

THE STORY
OF
VALIANT SIKHS

From the Same Pen

- The Masters and the Word Divine
- The Living of a Gursikh
- Bhai Gurdas- The First Sikh Scholar

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THE STORY OF VALIANT SIKHS

S.J.S. 'Pall'



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INTRODUCTION

When I wrote a book on Sikh Gurus and another on Bhai Gurdas, I was encouraged to write a book about the Sikh way of living. This inspiration had mainly come from Bhai Gurdas who has mentioned various qualities and characteristics of a Gursikh and has also expressed deep devotion and reverence for such Gursikhs who follow the path shown by the Masters. By God's grace this book also became popular as the readers found satisfactory replies to many of their questions relating to the Sikh values and traditions. While writing all these replies I had gone through not only various Rehatnamas and the Rehat Maryada as released by the SGPC but also various books on history which proved as how the Sikhs succeeded during their 500 years period of existence by following the teachings of the Gurus as contained in the scriptures and also their commands in various Hukamnamas. In the course of this study, I thought of writing something relating to the magnanimous heritage of this intrepid community. However, I was fully aware of the fact that there are scholarly works by eminent historians on the history of the Sikhs, and also that I was neither a historian nor a researcher who could shed more light on the history of this great religion.

I, therefore, decided to highlight some of the most important characteristics of Sikhs and present a record of their achievements with reference to those particular traits. Bravery is undoubtedly the most important characteristic of a Sikh. Its scope is wide enough to cover so many other traits like frankness, boldness, gallantry, adventurous spirit, etc. Thus, for the purpose of highlighting all these aspects, I have elaborated on the role played by them during the period of the Gurus, in the 18th century, under the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, as soldiers of the British Indian army and in the fight for freedom of the country. As soldiers of the British army, their achievements in the two world wars are notable. However, in the history books, the same are often ignored. I have, therefore, written 3 chapters on these two wars. I have also separately dealt with their role in the skies, in the sea and many other spheres outside the battle fields. The contribution made by them for preserving the integrity of the country, for its economic development, for the agricultural enrichment and for promotion of various arts and crafts, are the subject matter of various other chapters.

Although, I have not made any research, I have collected my material from

various books, magazines, newspapers, internet websites and reports and records. I have drawn heavily from the Encyclopaedia of Sikhism as prepared by Punjabi University, Patiala and quoted therefrom at appropriate places. I have mentioned the names of some other books also from which I have quoted in my support. Mention may also be made of the two books on Sikh Diaspora, one by Dr Surjit Kaur and another by Gurmukh Singh, which proved very useful for writing about Sikhs abroad. I have also used some observations and photographs from these books. Similar is the position regarding other sources of my information including Nishaan from which I have not only quoted, but also reproduced a number of photographs. Among the various persons with whom I have discussed certain matters, the Executive Director of this wonderful magazine, S. Pushpinder Singh, deserves a special mention. His vast knowledge regarding Indian army and other Sikh affairs in India and abroad proved very helpful to me in writing the relevant portions. Not only this, S. Pushpinder Singh was kind enough to go through certain chapters relating to wars and gave valuable suggestions. I express my thanks to all mentioned above.

I would like to mention here that while dealing with the role of the Sikhs in various fields, I have tried to mention some important names. However, as it is humanly impossible to mention each and every name and as the writer has to take the liberty to select the names as per his knowledge, information and choice, I hope that I shall be excused for any significant omission in this respect. In case, any such omissions are pointed out and I consider it to be worthy of inclusion, the same will be taken note of and mentioned in the subsequent editions.

Before I close, I would also like to thank all those persons who helped me in writing this book and making it possible to reach the prospective readers. I cannot forget my Stenographers namely Shri M.S. Rana, Smt. Roma Sondhi and Shri Qamar Mukhtar, who were kind enough to type the various portions time and again to enable me to make necessary amendments and corrections from time to time till its finalization. I am also grateful to all those persons who provided me useful information and guidance in the matters relevant for my book. The proof readers, the computer typists and other persons working with the publisher M/s Chattar Singh Jiwan Singh had also worked hard for completing the job. My special thanks are to all of them and the publishers, particularly S. Harbhajan Singh, one of its associates. All my children and my wife Mrs. Sharan Pall also helped me in various ways for the fulfilment of my task. I thank all of them. Last, but above all I express my gratitude to the Great Gurus who always provided me ability and strength to do such works which are beyond my capability and competence. It is because of their grace and

benevolence that I continue with my mission of spreading the message of the Masters and the knowledge and information about Sikhs among the people of the world. I therefore, with utmost humility present this work to all those who take pleasure in the glory of the Khalsa. Suggestions are welcome to make this work more informative, interesting and useful.

S. SJS Pall

THE SIKH HISTORICAL TRADITION

Whenever there is a reference to the brave people of the world, the names of Greek and Roman heroes, British and French Generals and those who won laurels during the first and second World Wars, are mentioned. The names like Alexandra the Great, Napoleon, Nelson, Hitler may be known to most of the people in the world, but there will be very few people who know that the history of India is full of names of brave people who displayed exemplary courage and fighting spirit in and outside the battle field. The emperors of the Hindu period like Chander Gupt Morya, Ashoka and Kanishka were all valiant persons. Ashoka the Great, although, had given up the warfare after the battle of Kalinga, but his victories of love constituted a much more powerful step than the expansion of his empire. It is such victories that took his name beyond the frontiers of his boundary limits to other counties of the world.

In the Sultnat and Mughal periods also, there were brave rulers and Generals. There was no dearth of brave people in those places also, which were outside the limits of the empire of the great Mughal rulers, and who had fought against the Mughal Empire for maintaining their independence. Who can forget the names of Maharana Pratap, Shiva Ji and Guru Gobind Singh? The story of brave people in our country has since been continuing and thousands of those who sacrificed their lives for attaining independence, were no less heroes in this glorious realm of history. The names of Haider Ali, Tipu Sultan, Chand Bibi, Tantya Tope, Rani Laxmi Bai, Subhash Chander Bose, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bhagat Singh, Udham Singh and so on constitute a long list of National Heroes.

The question may arise as why is it that Indian Heroes are lesser known than those of other countries. The most obvious reason will be the sphere of activity of the foreign nations. Alexander the Great had a dream to rule all over the world and with a view to achieve the same; he traversed a considerable part of the world. So was the position of French, Spanish and other European nations who tried to establish their suzerainty over different parts of the world. The British were the most successful and as such the brave deeds of their Generals and soldiers became known to the world. Another significant reason in this regard is lack of proper historical material and evidence available regarding Indian Heroes. Our people could not pay as much attention to the

writing of history in the right perspective as the same should have been given.

In fact, India is one of those oldest civilizations, the people of which were more interested in religion and philosophy than in writing History. The wise people of that time preferred to impart the spiritual values to their contemporaries than to record the events of that period. People were more concerned with such metaphysical questions as who was the supreme power?, who was the creator of the universe and running the whole show, what was the purpose of human life? How should the life be spent as per the spiritual traditions? And soon such like questions were answered by the ancient sages to the best of their ability by narrating the mythological events and highlighting those values, which should have been the basis for living a meaningful and purposeful life.

History on the other hand was a record of the past events and with the passage of time its scope increased to cover the way of life of the people of a particular period and the progress made by them in different spheres of life, social, political and religious. Thus, whereas in the beginning only religion was important, gradually when the historical sense developed, many other aspects of life were taken note of by the writers. However, even while keeping a record of different periods and covering various aspects of life, our historians till recent times could not get rid of the myths, legends and allegorical stories. For example, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the two great epics reveal a blend of religious, mythological and legendary stories in such a proportion that it is very difficult to discern in them a pure historiographical tradition. Similar is the position of Puranas containing mostly mythological elements with semblance of history.

It was only during the period of Muslim Rulers that the art of historiography started in the true sense of the world. The historians at that time recorded events occurring on day-to-day basis and showered praise on the rulers being the heroes. They did not comment or make a critical estimate of the events or the persons concerned. In other words, there is hardly any evidence of history writing in ancient and middle periods of Indian civilization. It was only the British who brought this tradition and followed it up in the right earnest.

The most neglected part of the Indian history is which relates to the Sikhs. This class of people, during the most notable period of their history, had to spend most of their time fighting against injustice and tyranny, and there was none who could record their history of the said period in the true spirit. The earliest records regarding Guru Nanak are the biographical accounts called 'Janam Sakhis'. These accounts, based upon oral tradition, cannot be called

historiography in the true sense of the term. The facts and fiction are so intermingled in them that despite their importance as a source of information on the life and Mission of Guru Nanak, their historical value is not at all significant. Similar is the position of *Vaars* and *Kabbits* by Bhai Gurdas which shed more light on the mission of Gurus and the principles of Sikh religion than containing historical information. Apart from these biographies, there is an autobiography by the 10th Guru named "*Bachiter Natak*" which gives some insight into the major events of his life up to the year 1696. Then followed a period in which were written *Gurbilas Patshahi Chheveen*, *Gurbilas Patshahi Dasween* and *Bansavalinama*. But, such accounts were also more pane-granics than analytical. Similarly, there were certain Nirmala Saints who wrote some useful works expressing their deep reverence for the Gurus. For example, Pandit Tara Singh Ji Narottam wrote a book "Guru Teerath Sangraihai", which narrates certain stories related to the Gurus. However, the works of *Nirmalas* were more of commentaries on Gurubani and whatever stories figured therein, the same lacked the historical insight and perspective.

Rattan Singh Bhangu wrote *Sri Guru Panth Prakash* better known as *Prachin Panth Prakash* in 1841 wherein he dealt with the lives of the Gurus. This was somewhat historical as the author cared more for truthful record of facts. Another work of a Sikh Historian following the example of Rattan Singh Bhangu was that of Bhai Santokh Singh, who wrote *Sri Guru Nanak Prakash* and *Sri Gur Pratap Suryodaya* commonly known as 'Suraj Prakash'. Similarly, Gyani Gyan Singh's *Panth Prakash* in verse (1880) and his *Twarikh Guru Khalsa* in prose are somewhat historical although there is substantial doctrinal and anecdotal material in these works also. As mentioned above, like other parts of the country, the Sikh history in the real sense was first attempted by a Britisher named J.D.Cunnigham. He wrote a history of the Sikhs from the origin of the Nation to the battles of Sutlaj (1849). The other two histories written by Sohan Lal Suri and Sayyad Muhammad Latif also dealt with the history of Punjab up to the period of the close of 18th century. Princep wrote "History of Ranjit Singh". Others who wrote in Persian include Khushwakat Rai, Bute Shah and Ganesh Dass Gujarati. Some Britishers wrote eye witness accounts of some events relating to Sikhs. However, all these works having been written by non-Sikhs failed to present the Sikh view point and as such were lacking in the spirit of Sikh tradition in historiography.

It was only during the last century that Sikh historians like Sardar Karam Singh and Sardar Khazan Singh started writing on some of the topics relating to the Sikh history. Sardar Karam Singh (1849-1930) was pioneer of modern research in Sikh history. He made a considerable use of oral history, which was made by him an important tool of research. He met personally a number of

persons who had witnessed the happenings in Punjab under Sikh rule for recording their testimony. He also gathered a lot of information regarding Guru Nanak's visit to Macca and Baghdad. He visited a number of libraries at distant places like Darbhanga, Aligarh, Kolkata and took excessive notes from books and manuscripts relating to Sikh history. His historical works included research papers, biographical accounts and tracts on various subjects. His articles appearing in a Punjabi Journal "Phulwari" from 1928 to 1930 were research oriented, and the same were later on published in a book form by History Research Board "Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandak Committee". His biographical accounts of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, Bibi Sada Kaur and Maharaja Ala Singh of Patiala are also historical in nature. His most important work was "Kattak Ke Bisakh" wherein he held a scholarly view that Guru Nanak was not born in the month of Kattak and his actual month of birth was Baisakh. He also opined that Bhai Bala's "Janam Sakhi" did not contain the whole truth, nor was it written during the period of the 2nd Guru, Guru Angad Dev.

Dr. Khajan Singh got his history and philosophy of Sikh religion, published in two volumes in 1940. It was another pioneering work of historical research. It was in view of the works of these two Scholars that the Sikh Historical Society and a Deptt. of Historical Research in Khalsa College, Amritsar came into being. Since then, a number of Sikh historians appeared on the scene to write about the history of their great religion.

Dr. Ganda Singh (1900-1987) was another historian, who did pioneering work in the field of historical research and initiated new trends in Sikh historiography. He remained in-charge of the Sikh History Research Deptt. at Khalsa College, Amritsar for a long time. He also spent considerable time in searching out old valuable material on Sikh history and brought out several books and tracts based on the facts discovered by him. He along with S. Teja Singh wrote a short history of the Sikhs in addition to various research papers, tracts and articles. S. Khushwant Singh, a well known English writer of India, also wrote a history of the Sikhs. Some other prominent Sikhs, who have contributed in writing the Sikh history include Sardar Fauza Singh, Sardar Kirpal Singh and S.J.S. Grewal.

S. Patwant Singh and Dr. Sangat Singh have also written two books namely "Sikhs" and "Sikhs in History" respectively, which shed considerable light on the recent history of Sikhs. Some non-Sikhs like Dr. Hari Ram Gupta, Shri Sita Ram Kohli, Shri Indu Bhushan Bannerjee and Shri G.C. Narang have also contributed considerably in the writing of Sikh history during the second half of the last century. Macauliffe's work on Sikh religion, though not exactly a historical work, proved very useful for those writers who made researches in Sikh history and religion. Macauliffe had a good intention to apprise the Sikhs

and other people of the world of the richness of the religion which was getting lost at that time. He believed that by rendering a competent translation and history of the religion, Sikhism could be preserved not only for the historian but also as a creative religious force. He made the religion known to the people of the world with all the sincerity and dedication. He brought to the notice of the people of the world its moral and political merits, in the following words:

“It prohibits idolatry, hypocrisy, caste exclusiveness, the concrementation of widows, the immurement of women, the use of wine and other intoxicants, tobacco-smoking, infanticide, slander, pilgrimages to the sacred rivers and tanks of the Hindus; and it inculcates loyalty, gratitude for all favours received, philanthropy, justice, impartiality, truth, honesty, and all the moral and domestic virtues known to the holiest citizens of any country.”

In the present scenario, the research work on Sikh history and religion is in progress. Various universities have set up chairs for the said research. As a result of the efforts made by certain scholars, new evidence and facts are being discovered for writing the Sikh history in the right perspective. For example, Bhatt Vahees were discovered by a researcher named Giani Garja Singh who found many old vahees preserved with certain families in the Haryana State. He obtained Gurmukhi transcripts of some of the entries pertaining to the Guru period, from Guru Hargobind (1595-1644) to Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) through Bhatt Mann Singh of Karsindhu village, in Jind district. Some of these were published as footnotes to Shaheed Bilas Bhai Mani Singh, edited by Giani Garja Singh and published by Punjabi Sahitya Academy, Ludhiana in 1961. The rest are still in manuscript form lying in the Department of Punjab Historical Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala. These extracts provide valuable information regarding dates, places and events of the period. Since then, many scholars have collected useful information from this contemporary evidence regarding the Sikh martyrs (eg. Dr. Rattan Singh Jaggi, formerly, head of Punjabi, Punjabi University, Patiala and Dr. Harjinder Singh Dilgir).

One thing that is common in both the historical and non-historical works of earlier writers and that of the modern writers is the remarkable trait of bravery of the Sikhs which distinguishes them from others. Bravery here does not merely mean fighting by brave soldiers in the battlefield, it is in the broad sense covering the courage, determination the fortitude and the heroism shown by these people in and outside the battle field. The distinguishing names of brave people in the history of merely 300 years since the formation of the Khalsa, will be so many as to push into insignificance, the history of any other nation or people. To start with the Gurus, Guru Hargobind (Sixth Guru),

and Guru Gobind Singh, one of the bravest Generals and soldiers of the world, the names of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Nawab Kapur Singh, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Hari Singh Nalwa, Akaali Phoola Singh, Baba Deep Singh and hundreds of others like Bhagat Singh and Udham Singh who laid down their lives in the fight for independence of the country, figure prominently in the annals of bravery. The subject of this book revolves around this trait of bravery of the Sikhs, who with their full grown beard and moustaches and turbans on their heads stand out, in any crowd, anywhere in the world.

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CHAPTER-II

THE BEGINNING OF THE TRADITION
OF COURAGE

KHALSA SOI KARE NIT JUNG

The above noted verse from Tankhahnama should not be misunderstood to mean that a Sikh is a quarrelsome person, who always fights with everyone. In fact, the philosophical importance of this verse refers to the continuity of struggle in human life. A number of persons have to face all kinds of situations in life, for which purpose they have to fight with certain forces working against them. Whereas the weak persons are unable to face the adverse circumstances and situations and try to make a compromise at the cost of their self respect and honour, a Sikh in that sense is an ever fighter. He believes what an English poet has stated in the following lines:

When the blandishments of life are gone,
The coward sneaks to death, the brave live on.

Thus, when a Sikh has to compete for material prosperity and status in life, he will fight with indolence, inertia, home sickness and will move to any place to achieve his goal. When he feels that he has to go ahead of others to acquire the latest knowledge and information, he will wage a war against ignorance and illiteracy. Similarly he will not tolerate any injustice, oppression, arbitrariness and will dare to speak against all such forces who are responsible for such atrocities. He will not only fight for himself but also for others to enable them to get justice and protect their rights. Above all, a Sikh also knows that for his spiritual upliftment, his goal is to get the divine union and for that he will follow his Guru, and acting upon his divine teachings, fight against all human weaknesses and vices like *Kam, Krodh, Lobh, Moh* and *Ahankar*. All these fights starting from his birth till achievement of the divine union constitute the historic story of the brave Sikh people.

The story of the brave Sikh community is not the story of any greed or lust on their part to conquer other people's territories for their selfish aggrandizement or to satisfy their fundamentalism for converting people to their faith as may be the case of many others. It is the story of courage to speak out what is just and reasonable, valour to fight the forces of tyranny and oppression, a dedicated spirit to do their duty towards their country and their

faith and above all the story of their fortitude for the cause of defending the glory and prestige of the nation and for the protection of the weak and the oppressed ones.

THE ADVENT OF GURU NANAK

The story began with the advent of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh religion, who was born in 1469 A.D. at Rai Bhoi Di Talwandi, which is now called Nankana Sahib and is in Pakistan. The great Guru challenged the old traditions and customs, which had nothing to do with the true religion. The Hindus followed a number of rituals and formalities, believed in cant and superstitions and were obsessed with the idea of castism. The Guru clarified that all these things were of no avail in search of truth. God, who was supreme power and the creator of every thing, was one for all. Nobody got any honour in the divine court on the basis of caste. The honourable place in the Court of Lord was given to those who remembered him, loved Him and his creatures and performed noble actions and splendid deeds for the welfare of the entire humanity.

NEITHER A HINDU NOR A MUSLIM

It was very difficult at that time for anyone to criticise the caste system, which was the main consideration in the Hindu religion. In Islam also there were conflicts among various sects and Muslims also believed in certain unwarranted formalities and class distinctions. Whereas the Muslims being the rulers could effect the conversion to Islam by force, the Hindus were subjected to atrocities like slaves. Guru Nanak took bold stand when he said he was neither a Hindu nor a Muslim. He also explained to them as how one could be a true Hindu and a true Muslim.

REVOLUTIONARY CHANGES IN CONCEPTS

The very fact that the Guru criticised idol worship also shows his bold and clear stand on the concept of worship. He also challenged the old system when he told the people that for reaching God, there was no need to go to the forest or become a Yogi. He recommended the life of a householder and anyone by remembering God could obtain salvation irrespective of his caste or religion. He gave the example of lotus, which is born in mud, remains in muddy water but even then keeps itself above the whole glut. It was not only in social and spiritual sphere that the Guru acted as a revolutionary, in political sphere also, he alone had the guts to condemn Barber's invasion and the atrocities committed by his soldiers over the weak people. There were murder, rapes, looting and arson all around. Guru Nanak gave a vent to his feelings when he described the barbarous acts of the invaders in the following words:-

ਜਿਨਿ ਸਿਰਿ ਸੋਹਨਿ ਪਟੀਆ ਮਾਂਗੀ ਪਾਇ ਸੰਧੂਰੁ॥
ਸੇ ਸਿਰ ਕਾਤੀ ਮੁੰਨੀਅਨਿ ਗਲ ਵਿਚਿ ਆਵੈ ਧੂੜਿ॥
ਮਹਲਾ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਹੋਦੀਆ ਹੁਣਿ ਬਹਣਿ ਨ ਮਿਲਨਿ ਹਦੂਰਿ॥ ੧॥

ਜਦਹੁ ਸੀਆ ਵੀਆਹੀਆ ਲਾੜੇ ਸੋਹਨਿ ਪਾਸਿ॥
ਹੀਡੋਲੀ ਚੜਿ ਆਈਆ ਦੰਦ ਖੰਡ ਕੀਤੇ ਰਾਸਿ॥

ਧਨੁ ਜੋਬਨੁ ਦੁਇ ਵੈਰੀ ਹੋਏ ਜਿਨੀ ਰਖੇ ਰੰਗ ਲਾਇ॥
ਦੂਤਾਂ ਨੋ ਫੁਰਮਾਇਆ ਲੈ ਚਲੇ ਪਤਿ ਗਵਾਇ॥

ਅਗੋ ਦੇ ਜੇ ਚੇਤੀਐ ਤਾਂ ਕਾਇਤੁ ਮਿਲੈ ਸਜਾਇ॥
ਸਾਹਾਂ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਗਵਾਈਆ ਰੰਗਿ ਤਮਾਸੈ ਚਾਇ॥
ਬਾਬਰਵਾਣੀ ਫਿਰਿ ਗਈ ਕੁਇਰੁ ਨ ਰੋਟੀ ਖਾਇ॥ ੫॥
ਇਕਨ੍ਹ ਵਖਤ ਖੁਆਈਅਹਿ ਇਕਨ੍ਹ ਪੂਜਾ ਜਾਇ॥
ਚਉਕੇ ਵਿਣੁ ਹਿੰਦਵਾਣੀਆ ਕਿਉ ਟਿਕੇ ਕਢਹਿ ਨਾਇ॥
ਰਾਮੁ ਨ ਕਬਹੂ ਚੇਤਿਓ ਹੁਣਿ ਕਹਣਿ ਨ ਮਿਲੈ ਖੁਦਾਇ॥ ੬॥

(ਪੰਨਾ ੪੧੭)

Jin Sir Sohan pattiaa maangee paae sandhoor.

Se sir kaatee muneean gal vich aavai dhoor.

Mehlaa andar hodeeaa hun behan na milan hadoor:1.

Jadho seeaa veeaaheeeaa laare sohan paas.

Heedolee charr aaeaa dand khand keete raas.

Dhan joban due vairy hoe jinee rakhe rang laae.

Dootaa no furmaaiaa lai chale pat gavaae.

Ago de je cheteai taan kaait mil sajaae.

Saahaan surat gawaaeaa rang ta maasai chaae.

Baabarvaanee phir gae kuir na rotee khaae.

Ikna vakhat khuaaeeah ikna pooja jaae.

Chauke vin hindwaaneaaa kio tike kadheh naae.

Ram na kabhoo chetio hun kehan na mile khudaaee.

The heads on which the hair-plaits are beautifully
Arranged, with vermillion on the parting line,
These heads are sheared by scissors, the dust rises to the necks
The dwellers of palaces now do not find the company of their husbands
When they were married, their husbands looked graceful by their sides,
They were brought in palanquins studded with ivory
Their youth and wealth both became their enemies,
They had enamoured them,
The messengers were ordered to rape them
Why should one get punishment, if one thinks beforehand?

The kings had lost sense in merriment, entertainment and pleasure.

The word of Babar went round and the young boy (prince) could get no food

Some had lost the time of prayer and some could not worship

Without the sacred floor, how the Hindu women could bathe and instal tilaks?

Previously they did not remember Ram,

Now they cannot utter His Name.....

(Asa M.I. page 417)

(Translation By Dr. S.S. Kohli)

Guru Nanak also took a strong notice of the fact that during the period of Sikander Lodhi and later on also, when Babar became a ruler, the Hindus were highly maltreated. Sikander Lodhi broke into pieces the idols of the temples of Jwalamukhi and Kangra and gave them to butchers to be used as weights. He forbade Hindus from bathing at the ghats on the Yamuna. Barbers were ordered not to shave Hindus. Hindu temples were destroyed on a large scale and Hindus were forcibly converted to Islam. Justice was publicly denied to them. Law of blasphemy was strictly enforced, and for any criticism of Islam, capital punishment was inflicted. Bodhan, a Brahmin, was executed by Sikander Lodhi for saying that Hinduism was as good as Islam. The Hindus had become so scared of the rulers that they had lost all self-respect and were only speaking the language of the ruling class. Guru Nanak's stand that neither Hindus were good Hindus nor Muslims were good Muslims indicated that both should understand their religions in the right perspective and not follow rituals, superstitions or indulge in vandalic activities. He criticised the Hindus for adopting the language and culture of Islam and forgetting their own religion.

He was also against any kind of social and political evils. When he noticed that bribery and corruption were rampant, he observed "Justice hath taken wings and fled." This age is like a drawn sword, the Kings are butchers, goodness has taken wings and flown" "There is no one who receiveth or giveth not bribes: the King administers justice only when his palm has been greased (filled)." He mentions that there was a high degeneration in the attitude of the rulers, who had become greedy and accepted bribes for rendering so called justice. In such political circumstances, there was no religion worth the name and the kings were acting like lions whereas the officials were merely their dogs causing all troubles for the ordinary people. The subjects had become blind without knowledge and even the religious leaders were unable to convey the truths of their religion to the people.

So far women were concerned, there was no respect for them both among the Hindus and Muslims, and they were treated very shabbily. The Guru took a bold stand by raising his voice in the support of women. His following

immortal words raised the status of women in the society.

ਜੋ ਕਿਉ ਮੰਦਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਜੰਮਹਿ ਰਾਜਾਨ॥

(ਪੰਨਾ ੪੭੩)

So Kio Manda Aakheeai Jit Janmeh Raajaan.

Why to condemn her who gives birth to kings.

(Page 473)

SUCCESSOR SELECTED ON MERIT

Guru Nanak again acted as a revolutionary in making selection of his successor on merit, and not of his son as was common during those days. It was again a deviation from the old principle of succession. He made his successor, a part of him and when the divine light passed on from the first Guru to the worthy disciple Bhai Lehna, he was named as Guru Angad. Thus, it is evident from the life of Guru Nanak that when he founded the new religion, he imparted the spirit of boldness in them. He taught them that the divine path to God was not through rituals and superstitions, but by following the truth and living a true life. That is why poet Iqbal, while paying his tribute to the great Guru says in his memorable couplet

ਫਿਰ ਉਠੀ ਆਖਿਰ ਸਦਾਅ ਤੌਹੀਦ ਕੀ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਸੇ।

ਹਿੰਦ ਕੋ ਇਕ ਮਰਦੇ-ਕਾਮਲ ਨੇ ਜਗਾਯਾ ਖਵਾਬ ਸੇ।

(ਪੁਸਤਕ ਬਾਂਗੋ ਦਰਾ)

Phir uthi aakhir sada toheed ki Punjab se

Hind ko ik marde kaamal ne jagaaya Khawaab se

“Once again the voice of touhid (Monotheism)

Was proclaimed from the soil of Punjab,

A real perfect man woke up India

From her slumber of dream.”

GURU ANGAD CONTINUED THE TRADITION

The 2nd Guru, (1504-1552), whose 500th Birth centenary is being celebrated this year, was the worthy successor to continue the tradition of bravery and boldness. His first brave act was to propagate the teachings of his Master and prevent the Sikhs from falling under the influence of Udasies led by Baba Sri Chand Ji, the elder son of Guru Nanak. He challenged the Brahminical thought that Sanskrit was the language of God and the scriptures can be written only in that language. Guru Angad invented a new script (Gurmukhi) for the common language of the people of Punjab, and composed his hymns in the same. He clarified the Sikh concept that God in His NIRGUN form does not speak any language and as such Sanskrit cannot be the language of God. With a view to justify the Sikh concept that everybody had a right to read the scriptures and obtain salvation, he got the compositions of his predecessor written in simple language of the people that is Punjabi. The concept of equality among the people was again strengthened by the Guru by regularising

the Langar tradition as per which all persons were made to sit together to partake the food.

Guru Angad had shifted his headquarter from Kartarpur to Khadur. Satta and Balwand praise the Guru in their *Vaar*, popularly known as “Tikke di Vaar”. The Guru’s qualities of humility, wisdom and generosity have been highlighted. Tradition records that emperor Humayun had once visited Khadur to seek Guru’s blessings. Guru Angad also selected his successor on the basis of merit and did not appoint any of his sons on the spiritual seat. Amardas had spent 12 years serving Guru Angad with single minded devotion. He used to bring water from a river for Guru’s bath and worked for long time in community kitchen, helping in washing utensils, cooking and serving meals. One of the anecdotes relating to this period of service is well known in Sikh tradition, as per which, when, Amardas was bringing water for the Guru’s bath, he stumbled against a weaver’s peg and fell down, but he did not let the water pitcher fall from his head to save the water for the Guru. It is recorded that the weaver woman, feeling disturbed in her sleep, disparagingly called him ‘Amaru Nithaavaan (Amaru the homeless). As the incident was reported to Guru Angad, he praised Amar Das’s devotion and described him as “the home of the homeless,” adding that he was “the honour of the unhonoured, the strength of the weak, the support of the supportless, the shelter of the unsheltered, the protector of the unprotected, the restorer of what is lost, the emancipator of the captive.” This also decided Guru Angad’s mind on the issue of selection of a successor. The choice inevitably fell on Sri Amar Das. (The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism, Vol-I, Page 87).

DIVINE LIGHT PASSES TO THE 3RD GURU

Guru Amar Das, the 3rd Guru (1479 to 1574) carried forward the tradition of bravery and valour and took some bold steps against the social customs prevalent at that time. He severely criticised the Sati custom and advocated for the right of remarriage for a widow instead of dying on the pier of her husband. He also condemned the Parda system for the women adopted mainly by Muslims and certain Hindus. Guru Amar Das constructed a Baoli at Goindwal Sahib establishing thereby the first shrine for the Sikhs. He also set up 22 cots for propagating the Sikh religion. These were 22 centres where the preachers apprised the people of the tenets as propounded by the Great Gurus. When the 3rd Guru was constructing the spiritual centre at Goindwal Sahib, he noticed a young boy named Jetha, rendering service for this cause with utmost devotion and dedication. After discussing with his wife, he decided to get his daughter Bibi Bhani married to this young boy. Later on, Bhai Jetha becoming the worthy successor of the 3rd Guru came to be known as Guru Ram Das (...1534-1581.) The langar tradition was strengthened during the time of Guru Amar

Das to such an extent that even when emperor Akbar visited him at Goindwal, he also took food in the refectory like any other pilgrim. However, Akbar being a wise and tolerant king, was highly impressed by Guru's personality and works. As per one of the versions, it is stated that Akbar had granted a big piece of land in the name of Bibi Bhani, the daughter of the 3rd Guru, and that is why, the fourth Master was directed by the 3rd Guru to move to this new place and establish a new centre for preaching. There are a good number of compositions of Guru Amar Das enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib which express his deep spiritual experience. The most important composition is 'Anandu', which is now recited by the Sikhs on all the occasions at the time of concluding the congregation. Anand means that pleasure which one gets by meeting with the true Guru and by following his instructions. It is that feeling which liberates a person from all sufferings. It is that state of mind, which takes the enlightened one in realm of bliss. The very fact that this very composition is to be recited by the Sikhs all the times shows that they have to remain in high spirits and accept the will of God in all circumstances.

The 4th Guru, although had a short span of life, composed significant compositions born out of divine revelations including 'Lavaan' (a composition of four stanzas relating to wedding with a spiritual meaning) which is recited at the time of the marriage of a Sikh couple. In addition to lavaan, Guru Ramdas also prescribed a daily routine for the Sikhs. As per this daily routine, a Sikh gets up early in the morning and after cleaning his body, he recites the name of God. He is also required to sing the hymns of praise of God in the company of the enlightened ones. The Guru had made it clear that a Sikh is known for what he does and not because of his birth or status. The 4th Guru founded a new city presently known as Amritsar. For financing the construction of the tank, the Guru had started Masand System which meant that preachers in different places were sending a part of collection from Guru's followers, for religious causes.

THE FIFTH GURU, THE COMPILER OF HOLY COMPILATION

The 5th Guru, Guru Arjan Dev (1536-1606) son of Guru Ram Dass, completed the construction of a temple in the midst of a pool, which is now popularly known as Golden Temple (Its foundation stone was got laid by Sain Mian Mir, a Muslim saint) and the pool of nectar. By the time, the 5th Guru ascended the divine throne, thousands of Hindus and Muslims had become followers of the new faith. Bhai Gurdas testifies this fact in some of his Vaars and Kabbits. The 5th Guru realised the importance of compiling the compositions of his predecessors in one volume for the benefit of his followers. Thus, the Guru started the work of compiling the holy Granth wherein were included his own compositions, the compositions of his predecessors and also the best of the

compositions authored by various Hindus and Muslim saints available at that time. It includes the compositions of 15 saints namely Jaidev, Baba Farid, Namdev, Trilochan, Parmanand, Sadhna, Beni, Ramanand, Dhanna, Peepa, Sain, Kabir, Ravidas, Surdas and Bhikhan, and that of 11 Bhattas. The remaining 4 contributors are Mardana, Baba Sunder Ji and the hymn singers of the court of the Guru, Satta and Balwand. Most of the compositions spread over 1430 pages have been composed in musical measures, 31 in number. The compositions of the 9th Master were included by the 10th Guru before the holy book was installed as the Guru. This unique Adi Granth is the first and the only holy book of the world wherein compositions of persons of other religion were included to make it universal in appeal. When, the holy book was completed it was installed in the holy temple. What a bold step it was in those days when Hindus and Muslims were estranged, the Guru combined the best of spiritual thought in one compilation and made it a universal divine book. The new temple was also meant for the entire humanity. Thousands of Hindus and Muslims were, thus impressed by the Guru and came to his shelter.

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CHAPTER-III

THE SAINTS BECOME SAINT SOLDIERS

When the 5th Master gave to his followers a place for worship, and a holy book to seek spiritual solace and guidance, the popularity of the new faith spread far and wide. Bhai Gurdas, who acted as the scribe to write the first copy of the holy book, the Adi Granth, when it was dictated by the 5th Guru, highlights the glory of the new faith during that period. He also makes a mention of degradation that had entered into the two existing religions of Hinduism and Islam. According to him, the successor occupants of the throne of Guru Nanak preached such great principles of love and universal brotherhood that people from both Hinduism and Islam were deeply impressed. He openly declares in the 34 Stanza of his first Vaar that both Hindus and Muslims became the followers of the Gurus in large number. Says he:-

ਘਰਿ ਘਰਿ ਬਾਬਾ ਪੂਜੀਐ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ਗੁਆਈ।
ਛਪੇ ਨਾਹਿ ਛਪਾਇਆ ਚੜਿਆ ਸੂਰਜੁ ਜਗੁ ਰੁਸਨਾਈ।

Ghar ghar Baba poojee-ai Hindu Musalmaan guaa-ee.

Chhape naahe chhapaalaa chariaa Sooraj jag rusnaa-ee.

Baba is worshipped in the house of

Both Hindus and Muslims.

When the Sun rises it can not be covered

And it lightens the whole world.

THE GROWING POPULARITY BECOMES AN EYE SORE

The growing popularity of the new religion became an eye sore for the detractors of the House of the Guru. They wanted to bring harm to the Guru and those who followed him. Even the elder brother of the fifth Guru, Prithi Chand was so jealous that after having been deprived of the Guru Gaddi, was bent upon destroying the peaceful order. He had become vindictive and was always on the look out for an opportunity to take vengeance. It was he, who made the complaint to the Emperor Akbar that the Holy Book prepared by the fifth Master was in fact, full of material against Hindus and Muslims. However, Akbar was a tolerant and wise ruler. When he got verified the fact, he found that the allegation was baseless as the volume prepared by the Guru, was worthy of reverence by one and all. After that, although certain persons associated with the emperor, like Birbal and Sulhi Khan, were opposed to the Guru, the

Emperor had no ill will against the Guru's House. However, the cordial relationship between the Emperor and the Guru did not remain same when Jahangir succeeded Akbar.

REASONS LEADING TO THE MARTYRDOM OF GURU ARJAN

Jahangir was an impatient and narrow-minded person in the matter of religion. He became highly jealous and apprehensive of the increasing popularity of the Guru, and was determined to put a stop to the religious preaching of Guru Ji. His prejudice against the Guru is clearly visible in the observations as made by him in his autobiography "*Tuzak-I-Jahangiri*". He has stated therein, "that at Goindwal, situated along the bank of the River Beas, was a Hindu (sic) named Arjun, who went about as a religious teacher. A large number of simple-minded Hindus, even stupid and ignorant Muslims, were attracted to this way, and his reputation as a teacher of religion got widespread. They called him Guru. Followers and practitioners of superstition from all directions turned towards him and reposed great faith in him. This commerce had been going on for three or four generations. For a long time it had been in my mind that this false business should be brought to an end or he (Guru Arjan) should be brought within the fold of Islam".

The construction of Harimandir and the compilation of the Adi Granth were such acts of the Guru, which attracted his followers from far and wide. The Sikhs, living in different parts of the country, started visiting the Guru and called him "Sachha Padshah." Maulvies and Pandits, who felt their positions as threatened and down graded, were also jealous of the increasing popularity of the new faith. They started complaining to the Emperor, who, was convinced that whatever Guru had done, was not in the interest of existing two religions. It is recorded in the tradition that the Emperor had wanted the Guru to write something about Islam and its founder but the Guru refused to make any changes in the holy compilation. Prithi Chand also took advantage of the situation and got the help of Sulhi Khan, the Governor of Lahore and Chandu Shah, a high ranking officer at Lahore. The Sikh tradition records that Chandu Shah was interested in getting his daughter married to Guru Arjan's son. Hargobind, but, as he had uttered certain disparaging words against the Guru's house, the Guru declined the offer on the suggestion of the Sikh gathering. The Sikhs had felt injured when they came to know that Chandu had said that Guru's house was too low for his status and wealth. The rejection of this proposal by the Guru made Chandu an enemy, and as such he became a party with those who wanted to make the Guru suffer.

The immediate cause that led to the Guru's martyrdom is related to the rebellion of emperor Jahangir's son Khusro. According to Mehima Prakash by

Sarup Dass Bhalla, when Khusro had met the Guru, the Guru showed him hospitality by serving him Langar. This gesture on the part of the Guru provided an opportunity to Chandu Shah and other detractors of Sikhism to instigate the emperor by saying that the Guru had helped the rebel Prince. Thus, Jahangir charged the Guru with the offence of supporting a rebellion and fined him heavily. When the fine was not paid, the Guru was arrested and was sentenced to death. Tuzak-I-Jahangiri mentions in this regard, as per which the Emperor ordered, "That he should be brought into my presence, that his property be confiscated, and that he should be put to death with torture".

The sacrifice made by the Guru for the purpose of defending the independence of ideas and following a religion separate from that of the ruling class, was the first known incident of martyrdom in the history of Sikh religion. The Guru was subjected to extreme physical tortures. He was made to sit on red hot iron plates and burning sand was poured upon him. Mian Mir, Guru's Muslim friend, a saintly figure, wanted to intercede on his behalf, but the Guru forbade him by saying that whatever was God's will must be fulfilled. When the Guru was taken to Ravi river for a dip in cold water, it was the height of the torture for his blistered body. However, obeying the God's Will, the Guru remained in meditation and peacefully passed away. Such act of tolerance and forbearance could be performed only by a brave person who had full faith in God. It is for such like brave people that Shakespeare had said:

Cowards die many times before their deaths;
The valiant never taste of death but once

THE IMPACT OF GURU'S MARTYRDOM

Guru Arjun's martyrdom brought a significant change in the Sikh religious history. It showed the moral strength which could always prevail upon the wicked forces. In the words of Sri Gokul Chand Narang, the writer of "transformation of Sikhs", with his martyrdom, the whole Punjab started burning with vengeance. When the martyrdom of the Guru took place, his son Hargobind, appointed as his successor, was barely 11 years old. According to Guru Pratap Suraj Granth, Guru Arjan Dev had sent instructions to his son that he should arm himself for the protection of the faith. It was indeed the need of the time that the new religion, which had become an eye sore for many influential and high placed people including the emperor, must be protected from their ruthless and tyrannous endeavour to destroy the same. The Sixth Guru, thus, decided that the path of devotion as shown by his predecessors must be continued to be promoted, but as a safeguard, the devotion must be combined with valour as to protect the righteous path.

BABA BUDDHA JI

Baba Buddha was the most venerated Sikh during the period of first six Gurus. When he met Guru Nanak, at Kathunangal, his birth place, he talked like a mature person. The Guru took him in his company and called him Buddha, mature enough to talk like elderly wise persons. From that day, Baba Buddha remained in the company of the Gurus, and whenever there was a change in succession, the honour of applying the ceremonial Tilak on the forehead of the new Guru was given to him. During the time of the construction of the Baoli at Goindwal and later on, the construction of the pool of nectar at Amritsar, Baba Buddhaji rendered a useful service with full devotion and dedication. He also gave spiritual training to Guru Hargobind. When the Adi Granth (Guru Granth Sahib) was installed in the Harimandir on 16th August, 1604, Baba Buddha was appointed the first high priest of the sacred shrine and the first Hukamnama from the Holy compilation was recited by him. Thus, when Guru Hargobind Sahib decided to follow the path of combining Bakhti with Shakti, Baba Buddha Ji, approving this policy, performed on 24th June, 1606, the investiture ceremony at which, the Guru wore two swords on his person, representing thereby the symbols of spiritual and temporal investiture.

AKAAL TAKHAT

For his investiture, the Guru got constructed a high platform just opposite the main shrine, which later on came to be known as Akaal Takhat. It was meant for conducting secular affairs of the community. The Guru adopted a princely style and held his court at this place receiving offerings and issuing commands therefrom. With a view to adjust the mind set of the Sikhs, he thought of training them in the martial arts as to become soldiers, when the need arose to defend the faith. In the open space between Harimandir and Akaal Takhat, tournaments were held wherein the Sikhs were encouraged to show physical feats of strength. Various bards were made to sing the poetical compositions of heroic ballads called Vaars in Punjabi. Abdullah and Nattha were the most well known Vaar Singers. The Guru issued a Hukamnama on June 12, 1606 desiring thereby that people should bring arms and horses as offerings by the devotees. A small retinue of 52 armed Sikhs was formed. Many other Sikhs were provided with horses and weapons with necessary trainings in their use.

As mentioned above, the Guru had only combined the spirit of bravery with the spirit of saintly tradition of devotion, and not deviated from the path shown by his predecessors. He himself got up early in the morning and sat in Seclusion to concentrate on the divine. He read the holy book with concentration and deep spiritual absorption. He had realised through the holy word as enshrined in the compilation made by his father that the path of

devotion towards God itself required the necessary valour, courage, fortitude and dedication. The 3rd Guru had made it clear that it was not easy to tread this path which was sharper than the sword and narrower than a hair. The founder of the religion had earmarked this path, when he said

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

Jau tau prem khelan ka chao.

Sir dhar talee galee meree aao.

It maarag pair dhareejai.

Sir deejai kaan na keejai.

If you want to play the game of love
Tread my path with head placed on your palm
Once on this path, then sacrifice your head,
Without bothering about what the people say.

(SGGS, Page 1412)

The 6th Guru was fully aware of the fact that a brave person according to the new religion, called a 'Soora' was he who had delved himself in the colour of Godly love and at the same time he was a person, in the words of saint Kabir, who could sacrifice his life for a great cause, and would never leave the battlefield even when cut into pieces.

ਸੂਰਾ ਸੋ ਪਹਿਚਾਨੀਐ ਜੁ ਲਰੈ ਦੀਨ ਕੇ ਹੇਤ॥
ਪੁਰਜਾ ਪੁਰਜਾ ਕਟਿ ਮਰੈ ਕਬਹੂ ਨ ਛਾਡੈ ਖੇਤ॥ ੨॥ ੨॥

Soora so pehchaanee-ai ju larai deen ke het.

Purja Purja kat marai kab-hoo na chhaadai khet.2.2.

Warrior is he who fights for a religious cause;
He doesn't abandon the battlefield, though cut into pieces he dies.

(SGGS, Page 1105)

Realising the fact that the life of a Gursikh was a struggle for excellence, the Guru wanted a Sikh both a saint and a soldier. Thus, the followers of the new religion, mostly having a saintly bent of mind were transformed as saints-soldiers.

JAHANGIR'S REACTION

When the news of the modification of the policy as made by Guru Hargobind reached emperor Jahangir, he decided to go ahead with his mission of destroying the new religion, and as a step forward in this direction, an order was passed by him for the detention of the Guru in the fort of Gwalior. However, when the emperor realised the love and devotion of the devotees of

the Guru, who made trips to the Gwalior fort in batches and even when disallowed to enter the Fort, offered obeisance from outside the walls, and the emperor heard from many people that it was an act of harassment of a saintly and truly divine personality, good sense prevailed on him and the Guru was released from the Fort.

Although, the relations with the emperor, thereafter, remained normal, there arose again a danger to the just and religious people of the new faith during the period of Shahjahan, whose fundamentalism had made him jealous of the popularity of the Guru. It was in such circumstances that the Guru had to fight certain battles with the Mughal Army or with those, who got the support from them. It is also a fact that the Guru never lost a battle but even then towards the end of his period, he preferred to shift his headquarters from Amritsar to a secluded peaceful place in the Hill, called Kiratpur, for the purpose of promoting the golden tenets of love and devotion. Thus, to conclude it can be said, borrowing from Bhai Gurdas that the Guru was the vanquisher of Armies with a heartfull of love and charity. "This synthesis of heroic and the spiritual was Guru Hargobind's distinctive contribution to the evolution of Sikh society". (Encyclopaedia of Sikhism, Volume 2 page 234).

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THE SIKHS FIGHT THEIR FIRST BATTLES

When Guru Arjan Dev, the 5th Nanak, became a martyr, the Mughal administrators thought that the new faith will get a big jolt and its followers will be scared and leave it in good number. However, the expectations of the Mughal ruler did not come true as the 6th Guru, after analysing the situation effected a radical change in his policy. He realised that for a peaceful set up, it was necessary to be bold and brave enough as to face the enemies who were bent upon to destroy the peaceful order. Guru Hargobind, therefore, made all preparations in this respect. He started organising camps and giving training to Sikhs in fighting for self-defence by using the common weapons of that time. He himself adopted a warrior's dress and also directed his followers to adorn themselves as saint soldiers.

