synthesized with the Khalsa are 'the same insistence on the worship of the one True Lord, the same idealisation of devotion and surrender and the same glorification of the Name'.[36] Banerjee talks of the linkages of the Khalsa with the idea of the sanctity of the five Sikhs, the importance of the *sangat* in relation to the Guru, and the exaltation of the military ideals since the days of Guru Hargobind.[37]

Logically, then, why did Guru Gobind Singh feel impelled to create the Khalsa? Banerjee attributes this to the changed external and internal circumstances. He gives considerable weight to the irreconcilable hostility of the hill rajas, aided as they were by the 'Muhammadans'. To enable his followers to withstand this combined threat by 'their own unaided strength', the Guru is said to have created the Khalsa.[38] However, the 'hopeless disintegration from within' also had to be tackled. The authority of the Guru was being challenged by the Masands and the dissenters, i.e. the Minas, the Dhirmallias and the Ram Raiyas, since the last years of Guru Hargobind. Therefore, the need arose 'to revitalize the Sikhs by giving them a new ideology and a new programme of action', which could unite the contradictory forces under 'a common ideal'.[39]

Moreover, 'the character of the Sikhs themselves demanded further development'.[40] The growing preponderance of Jats among the Sikhs since the time of Guru Arjan had changed the nature of the Guru's following. Banerjee dilates on the 'fundamental traits' of the Jats, highlighting their warlike qualities, love for freedom, and 'marauding instinct'.[41] Certain 'readjustments' were necessary to 'accommodate these people within the system'. The policy of 'non resistance' followed by Guru Amar Das or 'passive resistance' shown by Guru Tegh Bahadur 'would hardly have suited the temper and tradition of these people'.[42] Thus, by joining the Sikh Panth in large numbers, the Jats themselves appear to have contributed towards militarism, a 'process that had already commenced' under Guru Hargobind. By adopting 'militarism finally as an article of creed', Guru Gobind Singh 'registered this change'. 'The Khalsa was a compound of the Sikh and the Jat'; it united 'the religious fervour of the Sikh with the warlike temper of the Jat'.[43] Banerjee regards this as 'a rather striking example of the assimilation of the form of the religious system to the innate tendencies of the people'.[44] He says:

> The Sikh gave him the ideal, the Jat the material, and combining the two the Guru forged 'a dynamic force', which none could henceforward ignore. Speaking dialectically, we may say that the Sikh was the thesis, the Jat the anti-thesis, and the synthesis came in the Khalsa.[45]

Thus Banerjee assigns an excessive weight to race and the

political environment in his explanation of what Guru Gobind Singh did. He discounts the role of Sikh ideology in the creation of the Khalsa. His preoccupation with race suggests that the Jat tide swept almost everything before it. To stay afloat the Guru had to produce a boat out of the materials offered by his followers. The role of ideology and individual initiative are discounted in this explanatory scheme. For this reason, Banerjee's discussion of the 'Guru's Mission', which, he says, was 'to spread the true faith and to extirpate the oppressor and the wicked',[46] remains somewhat unrelated to the religious ideology of Sikhism.

Banerjee devotes considerable space to the question of 'the alleged worship of Durga' and its relevance for the creation of the Khalsa. He rightly regards it as 'the most controversial question in the career of Guru Gobind Singh'.[47] Therefore, different sources and their variations regarding the *hom* ceremony are examined at some length. Banerjee is inclined to regard Sainapat's silence in this matter as 'decisive', because in his view, *Guru Sobha* was 'possibly the most controversial authority on Guru Gobind Singh', next only to the 'Guru's own works'.[48] Yet, to explain the inclusion of this episode in Sukha Singh's *Gurbilas Patshahi* 10, considered to be the 'earliest and the best of all the later records',[49] he suggests that by the late 1790s when Sukha Singh composed his work, 'the worship of the Devi had again become popular and it is quite conceivable that in this changed mental climate the Durga legend originated and gradually got current'.[50]

The idea of reversion to Hindu practices substantiates Banerjee's thesis of Sikhism starting as a reform movement within brahmanical Hinduism. At the same time, his own Vaishnava proclivities inadvertently get reflected in his work. He was hesitant to acknowledge the relevance of the goddess for the creation of the Khalsa.

> The *hom* ceremony, therefore, had either not taken place at all, or if it had, it must have been during the earlier part of the Guru's career when he was a younger man, surrounded by Hindu influences, without and within, and when his object appears to have been to come to some sort of a lasting understanding with the Hill Rajas, who were all fanatical worshippers of the *Devi*.

In support of this conjecture, Banerjee quotes from the *Bachittar Nātak*:

Thou turnest men like me from blades of grass into mountains; than Thou there is none other Cherisher of the poor.
God, do Thou Thyself pardon mine errors; there is none who hath erred like me.[51]

Banerjee concludes by saying, 'it may not be improbable that the Guru is here referring to the incident in question and the policy that he had pursued in his earlier life'.[52]

In fact, Banerjee does not see any organic linkages between Guru Gobind Singh's activity in the pre-Khalsa period and the 'central climacteric' of his career. The Guru 'seems to have pursued different objectives' in this phase which Banerjee labels as 'Early Adventures'.[53] The Guru's military activity during this phase is said to be geared initially to saving 'himself from the wrath of the Emperor'.[54] Subsequently, in his dealings with the hill chiefs, the Guru's 'object' was 'to gradually enter into the fraternity of the Hill Rajas and establish himself as one of their equals'.[55] This policy, according to Banerjee, 'proved a conspicuous failure',[56] obliging Guru Gobind Singh to reorient himself.

V

Banerjee treats the post-Khalsa period or 'the last phase' of Guru Gobind Singh in the longest of the three chapters devoted to him. It deals with his battles, loss of Anandpur and the loss of his sons and mother, his wanderings, his three-year sojourn at Damdama Sahib, the preparation of a new recension of the *Adi Granth*, relations with the Mughal emperors, and the circumstances of his end. The Epilogue sums up the main argument of the author and gives his assessment of the Guru's greatness.

Banerjee regards the battles between the hill rajas and the Guru as 'the immediate effect of the coming of the Khalsa'. The differences between the two, which were 'fundamental' in nature, got 'accentuated by the Guru's reforms'.[57] Banerjee questions the Sikh writers' view that the 'war' was 'forced upon the Guru'. Rather, the 'marauding instinct' of his well armed Jat followers and their plundering raids on villages seriously threatened the integrity of the Kahlur chief's dominions. It was because of the 'oppression of the Khalsa' that 'he decided to enlist the assistance

of the Mughal Government'. He was temporarily ejected but on his return to Anandpur, 'the Khalsa horsemen' again began to 'levy contributions by force', and 'those who paid forthwith were not troubled further'.[58] Here, it is important to note three points: one, Banerjee continues to dwell on 'the marauding instinct' of the unruly Jats as an explanation; two, he reduces the levying of 'contribution' to merely a 'question of supplies'; and three, he does not attribute any political motives to the Khalsa, let alone associate the idea of sovereignty with them.

Banerjee was unable to appreciate the significance of the Guru's dealings with the Mughal emperors. The sending of the *Zafarnāma* and seeking a meeting with Aurangzeb are explained not in terms of the Guru's eagerness to regain Anandpur and its environs back, but to secure the 'punishment of the wrong-doer', i.e. Wazir Khan. When negotiations with Bahadur Shah, with whom the Guru 'had been travelling as a mere companion', appeared to have failed and the Guru's end was near, he is said to have 'commissioned Banda to accomplish by force what he had failed to accomplish by an appeal to justice'.[59] Wazir Khan is also mentioned as 'the real instigator of the murderous attack that led to the Guru's death'.[60] Banerjee maintains that, 'to let Wazir Khan go unpunished would have been to deny the very basis of his creed'.[61]

In short, the post-Khalsa developments in Banerjee's account begin with a reference to the new aggressive militarism of the Guru's followers, and end with the Guru's determination to punish the guilty. There is no indication of a deliberate pursuit of political sovereignty or of its ideological basis. It was left for the Khalsa to achieve sovereignty after Guru Gobind Singh. In the Epilogue, however, Banerjee becomes conscious of the possible role of ideology, and attributes the successes of the Khalsa against the Mughals and Afghans to 'the ideological factors'.[62] Ironically, he even takes Jadunath Sarkar to task for 'completely' ignoring the role of ideology—something that he himself does with reference to Guru Nanak and the period before the creation of the Khalsa.

The ideology of the Khalsa is now said to have kept the 'predatory trait' of the Guru's followers in check for some time by giving it 'a wider purpose and direction' as reflected in 'the Sikh war of independence'. After the ouster of the enemy,

however, this trait resurfaced in the 'internecine quarrels' in the period of the Sikh *misls*. Ranjit Singh was able to restrain these tendencies, but not for very long. His military monarchy is said to be 'an aberration', because it was 'far off from anything that the Guru had contemplated'.[63] Banerjee notes the reappearance of the same predatory trait 'in the lawlessness and rapacity of the Khalsa soldiery and in the more subtle ambition of some of the leaders' after the death of Ranjit Singh. This predatory trait became 'one of the main causes of the political debacle of the Sikhs'. For Banerjee, 'the greatest contribution' of Guru Gobind Singh to the cause of India was 'the wresting of the Punjab and the adjoining lands upto the frontier from the clutches of the Afghans' by the Khalsa.[64] The sword-arm of Hindus fulfilled its historical mission of withstanding the Muhammadans. Sir Asutosh's vision of Hindu nationalism appears to have been realized by Banerjee in his treatment of the Khalsa.

VI

On the whole, Indubhusan Banerjee is not able to resolve the tension between his hypothesis and the Sikh tradition. In trying to prove that Guru Nanak was merely a reformer 'out not to kill but to heal, not to destroy, but to conserve',[65] Banerjee fails to notice the obvious ideological linkages between the first and the last Guru. In presenting Guru Gobind Singh as primarily responding to his environment dominated by 'religious persecution' and the peculiar racial 'traits' of the Jats, Banerjee overlooks the role of Sikh religious ideology and also belittles the Guru's creativity and initiative. Furthermore, Banerjee's 'point of view' appears to preclude him from approaching the sources with an open mind which often results in their somewhat selective and literal use. In addition to the 'limitations of conceptualization', his reliance on English translations of the Gurumukhi and Persian sources appears to have added to the 'limitations of his source materials'.[66] His work virtually stands dated in its main premise as well as the evidence on which it is based.

The question therefore arises why did the *Evolution of the Khalsa* remain in circulation for almost half a century? The work appears to have stood the test of time primarily because of its

intrinsic worth in terms of comprehensive content and scholarly treatment, combining detail with a 'synoptic vision', treating the subject 'as part of a bigger whole'.[67] The readability of his work was enhanced by a lively style and impressive analysis of the conflicting evidence. Moreover, in the context of the contemporary debate on the distinct religious identity of the Sikhs and their agitation for political concessions, the wider Hindu readership probably felt more comfortable with Banerjee's thesis. In the final analysis, Banerjee remained acceptable to the Sikh readership as well because of his essentially sympathetic treatment of the subject.

NOTES

1. Indubhusan Banerjee, 'Preface to the first edition', in *Evolution of the Khalsa*, vol. I: *The Foundation of the Sikh Panth*, Calcutta: A. Mukherjee & Co., 1963, p. xiii.
2. 'Indubhusan Banerjee', in *Historians and Historiography of the Sikhs*, ed. Fauja Singh, New Delhi: Oriental Publishers & Distributors, 1978, pp. 239-57. Incidentally, Banerjee's other important book is entitled *The Supreme Court in Conflict*.
3. Anil Chandra Banerjee, 'Note on the Author', in *Evolution of the Khalsa*, I, xi.
4. Indubhusan Banerjee, 'Preface to the First Edition', vol. I, p. xiv.
5. Anil Chandra Banerjee, 'Indubhusan Banerjee', p. 239.
6. For the concerns and assumptions of the Hindu 'Nationalist' historiography, R.C. Majumdar, 'Nationalist Historians', in *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, ed. C.H. Philips, London: Oxford University Press, 1961, pp. 416-28.
7. 'A great educationist and a great jurist of his time', Sir Asutosh Mookerjee (1864-1924) was the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calcutta during 1906-14 and 1921-3; a judge of the Calcutta High Court during 1903-4; and a member of the Bengal Legislative Council and Imperial Legislative Council during 1899-1903. Born in a middle class brahman family, Sir Asutosh is said to have 'proudly cherished the orthodox Hindu tradition'. 'Deep patriotism and national feelings' inspired his manifold activities. He was instrumental in giving a 'national' character to the University of Calcutta, shifting its focus from 'foreign' to Indian languages and subjects. His son, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, became a leading member of the Hindu Maha Sabha. Amiya Barat, *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. S.P. Sen, Calcutta: Institute of Historical Studies, 1974, pp. 152-4.
8. Anil Chandra Banerjee, 'Note on the Author', vol. I, p. x.