SIKH ARMY FORMED

As a result of the efforts made by the Guru to train the Sikhs in martial arts, a number of Sikhs learnt how to use bows and arrows, swords, sticks and some other weapons. Thus, when the Guru gave a call to constitute an army, most of the devotees of that time enrolled themselves. Bhai Nannu, Bhai Mathura Bhatt, Bhatt Prag Dass, Bhai Kishna, Bhai Jagna, Bhai Kalyana, Bhai Malluka, Bhai Jattu, Bhai Sattu, Bhai Sunder, Bhai Ballu, Bhai Pirana, Bhai Paida, Bhai Ananta, Bhai Bhagtu, Bhai Tarloka, Bhai Jaita, Bhai Nihalu, Bhai Nanda, Bhai Madho, Bhai Lakkha, Bhai Mehar Chand, Bhai Krishna Bhai Dassa, Bhai Suhela and Bhatt Kirat were among the prominent soldiers of the Army of the 6th Guru. Although it was initial stage of transformation from saints to saints soldiers, the spirit of Gurbani had made the Sikhs sufficiently strong and bold enough to challenge whatever was wrong and unjust. Some historians like Indu Bhushan Bannerjee hold the view that some Jats of Punjab were drawn to Guru's Army because of their lure for booty and adventure, but such cases, if any, could only be exceptional. Most of the soldiers had a religious motive. They knew that the Guru wanted to protect the forces of spirituality and religion as against the forces of tyranny and oppression. In such battles, booty could not be the lure for those who came forward to fight for the cause. Moreover, the Guru's army was too small as compared to that of the Mughal army or all those who were supported by the Mughal administrators, and in that case the only option for a soldier was to win and protect his faith or to

sacrifice his life for the said cause.

Bhai Gurdas has given an indication in his works regarding the modification that occurred during this period. There are other works also which shed light on this aspect of the matter. All these sources confirm that after the construction of Akaal Takhat, this place had become the focal point for taking all such decisions which were concerned with the very existence of the new faith. It has also been pointed out that in the preliminary stage around 400 Sikhs, residents of Malwa, but later settled in Majha and Doaba were recruited by the Guru. Some of the brave soldiers were made commanders of small segments of this army. Most of those recruited were volunteers and were only contented with Guru's blessings.

EMPEROR'S FANATICISM, CAUSE FOR CONFLICT

When the detractors of the House of the Gurus noted the martial activities of Guru and its soldiers at Akaal Takhat, they were alarmed and were always for the look out for an opportunity to impose a battle on the Guru. When Shah Jahan ascended the throne of Delhi, religious fanaticism and orthodoxy became all the more supreme. The Hindu temples were demolished in Benaras. The *Baoli* as built by Guru Arjan Dev in Dabbi Bazar in Lahore was also covered with rubbish and demolished. The langar building adjoining the Baoli was converted into a Mosque. The battles fought during the period of 6th Guru by the newly trained soldiers were mainly caused by this fanaticism and orthodoxy and were borne out of the determination of Mughal Empire to bring the Sikh religion to a close. There is a divergence of opinion with regard to the dates of the battles with the result that no chronology has yet been fixed for them. Bhai Gurdas does not make mention of the battles fought during this period, but only gives a clue regarding the Sikh's success in these battles. Gurbilas Patshahi Chheveen was the first endeavour to give correct dates of the said battles in historical perspective. Bhatt Bahis, a bardic account as has come to our notice during the recent years is another attempt to chronify the battles. However, even this source cannot be relied fully as an element of devotion of Bhatt Bahi writers some time may make a confusion regarding the chronology.

THE FIRST BATTLE OF ROHILA

The first battle fought during the time of Guru Hargobind is considered as that of a battle of Rohila. Rohila was a village which fell within the jurisdiction of Jalandhar Doab. In the background of this battle was Chandu, who had played a vital role in the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev. It was on 3rd (or 4th October) 1621 when this battle took place. After the death of Chandu, the Sikhs also got possession of his land. Guru Ji started new construction for founding a new city there. One, Shri Bhagwan Dass, a landlord of that village put up resistance and

attacked Sikhs. In a scuffle that took place, Bhagwan Dass was killed. His son, Rattan Chand and Chandu's son Karam Chand took the help of Subedar of Jalandhar and large army was sent against Guru ji in their support. The Subedar of Jalandhar dispatched 4000 troops with instructions to the local Fauzdar Nawab Abdulla Khan to arrange some individuals of repute to fight against the Guru. Thus, Mod. Khan, Behram Khan, Balwand Khan, Ali Bakhsh, Imam Bakhsh, Nabi Bakhsh, Karish Bakhsh and Chirag Din were among those reputed persons who joined the Mughal forces. On the Guru's side fought men like Bhai Kalyana, Bhai Piraga, Bhai Mathura, Bhai Jagna, Paras Ram and Bhai Saktu, in charge of different jathas or groups under the overall leadership of Bhai Jattu.

THE EARLY SIKH MARTYRS IN THE BATTLEFIELD

Bhai Nannu was the first Sikh to become a martyr. He killed Karam Chand, the son of notorious Chandu in hand to hand fight. Before he died, he fought for many hours and showed his excellent skill in shooting arrows. As per tradition, it is believed that his arrows followed the very voice of the enemy and hit the target. He killed several prominent persons of the enemy's camp including Bhagwan Dass and his son Rattan Chand. His brave fight finds a mention in Bhatt Bahi Multani Sindhi as well as Gurbilas Patshahi Chheveen. Similarly, Mathura Bhatt is also mentioned in these sources as the martyr of this battle. He is stated to have been sent in the middle of the battle with 100 persons to face Beram Khan and his 500 troops. Beram had covered almost the whole of his body with equipment made of steel. Despite that Beram Khan was wounded in a hand-to-hand fight with Bhai Mathra. Some other Sikhs who were killed included Bhai Paraga, Bhai Kishna, Bhai Jagna, Bhai Kalyana and Bhai Malluka. Bhai Jattu was also killed after fighting very bravely and killing a large number of Mohammedan generals. When in the final bout, he fought with the Mughal leader Mohammad Khan, there was an excellent display of archery by Bhai Jattu. Whatever arrows came from Mohammad Khan, Bhai Jattu stopped them with his arrows and they just fell in the air before hitting anyone. On the other side, the arrows that were sent by Bhai Jattu killed a number of Mughal soldiers and many others were injured. When the stock of arrows was exhausted, there was a fight with swords and in the end both the leaders killed each other.

This first battle fought by the Sikhs and won by them brought them laurels. The people in general, and the followers of the Guru in particular were so impressed and convinced that Sikhs, though small in number could face even the big and powerful forces. This not only led to boost the morale of the Sikhs, but also helped in the spread of Sikhism. People were fed up with the tyrannical administration of Nawab Abdullah Khan and as such with his death

they felt relieved. Many others, there after, joined Sikhism and some of them even the Army prepared by the Guru. The Sikhs became so fearless that they were not even scared of the royal commands. When one day, the royal hawk which had strayed from its path, fell into the hands of the Sikhs, and the royal soldiers approached the Sikhs in an insolent manner, the Sikhs dared to refuse them the restoration of royal hawk. When the matter was reported to the Emperor, an army headed by Mukhlis Khan was sent against the Guru. The quarrel over the hawk ultimately turned into a battle, popularly known as the battle of Amritsar.

BATTLE OF AMRITSAR

This battle of Amritsar was fought in the year 1634. The rigid attitude of Shahjahan, a modification in the policy of the Guru and the incident of Kaulaan, the daughter of a Quazi at Lahore were some of the reasons which led to this battle. The immediate cause was the possession of a hawk of emperor Shahjahan by the Sikhs. When the battle was forced upon the Guru and his Sikhs, it was an occasion for the marriage of Guru's daughter Bibi Viro. The Guru was busy in the preparations for the marriage. However, the first task of the Sikhs was to shift the Guru's family to a safer place and then face the enemy. Some of them were engaged in shifting, whereas others went to Lohgarh Fort to restrain the Mughal forces. A hollowed tree was converted into a place of rough artillery and the enemy was given a fight from Lohgarh Fort at Amritsar. The Sikhs of the Guru fought with zeal and courage. Gurbilas Patshahi Chheveen informs us that when Guru's family was shifted to a house near Ramsar, his daughter Bibi Viroji, who was in the midst of wedding preparations was incidentally left behind in the upper storey of the house. The Guru's volunteers, Bhai Babak and Bhai Singha were able to bring her safely to the Guru's camp at great risk to their lives. The mughal soldiers continued to harass the Sikhs when they were busy in their rescue operations. The Sikh soldiers in Lohgarh Fort fought with confidence against the Mughal soldiers whose strength outnumbered their's. The fighting operations continued. So much so that when some of the divisions of the Sikhs were heavily reduced, the Mughal soldiery managed to enter the city. On finding the establishment of the Sikhs somewhat deserted, the property of the Guru was looted. Even the sweets which had been prepared for the wedding of the Guru's daughter were taken away by the Mughal soldiers. Realising the gravity of the situation, the Guru promptly managed to send his family to Chabaaal under the supervision of some Sikhs. The Guru then made his final arrangements for the battle. Bhai Bidhia, Bhai Parana, Bhai Bhanu and Pains Khan commanded the Sikhs of the Guru, who were divided in two different sections. The Gurus' force consisted of footmen, horsemen and archers, and the weapons used by them

were arrows, spears, swords, shields, lathis and muskets. The Mughal troops were commanded by Mukhlis Khan. The command of the sub-divisions was handed over to Shamas Khan, Anwar Khan and Sayyad Muhammad. The Mughals and the Sikhs both fought with determination. The soldiers of both sides occasionally resorted to swords and spears in a hand-to-hand fight instead of using muskets and arrows.

Macauliff has also given a vivid account of this battle, wherein was shown the perfection of Skill in swordsmanship and archery. He has mentioned as how the Sikhs accepted the challenge and took up their positions with their swords and arrows near Lohgarh Fortress outside the city of Amritsar. He says that Guru's Sikhs used even hollow trees as converted weapons of artillery and discharged stones from them. Guru's wives and children along with certain valuables kept for the purpose of marriage were removed to a house near Ramsar. The Guru prayed in the Harimandir and inspired his persons to give a tough fight. The Sikhs fought so vigorously that seasoned Mughal Generals like Shamas Khan, Anwar Khan and Mukhlis Khan had to give in. The brave Sikhs like Singha, Bhai Joti Mal, Bhai Nanda, Piraga, Bhima and Bhikhan cut off the heads, arms and legs of a large number of their adversaries. The Guru himself fought with Mukhlis Khan and cut his head in twain. Ultimately, the Sikhs won the battle. The place where this battle was fought is now called Sangrana and a Shrine commemorates this event and the victory of the Guru at this place, where a fair is held at the time of the full moon in the month of Baisakh every year.

The battle at Amritsar proved the worth of the soldiers of the Guru. Although, the Sikh warriors of fame like Bhai Bhagtu, Bhai Takhtu, Bhai Tota, Bhai Piara, Bhai Mohan and others were killed in this battle, the death of Mughal leader, Mukhlis Khan was just an indication of the triumph of the Sikhs over them. A contemporary writer Zulfiqar Ardistanani admits that the credit goes to the soldiers of the Guru that in spite of the fact that though they were no match for the regular and well organised forces of the Mughals, they fought a heroic battle and the Mughal soldiers after the death of their leader were completely routed. It further stimulated the Sikh movement and enabled them to prove martial race in the coming years.

THE BATTLE OF VILLAGE MEHRAZ

The next battle fought was that of village Mehraz. The immediate cause of this battle was the seizure of the two horses, Dilbag and Gulbag by Inayyat Atullah, a government official of Lahore. The horses were sent to the royals stable. Guru Hargobind Sahib was on tour from Bhai Rupa and was on his way to Rai jodh, when he got the news that one devotee from Kabul had brought two horses out

of daswand money collected by him. But as he was bringing them, the horses were taken possession of by the Mughal soldiers of Suba Lahore. It was learnt that the horses were kept in the royal stable. Guru Ji blessed one of his followers Bhai Bidhi Chand and entrusted him the work of bringing back the two horses from royal stable. Bhai Bidhi Chand very boldly performed this task and brought back the horses to Guru Ji. When emperor Shahjahan came to know of this development, an army was sent against Guru Ji. The Sikh army and the Mughal army fought a battle at a place named Lehra (Near Mehraj).

BIDHI CHAND'S ACT OF VALOUR

This battle at Mehraj is stated to have been fought on 16th December, 1634. As per Gurbilas Patshahi Chheveen, the act of seizure of horses by the Mughal officials was taken as a challenge by the Sikhs and they girded up their loins to bring back the horses. The Sixth master gave his consent to Bidhi Chand to recover the horses from the royal custody. Gurbilas tells us as how Bidhi Chand executed the plan and entered the royal stable as a grass cutter. He won the sympathy and favour of the officials who mattered and one night, finding a suitable opportunity, he slipped away with one of the horses called Dilbag. Bidhi Chand being a successful rider was able to manage to cross the hurdles in the way and reached with the horse at the place of the Guru. Since the horse felt lonely, Bidhi Chand planned to bring his companion also. This time, he disguised himself as an astrologer who was expert in telling about the lost things. When he was presented before the emperor he stated that he will be able to tell the name of the thief if the companion horse will be shown to him. As soon as the horse was brought before him, he wasted no time in galloping it off and while leaving he informed that he was the devotee of the Guru Hargobind and the horses belonged to the Guru and the Sangat, so he had taken away the first horse also. Such was the spirit and the courage of the Guru's Sikhs.

When the battle started the Mughal soldiers were unable to stand before the religious zeal and enthusiasm of the Sikhs. The Sikhs were used to hardships, whereas the Mughal soldiers, in view of the paucity of food and drinking water, felt helpless and could not fight in the right earnest. When the Mughal Commanders were killed, the most of their soldiers fled from the field. There were heavy casualties on both the sides. About 1200 volunteer Sikhs including some prominent soldiers lost their lives. According to *Bhatt Vahi Multani Sindhi*, Kirat Bhatt also died fighting in this battle.

PAINDE KHAN'S RISE AND FALL

Painde Khan was a brave soldier in the Guru's army. He was a Pathan who was nurtured to be a well-built handsome soldier by the Guru himself. However, when he became proud and thought himself indispensable, he picked up a

quarrel with the Sikhs and deserted the Guru. When he went to the side of the Mughal forces, another battle was fought, wherein the Guru himself took part in action. This battle was fought at Kartarpur in the year 1635 and the Mughal army under the command of Kalla Beg and Kamar Beg attacked the Sikhs. Painde Khan and Kalle Khan were also heading another unit of the Army. Thus, the Sikhs had to face a fierce battle. Guru had to fight Painde Khan in a face-to-face combat. Guru gave him every opportunity to attack first and shield himself against Guru's attack, but ultimately Painde Khan was killed. Baba Gurditta, the son of the Guru also fought vigorously and killed Asman Khan in hand-to-hand fight.

General Kutab Khan and Kale Khan both were slain in hand to hand fighting with Guru Hargobind. Zulfiqar Ardistani has argued that the defensive move made by the Guru was not the result of any anger or from a feeling of revenge but was chiefly because his challenge had to be met and by way of teaching him the art of warfare. *Bhatt Vahi Multani Sindhi* records the killings of Bhatt Amir Chand and Fateh Chand, sons of one Dharma Bhatt and grandsons of Bhoj Bhatt.

GURU'S SHIFTING TO KIRATPUR

After the battle of Kartarpur, the Guru thought of shifting to a peaceful place as to concentrate more upon the spiritual activities. Since he did not want more of warfare, he selected a peaceful hilly place, far away from Lahore and shifted to the serene atmosphere of this place called Kiratpur. On their way to Kiratpur, the Sikhs were again attacked by a Royal Detachment under the command of Ahmad Khan, son of Abdullah Khan, near Phagwara. Although, it was a sudden onslaught and the Sikhs were not ready with their defensive measures, they displayed exemplary courage by fighting in high spirits.

SHAKTI CONCEPT CONTINUED AND STRENGTHENED

When the Sixth Guru left the world for heavenly abode, the divine light passed on to his grandson, Har Rai (Son of Baba Gurditta, who had predeceased his father). Har Rae, the Seventh Master had a very soft and devout temperament. In this respect, there is a prevalent story that once, when he was passing through a garden, his robe was caught in a bush, as a result of which, some flowers were broken from their stems. This incident pained him so much that he became sad on the lot of beautiful flowers. However, even with this kind of tenderness of heart, he was strong enough to perform his duties as the preacher of the tenets of the new faith for which he toured extensively and also sent various other persons to different places. He kept the daily practice of meditation and attending the congregation, explaining therein the Sikh doctrines. At the same time, he carried on the stately style of his father keeping

with him 2200 armed followers. There arose no occasion for going to the battlefield during his period but when Emperor Aurangzeb, guided by his bigotry and narrow mindedness summoned him to his court, the Guru sent his son alongwith certain other Sikhs to satisfy the queries of the ruthless ruler. He had instructed his son to answer all the questions fairly, without any fear, and in conformity with the teachings contained in the *Adi Granth*. However, when his son, Ram Rai misread one of the lines from the scriptures with a view to keep the emperor happy, the Guru broke his relations with him and boldly debarred him from ascending the spiritual throne. The spiritual throne then passed on to the younger son of the Guru, namely Har Krishan, who succeeded his father on 6th October, 1661.

Guru Har Krishan, the 8th in the line of Guru Nanak, was only five years old when he assumed the spiritual office. However, he possessed the rare ability of explaining and propagating the teachings of his predecessors. When Aurangzeb issued him summons for his presence in the court, the Guru was bold enough to visit Delhi to meet the king. On his way to Delhi, he carried on his duty of attending Sangats (congregations) and explaining to them, the spiritual percepts. While in Delhi, he preferred to serve the people of Delhi who were suffering from small pox and plague than to meet the emperor. The epidemics had taken so severe a shape that the patients were deserted even by nearest and dearest relations.

The Guru blessed the people and a large number of them got cured with his blessings. That is why, the 10th Guru has said about him that with his very sight, one can get rid of all sorrows and sufferings. However, the selfless dedicated service of the Guru involved him so much that he himself fell ill and became afflicted with the disease. Considering this as the will of God, he performed his last duty by directing his followers to his successor, Tegh Bahadur, who was living in meditation at Baba Bakala, during those days.

Tyag Mal, who became the Ninth successor of Guru Nanak was the son of Guru Har Gobind. He had shown his valour in fighting in the battles fought during the period of his father. It was because of his valour in the battles, that he had earned for him the distinctive title of The Brave of the Sword, (Tegh Bahadur). Although, no battles were fought during the period of the 7th, 8th and the 9th Guru, the Sikhs had to remain ready for any confrontation and were thus given some sort of martial training even in those years. By the time, the 10th Guru ascended the spiritual throne, Aurangzeb had started giving shape to his arbitrary mission to convert everyone to Islam. For fulfilling his mission, the emperor and his lieutenants at several places perpetuated such atrocities over the weak and down trodden Hindus that there was a hue and cry all around. The Guru could not tolerate such kind of injustice and suppression.

Whereas Guru Tegh Bahadur, sacrificed his life for preventing this kind of cruelty and high-handedness, the 10th Guru, as a part of the policy of combining Bhakti with Shakti, had to produce such a class of people who could stem this storm of conversions. Bulle Shah, a Muslim Sufi poet of that period has rightly said :-

ਨਾ ਕਹੂੰ ਅਬ ਕੀ, ਨਾ ਕਹੂੰ ਤਬ ਕੀ,
ਗਰ ਨਾ ਹੋਤੇ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ,
ਤੋ ਸੁਨੱਤ ਹੋਤੀ ਸਭ ਕੀ।

*Na Kahun Ab Ki, Na Kahun Tab Ki
Gar Na Hotey Guru Gobind Singh,
To Sunnat Hoti Sab Ki*

I don't say of now, nor say of then,
But one thing is true, had the Guru
Not appeared, everybody would have been
Circumcised and converted to Islam.

*

CHAPTER-V
BEFORE CREATION OF KHALSA

Guru Gobind Singh, known as Gobind Rai, during his childhood was only 9 years old when a delegation of Brahmins from Kashmir had come to meet his father, the 9th Master. They were led by one Shri Kirpa Ram, and had come to inform the Guru that in Kashmir, the Mughal Governor Iftikhar Khan, who was highly bigoted, had made their life miserable. The Guru, on hearing their tale of woes was just thinking the course of action, when Gobind Rai asked him the reason for his thinking. It is recorded in Gurbilas Patshahi Ten that when the 9th Master told his son that for redemption of the difficulties of these afflicted persons, some noble person had to sacrifice his head, the young son replied in innocence as who could be worthier than the Guru for such a noble act. This reply of Gobind Rai relieved Guru Tegh Bahadur from his thought and he immediately took the decision to lay down his life for this cause. Kashmiri Pandits were told to go and convey to the emperor that they will all become Muslims if he could convert the Guru to Islam.

When the Emperor noticed a new spirit in the people, who were so scared of him, he immediately ordered for the arrest of Guru. The Emperor could not tolerate a Guru who was preaching

ਭੈ ਕਾਹੂ ਕਉ ਦੇਤ ਨਹਿ ਨਹਿ ਭੈ ਮਾਨਤ ਆਨਿ॥

ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੁਨਿ ਰੇ ਮਨਾ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਤਾਹਿ ਬਖਾਨਿ॥ ੧੬॥

(ਪੰਨਾ ੧੪੨੭)

Bhai Kaahoo Kau Det Neh Neh Bhai Maanat Aaan.

Kauh Nanak Sun Re Mana Giaanee Taahe Bakhaan.16.

Neither frighten anyone, nor be afraid;

Says Nanak, who does so, is divinely wise.16.

MARTYRDOM OF GURU TEGH BAHADUR

Thus, when the Guru reached Delhi he was imprisoned and then was required to either embrace Islam or die. The emperor and his men wanted that if Guru had miracle powers, let the same be displayed. However, the Sikhism does not believe in miracles. The emperor did not realise that the miracle of the Great Guru and his followers was their fearlessness and fortitude in facing death in preference to adopt Islam. They were not against Islam, but the principle was that everybody had a right to follow his religion and remember God in his own manner of conviction. It was for this cause of freedom of religion that the Guru

had to sacrifice himself. Three of his followers, Bhai Mati Das Ji, Bhai Sati Das Ji and Bhai DIALA Ji, who had accompanied him to Delhi, were also martyred in front of his eyes. Bhai Mati Dass was sawn into two pieces Bhai Sati Das, brother of Bhai Mati Dass was wrapped up in cotton wool and was set on fire, Bhai DIALA, elder brother of Bhai Mani Singh, was boiled to death in a heated cauldron of water. These great persons were martyred just to over awe the Guru, but of no avail. It was on the 11th Nov., 1675 that the Guru was beheaded in public at Chandni Chowk Delhi where now stands a Memorial in the form of Gurudwara Sisganj.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was an embodiment of Bhakti and Shakti. He had shown his soldier like qualities in the battles fought at the time of his father. Thereafter, he spent a number of years in meditation. He was always imbued with the love of God. He was so peaceful by nature and in temperament that whatever he wrote, gives a feeling of tranquillity and peace of mind. He reminds us time and again that the life is being spent, and the time once gone will not come again, so we should remember God and perform the noble deeds. However, this bent of mind did not make him weak, as is exemplified by the fortitude with which he faced all the tortures before his execution. It is said that a great storm blew in the city of Delhi at that time, and everybody was struck with terror. The helpless people felt the agony, but the Guru obtained the highest glory. The 10th Guru has expressed his feelings about the martyrdom of his father in his Bachitra Natak in such beautiful words as under:-

ਠੀਕਰਿ ਫੋਰਿ ਦਿਲੀਸ ਸਿਰਿ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਪੁਰ ਕੀਆ ਪਯਾਨ॥
 ਤੇਗ ਬਹਾਦਰ ਸੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਆ ਕਰੀ ਨ ਕਿਨਹੂੰ ਆਨ॥
 ਤੇਗ ਬਹਾਦਰ ਕੇ ਚਲਤ ਭਯੋ ਜਗਤ ਕੇ ਸੋਕ॥
 ਹੈ ਹੈ ਹੈ ਸਭ ਜਗ ਭਯੋ ਜੈ ਜੈ ਜੈ ਸੁਰਲੋਕ॥ ੧੬॥

Theekar phor dilees sir prabh pur keeaa pyaan

Tegh Bahadur si kiriaa kari na kinhoon aan

Tegh Bahadur ke chalat bhayo jagat ko sog

Hai Hai Hai Sabh jag bhayo jai jai jai sur log.

“Guru Tegh Bahadur broke his earthly vessel on Aurangzeb’s head.

And went to the Home of God

No one had ever performed such a noble act like the self sacrifice of Guru Tegh Bahadur

When Guru Tegh Bahadur passed away,

The world was sorrow stricken

Alas! Alas! Rose the wailing cries on earth;

The shouts of Glory! Glory! Glory! Resounded in heaven.”

THE REACTION AFTER THE MARTYRDOM

The Guru, although, he was just a child at that time showed a heroic spirit in performing the cremation of the head of the Guru which was brought to him by a person named Bhai Jaita. Although he remained peaceful and unshaken, the incident proved another landmark on the way of bravery of this nation. It strengthened the Sikhs, and enlightened the other people of the country to profess the religion of their choice. It is on the basis of such events that the independent India chose to be secular democratic republic. The very cause for which the Guru sacrificed his life is now enshrined as one of the fundamental rights in the Constitution of India. This is a tribute to the memory of the Great Master and an acceptance of the fact of his being the protector of religion, and the savour of the country (Hind Di Chaddar, as he is called).

The 10th Guru, although continued to follow the tradition of combining Bhagti with Shakti, he had no intention to wage a war against anyone. Rather, he had a vast interest in Indian religions and philosophies and he encouraged all those people who were writing on such subjects. He got an opportunity to devote his maximum time to his spiritual and literary pursuits, when he stayed at Paonta, a small town on the bank of river Yamuna in Sirmaur district of Himachal Pradesh. This place was visited by him on the invitation of Raja Medni Prakash of Nahan. The Raja had high regards for the Guru and wanted to extend him the best hospitality. However, the Guru selected a peaceful and calm place outside the city and stayed there for about three years.

GURU'S LITERARY AND MARTIAL ACTIVITIES

The Guru, thus, founded this city, which came to be known as Paonta. The Guru was inspired by the natural beauty of the place and spent most of his time in the study of ancient languages and scriptures. A large number of writers and poets came to his shelter and were patronised by him. It is believed that there were 52 Poets who wrote their compositions during this period of literary activities. At the same time, the Guru had realised that although the hilly citadel of Anandpur was purchased by the 9th Guru by paying the demanded price, the surrounding chieftains of the hill states had an eye on this place and were always eager to deprive the Guru of his rightful possession. The hill chieftains did not like the martial activities of the Guru as they thought that in case Guru became more powerful he could become the ruler of all the states.

Considering the hostile attitude of the hill chieftains, the Guru, in addition to the literary activities continued to give attention to martial activities as to keep his men in ready position to meet any invasion from the hostile neighbours. Even the Mughal administration could not tolerate the ever increasing popularity of the House of the Guru. Thus, The Guru imparted

physical training to his followers, and raised a Nishan Sahib as the flag of the community as a sign of their sovereignty. He also started the practice of beating of drum (Nagara) as to boost the spirit of his soldiers. All these developments alarmed the hill chiefs, particularly, Bhim Chand of Bilaspur, who did not like the Guru for his boldness on various issues and his rejection of old customs, rituals and superstitions. Being highly apprehensive of the activities of the Guru, Bhim Chand started instigating other rulers and collected a combined force for an attack on the Guru at the appropriate time.

BATTLE OF BHANGANI

When Bhim Chand found that the Guru was staying at Paonta, he considered it a right opportunity to launch an attack on him. When the Guru came to know of this plan of Raja Bhim Chand, he selected a place 10 kms. north east of Paonta for meeting the invaders. Although, the number of Sikhs with him was quite small, they were all prepared to fight for their Guru. Apart from the Sikhs as the soldiers, the Guru's devoted disciple Pir Budhu Shah got certain Pathans enlisted in his army, but these Pathans did not prove loyal and deserted the Guru in the middle of the battle. It was at this moment when Budhu Shah entered the battle scene along with his 4 sons and a good number of followers. The place where battle was fought was Bhangani.

The most important source of information regarding this battle and the battles fought later on at Nadaun and with Hussaini, is the Guru's own autobiography, named *Bachittar Natak*, Sainapat's *Sri Gur Sobha*, The *Gurbilas* of Bhai Kaeor Singh and Sukha Singh and the *Bansavalinama* by Bhai Kesar Singh Chhibar. The first hand description of this battle finds expression in Guru's own autobiographical work *Bachittar Natak*, wherein he gives vivid details of the battle. We come to know that the attack from the enemy was sudden and direct, and the Guru's soldiers had no other alternative but to fight in the battlefield. The sons of Bibi Viro, his aunt, Ganga Ram, Jit Mal, Mohri Chand and Gulab Chand, under the command of their brother Sango Shah, showed acts of bravery and great skill in arms. Sango Shah has been addressed by the Guru as Shah Sangram, Jit Mal as an apostle of patience, Gulab Chand as Ghazi and Ganga Ram as the pastmaster in archery. Mohri Chand has been described as the very image of encouragement. Pandit Daya Ram and Mahant Kirpal Chand, the peaceful devotees, promptly jumped into the battlefield with lathis or sticks or whichever article they happened to catch hold of. Guru has recorded his appreciation of the Shivalry of Mahant Kirpal Chand and described as what lay in store for Hayat Khan, a Pathan, who had first joined the service of Guru and later deserted him when the battle was going on.

BATTLE OF NADAUN AND HUSSAINI

There were two other battles fought at Nadaun and Hussaini, which find a detailed description in the Guru's autobiography. The main reason for the battle at Nadaun was the conflict between the Mughal Government and the hill rulers. The hill rulers had not paid the due revenue to the imperial government for which default they had to face an attack. When the hill rulers approached the Guru for his help in fighting with the Mughal Government, the Guru sided with them and as such the Sikhs fought the battle with the Mughal Army led by Alif Khan at Nadaun, which place is about 30 kms. South east of Kangra, situated on the left bank of Beas. While describing this battle that was fought on 20th March 1691, the Guru has written that the enemy was pushed down into a stream. Arrows and musket bullets were being rained on the enemy and it appeared that the warriors were playing holi as their clothes were red with blood. The Guru further writes that the enemy left their positions clandestinely at mid night. Alif Khan had fled in utter dismay, "without being able to give any attention to his camp."

The autobiographical account as appearing in *Bachitra Natak* further reveals that most likely on the instructions from Aurangzeb, the Fauzdar of Kangra sent another contingent under the command of Rustam Khan to chastise the Guru. It was a cold and dark night when Rustam Khan crossed Satluj with 1000 troops against the Guru. However, the fierce battle that ensued made the enemy to cross back the Satluj and go away. The Guru writes in his cheerful spirit that the Turks did not even use their weapons or swords, nor did they roar. They were more shy than women folk and fled away without fighting. Another battle which followed is known as battle of Hussaini after the name of Hussain Khan, the Mughal Commander, who was sent by Dilawar Khan. Dilawar Khan wanted to avenge the defeat of his son Rustam Khan. However, the Sikhs again won after a fierce battle. This battle of Hussaini, which was fought on 20th March, 1696 was in fact a battle among the Mughals and the Sikhs, the Hill chiefs being divided on both the sides. On the side of the Sikhs were Raja Gopal of Guler and Raja Ram Singh of Jaswan. The Guru has praised not only his Sikhs for the bravery shown by them, but also other brave persons. He also expressed his gratitude to the Almighty God for this victory as is recorded in *Bachitra Natak*.

SAINAPAT'S ACCOUNT OF THE BATTLES

Sainapat has given an account of the battles fought during the period of the 10th Guru in great details. First he has described, the battles that took place before the creation of Khalsa. While describing the battle of Bhangani, Sainapat writes about the fight between Hari Chand and the Guru. He writes

about Jaimal, Nand Chand and Ganga Ram who put up a tough fight to the enemy. He also mentions about the killing of various soldiers on the enemy side and the escape of various others from the battlefield e.g. Mudhkar Shah of Dhadwal. Regarding the battle of Nadaun, Sainapat indicates as how the Guru had supported the cause of the hill Rajas. “*Rajan ke hit karne kio judh im jaan*”. Sainapat also writes about the battle of Guru Gobind Singh with Rustam Khan, son of Dilawar Khan, who was a *Panjhazari* Sardar in the establishment of Emperor Aurangzeb. Dilawar Khan had wanted to chastise the hill chiefs, as such he sent Rustam Khan, but in vain.

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SIKHS BAPTISED AS SINGHS (LIONS)

Although, the Sikhs of the Guru had shown their valour in the battles fought so far, the Guru realised that they still needed a psychological boost as to give their best in and outside the battlefield. Moreover, the major portion of the population being that of Hindus was living a life of humiliation at the hands of the ruler class of Muslims. Aurangzeb, the new Mughal Emperor was determined to convert the weak and suppressed Hindus into Muslims for the spread of his religion. The Guru's father and great grandfather had sacrificed their lives for protecting new faith. These sacrifices aimed at giving to all the people a freedom of religion, which was being denied by the despotic rulers. The Guru wanted his followers to have their distinctive identity, to banish all their fears from their minds and to transform themselves into such fearless and brave human beings, who could live with respect and honour. He wanted them to have the capacity for each one of them to fight with thousands, but at the same time observe a strict code of conduct for their martial and spiritual living. The agony of living with the complex of inferiority and humiliation as finding expression in the words of the founder of Sikh religion, as under:-

ਜੇ ਜੀਵਾ ਪਤਿ ਲਥੀ ਜਾਈ॥

ਸਭ ਹਰਾਮ ਜੇਤਾ ਕਿਛੁ ਖਾਈ॥

Je jeeva pat lathee jaaee.

Sabh haraam jeta kichh khaaee.

Who lives without honour and respect

For him eating anything is forbidden.

Was to be brought to an end. The Guru was fully aware of the fact as pointed out by Bhai Gurdas that when temples were being converted into Mosques, none dared to challenge such ruthless action of the Muslim administrators. Thus, there was a need to make the week so strong that they could challenge all forces of injustice, tyranny and oppression. It may be made clear that the Guru was not against Muslims, but against those Muslims rulers who were committing such heinous acts of injustice, tyranny and oppression. He was against those Hindu rulers also who were harassing the poor ordinary people in their states.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL TREATMENT GIVEN BY THE GURU

The wonderful act of converting the weak into brave was performed by the Guru like a psychologist, who effected the change of mind by giving his

followers a unique physical appearance and a martial spirit. In the historic gathering of Baisakhi day of 1699 the Guru had demanded the heads of those who wanted to go along with him on the spiritual path. He gave them God given appearance and made them realise that after drinking the nectar as prepared by him with *Khanda Bata*, they could fight against the strongest and the most powerful. The *Khanda Bata* method of preparing the nectar was churning of sweetened water with a double edged broad sword called a *Khanda*. When such an Amrit was being prepared, the hymns of the Gurus were recited. The first takers of Amrit, called the five beloved, named as Bhai Daya Ram, a Khatri of Lahore, Bhai Dharam Dass, a Jat from Hastinapur, Bhai Mohkam Chand, a washerman from Dwarka in Gujarat, Himmat Chand, a water carrier from Jagannath Puri and Sahib Chand, a barber from Bidar. Karnataka were sir named as Singh, which meant lion. This not only made them feel equal but also bold and brave like a lion. When the Guru, after making them Khalsa, the pure ones, requested them that they should now make him like them by administering Amrit to him, the five beloveds felt the importance of Amrit which could make Gobind Rai, Gobind Singh. They felt that they were a part of Guru and they were to be ever ready for sacrificing their life for the sake of the great cause.

The act of creation of Khalsa was undoubtedly the most important task of the Guru and unique in nature in the whole history of religions of the world. Cunningham, the world famous historian, writes in the history of Sikhs as “Thus Guru Gobind Singh transformed his followers into brave fighters, who possessed so much strength and courage that they could dare the lions in their own dens and challenge dreadful Aurangzeb in his own court. The lowest of the low became equal to the highest of the higher caste.” Sh. Gokul Chand Narang, and Sh. Indu Bhushan Bannerjee, the two famous historians of India also hold the view that the Guru injected a new dynamic force into the arena of Indian history. This force uplifted the depressed and the down trodden. However, despite causing this miraculous change in the people, the Guru remained a great supporter of peace.

THE GURU’S MULTI-FARIOUS PERSONALITY

The Guru was, in fact, a multi-farious personality. Sadhu T.L. Vaswani, a famous saint of India when compared the Guru with other prophets, he concluded “Guru Sahib’s personality is like a rainbow. He possessed sweet honeyed humility of Guru Nanak, lamblike virtue of Jesus Christ, spiritual wisdom of Gautam Budha; budding energy of Hazrat Mohammed; sun kissed glory of Lord Krishna, abiding discipline of Lord Rama and more so, royal glamour of emperors”. How the Guru acted as a brave warrior and general and at the same time as a prophet of peace giving a message of “*Manas Ki Jaat Sabhe Eko Pahchan*

Bo," becomes clear when we dwell upon the details of life period of the Guru after this unique action. It was perhaps this multifariousness of the Great Guru that inspired his close disciple Bhai Nand Lal, to sing the praises of the Master in the following beautiful verses:

ਹੱਕ ਹੱਕ ਅਗਾਹ ਗੁਰੁ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ।
ਸ਼ਾਹਿ ਸ਼ਾਹਨਸ਼ਾਹ ਗੁਰੁ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ।
ਕਾਦਿਰੇ ਹਰ ਕਾਰ ਗੁਰੁ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ।
ਬੇਕਸਾ ਰਾ ਯਾਰ ਗੁਰੁ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ।
ਸਾਜਦੋ ਮਕਸੂਦ ਗੁਰੁ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ।
ਜੁਮਲਾ ਫੈਜੋ ਜੂਦ ਗੁਰੁ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ।
ਹੱਕ ਹੱਕ ਅੰਦੇਸ਼ ਗੁਰੁ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ।
ਬਾਦਸ਼ਾਹ ਦਰਵੇਸ਼ ਗੁਰੁ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ।

Haq haq aggah Gur Gobind Singh.

Shaahe Shaahanshaah Gur Gobind Singh.

Qaadre har kaar Gur Gobind Singh.

Bekasaa ra yaar Gur Gobind Singh.

Saajdo maqsood Gur Gobind Singh.

Jumla faizo jood Gur Gobind Singh.

Haq haq andesh Gur Gobind Singh.

Baadshaah darvesh Gur Gobind Singh.

Sainapat, the famous poet at the court of the Guru, makes it clear that there was no political motive of the Guru in creating the Khalsa. His mission was only to destroy the evil and the sinful and to steer clear of all hardships. Further, it was a measure of reform within the religious order of the Sikhs. The Guru brought his Sikhs into a direct contact with the institution of the Guru, and the Masands acting as intermediaries were abolished because of their lethargic and corrupt practices becoming notable in the course of time. Khalsa was given a code to be followed, a respect equal to the Guru and a position where by, the five of them collectively could even command the Guru. That is why Bhai Gurdas II calls him both a Guru as well as a disciple.

ਵਹ ਪ੍ਰਗਟਿਓ ਮਰਦ ਅਗਮਿੜਾ ਵਰੀਆਮ ਇਕੇਲਾ।
ਵਾਹ ਵਾਹ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਆਪੇ ਗੁਰੁ ਚੇਲਾ॥ ੧੭॥
Vah pragtio mard agamra variaam ikela.
Vah vah Gobind Singh aape gur chela. 17.

THE BRAVE ACT OF BACHITAR SINGH

When this historic event took place, the hill chiefs again became jealous and apprehensive. When their repeated expeditions to attack the Guru proved abortive, they approached the Mughal Emperor at Delhi for help. It was thereafter that the Governor of Lahore and the Faujdar of Sirhind came to their help. The Generals like Dina Begh and Pande Khan led the expeditions but in

vain. Pande Khan had direct confrontation with the Guru, but was badly wounded by an arrow shot by the Guru. After the defeat of these two Generals, the hill rulers decided to launch a combined attack at Anandpur. They required the Guru to either accept the suzerainty of the hill rulers or vacate Anandpur. When Guru Ji refused to accept any of the conditions, a siege was laid to Anandpur. Even this did not prove very useful as the Sikhs managed to go out in small groups and arrange their provisions. The hill rulers then sent a drunken elephant to batter down the gate of Lohgarh fort. As the elephant reached near the gate, Bachitar Singh, a devotee of the Guru Ji was sent to face the elephant. The Gurbilas Patshahi Ten records that Bachitar Singh, seated on his horse back made such powerful thrust with his spear at the forehead of the animal that the injured elephant ran back creating havoc in the besieger's ranks. This incident took place on 1st September 1700.

The battle at Anandpur left no doubt that all the hill Rajas combined together were no match to the Guru and his Sikhs. A number of Rajas had been either killed or wounded in this battle imposed by them on the peaceful Guru. Raja Kesari Chand of Jaswal was killed and Rajas of Handoor and Kehloor were wounded. Raja Ghumand Chand of Kangra was also wounded after a fierce battle. This made the hill Rajas so disappointed that they had to make a retreat under the cover of darkness of night. Despite the victory of the Guru, the Guru was humble and did not want hostilities with the neighbouring kings. That is why, when the hill kings pleaded with him that he should leave Anandpur for some time so that they could face their people and peace may prevail, the Guru agreed to avoid unnecessary blood shed of men on both the sides, whom he considered as the children of one common father (God.) However, he knew that the Rajas were not worthy of trusting, and could play any dirty trick, but even then, he left Anandpur along with Sikhs and encamped himself at a mound at Nirmoh near Kiratpur. The Rajas of Kaloor and Handoor were on the look out for an opportunity to attack the Guru, and they played their game with full preparation. They also sought the help of Wazir Khan, Subedar of Sirhind, and Wazir Khan was eager enough to send a detachment against the Guru. The Sikhs again fought like Lions till their last breath. Even when they were besieged by the hill forces on one side and the Mughal forces on the other side and ahead of them was river Satluj, they did not lose their spirit and fought with great zeal and vigour. It is also recorded that hill Rajas had hired two Muslim gunners for killing the Guru. One of them fired at the Guru, but a Sikh standing near the Guru was killed. However, the Guru immediately shot the two gunners with his arrows, who died there and then.

THE BATTLE OF NIRMOH

The battle of Nirmoh was an unequal battle as the Guru had a small force as

against the very large contingent of the hill Rajas and that of Wazir Khan. The battle continued for two days, but it did not prove decisive. The Guru crossed over to Basoli across the river Satluj. Basoli was a friendly state and the Raja had invited the Guru many a times. Raja Dharam Pall of Basoli welcomed the Guru and the Sikhs. The Mughal and the hill Rajas' forces were in pursuance of the Guru and as such they reached Basoli also. A battle took place again between the Sikhs and the allied forces at village Kalmot. After that the Guru returned to Anandpur and the chief of Kehloor apparently professed peace by sending some offerings to the Guru as a gesture of goodwill.

HOLA AND NIHANGS

After the battle of Nirmohgarh in 1700, when the festival of Holi came, the Guru thought to give the festival a new shape with a view to make his followers more vigorous and enthusiastic. He made this occasion for them to demonstrate their martial skills in mock battles. Since then, this festival Holi Mohalla, which is in fact the masculine form of the feminine sounding word 'Holi', came to be celebrated every year in the open ground near Holgarh fort, north-east of the town of Anandpur Sahib. Even now it is celebrated and the Sikhs in large number assemble at the holy shrine to form an impressive and colourful procession, the major attraction of which are the 'Nihangs', who form the vanguard in their traditional dresses. These brave and daring people generally called as Guru Ki Fauj were those persons who had joined the Guru's army in the very beginning, and who also observed *Rehat Maryada* very strictly. They were distinguished by their dress and considerable weapons worn by them on their body.

There are different versions regarding their origin and also the peculiar dress worn by them. Some people hold the view that during the battle of Chamkaur, when the Guru on the request of the Khalsa escaped from the battle field, this type of dress was worn by him as a disguise. When he reached village of Dhilwan near Kotkapura, he discarded the dress, but ultimately it was adopted by a group of people also. However, without going into such details, it is relevant to mention that the Sikh history right from the time of the Gurus till the period of Sikh Rule, is full of prominent names of Nihangs who rendered valuable service for the Religion.

They have always been strict in practicing their religious daily routine like early rising, reciting Nitnem, reading scriptures, joining congregation etc. They have also been doing, whatever is assigned to them by their leader, which may include working in the community kitchen, Kar Sewa etc. Their martial spirit is reflected not only in their actions, but also in their vocabulary, which, although coined by the Sikhs in the hard days of persecution at the hands of

the Mughal rulers, still continues to be popular with them. For eg. a single Nihang would announce himself as an army of a lakh and a quarter. Adversities would be described in a language of challenge and bravado, and articles of worldly comfort and glory belittled to the point of ridicule. Death was called an expedition of the Khalsa into the next world. One with empty stomach would call himself maddened with prosperity. Taking a meal of parched gram of necessity, a Nihang would describe himself as eating almonds. Even now onions for Nihangs are silver pieces, rupees on the other hand mere pebbles, and a club the repository of wisdom.

COMBINED ATTACKS AT ANANDPUR

The next battle during the period of Guru Gobind Singh was again fought at Anandpur. It may be mentioned here that the semi hill area of Anandpur was comprised of the land purchased by Guru Tegh Bahadur as the same being a very peaceful place was selected by him for his spiritual activities. The population of Anandpur was very small. The hill Rajas always wanted that the Guru should quit the place so that the same be occupied by them. That is why, the hill Rajas continued to make efforts through attacks here and there. The Sikhs did not want hostilities with the Rajas, but whenever there was an attack that had to be repulsed vigorously. One of such attacks was made in 1703, which was again repulsed by the Sikhs. But, a more stringent attack was made on 29th March, 1704 when Said Khan invaded Anandpur on the instructions from the Mughal Empire. The historians record that the Guru had only 500 Sikhs with him at that time. A Muslim disciple of the Guru named Saida Begh offered his services and stated to have wrought havoc on the combined army of Mughal and the hill Rajas. He was wounded by the enemy soldiers. General Said Khan was wonder struck to see the valour of the Sikhs, who faced the imperial army and the army of the hill Raja, despite their smaller number. He was also impressed by the fact that people like Sayyad Beg, Momun Khan and other Muslim soldiers were fighting on the side of the Guru. When he realised that the Guru was not the enemy of the Muslims but a divine personality considering everyone his brother, and war was just thrust upon him, he surrendered before the Guru and gave up fighting for ever. He was replaced by Ramzan Khan, who was mortally wounded by an arrow of the Guru. The allies were discouraged again to go ahead and retreated. They again approached emperor Aurangzeb through Raja Ajmer Chand of Kaloor, who is stated to have personally presented himself before the Emperor in Deccan and poisoned the emperor against the Guru. Aurangzeb felt alarmed and considering the increasing power of the Guru as a danger to the empire, issued instructions to various Fauzdars to launch a massive attack against the Guru.

When the massive attack was launched as per the instructions of the

Emperor, Wazir Khan, Subedar of Sirhind along with Zabardast Khan of Lahore mobilised the hill chiefs for the joint action. The hill chiefs of Kehloor, Kangra, Mandi, Nurpur, Dhadwal, Wizarwal, Srinagar, Jammu, Chamba, Darali and Jaswal along with the local Gujjars and Rangars joined against the Guru. Numerous petty chieftains namely that of Jhang and Multan, Shamas Khan of Bijwara, Osman Khan of Qasam and Nazib Khan of Jalandhar also joined the enemy ranks. Sainapat describes the situation as under:-

ਤੁਰਕ ਸਬੇ ਮਿਲ ਕੇ ਉਠ ਧਾਏ।
 ਸਾਮਾ ਕਰੀ ਬੇਘ ਹੀ ਆਏ।
 ਬਹੁਤ ਮੁਗ਼ਲ ਔਰ ਘਨੇ ਪਠਾਨ।
 ਚਾਰ ਸਾਜ ਦਲ ਚਬੋਂ ਪਾਨ।
 ਗੁੱਜਰ, ਰੰਗੜ ਬਹੁਤ ਅਪਾਰ।
 ਬੜੇ ਬੜੇ ਜੋਧ ਅਸਵਾਰ।
 ਸਿਰਹਿਨ ਵਾਲੇ ਹੈ ਹਮਰਾਹੀ।
 ਗੜ ਲਾਹੌਰ ਤੇ ਫੌਜ ਮੰਗਾਈ।
 ਬਹੁਤ ਫੌਜ ਕਰਿ ਇਕੱਠੀ ਜਮ ਸੰਗ ਮਿਲਾਏ।
 ਸਭ ਰਾਜਾ ਦਲ ਜੋੜ ਕੇ ਫੇਰ ਪਾਛੇ ਆਏ।

Turk sabe mile ke uth dhaae.