9. Indubhusan Banerjee, *Evolution of the Khalsa*, vol. I, p. 1.
10. Ibid., vol. I, p. 4.
11. Ibid., vol. I, pp. 2, 4.
12. Ibid., vol. I, p. 289.
13. Ibid., vol. I, p. 9.
14. Ibid., vol. I, pp. 289-90.
15. Ibid., vol. I, pp. 285, 286.
16. Ibid., vol. I, p. 291.
17. Ibid., vol. I, p. 290.
18. Indubhusan Banerjee, *Evolution of the Khalsa*, vol. II: *The Reformation*, Calcutta: A Mukherjee & Co, 1962, p. 194.
19. Ibid., vol. I, pp. 287-90.
20. Ibid., vol. I, pp. 191-5.
21. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 113-16.
22. Ibid., vol. II, p. 114.
23. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 118-19.
24. Ibid., vol. II, p. 112, n 1.
25. Ibid., vol. II, p. 115.
26. Ibid., vol. II, p. 116.
27. Ibid., vol. I, pp. 110-11.
28. Ibid., vol. I, pp. 113-45.
29. Cf. J.S. Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, The New Cambridge History of India Series, revd. edn., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 71-2.
30. Indubhusan Banerjee, *Evolution of the Khalsa*, vol. II, p. 118.
31. Ibid., vol. II, p. 120.
32. Ibid., vol. II, p. 124.
33. Ibid., vol. II, p. 117.
34. Ibid., vol. II, p. 119.
35. Ibid., vol. II, p. 122.
36. Ibid., vol. II, p. 123.
37. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 119-20.
38. Ibid., vol. II, p. 92.
39. Ibid., vol. II, p. 108.
40. Ibid., vol. II, p. 67.
41. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 35-44.
42. Ibid., vol. II, p. 44.
43. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 124-5.
44. Ibid., vol. II, p. 152.
45. Ibid., vol. II, p. 153.
46. Ibid., vol. II, p. 496.
47. Ibid., vol. II, p. 97.
48. Ibid., vol. II, p. 105.

49. Ibid., vol. II, p. 193.
50. Ibid., vol. II, p. 105.
51. Ibid., vol. II, p. 107.
52. Ibid., vol. II, p. 106.
53. Ibid., vol. II, p. 92.
54. Ibid., vol. II, p. 67.
55. Ibid., vol. II, p. 92.
56. Ibid., vol. II, p. 73.
57. Ibid., vol. II, p. 126.
58. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 127-30.
59. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 144, 145.
60. Ibid., vol. II, p. 151.
61. Ibid., vol. II, p. 158.
62. Ibid., vol. II, p. 154.
63. Ibid., vol. II, p. 155.
64. Ibid., vol. II, p. 161.
65. Ibid., vol. I, p. 145.
66. J.S. Grewal, 'Indubhusan Banerjee's Evolution of the Khalsa', in *Historians and Historiography of the Sikhs*, ed. Fauja Singh. New Delhi: Oriental Publishers & Distributors, 1978, p. 263.
67. Anil Chandra Banerjee, 'Indubhusan Banerjee', op. cit., pp. 254-7.

CHAPTER 11

A Modern Sikh View: Teja Singh And Ganda Singh

Anurupita Kaur and J.S. Grewal

Teja Singh and Ganda Singh were already established scholars before they published *A Short History of the Sikhs*. Ganda Singh's early works highlight his basic interests as a historian: biography, original source materials and issues or themes of contemporary interest.[1] Teja Singh's works had two major concerns: to interpret Sikhism as an original system and to propagate this interpretation among Sikhs and non-Sikhs alike.[2] *A Short History of the Sikhs* was Teja Singh's only systematic work on Sikh history. The authors' twin interest in Sikhism and Sikh history formed an admirable combination for writing this work. They looked upon it as 'the first attempt to write the history of the Sikhs from a secular stand point'.[3]

The sources used by the authors were mainly contemporary, and they used second-hand or later authorities only in support of the earlier ones. All major works in Gurmukhi, some available only as manuscripts, are listed in the bibliography. Persian works provide material for the period of Sikh-Mughal conflict, and nearly all contemporary works in Persian are listed. Works of the early European writers like James Browne, George Forster, John Malcolm and J.D. Cunningham, and Indian writers like G.C. Narang and Indubhusan Banerjee, also figure in the bibliography, apart from the earlier works of the authors themselves.

The primary concern of Teja Singh and Ganda Singh was to

provide a meaningful narrative of Sikh history from the time of Guru Nanak to the establishment of Sikh rule. The book is divided into three parts. The first part deals with the 'religious foundations' under the ten Gurus. The second part focuses on the 'political foundations', i.e. the activities of Banda Bahadur. The third part covers the political history of the Sikhs from 1716 to 1765 in four clearly demarcated phases, showing how 'persecution leads to power'. The authors point out what they regard as the inadequacies of their predecessors, on the basis of fresh evidence, better linguistic competence, and their own understanding of the original sources.[4]

The authors state their position clearly. According to them, the Sikh Gurus were temporal and spiritual guides of the Sikhs. The political institutions of the Sikhs grew out of their religious origins. 'The whole movement was gradual and at no stage was there any sudden or uncalled for departure from the original aim'. The character of the Sikh movement according to the authors, was multifaceted and its division into 'saintly' and 'worldly', 'peaceful' and 'military' was unjustified. The Sikh movement was harmonious and many-sided.[5]

II

According to the authors, while reading Puranic literature Guru Gobind Singh was deeply impressed by the idea that God had sent a saviour from time to time to uphold righteousness and to destroy evil. He came to believe that he was the man required by the times. As he states in the *Bachittar Nātak*, he believed that God had commissioned him 'to advance righteousness, to emancipate the good, and to destroy all evil-doers root and branch'. The keynote of literature preserved in the *Dasam Granth* is optimism, freedom from superstition, and strong faith in the oneness of God and of all humanity. His purpose in producing this literature was 'to inspire ardour for religious warfare'. Literary activity was placed by the Guru at the forefront of his programme of national reconstruction. He wanted to infuse a new spirit among his followers and to steel their hearts against all injustice and tyranny, both political and religious.[6]

Beginning with the narrative of the tenth Guru, the authors

refer to the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur at Delhi, which revealed to Guru Gobind Singh the danger of backsliding among the Sikhs. Apart from the close followers of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the Sikhs had denied their religion on being questioned by the Mughal officials. Guru Gobind Singh vowed that he would make it impossible for the Sikhs to hide their creed in the future by giving them distinguishing marks.' The objective of making the identity of the Sikhs patently visible was conceived by the Guru early in his career.

Guru Gobind Singh tried to rouse a sense of national unity among the people, especially the semi-independent rulers of the Shivaliks. He realized, however, that these people could not rise above their racial and caste prejudices to unite for any 'national cause'. This led to the further realization of the need to

> cut at the root of all such institutions as hindered the unification and consolidation of the nation, and to rear a self-contained and compact body of men who would be pure enough to free themselves from the oppression of priests and rulers, and would at the same time be strong enough to maintain this freedom.[8]

At another place, the authors state that the aim of Guru Gobind Singh in founding the Khalsa was 'to build up a nation of the purified ones who would be free from the evils of religion and society'.[9]

III

Before the creation of the Khalsa, Guru Gobind Singh had asked Pandit Kesho from Benares to invoke Durga, the goddess of power. The whole purpose of this exercise was to disillusion the people with such beliefs and ceremonies. The evidence of the Guru's own writings, in which he is clearly opposed to the worship of gods and goddesses, refutes the idea of his own belief in the goddess. The authors add that when the Pandit could not produce any result the Guru flashed his naked sword and declared: 'This is the goddess of power.'[10]

Standing before a large gathering of Sikhs at Anandpur on Baisakhi day in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh asked if anyone was willing to lay down his life for *dharma*. In response to his call,

five Sikhs offered themselves. Daya Ram, a Khatri of Lahore; Dharam Das, a Jat of Delhi; Mohkam Chand, a washerman of Dwarka; Himmat, a cook of Jagannath; and Sahib Chand, a barber of Bidar.[11] The Guru led each one of them to a separate enclosure where he beheaded a goat every time. These five Sikhs were administered *pahul* prepared by the Guru with sweetened water stirred with a sword. They were called 'the Beloved Five'.[12] After baptizing the five beloved ones the Guru requested them to baptize him in the same manner and declared that there was no difference between him and his baptized Sikhs. He was their Guru and collectively they were his Guru. They were the Khalsa.[13]

The Guru, according to the authors, ordered that all those who called themselves Sikhs ought to receive baptism and follow the *rahit* he had initiated. Within a few days nearly 80,000 men were baptized. The Khalsa were to wear the five 'ks' on their person: long hair (*kesh*), a comb (*kanghā*), a pair of shorts (*kachha*), an iron bracelet (*kaḍā*), and a sword (*kirpān*). They were to have a common surname—Singh or lion. The Guru became 'Gobind Singh' after his own baptism. The baptized Khalsa were told to believe in one invisible God and the mission of the ten Gurus. Bravery as much as purity, was their religion. Guru Gobind Singh expressed great admiration for the Khalsa. To serve them pleased his heart, and no other service was so dear to his soul. 'All the substance in my house, nay, my soul and body are at their disposal.' The Guru poured his life into the Khalsa and invested them with his own personality. The boundaries of the Khalsa were clearly defined by the Guru. Any person who did not fall within these boundaries was not considered a part of the Khalsa. Those who did not identify themselves with the mission of the ten Gurus and did not subscribe to the belief in one invisible God, and who believed in any rival *guru*, had no place in the Khalsa order. In contrast to the regard in which the Guru held the Khalsa, the followers of such *gurus*, i.e. the Minas, the Dhirmallias and the Ram Raiyas, were ostracized and their company was forbidden to the true Sikhs.[14] The mode of salutation was changed and instead of touching each other's feet, as was done in the past, the Khalsa had to fold their hands and say, *Wah Guru ji ka Khalsa, Wah Guru ji ki fateh*. The Khalsa were instructed by the Guru to lead clean lives, to avoid alcohol and tobacco.[15]

IV

During Guru Gobind Singh's lifetime, the Khalsa fought several battles against the hill chiefs and the forces of the Mughal governors and *faujdārs*. However, Teja Singh and Ganda Singh do not attribute any political aspiration to the Guru or to the Khalsa. They emphasize that the battles of the Khalsa were not directed to gain territory.