Saama kari Begh hi aae.

Bauhat Mughal our ghane Pathaan.

Char saaj dal chaben paan.

Gujjar, Rangar bauhat apaar.

Badhe badhe jodh asvaar.

Sirhin waale hai hamraahi.

Garh Lahore te fauj mangaa-ee.

Bauhat fauj kar ekathi jamm sang milaa-ee.

Sabh Raja dal jor ke pher paahche aae.

GURU'S PREPARATIONS

When the Guru came to know of such a vast force coming to attack Anandpur, he also sent messages to the Sikhs in all parts of the country to come prepared for a war. The Sikhs knew that Guru was a peace loving person and despite the fact that he had defeated his opponents many a times, he was not willing for a war. However, if the war was forced upon him, it was their moral duty to defend. The Sikhs also knew that their future lay with the Guru only and as such many of them marched towards Anandpur Sahib along with sufficient provision of war material and articles of food. However, whereas there were two hundred thousand soldiers in uniform in the enemy camp apart from the auxiliary and voluntary forces, the number of Sikhs assembled at Anandpur was only 10,000. The Guru had constructed five forts at Anandpur in the past and as a part of strategy he deployed 500 Sikhs in each of the five forts raised by him around

the town for the defence. These forts were (1) Keshgarh, (2) Anandgarh (3) Holgarh (4) Lohgarh (5) Agampura. He gave necessary instructions to all the Sikhs making an effective defence of the town. The Guru advised a number of families including that of poets and scholars to leave the town for safer places. The allies started their march from Ropar in May, 1705. When they reached outside Anandpur the Sikhs engaged them with a view to check their advance. Then was fought the most terrific battle that was ever fought at Anandpur. The Sikhs inspired by the words of Saint Kabir:-

ਗਗਨ ਦਮਾਮਾ ਬਾਜਿਓ ਪਰਿਓ ਨੀਸਾਨੈ ਘਾਉ ॥

ਖੇਤ ਜੁ ਮਾਂਡਿਓ ਸੂਰਮਾ ਅਬ ਜੂਝਣ ਕੋ ਦਾਉ ॥ ੧ ॥

(ਪੰਨਾ ੧੧੦੫)

Gagan damaama Baajio, Pario Nisaanai Ghaao.

Khet ju Maandio Soorma, Ab Joojhan ko daao.

When the battle drum beats and the warrior wound is inflicted
He enters the battlefield to show his martial skill.

caused havoc in the ranks of the invaders as a result of the artillery firing and hand to hand fighting. Their bravery was magnificent as they were imbued with the fervour and the moral courage to fight for a righteous cause of self-defence. The leaders of the invading forces had evil intentions and their soldiers had only mercenary interests. Thus, it was a war of the evil-minded forces against the most humane and saintly persons. The Sikhs were facing a difficulty of shortage of water into the fort. It was, therefore, decided that 4 Sikhs will come out of the fort, 2 of them will engage the enemy in fighting, whereas the other two will take away the water. In the words of Sainapat:

ਚਾਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਪਾਣੀ ਕੋ ਜਾਵਨ।

ਦੋ ਜੂਝੋਂ ਦੋ ਪਾਣੀ ਲਿਆਵਨ।

Char Singh paani ko Jaavan.

Do joojhen do paani liaavan.

Four Sikhs were going to bring water.

Two were engaging themselves in fighting and two were bringing the water.

SIEGE OF ANANDPUR

When the Sikhs realised that the war was getting longer and food supplies both for men and animals were not adequate, they started reducing the intake of food to tide over the situation. The number of allies dying in the battle was much more than the Sikhs. When the fighting continued for a month and the allies realised that they could not win the war, they decided to lay a complete siege of the town so that nothing could go in. They knew that in the absence of food and water, the Sikhs in the town will start dying of starvation and thirst. However, even this plan of the invaders did not prove effective in the beginning. The Sikhs would come out at night, snatch food and arms from

their opponents by surprise attacks and go back. The enemy forces became very panicky of the Sikh raids and shifted their food storage and war material to safer places outside the reach of the Sikhs. This, of course increased the problems of the Sikhs. But, even the invaders were faced with so many problems in continuing the siege. The siege could not be prolonged as it effected the civilian population and this could turn them against the invaders. Such a situation could annoy the emperor, who was already out raged at the inefficiency of the Mughal Generals and hill Rajas. The allies then thought of another plan. They sent a letter to the Guru wherein they swore by the cow and the holy Quran and pleaded with the Guru that in case he leaves Anandpur, the war will come to end. They assured him that in case he left the city with bag and baggage, safe passage will be given to him. This was a sort of treaty which the allies wanted to enter into with the Guru. The Guru knew that there was no reason to trust them, but even then, in the interest of peace and because of the appeal made by the Sikhs through his mother that it was very difficult for them to suffer the pains of hunger and thirst for a further longer period, he decided to leave Anandpur. It is also believed that the emperor had given an assurance that peaceful negotiations will take place. The Guru has himself referred to the assurance made by the Emperor in his composition called "Zafarnama" meaning, epistle of victory. First of all, Guru's mother along with her two grandsons, guru's wife and some old men left the fort. Guru left the fort along with his devotees including the five beloved and two sons.

GURU'S DEPARTURE FROM ANANDPUR

The Guru's departure from Anandpur Sahib took place on the night of 5th December 1705. When the allies came to know of this departure they went back on their words and started following the Guru with a view to attack him again at the opportune moment. Nawab Wazir Khan of Sirhind despatched his troops with which the Sikhs clashed at a place called Shahi Tibbi which was the halt of the Sikhs. Bhai Udey Singh tried to stop the advance of the enemy, but while fighting bravely, he was killed by the huge force. His place was then taken by Bhai Jiwan Singh, who was also killed while supporting Baba Ajit Singh who was encircled by the enemy. Baba Ajit Singh, the elder son of Guru Gobind Singh was however successful in crossing Sarsa along with some Sikhs. This battle, known as battle of Sarsa is significant as it led to Guru's separation from other family members. Guru's mother along with two younger grandsons were taken away by Gangu, an old servant of Guru's house, to his native village. It was he who later on gave information of them to Nawab Wazir Khan of Sirhind as a result of which the innocent Sahibzadas were sentenced to death on their refusal to adopt Islam. The bravery shown by the young Sahibzadas constitutes an event which has no parallel in the history of world. It was the revengeful

feeling on the part of Wazir Khan which caused the martyrdom of the Sahibzadas who were bricked up alive in a wall. Tradition records that the Nawab of Maler Kotla prevented Wazir Khan from doing this sinful act but in vain. The mother of the Guru, Mata Gujri Ji also expired after hearing the heroic tale of martyrdom of her grandsons.

Guru's wives Mata Sahib Kaur and Mata Sundri Ji were also separated and they proceeded to Delhi. Many Sikhs lost their lives while crossing Sarsa which was highly flooded at that time. Tradition also records that valuable historic literature written by the Guru and his court poets along with the literature produced at Paonta Sahib was also lost in Sarsa in the course of this action.

THE UNEQUAL BATTLE OF CHAMKAUR

When Guru along with some of his Sikhs reached Chamkaur, a zimidar of that village requested him to stay in his Haveli, which was a mud built house. It was this Haveli which later on became a fortress when the Mughal forces surrounded it. It was on 7th December, 1705 when this battle of Chamkaur was fought. This was one of the rarest battles in the history of world where only 40 persons on the Guru's side fought with thousands of soldiers against them. The battle continued for a quarter of the day wherein arrows, spears and guns were used. The Guru organised the deployment of Sikhs in such a way that they could repulse any attack from any side. Volley after volley of arrows were discharged from the mud house and the same hit and killed the enemy soldiers in a good number. When the day was going to be over and the Sikhs found that the stock of ammunition and missiles was also depleting, they decided to engage the enemy in hand-to-hand combat. The Sikhs then came out in a group of two persons, gave a tough fight and when became martyrs, the other group came out to take their place. In these groups, the two sons of the Guru, Sahibzada Ajit Singh 19 years old and Sahibzada Jujhar Singh, 15 years old also came and fought like other brave Sikhs. It was really great for the Guru to send his sons most willingly and cheerfully to fight for the cause of truth and righteousness. He made no distinction between his sons and other Sikhs, who were all dear to him. He had the capacity to sacrifice everything he had for a noble cause, as he had no ambition or desire to have anything for himself, for his family or beloved ones. While writing about this battle, all the historians agree that it was a heroic fight as everyone who came out knew that he was to be killed, but even then the spirit, the valour and the steadfastness as shown by them was marvellous. They exhibited great feats of warfare and fought till the last breath. The sons of the Guru also fought so bravely that many of the foe were cut by them into pieces before they became martyrs. Sainapat writes about Sahibzada Jujhar Singh that he made such a terrible and vigorous attack on the enemy that it was difficult for hundreds of them to fight against him. Apart

from the historical sources giving information regarding this battle, Bhatt Bahis also provide useful information and account of the battle. Since then, a number of poets have written poems on the bravo who fought in this battle, particularly the two sons of the Guru, who attained martyrdom at a very young age after killing a large number of enemy soldiers. When a poet Nandlal Nurpuri wrote a lyric “Chum Chum Rakho Ni Ih Kalgi Jhujar di”, it became so popular that it was sung by many a singers during 60’s of the last century. Another Muslim poet Allah Yar Khan Jogi, wrote a memorable poem wherein the valour displayed by the young sons of the Guru has been poignantly narrated and the same was recited by him many a times during the early quarter of last century. Says he that there is no place more pious than the place where the two young ones became martyrs.

GURU’S MOVE TOWARDS MACHHIWARA

When the battle came to a close at night, the Guru was left with only five Sikhs in the fortress. It was decided by the Sikhs that the Guru should escape to some other place so that the fight against the tyrannous rulers be continued. Some historians are of the view that there were 11 persons left with the Guru. In any case, the decision of five Sikhs had to be obeyed by the Guru as he had himself vested the authority of taking a decision by five Khalsa Sikhs. The Guru was always optimistic and willing to obey the will of God. Although, by this time he had lost almost everything including his two sons, his faith in God was still firm as it was. As he ever remained in union with God his mind remained in equipoise and undisturbed by the events. He knew that everything happened according to His will. Thus, he accepted the decision of the Khalsa. It was also decided that some of them will remain at that place so that they could engage the enemy as need arose. Three Sikhs were to accompany the Guru. They were Bhai Daya Singh, Bhai Dharam Singh, two out of the five beloved, and Bhai Man Singh, a learned Sikh scholar. They offered prayers to God and planned leaving the place. One of the Sikhs remaining in the fortress, Bhai Sangat Singh, who had a resemblance with the Guru was to clad himself with the Guru’s dress. It was decided that when the Guru will leave, the enemy may attack the fortress again so the remaining Sikhs will fight vigorously till their death as to keep the enemy engaged. It is significant to note that Guru directed the Sikhs accompanying him to move through different directions towards the enemy Camp and meet at a fixed destination. The Sikhs never preferred to do an act clandestinely. Thus, when the Sikhs proceeded towards the enemy camp and they were just passing through the resting enemy persons, one of them raised a cry saying that the Guru along with the Sikhs was escaping and should be caught. As was pre-planned, the second Sikh after some pause raised the similar cry and likewise the third Sikh did so. In this way all the three Sikhs

continued raising the alarm as the situation demanded and swiftly went on passing through the enemy camp unmolested. When the enemy soldiers heard the cries, there was a considerable confusion in the ranks of the invading forces in the darkness of the night. They ran in all the three directions and by that time Guru also moved in his direction and all of them escaped. When the sun rose in the morning the invaders attacked the house occupied by the remaining Sikhs, who were determined to die rather than give in. They kept their tradition of fighting bravely till death. In killing Sangat Singh, the imperial army thought that the Guru was killed, but the Guru was already there at his next destination that is Machhiwara. It was in the forests of Machhiwara that the Guru lay alone in that dark cold night with a stone under his head as the pillow. Even in that moment, he uttered those immortal words to give expression to his longing for the loved:-

ਮਿਤ੍ਰੁ ਪਿਆਰੇ ਨੂੰ ਹਾਲ ਮੁਰੀਦਾਂ ਦਾ ਕਹਿਣਾ॥
 ਤੁਧੁ ਬਿਨੁ ਰੋਗੁ ਰਜਾਇਆਂ ਦਾ ਓਢਣ ਨਾਗ ਨਿਵਾਸਾਂ ਦੇ ਰਹਿਣਾ॥
 ਸੂਲ ਸੁਰਾਹੀ ਖੰਜਰੁ ਪਿਆਲਾ ਬਿੰਗ ਕਸਾਈਆਂ ਦਾ ਸਹਿਣਾ॥
 ਯਾਰੜੇ ਦਾ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਸੱਥਰੁ ਚੰਗਾ ਭੱਠ ਖੇੜਿਆਂ ਦਾ ਰਹਿਣਾ॥ ੧॥ ੧॥ ੬॥

Mitar piaare noo haal mureedaan da kehna.

Tudh bin rog rajaiaan da odhan naag niwaasaan de rehna.

Sool suraahee khanjar piaala bing kasaaeeaan da sehna.

Yaar-re da saanoon sathar changa bhath kheriaan da rehna.1.1.6.

Go tell the bad condition of His devotee to my beloved Lord.

The luxury of soft beds is agony without Him.

It is like living in a snakepit.

The goblet is poison and the cup a dagger.

Life is like receiving the punches of a butcher's knife.

I would rather live in a hiding, with my beloved.

It is hell living with strangers without Him.

GURU'S JOURNEY TO MALWA

From Machhiwara, the Guru started moving in the direction of Malwa. On his way, he was greeted and assisted by many a followers, who loved him and appreciated his struggle for truth and righteousness as against the ruthless unjust rulers of the day. These persons included a number of Muslims also like Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan who helped the Guru to move safely from Chamkaur. In the course of his journey, the Guru came to know of the martyrdom of his two younger sons. He wrote a letter to the Emperor Aurangzeb wherein he categorically stated that he was not for war, but when there was no way out, it was justified to unsheathe the sword. He condemned the religious policy of persecution and torturing Hindus. He apprised the emperor that whatever he was doing in the name of Islam would not please the

Almighty. There are certain autobiographical details in this letter that indicate as how the imperial forces had inflicted tortures on the peace loving Guru and his Sikhs. The tone and the content of the letter show how bold, straightforward and truthful, the Guru was. The letter (Zafarnama) was sent by hand through Bhai Daya Singh, who went to Daccan for giving it personally to the emperor.

LAST BATTLE AT MUKATSAR

In the course of his journey towards Malwa, Guru was able to procure good number of soldiers and war material as to continue his struggle. That was the mission when the Guru had escaped from Chamkaur and then Machhiwara. The tradition records that 40 persons, who had deserted the Guru in the midst of the battle and had gone to their homes, when chided by their women folk, realised their mistake and were on their way back to join the Guru in his mission. The Guru was camping near a pool of water at a place called Khidrana, when the enemy, in his pursuit, reached there for another attack. The 40 persons who were coming to the Guru for expressing their repentance came in confrontation with the invaders. Realising that their number is very small as against the invaders, the 40 Sikhs along with a courageous lady Mai Bhago took their position in a thicket of van trees (*Quercus incana*) and karir bushes (*Capparis aphylla*) near the Dhab itself. They spread their sheets over the bushes to give them the semblance of tents. As the Mughal vanguard, on noticing the encampment” stopped at a distance, the Sikhs fired their muskets in a volley and charged to engage the confused enemy in a hand-to-hand fight. In the grim action that followed, they fought ferociously and fell to the last man, but not before forcing the host to retreat. Guru Gobind Singh who had been showering arrows in support from the *Tibbi* (a mound), came down to the battlefield. Blessing by turns his Sikhs who had valiantly laid down their lives, came near Bhai Mahan Singh who, though gravely wounded, was still alive. The Guru praised the gallantry of the Majha contingent and promised Mahan Singh any boon he might ask of him. The only request the dying Sikh made was for the cancellation of the deed of renunciation he and some of his companions had signed at Anandpur. The Guru granted the request and blessed Mahan Singh who now died in peace. Mai Bhago, who lay seriously injured, however, survived and attended upon the Guru ever after. The forty dead were declared by Guru Gobind Singh Forty Muktas or the Forty Saved Ones, whence the pool of Khidrana came to be named Muktsar.

GURU'S STAY AT DAMDAMA SAHIB

Guru Ji's last destination was Talwandi Sabo, a place about 17 miles from Bhathinda, where he reached on 20th January, 1706. Here he was welcomed by

many of his followers including the Chaudhari or landlord, namely Bhai Dalla. Bhai Santokh Singh has narrated a story relating to Bhai Dalla, who was proud of his army and always reminded the Guru that had he called them during the days of his adversity, he would have been saved much of the travail. When one day some devotee brought two costly guns for the Guru, the Guru asked Dalla to send some brave persons from his army for testing the gun. However, none of such persons came forward, whereupon the Guru invited two Ranghreta Sikhs, father and son, who happened to be busy tying their turbans near by. They both came running, turbans in hand, each trying to be in front of the other in order to be the first to face the bullet. Bhai Dalla, astonished at the Sikh's spirit of sacrifice, was ashamed and learnt to be humble. He took the initiation of the Khalsa, receiving the name of Dall Singh. Now there is a shrine at Talwandi Sabo in the memory of Bhai Dall Singh.

As Guru stayed at Talwandi Sabo for about 9 months, which was a long resting period after the strenuous journey from Anandpur to this place, this place came to be known as Dam Dama Sahib. The Guru utilized this period for imparting missionary training to his followers and by providing a stimulus to the literary activity. He sent some Sikh scholars to Benaras for acquiring Sanskrit scholarship and encouraged many others to produce literature. Guru Ji wanted the compositions of the 9th Guru to be included in the holy volume, but the original copy lying with the descendants of Dhir Mal was not given by them to him. He, therefore, dictated to Bhai Mani Singh and got prepared a new copy of the Adi Granth. Apart from giving a touch of completion to the holy volume, which was later on declared by him by taking a unique decision in the history of the world religions, the Shabad Guru as his successor, the Guru also composed considerable literature of his own, which was later on collected and compiled by Bhai Mani Singh and is presently known as Dasam Granth. Many of the compositions included in Dasam Granth and believed to be composed by the 10th Guru reflect the martial spirit of the Master. The most important and the first composition of this Granth, Jaapu Sahib, consisting of 199 stanzas is full of laudation of the Lord, who is remembered by various names and attributes of Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian origin. Some of these attributes are of course, related to power and strength. Some being quite vigorous. Various other compositions include his hymns, Chandi Di Vaar (which describes battle between good and evil represented by Durga and Demons) and Bachitra Natak. It may be added that the opening verses of Chandi Di Vaar form opening part of the daily prayer of the Sikhs. Included in this Granth are certain Persian compositions as Zafarnama. The Guru has used various metres and poetic forms which show that he was a versatile genius. As all such activities relating to knowledge and literature took place at Dam Dama Sahib, the place became famous as Guru-Kashi. It is now one of the 5 Takhts

of the Sikhs.

RULES OF WARFARE FOR THE SIKHS

The period of Guru Gobind Singh is the most significant period in the history of bravery of Sikhs. Whereas the first five Gurus had taught us to take a bold stand against tyranny and oppression and condemn vigorously the social and religious evils, the sixth Guru added that if need arose, the Sikhs should also show their valour in the battle field. However, it was during the period of the 10th Guru that golden principles of Sikh warfare were practically applied in the battlefield. The first and the most important principle was that war should not be for any selfish or greedy purpose. It should be fought only in self-defence, or in defence of one's faith or nation or the weaker sections of the society. It should be fought against those forces that do not deserve to be rulers because of their policies of injustice and repression. Howsoever big, the number of the enemy be, there should not be any fear while fighting as the confidence of winning a battle fought for the right cause should always be there in the mind. The Guru's words

ਦੇਹਿ ਸਿਵਾ ਬਰ ਮੋਹਿ ਇਹੈ ਸੁਭ ਕਰਮਨ ਤੇ ਕਬਹੂੰ ਨ ਟਰੋਂ॥
ਨ ਡਰੋਂ ਅਰਿ ਸੋਂ ਜਬ ਜਾਇ ਲਰੋਂ ਨਿਸਚੈ ਕਰ ਆਪਨੀ ਜੀਤ ਕਰੋਂ॥
ਅਰੁ ਸਿੱਖ ਹੋਂ ਆਪਨੇ ਹੀ ਮਨ ਕੋ ਇਹ ਲਾਲਚ ਹਉ ਗੁਨ ਤਉ ਉਚਰੋਂ॥
ਜਬ ਆਵ ਹੀ ਅਉਧ ਨਿਦਾਨ ਬਨੈ ਅਤਿ ਹੀ ਰਨ ਮੈ ਤਬ ਜੂਝ ਮਰੋਂ॥ ੨੩੧॥

Deh Shiva bar moh ihai shub karman te kabhoon na taron.

Na daron ar son jab jaae laron nischai kar aapni jeet karon.

Ar Sikh hon aapne hi man ko ih lalach hau gun tau uchron.

Jab aav hi audh nidaan banai at hi ran mai tab joojh maron. 231.

Lord! Grant me this boon,

May I never turn my back on the right path.

May I never turn my back in fear when face to face with the foe.

May I never direct my mind to chanting thy praises; and

When the end arrives

May I fall fighting squarely on the field of battle.

(Translation as given in the Encyclopaedia of Sikhism, Vol.3, Page 59)

Always resounded in the ears of the Sikhs and they will never think of any pessimistic results. Hope and optimism along with faith in God should be the qualities of the Sikhs fighting in the battlefield. The Sikhs were also guided not to make plunder of properties of the enemy and if at all it was to be done, it must be for the distribution of the same to those to whom it rightfully belonged. It was only in such cases where the rulers had deprived the right owners of these properties by committing atrocities.

In Sikh warfare, a woman was never considered a property or a commodity.

In all other wars anywhere in the world, the victorious always took possession of the women of the enemy camp and dealt with them as with other properties or possessions. Many a times, the women had to kill themselves for saving their honour by not falling in the hands of enemy. The tradition of Sati was an outcome of this kind of practice prevalent both among the Hindus and Muslims. It may also be mentioned here that a numbers of wars were fought for the sake of women only. In Sikh religion, neither any such war was ever fought, nor the women had to face any insult, humiliation or lose their modesty/honour even when the Sikhs won the battles against their men. Rather, the Sikhs would always respect the women of the enemy camp. The 10th Guru has added one of the four rules in the Rehat Maryada with a view to make this principal as part of the spiritual code, when he said that no Sikh should have any relations with any woman outside the marital bond. Among the other principles of Sikh warfare, it was crystal clear that nobody was an enemy unless he was fighting on the other side. If he ran away from the battlefield or begged pardon, he was not to be killed. In case he was wounded, and was helpless not to fight, he was to be provided every help for his survival. The Guru's arrows used to have a gold edge so that if someone was wounded, gold could be used for the treatment of the injured one, and if dead, the gold could be used for meeting funeral expenses (Arrows are lying at Akaal Takhat and are shown to the public everyday) Directions to Bhai Kanaiyya to apply the heeling balm on the wounds of even the enemy soldiers makes the position clear. The Guru also demonstrated in his lifetime that forgiveness was a quality of the brave. Whenever someone asked for forgiveness', the Guru never nursed any revengeful feeling or that of vindictiveness against him. Last, but not the least, peace should always be preferred. The Guru always did everything for maintaining peace, but as he said in Zafarnama, if all efforts to maintain peace failed and it was not possible to settle the matters amicably then it was justified to go for a war and achieve peace.

ਚੂੰ ਕਾਰ ਅਜ ਹਮ: ਹੀਲਤੇ ਦਰਗੁਜ਼ਸ਼ਤ
ਹਲਾਲ ਅਸਤ ਬੁਰਦਨ ਬ ਸ਼ਮਸ਼ੀਰ ਦਸਤ॥ ੨੨॥

Choon kaar az hama heelte darguzashat.

Halaal ast burdan ba shamsheer dasat.22.

When all endeavours to restore peace become useless.

It is righteous indeed to unsheathe the sword.22.



CHAPTER - VII

BANDA SINGH BAHADUR - THE FOUNDER OF SIKH RULE

The first century after the 10th Guru baptised the Sikhs and made them Khalsa, was a period of testing their qualities of valour and fortitude, patience, perseverance and faith in God. The way of living of the Sikhs based upon the tenets given by the great Gurus was subjected to atrocities by the rulers of the day. The Sikhs were to respond to the challenge and prove the worth of the teachings of their masters. In this process, they were required to remain highly spiritual, but at the same time to fight against the forces of tyranny injustice and oppression. This century tells the story of the struggle of the Sikhs as to justify their existence based upon the ideal combination of Bhakti and Shakti. When the 18th century started, the struggle began, and when it ended the Sikhs were successful in establishing a sovereign Government in the northern parts of the country with a commitment to ensure the welfare of all, the same being the cardinal principal of Sikhism.

THE PERIOD AFTER THE GURUS

The 10th Guru had deputed a brave soldier to Punjab for fulfilling the task of fighting against those who had adopted a hostile attitude towards Sikhs with a view to annihilate them. The story of continuous struggle during this century shows as how the Sikhs grew into power, from simple minded farmers converted into soldiers to magnanimous rulers of a considerable area of northern India. When Banda Singh Bahadur, the brave Sikh deputed by the Guru, reached Punjab, he was carrying with him five arrows from the quiver of the master and the battle drum as the emblem of victory. The five Sikhs, namely, Vinod Singh, Kahan Singh, Daya Singh, Ram Singh and Baj Singh had also accompanied him for his mission. Banda Singh issued Hukamnamas to all the Sikhs of Punjab to join him in the struggle. His call elicited a very good response from the Sikh peasants because the poor people had realised that the ruling class supported the Zamindaars from whom they could get rid of only by joining the Guru's Sikhs.

BANDA SINGH STARTS HIS VICTORY MARCH

The story of various military campaigns of Banda is the story of a very brave and dedicated Sikh, who went on targeting all those who had committed the

high-handed atrocities. He went on with his triumphant march passing through various cities like Kunjpura, Ghuram, Thaska, Shahbad, Mustafabad, Kapuri, Sadhaura and then Sarhind. In Kapuri it was commander Qadmu-Din, notorious for his lust, who behaved like a devil with the Hindus, who was taught a lesson. His strong holds were raised to the ground, and his soldiers were killed. The same was the position of Sadhaura, where the ruler Osman Khan, had caused oppression and made lives of the Hindus and Sikhs highly miserable. According to Dr. Ganda Singh, the ruler used to slaughter the cows before the houses of Hindus for hurting their sentiments. It was he, who had tortured to death the great Muslim saint, Sayyad Badr-un-Din Shah, popularly known as Pir Budhu Shah, simply for his having rendered help to Guru Gobind Singh in the battle of Bhangani. Banda Singh Bahadur marched on Sadhaura with his Sikhs whose number swelled when the aggrieved peasantry, who were looking forward to the opportunity, joined their ranks. The angry mob got out of control and subjected the place to utter plunder and destruction. All those Muslims who had taken shelter in the mansion of Sayyad Budhu Shah were also put to sword. The place, since then, has been called as Qatalgarhi or slaughter-fortress. After the fall of Sadhaura, the Sikhs took the neighbouring fort of Mukhlisgarh. There from Banda proceeded towards Sirhind.

Sirhind is the place where, Wazir Khan, the Faujdar, had put to death the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh by bricking them alive. The Sikhs thus hated this place and used to call it Guru ki Mari. They were always desirous of teaching the Faujdar, Wazir Khan, a lesson for committing such a heinous act. Thus, when Banda gave a call to invade Sirhind, about 40,000 Sikhs assembled to go along with him for this noble cause. However, Banda's soldiers did not have proper weapons, whereas their enemies including the other Faujdars of Aminabad, Lahore etc. had huge stores of Gun powder, a long train of artillery and elephants and about 15000 persons equipped muskets. They were also supported by Ghazis (crusaders) armed with swords, spears, bows and arrows. The Sikh farmers, who had mainly come with their farming implements were ready to use the same as weapons.

THE BATTLE OF CHAPPAR CHIRI

The confrontation took place on 12th May 1710 at a place Chappar Chiri, 10 miles out of the city of Sirhind. When the fierce battle started, many of the peasants who had joined Banda only for the benefit of booty, took to their heels. However, those left with him were the brave Sikhs of the Guru, who in the absence of any other weapons started wrestling face to face with their enemies. The hand-to-hand combat proved beneficial to them because of their heavy number and valour. Wazir Khan had to face Baj Singh in such a combat and Baj Singh was quick enough to snatch the lance and struck with it the forehead of

the horse on which Wazir Khan was seated. Wazir Khan tried to use his arrows and pierce Baj Singh, but the latter took out his sword with a view to give a tough fight. It was Fateh Singh, who got an opportunity to put Wazir Khan to death with his sword. As soon as Wazir Khan died, there was a confusion in the Muslim rank and the Sikhs fiercely fell upon them leading to a complete rout out of the Mughal Army and the Ghazis. Khafi Khan writes about this battle that “not a man of the army of Islam escaped with more than his life and the clothes he stood in”. “Horsemen and footmen fell under theswords of the infidels, who pursued them as far as Sirhind”.

Although the Muslim writers speak of the vindictiveness on the part of Banda who is stated to have put all the inhabitants to death and dug the graves for taking revenge, there is considerable evidence to show that they have only exaggerated the statements. It is true that Sikhs killed all such people who had sided with the cruel autocrats and committed atrocities on the Hindus and the followers of the Guru. Such Moulvies who were orthodox in their approach and had provided moral backing to Wazir Khan's actions had to face the fury of the victorious Sikhs, but the exaggerated accounts of the Muslims cannot be believed.

After this victory, Banda became the virtual master of the territories between Jamuna and Sutlej yielding annual revenue of Rs.36 lakhs. Banda made the old fort of Mukhlispur his headquarter and struck coins in the names of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. He laid the foundation of Sikh rule and provided such a wonderful administration that people tortured under the Mughal rule heaved a sigh of relief. He abolished Zamindari and helped the tillers to get the lands. He appointed the governors of different places and told them to give a fair and just administration. However, he did not have much time as he had to go ahead with his mission. He went on making conquests and ultimately occupied vast territories from Jamuna to Ravi.

GURDAS NANGAL ENCOUNTER

He was brave not only in the battlefield, but also when he was caught and made prisoner. It was in Gurdas Nangal, where Banda had taken his position in a small fortress that he was surrounded by the Muslims. The cordon was tightened to such an extent that nothing could go inside the fortress. The Sikhs felt the shortage of not only weapons but also that of food making them go without food for a number of days. There was no way left but to starve. The brave Sikhs were compelled to eat their horses, mules and even oxen. The scene in the fortress became so horrible with so many persons dying and the dead bodies of men and animals getting putrid giving an unbearable scent. Banda Singh did not want to give in and wanted to die while fighting, but when

the Muslims made an offer that in case they surrendered, the emperor would take a lenient view in awarding them punishments, a number of Sikhs became inclined to accept the assurance given to them. The assurance was given by no less than a person, Abdus Samad Khan, the governor at that time but, as per their tradition, the assurances were only in words and not to be acted upon. Banda and his men had thus to suffer tortures, humiliations and then a horrible death. They were brought to Delhi in the form of a procession and then began the so called Tamasha as the rulers had made it to show the public as how the terror for them were being treated. It was cowardly act on their part to treat such brave heroes with so much affliction, but the brave did not show any fear or repentance for what they had done. The wonderful patience and the resolution with which all the Sikhs underwent their fate during the carnage which started on 15th March, 1716 has no parallel in the history of mankind.

EXECUTION OF SIKHS

There are various stories given by the eye witnesses which prove that how these brave people behaved when 100 of them were executed every day. They were all allured with pardons and positions in case they gave up their religion and adopted Islam but, as Surman and Stephenson say “it has not been found that one apostalised from this new formed religion”. Among the condemned prisoners was a youth of tender age recently married. His widowed mother supplicated to Quatab-ul-Mulk, the Wazir, through his Diwan Ratan Chand, to the effect that his son had been unjustly seized, being no disciple or follower of the Guru (Banda) but only a prisoner in his hands. The Wazir interceded and the order for the boy’s release was issued. The mother brought the order of the release to the Kotwal who set the boy free. The boy said, “I know not the woman, what does she want from me? I am a true and loyal follower of my Guru, for whom I give my life, what is his fate shall be mine also.” He ran back to the place of execution and was duly beheaded. Irvine, another British eyewitness has stated that the Sikh attachment and devotion to their leader were wonderful to behold. They had no fear of death, they called executioner, ‘Mukti-Deliverer’, they cried out to him joyfully. O Mukti kill me first.’ The most singular thing in respect of these martyrs was that they not only behaved firmly during the execution but they would dispute and wrangle with each other for priority to death and they made interest with the executioner to obtain the preference.”

BANDA TORTURED TO DEATH

The work of execution of the Sikhs went on for seven days. The Muslims thought that these assassinations would have a demoralising effect on Banda and 26 companions with him and they may agree for conversion to Islam. The

Muslims also thought of getting information regarding some treasure, which they thought Banda had hidden somewhere. However, their thoughts were misconceived. Neither there was any treasure of which Banda or his companions could give the information, nor were they made of a metal, which could make them fear death. All of them preferred to die rather than abjure their religion. When Banda did not agree, his four-year-old son was put into his arms and he was told to kill him. This was another step to shake the faith of this Sikh hero of the 18th Century, but it was he who was to write the history for the future Sikhs. In the meantime, the executioners killed the child with a long knife, dragged out its quivering liver and thrust it into the mouth of Banda Singh Bahadur. Even this incident did not make him weak and as the last attempt of the cruel executioners, the Banda was given a horrible death. First of all, his right eye was removed by the point of a butcher's knife, next his left foot was cut off, then his two hands were severed from his body and finally his body was hacked to pieces. His companions were also executed at the same time. R. N. Tagore wrote a poem in Bengali 'Bandi Bir' as to show the heroism of Banda Singh in his fights as well as in meeting his torturous end. "The poem was a source of inspiration to several Bengali militant youth engaged in the struggle for India's independence" (Encyclopaedia of Sikhism Vol. I page 276).

Although, some writers including Sikh writers have pointed out certain differences between Banda and his companions and have also referred to his schematic activities, the consensus is in favour of Banda Singh Bahadur being an epitome of all the qualities which should be possessed by a Sikh of the Guru. He was highly religious, liberal towards others, humble, and a strict follower of Sikh Rehat Maryada. He did nothing which was contrary to the teachings of the masters. He had sympathy for the poor peasants and took necessary steps to rescue them from the clutches of tyrants. He was warrior and a general of the highest order. An expert rider, an adept marksman, dextrous swordsman, an able lance mover and a great warrior as he was, he could succeed against any enemy. He had no greed or ambition, and whatever was possessed by him, he distributed among his companions. He occupies a unique place in the Sikh history as he established for the first time, a benevolent administration and taught his co-religionists as how to fight against tyranny and to live and die for a noble cause. His personality affected the course of events to come and the Sikh movement entered a new era of fight against despotism with strong will and determination. The Muslims thought that they had created terror among the Sikhs, but the affect was the opposite and the governors appointed thereafter had the most difficult problem to solve as to deal with these people who loved every kind of freedom including freedom of religion. It was during the period of Abdus Samad Khan that the massacres of the Sikhs started, but there was no end of those who went on sacrificing their life for their religion.

When, after the death of Banda Singh Bahadur, the Sikhs were split into two groups, Bhai Mani Singh was sent to Amritsar to resolve the dispute.

CONFLICT THAT FOLLOWED

Bhai Mani Singh, a devout Sikh as he was, realised that the main issue of conflict between the two groups was as whether the Sikh way of greeting should be Fateh Dharm, Fateh Darshan or “Wahe Guru Ji Ka Khalsa, Wahe Guru Ji Ki Fateh”. The former salutation was promoted by Bandai Sikhs (those who believed Banda Bahadur to be the successor of the last Guru). Bhai Mani Singh, in his wisdom, wanted to reconcile as to forge unity among the Sikhs, and as such he suggested that the two slips bearing the said salutation be immersed in the holly tank of Sri Harimandir Sahib at *Har Ki Pauri* and whichever slip rises first to the surface, that should be the salutation of all and the other group should surrender and merge itself with the victorious group. When the slip bearing “Wahe Guru Ji Ki Fateh” rose up, the Bandai Sikhs abandoned their stand and joined the ranks of Khalsa. However, one Bandai leader Mahant Singh did not accept the verdict, and with a view to satisfy him and avert the clash, Bhai Sahib again suggested that the issue be finally decided by a wrestling match, to be arranged between the representative of the two sides. Such a match again decided the issue in favour of the Tat Khalsa and the Bandai's, thereafter, did not assert their independent position. This was a great task performed by Bhai Mani Singh, whose main aim in life was to spread the message of the Masters and baptise more and more Sikhs to expand the fold of the Khalsa. His guidance and actions roused the drooping spirit of the Khalsa.

Bhai Mani Singh's activities emboldening the Sikhs again came to the notice of the ruler. The authorities started keeping a watch on their activities and a strong police force was established at Amritsar with a view to check the Sikhs whenever they were to assemble in large number. The groups of pilgrims from different places were harassed and many a times looted. Even then the Sikhs did not lose heart and their visit to *Harimandir Sahib* at Amritsar continued. It was, their love for their sacred shrine that made them visit the place whenever they got an opportunity to visit. While doing so, many Sikhs lost their lives, but the number of visitors continued to increase. This was never liked by the Mughal authorities, and as such the persecution of the Sikhs increased with the passage of time.

A CENTURY OF MARTYRDOMS

When Zakaria Khan replaced Abdus Samad Khan as the governor of Punjab in 1726, he adopted very harsh measures against the Sikhs. The Sikhs were arrested in large number and many of them were brought to Lahore for being tortured and beheaded. The place where these tortures were committed was known at that time "Nakhas" or market place outside the Delhi Gate in Lahore. Later on a memorial Gurudwara was built at this place, which is called Shaheed Ganj (now in Pakistan). Many such Sikhs who were bold enough to raise a voice against the administrators were conspicuously chosen to be brutally punished. One such Sikh was Tara Singh of Village of Vaan, who was very popular because of his boldness and human approach towards everyone. In the time of distress of the Sikhs, he was very helpful towards his fellow brothers. For this very reason, the Chaudhary of Noshera, Sahib Rai was highly jealous of him and was on the look out for an opportunity to get him punished.

BHAI TARA SINGH OF VAAN

One day, when Chaudhary's horses were not allowed by the Sikhs to graze in their fields, Sahib Rai abused them and used objectionable language regarding their hair. This provoked the Sikhs to take away one of his horses, which they sold in the market and utilised the sale proceeds for the Langar maintained by Bhai Tara Singh. Sahib Rai complained the matter to the Faujdar of Patti, who sent a detachment of 80 soldiers and 25 horses against Tara Singh of Vaan. A few Sikhs drove the said soldiers back by killing two nephews of the Faujdar in the detachment. One Sikh Bhagel Singh was also killed in the skirmish that took place. This enraged the authorities and when the matter went to Lahore, Zakaria Khan, the governor, sent 2200 horses, 40 Zamburks, 5 elephants and 4 Rahkals under the command of a cruel Momun Khan. Some people of the village suggested to Tara Singh to run away to jungles for taking shelter, but the Sikhs could not do so. It was their duty to fight against the tyrants. The hymn of Guru Gobind Singh resounded in their ears that when the need arose they were to fight for the laudable and the sublime goal. Tara Singh, thus, led a band of 18 persons and this small group gave such a tough fight for the whole of night and all of them sacrificed their lives after causing a heavy loss to the men and material.

The heroic resistance of Tara Singh and his followers further strengthened

the Sikh movement as they became infused with the spirit of fighting to put an end to the tyranny of the Mughals. Before the eventful year of 1726 was over, the Sikhs had started showing their apathy towards the rulers. Many a times, they looted government treasury and valuables as to make the government weaker. However, their plundering expeditions were not without moral scruples. They plundered not for their selfish motive, but as a part of their programme to paralyse the government machinery and to strengthen their own movement. As the Sikh movement gained momentum, the forces of Govt. also became active with a determination to exterminate the Sikhs. However, most of the Sikhs had left their houses and were living in forests or other hidden places. The government then thought of killing all the Sikhs in one attempt and as such they gave a call to launch a zehad against them. Haidri Flag was hoisted on the day of Id calling thereby all the Muslims to come under the said flag as to fight against the Sikhs.

Haidri Flag Forces Fight With The Sikhs

The cry of religion being in danger elicited a tumultuous response from all the Muslims. Thousands of them assembled around Lahore. All classes and tribes joined the Mughal forces. Leader like Taqqi Mohammad and Inayat Khan raised an army of their own and equipped it at their own expense. Fanatic leaders like Tayar Beg and Murtza Khan also participated. The infamous Yar Mohammad Quazi and the notorious tell-tale Mullah Pir Mohammad ran to the spot to weave their net of intrigues. The great Mughal Sardar of Jullundur, Inayat-Ullah, Rajputs of Jerawari and Rohillas from farther east brought their own contingents. Pahar Mal, a great grandson of Raja Todar Mal placed his treasures at the disposal of the leader of this so-called religious war against the Khalsa. The huge force, supplied with guns and ammunition by the Nawaab marched out under the command of Mir Inayat Ullah with the beat of drum and with banners flying. The Sikhs apprehending the danger had taken shelter in the swamp of Kahnuwan. The Muslims in large number started killing their kith and kin, which act compelled the Sikhs to come out and face thousands of Muslims ready to sacrifice themselves for the sake of religion. The Muslims set fire the forests of Kahnuwan and then the Sikhs came out and fell upon the Muslims with all their strength. The final battle took place between the Khalsa and the Muslims crusaders at Bhilowal. When the Muslims were enjoying themselves with drinks and meat, the Sikhs got an opportunity to attack them in such a manner that they were struck with panic and terror. They started fleeing leaving behind their valuables and weapons. The Khalsa chased them with their swords and slew a large number of them. Says Bhagat Lakshman Singh in 'Sikh Martyrs'. "Some Turks were cut down while fleeing, some struck against the trees and other impediments and fell; some broke their skulls, some

lost their eyes”.

RECONCILIATION WITH THE SIKHS

The debacle of Haidri Flag fight made the government realise that their policy of repression of the Sikhs was not yielding results. Zakaria Khan then thought of negotiating with the Sikhs through Subeg Singh, who was a Government contractor. He went as a messenger and discussed the position with prominent Sikh leaders at that time like Bhai Mani Singh, Darbara Singh, Kapur Singh, Issar Singh etc. Darbara Singh was of the view that the govt.'s offer of a Jagir for the Khalsa as a part of settlement be rejected as Khalsa was a sovereign and could acquire the Jagir with their strength. However, the consensus was in favour of accepting the favourable terms of the settlement with a view to have peace with the rulers at least for some time. There was again a consensus regarding the conferring of Nawabship on Kapur Singh, who accepted the same with the utmost humility as to obey the command of the Guru's Sikhs. Thus, as a part of settlement Kapur Singh obtained the tile of Nawab and a Jagir consisting of Parganas of Depalpur, Kanganwal and Jhabal yielding annual income of about a 100 thousand rupees. Kapur Singh was also given the robe of honour, which he adorned after putting the same at the feet of the five revered Sikhs Bhai Hari Singh Hazuria, Baba Deep Singh Shaheed, Sardar Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Bhai Karam Singh and Sardar Budh Singh, great grand-father of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The robe of honour included a shawl, a turban, a row of pearls, a brocade garments and a sword. Nawab Kapur Singh accepted everything with utmost humility and with feeling of gratefulness towards God.

TARUNA DAL AND BUDDHA DAL CONSTITUTED

The Sikh Nawab knew that the Mughals could not be believed and the peace period was not going to be longer. He, therefore, utilised this period for consolidating the position of the Sikhs. He formed two sections known as Buddha Dal, the army of the veterans and Taruna Dal, the army of the young Sikhs. The duty of the Buddha Dal was to look after the holy places and propagate the tenets of the religion. Nawab Kapur Singh was himself in charge of this section. The Taruna Dal was to fight the battles whenever required. Both the Dals were put under the control of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, who, later on came to be known as Sultan ul Quom. A large number of youngster started joining Taruna Dal that became so big in a short period that it had to be further split into five groups for the purpose of efficient control and administration. Each group had its own banner, drum and a particular territory. They were 1300 to 2000 persons in each of these groups. All the members of a group had a common Mess and a common store for clothing's and other necessaries. The

first batch was led by Deep Singh and its centre was at Ramsar. The second batch was led by Harnam Singh and Dharam Singh of Amritsar, and its centre was at Bibeksar. Kahan Singh and Binod Singh of Goindwal led the third batch whose centre was Lachhmansar. The leader of the fourth batch was Dasaunda Singh of Kot Budha while the fifth batch was stewarded by Vir Singh and Jiwan Singh Ranghreta. The respective centres of the fourth and fifth batches were at Kaulsar and Santokhsar.

MARTYRDOM OF BHAI MANI SINGH

When Zakaria Khan noted the activities of the Taruna Dal and that of the elderly persons like Nawab Kapur Singh and Bhai Mani Singh, who had made laudable efforts in bringing a considerable part of the Majha peasantry into the fold of Sikhism, he became restless. He again started looking for an opportunity to remove influential Sikhs from the scene so that the Sikh movement did not progress. Bhai Mani Singh was the most conspicuous to attract his wrathful attention. When a check on the entry of Sikhs into Amritsar was being resisted considerably, Zakaria Khan offered to grant permission to the Sikhs to assemble at Amritsar on Diwali Day in 1734 A.D., if he was paid Rs.5000 after the congregation. Bhai Mani Singh, being their at the helm of the affairs agreed to this condition as he was sure that it was not difficult to pay the demanded amount out of the offerings by a large number of Sikh devotees. However, when the Sikhs started coming to Amritsar in large number, the Mughals made a plan to destroy them by attacking them together. Bhai Mani Singh came to know of the secret intention of the Mughals and as such sent a message to the Sikhs not to come to Amritsar. As a result the amount demanded by the governor could not be paid. Governor treated it as an offence and awarded the punishment to Bhai Mani Singh for this revenue default. Bhai Mani Singh was also offered the choice between Islam and death and as per the Sikh tradition, the noble soul opted for death. His body was cut to pieces limb by limb in 1734 A.D. The execution of Bhai Sahib caused a deep resentment among the Sikhs, who became the enemy of the Mughal rule. Thereafter, a continuous struggle ensued between the two till the Sikhs, after destroying the Mughal empire, became the rulers. The persecution of the Sikhs was undertaken more vigorously.