This period from 1699 to 1708 was a turbulent one. In 1701, a battle was fought at Anandpur in which a number of Singhs lost their lives. During the siege of Anandpur forty Sikhs who disagreed with the Guru signed a 'disclaimer' and left him. Another battle mentioned by the authors is that of Chamkaur where the two elder sons of the Guru and three of the Beloved Ones were slain. The battle at Muktsar saw the return of the forty Sikhs to the fold of the Guru.[16]

After the battle at Muktsar, the Guru managed to reach Talwandi Sabo, now known as Damdama Sahib or the resting place of the Guru. It became a great seat of learning and is sometimes referred to as the Guru's Kashi. Here Guru Gobind Singh gave the final form to the Holy Granth. At Dina, the Guru had sent the *Zafarnāma* (the epistle of victory) to Aurangzeb in reply to summons from him. The *Zafarnāma* had a profound effect on Aurangzeb and he invited the Guru to meet him. The Guru was on his way to meet the emperor when the latter died in February 1707. This was followed by Guru Gobind Singh's meeting with Bahadur Shah at Agra in the summer of 1707. The Guru intended to return to Anandpur. However, while the negotiations were still in progress, Bahadur Shah had to proceed to Rajputana. He was accompanied by the Guru. When he realized that Bahadur Shah had no intentions of coming to any kind of understanding with him, he went to Nander. It was here that he baptized Banda before he was stabbed by a Pathan. The wound had not yet healed when the Guru tried to bend a stiff bow and the wound began to bleed again. The Guru breathed his last on 7 October 1708. Before his death, personal guruship was abolished; the whole Sikh community, organized as the Panth, was to guide itself by the teachings of the Gurus incorporated in the Holy Granth, and by the collective sense of the community.[17]

V

According to the authors, Sikh history reveals the gradual making and development of a nation in the hands of ten successive leaders or Gurus. They had in mind the duties of a nation as much as the duties of an individual. All apparent contradictions of Sikh history vanish once this development in Sikh history is viewed as 'transfiguration' rather than as 'transformation'.[18] Thus, the Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh was not a departure from the earlier Sikh movement. The notion that Guru Nanak was a man of devotion and peace, and did not think of the worldly needs of his people is entirely incorrect. In support of Guru Nanak's concern for the political and social disabilities of the people, Teja Singh and Ganda Singh quote *Āsā dī Vār*:[19]

Sin is the king, Greed the minister, Falsehood the hunt master, and Lust the deputy to take counsel with; they sit and confer together. The blind subjects, out of ignorance, pay homage like dead men.

To give practical shape to the idea of equality, Guru Nanak 'instituted the custom of interdining in a common mess attached to every place of worship'. He adopted the spoken language of the people for religious purposes to rouse their national sentiment. 'That the Guru was not a mere reformer but the founder of a new religion is clear from the fact that he travelled abroad to non-Hindu countries, established Sangats or Sikh organizations in different centres under the charge of Manji-holders.' He took special care to test and appoint a successor who should continue to work after him. Guru Angad was actually installed and 'saluted' by Guru Nanak before he died.[20]

Guru Angad explained the mission of Guru Nanak through regular meetings, wrote on the same themes, maintained the common kitchen and gave definiteness and distinction to the general ideals laid down by Guru Nanak. He collected the sayings of his Guru and had them recorded in a special script called Gurmukhi. 'Thus a nucleus of the Sikh scripture began to be formed, giving a definite direction to the faith of the disciples. It constantly kept alive in their minds the consciousness that they were something distinct from the common mass of Hindus.' Guru Angad, too, tested his sons and Sikhs before choosing Amar Das as the successor.[21] Guru Amar Das reinforced the ideal of social commitment and told 'his Sikhs to reject the path of

renunciation, and consider the life of a householder as the only way approved for practising religion'. He constructed a *baoli* with 84 steps 'for the use of visitors' at Goindval. The Guru's *langar* rapidly became a great institution. All had to sit in a row and eat together. There were no distinctions of caste or creed, high or low. The number of Sikhs having increased considerably, the Guru partitioned his entire spiritual domain into 22 provinces or *manjīs*, and appointed his representatives to each of these.

His own compositions as well as selections from the compositions of some *bhagats* were added to the compositions of his predecessors and compiled by his grandson Sahansar Ram. Guru Arjan referred to these volumes for the compilation of the Holy Granth. Gurbani was recited during ceremonies of marriage and death. Guru Amar Das wanted only the praises of God to be sung on his death. He consecrated his son-in-law, Ram Das, as his successor before he died on 1 September 1574.[22]

Guru Ram Das laid the foundation of the city of Amritsar, then known as Chak Guru Ramdas or Ramdaspur. He invited traders and craftsmen to reside in the town. 'Possession of wealth was no longer to be considered as Maya, but as a very salutary and helpful thing in the conduct of human affairs.' Guru Ram Das died in Goindval on 1 September 1581 to be succeeded by his youngest son. Guru Arjan completed the work of building the tank and the city with the manual and material support of the Sikhs. Every Sikh was expected to set aside one-tenth (*dasvandh*) of his income for the Guru's fund as a voluntary contribution. This could be remitted through an accredited Masand. Guru Arjan laid the foundation of the central shrine, the Golden Temple, in the midst of the tank of Amritsar. He founded Tarn Taran, Sri Hargobindpur and Kartarpur (in the Jalandhar Doab) as townships. He constructed a *baoli* at Lahore. Above all, he completed the Holy Granth, 'the greatest work of his life'.[23]

Teja Singh and Ganda Singh outline the history of the compilation of the *Adi Granth*. Some work in this direction had already been done by Guru Angad and Guru Amar Das. Guru Arjan went to Goindval personally to borrow the volumes from Baba Mohan and to carry them to Amritsar. He consulted some other sources as well to complete the work. Guru Arjan's own contribution to the Holy Granth was the largest. He also included

selections from the writings of fifteen Hindu and Muslim saints, most of whom belonged to the so-called depressed or untouchable classes. The basis of selection was not doctrinal but 'the lyrical and living values of the pieces'. The idea was inherent in the 'cosmopolitan nature of Sikhism'. Guru Arjan was not the first Guru to conceive the idea of compiling a collection of the verses of the *bhagats*. He enlarged the scope of inclusion and gave 'a scriptural position' to their writings. Compositions of men like Kanha, Chhajju, Shah Husain and Piloo were rejected either because of their Vedantic leanings or because of their hatred for the world, or for women.