When in 1735, the Buddha Dal was deprived of the Jagir and was driven towards the Malva by Lakhpat Rai, the Diwan of Zakaria Khan, the Taruna Dal promptly came to their help and the combined Sikh forces defeated Lakhpat Rai near Girja Shah Muquim, in which battle, Duni Chand, a nephew of Lakhpat Rai was among those killed. The battle fought on 27th October, 1736 invigorated the Sikhs, but Lakhpat Rai became all the more vindictive towards them. As per the Govt. policy, it was declared that anybody who gave shelter to

the Sikhs will be punished. Even the suppression of the news regarding their whereabouts was treated as a crime. The Harimandir Sahib at Amritsar was sealed to prevent the entry of the Sikhs and their families and kith and kin were harassed. However, the Sikhs continued to visit the shrine, in secret, in disguise or openly by defying the order of the Govt. Accordingly to contemporary Mohammedan records the Sikh horsemen were seen riding at full gallop, towards their favourite shrine of devotion. They were often slain in making this attempt and sometimes taken prisoners, but they used, on such occasions, to seek, instead of avoiding, the crown of martyrdom and the same authority states that an instance was never known of a Sikh taken in his way to Amritsar, consenting to abjure his faith.

NADDIR SHAH'S INVASION

During those days of persecution, when the Sikhs were mostly taking shelter in the Shivalik hills, the LAKHI Jungles and the sandy desert of Rajputana, the Sikhs continued to be inspired by their leaders, particularly the veteran Sardar Kapur Singh, and whenever they got an opportunity they killed the brutal administrators who were a cause of their tortures and sufferings. For example, Samad Khan, who was responsible for killing with torture Bhai Mani Singh was killed by them in an encounter. Their position improved when the Persian invader Naddir Shah uprooted the Mughal empire and went on a killing spree in Delhi on March 11, 1739. In his utmost fury, Naddir had ordered general massacre of the inhabitants of the city, and his orders were executed with such vision that till midday, the streets of Delhi ran with blood. The incensed Persians destroyed all before them, demolishing every building they came to and levelled to the ground the loftiest and the most spacious edifices of the Metropolis of the Indian Empire. The Chandni Chowk, the fruit market, the Dariba Bazaar and the buildings around the Jama Masjid were set on fire and reduced to ashes. It was only on the request of the emperor and the nobles that the massacre came to an end and a compromise was reached with him resulting into considerable decline of the Mughal strength. This invasion weakened the political machinery to such an extent that it became difficult for them to control the bold and brave Sikhs. Zakaria Khan, the governor of Punjab, by virtue of the treaty concluded with Naddir, had become the representative of the Persian ruler so far as the districts of Gujrat, Pasrur, and Syalkot were concerned. In other words, Zakaria Khan now had two masters, one the Delhi empire and the other the Persian kingdom. Such a situation gave strength to Sikhs to spread their influence over various territories in Majha and between Ravi and Beas. The Sikhs had made their presence felt even by Naddir Shah, who while passing through Punjab on his return from Delhi was deprived of considerable booty, which he was carrying from India. It is recorded that when Naddir Shah

asked Zakaria Khan about them, the governor replied that these people lived on the saddles of their horses and visited Amritsar on certain occasions for the spiritual bath and obscene. Naddir is stated to have warned Zakaria that if not crushed, these people may rule over these territories one day.

When Naddir left India, Zakaria Khan realized the significance of the remarks made by the Persian invader. He lost no time in starting an offensive more vigorously against the Sikhs. He started rewarding all those, who brought the heads of the Sikhs and even those who supplied information regarding their whereabouts. Killing of Sikhs and plundering their homes was no more an offence. Rather giving shelter to them or suppressing information regarding them was made capital offence. The Sikhs were hunted like wild beasts and thousands were put to death refusing pardon on the condition of renouncing their faith. A number of Chaudharies and Muqaddams, the government's officials were among those who played a vital role in this policy of annihilating the Sikhs. Massa Rangar of Mandiala was one such person, who was rewarded by being made the in-charge of the holy Harimandir Sahib. Massa Rangar, with a view to insult the Sikhs, used the holy place for drinking, smoking and enjoying the dancing women.

MASSA RANGAR KILLED BY SUKHA SINGH AND MEHTAB SINGH

The ruthless policy of Zakaria Khan led many a Sikhs to move towards hills of Jammu and Kangra, Lakhi Jungle or the deserts of Bikaner and other places in Rajputana. It appeared as Zakaria's policy had succeeded and there were hardly any Sikhs left, but such an impression was misconceived, as the Sikh's morale remained as strong as ever. This is evidenced by the brave acts on their part that followed and the great sacrifices made by them while treading the righteous path. Two Sikhs Bhai Sukha Singh and Bhai Mehtab Singh, employed in Rajputana, when came to know of the desecration of the holy shrine at Amritsar, took a woe to free the holy place from the tyrants and make an example of the miscreant Massa. They reached the holy temple in the guise of Merchants and were able to get entry into the presence of Massa who was seated on a cot at that time in Harimandir, listening to the music of a dancing girl. When they showed their bags to Massa, the greedy fellow bowed to take out the money. As soon as he bowed down, his head was chopped off. There was confusion all around, everybody was struck with terror and in this state of shock, the bravo, left the scene, brandishing their swords and fled away riding on their horsebacks. After some time, both of them had to suffer the death penalty for their brave action, but they were not scared of that, and were happy to do something for saving the honour of their faith.

SUBEG SINGH AND SHAHBAZ SINGH BECOME MARTYRS

Another pair of martyrs, remembered in the Sikh history and in the daily prayer of the Sikhs was that of the father and the son named as Subeg Singh and Shahbaz Singh. S. Subeg Singh was the same person who had played a role in getting Diwali for the Sikhs. He was no doubt an employee of the Lahore Government, but was a devout Sikh. When he was Kotwal of City of Lahore, he devoted himself to the construction of Gurdwaras. He was always eager to do something for his fellow religionists. This liberal attitude of Subeg Singh prompted a number of Muslims to complain against him by labelling him as a supporter of the rebels. When on one occasion, Subeg Singh, His son picked up a quarrel with his Mohammedan teacher, when the teacher made derogatory remarks about Sikhism, the complainants got the opportunity to poison the Quazi to punish him. The Quazi lost no time to tell Shahbaz Singh either to embrace Islam or face death. When the father approached Zakariya Khan for intervening, he was also involved. Both the father and the son declined to adopt Islam and were ready to face the death. They were put on the wheels having sharp blades and when the wheels were moved they rubbed each other wherein the blades minced their bodies. They were hung up by their legs and flogged on bare bodies. However, the brave Sikhs did not give in and gave up their mortal existence while uttering Sat Nam, Sat Nam.

BHAI TARU SINGH

There were many other braves Sikhs who displayed exemplary courage and determination for the cause of their religion, but their number being so large, it is not possible to mention all of them. However, the name of Bhai Taru Singh deserves special mention as when the capital sentence was given to him, as a part of that, his hair were ordered to be shaved. He was a peaceful person engaged in agriculture, but his complainant Harbhagat Niranjnia of village Jandiala Guru, had particularly teased him that he will cut his hair and use in his coat. Bhai Taru Singh was ready to die, but he insisted that instead of shaving his hair, his scalp be removed. The cruel officials used a torturous method of scrapping of his scalp. Taru Singh stood the ordeal bravely, reciting the words of 'Japji' and calling on the names of God. After a few days torture he surrendered his soul on the Ist of July 1745. The same day Zakariya Khan died on account of the attack of the disease that had stopped his urine.

BHAI BOTA SINGH

An account of Banda Singh Bahadur's companions at the time of their execution as given above clearly indicates as how the martyrs always remained in high spirits. They were always eager to under go the hardships and the tortures with which their death sentence was implemented. They never gave up

their cheerfulness as they knew how to live and die in conformity with the will of Almighty. A very interesting story of dare devilish high spirit during this period of martyrdoms is that of Bhai Bota Singh, who was living in hiding during those hard days. One day when he was noticed by some people and he hid himself, he heard a person remarking that “he could not be a Sikh as the Sikhs would never hide themselves”. This remark hurt Bota Singh, and he accompanied by his companion Garja Singh, made their presence felt as they started collecting tax by stationing themselves on the main road near Sarai Nur-ud-din near Tarn Tarn. A communication was sent to the Provincial Governor in Punjabi that gives an interesting reading and shows the boldness and the frankness with which the Sikhs lived even in such hard times. The letter reads as under:-

ਚਿਠੀ ਲਿਖੀ ਸਿੰਘ ਬੋਤਾ,
ਹੱਥ ਹੈ ਸੋਟਾ,
ਵਿਚ ਰਾਹ ਖਲੋਤਾ।
ਆਨਾ ਲਾਇਆ ਗੱਡੇ ਨੂੰ,
ਪੈਸਾ ਲਾਇਆ ਖੋਤਾ।
ਆਖੇ ਭਾਬੀ ਖਾਨੋ ਨੂੰ
ਇਓਂ ਆਖੇ ਸਿੰਘ ਬੋਤਾ।

Chitthi likhi Singh Bota

Hath hai sota

Vich raah khalota

Anna laaya gadde noon

Paisa laaya khota

Aakho Bhabi Khaano noon

Iyon aakhe Singh Bota

Bota Singh writes this letter

With a big club in hand,

On the road do I stand.

I levy an anna on a cart

And a pice on a donkey

Tell Bhabi Khano, what Bota says.

The wife of the Mughal governor is burlesqued here using her popular name “Khano”. Bota Singh calls her his Bhabi, i.e. brother’s wife with whom one could take liberties.

The authorities concerned, of course, could not tolerate such an authoritative sovereign action on the part of two Sikhs. Both of them were summoned by the authorities, but when the brave Sikhs refused to come, a contingent of 100 Horses under Jalal Ud Din was sent for their arrest. This contingent had to fight with them and the bravo died a heroic death fighting

valiantly against heavy odds.

CHHOTA GHALU GHARA

Apart from the individual martyrs, the Sikhs were also killed in large groups after their arrest and refusal to accept Islam. Whether it was a period of Zakariya Khan or that of the successor namely Yahiya Khan and Shah Nawaz Khan, the Sikhs remained the foremost enemies of the Mughal empire which was represented by forces of tyranny, injustice and oppression. The Sikhs on the other hand wanted freedom from the cruel despots for the evolution of a Society on the basis of dignity of labour and welfare of all. They continued their fight in the beginning by adopting hit and run method and then following the Guerilla warfare because of their small strength as against the Mughal Army. When Yahiya Khan was the Governor of Punjab, he was instigated by the Dewan Lakhpat Rai to take such stern measures against the Sikhs so that they could be completely annihilated. It was as a part of this policy that a holocaust was launched in 1746. The main and the immediate cause for this holocaust was the death of Jaspat Rai, who was killed in an encounter with a rowing band of the Sikhs. Jaspat Rai being the brother of Lakhpat Rai, who was the Dewan of Lahore, it was at his instance that huge reinforcements from Multan, Bahawalpur and Jalandhar were mobilised as to launch a *Jehad* against the Sikhs. All the Sikh residents of Lahore were rounded up and ordered to be executed. This execution took place on 10 March, 1746. Lakhpat Rai then set out at the head of a large force, mostly cavalry supported by cannon, in search of Sikhs who were reported to have concentrated in the swampy forest of Kahnunan, 15 Km south of the present town of Gurdaspur. He surrounded the forest and started a systematic search for his prey. Some times, the Sikhs tried to hit back but again they had to escape to the hills considering the very large number of the enemy forces. In this process, when they crossed Ravi river and reached the heights of Basohli in the present Kathua District of Jammu and Kashmir, they were not treated well by the Hindu population of that place because of the declarations made by the authorities that nobody should help the Sikhs. Thus, caught between the Hindu Hill men in front and the Muslims hordes following close upon their heels, the Sikhs found themselves helpless., particularly, as they had no weapons. Many of them were killed in the encounter and those who again retried to cross River Ravi were swept away in the torrent. It is said that 7000 Sikhs were killed and 3000 captures by Lakhpat Rai's forces. The captives were beheaded in batches in the Nakhas or site of the horse market outside Delhi Gate at Lahore. This holocaust is known in Sikh history as *Chhota Ghallu Ghara*. It is *Chhota* that is small because a bigger one was yet to take place after some years.

After *Chhota Ghallu Ghara*, Lakhpat Rai boasted that Sikhs will not raise

their head as they were hardly left alive. However, history proved him wrong when in the large congregation called Sarbat Khalsa which took place on 30 March, 1747 at Amritsar, a resolution was passed that a fort named Ram Rauni be constructed at Amritsar as a permanent strong hold. The said fort was constructed immediately and the Sikhs strengthened their position again. In the mean time, the strife between Yahiya Khan and his brother Shah Nawaz Khan for the Governorship of Lahore resulted in the replacement of Yahiya Khan by Shah Nawaz Khan. The Sikhs took advantage of this strife and became bold enough in attacking the government treasury and all those who had played a role in their persecution. "They soon succeeded in acquiring an immense booty, thus replenishing their exhausted stores and fully equipped themselves with arms, ammunition, horses and other necessaries." They also got considerable support from Dewan Koda Mal, a Hindu Khatri, who was their well-wisher. Further, Shah Nawaz Khan, with a view to strengthen his position against his brother had sent an invitation to Ahmad Shah Abdali to come to India and establish his supremacy. This emboldened Abdali, who was eager to follow the footsteps of Naddir Shah and establish a supremacy over the vast empire of India. He launched attack after attack, and looted the vast treasures of this country, whenever he got an opportunity. However, he could not establish his Empire because of the strong opposition and intervention by the Sikhs. Although, he had made the Mughal administration so weak and also suppressed the brave Marathas by defeating them in the historic 3rd Battle of Panipat in 1761, he could not bring under control the brave Sikhs who always used to harass him whenever he passed through Punjab while coming to India and going back. Once he decided to teach the Sikhs a lesson and kill them in bulk as to get rid of this problem, but that effort of his also proved aborted, though it gave to the history another *Ghallu Ghara* known as the *Wadha Ghallu Ghara*.

WADHA GHALLU GHARA

The big Ghallu Ghara took place on 15th Feb. 1762 when one day battle was fought between Dal Khalsa and the forces of Abdali at a place called Kup-Rahira, 12 kms. of north of Maler Kotla. The Sikhs had noted that Aquil Das of Jandiala, head of Niranjania sect being a inveterate enemy of the Sikhs was required to be taught a lesson. They, therefore, besieged Jandiala Guru, but when Aquil Das called Abdali for his help, the Sikhs lifted the siege and started moving towards Malwa. They wanted to confront Ahmad Shah at a place near Malwa as the atmosphere there was not hostile to them. However, it was on their way to Malwa that they were made to face Abdali's forces at Kup Rahira at the dawn on the 5th Feb.. They were taken by surprise as a number of persons supporting Abdali had surrounded from outside. Since there were women and

children also with the Sikhs, they could not resort to the Guerilla tactics and were constrained to fight a battle. Their leaders at that time promptly decided that they should form a circle having their ladies and children inside and should continue advancing while fighting the enemy forces. Thus, they kept on moving and while moving the fighting went on. On many occasions Abdali's troops broke the cordon and killed the women and children inside the circle. When both the sides were exhausted and the Sikhs reached near Barnala, Ahmad Shah's forces did not pursue further. In this brave fight given by the Sikhs their loss was tremendous. The figures as put by the historians vary from 25000 to 50000 and it is because of this large number that the event became a Big Ghallu Ghara. It may be mentioned again that the spirit of the Sikhs did not fall and remained as high as it ever was. Such was the state of their morale that to quote the Prachin Panth Prakash again, as the Sikhs gathered in the evening that day, a Nihang stood up and proclaimed aloud "the fake has been shed. The true Khalsa remains intact.". The Sikhs rose again within three months to attack Zain Khan of Sirhind, who bought peace by paying them Rs.50,000 in May and they were ravaging the neighbourhood of Lahore during July-August, 1762. Ahmad Shah, who was still in the Punjab watched helplessly the devastation of the Jalandhar Doab at their hands.

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SIKHS BECOME RULERS

We have seen that the first half of the 18th century was a remarkable period in the history of Sikhism as it was during this period that the Sikhs strengthened the foundations laid by their Masters by giving them an independent identity, status, place of worship, code of conduct and scriptures. They had to give a large number of sacrifices, but the blood shed by them for the sake of religion made them more committed and powerful for the cause for which the new faith had come into existence. It happened because the Sikhs of that time followed the tenets as enshrined in the holy Guru Granth Sahib being the divine utterings of not only their Gurus but also of the greatest saints of Hindu religion and Islam. These spiritual guidelines kept them strong and face with unshakable belief and fortitude all kinds of atrocities perpetrated against them. The principle of combining Shakti with Bhakti was the strongest weapon with the Sikhs to face all kinds of tortures and cruelties. However, their sacrifices proved nails in the coffin of Mughal Empire, which was crumbling because of the weak administration by the successors of Aurangzeb and the foreign invasions. When the Mughal administration failed to suppress them and Ahmad Shah Abdali could not succeed in annihilating them even by conducting a *Wadha Ghalu Ghara* in which thousands of Sikhs were killed, the Sikhs emerged powerful in the eyes of the people. They started looking towards them for protection from the forces of tyranny and oppression. The powerful Sikh chieftains then developed a system called Rakhi. They undertook to defend the people in their respective areas of influence on payment of protection tax called Rakhi.

SIKH MISLS AND THEIR TERRITORIES

By the middle of 18th century, the 12 groups of Sikhs known as Misls became powerful in certain territories in which they had been collecting Rakhi. Each of these Misls had a leader of its own, whereas all of them combined by a part of bigger confederation called Dal Khalsa of which earlier Nawab Kapur Singh and later on Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was the supreme Commander. Among the most powerful Misls were the Bhangies, who were in possession of Lahore, Amritsar and most of the Western Punjab. The Kanaiyyas were holding the territories of the Himalyan foothills. The Ahluwalias were Masters of the land between Ravi & Beas. The Shaheed Misl had its area of influence south of river

Sutlej. The Sukkarchakkias were in possession of the town of Gujranwala and the neighbouring villages. The subject of this chapter is not to deal with the history of the Sikh states, but to refer to some of the bravest of the Sikhs who played a vital role during the 2nd half of the 18th century.

DEWAN KAPUR SINGH

The first prominent Sikh to dominate the scene after Baba Banda Singh Bahadur in the eventful 18th century was S. Kapur Singh, who was born in 1697 in a village in Sheikhpura District (now in Pakistan). Since at a very early age he had learnt the art of warfare, he was able to seize a village named Faizullapur near Amritsar and started living there after establishing Faizullapuria principality. Gradually, he developed as an expert horse rider and a swordsman as well as a pious and learned Sikh. During that period of struggle for survival by the Sikhs, he had become so popular because of his warrior and saint like qualities that when the Sikhs were offered Diwani, he was considered as the most eligible person to become Dewan. It was he, who guided the destiny of the Sikhs in the right direction by forming Buddha Dal and Taruna Dal and assigning them different tasks for the progress of the Sikhs and Sikh religion. His bravery can be gauged from the fact that when in 1739 Naddir Shah was returning to Persia after a heavy plunder of Delhi and Punjab, he swooped upon his rear guard, near Akhnoor, on the river Chenab and rescued a number of innocent girls who were being abducted. When he became old, it was at his suggestion that Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was chosen as the supreme Commander of Dal Khalsa.

PHULKIAN MISL

Although Banda Singh Bahadur had laid down the foundation of Sikh rule he could not get a longer period to give permanence to the Sikh empire. After him, the Phulkian Misl was the earliest to establish the Sikh rule in the 3 states of Patiala, Jeend and Nabha. This Misl traced its ancestry to Jaisal a Bhatti Rajput, who had founded the Jaisalmer State in 1180 A.D. This Misl came into contact with Sikhism during the period of 7th Guru, Guru Har Rai, who is believed to have blessed the ancestor of this Misl, named Phul. It is from his name that the name of misl was derived. His two successors Ram Singh and Tirlok Singh find a mention in a Hukamnama of Guru Gobind Singh dt. 2nd August, 1696 wherein they have been called upon to send a detachment of cavalry. Both of them being devoted disciples of the 10th Guru were very helpful to Banda Singh Bahadur, who can be regarded as the first Sikh ruler (1710-16).

BABA AALA SINGH

The first well known ruler of this dynasty was Baba Aala Singh, who was the 3rd

son of Ram Singh. He was a brave soldier and a shrewd politician. His wife Fateh Kaur, is popularly known in the Sikh history as Mai Fatto. Aala Singh started his career of conquest after the execution of Banda Singh Bahadur in 1716 when he gathered around him a band of some daring young persons. He set up his headquarters in Barnala in 1722 and became a Master of a territory comprised of 30 odd villages. Gradually he captured new villages and increased his strength. However, at one stage the Governor of Sirhind, Ali Mohammad Khan Rohilla had imprisoned him and kept in captivity for about 3 years from 1745 to 1748. But, when Ahmad Shah Abdali invaded India and the governor fled from his capital, Aala Singh got his release. Aala Singh became popular, when he defeated Farid Khan, Rajput Chieftain and helped the Marathas when they were engaged in the Battle of Panipat with Ahmad Shah Abdali. At the time of *Wadha Ghallu Ghara* in Feb. 1762, he remained neutral as he could not fight against Sikhs nor could he annoy Ahmad Shah Abdali. Ahmad Shah thought him the well-wisher of Sikhs and as such got him imprisoned and presented before him. The brave Sikh was bold and shrewd enough to defeat the designs of Ahmad Shah Abdali by offering him some money. When Abdali ordered that Aala Singh's hair be shaved off, he took advantage of Abdali's lust for money and got this punishment cancelled by paying a sum of 1.50 lakhs of rupees. This shows his love for his religion. This also shows that apart from being brave, he was shrewd enough to handle any situation tactfully. He had taken Pahul in 1732 at the hands of Nawab Kapur Singh, leader of Dal Khalsa. He was an ally of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia in the attack on Sirhind in 1764 and later on when no body was interested in keeping Sirhind with him, he purchased the town and annexed it with his territory. The Muslims record reveals that Ahmad Shah Durani had recognised Aala Singh as the sovereign of the territories under his control by a written decree. Abdali had also confirmed him as the Raja of Sirhind and granted him the robes of honour, a drum and a banner as insignia of royalty.

JASSA SINGH AHLUWALIA

Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was the most notable Sikh chief, who remained associated with the Sikh struggle during the 18th century. He was the leader of the Dal Khalsa and had organised the Sikhs militarily. He was so strong and brave that nobody could succeed against him in any of the engagements. He was the founder of Rakhi system and under his authority the Sikhs were able to levy and collect Nazranas from Mughal and Afghan straps. He shot into prominence when he made a surprise attack on Ahmad Shah Durani's force near Amritsar in March, 1761 and rescued 2200 women captives who were being carried as slaves. After that, he won many victories by commanding the combined forces of various Misl. For example Sukkarchakkias, Kanaiyyas and

Bhangi Sardar were with him when Khawaja Ubaid Khan, the Afghan Governor of Lahore was defeated near Gujranwala in Sept. 1761. The victorious Sikhs entered Lahore and proclaimed Jassa Singh Ahluwalia as the King of Lahore with the title of Sultan ul-Qaum (King of the Nation). A coin was issued in the name of Guru Nanak- Guru Gobind Singh commemorating the Sikh victory with the inscription taken from the seal of Banda Singh Bahadur:

Deg o tegh o fateh o nusrat be diring

Yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh

(Prosperity, power and unfailing victory received from Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh).

When Ahmad Shah Abdali came to know of these developments in Lahore, he launched his 6th invasion. It was during this invasion that *Wadha Ghallu Ghara* took place at Kut. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was also there as the Leader of a Group. He sustained 22 wounds on his body, but survived to take revenge for this ghastly act of Ahmad Shah Abdali. Before going back, Ahmad Shah had also blown up the holy Harimandir Sahib with gun powder and got filled the holy tank. However, the Shah was still in Lahore when Jassa Singh fell upon Sirhind on 17th May, 1762 and extracted Nazrana from Zain Khan, the Faujdar. The combined forces of the Bhangies and Sukkarchakkias joined Jassa Singh in defeating commander Jahan Khan near Sialkot in Nov. 1763. The combined forces went on occupying area after area and Ropar, Kurali and Morinda all fell under their control. A significant achievement was an attack on Sirhind on 14th January 1764, wherein the Afghan Faujdar was killed and the town laid waste. The city was plundered and destroyed because it was not liked by the Sikhs as the two younger sons of the 10th Guru were sentenced to a torturous death at this place. Even after plundering the city, no one was willing to take possession of the city of Sirhind because of this reason. When it was given to Buddha Singh as his share of the booty, he sold it to Sardar Aala Singh. This conquest of Sirhind made Jassa Singh Ahluwalia as the most respectable leader among the Sikhs. He was the leader of the Ahluwalia Misl and the areas of Kapurthala and Sultanpur Lodhi were acquired by him as the territories for rule by this dynasty.

Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was not only a brave general, but also a devout Sikh who was mainly instrumental in overthrowing Afghan power in northern India and after winning various territories handing over the same to different Sikh Chiefs. He was the person who got the holy Harimandir Sahib re-built. He was so much revered for his deeply religious and pious character that many a meritorious persons felt themselves honoured by getting baptised by him. It was under his command and leadership that many brave generals and spiritual leaders got prominence. Jai Singh Kanaiyya and Mahan Singh Sukkarchakkias

were among those brave Sikhs who remained his companions in various victories.

When after the death of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, S. Fateh Singh succeeded to the Ahluwalia Chief ship in 1801, he proved to be another powerful Sikh of that period. He had best of relations with Maharaja Ranjit Singh with whom he had exchanged turbans signifying a permanent bond of brotherhood between them. He had fought very bravely in the various campaigns of the Maharaja and was also his plenipotentiary, signing on his behalf, the 1st Anglo Sikh treaty with Lord Lake. He possessed extensive territories of both sides of Sutlej yielding an annual revenue of Rs. 1,76,000/-. Later on, he established his empire at Kapurthala, where he remained till his death in October, 1836.

JAI SINGH KANAIIYYA

Jai Singh Kanaiyya was the founder of Kanaiyya clan and had extended his territory up to Parol, about 70 Kms. South east of Jammu covering the territories of Batala which were shared by him with Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. The hill chiefs of Nurpur, Datarpur and Siba had become Jai Singh's tributaries. But, when a dispute arose between Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Jai Singh sided with Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and drove away Jassa Singh Ramgarhia from Punjab.

JASSA SINGH RAMGARHIA

Jassa Singh Ramgarhia was another brave Sikh general of the 18th century. Although he was not friendly with Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, as a result of which he had to leave Punjab, but he was brave enough to take possession of Hissar, Hansi and considerable area extending up to Delhi. He then invaded Meerut and levied an annual tribute of Rs. 10,000/- Further, along with Karam Singh he crossed into Saharnpur and occupied a vast territory. When his rivals Jai Singh and Mahan Singh fell out after the death of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia returned to Punjab and allied himself with the Sukkarchakkias as against Jai Singh Kanaiyya. Jai Singh was defeated and his son Gurbax Singh killed. All the territories in the Bari Doab including Batala, Kalanaur, Dina Nagar, Gurdaspur and considerable part of Jalandhar Doab fell under his control. The Hill rulers of Kangra, Nurpur, Mandi and Chamba started paying him a tribute of 2 lakh of rupees. Jassa Singh was earlier known as Ichhogallia after the name of his village, but later on when he was assigned to the task of rebuilding Ram Rauni Fort at Amritsar, and after reconstruction he named it Ramgarh, he became popular as Jassa Singh Ramgarhia.

BABA DEEP SINGH

Baba Deep Singh was a very prominent Sikh personality of the 18th century,

who lived right from the period of Guru Gobind Singh till 1757 in which year he sacrificed his life while fighting against Jahan Khan, who had caused a desecration of filling up the sacred pool of nectar at Harimandir Sahib, Amritsar. Baba Deep Singh was the founder of Shaheed Misl as well as of the Damdami Taksal, which was in fact the school of Sikh learning at Talwandi Sabo. Baba Ji was there at the sacred shrine when the 10th Master dictated to Bhai Mani Singh, the new version of Guru Granth Sahib. He was such a scholar that he had four copies of the Guru Granth Sahib made from the recension prepared by Bhai Mani Singh. Whereas as a saint he was so much involved in the study of scriptures and meditated for hours together in a tower, which is still existing as Burja Baba Deep Singh at Damdama Sahib, he was also a very brave soldier. He was made the commander of the one of the five Jathas of Taruna Dal. His Jatha, which later on came to be known as Shaheed Misl had increased their sphere of influence south of river Sutlej with its headquarters at Talwandi Sabo. Baba Ji could not tolerate the desecration of Harimandir Sahib and Nectar Pool and thus started moving towards Amritsar to teach a lesson to Jahan Khan, who was responsible for sacrilegious acts. When he arrived at Taran Taran he had at his command a force of 5,000 men. Jahan Khan's troops lay in wait for them near Gohlwar village, 8 Km ahead. They barred their way and fierce action took place. Deep Singh suffered grave injury near Ramsar, yet such was the firmness of his resolve to reach the holy precincts that he carried on the battle until he fell dead in the close vicinity of the Harimandir Sahib. This was on 11 November, 1757. A legend grew that it was Baba Dip Singh's headless body holding his severed head on his left hand and wielding his Khanda, double-edged sword, with his right hand that had fought on until he had redeemed his pledge to liberate the holy shrine. Two shrines now commemorate the martyr, one on the circumambulatory terrace of the sarovar surrounding the Golden Temple where he finally fell and the other Shaheedganj Baba Deep Singh Shaheed, near Gurdwara Ramsar, where his body was cremated. (Encyclopaedia of Sikhism Volume I Page 588)

SARDAR GURBAX SINGH

There was another notable Shaheed from the Shaheed Misl, who laid down his life for protecting the holy shrine at Amritsar. Ratan Singh Bhangu informs us in his *Prachin Panth Prakash* that this brave Sikh, named S. Gurbax Singh was there in the Shrine when the Afghans swooped down upon them. There were only 30 Sikhs, who had to fight the Army of Ahmad Shah Durrani when he invaded the country 7th time. Quazi Noor Mohammad, giving an eye witness account of this battle also states that "they were only 30 in number. They did not have the least fear of death. They engaged the Ghazis and spilled their blood in the process". All the 30 Sikhs led by Bhai Gurbax Singh became

Martyrs on 1st December, 1764. Now there stands a Gurdwara in the memory of these martyrs behind Takhat Akaal Bunga at Amritsar.

SARDAR BAGHEL SINGH

The Karor Singhia misl made a mark in the Sikh History when its leader S. Baghel Singh was able to defeat the Royal Forces in Delhi and on 11th March, 1783 the Sikhs entered the Red Fort and occupied the Dewan-I-Aam. The Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II had no other alternative but to make a settlement with the brave Sikh who had won laurels by establishing his area of influence in Jalandhar-Doab and Haryana near Hoshiarpur. When the Sikhs won the victory over Sirhind in January, 1764, Baghel Singh extended his area towards Karnal and went towards Yamuna to capture Saharanpur, Muzaffar Nagar and several other villages of the Yamuna-Gangetic areas. However, despite such vast powers and influence, S. Bhagel Singh preferred to make the emperor accept his proposal to raise Gurdwaras in Sikh historical sites in Delhi. In addition, the Sikhs were allowed to realise 37.5% of the octroi duties in the capital. He located seven sites connected with the lives of the Gurus and had shrines raised thereon within the space of eight months, from April to November 1783. Gurdwara Sis Ganj marked the spot in the main Mughal street of Chandni Chowk where Guru Tegh Bahadur had been executed under the fiat of the emperor and Gurdwara Rakabganj, near modern day Parliament House where the body was cremated. Bangla Sahib and Bala Sahib commemorated the Eighth Guru, Guru Har Krishan. Three other Gurdwaras built were at Majnu Ka Tilla, Moti Bagh and Telivara.

SUKKARCHAKKIA CHIEFS

Mahan Singh Sukkarchakkia was the son of Charhat Singh, who was the founder of Sukkarchakkia dynasty. Charhat Singh had fought in various skirmishes of the Sikhs with the Afghan invader Ahmad Shah Durrani. He had established his headquarter at Gujranwala and later on added Eminabad, Wajirabad and Sialkot in his territories. Sialkot victory in August, 1761 against Ahmad Shah Durrani's man Nuru ud Din Bammerzai was his most significant achievement. When Khwaja Ubaid Khan, Afghan Governor of Lahore marched upon Gujranwala to chastise him, he fought with courage and determination. In the meantime the other Sikh Sardars under the leadership of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia came to his rescue and Ubaid Khan was forced to retreat leaving behind Guns, ammunition and stores.

When Charhat Singh died while fighting in a skirmish, his son Mahan Singh was a minor. When Mahan Singh came of age, he also embarked upon a carrier of conquest. His biggest victory was against Chatthas. He built a fort in Gujranwala and named it as Garhi Mahan Singh. He increased the number of

his horsemen to 6000 and strengthened his position. His biggest achievement was against Chatthas. Peer Muhammad Khan Chattha was the head of the Chattha tribe living along the Jehlam. In his territory of Rasul Nagar, he treated his subjects, specially the Hindus with utmost cruelty. The Chattha chief was not only cruel but also debauch. It was his excesses and atrocities which led Mahan Singh to launch an attack against him. Peer Muhammad had shut himself along with others in a fort which was besieged by Mahan Singh. After a few months' struggle, Mahan Singh was able to conquer and punished the Chatthas for their acts of oppression. Rasul Nagar was renamed as Ram Nagar. After that Mahan Singh got victories at Pindi, Bhattian, Sahibal, Sialkot and then against Jammu Dogra ruler. With all these conquests the Sukkarchakkias became very powerful. Mahan Singh, who was earlier a friend of Jai Singh Kanaiyya, later on befriended himself with Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and in the battle fought with Sardar Jai Singh Kanaiyya, Jai Singh was killed.

When the whole of Punjab became a territory of different Sikh states a tussle started among the Sikh rulers for supremacy. The wise elderly Sikh leaders like Jassa Singh Ahluwalia died, and in the last decade of the century, Punjab became a scene of disunity among the Misaldars. This disunity could attract an invader from the north-west or a power from within which could again snatch Punjab from the hands of Sikhs. It was, therefore, the need of time to make Punjab powerful by uniting all the small states and creating a consolidated empire. Sukkarchakkias, becoming more powerful with the passage of time, thought of doing this service for the community. It is in this context only that a matrimonial alliance was fixed between the grand daughter of Sardar Jai Singh Kanaiyya and the son of Mahan Singh Sukkarchakkia, named Ranjit Singh. It was destined for Ranjit Singh to become the ruler of powerful Sikh empire, which he created with his wisdom and brave campaigns against those who did not agree with this view point.



CHAPTER - X

RANJIT SINGH AND HIS BRAVE SIKH GENERALS

Ranjit Singh, who later on came to be known as Maharaja Ranjit Singh was the son and the grandson of brave Mahan Singh and Charhat Singh Sukkarchakkia respectively. He was only 10 years old when his father took him for Gujrat campaign which was launched against the powerful Bhangi dynasty. It may be made clear that this place, Gujrat was a district town of Punjab, now in Pakistan, which during the later half of the 18th century was occupied by Sahib Singh of Bhangi Misl. When Sukkarchakkias launched an attack in which Ranjit Singh participated as the first experience of his military career, Mahan Singh fell seriously ill before the action was complete. It was Ranjit Singh, who completed the action like a seasoned general. He had made the Bhangies flee leaving behind a large number of Guns and canons. His father became very happy, but, he died next day.

ENCOUNTER WITH SHAH ZAMAN

Ranjit Singh occupied the throne of his father at a young age, and for some time the administration was looked after by his mother and mother in law to be. Ranjit Singh thought of a mission of making Punjab a strong state and he started working on this mission after some time. In the meantime, the Afghans were again thinking of taking advantage of disunity among the Sikh states, and as such Ahmad Shah Abdali's grandson Shah Zaman, who was on the throne at that time, thought of invading India for re-establishing the Afghan empire there. His first invasion took place in 1793 in which he came as far as Hassan Abdal. In his next attempt in 1795, he not only re took Hassan Abdal but also captured Rohtas which was under the rule of Sukkarchakkias. Nizamuddin of Kasoor was helping Shah Zaman. In 1796, Shah Zaman occupied the city of Lahore, but as he had to rush back to his country, he appointed his general Ahamed Shah Shahanchibashi as his deputy and gave him 12,000 soldiers to deal with the Sikhs. However, when deputy Khan tried to deal with the Sikhs, he was killed in a battle near Ramnagar and his force was completely routed. This made Ranjit Singh, the Hero of Punjab.

Shah Zaman tried again in 1798 to establish his empire in India, but in vain. The Sikhs did not let the Afghans succeed. Historians like Sohan Lal and

Bute Shah make a mention that Ranjit Singh even went to challenge Shah Zaman when the latter was putting up at Samman Burj of the Fort at Lahore. Ranjit Singh said in a loud voice “Come on, O Grandson of Ahmad Shah! And try your strength with the grandson of Sardar Charhat Singh, I challenge you for a duel.” Shah Zaman could not dare to have a combat with Ranjit Singh. Thus, he went back to his country without fulfilling his desire. Shah Zaman’s return to Afghanistan was a great achievement for Sikhs as Ranjit Singh had got the cooperation of all the Sikhs in this action. In 1799 Ranjit Singh drove the Bhangi Rulers out of Lahore and made Lahore his capital. On Baisakhi day of 1801 (12th April) Ranjit Singh was ceremoniously proclaimed as Maharaja of Punjab. Sahib Singh Bedi, a pious Sikh in direct descent from the family of Guru Nanak applied the ceremonial saffron mark to Ranjit Singh’s forehead. However, Ranjit Singh was humble enough not to wear any emblem of royalty or sit on the throne. He considered his government as that of Khalsa and his court came to be known as Darbar Khalsa Ji. The coins were struck in the name of Guru and not in the name of Ranjit Singh. The seal of the Govt. also did not bear any reference to Ranjit Singh.

MODERNISATION OF ARMY

After becoming the King of Punjab, Ranjit Singh paid considerable attention to his Army. He wanted to establish a modern army instead of the crude military system inherited by him from the Sikh Misl. For the purpose of modernisation of his army, he recruited foreigners so that they could train the Army of Ranjit Singh on the lines of the forces of East India Company. Many of the foreigners appointed by Ranjit Singh rose to very high positions. They included Allard, Claude, Ventura and Paolo. These foreigners helped the Maharaja, in modernising the Army. However, they also learned a lot from the great Sikh ruler, particularly the qualities of bravery determination and confidence. These qualities of Maharaja were quite visible in his various victories, which he made to realise his dream of bringing the entire Punjab under his control. It may be mentioned here that Maharaja Ranjit Singh occupies a unique place in the history of modernisation of the Indian Army. The position in this regard has been elaborately discussed in one of the pamphlets published by National Book Trust of India, wherein the learned author Major General D.K. Palit has summed up the contribution of the Sikh ruler in the following words:

“It was left to Maharaja Ranjit Singh to modernize this democratic military machine by regularizing it and equipping it after the fashion of the European armies. He engaged British, Italian, and French officers to train and re-organise his forces on modern lines. The Khalsa artillery became an effective, modern arm. Foundries were established at Lahore fort where guns were cast which were in no way

inferior to any in the world. It was this army that nearly shook the edifice built by the British in North India.”

CAPTURING AMRITSAR

In 1802, he occupied Amritsar. This acquisition was highly significant as it brought to Maharaja a number of canons including Zamzam, belonging originally to Ahmad Shah Abdali. It also brought to Maharaja's Army a very large number of Nihangs or Akaalis, whose leader Baba Phoola Singh was responsible for Maharaja's easy and bloodless victory at Amritsar. Moreover, this city, being the hub of all Sikh activities, was a place of reverence for the Maharaja and its occupation gave him an opportunity to do in his humble way, a great service of beautifying the Harimandir, with gold plating. This work was entrusted by the Maharaja to one Giani Sant Singh, who was not only a very close courtier, but also a devout Sikh spending most of his time in reading and expounding the scriptures at Sri Darbar Sahib. Bhai Santokh Singh, the renowned author of 'Sri Gur Pratap Suraj Granth' was his pupil. The task he performed relating to art and filigree work carried out in the interior of the Harimandir and that of covering the upper portion of the exterior with gold leaf, has been immortalised by an inscription at the main entrance of the inner sanctuary which commemorates the services of the Maharaja "Whom the Guru by his own favour had assigned to the seva and of Giani Sant Singh who supervised execution."

OTHER VICTORIES OF RANJIT SINGH

After Amritsar, the Maharaja humbled a number of independent principalities like Jhang, Kasoor, Multan and also intervened in the affairs of Sis-Sutlej states in the Malwa region, which led him to make up his mind to subjugate the entire region. However, these states approached the Britishers and it was with their intervention that on April, 25 1809, a treaty was reached between the Britishers and the Maharaja which provided that the British government would count the Lahore Darbar among the most honourable powers and would in no way interfere with the Sikh ruler's dominions to the north of the Sutlej. It however fixed the southern limit of his kingdom and barred further extension of Sikh frontier in that direction. Yet the establishment of peace and friendship between the two powers left Ranjit Singh free to pursue a course of conquest in the north and beyond the River Indus unhampered and to consolidate his power in the central and southern Punjab.

The conquest of Multan in 1818 was a major conquest, thereafter, Kashmir was annexed in 1819 followed by conquest of Peshawar, Dera Ghazi Khan, Dera Ismile Khan, Hazara, Kohat, Tonk and Bannu. Earlier, many of these provinces used to pay an annual tribute, but later on the same were annexed to the Sikh

empire. The empire was thus extended with its boundaries in the north west into the base of Yusufzai territory north east of Peshawar, upto Fatehgarh, a Fort near the Khaibar Pass. In the south west, it touched the undefined borders of Sindh, Rojhan and Mitthankot, junction of river Sutlej and Indus. A large number of hill states like Bilaspur, Suket, Chamba, Rajauri, Laddakh and Iskardu were his tributaries. He also held large territories in the hills as formed out and received an annual revenue of Rs.20 lakh rupees from the Sis-Sutlej region.

HIS QUALITIES OF HEAD AND HEART

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was not only a brave soldier, but also an able general and excellent human being with a sense of justice, kindness and generosity. His utmost humility, his secular approach and human administration endeared him to one and all. He was no doubt a devout Sikh, but his rule was not theocratic. It was a secular state in which people of all religions enjoyed equal rights and opportunities in the true spirit. His liberal grants for temples and mosques show his secular spirit. It was he, who spent tonnes of gold for gold plating of domes of Kashi Vishwanath temple in Varanasi. While making a treaty with the Afghans, he had demanded the precious doors of Somnath temple back from them for their restoration to the shrine. He had also expressed his desire to donate certain valuables for the temple at Jagannath Puri. Although all these shrines did not fall within his empire, he was quite considerate for doing the maximum, as he could do for these holy places. Even otherwise, the Maharaja acting in accordance with the Sikh tenets never discriminated against anyone because of caste, creed or colour. Like the Rulers of other Sikh states, he gave employment to people of all religions, considering their merits. It was not only in the army, that people from diverse origins, castes and religions were employed, in administration also, high positions were held by the people of different religions. His most important minister and adviser was a Muslim. His considerate attitude even towards general public is evidenced by the fact that not a single person of any denomination, suffered capital punishment on any ground in his reign. This is such an achievement that even most modern state of today finds it difficult to achieve. It required courage for anyone to emulate the Maharaja. There are numerous stories about his living, his rendering justice, his approach towards other religions, his consideration for all people and above all his faith in the Gurus, whose benevolence he always invoked for doing anything. As mentioned above, he was such a type of brave person who could create other brave men. There were a large number of persons in his forces, whose bravery was known in all the directions. General Hari Singh Nalwa and Akaali Phoola Singh were among those who are considered as among the bravest persons ever born in our

country.

HARI SINGH NALWA

Nalwa was such a terror for the Afghans that till now, the Afghans mothers frighten their children by saying that Nalwa will come. It was he whose very sight would make the Pathans flee from the battle fields. He was ill, when he came to know that there was an attack by the Afghans at Jamraud. He immediately got up and rushed to Jamrud to get it free from the seize of Afghans. The Afghans raised the seize and took up their positions in the Khaibar valley so as to have a safe route of escape in case of defeat. Nalwa was with a few persons, when he was attacked by the Afghans and wounded in the encounter. He received four wounds: two sabre cuts across his chest, one arrow was fixed in his breast which he deliberately pulled out himself, and continued to issue orders as before, until he received a gunshot wound in the side, from which he gradually sank and was carried off the field to the fort, where he expired, requesting that his death should not be made known until the arrival of the Maharaja's relief. When Maharaja Ranjit Singh came to know about the death of Nalwa he was down with grief. He immediately started from Lahore and after galloping for one day continuously reached Jehlum a distance of 165 Kms. By the time he reached, the Pathans had all run away. Jamrud was again with the Sikhs but the loss of Nalwa was a very high cost for that.

AKAALI PHOOLA SINGH

Akaali Phoola Singh was another brave soldier of Maharaja's army. He was fearless and out spoken soldier, who played a crucial role in several of Maharaja's military engagements. His bravery as displayed in his fight against the Ghazis is unforgettable. When it was decided by taking a Hukamnama from Guru Granth Sahib that the Ghazis should be attacked in Naushehra before they could get assistance from Azim Khan's army, he was determined to take the action immediately. When the Maharaja suggested that the offences should be postponed till Gen. Ventura joined them with his artillery, Phoola Singh insisted that as we have taken a vow in the presence of Guru, the attack must be launched without waiting for anyone. It was this determination which led Phoola Singh to fight vigorously despite several wounds. He fought a hand-to-hand combat with the Ghazis. When he was wounded in the thigh, he bandaged his wound and rode back in to the thick of the battle. When his horse was wounded and he also got a severe wound, he rode the elephant and kept on fighting. When he was on the elephant, he was so visible that the Ghazis concentrated on him and fired at him from all sides. His body was riddled with bullets, but he went on roaring like a lion. He fought till last, and inspired by him, the Nihangs beat the Ghazis so fiercely that they became disorganised and

were killed in large number. A true brave soldier as he was, he died fighting and even in his death, he won the victory.

There were many others lesser known military commanders who had been groomed under the able guidance of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. For example, S. Fateh Singh Kalianwala was one such commander who had fought against the Chatthas inhabiting the northern part of Gujranwala district. He lost his two sons, but that did not deter him from doing his duty towards the Master. He was a brave and skilful soldier and took part in almost every campaign undertaken by the Maharaja during his early career. He fought against Ghulam Mohammad Khan Chattha and against Jodh Singh of Wazirabad. He was with the Maharaja at the time of the capture of the city of Lahore in 1799. He participated in the Kasur (1801) and Jhang (1806) campaigns. Fateh Singh conquered Chiniot from Jassa Singh Bhangi and when Jhang was taken in 1806 from Ahmad Khan Sial, the district was leased to him. When towards the close of 1806, Qutub Ud-Din Khan of Kasur raised the banner of revolt, Fateh Singh Kalianwala was sent against him. In 1807, Ranjit Singh, after a visit to Patiala, besieged the fort of Naraingarh held by Sardar Kishan Singh, Fateh Singh, who was in immediate command, assaulted the fort, but was repulsed and mortally wounded. He died on 25th October, 1807".

(Encyclopaedia of Sikhism, Vol-II Page 24)

The great ruler, Maharaja Ranjit Singh ruled for more than 50 years. The Sikhs were at the height of their glory during this period. They showed to the world as what kind of rule they could give. They showed to the world as how much bravery they had, but, despite that how much humble and generous they were not only towards their fellow religionists but, to one and all. There was no dearth of brave people, who could carry on this brave tradition, but the British knew the art of dividing and ruling the people. They knew how to succeed even against the bravest of the people and that is why when the great king died they lost no time in executing a plan for annexation of the state of Punjab.



THE SIKHS—
TOUGHEST FOR THE BRITISHERS

When the golden rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh came to a close on his death in 1839, the British started exploring the possibility of annexation of Punjab with their empire. After the treaty of 1809 in Amritsar, the British had resisted the temptation of going north of the Satluj as they knew that any confrontation with the Lion of Punjab could bring them disaster. Ranjit Singh on the other hand was wise enough to restrict his control over a vast empire extended from Satluj to Kabul in Afghanistan and from Ladhaak and Iskardu and Tuklakote in Tibbet, and not to enter into a confrontation with a world power, the British, at that time. However, when he died on 27th June 1839, he left no worthy successor to carry on the tradition of greatness of his times. His sons, born of different women, could easily fall a prey to the court intrigues and that led to a number of assassinations. The nobles of the Sikh Durbar and the council of Ministers too indulged in selfish grinding of their own trumpet. A number of groups emerged leading to fighting among themselves, struggling for power. When the struggle for power reached a stage, that in 1845 Ranjit Singh's youngest son Dilip Singh was made to occupy the throne, the position of the State was highly miserable. The two main groups were that of Dogra brothers, namely Gulab Singh, Dhian Singh and Suchet Singh, and that of Sikh aristocracy, such as the Sandhawalia brothers, who resented Dogra influence. The Sikh Army was still very powerful as becomes evident from their campaigns in Tibbet and Afghanistan.

BATTLE OF MUDAKI

The British watched all the developments after the death of great ruler, and were on the look out for an opportunity to enter into a tussle with the weak administration. They took advantage of all such persons who could take side with them and betray the Sikhs in delicate and appropriate situations. Thus, with an intention to fish in the troubled waters of Punjab, the British started strengthening their position on Punjab frontiers. These positions were at Ropar, Ludhiana, Harike and Ferozepur in the south and at Peshawar and Attock in the north. The Sikhs realised their evil intentions and made their troops to move for the purpose of countering British preparations. When the Sikh army crossed the Sutlej between Harike and Kasure on 11th December

1845, the British treated it as an act of violation of the treaty of 1809. Although, this is a debateable issue as whether crossing the Sutlet was as serious a default as to force a war, Lord Hardinge did not want to miss an opportunity to declare war. The battles that were fought at Mudaki and Ferozeshah were won by the British mainly because of the treachery of Lal Singh and Tej Singh.

Lal Singh was a mercenary from Rohtas and was allured by the British with the office of the Prime Minister of the State. He was, therefore, not willing to cross Satluj but, when forced by his soldiers to do so, he contacted Capt. Nicolson through correspondence as to enquire as what further he should do. The British Capt. Nicolson directed him that they should not attack Firozpur and halt their progress as much as they can and then march towards the "Governor General". The British knew, that the Sikhs were in big number, around 60,000, whereas the British were merely 8000 and that too in an unprepared condition. It was also evident that for Sikhs, they were to fight for defending their freedom, a cause very near to their heart, for which they were prepared to do all such things as carry a musquat, drag guns, drive bullocks, lead camels and load and unloads boats with a cheerful alacrity. Lal Singh's force comprising of 18000 infantry, 16000 cavalry and 85 Guns could not move promptly to up root the enemy. Rather 7000 men with 20 Guns were left by them to watch over Firozpur. The remaining troops marched towards Mudaki, which place they could not reach even after whole night's wandering. It was Ferozeshah where the forces reached and when a message was received that the Governor General had reached Mudaki, Lal Singh moved with half the force towards Mudaki. The battle of Mudaki was fought on 18th December 1845, which was headed by Lal Singh. Lal Singh did not participate in the battle whole-heartedly and rather after involving his followers in an engagement left them without any proper directions. The battle lasted about less than two hours and ended in a large number of casualties on both sides. The casualties on the British side were much higher than that of the Sikhs. Gen Sir Robert Sale and Sir Joseph Macgaskill and two aids of the Governor General being amongst the 215 killed. On close of the battle, the Sikhs withdrew to Ferozeshah by mid-night.

THE BATTLE AT FEROZESHAH

The attack at Ferozeshah was opened by the British Commander-in-Chief, Lord Gough at 3.30 p.m. on 21st December 1845. However, the Sikh Gunners opened fire promptly and within 10 minutes 200 British soldiers were either killed or crippled and Sir Littler had to retire with his force. Cunningham who was present in the battle gives a graphic description of the battle scene, "Darkness, and the obstinacy of the contest, threw the English into confusion; men of all regiments and arms were mixed together; generals were doubtful of

the fact or of the extent of their own success and colonels knew not what had become of the regiments they commanded or of the army of which they formed a part.”

He adds “On that memorable night the English were hardly masters of the ground on which they stood; they had no reserve at hand, while the enemy had fallen back upon a second army, and could renew the fight with increased numbers. The not imprudent thought occurred of retiring upon Ferozepur. On the morning of the 22nd December, the last remnants of the Sikhs were driven from their camp; but as the day advanced the second wing of their army approached in battle-array, and the wearied and finished English saw before them a desperate, and, perhaps, useless struggle. This reserve was commanded by Tej Singh, who had been rugged by his zealous and sincere soldiery to fall upon the English at daybreak, but his object was to have the dreaded army of the Khalsa over-come and dispersed, and he delayed until Lal Singh’s force was everywhere put to fight, and until his opponents had again ranged themselves round their colours. Even at the last moment he rather skirmished and made feints than led his men to a resolute attack, and after a time, he precipitately fled, leaving his subordinates without orders and without an object, at a moment when the artillery ammunition of the English had failed, when a portion of their force was retiring upon Ferozepur, and when no exertions could have prevented the remainder from retreating likewise, if the Sikhs had boldly pressed forward”.

Colonel G.B. Malleon, also states that the Sikh army had repulsed the British attack. However, despite the fact, that the Sikhs had driven back little, forced Smith to retire, compelled Gilbert to evacuate the position he had gained and thrown the whole British army into disorder, they failed to achieve success for want of a guiding mind. Sir Robert Cust, who was present in the battle has also noted down in his diary. “News came from the Governor General that our attack of yesterday had failed, that affairs were desperate, all state papers were to be destroyed, and that if the morning attack failed all would be over; this was kept secret by Mr. Currie and we were considering measures to make an unconditional surrender to save the wounded.” Some historians have also referred to the fact that Lord Hardinge had stated after the battle of Ferozeshah, “that the fire (of the Sikh artillery) was even more terrible than at Albuera, for the Sikhs had guns in position of treble the calibre ever used in European Warfare”.

THE BUDDOWAL ENCOUNTER

In conclusion, it can be said that the British were saved in this battle not because of their valour or the lack of valour on the part of the Sikhs but because

of the treacherous acts of Sikh Generals like Tej Singh. Sarkar and Dutta rightly conclude that “but for this failure of Sikh leadership the result of the battle might have been otherwise.” English then advanced forward, but were soon again to face Ranjur Singh Majithia, who led the Sikh army against them by crossing the Sutlej River and defeated the British at a small encounter at Buddowal. However, the brave Sikh leader could not take advantage of the position as he did not march towards Delhi and confined himself only to attacking Ludhiana and Buddowal. In the mean time, the English army received reinforcement and while advancing towards Aliwal, they defeated the Sikhs with the help of Dogras.

THE BATTLE OF SABRAON

Although the British had achieved successes so far, the Sikhs did not become disheartened. They continued with their preparations to show to the British their best. Unfortunately, their leader Lal Singh was again re-imposed on the Army and he was passing all the details of the defensive plans to the British. The British Divisions under Sir Robert Dick, Sir Walter Gilbert and Sir Hanery Smith were strategically to meet the brave Sikhs. Sardar Sham Singh of Ataari was fully aware of the part played by the traitors, and as such was determined to fight against the British despite his advanced age. He along with the other brave Sikhs fought with such vigour and spirit that this battle of Sabraon became the Waterloo of India. The battle was no doubt won by the British, with the support of the traitors like Tej Singh and after sacrificing large number of men and material. The self-sacrifice of Sardar Sham Singh, the hero of this battle had an inspiring affect when he addressed the Sikh Army, he reminded them of their glorious traditions of bravery and sacrifices in the past and exhorted them to fight till last. It was because of his inspiring words that the English had to face the deadliest hand-to-hand encounter with the Sikh infantry. Sardar Sham Singh remained in the battlefield and kept on encouraging his men, moving from column to column, till he lost his life. Malleson rightly points out that the victory for the Sikhs in this battle would have meant to the English the loss of India. Cunningham, who was also present at the time of the battle refers to the shameless treason which led to the victory of the British. George Bruce also wrote in ‘Six Battles for India at page 176 that the Khalsa was refused arms and ordered to stay where it was at Sabraon, more or less disowned by its government. So, under such circumstances of discreet policy and shameless treason, the decisive battle of the campaign was fought at Sabraon, situated to the South of Sutlej, near Hari ke Pattan.

It may be mentioned here that the bravery of the Sikhs in this battle has been appreciated by everyone. Some of the important observations as made by the British need to be reproduced here to show as how the gallant Sikhs were

made to suffer because of the discreet policy adopted by the British.

Edwards says, about this battle, “The Sikhs made a gallant and desperate resistance but were driven towards the river and their bridge of boats which, as soon as the action had become general, their leaders Raja Lal Singh and Tej Singh, had by previous consent broken, taking the precaution first to retire across it themselves, their object being to effect, as far as possible, annihilation of the feared and detested army.” According to Major Carmichael Smyth, “The Singh ordered up eight or ten guns and had them; pointed at the bridges as if ready to beat it to pieces or to oppose the passage of the defeated army”.

Again; “The Sikh troops, basely betrayed by their leaders who had come so it was said, and not without some appearance of truth to a secret understanding with us, fought like heroes”.

Hesketh Pearson says, “A British defeat, was again turned into a victory by the convenient flight of Tej Singh who damaged the bridge of boats over the Sutlej on his way and so helped to drown a large number of his countrymen”.

Lord Gough described Sabraon as the Waterloo of India. Writing to Sir Robert Peel, the British Prime Minister, he paid glowing tribute to the Sikhs. “Policy precluded me publicly recording my sentiments on the splendid gallantry of our fallen foe, or to record the acts of heroism displayed, not only individually, but almost collectively by the Sikh Sardars and the army; and I declare were it not from a deep conviction that my country’s good required the sacrifice, I could have wept to have witnessed the fearful slaughter of so devoted a body of men.” Lord Gough then told the whole truth when he added, ‘Certain it is that there would have been a different story to tell if the body of men had not been commanded by traitors.’ (The life and Campaigns of Viscount Gough p.108). Shah Mohammed, a Sufi poet of that period has written an immortal poem which narrates the events of the war between the Sikhs and the British. While writing about the bravery of the Sikhs, he openly declares that the Sikhs were proving a terror for the whites, but, in the absence of the wise ruler, the battles won turned into the defeat, of course, mainly because of the traitors. His following words must be quoted to show the heroic stand of the men of Sham Singh Ataariwala at Sabraon.

*“They squeezed the blood out of the Whites,
As one squeezes juice out of a lemon;
If only Ranjit Singh were there,
He would have been proud to see,
How the Khalsa wielded their swords.”*

About the sad result of the campaign, he wrote

'Oh Shah Mohammad, without Ranjit Singh, such was our plight, We won the battles, but lost the fight.'

The traitors to the Khalsa were not only taken note of by the British or the Khalsa themselves, but were immortalised in doggerel verse punning on their names.

*Laaloo dee laalee gaae. Teju da gaa tej,
Ran vich pith dikhaaika modha aae pher.*

'Laaloo lost the blush of shame, Teju lost his lustre, by turning their backs in the field, they turned the tide and battle yield.'

TREATY OF LAHORE 1846

The battle of Sabraon ended with the treaty of Lahore on March 9, 1846. This treaty was aimed at weakening the position of Sikhs and Punjab, a buffer State Between Afghanistan and the British. The British Govt. took possession of all the territories of Lahore Govt. lying to the south of Sutlej and of the Doab, hill and plain situated between the rivers Sutlej and Beas and also the territories of J&K situated between Beas and the Indus of which Gulab Singh was made the sovereign ruler as to compensate him for his services and loyalty to the British Govt. The agreement was further elaborated on March 11, whereby a British force was made to be stationed at Lahore. However, this force was to be detained not beyond the expiration of the current year (1846). The Sikh army was reduced considerably and all restrictions of the entry of English army into Lahore State were removed. Although Dilip Singh was acknowledged as the Maharaja, Lal Singh was appointed as his Prime Minister and Rani Jindan as the regent. An English resident named Sir Hanery Lawrance was appointed at the Lahore Durbar. The Governor General assured that there will be no further interference in the internal affairs of Lahore Durbar.

MULTAN REVOLT

The Lahore treaty did not work well for long and another Treaty of 16th Dec. 1846 was made at Bhairowal which provided that English troops at Lahore will not leave in view of the disturbed law and order situation in Lahore caused by the Sikh army. This led to further weakening of the Sikh army as a result of which thousands of Sikh soldiers were rendered unemployed. The British also did not treat well with Rani Jindan, whose pension was also reduced from Rs.1 and half lakhs to Rs.48 thousand per annum only. When Mool Raj of Multan revolted against the British for their interference in his affairs, the British tried to use the Sikhs to suppress this revolt. However, Chattar Singh and Sher Singh joined hands with Mool Raj against the British. Lord Dalhousie was eager to annex Punjab to the British empire, and as such the situation as arising in

Multan provided him sufficient cause for going for another war against the Sikhs. Sir Hugh Gough, the commander of the English forces, crossed Ravi river on 16th Nov., 1848 and arrived at the bank of Chenab on 22nd Nov. where a confrontation took place between him and Sardar Sher Singh at Ram Nagar. This confrontation led to the major battle between the British and the Sikhs, that was fought at Chillianwala on 13th January 1849.

CHILLIANWALA BATTLE

The British artillery started the assault as led by Brigadier Pennyquick. The Sikhs started their hit and run tactic which caused a heavy toll of British cavalry and infantry. When Brigadier Pennyquick fell on, his son tried to protect his body but was himself mortally injured. Four British Guns and colours of three British regiments fell to the Sikhs. The Sikhs fought like devils, fierce and untamed, as plucky as Lions, they ran right on bayonets and struck their assailants when they were transfixed. The British registered nearly three thousand dead or wounded. The brave Ataariwalas were on a winning spree for three days, but when they sent George Lawrance, who was their prisoner, with terms for truce, which included the investment of Dilip Singh as Maharaja, the destiny again went against the Sikhs.

Although, the Sikhs could not take advantage of their strong position and fell a prey to cunning tactics of the English, the battle of Chillianwala was one of the hardest fought battles of the English. It proved even a bigger disaster than Afghanistan. Dr. Adams was right when he said that Chillianwala was not a victory. When the news of this disaster reached England, a gloom overpowered the whole nation. It was felt that the British influence in India had undergone a heavy blow. Lord Gough was severely criticised and condemned not only by the Governor General Lord Dalhousie, but also by the British people. One of the leading newspapers of London wrote "Lord Gough was playing with the lives of our soldiers." Sir John Hobhouse, the President of the Board of Directors, observed on March 7, 1849. "The disaster has thrown the success into the shade and the impression made upon the public mind is stronger than that caused by the Kabul Massacre. The result has been that, in eight-and-forty hours after the arrival of the mail, it was determined to send Sir Charles Napier to command the Indian army." Even the eighty-year old Duke of Wellington, conqueror of Napoleon, offered to go out to India to fight against the Sikhs, if Napier hesitated. He said to the latter, "If you do not go I must." The English poet, George Meredith wrote a poem in commemoration of the battle:

Chillianwalah, Chillianwalah
When the night set in with rain,

Came the savage plundering devils
To their work among the slain,
And the wounded and the dying
In cold blood did share the dom
Of their comrades round them lying,
Stiff in the dead skyless glom.

Lord Dalhausie said, "In Public I make, of course, the best of things, I treat it as a great victory. But writing confidentially to you I do not hesitate to say that consider my position grave". The Lord added that "another such victory shall certainly spell our ruin".

BATTLE OF GUJRAT

Before Lord Gough was replaced by Sir Charles Napier in the Command for the British forces, Lord Gough won a victory at Multan and thereafter General Whish joined his forces with that of Lord Gough increasing thereby the strength of the British forces considerably. There were 250000 soldiers and 100 cannon with the British as against the Sikh Army of 65,500 soldiers and 61 Cannon only. The British, therefore, knew that another battle with the Sikh may prove conclusive for the annexation of Punjab. This battle was fought at Gujrat, on the banks of river Chenab, on 21st Feb. 1849. As the Sikh forces after the battle of Chillianwala had advanced towards Chenab and entrenched themselves between the Town of Gujrat and the river, a grim fight with the British took place on that day. Both the sides made an extensive use of Cannon in this battle and that is why the battle came to be known as battle of Cannon. The Sikhs fought vigorously, but because of their strength in number and Cannon, they ultimately lost to the British. Punjab was annexed.

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CHAPTER-XII

THE SIKHS IN THE BRITISH INDIAN ARMY

As the British went on extending their suzerainty over various parts of India, they learnt more and more about its resources including the manpower. They heard about the valiant acts of the Sikhs. They were aware of the accounts given by the foreigners regarding the persecution of the Sikhs during the 18th century and the fortitude with which they had faced it. They had also learnt about the fighting skills of the Sikhs in the various encounters with Mughals, Marathas and the foreign invader Ahmad Shah Abdali. When the British came to have their hold in Delhi, Maharaja Ranjit Singh was extending his control in Punjab. The British thought it prudent not to engage themselves in confrontation with the mighty Sikh ruler. They, therefore, entered into a treaty with him in 1809 at Amritsar. They never dared to violate the provisions of the treaty till the lion King of Punjab was alive. Even after his death, the British found the Khalsa army as powerful as it was during the period of Maharaja. However, the British were successful in capturing power in Punjab by adopting their discreet policies and dubious methods. It was only after their battles with the Sikhs that the British realised that they were among the toughest to fight with. By that time some Sikhs in other parts of the country had already joined various battalions of the British Army. However, after annexation of Punjab the importance of the Sikhs as soldiers became better known and the British started thinking of inducting them into their Indian Army.

At the end of the first Sikh war in 1846, an irregular force was raised out of the disbanded troops of the Durbar army. At the end of the second Anglo-Sikh war, this force was increased in strength and transferred to the northwest frontier. It came to be known as the Punjab irregular Force and later the Punjab Frontier Force – the famous Puffers. In 1849, Dalhousie decided to take a few real Khalsas into the British army. Although the number was very small, he was criticised for this action.

SIKH RECRUITMENT

The question of Sikh recruitment was considered by the governor general, the commander-in-chief, and the Board of Administration. Brigadier Hodgson, who had commanded the Sikh corps drew up a memo on the subject which, after its approval, became a sort of magna carta for Sikh recruitment. It

provided that the number of the Punjabis to be enlisted in the regular army should be limited for the time being to 200 per regiment of whom only half were to be Sikhs, making the total number of Sikhs in the 74 regiments 7,400. Recruits were to be under 20 years of age – thus the old Khalsa of the Durbar army were debarred. To make soldiery an honourable profession, only Jat Sikhs were enlisted; Sikhs of other castes such as Mazhabis, Ravidasis, etc. were rigorously excluded. The most important decision taken, and one which had a far –reaching effect in preserving the separate identity of the Sikhs, was to assure the Sikhs who joined the army that the traditions of the Khalsa would not be interfered with. The regulation provided that:

‘The *Paol*, or religious pledges of Sikh fraternity, should on no account be interfered with. The Sikh should be permitted to wear his beard, and the hair of his head gathered up, as enjoined by his religion. Any invasion, however slight, of these obligations would be construed into a desire to subvert his faith, lead to evil consequences, and naturally inspire general distrust and alarm. Even those, who have assumed the outward conventional characteristics of Sikhs should not be permitted after entering the British army, to drop them.’

REVOLT OF 1857

When in the year 1857 an atmosphere of revolt was created against the British, they felt that more and more people be included in their armed forces. The British had a fear that the Sikhs might also join the revolutionaries with a view to get back their empire. In anticipation of the growing banner of revolt, a number of new regiments were constituted which had a good number of Sikhs. These cavalry regiments may be mentioned as Skinner Horse, 2nd Royal Lancers, 3rd Cavalry, Hodson’s Horse, Probyn’s Horse, 7th Light Cavalry, 8th Light Cavalry, 10th Cavalry (FF), 11th Cavalry (FF), 12th Cavalry (FF), 13th (DCO) Lancers, Scinde Horse and 20th Lancers. The Mazhabi Sikhs, who were till then being recruited as labourers to build roads in mountains infested with hostile Pathan tribes men, were also promoted to regular soldiering at the time of revolt of 1857. The British also tried to pacify the Sikhs by giving lands to military men in various parts by forming canal colonies. All these measures led to a tremendous increase of Punjabis in general and Sikhs in particular in British Indian Army. Before the First World War began, a third of its total strength at the beginning of this period, Punjabis were three-fifths of it by the end, more than half of whom were Sikhs. Inevitably, the British Indian Army’s main recruiting centres in Bengal, Madras and Bombay had to give way to Punjab. Since land ownership also provided status, in all half a million acres were given to military veterans and serving officers and men in the nine canal colonies.

A good number of Sikhs had constituted the Sikh Regiment, the Sikh Light Infantry and were a part of the 1st, 2nd, 8th, 14th, 15th, 16th Punjab Regiments and 12th and 13th Frontier Force. Apart from these fighting arms, there were 21 Regiments of Cavalry, some 50 Regiments of Artillery plus supporting arms such as the Signals Corps, Ordnance and Supply Corps etc. that also had at least 25% Sikh troops. At the start of the Second World War the standing Indian Army had a strength of some 1,80,000 officers and men which dramatically increased to over 2 million by 1944. New Regiments were formed, including the Sikh Light Infantry, Assam Regiment, Bihar Regiment etc. while each of the original Regiments which had 4-5 battalions each, were doubled in strength.

CONSIDERABLE INCREASE OF SIKHS IN ARMY

Thus, right from the period when they joined the British Indian Army, they did their best to safeguard the interest of the Britishers. That is why, even during the uprising of 1857, which is considered as a mutiny by the Europeans, whereas the Indians regarded it as the first war for independence, the Sikhs fought for the Britishers against their own countrymen. Some historians hold the view that one of the causes of the failure of the 1857 revolt was that the Sikhs did not support the mutineers. This allegation against the Sikhs cannot be appreciated when considered in the overall perspective of facts and circumstances. Punjab had been annexed in the recent past after fierce tussle with the Sikhs, and as such many of them did not want to join against the British in such unsettled situation. Further, the British had realised the fact that the Sikhs were very powerful and could prove very brave and loyal soldiers. Sir John Lawrance was raising as many Sikh regiments as possible in that critical period. The records indicate the movement of 8th Foot three companies of the 24th, with three horse artillery guns of Captain Paton's troops for Peshawar and 2nd Punjab Infantry, the 4th Punjab Infantry and other wings of the 6th Punjab. This total force, around 10,000 men consisted entirely of Sikhs. Further there were Sikh forces under Wilson and Nicklson around 4000 men. General Cort Landt also had a body of Sikhs under him. Eventually John Lawrance was able to raise 30 thousand new troops from the Punjab and 7 Battalions of Punjabi Infantry, 3 regiments of Punjabi Cavalry as well as a Punjabi Corps of Sappers and Miners were among those which were sent to Delhi for fighting against the Mutineers. How could all these people, mainly Sikhs rebel against the British who had given them employment very recently. The Sikhs were aware that in Gurbani, an ungrateful person has been highly condemned. The Sikh ethics required them to prove true to their salt. Bhai Gurdas, the first Sikh scholar, whose compositions were considered by the 5th Master as the key to Guru Granth Sahib, had given a clear finding in this regard, when he says in the

opening line of the 14th Pauri of his 30th war:

ਲੂਣ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦਾ ਖਾਇ ਕੈ ਰਣ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਲੜਿ ਮਰੈ ਸੁ ਜਾਪੈ।

Loon Sahib da khaae kai rann andar lar marai su jaapai.

True to Salt is he, who dies fighting for his Master in the battlefield.

There were other practical reasons for the Sikhs for taking the side of the British against the Mutineers. Firstly, they knew that the position of their state was highly unstable and critical. Further, the Sikhs had suffered considerably under the Mughal empire before they established their empire, and as such they could not be convinced that the Mughal empire was better than that of the British. Above all, the Sikhs held in their minds that if they supported the British they may gain back the independence of their State. Moreover, the British had started taking great interest in them without interfering in their religious affairs. They were highly appreciative of the bravery of the Sikhs and encouraged them to become the best of the lot. Thus, the Sikhs considered it most appropriate both from practical and spiritual point of view that they should act as the loyal soldiers of the British Indian Army.

HODSON'S HORSE

Even after the events of 1857, the Sikhs in the British Indian Army continued to remain loyalists to their British superiors and gave excellent performance everywhere. That they were justly considered as a martial race by the British, is proved by their valourous acts in several operations. Some major operations will be dealt with in subsequent chapters, but, here we can briefly refer to some of the events and the Sikhs associated with them. After the constitution of Skinner's Horse, Gardeners Horse and the 3rd Cavalry out of the old irregular Cavalry of the Company, it was decided to raise a 4th regiment of the irregular cavalry to be composed of Sikhs. Similarly, Hodsons' Horse was also brought into existence with a view to suppress the mutineers. This irregular cavalry corps came into being in the mid summer of 1857. The credit of raising the first troops of this regiment goes to an officer of the Punjab Police – Man Singh – who rendered for more than a decade meritorious service to the regiment.. As Sirdar Bahadur, Man Singh, C.I.E., he will probably be better remembered by the Sikh community, for he was manager of their principal shrine – the Golden Temple of Amritsar – for many years after his retirement from the Regiment until his death at a ripe old age. One non commissioned officer was Dafadar Wadhawa Singh of the Hodson's Horse (4th Duke of Cambridge's Own Lancers), who had become orderly to the great Lord Roberts, then Commander-in-Chief in the field, and remained with him throughout the campaign. The Dafadar subsequently became State Mace Bearer to His Majesty the King-Emperor George V. He was also depicted as Lord Roberts' orderly in

the pageant at the Royal Tournament in London during King George's Silver Jubilee year".

PROBYN'S HORSE

When the Chief Commissioner of Punjab thought of raising new corps, what better material than the martial Sikhs could be there to fill the fighting ranks? Sir John Lawrance then created at Lahore the 1st and the 2nd regiments of Sikh irregular cavalry. Many of the 1st had fought for the Army of the Khalsa against the British. These brave Sikhs gave a tough fight against the rebels under the Command of Captain Wail. Later on when Captain Wail was shot dead by a rebel sepoy in ambush, the Victoria Cross winner Major D.M. Probyn took over the command. The regiment became Probyn's Horse.

"The 2nd regiment which was under the command of Captain Hockin showed exemplary valour at Keotee, a small village in Rewa State. At Keotee, on March 4th, 1859, sixty-one tired and exhausted sawaars of the 2nd Sikh Irregular Cavalry charged the centre of a formed battle line of twelve hundred fully armed, disciplined, desperate rebel soldiers, and after most blood, hand-to-hand encounter, completely drove them from the field. The astonishing results achieved by such a small body of men, in complete disregard of the enemy's numbers, make the action at Keotee one which is an epic in the history of cavalry combat". (India's Army By Major Donovan Jackson).

"When the seizure by the Celestial Government of a Hong Kong Ship in 1859 led to hostility against China, in which the French joined, it was decided to send an expedition from among the Indian troops. The duty of serving abroad was voluntary, each man being required to attest individually his willingness. All the soldiers of Probyn's Horse showed their willingness and went to Rangoon on their way to Hongkong. The regiment in this expedition were armed with lances for the first time, and so effectively were they used that in the end no Chinese troops would stand up to the Indian Cavalry and fled upon their approach, and so Peking capitulated". (India's Army by Major Donovan Jackson)

WATSON'S HORSE

The story of the 4th regiment of the irregular cavalry to be composed of Sikhs, which later on came to be known as Watson's Horse (6th Duke of Connaught's own Lancers) is also full of achievements. When the 13th Duke of Connaught's Lancers came into being, a good number of Sikhs were enlisted into the new regiment that earned honours in Afghanistan, Burma and on the north-west frontier. Mention may also be made of 19th King George V's own Lancers, which was the most important regiment because of its intimate connection with the

Monarch, whose name it owned. The 18th and the 19th regiments of King George V's Own Lancers showed valourous acts during the German counter battle of Cambrai during the First World War. Later on, the regiments, on their way to Palestine were engaged in the brilliant operations in the Jordan valley. "The 18th were with the Brigade selected to raid Nazareth – the enemy G.H.Q. from which the German-Turko Commander-in-Chief escaped in his pyjamas by a matter of two hundred yards; the 19th with the column through the Musmus Pass, making thereafter one of the outstanding night marches of the War. And so on to Damascus, where ended what was one of the greatest cavalry victories in history. 250 miles in just a week was a triumph of horsemanship; and the laurels went to "A" Squadron (Sikhs) of the 19th Lancers, who arrived at Damascus without losing a horse from sickness or causes other than battle". (India's Army by Major Donovan Jackson)

MOUNTAIN BATTERY BATTALION

The 1st and the 2nd Mountain Battery FF were raised from the disbanded Sikh Horse Artillery of Maharaja Dilip Singh, the last of the Sikh Rulers prior to the British annexation of Punjab. The first Royal (Kohat) Mountain Battery FF was raised at Bannu in 1851, where as the 2nd was raised at Dera Ghazi Khan. These battalions were employed in the Frontier Tribal operations of the mutiny period and also in Oudh and Bundelkhand against the mutineers. The 2nd served with distinction in the Mahasud Waziri expedition of 1860, whereas the 1st was engaged in the Major operations of Afghan War of 1878-80. The Sikhs were also inducted in the other Mountain Battery battalions e.g. 3rd, 4th, 5th and the 6th. The 5th (Bombay) Mountain Battery was the first Artillery Unit to serve overseas when they went to Abyssinia in 1868. The 6th (Jacob's) Mountain Battery raised as Bombay Foot Artillery in 1853 will be remembered for their role played at Maizar when escorting the Political officer, a section of the Battery, together with detachments of the Ist Sikhs, were treacherously attacked by Pathans pretending to be friendly, and with whom they had been fraternizing. The British officers were killed and the section surrounded by hordes of fanatical tribesmen. The guns were got into action and fought on by the Indian gunners under their Havildar-Major, and when their ammunition failed they effected an orderly retirement to safety without the loss of a gun, although many of the gun mules had been shot down. No less than nine Indian Orders of Merit were earned by these indomitable men, and June 10th, Maizar Day, is to-day a day of celebration in Jacob's Battery.

The Sikhs were also included in the Artillery regiments of Mountain Field, Light Ack and Heavy Ack. Similarly among the engineers, the Sikhs found a place in Bengal Engineers, Royal Bombay Engineers and Viceroy's Body Guards. The support arms, like Singals, Ordnance and Supply had also

recruited a good number of Sikhs. In fact, the estimated total strength of Sikh troops who were in the regular army at its peak were over a half million.

THE GALLANTRY AWARDS

Before concluding this chapter, it may be mentioned that when the British took over the reigns of the country, they started a system of appreciating the gallant people with suitable decorations. It does not mean that there were no rewards for acts of valour prior to the coming of the British in India, the rewards introduced by the British were of different nature being mostly in the form of medals along with the monetary benefits. In 1837, the British instituted 3 classes of order of merit, which were awarded to the officers and men of the Indian Army for acts of conspicuous gallantry in the battle. The Victoria Cross, the most coveted of all British decorations was instituted in 1856 to honour the gallant acts of British soldiers in the Crimean War. It was not awarded to Indian Officers and men. It was only in 1911 when King George V visited India, he announced that Indian soldiers were to be considered eligible for the Victoria Cross. Among those Indians, who were honoured with the highest gallantry award, the number of Sikhs was much higher than their percentage of population. Although, at any stage their population was not more than 2% of the Indians, the awards won by them were always more than 20%. It was unique for the Sikhs to be honoured with the Indian Honour of Merit Class I, the highest gallantry award at that time when they had shown an exemplary courage at the time of fighting at Saragarhi in 1897. Between 1911 and 1947, 40 Indian Army Officers and men won Victoria Cross out of which 12 were from Nepal, which was part of India at that time. The 28 persons from the present day India, who were honoured with the highest gallantry award, Victoria Cross included about 25% of the Sikhs.

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CHAPTER-XIII

BATTLE OF SARAGARHI – A SAGA OF VALOUR

“It is no exaggeration to record that the armed forces which possess valiant Sikhs cannot face defeat in a war”. These eulogising words were put on the record of the British Parliament, when the Hon’ble Members, in their special session, paid glowing tributes to the most daring Sikh soldiers, who had sacrificed their lives in battle fought at Saragarhi on September 12, 1897 in one of the most un-equal engagements in the history of warfare. The Saragarhi battle is one of the eight stories of the collective bravery published by UNESCO. It has been mentioned as one of the 5 most significant events of its kind in the world which includes the Saga of Thermopylae associated with the heroic stand of a small Greek Force against the mighty Persian Army of Xerxes in 480 B.C.

INTRODUCTION

Saragarhi is a small village in the border District of Kohat, situated on the Samana range, now in Pakistan. This area, in the North West frontier is called Waziristan. The 21 brave Sikh soldiers of the 36th Sikh Regiment had to face more than 10 thousand Afreedi Pathans, at this small picket on that historic day. The 36th Sikh Regiment, (renumbered as the 4/11 Sikh) was constituted on 20th April, 1887 under the command of Col. J.Cook at Jalandhar Cantt. From 1891 to 1894, this regiment did a wonderful job in suppressing a revolt in the Army which act was highly appreciated by Army HQrs. When the Regiment was being commanded by Lt. Col. Haughten, it was sent to North-West Frontier Province and Balochistan. The Regiment was to take care of 5 pickets, viz. Samana Hills, Kurag, Sangar, Sahtop Dhar and Saragarhi. Since the British had partially succeeded in getting control over this region, the tribal Pathans used to attack the British personnel from time to time.

The British had a consolidated series of forts, some of which were originally constructed by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, with a view to have an effective control of the area under reference. Two such Forts on the Samana range of the Hindu kush and Sulaiman ranges, viz. Fort Lockhart and Fort Gulistan were a few miles apart. Since these forts were not inter visible, a relay post was created at Saragarhi which was mid-way between these two forts as to provide for heliographic communications between them.

AFGHANS ATTACK AT SARAGARHI

In 1897, when there was a general uprising by the Afghans, the 36th Sikhs were occupying two forts as well as the picket of Saragarhi which was under the Signaling detachment under the command of Hav. Ishar Singh. It may be mentioned here that between 27th August and 11th September there were vigorous efforts by the Afghans to capture the fort but the brave soldiers of the 36th Sikhs had foiled these attacks. On 12th September, the Afghans attacked Saragarhi so that communication between the two forts would be destroyed.

It was around 9.00 in the morning that ten thousand Afghans reached the Saragarhi post and when they were only a thousand yards away, started firing at it heavily. Sardar Gurmukh Singh gave a signal to Col. Haughten, who was at that time at Fort Lockhart. However, as it was not possible to send immediate help to Saragarhi, the 21 brave Sikhs at the picket decided to fight till the last man, last round as to protect the Saragarhi post so as to prevent the enemy from reaching the forts. Naik Lal Singh, Bhagwan Singh and Jiwa Singh came out of the post and started firing at the enemy and killed a number of persons. In the meantime Naik Bhagwan Singh became a martyr and Naik Lal Singh was seriously wounded. Sardar Jiwa Singh and Lal Singh continued fighting even while carrying the dead body of Bhagwan Singh to the inner part of the post. The brave Gurmukh Singh continued giving signals to Col. Haughten to apprise him of the latest position. When the enemy was able to break portion of the wall of the picket, Hav. Ishar Singh inspired his men to defend their post in the best tradition of their race and regiment. They were not there to hand over the post to the enemy and seek safety elsewhere. They knew that they would not be able to hold back ten thousand tribes men, but they would not allow them to move till the last of them had died.

From Fort Lockhart, troops and the Commanding Officer could count at least 14 enemy standards which gave an idea of the number of tribes men and their massed strength against the Saragarhi relay post (estimated at between 10,000 to 12,000 tribals). From early morning, the tribals had started battering the fort. The Sikhs fought back valiantly. Charge after charge was repulsed. The tribal leaders started to make tempting promises so that the Sikhs would surrender. But Ishar and his men ignored them. For some time, the troops held their own against the determined and repeated attacks by the wild and ferocious hordes. A few attempts were made to send a relief column from Fort Lockhart but these were foiled by the tribals.

ENEMY ASSAULTS REPULSED

At Saragarhi, the enemy made two determined attempts to rush the gate of the post and on both occasions the defenders repulsed the assault. While the

enemy suffered heavy casualties, the ranks of the defenders too kept dwindling as the fire from the attackers took its toll, and ammunition stocks were depleting.

Unmindful of his safety, Sepoy Gurmukh Singh kept signalling minute-to-minute account of the battle from the signal tower to battalion headquarters. The battle lasted better part of the day. When repeated attacks failed, the enemy set fire to the surrounding bushes and shrubs and two of the tribesmen under cover of smoke, managed to close in with the post's boundary wall in an area blind to the defender's observation and rifle fire from the post holes. They succeeded in making a breach in the wall. This development could be seen from Fort Lockhart and was flashed to the post.

A few men from those defending the approaches to the gate were dispatched to deal with the breach in the wall. This diversion by the enemy and the defenders' reaction resulted in weakening of the fire covering the main gate. The enemy now rushed the gate as well as the breach.

HAND TO HAND FIGHTS

Thereafter, one of the fiercest hand to hand fights followed. The Sikhs, even those seriously wounded and profusely bleeding, went on fighting amidst the slogan "Bole So Nihaal, Sat Sri Akaal". Gurmukh Singh reported the death of every brave soldier. By 2 O Clock when the soldiers were short of arms and ammunition, Gurmukh Singh was informed by the Colonel that "don't surrender we are sending help". The enemy taunted the remaining Sikhs to surrender as nobody would come to their help and in case of surrender, their lives would be saved. There were only 7 soldiers left at that time. They replied that the Sikhs never surrender and would prefer death. When the enemy started climbing the wall inside the picket, the remaining 2 Sikhs wrestled with every climber to throw them down. They were fighting at that time with bayonets alone. The last message given by Gurmukh Singh was that they had waited long but no assistance had come. If ammunition could be sent, they could continue fighting for long. However, all ways were blocked by the enemy. The signaller added that they had fulfilled their duty and obeyed all orders. The message giver himself then fought and killed a number of enemies before himself becoming a martyr.

The 21 soldiers had killed an estimated 600 Pathans and seriously injured more than a thousand of them. Each had fought on and on showing his worth as a loyal soldier.

THE VALIANT IMMORTALISED

In commemoration of this gallant action, September 12 was declared a holiday

in perpetuity for all the regiments enlisting Sikhs. The Saragarhi heroes were collectively awarded IOM Class I (the highest gallantry award at that time) posthumously. Apart from this highest gallantry award given to each one of them, the family of each was given Rs.500 in cash and 2 murabbas of land (about a thousand sq. yards). The British Governor constructed 3 Gurdwaras at Ferozepur, Amritsar and Saragarhi as a permanent memorial to these soldiers. Every year a big 3 day carnival is organised at Ferozepur and tributes are paid to these great heroes. It may be made clear that the gallantry awards given on that day to the 21 Sikh soldiers were the highest in number ever awarded for any single day. The British were so overwhelmed by the dauntless spirit of the Sikhs, that they made it mandatory for all the school going children to study the history of this un-paralleled battle. It was in this context that the British Parliament in their special session had remembered the daring of Sikh soldiers, and had observed “the English as well as Indian subjects are proud of 36th Sikh Regiment and it is no exaggeration to record that the armed forces which possess valiant Sikhs cannot face defeat in war”. Such a tribute has never been given to any other people by a Parliament and that too of a Ruling country.

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THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND THE SIKHS

When the First World War broke out in 1914, there were 6 Battalions of the Sikh Regiment forming part of the British Army. They were numbered as the 14th (Ferozepur) Sikhs, 15th (Ludhiana) Sikhs, 35th Sikhs, 36th Sikhs, 45th Sikhs and 47th Sikhs. Since the Sikh soldiers were known for their bravery and steadfastness, the British employed all these battalions, except the 35th Sikh, in war at such far away places like France, Italy, Mesopotamia and Palestine. In all the battles in which they fought, they distinguished themselves, earning many gallantry awards but also had to suffer heavy casualties. However, there was no wavering among them and they always stood like rock as to rank sky high among the fighting men.

ARRIVAL OF SIKHS IN FRANCE

France was one of the major battlefronts of this war. With the allies having suffered heavily, and the position of Germans becoming very strong, the Imperial British Govt., decided that an Indian Expeditionary Force be sent to France. The Divisions which were sent included Lahore Division which had three Brigades, namely Ferozepur Brigade, Jalandhar Brigade and Sirhind Brigade. The 15th Ludhiana Sikhs was a battalion of the Jalandhar Brigade, though at a later stage it was made a part of Sirhind Brigade. Similarly, other Sikh Battalions were part of the Brigades deployed on the France border. Those who were ordered to arrive at Marseilles included the 15th (Ludhiana) Sikhs and the 47th Sikh Battalions. The 15th (Ludhiana) Sikh was the first to land at Marseilles (Southern France) on 26th Sept., 1914. When this first Indian Army contingent landed, the people living there heaved a sigh of relief. They were happy to note the arrival of the troops from distant India. The depressed French, who were dreading the advancing Hun, felt assured that the British Empire had come to their assistance. The 47th Sikhs forming part of the 8th Jalandhar Brigade of the 3rd Lahore Division reached Marseilles on 27th Sept. 'The Times' reported the arrival of the Indian Corps. at Marseilles as a landmark in the history as it inspired the people, the French and the Britons to look forward to their success. "New Vistas of honour were opened out".

Apart from such Units as 47th Sikhs wherein only Sikh soldiers were there, there were other Units also which had mixed ethnic people including Sikhs e.g. 57th Wilde's Rifles. (It included two Sikh companies). When the Sikh

soldiers marched through the main streets of Marseilles, with their ' chests out', the people there were thrilled to see "the stalwarts from the east, the unique tall, handsome, bearded soldiers. Most of these soldiers were taller head and shoulders above the spectators. "They received the plaudits of the crowd with the imperturbable smiling composure of their race. The police guarding the road were swept aside, the ranks were rushed, men and women shook the sepoy by the hand, and young girls showered flowers upon them, pinning roses in their tunics and on their turbans. "Tricolours were distributed with prodigal favour, old ladies with bitter memories of '1870 pressed forward the better to admire these handsome, bearded men, and it would be difficult to conjure up anything more touching than the sight of those frail women patting the bronzed giants on the back and calling down blessing on their heads."

The people were so impressed by the Indian Forces, particularly the Sikhs, that they followed them to their Camps, watched them in all their duties, helped them in making food, and provided them coffee, fruits etc. at every halt made by them. The battalions were given training before they were put on the front to help the allies against the mighty Germans, who were getting stronger day by day.

FIRST BATTLE OF YPRES

When the first battle of Ypres was fought, the 47th Sikhs had taken up the position in support of the 19th (British) Brigade and a French Cavalry Brigade of Conneau's Division. Immediately thereafter, the Sikhs were to take up a line along the Rueu Tillelloy near Fauquissart to help the 8th British Brigade and the French Cavalry who were holding a line parallel to and about 600 yard east of Rueu Tillelloy. There was another change of orders as per which the 47th Sikhs moved through Fauquissart and came under shell fire for the first time. When the enemy aeroplane flying over dropped signal lights to disclose their positions to German Gunners, this Battalion was there to face the superiority of the enemy in the air. Sepoy Nikka Singh was the first Sikh wounded by a stray bullet, when the Battalion was marching through Fauquissart. The 47th Sikhs, after facing considerable firing by the Germans were relieved after a few days by the 15th Sikhs, who had to dig trenches for their safety from heavy shelling. It was not only at Marseilles and Fauquissart, but at other places also like Orleans, La Basse, Croix Barbee, and so on that the Sikhs had to move for fierce fighting and the heavy enemy guns. The cheerful Sikhs gladly accepted the challenge extended by the ruthless enemy and the bitter cold weather. All the trenches, wherein they had to stay, had 2 or 3 ft. mud and slush. Even remaining in such a situation, they fought from dawn to dusk. The enemy was bewildered at this strange phenomena. They wondered as how could the relatively unsophisticated Sikhs eat and sleep in the mud and the slush of

trenches. Not an inch of frontline defended by these wonderful soldiers could be breached by the enemy.

THE BATTLE FOUGHT ON 28TH OCT. 1914

The gallantry shown by the 47th Sikhs at La Basse in the battle fought on 28th October, 1914 has become immortal in the history of warfare. It was on this day when the Regiment was detailed to attack and capture Neuve Chapple. The importance of this village was that it formed the gateway to a Ridge along with which was the road to three chief manufacturing towns of France being Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing. The possession of the Ridge was so important a step towards the possession of Lille that its occupation was regarded as almost employing the entire Corps to capture that town. This capture could place the allies in a fair position to move against the Germans who were the masters of the situation. Thus the Village of Neuve Chapple and the area immediately around it was of high strategic importance. In the north of village was a triangle of roads, where the Germans had established a strong post, which flanked the approaches to the village. The Herculean task was that there was a big open ground which had to be covered by the attacking forces before they could reach the enemy lines. Moreover the Germans had great superiority in numbers and machine guns.

The British and the Indian Forces with them including the 47th Sikhs, were busy throughout the night digging trenches under continuous heavy firing. When the attack was launched, they covered 700 yards of open ground between them and Neuve Chapple facing fire and with continuing casualties. Maj. Davidson, the leader of these forces at that place was much inspired by the bravery of the Sikhs, who along with Sappers were ultimately successful in capturing the village. The reports in this regard read as under.

“When our men were about 100 yards from the outskirts of the village, the Germans in the front trenches began to bolt, pursued by the gallant Sikhs and Sappers with the bayonet, a few being killed and other captured. The Indians then tore on and into the village, Sikhs and Sappers mixed together, and worked in parties up the streets, under furious fire from the roofs of buildings”.

By degrees, the houses were cleared after desperate hand-to-hand fighting in which a man of the 47th is reported to have captured 3 Germans out of 8, having previously killed the other 5. From another house, the 47th recovered a wounded British soldier and 2 wounded Germans. “The latter were searched, and one of them lifted his voice and wept bitterly, evidently thinking that our men were feeling for a soft place in which to insert a bayonet, until comforted by a stalwart Sikh who patted him kindly with the words ‘Dar mat’ ‘Be not afraid’.

It is also interesting to note that even when the troops were ordered not to advance, the Sikhs continued fighting hand to hand and achieved success. Out of 286 who had assaulted, only 58 survived. It is also on record that despite heavy casualties and severities of fighting including shortage of water, the spirit of Sikhs remained so high that they were laughing and joking with each other in those critical moments too. Although, ultimately Maj. Davidson had to ask his men to go into the billets as there were no reinforcements coming, history will never forget this attack which was so magnificently carried out. Their behaviour was so magnificent that in the words of a French historian “The 47th Sikhs never failed to answer all calls”.