Guru Arjan 'wanted only healthy optimism and joy in worldly duties and responsibilities and not mere tearful ecstaticism or other-worldliness'. The vast material collected was reduced to writing by Bhai Gurdas at the dictation of Guru Arjan. The Holy Granth was completed and installed in the Harmandar at Amritsar in 1604. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh refer to the arrangement of the contents of the Holy Granth and make some interesting comments. The *Granth* was brought to its present final form by Guru Gobind Singh at Damdama Sahib (Talwandi Sabo) in 1706. The new recension was prepared, not by dictating it from memory, nor by adding the *baṇi* of Guru Tegh Bahadur for the first time, but by re-editing an existing recension.[24]

Jahangir harboured a prejudice against the Sikh movement. As he states in his *Tuzuk*, he had thought of putting an end to 'this false traffic' or to bring Guru Arjan into the fold of Islam. He got the chance during the rebellion of Prince Khusrau. After the prince was captured and punished, Jahangir was informed that Guru Arjan had applied a saffron mark on Khusrau's forehead as a sign of his blessings. No enquiry was made, nor any trial held. Jahangir asserts that he knew the Guru's heresies. He ordered that his house and children be made over to Murtaza Khan, that his property be confiscated, and that he should 'be put to death with tortures'. The allegation seems to have been concocted by the Guru's enemies, and Jahangir got the pretext he needed. Guru Arjan was handed over to Chandu Shah who nursed a personal grudge against him. Subjected to all kinds of tortures in the burning heat of Lahore, the blistered body of Guru Arjan was thrown into the cold water of the Ravi to be carried away on 30 May 1606.[25]

The martyrdom of Guru Arjan convinced the Sikhs that they should arm themselves and fight if they had to survive. Guru Hargobind wore two swords on the occasion of his accession, one representing spiritual and the other temporal interests. He asked the Masands and the Sikhs to bring arms and horses as offerings. A fortress, named Lohgarh, was constructed in Amritsar. A meeting place for the Sikhs called Akal Takht, or the throne of the Almighty, was also built. In the courtyard in the front, physical feats were performed, visitors were received, and complaints were heard and redressed. Jahangir summoned the Guru and held him as a state prisoner in the fort of Gwalior. Later, however, Jahangir was convinced that he had been misled. Guru Hargobind was released and he resumed his mission. He built the town of Kiratpur in the hills. Jahangir's death in 1627 marked the end of a peaceful phase.

Shah Jahan prohibited the conversion of Muslims and ordered the demolition of temples. The *baoli* at Lahore was filled up and a mosque was erected on the site of the free kitchen attached to it. In such a situation even the slightest provocation could have led to violence. In 1628, an altercation over a hawk between the Sikhs and some men of the royal hunting party provided such a provocation. The Mughal noble Mukhlis Khan was killed. Guru Hargobind left Amritsar for Kartarpur where he was attacked by the Mughal *faujdār* of Jalandhar. The *faujdār* was killed in the battle. Two other commandants, Painde Khan and Kale Khan, were killed in another battle fought near Kartarpur in 1632. A new heroism was emerging in the land, of which the object, then dimly seen, was to create the will to resist the mighty power of the foreign aggressors. This accorded well with the intentions of Guru Nanak. The Sikh Gurus were practical leaders as well as meditating saints. For them, to propagate religious ideals was not inconsistent with active measures for the service of mankind. The assumption of *mīrī-pīrī* by Guru Hargobind was not a deviation but a logical development.[26]

Teja Singh and Ganda Singh present a factual narrative of events from the death of Guru Hargobind through the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur to the institution of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh. They talk of 'transfiguration' deliberately to emphasize the historical links between the ideas of Guru Nanak and the structure raised by his successors, and to hammer the

point that developments in Sikh history were inspired by one and the same ideology expounded by Guru Nanak and his successors.

VI

The part entitled 'political foundations' deals with Banda Bahadur alone, summarizing Ganda Singh's earlier work on Banda Singh. It is emphasized that Banda Bahadur was converted to his faith by the Guru and baptized as a regular Sikh. The Guru, according to them, raised him to the position of 'the commander' of the Khalsa and 'sent' him to the Punjab to continue the struggle against the Mughal rulers. Banda Bahadur sacked the towns of Samana, Sadhaura, Mukhlispur and Sirhind. Malerkotla was spared for 'a large ransom' and the entire province of Sirhind extending from Karnal to Ludhiana fell into the hands of Banda Bahadur when the terrified imperial deputies submitted to his authority without striking a blow.[27]

Banda won battles, occupied territories and established a government. He made Mukhlispur his capital and struck coins in the name of the Guru. In the authors' view the inscription on his official seal was indicative of Banda Bahadur's devotion and loyalty to Guru Gobind Singh.[28] According to them, Banda abolished the *zamīndārī* system, but they do not provide any evidence or argument in support of this statement. Bahadur Shah had to move against him personally. Banda remained a threat to Mughal power and authority for several years before he was besieged and captured towards the end of 1715. He was executed in Delhi on 9 June 1716. The revolution which he led against the Mughal power 'had been started much earlier by the Sikh Gurus, but it was he who effectively organized and used it as a political force to pull down the Mughal edifice and to give a foretaste of independence to the people of the land'.[29]

Banda, according to the authors, was the first man to conceive the idea of founding a political *rāj*. They do not feel inclined to see that Guru Gobind Singh had acted as an autonomous person throughout his life. Banda fought battles not to cripple the Mughal power, but to destroy it root and branch. The movement started by Banda was, however, handicapped by its very successes. It

terrified the upper classes and only the poor classes of Sikhs joined him. The general mass of Hindus remained aloof. The paucity of men and materials made the successes of Banda transitory. But there was a revolution effected in the minds of the people to resist tyranny, and the idea of a national state once again became a living inspiration. The example set by Banda served as a beacon light for the Sikhs in the darker ages to come.[30]

The issue of authority within the Sikh Panth came to the surface during the time of Banda Bahadur himself. According to the authors, there is no doubt about Banda's faithful adhesion to the doctrine of Guru Gobind Singh. It is clear from his letters that he never arrogated to himself the title or position of a guru. They admit, however, that Banda introduced the war cry *fateh darshan* and insisted on vegetarianism. The authors maintain that undue emphasis has been laid on the differences between Banda and some of his companions because, in their view, these differences assumed importance only after his death. The Khalsa stood by Banda till the end and sacrificed themselves with him at Delhi.[31] Nevertheless, the authors state that the Sikhs known as Bandais apotheosized Banda after his death and looked upon him as a successor of Guru Gobind Singh.