“Its reputation would be secure and its right to fight shoulder to shoulder with our best troops would be established if based only on the record of Neuve Chapelle but this action was only one of many in which the 47th distinguished themselves. The History of the Indian Army contains few nobler pages than that of the 28th October, 1914.”

SECOND BATTLE OF NEUVE CHAPPLE

The heroes of this Regiment were again called upon to show their valour in March 1915 when they were ordered to march to Vilee Chapple as advance Guard. It was the opening day for another battle of Neuve Chapple. On this cold and misty day, they had again to face heavy firing. It is worth noting that when immediately before this battle started, an order came that as newly trained British troops had arrived, the Indian forces should be withdrawn, Subedar Harnam Singh, a splendid specimen of a Sikh officer, on being asked to give his opinion said “Well, Sahib, as I am asked to speak I will say that we came here to defeat the King’s enemies. They are not defeated and we should not leave the country till they are”. Sardar Harnam Singh was killed while fighting with conspicuous bravery as shown by him throughout the campaign. It may be added that on 20th Dec., his only son, a Sepoy in the Regiment had also been killed. It was for that campaign at Festburt when Subedar Harnam Singh was awarded the Indian Order of Merit (IOM) for his bravery.

There were many other Sikhs who showed exemplary courage and dedication during these operations. When during the advance, a wounded man was seen to be lying in the most exposed position, Hav. Gajjan Singh and Sepoy Rup Singh volunteered to bring him in. Gajjan Singh was wounded but Rup Singh managed to bring him back to cover and then again went for the wounded Sepoy ultimately succeeding in bringing him in, with the help of an English Officer. Both Hav. Gajjan Singh and Sepoy Rup Singh were awarded the Indian Order of Merit. Sepoy Puran Singh and Ishar Singh were also recommended for devotion to duty for their gallantry shown in attending the

wounded under heavy firing. The other brave Sikh soldiers included Jamedar Churh Singh and Jamedar Jiwan Singh killed and Jamedars Ishar Singh, Hira Singh, Mehar Singh, Harnam Singh, Inder Singh and Varyam Singh wounded. This battle continued for three days and during these days the casualties of the Regiments were British Officers: 1 killed, 9 wounded; Indian Officers: 3 Killed, 8 wounded; Other Ranks: 46 killed, 248 wounded.

Subedar Mota Singh received the Indian Order of Merit for gallantry in this action and in that of 28th October, 1914. Naik Kishan Singh received the I.D.S.M. for gallantry in carrying messages under heavy fire between Battalion Headquarters and the firing line.

SECOND BATTLE OF YPRES

The battle of Neuve Chapple had given a gain in advance of the line for a depth of 1000 yards on a front of one and a half miles which had straightened the Neuve Chapple – Port Arthur Salient. Thus, after a few days i.e. on 20th April, the Germans began yet another effort in the Ypres neighbourhood with the object of thrusting their way through to the Channel ports. They began with the heaviest attacks against the French, north of Ypres, who were holding a portion of the line that had shortly before been captured by the British. The Lahore Division, consisting of the Sikh Regiments, were warned to be in readiness. In the small hours of 26th April, there were orders for the 47th Sikhs to attack. The battle that ensued on that day witnessed heavy firing. The Germans also used gas against the Sikhs putting them to one of the severest tests of any battle fought anywhere in the world. Maj. Talbot commanding the 47th, fell mortally wounded. However, the Regiment went on fighting despite 78% of their persons being lost. “No Regiment could wish, and none in the Army possesses, a prouder record than that of the 47th Sikhs at the attack on Neuve Chapple on Oct. 28th and again in March 1915, and the Second battle of Ypres (The Indian Corps in France, Merewether).

INDIVIDUAL ACTS OF BRAVERY

Many individual acts of bravery were performed during this time. Havildar Mula Singh and Sepoy Rur Singh went forward to help Captain Turnbull who was lying wounded in the open, north-east of the farm. Mula Singh then assisted another wounded man, carrying him back to cover. Havildar Dewa Singh went out with Lieut. Drysdale to help Lieut. Brunskill, who was lying with a shattered leg close to the front, and between them they dragged him under cover. Subedar Khushya Singh, Jamedar Kharhak Singh, Jamedar Lal Singh, Jamedar Narain Singh, Jamedar Mota Singh, and Jamedar Krishan Singh were also wounded.

57TH WILDE'S RIFLES AND 34TH SIKH PIONEERS

Some Sikhs from 57th Wilde's Rifles also displayed a conspicuous bravery. Bhan Singh was the orderly of Captain Banks of the 57th Wilde's Rifles. Although, himself wounded in the face, he did not withdraw when he saw his captain falling. Feeling very weak he still tried to save his captain, and that under heavy firing. When Banks died Bhan Singh made sure to save his personal belongings. Another Sikh, Jamedar Kapur Singh, kept on fighting until everyone else was out of action, except for one wounded sepoy. As he did not want to surrender, he committed suicide with his last bullet. All British Officers of the 57th Wilde's Rifles, present on this part of the front, were killed. Two men of the 34th Sikh Pioneers, Sappers Jai Singh and Gujjar Singh were awarded the Indian Distinguished Service Medal because they had established communication lines under constant fire.

The Sikhs not only fought vigorously but also performed daring duties which surprised not only the enemy, but also the British officers who were wonderstruck to see as how in such adverse circumstances, the Sikhs were performing the tasks assigned to them. To quote one instance, when some bombs were to be sent from the support trenches to the front which was holding a part of the German trenches, the distance to be covered was about 250 yards, but the same was covered by the German Machine guns and rifle fire. When two attempts proved to be abortive, Lt. George Smyth, of the 15th Sikhs was ordered to deliver the bombs along with a bombing party. It was wonderful to see the morale of the Sikhs at that time as everyone in Smyth's Company volunteered to go with him.

THE BRAVE SIKHS WHO CARRIED BOMBS

As the party was to consist of only 10 persons, those selected displayed exemplary courage and devotion towards their duty. There were no ropes available and as such the Sikhs pulled the boxes of bombs with their own turbans. They went ahead under heavy German fire and by the time they reached only 27 Mtrs. short of their destination, Lt. Smyth was left with only 3 persons. Now it was not possible to pull the boxes any more. So it was decided to open them and carry two bombs at a time and rush the remaining distance. In this process, one more Sikh became a martyr. The remaining two with Lt. Smyth were able to accomplish the task. These persons were decorated adequately with the officer concerned honoured with the Victoria Cross.

Before we proceed with our story of the brave Sikhs who fought for the British and their allies in other fronts also, it may be mentioned that there is a war memorial at Menon Gate in Eiper (Belgium), where every evening, the brave martyrs of the Ypres salient are remembered by the soldiers. There are

inscribed the names of all those martyrs of the First World War. On 27th April, the martyrdom day of Malook Singh, who was the first Sikh victim of the German Gas is celebrated by the Sikhs at this place. He along with other martyrs are remembered by the army soldiers with full honours. It may also be added here that when the third centenary of the creation of Khalsa was celebrated all over the world, a monument was unveiled at Hollebeek in memory of these brave soldiers. This monument was unveiled on April 4, 1999. The city of Ieper together with the European Sikh community organised a celebration of peace on that date at cloth hall in Ieper, Belgium. Sardar Bhupinder Singh, the main person behind this show and his other companions reminded the people of Sikh martyrs, who had spent hard times in an alien place and faced difficult weather, ununderstandable language, and killing gas used by the Germans. However, they maintained their glory by following the tradition of bravery and loyalty.

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FIRST WORLD WAR – FIGHTING WITH THE TURKS

The allies had not only to face the Germans, but also the Turks during the First World War. When Lord Kitchner, Secretary of State for War, received an appeal on 2nd January, 1915 from the Russians that with a view to divert the Turks, a diversionary front be opened, the War Council decided of a joint attack under General Hamilton. General Hamilton landed on 25th April at the southern tip of the Gallipoli peninsula. He found that their strength as compared to that of the Turks was highly inferior. He also realised that the terrain greatly favoured the Turks who were well dug-in with a view to meet the situation effectively, it was decided that some brave regiment be included in the diversionary force. The 2nd Royal Fusiliers were finding it highly difficult to fight with the Turks. Their mission was to capture Constantinople, and for fighting a difficult battle for this purpose, there could not be found better soldiers in the Indian Army than the Sikhs. Thus, the first Battalion of the Sikh Regiment, called the 14th Ferozepur Sikhs was moved after a short stay in the Suez canal area to Gallipoli with a view to help the 2nd Royal Fusiliers.

BATTLE OF GALLIPOLI

The battle fought at Gallipoli in the 1st Week of June, 1915 was highly significant to prove the shining glory of the Sikhs. The Task given to the Sikhs was highly arduous. They were to capture two Turkish trench lines named as J-11 and J-13. The brave soldiers of the 14th Sikhs were equally divided for the task on these two lines. The fierce battle took place on 3rd and 4th June, 1915, wherein the brave soldiers fought vigorously. The history records that the allies did not succeed but the Sikhs who were brought for the help of Royal Fusiliers for reliving them of the high pressure, did show their bravery as per their tradition. Their loss was tremendous. They suffered 371 officers and men killed or wounded. The tough fight given by them and spirit and valour shown therein became a glorious chapter in the history of warfare. Sir Hamilton wrote to Commander-in-Chief in India.

HAMILTON PRAISES THE SIKHS

“In spite of tremendous losses there was not a sign of wavering all day. Not an inch of ground was given up and not a single straggler came back. The ends of

the enemy's trenches were found to be blocked with the bodies of Sikhs and of the enemy who died fighting at close quarters, and the glacis slope was thickly dotted with the bodies of these fine soldiers all lying on their faces as they fell in their steady advance on the enemy. The history of Sikhs affords many instances of their value as soldiers, but it may be safely asserted that nothing finer than the grim valour and steady discipline displayed by them on the 4th June has ever been done by soldiers of the Khalsa."

Mr. R.A. Savory was the young 2nd Lt. Associated with this battle, who later on retired as Lt. Gen. When he gave the description of this battle fought on June 4, 1915, he specifically mentioned the brave act of a Sikh, named Udai Singh. In his words:-

SAVORY'S LIFE SAVED BY A SIKH

"On 3rd June were received orders for general assault all along the line next day. The orders were short and clear. At 11 a.m. on 4th June all the guns were to bombard the enemy's front line trenches for twenty minutes. Then for ten minutes they were to stop while the infantry were to cheer and wave their bayonets. The object of this was to persuade the enemy to man their parapets. Then the bombardment was to come down again. At noon we were to advance. It all sounded simple enough. The 14th Sikhs were to attack astride the Gully Ravine.

The 4th of June was a beautiful summer day. Our guns started registering at 9 a.m. and even before the bombardment began it must have been clear to the enemy that something was about to happen. It was now 11.30 a.m. and time for the cheering to start; but the noise was so great that we could hardly hear it even in our own trench. And then-twelve noon – blew the whistle – and were away. From that moment I lost all control of the fighting. The roar of musketry drowned every other sound, except that of the guns. To try to give an order was useless. The nearest man was only a yard or two away but I couldn't see him. Soon I found myself running on along, except for my little bugler, a young, handsome boy, just out of his teens, who came paddling along behind me to act as a runner and carry messages. Poor little chap.

During the first few minutes, I was knocked out, lying on the parapet with two Turks using my body as a rest over which to shoot at our second line coming forward. When I fully recovered consciousness, the Turks had gone. I looked around and saw my little bugler lying dead, brutally mutilated. I could see no one else, stumbled back as best I could, my head was bleeding and I was dazed and then, Udai Singh, a great burly Sikh with a fair beard who was one of our battalion wrestlers, came out of the reserve trenches, picked me up, slung me over his shoulder, and brought me to safety, and all the time we were

being shot at.”

THE BRAVE S. UDAI SINGH AND S. BHOLA SINGH

Sardar Udai Singh, the saviour of the life of Savory, was a handsome Jat Sikh of Village Manikwal (near Gill Rly. Station). He was over 6ft tall and had a fair bearded and light green eyes. He was a wrestler from his very childhood and when in 1907 he went to Ferozepur to take part in the wrestling match, he was selected by the British to join the 14th Sikhs. He was with the Unit when Hamilton's forces landed at the Gallipoli Peninsula. It is interesting to note that when after the war, he was offered a gallantry award, he pleaded that he should be allowed to go back to his village so that he could pursue his vocation which was dear to his heart.

Another prominent Sikh soldier associated with this battle was L/Nk Bhola Singh. When Lt. Gen. Sir Reginald Savory came to India in 1968 to attend the presentation of colours ceremony at Meerut, L/Nk Bhola Singh was also present on that occasion. Recapitulating the past, the Gen. Spoke about the close relationship between officers and his men as was achieved during that period. In his own words:

“Only this morning (8th February 1968) Lance Naik Bhola Singh of the 14th Sikhs who had been wounded in Galli Poli in 1915, took the trouble to come all the way from his home to call upon me, and after 52 years we saw each other again. I was deeply touched, not only at having the pleasure of seeing him again, but also at the thought of all the trouble he had taken to come and see me. When he was wounded he and I were both young men. Now he is a chitti dari wala and I am old and bald, but although we have both grown much older, yet our affection for each other and our mutual pride in our old Regiment stays as young as ever. Long may this continue Wahe Guru Ji Ka Khalsa, Wahe Guru Ji Ki Fateh.”

The discussions on the battle of Galli Poli will not be complete if no mention is made of the appreciation earned by the Sikhs from the Fusiliers. It was in 1921 when the Fusiliers had been put on the firm footing and they along with the Sikhs were on duty in Khyber Pass area in the North-West frontier of India. The Fusiliers presented the Sikhs with a Silver Granade inscribed “in the memory of Galli Poli 1915 and the Khyber Pass 1921”, which continues to be a prized possession with them.

OTHER SIKH REGIMENTS IN MESOPOTAMIA AND PALESTINE

The 47th Sikhs which had played a vital role in France were ordered to leave France in March, 1916, were ferried across to the right bank of the River Tigris on the Steamer Medjidish. After few days, they were required to fight against

the Turkish Army. When Dujailah was attacked, they were included in the advance parties. When the advance party reached the Sand Hills where the Turks had entrenched themselves strongly, the Regiments came under intensive rifle, machine guns and Artillery fire. It became almost impossible for the Britishers to cross the Ridge. The 47th Sikhs carried out the advance steadily and were able to cross the Ridge and move into the Dujailah depression. It may be mentioned here that in the course of crossing the Ridge, which was a veritable inferno, the machine guns under Maj. Howard were totally smashed, Lt. Wallace was killed by a shell and the casualties were very heavy. The 47th Sikhs were attacked time and again by the Turks who followed them in the Depression. They became entirely isolated and unsupported. The task of collecting the wounded was also arduous. However, the 47th were able to stop the attack till the next morning when some other Battalions came to their assistance. New Battalions who had arrived from China and India included the 36th Sikhs. Although it were the Turks who succeeded, the Gallantry shown by the Sikhs was highly commended. Here are the relevant extracts from appreciation letters by their Commander in this regard.

APPRECIATIONS

“It is just a year ago since I had to congratulate you on your attack on Neuve Chapelle, when you distinguished yourselves by your fine conduct. A month later, you, in conjunction with the remainder of the 3rd Division, stemmed the tide of the German attack at Ypres and earned the commendations of the Army Commander and myself by your gallantry and devotion”.

“Now once again I have to congratulate you and commend you for your splendid conduct in an attack. We were given a task of the greatest difficulty. After our troops had failed in their objective it was decided to try and take the ‘Redoubt’ by a coup de main and this task the Corps Commander deputed to me to do with one Brigade. I choose the Jullundur Brigade. That you did not succeed was no fault of yours. Faced by superior forces, the task was beyond the power of a single Brigade and the troops which were cooperating from the south were unable to affect the issue in any way, their advance being checked before they reached the ‘Redoubt’.”

“We have had heavy casualties and we must mourn comrades who suffered. We should however at the same time remember that they suffered in a cause of the most urgent emergency. The Corps has a task before it which brooks no delay; the relief of our comrades in Kut who are in danger of starvation and of being forced to surrender. In war great risks are often accompanied by great success and it was an occasion on which a great risk had to be taken. Therefore, we must not criticise those who sent you in to do what turned out to be an

impossible task for the best troops in existence – the 8th Brigade of the 3rd Indian Division – than whom no men could have done better in their gallant attempt to take the Redoubt”.

“So far luck has been against us, the object admitting of no delay to await reinforcements, the weather being almost continuously adverse and the general fortune of war favouring our enemies rather than ourselves.

But our task remains before us and I am certain that in every future effort you will behave as gallantly and gloriously as you have on the day of which I speak”.

THE SUBSEQUENT BATTLES

As the Commander had expected from the brave soldiers that in every future effort, they will display their gallantry and glory as they had done earlier, the brave soldiers proved in future efforts also that they were alert, conscious of their duty and valiant for all times. The various battles fought in the subsequent years at Beitaïssa, Kut Al Amra, Kizail, Rabat, Jabel, Mamrin and Tekrit in Messopotamia showed the gallantry of the brave soldiers of the 47th Sikhs. It were they who advanced in open during a bombardment of 25 minutes in the operation of Beitaïssa and before concluding were able to open fire on enemies’ trenches. When the enemy attempted to bomb their trenches from the right, their attack was repulsed with the assistance of one Manchester’s Company. As this battle of Beitaïssa ran for days and nights, the 47th Sikhs moved from the trenches and pushed ahead about five hundred yards in pursuit of the Turks, capturing several who were lying in the scrub and sniping. They could not advance further because of the orders to stop the general advance. They had to remain in the trenches even during nights. Their continuous activity to dig new trenches on the new lines helped them in getting the positions evacuated by the Turks.

The 36th and the 45th Sikhs were together during the years of 1916 and 1917 in Messopotamia. They had celebrated the Birth Day of Guru Nanak in Nov. 1916 in that desert area of Messopotamia. Together they fought in the operations for the relief of Kut and faced natural calamities like floods in the river and storms of rain. They had also participated together in the battle of Hi river in early 1917. This position was held by about 1,200 Turks in very well-prepared entrenchments. Both battalions assaulted shoulder-to-shoulder in the face of heavy machine gun fire. Although the first three trench lines were captured, casualties were very heavy during the course of the day. At one time, the 45th was more or less isolated as enveloping counter attacks were launched by the Turks. These were eventually pushed back. The fierceness of the fighting can be judged by the fact, that at the end of the day, the 45th was left

with just three British and three Indian officers and 200 men. Of the 22 British and Indian Officers, who had become casualties, two-thirds (14), including the commanding officer, were killed. The other battalion also suffered heavily, and was led out of action by the Subedar Major the lone survivor of the British and Indian Officers who had taken part in the Battle.

In Palestine too, the Sikh Regiment was instrumental in bringing added battle honours after fighting the famous battles of Sherons and Nablus. Considering the overall performance of the Sikh Regiment in the 1st World War and recognising their gallantry and distinguished service, the 47th Sikhs was named as the “Dukes of Connaught’s Own”. Field Marshal H.R.H., the Duke of Connaught was appointed Colonel-in-Chief.

Apart from the re-numbering of the 47th Sikh, the other Sikh Battalions were also re-numbered as a part of the reorganisation of the entire Indian Army in 1922. All such battalions which had direct links with the Khalsa Army and were predominantly Sikhs in character were incorporated to form The Sikh Regiment whose battalions were as under:-

RE-ORGANISATION OF SIKH REGIMENT

The 14th (King George V’s own Ferozepore) Sikhs became 1st Battalion of the 11th Sikh Regiment (King George V’s own Ferozepore Sikhs)

15th (Ludhiana) Sikhs became the 2nd Royal Battalion, 11th Sikh Regiment (Ludhiana Sikhs)

45th Rattray’s Sikhs became 3rd Battalion, 11th Sikh Regiment (Rattray’s Sikhs)

36th Sikhs became 4th Battalion, 11th Sikh Regiment

47th Sikhs became 5th Battalion the 11th Sikh Regiment (Duke of Connaught’s own)

35th Sikhs became 10th Battalion the 11th Sikh Regiment.

It may be mentioned that all the formations enrolling Sikhs could not be made part of the Sikh Regiment as the number of such battalions in the Indian Army at that time was very large.

Apart from re-organisation, the British Government, recognising and appreciating valour of the Sikhs during the First World War, started recruitment of more and more Sikhs in the Army and deployed them wherever toughest situated existed.. For example, they were deployed for fighting against the Afghans. The 14th Sikhs were flown to Kurkuk and as such they became the first body of the Indian troops to be air lifted for military

operations. The 15th Sikhs participated in the Third Afghan war where a number of “flying columns” were sent. The Sikhs distinguished themselves in one of these, and a hill was re-named as ‘Sikh Hill’ in recognition of their distinguished service. The Ludhiana Sikhs were also honoured by being made a Royal battalion on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of King George V.

THE FIRST SIKH TO BE HONOURED WITH V.C.

It is also appropriate to mention the act of valour by a Sikh Ishar Singh (28th Punjabis Lewis Gun Section), who had won the First Victoria Cross among the Sikhs for exemplary courage shown by him near Haidar Kachh (WAZIRISTAN). He had received bullet wounds in the chest and was lying unconscious and bleeding beside his Lewis Gun, when the convoy of protection troops launched an attack resulting into a hand-to-hand fighting. In the mean time, the enemy captured his Lewis Gun. After some time when Sepoy Ishar Singh regained consciousness, he started fighting again. He recovered the Lewis Gun and continued to remain in action though still bleeding profusely.

Later, one of his officers arrived and after taking charge of the gun ordered him to go back and have his wounds dressed. Ishar Singh unhesitatingly obeyed him and went to the Medical Officer. But he forgot all about his wounds when he reached the regimental aid post, and started assisting the Medical Officer by pointing out where the wounded were, and by rushing water to them. Unmindful of his own wounds that were bleeding profusely, he made numerous trips to the river for this purpose.

On one occasion, when the enemy fire was very heavy, Ishar Singh got hold of the rifle of a wounded fellow soldier and returned fire. On another occasion, he physically covered the Medical Officer who was dressing a wounded man, and shielded him with his body. It was after three hours that he finally submitted to be evacuated. By then he had grown extremely weak due to loss of blood. His gallantry and devotion to duty were beyond praise. His conduct inspired all those who saw him. For this act of most conspicuous bravery, he was awarded a Victoria Cross and later on the order of British India, First Class, which carried with the title of “Sardar Bahadur”. The joint award of the VC and OBI (I) was unique. It may also be added that S. Ishar Singh was the only Indian Officer decorated with V.C. in service till that time.

CHAPTER-XVI

THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND THE SIKHS

As mentioned in the earlier chapter, there was re-organisation of the Indian Army, including the Sikh Regiment, in 1922. The six regular battalions of the Sikhs at the time of the commencement of the 2nd World War were numbered as the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 10th Battalions. Since there were heavy demands on manpower, Sikhs were preferred for the purpose of intake into the Army, their recruitment is evidenced by facts and figures; the fact that 7 new battalions of the Sikh Regiment – 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 14th, 25th and one Machine Gun battalion were raised during that period proves the contention. In addition, Sikhs also served in other Army formations. During the period Sept. 1939 to August 1945 as many as 112378 Sikhs were recruited in the Army. The 8th and the 9th battalions were later converted into Light Anti Aircraft Regiments. While the 6th and the Machine Gun battalion had proceeded to Burma, the remaining were in India in 1939. The 1st and the 5th Battalions witnessed action in Burma, Malaya and Singapore and the remaining three i.e. 2nd Royal, 3rd and 4th were to fight in the Middle East. Wherever the Sikh soldiers were, they fought with such bravery and dedication that as many as 27 battle honours in the Second World War went to their credit.

THE 4TH BATTALION IN EGYPT

The first Sikh formation to be sent to Egypt in Sept. 1940, was the 4th Battalion, which fought battles at Siddi Barrani, Aquacol, Libija, and a feature known as Point 204. It was this battalion, which took part in the Brigade attack on Aquacol, a strongly held enemy feature. This fierce battle that took place in early 1941 resulted in a large number of casualties. When the Germans launched their offensive at El Alamein a number of Sikhs along with others became Prisoners of War. Their bravery, alertness, and devotion to duty can be seen from the fact that many Sikhs, even when they were prisoners of war, were able to collect useful information and escape from the prisons. Among them was one Havildar Dhirta Singh who had managed to escape from the German prisons along with three other persons of his battalion, and then conducted this small party in very skilful manner through enemy infested territory covering a distance of about 700 kms. in just 22 days. Sardar Dhirta Singh was awarded the IDSM and also the "Macgregor Memorial Medal" for valuable information collected by him. Lance Naik Sohan Singh, who too had been captured at Deir

ez Shein in July 1942, also managed to escape three months later and rejoined his battalion, after having undergone great hardships. He too displayed great ingenuity and was awarded the IDSM.

One of the living Sikh soldiers who had fought in Egypt in the 2nd World war, was recently interviewed by the Hindustan Times. This soldier, who was recruited into the 4/11, Sikh regiment in 1932, had sailed for Egypt for fighting for the British. S. Kundan Singh, who later on retired as a Major, and is now residing at Lucknow, still possesses the same spirt of fighting at the age of 91. In his interview, he told that “The gallant Sikhs put up a heroic defence in El-Alamein against the sledge hammer onslaught of the numerically superior and better armed German forces, which marked the turning point in the Middle East Campaign. This battle was to prove a deciding factor for the 8th Army.”

The 4th Sikhs were also deployed in Italy on the Gothic Line, where some fierce battles were fought including the last one at Frassineto. The 2nd (Royal) Battalion had to fight at Qasr Sheikh Fort. It was also involved in the battle along with the 4th Battalion, when the allies had to withdraw under heavy German pressure because of heavy casualties of officers and men.

THE 2ND ROYAL AND THE 3RD BATTALION

The 2nd Royal Battalion then set sail for Cyprus, for a short operation, under escort of H.M.S. Sikh. Bearing the name of the regiment, the ship was of special significance to the men. During World War I, one ‘S’ class destroyer was named Sikh. It was still under construction when the war ended and was scrapped. Its bell was presented as a souvenir to Rumania. Shortly before World War II, the 4th battalion came to know of this bell and managed to secure it as a memento. In 1939, when a new ship was named H.M.S.” Sikh”, the regiment sent a silver statuette of a Sikh soldier, along with a shield, to the ship as a present and souvenir. This gesture was suitably reciprocated by the ship’s company when the ship’s badge was presented to each battalion of the Regiment. H.M.S. Sikh was unfortunately sunk off the port of Tobruk in September 1942.

The 3rd Battalion of the Sikh Regiment played a vital role in providing security at the British Embassy in Tehran where the Prime Minister of England, Mr. Churchil was staying for attending the historic Tehran Conference in Nov., 1943.

THE 5TH SIKHS IN DEFENCE OF MALAYA

In Sept. 1940, the situation in the Far East had become ominous with occupation of the northern portion of China by the Japanese, increasing thereby the overland threat to Singapore. The defence of Malaya also became

more acute a problem as the Japanese invading force could now be concentrated within close proximity of Malaya. Japan had also signed a tripartite treaty with Germany and Italy increasing thereby the strength of axis powers. Thus, the Defence of Malaya was very significant for the allies and for this campaign the 5th Sikhs were ordered to participate. They fought many actions in this area of impenetrable jungle, rubber plantations and mangroves swamps. It was a very tough fight with the Japanese who had greater number of troops and supremacy in the air. It was really a saga of heroism, bravery and endurance for the Sikhs of this Battalion to continue fighting, marching and digging defences.

The Brigade was given the task of defending Kuantan aerodrome, which was performed by them as per satisfaction of their seniors, who were rather indecisive in overall planning. When this Battalion was ordered to move to Moran, they engaged in constructing and manning a roadblock on the road to Kuala Lumpur. Their further move was to Rawang. It was here that they came under fire from a Ridge, 600 yards away on the east of the river near the road to Rawang. They were able to occupy a position with 3/16 Punjab on the right and a British battalion (Liecester Surrey) in reserve at Labu. Although there were lesser contacts with the enemy, but whatever task was assigned to the Sikhs, they performed it with utmost dedication.

THE BATTLE OF NIYOR

The first significant encounter of the 5th Sikhs with the Japanese was at the battle of Niyor. It was in this battle that the Sikhs were able to shatter the invincibility of the Japanese. The shouts of “Bole so Nihal, Sat Sri Akaal” unnerved the Japanese who left their positions throwing their arms in an effort to escape. Many Japanese were bayoneted. “The Sikhs continued to slaughter the enemy for a good 15 minutes, firing on Japs at close ranges of 30 to 100 yards till the enemy had withdrawn behind cover and out of range, after suffering heavy casualties About 150 motor cycles and 200 bicycles as also a gun and two mortars had been abandoned on the far side of the objective. This implied that the success was complete: “the bogey of the “Super Japs” had been laid bare.”

A group of Japanese moving through scrub, undergrowth and jungle attacked the MT harbour as also the wagon lines of artillery. A battle raged for sometime there and a platoon of the Sikhs of D Coy charged with fixed bayonets in a furious counter-attack. Then suddenly the noise died off and they could see some 20 Japanese lying dead in the open in front of them with the remainder scrambling back through the undergrowth, indicating that this subsidiary battle had also been won”. (Portrait of Courage by Maj. Gen. Prem

K. Khanna & Pushpinder Singh Chopra – Page 171)

The success of the Sikhs at Niyor was the most significant military event of the entire Malayan campaign. The battalion gained a name for dash and determination coupled with good leadership. There were headlines in all the newspapers, wherein the Japanese casualties were mentioned in detail, highlighting the great achievement of the 5th Sikhs. It gave the Allies much needed confidence and brought them appreciation and congratulations from notable persons like Maj. Gen. A.E. Barstow, the Divisional Commander and Lt. Gen. Sir Levis Heath the Corps Commander. “ Even Major General Gardon Bennett, the Australian GOC (who at a conference on the 20th had made some derogatory remarks about Indian troops) was highly impressed by this achievement and said so accordingly. A few nights later, a mention of this action at Niyor was made over BBC News. The Sikhs had exposed the invincibility of the advancing Japanese soldiers and shown own troops that they were as good, if not better, than the enemy. For this fine action, the battalion was awarded the “Battle Honour of Niyor”. (Portrait of courage – page 175)

SHOUTS OF SAT SRI AKAAL DO WONDER

Maj. Gen. Barstow, when he visited the 5th Sikhs on 26th January, made an announcement that all the forces on mainland of Malaya were to be withdrawn to the Island of Singapore. This task was to be completed at the earliest. The brave 5th Sikh battalion, even when on the move to Singapore had to face the enemy on the way. The heavy shelling by the Japanese at the village of Layang was so ferocious that the Battalion was saved from complete disaster only because of the brilliant tactical sense of the Commanding Officer Colonel Parkin. He had persuaded the Brigade Commander to allow the Battalion to move at a safe distance from the place heavily targeted by the enemy with artillery and mortar fire. On the withdrawal route, the Battalion also had to face other difficulties like absence of knowledge of the definite route, passing through thick forests, rubber plantations and swamps. When a company of the Brigade consisting of Sikhs and Muslims were faced with surprise fire from the Japanese, they fixed their bayonets and with loud shouts of “Sat Sri Akaal” and “Ya Ali” charged forward on the enemy and were soon swallowed up in a rather dense patch of jungle and bushes which lay ahead of them. A grim battle ensued for the next 30 minutes with the noise of firing and shouting augmented by burst of mortar bombs in the battalion HQ area. It was a grim fight, which the 5/11 won. On their withdrawal route, the 5/11 Sikhs had also to face attacks by enemy aircraft. However, despite such a heavy pressure from the enemy, it was visible that the Japanese too had a sense of fear to fight against the Sikhs. This becomes clear from the fact that an officer, who was captured by

the Japanese, was released “with a letter written in English to be delivered to the Indian troops telling them that they were friends of the Japanese who they did not want to fight them but only the British. The Japs further enjoined the Indians not to fire at the Japanese but give themselves up when they would be well treated”. (Portrait of Courage – page 181)

By the time the 5/11 Sikhs reached the Island of Singapore, there were very few personnel left. After searching the hospitals and rest camps, hardly 200 personnel could be mustered and one company of 5/11 Sikhs was constituted ('A' Company). Another Company called 'D' Company was constituted of the Sikhs for 2/12 Frontier Force Regiment. Despite heavy reduction in numbers, the 5/11 Sikhs had won laurels in all their campaigns. In the words of John Parkin, the CO “Throughout its comparatively short life till then, the 47th Sikhs were known for efficiency, dependability and a standard of behaviour whether in peace or war, which was second to none. It showed these to the full during its many years of active service in France, Mesopotamia and Palestine in the First World War and no one can read this story of its service in Malaya without again feeling the highest respect for the manliness and spirit that underlined its every action.”

THE 1ST BATTALION

The 1st Battalion of the 11th Sikh Regiment which had left for Rangoon in Feb., 1942 had also to fight the Japanese, who had built up strong forces in that area. There was tough fighting around Monywa (May 1942) and also on the Maungdaw – Buthidaung road in early 1944. This Battalion, when it moved out to Imphal, again fought the decisive battle at Anglatonvvi, which proved a turning point in the 2nd World War, as after this battle the Allied forces were on the offensive and the Japanese had to be on the defence.

THE SIKH HEROES WITH HONOURS

There were various Sikh heroes in these battalions, whose acts of valour and bravery deserve a special mention. Then 2nd Lt. Mohinder Singh who commanded a platoon of the 5 Sikh Platoon and was given the task of capturing and holding the last route picket on an extremely hostile belt against tribals in the NWFP who had launched a major attack with supporting machine guns was honoured with the first Military Cross to be awarded during the 2nd World War for exemplary courage shown by him in defending the picket killing, 10 and injuring 40 of the tribals.

S. NAND SINGH WINS V.C. FOR HIS BRAVERY

Capt. Satinder Singh, who while fighting around Monywa in May, 1942 was injured while fighting gallantly. Naik Nand Singh showed exemplary courage

and valour against the Japanese in the Kalpazin Valley in the Arakan. It was he who had killed 7 Japanese soldiers and captured 3 trenches almost single handedly. He was wounded in the thigh and had to crawl forward under heavy fire. A grenade, burst in front of him and wounded him in the face and the shoulder in the course of his taking over the 2nd trench. By the time he captured the 3rd trench he was wounded six times in an assault. His bravery won him the VC. The regimental history records him in the following words:

'The only possible approach on to the hill followed a narrow track leading up to the enemy position. Along this track Nand Singh led his section. Reaching the crest, the section came under heavy machine gun and rifle fire and every man was knocked over, either killed or wounded. Nevertheless, Naik Nand Singh dashed forward, alone, under intense fire at point-blank range. He was wounded by a grenade as he neared the first Japanese trench. Without hesitation he went on, captured the trench and killed two occupants with the bayonet.

Not far away, was another trench. Under continuous heavy fire, Naik Nand Singh jumped out and charged. He was again wounded by a grenade and knocked down, but he got up and hurled himself into the trench, again killing both occupants, with the bayonet. He moved on again and captured a third trench, still single-handed,

With the capture of this third trench, the enemy fire died away. Naik Nand Singh's encounter had taken little time, and the remainder of the platoon, checked for the moment by the sudden fire opened on it, as it reached the crest, now moved up and captured the remainder of the position, killing with the bayonet and grenade thirty-seven out of the forty Japanese who had been holding it.

Six times wounded in the assault, Nand Singh literally carried the position single-handed. He had displayed valour and resolution of a very high order, as also utter disregard for his own life, for which the immediate award of the VC was a fitting tribute.'

THE RESCUE OPERATIONS OF HAVILDAR PARKASH SINGH

Havildar Parkash Singh was the one who, on 6th Jan. 1945 at Donbaik, Mayu Peninsula, Burma (Myanmar) had driven his bren-gun carrier for rescuing of the crews of the two disabled carriers under very heavy fire. Again on 19th January, in the same area, three carriers were put out of action on an open beach covered by enemy guns. One of these carriers was sheltering the survivors of another, as well as its own crew. Havildar Parkash Singh again sallied forth and, with complete disregard for his own safety, rescued the two

crews from one carrier, and also brought back their weapons. Advancing once more in his carrier, he calmly attached a tow chain to one of the crippled carriers carrying two wounded men, and had the vehicle towed to safety despite heavy enemy fire. He was also honoured with the Victoria Cross and later on, was promoted to the rank of Major.

THE BRAVE NAIK GIAN SINGH

Another winner of the Victoria Cross was Naik Gian Singh of the Sikh Regiment who had killed a number of Japanese and destroyed their anti-tank gun crew, capturing the weapon single handed and getting the enemy positions cleared, while fighting on Kampe-Myingyan area in Burma. His bravery is exemplified by the fact that when in the course of his action he was ordered to the regimental aid post, he requested permission to continue leading his men until the whole action was completed. The permission was granted.

S. KARAMJEET SINGH JUDGE,

WHO DOMINATED THE BATTLE FIELD

Victoria Cross was also awarded to Lieutenant Karamjeet Singh Judge, of the 4th Bn., 15th Punjab Regiment was the Platoon Commander of a Company which was ordered to capture a Cotton Mill. He dominated the battlefield by his numerous acts of gallantry. Concealed enemy bunker in the reverse slopes of broken and untankable ground, constantly shelled and machine-gunned the advancing troops. Time and again the infantry were held by machine gun and small arms fire from bunkers which would not be spotted by the tanks. On every such occasion, Lieutenant Karamjeet Singh, with complete disregard for his personal safety, went forward through heavy fire to guide the tanks to deal with the bunkers indicated by him. Leading one infantry charge after another, he wiped out ten Japanese positions which had been battered by the tanks. Finally, Lieutenant Karamjeet Singh was mortally wounded and his men, inspired by his example went on and cleared the enemy from the whole area. In the words of the citation, Lieutenant Karamjeet Singh 'dominated the entire battlefield'.

One of the important tasks performed by the Sikhs during this war was the safety of their seniors. Whenever there was risk to the life of some senior officer, the Sikhs attached with him did not care for their life and made all efforts to save the life of the concerned officer. One such illustration is available in a recently published book "A touch of Greatness: encounters with the eminent" by Shri R.M. Lalla. In this book certain events have been narrated from the lives of eminent persons. While giving a profile of Field Marshal Manek Shaw, the author records that when the Japanese were advancing in Burma in early 1942 defending the Sittand Bridge was a 28 year old captain.

Facing a hail of machine-gun bullets, the captain fell to the ground and was left for dead by the retreating forces. His orderly, who had effectively hidden himself during the engagement, came out after the Japanese left. He picked up his unconscious master and carried him on his shoulder the whole day, heading for the town of Prome. He hid the captain in ditches during air raids. When captain Sam Manekshaw regained consciousness, he told his orderly, "Leave me now and go, for I am finished. You should think of your wife and children and save your life."

"So long as there is life in you, I shall not leave you, Sir," said Mehar Singh. For most of the next night he carried Manekshaw, bringing him to a field hospital. In a tent by candle light at 4 a.m., an Australian surgeon operated on Manekshaw and removed six bullets from his stomach, lungs and liver. Manekshaw was wrapped up in a blanket and sent off to Rangoon towards which the Japanese were advancing.

Later on, Manekshaw was sent to India and after treatment, he was fully recovered. The service rendered by Mehar Singh in this regard shows as how the brave performed their duty without caring for their own life.

There were many Sikhs who were wounded or captured by the enemy and tortured in prisons, but did not show any sign of weakness on their part. Their loyalty and dedication were recognised and appreciated at one or the other time. For example, we must mention the towering personality of Lt. Gen. Harbakhsh Singh, who had commanded a company of the 5th Sikh in 1942 in Malaya. Severely wounded in the head, a steel plate, which he carried to his last day, was a constant reminder. He was in a military hospital when General A.E. Percival, the Allied Field Commander, surrendered all Allied forces in Malaya and Singapore to the Japanese in 1942. Then followed three years of a miserable existence and near starvation as a Japanese Prisoner of War. Released at the end of the war in 1945, he remained in hospital for some months with beri-beri and other problems brought on by malnutrition and inhuman conditions in Japanese POW camps.

Later on, this brilliant officer of the Indian Army proved to be one of the most outstanding Commanders in modern Indian History.

CHAPTER-XVII

THE PATRIOTISM OF THE SIKHS

CHILLIANWALA BATTLE CRY

The brave deeds of Sikhs till their becoming rulers of Punjab and thereafter amply proved that the Sikhs were among the most courageous people in the country. When they became a part of the British Indian Army after the annexation of Punjab, their loyalty brought to the forefront another remarkable quality of their character. The British officers became so fond of the Sikh soldiers that they always maintained best of relations with them by adopting the method of mutual respect and by giving them due honours, awards and appreciations. However, it does not mean that the Sikhs forgot that the Britishers were a foreign power and were ruling over the country by making the Indians virtually their slaves. The Sikhs felt the agony of being ruled by the foreigners, and as such were among the earliest to raise a banner of revolt against them. It is true that those Sikhs working in the British Indian Army remained loyal as it was their duty to prove worthy of the tasks entrusted to them, but those who did not associate themselves with the British in any manner, least of all by joining their service, went on making efforts to get the freedom from the British. In fact, Sir Winston Churchill, who was not only a great statesman, but also a historian, had rightly stated that one of the reasons for the revolt of 1857 was the British set back at the Chillianwala. Thus, the Sikhs fighting so vigorously at Chillianwala provided a source of inspiration for all those Indians who did not like the British policies for one or the other reason. Thus, "Remember Chillianwala" became a battle-cry and a blood stained slogan in the upheaval which was to come.

Even during the 1857 revolt, some Sikh soldiers tried to associate themselves with the revolutionaries. As mentioned above, the Sikhs in general (not the army men) were determined to turn the Britishers out of their country. They could not relish the idea of remaining slaves and with the spirit of freedom burning in their hearts, always adopted a defiant attitude against the rulers. This spirit is best reflected by a small instance as appears in the British records. It is recorded that when the British fired a cannon at 12.00 O'clock as per their standard time based on Calcutta time, the Sikhs did not recognise that and they shot their cannon at 12.00 O'clock as per Lahore time. Since there was difference of half an hour between Lahore and Calcutta time, the

general public used to be in confusion as which cannon denoted the 12.00 (noon). It was during this period that general public started saying that it is 12.00 (noon)/ mid night of the British and another stroke afterwards was 12.00 noon/mid night of the Sikhs. Although the ignorant people made this kind of defiance as a joke in the name of Sikhs, they forgot that it was the beginning of the awakening of a feeling of independence from those who had actually spread their empire from North to South of Globe.

BHAI BIR SINGH OF NAURANGABAD

When the British completed the task of annexation of Punjab and the infant Prince Dilip Singh and his mother Rani Jindan were sidelined, the Khalsa Army, although still very powerful, felt restless without some good leader. It was at that time that Bhai Bir Singh, who was earlier a soldier in the Attary Troops, but later on had established a spiritual Dera at the village of Naurangabad, on the right bank of the river Satluj, about 20 miles from Firozpur, appeared at the forefront. He had earlier participated in Maharaja Ranjit Singh's campaign for the capture of Kashmir and Peshawar. When turned from soldier to ascetic to preach the word of Guru Nanak, he acquired a large following. It was because of this following that the Sikh soldiers and peasantry, in their hour of confusion looked forward to Baba Bir Singh for guidance. Sardar Atar Singh Sandhawalia, prince Kashmira Singh, prince Pashaura Singh and many Sikh Sardars including S. Jawahar Singh Nalwa, son of the renowned S.Hari Singh Nalwa, all went to the Dera to seek the guidance of Baba Bir Singh. Since the Dogras had sided with the British and helped them in the annexation, the Dera of Bhai Bir Singh became a centre of Sikh revolt against Dogra dominance over the State. The Dogra Prime Minister of the Sikh Kingdom, Hira Singh, sent a strong force comprising 20,000 men and 50 Guns to attack the Dera on May 7, 1844. Baba Bir Singh, a noble soul as he was, sitting in meditation behind the holy book, was killed with a shell fired by the Dogra besiegers. Several others who were killed by the attackers included Gen. Attar Singh and prince Kashmira Singh. Following the death of Bhai Bir Singh, his disciple Bhai Maharaj Singh was installed as the successor.

BHAI MAHARAJ SINGH

When Rani Jindan was arrested and deported, Bhai Maharaj Singh supported her rights and exhorted the people of Punjab to rise and turn out the foreigners. Gradually, Bhai Maharaj Singh became a force, who fought tooth and nail for preventing the slavery to the British. However, when he was arrested in 1850, he was exiled to the penal colony of Singapore. Even after reaching Singapore on June 9, 1850, Bhai Maharaj Singh remained a source of revolutionary spirit among the Sikhs who continued fighting for their rights.

The British did not care about his deteriorating health and kept him locked up in Jail under harsh and unhealthy circumstances. The great revolutionary and an arch-enemy of the British died, away from his country and became a martyr. In his memory stands now a Gurudwara at Silat Road in Singapore.

BABA RAM SINGH & KUKA MOVEMENT

There were many others who revolted against the British in the early years after the annexation of Punjab. Sardar Attar Singh Ataariwala son of Sardar Chatter Singh Ataariwala was another Hero who led a revolt against the British in 1848-49. The most prominent Sikh to lead such a revolt was Baba Ram Singh, who had started a *boycott* movement against the British as early as 1863 when Mahatma Gandhi was not yet born. He was the head of the Namdhari organisation and was a strict follower of the code of conduct as given by the Gurus. He was a devout Sikh who did not recognise the evil social systems like caste distinctions, female infanticide, forced widowhood, dowry etc. He believed in simple living and wanted his followers to lead a simple religious life. Baba Ji did not like the British suzerainty and always enlightened the people to fight against the slavery. He laid emphasis on the use of Swadeshi Home Spun clothes and shun the education through English medium. Since the British did not give regard to the Hindu feelings for the protection of cows, Baba Ji fought for this cause against the British. In fact he and his followers were generally critical of Christian proselytization as well as of the opening of the slaughterhouses by the foreign rulers. His followers known as Kukas because of their shouting ecstatic cries while chanting the sacred hymns, went to prison in large number in Ferozepur District for these reasons.

When the Kukas attacked a slaughterhouse in the sacred city of Amritsar on the night of 15th June 1871, four Butchers were killed and three seriously wounded. A similar incident took place in Raipur in Ludhiana District where also three Butchers were killed as a result of which they were awarded severe punishment including death penalty for five of them. In 1872 the Kukas attacked the house of a Sikh Chief of Malaud for stealing horses that were needed for their assault on the British armoury at Maler Kotla. This assault was made on January 15, 1872, but the Kukas could not succeed as an encounter took place in which eight police men and 7 Kukas lost their life. It was in view of this attempt by the Kukas that 68 of the them including two women were captured out of which 49 were blown up by canon and the other 17 were killed by other means. Baba Ram Singh along with some other persons was deported to Rangoon and the Kuka activities were placed under strict surveillance. Although, the efforts of the Kukas failed to achieve their object as their fight was unequal to succeed, they kept the flame of freedom burning in the hearts of the people.

SIKHS AS COW PROTECTORS

A brief discussion regarding Baba Ram Singh and his followers called Kukas makes two points quite evident, firstly that in the very beginning of the freedom struggle. The Sikhs had played a vital role to inspire the Indian People for fighting against the slavery. Even when Baba Ram Singh was in exile in Rangoon, the Kukas tried to remain in touch with their leader with the belief that he will come back one day and lead them to freedom from the British rule. It is recorded that some of Kukas like Gurcharan Singh and Bishan Singh made secret trips across the borders to make contacts with the Russians for their help in their cause. They were also active in their campaign for the restoration of Maharaja Dilip Singh, the living successor of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in the captivity of the British in England. This chapter of Sikh history also makes it clear that whereas Guru Tegh Bahadur had sacrificed his life for the protection of Hindu religion, the Kuka Sikhs sacrificed their lives for another Hindu cause that is protection of the cow. There is no other incident in the Indian History in which so many Hindus gave their lives for this cause as compared to the Kukas.

Even when the Kuka movement failed, the Sikhs continued to remain active in the freedom struggle by associating with various parties and movements. When the massacre took place on April 13th, 1919, at Jallianwala Bagh, at Amritsar, those who became victims also included maximum Sikhs. It is recorded that around 1300 persons were killed at Jallianwala Bagh, out of which 800 were Sikhs. This massacre proved a stimulous to the freedom movement and brought Mahatama Gandhi to forefront as the prominent Congress Leader in the said struggle. Many a young Sikhs were affected by this action of the British and took a vow to adopt a different path from that of Gandhi for dealing with the rulers. Martyrs like Bhagat Singh & Udham Singh, were fearless fighters in the freedom struggle.

BABBAR AKAALIS

It is now widely accepted that the freedom obtained by our country was not merely because of the peaceful efforts and the role of the revolutionaries was highly significant. When the struggle for freedom movement became active, Punjab became its hub. There were largest number of demonstrations and meetings in Punjab against the Rowlett proposal. It was because of these protests, that the British Lt. Governor of Punjab Michale O'Dyer, a hot tempered man, thought of teaching them a lesson. It was this vindictive intention of O'Dyer, which lead to the massacre on the Baisakhi day of 1919. The heartless firing on the peace loving people of Punjab converted a garden into a raging inferno. Dyer, being the representative of the rulers could teach a lesson to the freedom lovers, but who could dare to pay him in the same coin.

It was brave Udham Singh, who had to spend a number of years in England in search of an opportunity to kill him as after leaving Punjab, he had been living in London. When the opportunity came, he shot him dead at Kegston Hall for which Udham Singh was sentenced to death and executed on 12th June, 1940. His following words show his boldness at the time of execution.

'He deserved it. He was the real culprit, he wanted to crush the spirit of my people.....What greater honour could be bestowed on me than death for the sake of my motherland ?'

There were thousands of people who sacrificed their lives for the sake of freedom, but if someone is asked to name only one martyr for the freedom struggle of the country, most of the people will name Bhagat Singh, who was hanged alongwith his companions Rajguru & Sukhdev. The fact that he is remembered the most is evidenced by a large number of feature films made on his life and considerable literature written to glorify him. People remember that he alongwith Sukhdev and Rajguru used to remember Ram Kumar Bismil, the patriot poet, when he uttered the immortal verses '*Sarfroshi ki tammanna ab hamaare dil men hai, dekhna hai zor kitna bazooe kaatil men hai.*' The brave trio were bold enough to smile even at the time of hanging. The whole nation began to sing with them '*Mera rang de basanti chola*' which was a song given to the brave Bhagat Singh by his uncle S. Ajit Singh, another patriot who had dedicated his life to the cause of freedom. He had aroused the feeling of self respect among the Punjabi's when he popularised the song *Pagri Sambhaal Jatta, Pagri Sambhaal oye*. He was exiled and imprisoned in Burma.

The Babbar Akaalies also played a significant role in this regard. Although, they were treated as terrorists by the Britishers, they were patriotic to the backbone. Babbar mean lions and such Akaalis who preferred to leave the path of non-violence for achieving their object, came to be called as such. These Akaalis were largely drawn from the Ghadar party and army soldiers on leave. Babbar violence was, however, of short duration. By the summer of 1923, most of the Babbars had been apprehended. The trial conducted in camera began inside Lahore Central Jail on 15 August, 1923 and was presided over by an English Judge. Of the 91 accused, two died in jail during trial, 34 were acquitted, six including Jathedar Kishan Singh Gargaji and Ishar Singh, were awarded death penalty, while the remaining 49 were sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment.

GHADAR MOVEMENT

One very important feature of Sikh struggle against the British for the attainment of independence was their efforts for this purpose in other countries. The Ghadar Movement which originated abroad was mainly the

brain child of Sikhs and had proved very powerful in the Indian struggle for freedom. The Sikhs like Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna, Bhai Kesar Singh, Bhai Harnam Singh, Tundi Lat, Bhai Udham Singh, Bhai Ishar Singh etc. were associated with the Ghadar party which had its headquarters at San Francisco and which ran the famous paper Ghadar in Urdu and Punjabi. The paper carried the words "Enemy of the British Government," under its masthead on the front page. The paper was distributed to politico-Indian centres in United States (Western Coast), Canada, Philippines, Fiji, Sumatra, Japan, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Hankow, Java, Singapore, Malaya, Siam, Burma, India and East Africa. Occasionally, the Ghadr published the following advertisement:

Wanted: Enthusiastic and heroic soldiers for organising Ghadar in Hindustan,

Remuneration	:	Death
Reward	:	Martyrdom
Pension	:	Freedom
Field of Work	:	Hindustan

Later, Hindi, Gujarati, Pashto, Bengali and Nepali editions of the paper were also brought out. The paper brought about a new awakening among Indians. The British government tried to stop circulation of the paper, but failed in its efforts. Instead, the circulation of the paper increased and the party had to spend a great deal of money on it. Besides, a number of small pamphlets, many of them in Punjabi, such as *Firangi da Fareb*, *Shabash* (openly preaching the use of bombs for throwing the British out of India), *Ghadar di Gunj*, *Zulam:Zulam Gore Shahi Zulam*, *Tilak di Rihai*, *Navan Zamana*, *Panjabi Bharavan de Nam Suneha*, *Angan di Gvahi* were issued. The *Hindustani Sipahi* was published to instigate Indian soldiers against the British rule. "*Bande matram*", became the party slogan. The Ghadar party president, with some of his companions, often visited the Indian groups to exhort them to join the freedom movement.

KAMAGATA MARU

When the organisation gave the call to sacrifice everything for the mother land, the first person to volunteer was a young Sikh boy Kartar Singh Sarabha from Ludhiana. He was a student at the University of California at Breckley. He joined Ghadar Party as he did not like hatredness against Indians. He discontinued his studies and took over Gurmukhi edition of the Ghadar. He was hanged by the British when he was 19 years old. Another revolutionary activity of the period was related to the Ship of Kamagata Maru. When this ship reached Calcutta harbour, prominent Indian leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai and Mahatma Gandhi condemned the British and the

Canadians for their treatment with the passengers of this ship. The Canadian Authorities had even rejected the request made by Baba Gurdit Singh for the supply of provisions. The ship was fired as a result of which a number of passengers were wounded. Although the movement failed, the patriotic spirit shown by Baba Gurdit Singh and his companions proved a contributory factor for shaking the very foundation of the British Raj.

INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY

When Subhash Chander Bose made his efforts for attaining independence by raising a National Army in Japan, he was also inspired by a Sikh named Bhai Mohan Singh. In fact the Indian National Army was founded by Gen. Mohan Singh for the purpose of liberation of the Mother land, and it was only when Bhai Mohan Singh was arrested on 29th December, 1942 that Netaji Subhash took over the control of this Army which was renamed as *Azad Hind Fauz*. Netaji had so much regard for Gen. Mohan Singh that he went to see him at Changi in December, 1943. Most of the soldiers of Azad Hind Fauz were Sikhs, some of whom had been alive till very recently. The records state that when Netaji gave a call to Indian Prisoners of War to join arms against the British, 1200 persons, mostly Sikhs were recruited during the first six months for a training Camp set up at Frankenburg. This trend of joining the Fauz continued till it remained in existence.



FIGHTING AGAINST IGNORANCE & ILLITERACY

After, the Sikhs lost their empire because of the treachery of some of their own persons, the British made all efforts to weaken their position so that they could not rise against them for the restoration of their empire. Christian missionaries were given a free play to attack the identity and ideology of the Sikh religion, its history and institutions. These missions were located in the heart of the Sikh areas like Batala. These missionaries produced and supported such works like that of Mcleod. The British also entrusted the charge of Sikh shrines to such Mahants or Pujaris who suppressed the Sikh practices and traditions and highlighted the Hindu ways and customs. For example, they introduced a practice that Mazahbi Sikhs would not be given Prashad at Darbar Sahib. Such practice was contrary to the concept of equality among the Sikhs. Similarly, a number of idols were kept at Harimandir Sahib with a view to promote idol worship. Many institutions were set up to spread English education.. The western impact and the Christian proselytisation affected all the Indians including Sikhs, who were gradually led astray from the knowledge of their own values and traditions. The Brahmanical influence had again dominated the Sikh thought. They started indulging in rituals and practices which were rejected by the Gurus. There was such a dilution of Sikh doctrine and practices, that a strong need was felt to set right the religious aberrations without any delay.

NIRANKARI MOVEMENT: BABA DAYAL JI

It was in this context that, to stem the increasing trend of going away from Sikh values, that movements were launched by Namdharies and Nirankaries. The position regarding Namdhari movement led by Baba Ram Singh has been discussed at a different place. So far Nirankaries were concerned, they were led by Baba Dayal Ji, who launched vigorous campaign against such practices which were contrary to the teachings of the Gurus, with a view to convince the Sikhs to have belief only in Nirankar, the formless one. Baba Ji's revolt against the Brahmanical practices is evidenced by the fact that for solemnizing his own marriage in 1808, he discarded the traditional Brahmin Priest and got recited 'Lavaan' and Anand hymns from Guru Granth Sahib. This marriage being the first instance of a wedding performed by Anand ceremony in the modern period of Sikh history, it became a significant landmark towards passing of

Anand Marriage Act. Baba Dayal also preached simplicity in life, and such values as respect for parents, honest living, abstinence from liquor and drugs, idol worship, etc. It may be made clear that this Nirankari Movement is different from the Nirankaries of Delhi. The only link is that Buta Singh, Founder of Sant Nirankaries was once the member of the Nirankari Darbar at Rawalpindi. The present leader of Sant Nirankaries at Delhi is Baba Hardev Singh, his grandson (Son of Gurbachan Singh).

When Arya Samaj led by Swami Dayanand entered Punjab, it posed another great challenge for the Sikhs. The Arya Samajis propagated that Sikhs were just an offshoot of Hindus and were supposed to follow the teachings of the Vedas and other oriental scriptures of Hindu religion. The Hindu and Christian influence increased to such an extent in Punjab that most of the Sikhs started giving up their own rich values and falling under their influence. The gravity of the situation becomes crystal clear from the Punjab Administration Report for 1851-52, the relevant excerpt from which is reproduced as hereunder:-

BRITISH REPORT ABOUT SIKHS:

“The Sikh faith and ecclesiastical polity is rapidly going where the Sikh political ascendancy has already gone. Of the two elements in the old Khalsa, namely the followers of Nanak, the first prophet, and the followers of Guru Gobind (Singh) the second greatest religious leader, the former will hold their ground, and the latter will lose it. The Sikhs of Nanak, a comparatively small body of peaceful habits and old family, will perhaps cling to the faith of their fathers; but the Sikhs of Gobind (Singh) who are of more recent origin, who are more specially styled the Singhs or “lions”, and who embraced the faith as being the religion of warfare and conquest, no longer regard the Khalsa now that the prestige has departed from it. These men joined in thousands, and they now desert in equal numbers. They rejoin the ranks of Hinduism whence they originally came, and they bring up their children as Hindus. The sacred tank at Amritsar is less thronged than formerly, and the attendance at the annual festivals is diminishing yearly. The initiatory ceremony for adult persons is now rarely performed”.

It was, therefore, high time for Sikh thinkers to start their efforts. Thus, Sardar Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia (1837-87), Baba Khem Singh Bedi (1832-1905), Kanvar Bikrama Singh (1835-87) of Kapurthala and Giani Gian Singh (1824-84) of Amritsar convened a meeting in Guru Ka Bagh, Amritsar, on 30th July 1873. It was decided to form an association which should adopt measures to defend the Sikh faith against the onslaught of Christian Missionaries and others. This led to the birth of Singh Sabha Movement, in Amritsar and then in Lahore resulting into formation of many such Sabhas.

S. THAKUR SINGH SANDHANWALIA

S. Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia became the President of the first Singh Sabha formed at Amritsar. The wonderful work done by him in the Singh Sabha Movement was not his only achievement, he was also the mastermind behind a plan to bring back Maharaja Dilip Singh to Punjab from England. After annexation of Punjab Maharaja Dilip Singh had been taken away by the British to England and converted to Christianity. It was Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia, who created in the mind of the Maharaja a curiosity and interest to come back to the land of his father. When Thakur Singh visited London in 1884 and stayed with Maharaja, the British became suspicious of his intention. As a consequence, Dilip Singh was not allowed to enter India, and Thakur Singh was also kept under surveillance for his activities. Thakur Singh went to Pondicherry which was beyond the jurisdiction of the British territories, and kept in touch with Maharaja. The Maharaja was also eager to get back his empire and became a Sikh. Although, he was baptized as a Sikh before his death, he could not fulfil his desire to come back to his native land. Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia was made the Prime Minister by Dilip Singh for his emigrant government in Pondicherry, but, no useful purpose could be served as only after some time the brave Sikh having best of intentions for the restoration of the Sikh empire fell ill and died on 18th August, 1887.

THE OBJECTS OF THE SINGH SABHAS:

“The main objects of the Singh Sabhas were (i) to propagate the true Sikh religion and to restore Sikhism to its pristine glory; (ii) to edit, publish and circulate historical and religious books; (iii) to propagate current knowledge using Punjabi as the medium and to start magazines and newspapers in Punjabi; (iv) to reform and bring back into the Sikh fold the apostates; and (v) to interest the high placed Englishmen in and ensure their association with the education programme of the Sabha. It was the Singh Sabha’s policy to avoid criticism of other religions and discussion of political matters.”

(The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism Vol. IV Page 208)

CONCERTED EFFORTS BY SINGH SABHAS

At one stage, the various Sabhas were consolidated for making concerted efforts. As a result of the efforts of the various persons associated with this movement, Chief Khalsa Diwan was set up for promoting research and publication of books on ideological and historical topics. Khalsa Tract Society came into existence through the efforts of Bhai Vir Singh in 1894. Shuddhi Sabha for conversions and reconversions into Sikhism was founded in April 1893 by Dr. Jai Singh. Among the local Singh Sabhas, the one at Bhasaur was the most active under its leader, Babu Teja Singh. Among individual scholars,

who played a vital role in carrying the movement forward, were included Bhai Ditt Singh, Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, Giani Gian Singh, Pandit Tara Singh Narottam, Professor Sahib Singh, Principal Jodh Singh, Dr. Ganda Singh and many other Sikh scholars who, apprised the Sikhs of the rich traditions of this religion through their writings as to make them feel proud of their spiritual and historical heritage.

ARYA SAMAJ IN PUNJAB

The learned Sikh scholars made strenuous efforts to contest the arguments of the Arya Samaj and also some conservatives among the Sikh community that Sikhs were Hindus. In fact, Arya Samaj votaries of this thesis did not know that Guru Nanak, founder of Sikh religion in his very first statement had made it clear that he was neither a Hindu nor a Musalman. However, as many Sikhs had come under the influence of the supporters of this stand, the learned scholars took it a challenge to make the position clear. Bhai Ditt Singh was among such scholars who strongly refuted the stand taken by the Arya Samaj. It is interesting to note that he was earlier an associate of Swami Dayanand (he met him in Lahore in 1877), but later on when he alongwith his friend, Jawahar Singh came under the influence of Bhai Gurmukh Singh, who was an active figure in the Singh Sabha Movement, they were inspired to do the needful for their own religion. They parted their company from Araya Samaj, and the final breach took place, when in a public meeting on 25th Nov.'88, held on the 11th anniversary of the Lahore Araya Samoa, Pandit Guru Dutt of Govt. College Lahore and Lala Murlī Dhar spoke disparagingly about the Sikh Gurus. This hurt the feelings of Giani Ditt Singh and Jawahar Singh and they broke their relations with Arya Samaj and allied themselves wholeheartedly with the Singh Sabha Movement. Ditt Singh also married in 1880 according to Sikh rites and both husband and wife vigorously launched a campaign against customs and traditions contrary to Sikh religion. The death of Giani Ditt Singh in September 1901 was a loss mourned widely by the Sikhs. A 15 member memorial committee was formed with Bhai Sahib Arjan Singh Bagarian as chairman. Notable memorials honouring his name were Giani Ditt Singh Khalsa Boarding House in Lahore and Bhai Ditt Singh Library opened at Sikh Kanya Mahavidyala Ferozepur by Bhai Takht Singh, one of his former students and a close friend.

'HUM HINDU NAHEEN'

Although, a large number of persons wrote tracts in support of the proposition that Sikhs were not Hindus, the most reasoned and convincing of such tracts was Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha's "Hum Hindu Naheen", first published in 1898. It was this tract which set forth forceful Singh Sabha standpoint with regard to

Sikh identity. The various reasons given by the learned scholar are so convincing that the position becomes crystal clear. Bhai Sahib also wrote many other works which deal with such aspects which are helpful in understanding Guru Granth Sahib. Gurmat Martand in two parts as published by SGPC explains various terms pertaining to Sikh religion. His encyclopaedia called Mahankosh is one of the most useful works for references and research.

KAHAN SINGH NABHA & MACAULIFFE

Bhai Sahib's another contribution in creating awareness among the Sikhs is his helping Max Arthur Macauliffe (1841-1913) in writing his magnum opus "The Sikh Religion" in six volumes. Macauliffe worked hard as he had not only to understand the various dialects, Punjabi language and also the various versions of the life of Gurus as were available, with a view to create a useful work on the life of the Gurus and a translation of their compositions. Before him, a German missionary, Linguistic Trumpp had translated Sikhs' scriptures but that translation was not only inaccurate and faulty but was also based upon his biased observations made against Sikh religion. Thus, instead of using that translation, Macauliffe went through original scriptures in Punjabi for which he took the help of many Gianis like Bhai Nihal Singh, Sant Singh, Bhai Ditt Singh, etc. but, Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha was found by him to be the most reliable for this arduous task. He even took Kahan Singh Nabha to England for the purpose of proof reading of his book published in England. Thus, it was because of Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, that a great work was produced in English which has since been serving as a great help for researchers, scholars and non-Sikhs to know about this religion. It was out of Macauliffe's admiration for Bhai Kahan Singh that he assigned to him the copyrights of his book.

Giani Gian Singh (1824-1884) was another scholarly theologian, who strengthened the movement. He was among the founder members and the Secretary of Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Amritsar. He used to give discourses on Sikh scriptures and history. However, the great Sikh historian who wrote Panth Prakash and Twarikh Guru Khalsa, was a different person of the same name. Pandit Tara Singh Narottam (1822-1891) was a scholar of the Nirmala School of Thinkers. He was highly learned person, well versed in Sanskrit and Vedic literature, who had good number of scholars as its pupils (including Giani Gian Singh, the historiographer). Although Pandit Ji gave a number of commentaries called Tikas, his most well known work was Sri Guru Tirath Sangrahi.

PROFESSOR SAHIB SINGH

Professor Sahib Singh (1892-1977) was known for his erudition and assiduous pursuit of scholarship. More than 50 works of scholarship including 10 volumes commentary on Guru Granth Sahib were given by him. He gave

exposition of several Sikh sacred texts and also prepared textual grammar of Guru Granth Sahib. It was such a great contribution of the great Grammarian and Theologian that he came to be recognized as one of the honoured Sikhs. The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism has given him a tribute by stating that “no exegetical work since the publication of this book in 1932 has been possible without resort to the fundamental principles enunciated in it, especially those concerning the interpretation of vowel endings in inflexions of nouns and verbs” (The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism, Volume IV, Page 22).

KHALSA COLLEGE, AMRITSAR

When Khalsa college at Amritsar started functioning in the year 1901, it gave a stimulus to the Singh Sabha Movement. It gained the reputation of being the premiere institution of the Sikhs, and many persons associated with the College as Principal became well known names in the history of the Singh Sabha Movement. Bhai Jodh Singh (1882-1981) was one such person, who was a student, then lecturer and ultimately the Principal of this prestigious institution. He was one of the most learned and honoured Sikhs, who were considered as the most reliable interpreters of Sikhism. His commentaries on Japji and Bhagat Bani are among the best commentaries. His other important works includes *Gurmat Nirnay* (1932), *Prachin Biran Bare Bhullan di Sodhan* (1947), and *Shri Kartarpur Bir de Darshan* (1968): in English *Japji* (1918), *Life of Sri Guru Amardas Ji* (1921), *33 Sawaiyas* (1953), *Gospel of Guru Nanak in His Own Words* (1969) and *Kabir* (1971).

DR. GANDA SINGH

Dr. Ganda Singh was also associated with Khalsa College at Amritsar, where he remained Incharge of its newly created Sikh History Research Department. Later on he was Principal of Khalsa College, Patiala from where he went to Punjabi University, Patiala wherein he set up Punjab History Conference in 1965 which proved to be the most suitable platform for discussion of various matters relating to Punjab history. It was he, who in 1967 started the Journal ‘Punjab the past & present’ which carried the best and the highly researched articles on Sikh history. Dr. Ganda Singh was himself a prolific writer, and he contributed scores of research papers, booklets, pamphlets and over two dozens volumes of high historical values. His rich library is now possessed by Punjabi University, Patiala.

CHIEF KHALSA DIWAN

The Sikh Sabhas in various towns came to be known as Diwans with affiliation of number of Sabhas to them. For example, Singh Sabhas of Amritsar were affiliated to Khalsa Diwan, Amritsar. However, with the passage of time Central

Diwan was created, which came to be known as Chief Khalsa Diwan of which the opening session was held on 30th October, 1902 wherein Baba Teja Singh Bhasaur performed Ardas and Bhai Arjan Singh of Bagarian and S. Sundar Singh Majithia were elected as the President and Secretary of Chief Khalsa Diwan. This Diwan to which 29 Singh Sabhas including those of Amritsar, Rawalpindi, Agra, Bhasaur, Multan, etc. were affiliated in the beginning were later on expanded with more Sabhas coming under its control. The Chief Khalsa Diwan was mainly aimed at promoting the educational and religious aspirations of the Sikhs. The most important achievement of the Chief Khalsa Diwan was the formation of Sikh Educational Conference which was to be held annually for looking all the aspects of education of the Sikhs. Advancement of Punjabi was one of the main planks of the Sikh Educational Conference formed in 1908 at the insistence of the Diwan dignitaries such as Sundar Singh Majithia and Harbans Singh Ataari who, travelling through Sindh preaching Guru Nanak's word, had attended in December 1907, a session of the Mohammedan Educational Conference at Karachi and returned with the idea of having a similar institution set up for Sikhs. Besides channelizing the Diwan's work on behalf of Punjabi, the Sikh Educational Conference did much to promote western style education among Sikhs.

SIKH EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE

The first Educational Conference was held at Gujranwala (now in Pakistan) and since then 61 conferences have been held at different places, the last being at Amritsar in October, 2002. In these conferences, the Sikh intelligencia discussed various problems of the Sikhs including the religious and political problems. However, when the struggle for freedom of the country became active, a separate wing of Sikhs became prominent for dealing with religious and political matters and the main task of Chief Khalsa Diwan was confined to education and spread of spiritual knowledge. Shiromani Akaali Dal became the political party to look after the political aspirations of the Sikhs and due to their efforts, Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee came into being by an Act of Government known as the Gurudwara Act, 1925 for the task of management of all the major historical Sikh shrines.

MASTER TARA SINGH

So far as Akaali Dal is concerned, its leader Master Tara Singh (1885-1967) has been till now the boldest and the most daring spokesman of the Sikhs. Although he had fought against the British in cooperation with the Congress, he always did his best to get the interest of the Sikhs protected. Even after independence, he had to struggle hard for getting Punjab, a linguistic State. Since then, like all other political parties, there have been many splits in Akaali

Dal also, but even today, recognizing the bold leadership and the qualities of fearlessness and courage of Master Ji, an Akaali Dal under his name is still active in the Sikh politics. In consideration of his services a portrait of him was included in the Central Hall of the Parliament and his bust was erected just outside Gurudwara Rakabganj in Delhi. It may be added that a well known magazine in Punjabi, 'Sant Sipahi', dedicated to his memory was founded and continued to be published after him by his daughter Bibi Rajinder Kaur, who was also a fearless Akaali leader. When Bibi Rajinder Kaur was killed in a terrorist attack, her husband carried on the publication of the magazine, after whose death, the daughter of Bibi Rajinder Kaur named Bibi Kiranjot Kaur took up the task of publishing the said magazine. However, due to her various social and political activities, she entrusted this job to S. Gurcharanjit Singh Lamba, an advocate Sikh scholar and now the magazine is being published by S. Lamba as its Editor at Jalandhar. Apart from Masterjee, other prominent Akaali leaders included S. Mehtab Singh, Baba Kharak Singh, Sant Fateh Singh and S. Harchand Singh Longowal (He had entered into an agreement with Shri Rajiv Gandhi, then Prime Minister for settlement of Akaali demands, but soon after that, he was shot by some presumed extremists).

BABA KHARAK SINGH

So far as Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee is concerned, Baba Kharak Singh (1868-1963) was its President, when the committee did excellent job in the early years of its inception. Its main task was the redemption of Gurudwaras from Mahants and Government interference, which has been discussed in a separate chapter. The service rendered by Baba Kharak Singh for the great cause of Sikhs as well as for the freedom of the country deserves a special mention. He had to undergo severest of the afflictions while in jail but he stood like a rock and always came out triumphant. When he was sent to jail in distant Dera Ghazi Khan (now in Pakistan), there, in protest against the forced removal of the turbans of Sikh and Gandhi caps of non-Sikh political prisoners, he discarded all his clothes except his Kachhahira or drawers. Despite the extreme weather conditions of the place, he remained barebacked until he was released after his full term. In view of his bold and daring acts for the freedom of the country, his portrait has also been recently installed in Central Hall of the Parliament.

SGPC AND ITS WORKS

Since then a number of persons have been associated with Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee as office bearers or members including S. Gurcharan Singh Tohra, who recently died after occupying its president's post for the maximum number of times spanning over a period of more than 25

years. Among the most notable works of the SGPC mention may be made of the Rehat Maryada which was prepared under aegis of this body. The SGPC had appointed a committee of 28 members to examine all the Rehat Namas with a view to finally prepare an acceptable Rehat Maryada. Professor Teja Singh, another distinguished Principal of Khalsa College, Amritsar was entrusted the task of preparing a draft which was published and circulated for eliciting public opinion. The comments received from various quarters were then examined and the final Rehat Maryada (code of conduct) was prepared for the guidance of the Sikhs. This Rehat Maryada now governs the Sikh viewpoint on various issues relating to religious and social matters.

SGPC also started two magazines named as 'Gurudwara Gazette' & 'Gurmat Prakash' which are now in wide circulation. The committee has also published considerable literature (although not sufficient as per requirements) which includes translation of Guru Granth Sahib in English and Punjabi by S. Manmohan Singh (in 8 parts) Gurmat Martand by Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha (in 2 parts), Vaaran by Bhai Gurdas and research works of Karam Singh, Historian. The SGPC had declared that they will publish more literature to mark 300th Birth of the Khalsa but that task has not yet been completed as planned. In fact, the need of the time is to get more and more new literature published, old literature and classics including the holy volumes translated into more and more languages and its free and wider distribution with a missionary zeal. There is no dearth of funds and there is a Dharam Prachar Committee also working under the SGPC, so there is no reason that useful literature should not be made available free of cost to the people of the world.

NANAK SHAHI CALENDAR

Another notable work of SGPC has been its approval of the Nanak Shahi Calendar which is one of the boldest steps taken in the Sikh history so far. It has not only ended a controversy which had caused a division among the Sikhs but has also cleared many confusions regarding various important historical dates. A very bold Canada based Sikh Professor Pal Singh Purewal had understood the problem caused by the existing calendar to which he suggested to adopt a Nanak Shahi Calendar. The Institute of Sikh Studies at Chandigarh called a meeting of representatives of all major organizations of the Panths including SGPC, DSGMC, Chief Khalsa Diwan, Dum Dami Taksal, Kendriya Singh Sabha, Universities, Khalsa Colleges, Gurudwara Committees, etc. as to discuss the problems and reforms. Dr. Kharak Singh, who is a renowned scholar alongwith other historians and scholars constituted a committee to examine the available data to determine correct dates of the Gurupurabs. The reports submitted by these committees were considered by the SGPC. Earlier, Jathedar of Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib, Giani Puran Singh had not approved it, as such Bibi

Jagir Kaur, the then SGPC President also failed to adopt it, but the present Jathedar namely Singh Sahib Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti (Professor Kirpal Singh Badungar was the President of the SGPC at that time) took up the matter boldly and got it examined by other committees, finally to arrive at the courageous decision to introduce new calendar with effect from Baisakhi 2003. It goes to the credit of S. Gurcharan Singh Tohra, who piloted the draft and got it approved in the general house of the SGPC. The role played by Bibi Kiranjot Kaur, then General Secretary of SGPC, in this respect is also quite appreciable. Finally, Nanak Shahi Calendar was released by S. Manjit Singh Calcutta, Secretary of the SGPC.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF SINGH SABHA MOVEMENT

The Singh Sabha Movement on the whole brought spectacular results in the rejuvenation of Sikh religion. It was because of this movement that Anand Marriage Act 1909 was passed. The passing of this Act which gave legal validity to the Sikh ceremony of marriage, strengthened their stand that they were not bound to follow the Hindu practices/ceremonies. The movement also exposed the evils which had crept into the social and religious life of the Sikhs. It reclaimed Sikhism from “a state of utter ossification and inertia and articulated the inner urge of Sikhism for reform and gave it a decisive direction”. It not only checked the relapse of the Sikhs into Hinduism but also retaliated by carrying proselytizing activities into the Hindu camp. A large number of Hindus were baptized and the Sikh population which was 17,06,165 in 1881 rose to 21,02,896 in 1901 and never dwindled again.

The Singh Sabha Movement also gave a boost to the literary activity among the Sikhs. Although, with the writings of Baba Farid and the great Sikh Gurus in Punjabi, this language had become one of the few world languages of scriptures, its condition did not remain satisfactory after the period of rich compositions by Sufi poets before the last quarter of the 19th century. Thus many persons associated with the movement started writing in Punjabi for the enrichment of the language.

BHAI VIR SINGH

Bhai Vir Singh (1872-1957) generally known as sixth river of Punjab had not only taken active interest in the affairs of Singh Sabha Movement but, was also instrumental in making Khalsa Tract Society, starting a Punjabi Weekly, the Khalsa Samachar and also producing the various genera of immortal literary compositions. By writing some semi-historical novels like Sundari (1898), Bijay Singh (1899) and Satwant Kaur, (Published in two parts (I) in 1900 & (ii) in 1927), he recreated the heroic 18th century of Sikh history as to provide to his readers typical Sikh models of courage, fortitude and human dignity. He also

produced tremendous poetry including an epic Rana Surat Singh written in blank verse of Sirkhandi variety. He also tried various other poetic forms like Kabit, Sortha, Baint, Rubai, etc. All his works are published by Bhai Veer Singh Sahitya Sadan, Amritsar (and now Delhi).

PROFESSOR PURAN SINGH

A contemporary of Bhai Vir Singh, Professor Puran Singh (1881-1931) was a great scientist and a literaturer. Although, science was his special field and in view of that he had started business of distillation of essential oils wherefrom he prepared Thymol, Fennel and Lemon oil but gradually he became inclined towards literature. He wrote both in English and Punjabi. Many of his works were aimed at promoting the knowledge of Sikh religion. These included “The Ten Masters”, “The Spirit Born People” and collection of essays in Punjabi, namely “Khule Lekh” and “Khule Maidan”.

PROFESSOR MOHAN SINGH

Another prominent Punjabi poet of that period was Professor Mohan Singh. There are a number of his poetic collections including ‘Nakayan’. His ‘Save Patar’ includes one poem entitled ‘Sikhi’. His writing about Sikh religion in this poem as per the following verses has immortalized him:

ਉਹ ਕਿਹੜਾ ਬੂਟਾ ਏ?
 ਹਰ ਥਾਂ ਜੋ ਪਲਦਾ ਹੈ—
 ਆਰੇ ਦੇ ਦੰਦਿਆਂ 'ਤੇ,
 ਰੰਬੀਆਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਧਾਰਾਂ 'ਤੇ,
 ਖ਼ੈਬਰ ਦਿਆਂ ਦਰਿਆਂ ਵਿਚ,
 ਸਰਸਾ ਦੀਆਂ ਲਹਿਰਾਂ 'ਤੇ,
 ਸਤਲੁਜ ਦੇ ਕੰਢੇ 'ਤੇ,
 ਲੱਖੀ ਦੇ ਜੰਗਲ ਵਿੱਚ,
 ਰੋੜਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ, ਰੱਕੜਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ,
 ਸਰਹੰਦ ਦੀਆਂ ਨੀਹਾਂ ਵਿਚ,
 ਜਿੱਥੇ ਵੀ ਲਾ ਦੇਈਏ,
 ਓਥੇ ਹੀ ਪਲਦਾ ਏ,
 ਜਿਤਨਾ ਇਹ ਛਾਂਗ ਦੇਈਏ,
 ਉਤਨਾ ਇਹ ਫਲਦਾ ਏ।

*Uh kihra boota hai?
 Har thaan jo palda hai-
 Aare de dandiaan te,
 Rambiaan deaan dhaaraan te,
 Khaibar de dariaan vich,
 Sarsa deaan lehraan te,
 Satluj de kandhe te,*

*Lakhi de jungle vich,
Roraan vich, rakraan vich,
Sarhand deaan neehaan vich,
Jithe vee la de-ee-e,
Othe hee palda ea,
Jitna ih chhaang de-ee-e,
Utna hee phalda ea.*

**Which is that tree
That grows everywhere,
On the blades of saw,
On the turning wheels,
With sharp spokes,
In the mountain pass of Khaiber,
And waves of Sirsa,
On the banks of Sutlej,
In the Lakhi forests,
In woods and stones,
In the walls of Sirhind,
Wherever, we plant
Sikhism verily's a flourishing tree,
The more you prune it,
The more it spreads in root and branch.**

PUNJABI UNIVERSITY, PATIALA

In the fight of the Sikhs against illiteracy and ignorance , it was not only the SGPC or the Chief Khalsa Diwan which produced religious literature for the enlightenment of the Sikhs, there were many other institutions also which started making efforts in this direction. Punjabi University set up at Patiala was aimed at promoting Punjabi language and culture including Sikh religion as both its language and culture were highly influenced by the Sikh Gurus. Professor Puran Singh had truly stated that Punjab thrived on the name of the Gurus only. Thus, considerable literature has been produced since the inception of this university in 1962. It was noted that most of the encyclopaedias published all over the world contained wrong information regarding Sikh religion. In view of the theory propagated by detractors of this religion that Sikhs were merely an off shoot of Hinduism, the encyclopaedias were mentioning this view point in some of the encyclopaedias, Guru Nanak was shown as a disciple of Kabir and many other facts were also given wrongly and adversely to the understanding of this religion. The Punjabi University, therefore, justly took up a project of preparing an encyclopaedia. This Encyclopaedia of Sikhism edited by S. Harbans Singh was brought out in four parts. It is a matter of great satisfaction that with the view to keep the Encyclopaedia updated, the University has established the Encyclopaedia Cell

in the Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies into a separate full fledged Department. It has been named in honour of late Editor in Chief, Professor Harbans Singh Department of Encyclopaedia of Sikhism. This Cell is making sincere efforts not only to update it with further entries, but also to get it rendered into Punjabi. The Punjabi University has also published another scholarly work on Guru Granth Sahib in Punjabi entitled as “Guru Granth Kosh” by S. Ratan Singh Jaggi. A large number of books on Punjabi & Punjabi culture have also been published by this University.

GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY

Guru Nanak Dev University set up in 1969 on the occasion of the 500th birth of the founder of Sikh religion has also brought out a large number of new publications on Sikh religion and the new edition of old works useful for the purpose of research. Its Department of Guru Nanak Studies (Bibi Madanjeet Kaur, being its Head for a long time did excellent work by her religious writings) has been publishing ‘Journal of Sikh Studies’ wherein reputed researchers and scholars of Sikh history and religion have been contributing. Some significant works for understanding Guru Granth Sahib as published by press and publication Deptt. of the University under the directionship of S.J.S. Walia include *Gurbani Tatt Sagar* (6 parts). This work by Sardar Santa Singh Tatlay encompasses 4000 independent topics and 75000 references from Guru Granth Sahib, well explained and illustrated. S. Santa Singh has also prepared *Tattsagar. Bhai Gurdas*, which also covers 1000 independent propagation subjects of study for the purpose of research. This work is also likely to be published by this university. The research in Sikh religion being the need of the time, such works may help the researchers and enable them to give a correct interpretation of Guru Granth Sahib to the world. The universities can play an important role in this respect. In the recent years, another university in the name of Guru Gobind Singh has been established in Delhi. It is, therefore, expected that these institutions of learning will produce scholarly and well researched works in the coming years.

Apart from the universities, there were certain other departments and publishing houses which published books relating to Sikh religion. For example, Bhasha Vibhag of Punjab Government having its headquarters at Patiala also published considerable literature. Similarly, Bhai Veer Singh Sahitya Sadan has also since been publishing considerable literature of this kind. Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle with its head office at Ludhiana, Sikh Missionary College Ludhiana, Patiala & Delhi and Institute of Sikh Studies have also contributed considerably in this regard. Among the publishers, there were New Book Company of Jalandhar, Lahore Book Shop from Ludhiana, M/s Arcee Publishers from Delhi, M/s Jawahar Singh Kirpal Singh from Amritsar,

etc. which produced good religious literature on Sikhism. The contribution of Bhapa Pritam Singh of Delhi and that of M/s Hemkunt Press, Delhi has also been quite significant. M/s Singh Brothers and M/s Chattar Singh Jiwan Singh of Amritsar are still producing Sikh religious books in big number. These publishing houses have now published a good number of books in English also as to create awareness about Sikh religion among the people of the world. M/s Chattar Singh Jiwan Singh is also known for publishing Guru Granth Sahib for the last 100 years. Now SGPC and Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Prabhandak Committee are also publishing Guru Granth Sahib.

GIANIS, RELIGIOUS PERSONS & JOURNALISTS

Before this chapter is closed, the contribution of Gianis, religious persons and journalists to strengthen this movement also need to be briefly mentioned. Giani in Punjabi means scholar of high learning in Sikh religion. This term has generally been used for those persons who are competent to recite faultlessly, interpret and expound Guru Granth Sahib and other Sikh religious texts. Bhai Mani Singh, who had received instructions from the 9th and the 10th Guru, and who had the privilege of writing a copy of Guru Granth Sahib as dictated by the 10th Guru at Talwandi Sabo (Dam Dama Sahib, the Bir prepared at that time is known as Dam Dami Bir) is believed to have started Giani School of Sikhs. Although, before that, Baba Sri Chand (1494-1629), son of Guru Nanak had started Udasi Sampardai and there were Nirmalas also, who had contributed some literature for the advancement of Sikh religion, the Gianis were the most proficient exponents of philosophy and thought of Guru Gobind Singh. The various Gianis since time of Bhai Mani Singh included the prominent ones like Bhai Chanda Singh, Bhai Hazara Singh, Bhai Bhagwan Singh and some of them in recent times like Giani Bishan Singh, Giani Narain Singh, Bhai Veer Singh and Bhai Kirpal Singh. The main task of these Gianis has been to perform Katha i.e. discoursing on the Sikh teachings expounding a given hymn from the lives of the Gurus and their prominent followers. Bhai Gurdas was the first to give such discourses, but the founder of this school, Bhai Mani Singh was specially sent by Guru Gobind Singh to Amritsar where he started this kind of service. That is why Amritsar became the prominent centre of Gianis and the place where the Gianis used to live came to be known as "Bunga Gianian".

These Gianis of Amritsar successively served as head priests of the Harimandir Sahib at Amritsar. Bhai Surat Singh was followed successively by Bhai Gurdas Singh, Bhai Sant Singh, Bhai Gurmukh Singh and Giani Parduman Singh. Some others had their own deras or seats at different places. Giani Kirpal Singh had made his Dera at Mai Satto Wali Gali at Amritsar whereas Sant Kartar Singh established his seat at Patiala. Presently also,

Gianies from different Schools/Deras give spiritual discourses e.g. Giani Sant Singh Maskeen, who has his seat at Alwar in Rajasthan, makes extensive tours throughout the year to give spiritual discourses. He speaks not only on religious matters but on other matters also which are related in one or the other way with *prachar*. For example, in one of his talks he was vocal enough to criticize the present system of Gurudwara management. He expressed his views boldly which also finds expression in one of his books, wherein he says that if Gurudwaras are managed by the right people, there will be so much wealth available with the Gurudwaras that it can be utilized for the welfare and enrichment of the entire community. Wherever he gives his discourses, people in large number come to listen to him with patience and devotion. He also appears in a daily programme on ETC Channel entitled as “Gyan Da Sagar”.

SANT ATAR SINGH OF MASTUANA

There were certain religious persons also who played a significant role in promoting Sikh religion and strengthening the movements aimed at fighting ignorance and illiteracy. While making a mention of some of them, the name of Sant Atar Singh of Mastuana deserves to be mentioned first of all. Sant Atar Singh of Mastuana was one such charismatic figures in the field of Sikh piety. Although he travelled extensively in the north west frontier provinces, he established his main centre in the Malwa region at Gursagar, Mustuana near Sangrur. By his melodious and resonant recitations of the Gurus' bani before vast audiences, he created a new religious fervour in the Sikh community. Many were impressed by his gentle and spiritual manner and were drawn into the fold of Sikhism. Even in the field of education his contribution was notable in the sense that he helped in starting several institutions such as Khalsa High School, Lyallpur; Khalsa High School, Chakval, Missionary College, Gujranwala, Guru Nanak Khalsa College, Gujranwala, Malva Khalsa High School, Ludhiana and Akaal College, Mastuana. In 1914, he went to Benaras at the invitation of Madan Mohan Malviya to participate in the ceremonies for laying the foundation of the Sanskrit College. Maharaja Ripudaman Singh of Nabha, who was an admirer of Sant Atar Singh took him to Varanasi in his own saloon. Under the tent near the site of the college, Sant Atar Singh performed a series of five '*Akhand paths*', or continuous, uninterrupted readings of the Guru Granth Sahib, Maharaja Ripudaman Singh saying the 'Rehraas' every evening. As these recitations of the Guru Granth Sahib were concluded, Maharaja Ganga Singh of Bikaner offered concrete in a silver plate and Santji laid the foundation of the building by applying it to the eleven bricks of gold supplied by the Raja of Kashi. After the ceremonies were over, Sant Atar Singh remained in Varanasi for a week as the guest of the Raja who treated him with deep reverence. (Encyclopaedia of Sikhism Vol. I, Page 212-213). It may be added

that he was again the inspiring force behind starting of Baru Sahib academy. After him Sant Teja Singh continued to promote Sikh education. Presently Baba Iqbal Singh is looking after a number of educational institutions including Akal Academy at Baru Sahib in Himachal Pradesh. This academy is providing not only excellent education, but is also teaching the children as how to live a Sikh way of living.

Baba Nand Singh and Baba Ishar Singh were other saintly personages who attracted a considerable following. Although the original Dera of these saints was at Nanaksar, Kaleran but now there are a number of preaching centers established by their devotees at different places. They not only sang Gurubani, but also impressed the people with their '*simran*' i.e. repetition of the divine name and spiritual discourses. Raara Sahib is another important place with which the religious preaching has always remained associated. A famous saintly personality associated with this place, situated 16 kms. from Doraha, District Ludhiana was Sant Ishar Singh. He made himself known far and wide by his prolonged Kirtan, Soirees in his strong resounding voice attracting the devotee audiences from far and wide including England and other foreign countries.

DAM DAMI TAKSAL

Dam Dami Taksal has always been contributing considerably in the propagation of Sikh religion since the time of its founder Baba Deep Singh. Sant Gurbachan Singh had taken extensive tours for propagating the Sikh religion. After his death when Sant Kartar Singh Khalsa became the head of Dam Dami Taksal, he shifted his headquarters to Gurudwara Gurdarshan Prakash at Mehta Chowk 25 Kms. North east of Amritsar. Before his death in a road accident, he named Jarnail Singh as his successor. Sant Jarnail Singh had remarkable enthusiasm in carrying out his missionary activities. He used to denounce all kinds of anti Sikh activities, use of alcohol, drugs, trimming of hair, etc. However, when on the Baisakhi day of 1978, there occurred a confrontation between the Sikhs and the Nirankaris, he figured in the news as the most vocal protester against the government allowing the Nirankaris to hold their convention at a time when the Sikhs were celebrating the birth anniversary of the Khalsa. When the Sikhs marched to the site of the Nirankari Convention, they were fired upon by the Nirankari Guardsman killing 13 of them at the spot and wounding 78 others. This episode dragged Sant Jarnail Singh into the political field and later on he came to be known as Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale.

The govt. exploited the position and a sort of tussle started between Sikhs led at that time by Sant Ji and the govt. A peaceful person who believed in propagation of religion became increasingly outspoken. The govt. and the

non-Sikhs started considering Sant Jarnail Singh a Sikh fundamentalist. When Sant Jarnail Singh alongwith other like minded people including Bhai Amrik Singh son of late Sant Kartar Singh Khalsa, President of the All India Sikh Student Federation stationed themselves at Harimandir Sahib, Amritsar, the govt. got alarmed. It is true that the atmosphere in the holy places during those days had become tense as a result of which the number of visitors also dwindled considerably, but govt. does not appear to have made a correct assessment of the activities and jumped to a wrong decision of launching an attack not only on the Golden Temple but many other religious places (Gurudwaras) hurting thereby the psyche of all the Sikhs whether they were supporting Sant Jarnail Singh or not. It not only caused a considerable damage to the buildings, literature and valuable treasure of vital historical importance but also resulted in tremendous loss of human lives. Those killed in large numbers included Sant Jarnail Singh and Bhai Amrik Singh, also. However, despite the role of Sant Jarnail Singh and Bhai Amrik Singh, which may be a subject of difference of opinion among the people, it cannot be denied that Dam Dami Taksal has always been playing an important role in the propagation of Sikh religion.

BABA PREM SINGH HOTI MARDAN

Another remarkable personality, who rendered a fantastic service in promoting the Sikh religion was Baba Prem Singh Hoti Mardan. His coming into contact with Bhai Vir Singh at the time of the first Sikh Educational Conference at Gujranwala changed his course of life. Bhai Vir Singh prompted him to write biographies of Sikh heroes who had fallen fighting for the glory of the Khalsa. Prem Singh took to the task with a rare zeal and biographies flowed from his pen prolifically, establishing this genre in Punjabi writing and creating a new interest in Sikh history. The series began with a biography of Akaali Phoola Singh (1914), followed by those of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1918), Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh (1927), Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa (1937), Maharaja Sher Singh (1951) and Nawab Kapur Singh (1952). His *Khalsa Raj de Usraye* "Builders of the Khalsa Raj" (Vol. I in 1942 and Vol.II in 1944), and *Khalsa Raj de Badesi Karinde* "Foreign employees of the Sikh kingdom" (1945) were collections of shorter biographies. His lives of Bhai Gurdas, Bhai Sukkha Singh and Maharaja Dilip Singh remained unfinished. In 1952, he was honoured by the Punjabi Department of the Patiala and East Punjab States Union Government for his monumental work for the advancement of Punjabi letters (The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism, Vol.III Page 367).