There were other claimants to guruship: Ajit Singh, Gulab Rai and Kharak Singh, besides the *gurus* of the Minas, the Dhirmallias and the Ram Raiyas. Then there were the Sikhs of other denominations like the Handalis, the Nirmalas and the Udasis. There was yet another category of Sikhs who came to be known as Sahajdharis or slow adopters. They believed in the same principles as the Keshdharis, whom they supported in terms of money and provisions in times of need and whom they joined as baptized brethren as soon as they found themselves ready for sacrifice. For Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, only the baptized Khalsa were the 'genuine' or 'regular' Sikhs.[32]

VII

For the authors, the Khalsa represented the 'central authority' within the Sikh Panth. The Guru, in essence, represented two things: the Word and the Congregation. A mystic unity was established between the Word and the Guru on the one hand,

and the Guru and the Sikhs on the other. Greatest respect began to be shown to the incorporated Word, even the Guru choosing for himself a seat lower than that of the scripture. The Sikh congregation also acquired great sanctity, owing to the belief that the spirit of the Guru lived and moved among them. The Sikhs began to assume increasingly higher authority, until collectively the whole body, called the *panth*, came to be regarded as an embodiment of the Guru. It was in this context that Guru Gobind Singh received baptism from the Sikhs initiated by him. 'What the last Guru did was to separate the personal and the scriptural aspects of the Guruship. The one he gave to the Khalsa and the other to the Holy Granth. Both acquired the title of Guru, and were to be addressed as Guru Granth and Guru Panth.'[33]

In actual practice, the Sikh congregation would sit together, with the Holy Granth in their midst, and deliberate over issues of common interest. The decision they reached at such a meeting was known as *gurmata*. No Sikh was expected to contravene the 'decisions of the Guru'. The meetings of the Sikh congregations, the Sarbat Khalsa, were held twice a year, on the occasions of Diwali and Baisakhi.[34]

During the 1716-21 phase, the Khalsa had yet not recovered from the blow of the capture of Banda and the massacre at Delhi. Efforts were made by the government in power to destroy the Sikhs and to extirpate the community as a whole. It was only when the zeal of the Mughal officials slackened a bit that the Sikhs began to emerge from their hiding places and eventually to face problems of organization. Bhai Mani Singh was sent to Amritsar to grapple with the problem of the Bandais. He brought about a solution acceptable to both sides and many Bandais rejoined the Khalsa.[35] To make use of this newly found strength, the Khalsa began to punish quislings who had betrayed the Khalsa into the hands of the government.

Soon, however, clashes with the government obliged the Sikhs to go into wilderness. Their numbers increased despite the hardships they faced. In spite of being without a home, hearth and property the Khalsa lived in the hope that, as prophesied by the Guru, one day they would rule (*rāj karegā Khalsa*). The martyrdom of Tara Singh of Van stirred the Sikhs to seek revenge and this story of persecution and retaliation continued for some

years, until the government became weary and wanted to placate the Sikhs. In 1733, a *jāgīr* was offered to the Sikhs who gave it to Kapur Singh of Faizullapur.[36]

The Khalsa began to organize themselves into two Dals: the Buddha Dal or the veterans, and the Taruna Dal or the junior men. Since the Taruna Dal was difficult to control in one place, five centres were established for the Dal under Deep Singh, Karam Singh and Dharam Singh of Amritsar, Kahn Singh and Binod Singh of Goindval, Dasaunda Singh of Kot Buddha, Viru Singh and Jiwan Singh Ranghretas. Each *jatha* had its own drum and banner and comprised between 1,300 and 2,000 men. They had a common mess, a common store for clothing and other necessaries and a common treasury. Nobody could leave without permission. Both the Dals were supervised and held together by 'Nawab' Kapur Singh.[37]

The Buddha Dal was comparatively stationary; the Taruna Dal spread out to Hansi and Hissar. This alarmed the government. The *jāgīr* was withdrawn in 1735, leading to another phase of conflict and clashes. Bhai Mani Singh was executed at Lahore in 1738.[38] Nadir Shah's invasion provided some respite to the Singhs for a while. The Sikhs took full advantage of the confusion that prevailed during Ahmad Shah Durrani's invasion and regained possession of Amritsar. This victory ushered in a new era in which the Sikhs knit their scattered bands into a homogeneous organization. The number of leaders was increased. The idea of the *panth* also took a definite shape. On the Baisakhi of 1749, the panthic situation was discussed in Amritsar, and at the suggestion of Nawab Kapur Singh, who was then growing old, Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was made the supreme commander of the Dal Khalsa which was reorganized and declared to be a state.[39]

The Khalsa decided to establish a fort for themselves to serve as a military base, besides providing security to their central shrine. This fort was named Ram Rauni. The leading Sikhs began to assert their rule over different parts of the central Punjab and their resources also began to increase, enabling them to spread out. Peace was made with the Sikhs by the governor of Lahore and they were allowed to retain their fort. They were also granted a *jāgīr* of twelve villages from the area of Patti and Jhabal, yielding a revenue of about Rs. 1,25,000.[40] This period of peace lasted for

a year and a half. Following the fourth invasion of Ahmad Shah and the weakening of the Lahore administration, the Sikhs were again in a position to take advantage. They exploited the situation to the fullest and organized a protective system of influence, called Rākhī, under which they promised full protection to Hindu and Muslim *zamīndārs* against all attacks and disturbances in return for a levy of one-fifth of the revenue. The system was acceptable to most of the people in the troubled areas, which passed under the control of Sikh *sardārs*. Their leaders set up forts in their respective territories, and began to organize some sort of government which became the basis of the administration called the *misldārī* system.[41]

After his fourth invasion, Ahmad Shah Durrani placed the provinces of Lahore, Sirhind, Kashmir, Thatta and Multan under the charge of his son Taimur as viceroy with Jahan Khan as his deputy. Adina Beg was appointed governor of Jalandhar by Taimur but when his personal attendance at Lahore was insisted upon, he sought help from the Sikhs and considerably weakened the Afghan power. However, since he could not depend on his Sikh allies who were themselves seeking an empire, he invited the Marathas. In April 1757 the Sikhs and the Marathas entered Lahore. The Marathas stayed for some time but then left the administration in the hands of Adina Beg who made strenuous efforts during his four months of governorship to suppress the Sikhs.[42]

The Sikhs were no longer mere refugees hunted from place to place at the whim and fancy of the rulers. They had become the real power in the land. Without their cooperation, nobody could establish his rule. In the meantime Ahmad Shah invaded for the fifth time and defeated the Marathas in the battle of Panipat in 1761. Ala Singh of Patiala was confirmed by the Shah in his dominions in return for an annul tribute of Rs. 5,00,000. For this act of submission to a foreigner, Ala Singh was condemned and fined by the Dal Khalsa who wanted nothing less than sovereignty. On Diwali in 1760, the Sarbat Khalsa gathered at Amritsar resolved to take possession of Lahore but withdrew on receiving a present of Rs. 30,000 for *karāh prashād*.[43] They occupied Lahore in 1761. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was proclaimed the king, with the title of Sultan-ul-Qaum. He issued coins in the name of the Gurus, with the following inscription on it:

Deg O Tegh O Fateh O Nusrat Bedirang
Yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh.

At the gathering of the Panth in Amritsar in October 1761, the Sarbat Khalsa passed a *gurmata* to reduce the strongholds of all the allies and supporters of Ahmad Shah who were proving a hindrance to the liberation of the country. When Ahmad Shah returned in 1762, the Sikhs were taken by surprise. They suffered heavy losses in the great carnage (*vaddha ghallughara*). However, when Ahmad Shah left in December 1762 the Sikhs organized themselves to overthrow the government. The Buddha Dal led by Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia went about the country establishing *thānas* and punishing the enemies, while the Taruna Dal led by Sardar Charhat Singh Sukarchakia established itself at Amritsar to cleanse the holy tank and restore the demolished temple.[44] Ahmad Shah invaded the Punjab for the seventh time in 1764 and left in March 1765. His authority was confined to his camp. On Baisakhi in 1765, a *gurmata* was passed to take possession of Lahore. The city and its neighbourhood was parcelled out among three *sardārs*.

The Khalsa looked upon their achievement as a mark of the Guru's special favour. The coin struck at Lahore contained the inscription which had already appeared on the seal of Banda Singh.

Deg O Tegh O Fateh O Nusrat Bedirang
Yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh.[45]

VIII

A Short History of the Sikhs provides a good introduction to the subject. However, no historian is infallible and no interpretation of the past remains adequate for all times. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh look upon Guru Gobind Singh as the creator of a nation and yet they are reluctant to attribute any political purposes directly to him. They accept that Guru Gobind Singh agreed to perform *hom* for the goddess, albeit to disillusion the people. But there is no credible evidence of the performance of *hom*. While providing the list of Panj Piaras, they do not take into account the differences in names given by various Sikh writers.

As noted already, they do not cite any evidence in support of the abolition of the *zamīndārī* system by Banda Bahadur. They seem to emphasize Banda's orthodoxy far too much. They begin to talk of the Buddha·Dal and the Taruna Dal rather too early. Regarding the coin of 1761 and the title of Sultan-ul-Qaum for Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, they view their evidence uncritically. All these points, however, are not of major importance. The basic thesis of 'transfiguration' and the view of Sikh history as an uninterrupted process of development based on Sikh ideology and institutions is well substantiated by the authors on the basis of a large variety of contemporary sources.

NOTES

1. Before 1947, Ganda Singh had published, among others six books in Punjabi: *Maharaja Kaura Mal Bahadur*, *Sardar Sham Singh Attariwala*, *Kukian di Vithia*, *Sikh Itihas Bare*, *Punjab dian Varan*, and *Sikh Itihas Wal*.
2. Teja Singh published a number of works, including *Sikh Religion* (1937), *Sikhism: Its Ideals and Institutions* (1937), *Growth of Responsibility in Sikhism* (1942), *Essays in Sikhism* (1944) and *Shabadarth Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji*.
3. Preface, *A Short History of the Sikhs*, rpt, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1989. Also, J.S. Grewal, *Contesting Interpretations of the Sikh Tradition*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1998, p. 85.
4. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh (1989), pp. 26-7, n 1, for example.
5. Ibid., Preface.
6. Ibid., pp. 57, 58, 59, n 1, 60.
7. Ibid., p. 56 n 4.
8. Ibid., pp. 62, 64, n 2.
9. Ibid., p. 68.
10. Ibid., p. 64, n 2.
11. Ibid., p. 64.
12. Ibid., p. 65.
13. Ibid., pp. 65, n 1, 66.
14. Ibid., pp. 56, 66, n 3-68.
15. Ibid., pp. 66, 67.
16. Ibid., pp. 68 n 2, 69, 71.
17. Ibid., pp. 69-75.
18. Ibid., pp. 1, 2.
19. Ibid., p. 13.

20. Ibid., pp. 13-16. Also J.S. Grewal, *Contesting Interpretations of the Sikh Tradition*, pp. 89-93.
21. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, p. 18.
22. Ibid., pp. 18-23.
23. Ibid., pp. 23-8.
24. Ibid., pp. 28-31, 68-72.
25. Ibid., pp. 32-4.
26. Ibid., pp. 35-42.
27. Ibid., pp. 76-81.
28. Ibid., p. 82.
29. Ibid., p. 98.
30. Ibid., pp. 98-102.
31. Ibid., pp. 99, 100.
32. Ibid., pp. 103-7.
33. Ibid., p. 105.
34. Ibid., pp. 105-6.
35. Ibid., pp. 109.
36. Ibid., pp. 110-14.
37. Ibid., p. 115.
38. Ibid., pp. 116-26.
39. Ibid., pp. 127-9.
40. Ibid., pp. 129-33.
41. Ibid., pp. 130-48.
42. Ibid., pp. 149-52.
43. Ibid., pp. 153-6.
44. Ibid., pp. 157-63.
45. Ibid., pp. 160-70. The inscription is translated by Teja Singh and Ganda Singh as: 'The Kettle and the Sword (symbols of charity and power), victory and ready patronage have been obtained from Guru Nanak Gobind Singh.' However, '*yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh*' would mean 'received by Guru Gobind Singh from Nanak'.

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