BHAI RANDHIR SINGH

Bhai Randhir Singh was another holy person, a singer of Gurbani, a

revolutionary and writer of more than 3 dozen of books and pamphlets on Sikh theology, philosophy & mysticism. When in the course of Ghadar Movement in Malwa region, he was arrested and kept in jail, he wrote certain letters which later on took the shape of a book named 'Jail Chitthian'. The importance of this work is that it reveals a significant meeting which was arranged by a Muslim jailor in Lahore jail, between him and Bhagat Singh who was under death sentence at that time. Bhai Randhir Singh disclosed that Bhagat Singh confessed that he had been upto that time an atheist but after meeting him, a new spiritual awareness had dawned upon him. It is believed that before execution Bhagat Singh again kept his long hair and appeared in the Sikh form. Other important works of Bhai Randhir Singh include *Anhad Shabad Dasam Dwaar*, *Charan Kamal Ki Mauj* and *Gurmati Nam Abhias Kamai*. All these works are philosophical and spiritual whereas another work *Gurbani Dian Lagan Matran Di Bilakhnata* deals with peculiarities of vowel symbols in Gurbani. Sikhs under his influence constitute 'Akhand Kirtani Jatha' which often gives various Gurbani programmes. A large number of women in his group started wearing Kesaki to cover the knot of hair on their head. Such women can be seen even today.

BIRTH OF PUNJABI JOURNALISM

The fight against illiteracy cannot be complete unless there is a media to associate and participate in this fight. In this respect, the birth of Punjabi journalism in the wake of Singh Sabha Movement was also a great leap in this regard for the promotion of Punjabi language and for defusing the crisis of Sikh identity. Towards the end of 19th century, the Sikh journalism appeared on the forefront for revitalizing the community. Many newspapers & magazines were started, but many of them did not continue for a longer period. The notable journalists whose contribution deserves to be appreciated in this context included Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid, Bhai Gurmukh Singh, Bhai Vir Singh, S. Sundar Singh Majithia, Bhai Jodh Singh, Master Tara Singh, S. Hira Singh Dard, S. Amar Singh Shere-I-Punjab and so on. Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid was apothecary, a writer and a medical practitioner. He was one of the pioneers of the modern Punjabi prose with a simple and vigorous style of writing. He wrote nearly 200 tracts and books on topics varying from religion, social reform, medicine and health care to politics and psychology. Besides writing many novels, stories, essays and a couple of plays, mostly didactic in nature, he also published translations or adoptions of some western classics. Some of his more important works (other than those on medicine) are Dampati Piar, Rang Barange Phul and Hire dian Kania (fiction)' Birdh Viah Durdasha Natak (play); Rabbi Jor Mela (mysticism); Karam Yog, Bachan Vichar Ratnawali and Atmak Unnati (ethics), Ilm Khyal sub-titled Law of Mentalism (psychology);

Kire Makaure (zoology); and Grahi Prabandh Shastar (household economics). One of his pioneering efforts to propagate Gurbani among the non-Punjabi readers was the publication in 1928 of the Guru Granth Sahib in the Devnagri script. He was keen book lover, and a voracious reader. His biographer records that in 1931 at least 26 different papers and periodicals, mostly in Punjabi, were regularly received by him. His collection of books, magazines, pamphlets and newspapers has since been donated by his descendants to Punjabi University, Patiala, and it constitutes a rare bibliographical resource in Northern India.

Bhai Gurmukh Singh, Ganda Singh and Bhai Ditt Singh established Khalsa Press and started a weekly newspaper in Punjabi named as Khalsa Akhbaar. It was Bhai Vir Singh who set up in 1892. Wazir-I-Hind Press which became a primary source for Punjabi literature. Paper started by him as Khalsa Samachar (1899) is still being published. Bhagat Lakshman Singh, the famous writer of 'Sikh Martyrs' had started first English newspaper 'The Khalsa'. Another English weekly established by Bhai Jodh Singh (Khalsa, Advocate) (1903) is still being published by the Chief Khalsa Diwan. Some Urdu papers were also started by the Sikhs as Urdu was a popular language in those days. Whereas Master Tara Singh started the Urdu Akaali, of which later on a Punjabi version was also brought out, S. Amar Singh of Pindi Gheb (now in Pakistan), started Sher-I-Punjab. This paper is still continuing and is being published by his family. S. Amar Singh was not only a great journalist but also a scholar and a prominent figure in Sikh politics of those times. He was an associate of Baba Khadak Singh, and remained member of SGPC during the period of Jaito agitation. The most important monthly to be published in Punjabi in those days was (Phulwari) which was edited by S. Hira Singh Dard, who was a journalist with vast experience. It was Phulwari which set new standards of Punjabi prose and served as a major sounding board for Sikh intellectuals. Some of the most important essays by the Sikh historians and theologians were first printed in Phulwari.

SIKH STUDENT FEDERATION

Apart from the Singh Sabhas, the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee, the Chief Khalsa Diwan and various scholars & writers, who played a significant role in saving the Sikh religion during that crucial period in the pre-partition days, there was another organization which came into being in 1944 at Lahore with a view to promote among the Sikh youth, the principles and values for making them conscious of their religious inheritance. This organization was not only meant for the youth, but was also constituted by the Sikh youth studying in colleges and universities. It came to be known as the Sikh Student Federation with S. Swarup Singh as its first president. Before its

formation, there existed many Bhujangi Sabhas, Societies of the Sikh youth in schools to nurture Sikh ideals. These Sabhas were performing a good service till the formation of the Sikh Student Federation.

When the country became independent the Sikh Student Federation widened its sphere of activities. A very important task undertaken by this federation was organizing Sikh youth camps. These camps became so popular that even senior and seasoned leaders became associated. These leaders used to give speeches followed by intellectual discussions. The youth benefited by these discussions and lectures in such a way that a new zeal was created among them to understand and propagate their religion. The brilliant youth who spearheaded this movement included such leaders as S. Surjit Singh Barnala, S. Amar Singh Ambalvi, S. Jaswant Singh Neki, S. Gurmit Singh, S. Satbir Singh, Bhai Harbans Lal, S. Makhan Singh, S. Dalbir Singh and S. Santokh Singh of Indore. There are many others who had made themselves famous in their respective spheres. In fact, there is hardly a Sikh of any eminence who had not been touched by the Federation and its ideology. Men like Buta Singh, one time Home Minister of India and India's fabulous Prime minister Manmohan Singh were no exception. Another name that became a legend was that of Bhai Amrik Singh (1948-84), son of Giani Kartar Singh Khalsa, who was elected president on 2 July 1978. He remained its president even during his internment from July 1982 to August 1983 and thereafter until his death during Operation Blue Star in June 1984. This was a glorious period of Sikh youth resurgence and the Sikh youth found themselves profoundly moved. This was momentous experience for the entire body of the Sikh youth and its impact lasts to this day (The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism Vol.IV Page 178-179).

CONCLUSION:

For the survival and growth of a community, the fight against ignorance and illiteracy has to continue for ever. It is unfortunate for the Sikhs that the movement which started towards the end of the 19th century became weak in the 2nd half of the 20th century. Although Singh Sabhas and Sikh Student Federation are still there, but they are not doing the work so vigorously as when they started. It is true that a number of educational institutions have been started by SGPC, Delhi Gurudwara Management Committee and Chief Khalsa Diwan, but the standard of education in these schools is not at all upto the mark. There is a tough competition among educational institutions and as the Sikh parents find other educational institutions better than the Sikh institutions, they prefer to put their children in those institutions. In those institutions, the education standard may be very high, but there is no education regarding Sikh religion, and the children studying there are not only deprived of this knowledge but also the knowledge of their mother tongue, Punjabi. A

large number of Sikh children, therefore, do not know anything about their religion, nor can they speak their own language. However, some private trusts have started their own educational institutions, which are doing a good job, both in respect of maintaining a higher standard and also imparting Sikh religious education. For example, in Amritsar, Sant Singh Sukkha Singh group is running good institutions, both a school and a college, under the Directorship of S. Jagdish Singh, who was earlier a Principal for a long time, and is himself a highly religious and learned person. Miri Piri Academy in Amritsar in which most of the children are American converted Sikhs is also doing a wonderful job in this regard. Some such good institutions in Delhi include Mat Jai Kaur Public School, Jaspal Kaur Public Schools, Mota Singh Public School and Guru Tegh Bahadur 3rd Centenary Public School. Specific mention need be made of Guru Nanak Vth Centenary Schools at Mussoorie. These schools set up in 1969 are spread over sprawling area of around 80 acres, divided into two separate campuses. The co-educational institutions run by the family of S. Mehtab Singh provide a high standard of education alongwith spiritual knowledge for overall development of the students. The students are also taught Punjabi, Gurmat Sangeet and the teachings of the Masters inculcating in them the feelings of caring and sharing with others based upon the Sikh principles of welfare of all.

The question may arise as why the schools being run by the Sikh organizations like SGPC, Delhi Gurudwara Management Committee and Chief Khalsa Diwan fall short of the benchmark of educational standard maintained by others. The reason for this is the failure of leadership among the Sikhs. When the leaders are themselves devoid of any knowledge, many of whom not even educated, how it can be expected from them to carry on successful fighting against ignorance and illiteracy. They have rather helped in creating such false centres of Gurudom wherein Sikhs are misled and kept away from the truth of the divine revelations. Some of the intelligencia have realized that the increasing wave of apostasy and the onslaught of so called modernism and of all those forces who do not want the Sikhs to emerge powerful, need to be stemmed by bringing another powerful movement. In their own way they are trying it by writing, giving talks, organizing seminars and conferences and exposing the failure on the part of the leaders. In the criticism of present Sikh leadership, the intellectuals including Professors and senior IAS officers in India and such elite in the countries abroad have held in various seminars and conferences that this leadership must be replaced by dedicated and devoted to the welfare of the community, those who can bring awareness regarding Gurmat concepts among the Sikhs.

REFORMING GURDWARA MANAGEMENT

In fact, a radical change is required in the management of the Gurudwaras for effecting which some amendments may become necessary in the relevant Acts. The political interference in the Gurudwaras must come to an end. The source of management and corruption in religious places is mainly because of the dominance of politics over religion. The politicians know as how to get elected and after having been elected, they are always keen to feather their own nest rather render any service. As mentioned above, Giani Sant Singh Maskeen had invited our attention to this aspect in one of his books. Similarly, a notable doctor scholar of the present age, Dr. Jaswant Singh Neki, too in one of his recently published articles named 'Towards Corporate Maturity of the Sikh People' (as published in *Nishaan* 2/2003), has given valuable suggestions. He has dealt with the present position of the SGPC and the DGPC (Delhi Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee), and has opined that electoral system in the Gurudwaras is unwarranted. The following paragraphs on this aspect of matter are highly significant:-

“The method of ‘election by majority vote’ has never been a part of our tradition. It has never been practiced during the times of our Gurus. Had elections been in vogue, Sri Lehna ji would never have succeeded Guru Nanak to become Guru Angad. Nobody would have even proposed the name of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Accordingly to our tradition the spiritually elite were chosen to lead our religious community. The Panj Piare, the Guru’s ‘Beloved Five’ were not elected, but selected after they had passed the severest test of self-sacrifice.

In no other known religious community are religious leaders or managers chosen by election. Members of the SGPC, strictly speaking, are not religious leaders, but are looked upon as such being members of the “highest religious body of the Sikhs’. The presence of political vices in them has, unfortunately, led to welling up of disgust in the faith and form itself. The consequences have become alarmingly visible in the rash of cropped beards of our youth, as also of the tremendous mushrooming of pseudo-spiritual ‘Babas’.”

Among the suggestions given by him, he has recommended nomination of superior, ethical and intellectual persons, devoted and committed to the welfare of the Panth and the broad basing of the organizational set up consisting of various levels of management. He has also recommended requisite qualifications of not only the members to be nominated but also that of Jathedars of Takhts. The suggestions given by this great Theologian who has given us classical works like *Ardas* and *Vishva Ardas* and also occupies an

honourable position in literary and professional circles, are worth appreciating. The need of the time is that suggestions should come from other intellectuals also and then a consensus be formed for effecting the reforms in management and organizational set up. The emergence of the new management will definitely bring such leaders to the forefront who will continue to lead the community on the path of enlightenment. They will enable us to continue with full vigor and devotion, our fight against ignorance and illiteracy. May our great Guru dispel our darkness and show us the light, as enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib:

ਰਾਗੁ ਸੂਹੀ ਛੰਤ ਮਹਲਾ ੪ ਘਰ ੨॥

ਅੰਤਰਿ ਰਤਨੁ ਬੀਚਾਰੇ॥ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਪਿਆਰੇ॥

ਹਰਿਨਾਮੁ ਪਿਆਰੇ ਸਬਦਿ ਨਿਸਤਾਰੇ ਅਗਿਆਨੁ ਅਧੇਰੁ ਗਵਾਇਆ॥

ਗਿਆਨੁ ਪ੍ਰਚੰਡੁ ਬਲਿਆ ਘਟਿ ਚਾਨਣੁ ਘਰ ਮੰਦਰ ਸੋਹਾਇਆ॥

Antar ratan beechaare. Gurmukh Naam piaare.

Harnaam piaare sabad nistaare agiaan adher gwaaiiaa.

Giaan parchand ballaa ghat chaanan ghar mandar sohaaiiaa.

The name seems sweet to the Gurmukh,

Who is his mind reflects over the Lord's jewel.

The lovers of God's Name are emancipated by the Name,

And the darkness of their spiritual ignorance is dispelled.

The bright light of knowledge burns in their mind,

And their home and mansion are embellished.

(SGGS, Page 775)

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CHAPTER-XIX

**SIKHS WIN THE FIRST
BATTLE OF FREEDOM**

GURDWARA LIBERATION MOVEMENT

In their spirit of patriotism, the Sikhs had realised that in the course of fight for freedom of the country, their first step should be to free their Gurdwaras from the control of the foreigners. Since the days when the Sikhs had to live in hidden places because of their persecution by the Mughals, the Gurdwaras were being looked after by those people who believed in Sikh scriptures and teachings, but did not keep hair on their head and face with a view to protect themselves from the wrath of rulers. With the passage of time, this class of Gurdwara controllers became hereditary and by the time the Sikh rule ended in Punjab, they had become masters of vast lands and grants as bestowed upon them by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. This made them greedy and neglectful of their duties. Many a Sikh practices were replaced by rituals and instead of preaching the teaching of the Gurus, the clergy class started living in luxury and comfort. These people were patronised by the British. Even the Central Shrine of the Sikhs, the Golden Temple at Amritsar, was controlled by the British Deputy Commissioner through a Sikh Manager appointed by him. This led to the establishment of idols within the temple premises; sitting of Pandits and astrologers therein and following several such practices as were not permitted in the Sikh Religion. One of these practices was that backward classes pilgrims were not allowed inside Harimandir upto a particular time in the Morning. In short, the Sikhs were not satisfied with the administration of Gurdwaras, particularly, at Harimandir at Amritsar, and were of the view that the British must quit the same so that the Sikhs could administer their shrines in their own manner.

Sardar Thakur Singh Sandhawalia, who was a Member of Sri Darbar Sahib Committee in the last quarter of the 19th century, was among the first to raise a voice against the then administration. The First Singh Sabha was formed in Amritsar on 1st October, 1873 for the purpose of reformation. This was followed by the formation of another Singh Sabha at Lahore on 2nd Nov., 1879. A general Sabha combining the two was formed on 11th April, 1880 at Amritsar. A number of Singh Sabhas that came into being thereafter were subjected to the general Sabha being the Central Body, which later on came to be known as

Khalsa Diwan. The main task of the Diwan was religious and social reforms and the promotion of education among the Sikhs as to enlighten them of their rights and duties.

The Khalsa Diwan in their session in April, 1907 at Lahore resolved that the Manager of the Golden Temple appointed by the Govt. be removed and a Committee of Sikh Chiefs be appointed in his place. In this respect, when on 12th October, 1920 some backward caste Sikhs went to Harimandir with Karah Prasad, the Priests refused their offering and to say Ardas on their behalf. This action of Priests was protested against and at last a compromise was reached that a Hukamnama be read from Guru Granth Sahib as whether Karah Prasad be accepted or not. The Hukamnama went in favour of the reformist Sikhs and as such the Karah Prasad was accepted. The devotees present there were in such a high spirit that the priests deserted the Takhat and there was a change in the Management. The beginning of the movement for the liberation of Gurdwaras started on the optimistic note.

GURDWARA RAKAB GANJ ISSUE

The first direct confrontation with the British with regard to the Gurdwaras and their control took place in 1912 when the capital of India was shifted from Calcutta to Delhi. In the course of building of new capital, the Govt. acquired a plot of land attached to Gurdwara Rakab Ganj in New Delhi and demolished an old boundary wall. The Sikhs protested against this demolition. The protest continued for some time, but after the first world war which was won by the British with the help of the Sikhs, the Govt. realised its mistake and apologized to the Sikhs for hurting their feelings. The broken wall was re-built and the property of the Gurdwara was restored.

GURDWARA BABE-DI-BER MANAGEMENT ISSUE

In the process of reforming the administration of the Gurdwaras, the Sikhs paid their attention in October, 1920 to Gurdwara Babe Di Ber, at Sialkot. The problem in the administration of this Gurdwara started in 1918 when Mahant of the Gurdwara died and the Sikhs wanted to appoint a new Mahant of their choice. The daughter in Law of Mahant Harnam Singh, installed her minor son Gurcharan Singh as the New Mahant and a clean-shaven Sikh Ganda Singh was appointed as his regent. The Sikhs formed their own committee of 13 Members and took over the control of Gurdwara by Force. The Divisional Commissioner interfered and ultimately the matter was sorted out by giving administration to the elected Committee. This incident encouraged the Sikhs and it was planned to take over the control of the Management of all the Sikh Shrines. As a result, a Committee of 175 Members was formed on 15th November, 1920 under the Presidentship of Sardar Sundar Singh Majithia.

This Committee known as Shiromani Gurdwara Committee had S. Harbans Singh Ataariwala as the Vice-President and Bhai Jodh Singh as its Secretary. Another organisation which came into being at the same time came to be known as Akaali Dal, which was to run and organise the political activities of the Sikhs. The Akaali Dal was to raise and train men for participating in the morchas (agitations) in taking over the Gurdwaras from the arrogant mahants. The Akaali Dal was to be the political wing of SGPC. A national paper, the Akaali, in the Gurmukhi script, was also launched.

Under the pressure of the SGPC and the Akaali Dal, many Mahants began to transfer control to the SGPC and agreed to become paid priests at their respective Gurdwaras. However, at some important historic Gurdwaras, the Mahants resisted the pressure and refused to part with the control of the Sikh shrines. This led to very ugly scenes and confrontation with the Mahants and the police.

It may be mentioned here that wherever the Mahants created problem, they were supported by the British Govt. The Govt. machinery always helped them to resist the pressure of the Sikhs. At Taran Taran, near Amritsar, batch of Gurdwara functionaries attacked an unwary delegation of reformers who had been invited to the shrine for negotiations. One of them, Hazara Singh of Aladinpur, a descendant of Baghel Singh, one of the misl chiefs, fell a victim to priestly violence on 20 January 1921. He died the following day and became the first martyr in the cause of Gurdwara reform. Another Akaali, Hukam Singh of Vasau Kot, succumbed to his injuries on 4th Feb., 1921.

NANKANA SAHIB MASSACRE

What happened at Gurdwara Nankana Sahib in Feb., 1921 shows as how the Sikhs had to fight against the British mercenaries for getting their great shrine, the birth place of Guru Nanak, vacated from the custodian Mahant, Narayan Dass, who had the largest wealth and the most unsavoury reputation. He was a debauch and was known to be indulging in immoral activities within the Gurdwara precincts. When a Jatha of 150 Akaalis went to the Gurdwara on Feb. 1921, Mahant Narayan Dass ordered his mercenaries to fall upon the peaceful people and kill all of them. These mercenaries started firing bullets all around. The Jatha Leader Bhai Lachhman Singh of Dharowal, was struck down sitting in attendance of the Guru Granth Sahib. Bhai Dalip Singh, a much-respected Sikh leader who was well known to the Mahant and who came to intercede with him to stop the carnage, was killed with a shot from his pistol. Many members of the Jatha fell in the indiscriminate firing by the Mahant's men. The news of the massacre caused widespread gloom. Among those who came to Nankana Sahib to express their sense of shock were Sir Edward Maclagan, the British Lt.-

Governor of the Punjab. Mahatma Gandhi came accompanied by Muslim leaders, Shaukat Ali and Mohammad Ali. Narain Dass and some of his accomplices were arrested and the possession of the shrine was made over by government to a committee of seven Sikhs headed by Harbans Singh of Ataari, vice-president of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee.

KEYS OF GOLDEN TEMPLE ISSUE

The British Deputy Commissioner at Amritsar tried to interfere again with the administration of Golden Temple at Amritsar, when he took over the keys of the Golden Temple treasury. The Sikhs again protested strongly and decided to observe a *Hartal*, that is to strike work, on the day of the tour of Prince of Wales to India. The British banned their entry in the functions connected with the Prince's visit and put them in Jails in large number. The pressure on the Govt. mounted so considerably, that they had no choice but to surrender the keys to that time President of SGPC, Baba Kharak Singh. When the court official, on 19th January, 1922, surrendered the bunch of keys wrapped in a piece of red cloth, the victory was won by the Sikhs. The Indians all over the country considered it as a big achievement against the British. Mahatma Gandhi sent a telegram to Baba Kharak Singh, which read as "First Decisive battle for India's freedom won".

GURU KA BAGH

Even after this decisive battle, the Sikhs like all other Indians had to continue their fight against the British in the form of Gurdwara Reform Movement, which was an integral part of the freedom struggle of our country. The events that followed at Guru Ka Bagh and Jaiton played a significant role for the Sikhs to fulfil their demands. Guru Ka Bagh, a shrine related to Guru Arjun Dev situated about 13 miles from Amritsar became the scene of battle field in August, 1922, when the Udasi Mahant of the Shrine filed a complaint against the Akaalis alleging the charges of trespassing and stealing wood against them. In fact the Sikhs gathered fire wood from the Gurdwara's Land for the community kitchen (Guru Ka Langar). The Police arrested the Sikhs on the complaint of Mahant and put them into prisons. The Sikhs started a peaceful protest by sending Jathas (groups) in batches. Even when the police started beating up the Sikhs mercilessly, the Sikhs showed considerable patience and proved as how brave they were even to observe the concept of non-violence. They went on suffering without any violence. A significant development in this agitation took place when the Guru Ka Baag agitators were being taken as prisoners to Attock Jail by train. When the train passed through Panja Sahib, the local Sangat led by Bhai Partap Singh, Treasurer of the Gurdwara Managing Committee of Shri Panja Sahib requested the authorities that the

train be stopped for some time so that the Sikh prisoners could be served meals. The Railway Authorities refused to make an unscheduled way side halt, as desired by the local people. Bhai Partap Singh then decided that the train should be halted by squatting on the railway track. Some of the persons including Bhai Partap Singh offered themselves for squatting on the railway track whereas others were directed to serve the food to the prisoners during the halt period. When the train came, the brave Sikhs laid down on the track and did not move even when warning whistles were given. The train crushed Bhai Partap Singh and Bhai Karam Singh to death and wounded five others, but then screeched to a halt. The happening on 30 October, 1922 showed as how for observing non-violence also, the Sikhs could sacrifice their lives. Later on a Gurdwara was constructed at this place and an annual fair is held in the memory of those martyrs every year on Baisakhi Day. The agitation for Guru Ka Baag ultimately came to an end with intervention of National Leaders. The Government again gave in and the Akaalis got possession of the Gurdwara along with the disputed land.

JAITON MORCHA

The Jaiton Morcha took place in July, 1923 and the agitation continued till the Govt. yielded in April, 1925. The confrontation had started when the Maharaja of Nabha, Ripduman Singh, was forced by the British to abdicate in favour of his minor son. The Sikhs of Nabha organised Akhand Paths in their local Gurdwaras. One such Akhand Path at the Gangasar Gurdwara was interrupted by the police. The Sikhs launched the Morcha. The SGPC and the Akaali Dal were declared illegal, and 59 Akaali leaders, including Harkrishen Singh were arrested and charged with conspiracy to wage war against the King. The size of the Jathas increased from 25 in 1923 to 500 in 1924. The very first jatha of 500 was fired near Gurdwara Tibbi Sahib and 150 people died on the spot and 200 were wounded. When all the jails in and around Nabha were filled with the non-violent agitators the government yielded and apologised from the Sikhs for their excesses and irreligious acts.

The Morcha of Jaiton also coincided with another morcha at gurdwara Bhai Pheru at Lahore, where many thousand Sikhs courted arrest. Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru was also arrested at Jaito for participating in the morcha. Mr. M.A. Jinnah, Mahatma Gandhi, Madan Mohan Malviya and Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad all showed their sympathy for the Sikhs and stood with them in this passive but successful agitation.

The struggle for the control of Gurdwaras that started in 1912 came to an end with the passing of Gurdwara Act, 1925, when the control of the Sikh Gurdwaras was officially transferred to SGPC. The bill met all the Akaali

demands and all the political prisoners were released unconditionally.

The agitation of the control of Sikh shrines took a significant toll of the Sikh's lives. About 1000 people were killed, more than 3000 were wounded and about 30,000 were arrested. About Rs.2 million were paid in fines. Many hundred Army soldiers deserted their ranks and many retired soldiers lost their pensions.

In conclusion, it can be said that the liberation of Gurdwaras was very much a part of the freedom struggle for the country. In fact, when Gandhi Ji held the view that by taking over the keys of Golden temple from the British, the first decisive battle for India's freedom had been won, he was emphasising the importance of the agitation launched by the Sikh leaders (Akaalies) as they were called for the liberation of their shrine. It may be noted that Sikhs won the battle against the British at every place. The passing of Gurdwara Act, 1925, as per their demand was their total victory in this regard. They were, thus, the heralds of the independence of the country. Even otherwise, they should be considered as the largest contributors towards this noble cause. Apart from the sacrifices made by them in the Gurdwara movement, their suffering was maximum even in other aspects. The following table will show as how the Sikhs with a meagre percentage of 1.5% of the country's population were able to make sacrifices for the freedom as high as 90%.

Sl.No.		Sikhs	Non Sikhs	Total
1.	Those who were hanged	93	28	121
2.	Those who got imprisonment for life	2147	499	2646
3.	Those who became martyrs at JallianWala Bagh	799	501	1300
4.	Martyrs of Bajbaj Ghat (Calcutta)	67	46	113
5.	Martyrs of Kuka Movement	91	—	91
Total		3197	1074	4271

It was perhaps this realization of the importance of Sikhs by Sh. Madan Mohan Malviya that he said that if Freedom Movement was to be made successful, every Hindu family should make their one son a Sikh. This appeal had so much influence in Punjab that many Hindu families made their elder son, a Sikh, and many of them played their role as was expected from the valourous Sikhs.

THE ROLE OF SIKHS IMMEDIATELY AFTER INDEPENDENCE

The Independence of India on the 15th August, 1947 was indeed an occasion of jubilation for all Indians. However, for Sikhs, it was a mixture of both happiness and affliction. It is true that the Sikhs, like all other Indians could now breathe as citizens of a free country, but at the same time a large number of them had to face the greatest man made disaster in the shape of partition of the Punjab. This partition witnessed a gigantic human exodus on both sides. The artificial border between Amritsar and Lahore which was now to be permanent one between the two countries, led tens of lakhs of people to pass through a traumatic experience. In the words of Sardar Mohindar Singh Chopra, then Brigadier at that time, commanding the 123 Infantry Brigade at Amritsar "I saw terrible sights, the old too tired or ill to walk any further, had simply fallen on the dust and lay there under the merciless sun, streams of traffic would be held up by bullock carts that had stalled into ditches, and animals that refused to move any more. In that world of terror, panic and confusion, it was difficult to even fathom the extent of human tragedy. Civilisation seemed to have broken down".

THE TRAUMA OF MIGRATION

A large number of Sikhs, who migrated from various parts of newly created country of Pakistan had to face the atrocities, afflictions and hardships of such high dimension that one wonders as how could they bear the same. Their wives and daughters were victimised by Goonda elements, involved in kidnapping and rape. Many women had to kill themselves for saving their honour. The harrowing tales told by the recovered girls from various places could make even stone-hearted people weep. Amrita Pritam, the famous Punjabi poetess, cried for all these helpless women, when she wrote:-

ਇਕ ਰੋਈ ਸੀ ਧੀ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਦੀ
ਤੂੰ ਲਿਖ ਲਿਖ ਮਾਰੇ ਵੈਣ
ਅੱਜ ਲੱਖਾਂ ਧੀਆਂ ਰੋਈਆਂ
ਤੇਨੂੰ ਵਾਰਿਸ ਸ਼ਾਹ ਨੂੰ ਕਹਿਣ :
ਵੇ ਦਰਦਮੰਦਾਂ ਦਿਆ ਦਰਦੀਆ !
ਉਠ ਤਕ ਆਪਣਾ ਪੰਜਾਬ
ਅਜ ਬੇਲੇ ਲਾਸ਼ਾਂ ਵਿਛੜੀਆਂ

ਤੇ ਲਹੂ ਦੀ ਭਰੀ ਚਨ੍ਹਾਬ
 ਕਿਸੇ ਨੇ ਪੰਜਾਂ ਪਾਣੀਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਦਿੱਤੀ ਜ਼ਹਿਰ ਰਲਾ
 ਤੇ ਉਨਾਂ ਪਾਣੀਆਂ ਧਰਤ ਨੂੰ
 ਦਿੱਤਾ ਪਾਣੀ ਲਾ
 ਇਸ ਜ਼ਰਖੇਜ਼ ਜ਼ਮੀਨ ਦੇ
 ਲੂੰ ਲੂੰ ਫੁਟਿਆ ਜ਼ਹਿਰ
 ਗਿੱਠ ਗਿੱਠ ਚੜ੍ਹੀਆਂ ਲਾਲੀਆਂ
 ਫੁਟ ਫੁਟ ਚੜ੍ਹੀਆਂ ਕਹਿਰ
 ਵਿਹੁ ਵਲਿੱਸੀ ਵਾ ਫਿਰ
 ਵਣ ਵਣ ਵੱਗੀ ਜਾ
 ਓਹਨੇ ਹਰ ਇਕ ਵਾਂਸ ਦੀ ਵੰਝਲੀ
 ਦਿੱਤੀ ਨਾਗ ਬਣਾ
 ਪਹਿਲਾ ਡੰਗ ਮਦਾਰੀਆਂ
 ਮਤ੍ਰ ਗਏ ਗੁਆਚ
 ਦੂਜੇ ਡੰਗ ਦੀ ਲਗ ਗਈ
 ਜਣੇ ਖਣੇ ਨੂੰ ਲਾਗ
 ਲਾਗਾਂ ਕੀਲੇ ਲੋਕ-ਮੂੰਹ
 ਬੱਸ ਫਿਰ ਡੰਗ ਹੀ ਡੰਗ
 ਪਲੋ ਪਲੀ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਦੇ
 ਨੀਲੇ ਪੈ ਗਏ ਅੰਗ।
 ਗਲਿਓਂ ਟੁੱਟੇ ਗੀਤ ਫਿਰ
 ਤੁੱਕਲਿਉਂ ਟੁੱਟੀ ਤੰਦ
 ਤਿੰਜਣੋਂ ਟੁੱਟੀਆਂ ਸਹੇਲੀਆਂ
 ਚਰੱਖੜੇ ਘੂਕਰ ਬੰਦ
 ਸਣੇ ਸੇਜ ਦੇ ਬੇੜੀਆਂ
 ਲੁੱਡਣ ਦਿੱਤੀਆਂ ਰੋੜ੍ਹ
 ਸਣੇ ਡਾਲੀਆ ਪੀਂਘ ਅਜ
 ਪਿੱਪਲਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੀ ਤੋੜ
 ਜਿਥੇ ਵਜਦੀ ਸੀ ਫੂਕ ਪਿਆਰ ਦੀ
 ਵੇ ਉਹ ਵੰਝਲੀ ਗਈ ਗੁਆਚ
 ਰਾਂਝੇ ਦੇ ਸਭ ਵੀਰ ਅਜ
 ਭੁਲ ਗਏ ਉਹਦੀ ਜਾਚ
 ਧਰਤੀ ਤੇ ਲਹੂ ਵੱਸਿਆ
 ਕਬਰਾਂ ਪਈਆਂ ਚੋਣ
 ਪ੍ਰੀਤ ਦੀਆਂ ਸ਼ਾਹਜ਼ਾਦੀਆਂ
 ਅਜ ਵਿਚ ਮਜ਼ਾਰਾਂ ਰੋਣ
 ਅਜ ਸੱਭੇ ਕੈਦੋ ਬਣ ਗਏ
 ਹੁਸਨ ਇਸ਼ਕ ਦੇ ਚੋਰ
 ਅਜ ਕਿਥੋਂ ਲਿਆਈਏ ਲੱਭ ਕੇ
 ਵਾਰਿਸ਼ ਸ਼ਾਹ ਇਕ ਹੋਰ
 ਅਜ ਆਖਾ ਵਾਰਿਸ਼ ਸ਼ਾਹ ਨੂੰ

ਤੂੰਹੋਂ ਕਬਰਾਂ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਬੋਲ !
ਤੇ ਅਜ ਕਿਤਾਬੇ ਇਸ਼ਕ ਦਾ
ਕੋਈ ਅਗਲਾ ਵਰਕਾ ਫੋਲ !

Since then this great tragedy of Punjabis has been the subject matter of many a literary works, films (e.g. Gadar, Pinjar etc.) and T.V. Serials (e.g. Tamas of Bhisham Sahni). Such was the cost of independence for a large number of Sikhs, who had remained in the forefront for fighting against colonism by the British. Even those Sikhs who were not to migrate anywhere, were affected in one or the other way as they were visited by their relatives from across the border and it had become their duty to look after them and get them settled.

The Prime Minister of India, Pandit Nehru had made it clear that the achievement of independence was the first step and now it was the duty of all Indians to make the country strong and to defend its freedom, whenever called upon. One could not imagine that in the mental set up in which the Sikhs were placed, they could let themselves out of the agony through which they had passed in so near future.. They were still under the trauma when the newly created country of Pakistan attacked the freedom of India by sending infiltrators into Kashmir. The State Forces of Kashmir were not in a position to protect the Valley from those tribal hordes who indulged in looting, plundering and arson. The Battalion of the Sikh regiment, which was near Delhi (at Gurgaon) in October, 1947, became the first of the Indian Army to be called upon for defending the territories of India. Despite the adverse circumstances, the Battalion took it as a national pride and honour for the Sikhs to fight against the Pakistan-sponsored raiders.

FIRST PAKISTANI ATTACK

It was on 27th October, 1947 when the advancing tribal hordes overran Baramula and had reached the outskirts of Srinagar airfield. It was at this critical hour when Baba Mehar Singh landed the first Dakota on the foggy and bullet ridden airstrip of Srinagar. This dare devilish act of Mehar Singh enabled the persons and ammunition to reach the affected areas of the valley. In the pitched battles that followed, the Sikhs crushed the enemy causing heavy casualties. Followed by their capture of Pattan , then Baramula and Uri caused further heavy losses on the enemy troops and completely demoralised them. In the words of Pandit. Jawahar Lal Nehru “The Sikh Regiment played a gallant role in the Kashmir Operations and reached Srinagar just in time to save the country from the aggressor. Valour and spirit of sacrifice displayed by the men of the Sikh Regiment were examples worthy of emulation.”

After capturing Uri, the Sikhs moved to Hindwara area under an Infantry Brigade commanded by S. Harbaksh Singh. The brave Lt. Col. S. Harbaksh

Singh displayed his excellence during the historic battle of Shalatang in the Srinagar Valley in Nov. 1947, which turned the tide against the enemy raiders. The enemy hordes had been rampant on the route connecting Muzaffarabad, Tithwal, Chowkibal and Sopar, plundering and burning the surrounding villages, when the Sikh Regiment was ordered to advance and capture Tithwal, about 60 miles from Hindwara. Between Hindwara and Tithwal could be seen the snow covered, rugged ranges over 10,000 feet high Nashtachur Pass to solitary track between Hindwara and Tithwal.

The enemy had reached the outskirts of Srinagar on November, 20th and the fall of the capital city was imminent. On November 21st, around 3000 enemy troops concentrated on the outskirts of Srinagar at Shalatang, just four miles from city centre Colonel Harbaksh Singh then second in command of the newly inducted 16th Brigade was given the task of conducting the battle. He attacked Shalatang on November 22nd with second Infantry Battalion, one Sikh and one (Para Kumoun) with a troop of armoury cars of 7th Cavalry, and in a brilliantly planned and executed operation, routed the enemy leaving 472 of them dead on the field. The threat to Srinagar was now over. Thus, the brave Colonel was able to save the capital city, the fall of which would have proved disastrous for India.

On 19th May, 1948, the Sikhs captured Chowkibal after fierce fighting. Continuing their advance, they reached the Nashtachur Pass and the Hathhian-Ki-Gali on 21st May, Chhamkot, about three and half miles short of Tithwal, was occupied next day. Tithwal was captured on 23rd May.

The enemy fled, leaving behind huge supply dumps that were captured intact. A significant feature of this operation was that the Sikhs moved with a handful of 'Panjiri' as substitute for their normal rations and subsisted on it during the period, 17th to 23rd May, till they captured Tithwal and thus denied the enemy the main route to the Srinagar valley from the direction of Muzaffarabad.

CAPTURE OF RICHHMAR GALLI

The next great move of the Sikhs was to capture Richhmar Galli. It was here that the regular Pakistan Army troops had established strong positions and with a view to eliminate every enemy post, a frontal attack was necessary. The Sikhs were determined to teach the enemy a lesson and after fierce battles, made the enemy flee from this area. The defeat of the enemy on the hills of Richhmar Galli brought their offensive activities in this part of the area to a complete standstill and their determined attempts were foiled. In one day's engagement at Richhmar Galli, the Sikhs won the following decorations:-

Param Vir Chakra	1
Vir Chakras	7
Mention-in-despatches	13

The 27th October is now celebrated every year as “Infantry Day” by the Indian Army, In commemoration of those intrepid Sikh soldiers who added golden pages to their glorious history, who crushed Pakistan’s first aggression against our motherland by defending gallantly our socialistic democracy and our much-cherished secularism.

THE 7TH BATTALION OF SIKHS

In early 1948, the Sikhs were required to mount another operation for securing the very important strong holds at Pethahir Tregham. The 7th Battalion of the Sikhs Regiment had also been inducted to be a part of the 163 Brigade. Lt. Col. Mathura Singh led the Battalion into attack against the enemy’s stronghold at Pethahir, where a major battle was fought on 22nd March, 1948. The Sikhs were confronted with heavy small arms and artillery fire from well-dug-in-enemy positions. Undaunted by the heavy fire, our valiant soldiers pressed the momentum of the attack forward, in the teeth of enemy opposition. Ultimately, the enemy troops were forced to abandon the high ground dominating the village of Pethahir, leaving behind many dead and large quantities of arms, ammunition and equipment. The fierce counter-attack by enemy troops from the direction of their base at Tregham was also beaten back, and heavy losses were inflicted upon them by the Sikhs. The fighting spirit, the unwavering courage, and the iron determination demonstrated in these encounters were of the highest order, and worthy of the best traditions of the Sikh Regiment.

MAHAVIR CHAKRA FOR NAIK CHAND SINGH

Some of the brave Sikhs who were honoured in the Kashmir Valley operations need a special mention in this account. They include Naik Chand Singh, Jamedar Nand Singh, Subedar Bishan Singh and L/Nk Karam Singh, Nand Singh had exhibited fine leadership and outstanding gallantry in an engagement on 22nd Nov. 1947 when the enemy infiltrators had launched a heavy counter-attack. The Sikhs stuck to their positions tenaciously and beat off repeated enemy onslaughts. Next morning, many enemy dead bodies were found lying on the perimeter of our defences, while our own casualties were one killed and three other ranks wounded. For his heroic and exemplary performance in this battle, Naik Chand Singh was posthumously awarded the Maha Vir Chakra, and Subedar Gurcharan Singh and Sepoy Bhag Singh were decorated with the Vir Chakra.

LANCE NAIK KARAM SINGH

The hero of Richhmar Galli battle was L/Nk Karam Singh, who was also a hero of the 2nd World War. The enemy, in the course of this encounter put in several attacks, but Karam Singh, commanding the out-post, foiled the attacks after one another. As per the records of the Sikh Regiment “enemy shelling was causing heavy casualties. When his ammunition ran low and no help could reach him, it was decided to withdraw. It was at this time, that this NCO displayed outstanding courage and resourcefulness, in beating back the attack. Himself wounded, he brought back with him two wounded comrades, with the help of the third person with him. Wounded for the second time, he refused to be evacuated, and in spite of the proximity of the enemy, crawled from bunker to bunker encouraging those who were still unhurt, to carry on the fight.

The fifth attack was severe. Two Pakistanis came so close, that Karam Singh could not fire at them, without endangering his own men. On the spur of the moment, he took the only decision possible. He jumped out of his bunker and bayoneted the enemy. This spectacle of a hefty Sikh charging at them with bayonet unnerved the enemy and they dispersed and ran for their lives. However the attacks were not yet over. As per the Gazette of India Notification for the Award of PVC to this brave Sikh “the enemy launched eight separate attacks that day. In one such attack, the enemy managed to obtain a foothold in the platoon locality. Immediately, Lance Naik Karam Singh, who was severely wounded by then, with a few men, hurled himself in a counter-attack and evicted the enemy after a close quarter encounter which accounted for many dead, having been despatched by the bayonet.

Lance Naik Karam Singh proved himself to be a dauntless leader of men in crisis. Nothing could subdue him and no amount of fire or hardship could break his spirit.

His gallant actions on that day inspired his colleagues to face the massive onslaught unflinchingly. It was his fiercely proud spirit which was largely responsible for the gallant stand at Tithwal that day”. Maj. Gen. K.S. Thimayya, DSO, the Divisional Commander had also described the battle which the brave Sikh fought as “uniquely magnificent”.

JAMADAR NAND SINGH

Jamadar Nand Singh, the Victoria Cross winner during World War II is one of the immortals of India’s History of Warfare. When, in December, 1947, around 6000 Pakistani raiders infiltrated into the high hills in the Uri, causing grave threat to the Indian garrisons and the road leading to Srinagar and Poonch, this brave soldier of the 1st Sikh Regiment displayed once again his exemplary

courage by leading his platoon of the D Company in hand to hand combat with the enemy. The enemy fire was intense but Nand Singh pressed on, despite an injured leg. As the fierce fighting ensued, Nand Singh killed five enemy soldiers with his bayonet. His men were inspired by his example and the raiders fled, in disorder. A burst of fire from a retreating soldier, however, struck Nand Singh on the chest. He was killed at the very moment the Indian victory was assured. Jamedar Nand Singh was posthumously honoured with the Maha Vir Chakra.

The death of Jamadar Nand Singh on December, 12, 1947 was a sad day not only for his Regiment, but for the Army as a whole. It was on his death that orders were issued that holders of the VC or PVC were not to be at the front and involved in battle. In December 1956, while commemorating the memory of this brave soldier, a stadium was constructed in the Sikh Centre at Meerut Cantt. In Bhatinda, to which place he belonged, a number of memorials have been set up in his memory including his statue at Mahina Chowk Bhatinda, which was later on named Shaheed Nand Singh Chowk.

THE SIKHS SENT TO JUNAGARH AND HYDERABAD

The role played by the Sikhs in J&K proved their worth and in immediate succession, wherever there was a problem in some state and the Govt. found it difficult to tackle the same, the services of Sikhs were requisitioned. For example, when in Junagarh the bigoted and anti-national elements challenged the secular set up, the Sikhs formed spearhead of the troops to help the civil administration in normalising the situation. It may be mentioned here that Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, who later on became the head of Pakistan, belonged to this place, and he and his family had to flee when the Sikh soldiers marched triumphantly in the streets of Junagarh, holding aloft the tri-colour flag of India. Further, when miscreants called Muslims Razakars created a problem in Hyderabad, the Sikhs again accomplished the task of uniting Hyderabad with the Indian Union successfully. The enemy were completely routed. Havildar Bachitar Singh was given the highest gallantry award of Hyderabad Police Action i.e. Ashok Chakra Class I. N/k Hardial Singh and Sepoy Sewa Singh were awarded the Ashok Chakra Class II and Ashok Chakra Class III respectively.

SIKHS IN NAGALAND

In April, 1956, hostile Nagas created a lawless situation, for handling which Sikhs troops were moved to Nagaland at short notice. For three days enemy mounted relentless and ceaseless assaults, but all these attacks were beaten back by the Sikhs with heavy enemy casualties. It was here that Subedar Mohar Singh earned a well-deserved Ashok Chakra Class II. Some offenses were mounted

towards other hostile hideouts, desired results achieved and hostile activities subdued in the sector.

Kohima, the capital town of the Naga Hills, then became the scene of violence and bloodshed. It was besieged by a very large number of armed hostile Nagas from all sides. Within a period of two days, three Junior Commissioned Officers (Subedar Nazar Singh, Jamedar Kulwant Singh and Jamedar Jashkant Singh) fell in action here. These gallant Junior Commissioned Officers formed part of the garrison, which kept the Nagas at bay, and saved Kohima, the capital city of Nagaland.

A feat of unprecedented endurance was demonstrated by the valiant Sikhs, when mountain guns had to be physically lifted up to Chadema. This feat baffles human imagination when one appreciates the fact that even hardy mules were unable to negotiate the steep gradients over which the Sikhs carried the mountain guns on their shoulders, and brought them into successful action. By August 1956, the Sikhs had cleared most of the areas infested with hostile Nagas. Lieutenant-Colonel Gurbaksh Singh, who then commanded this regiment, still lives in the hearts of its men as an ideal friend, a kind father and a benefactor. With all the qualities of a successful military leader, at whose command soldiers gladly made great sacrifices. He is a legend, a frequently quoted proverbial apograph of courage and geniality, a symbol of inspiration, patriotism and faith for those who have been, and still happen to be the members of his team.

With the indomitable strength of character, devotion to Gurbani, unwavering courage, and integrity, Lt. Col. Gurbaksh Singh and his 'lions' combed the trouble-torn jungles with the result that a large number of the notorious and anti-national Nagas fled across the borders to east Pakistan allies for safety. The Sikhs were awarded the following decorations during their operations in the Naga Hills:

Ashok Chakra Class I	1
Ashok Chakra Class II	1
Ashok Chakra Class III	4

SIKHS FOR LIBERATION OF GOA

When the patriotic Ranes, could not get their freedom in Goa and were made to face unprecedented atrocities at the hands of Portuguese, the Sikhs had the pride of being in the van guard of the liberation forces, which went ahead for the liberation in Dec., 1961. All three Brigades of the Indian Army which captured Goa were commanded by Sikhs. The 48th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier Gurbux Singh), the 50th Parachute Brigade (Brigadier Sohan Singh) and 63rd

Infantry Brigade (Brigadier Kulwant Singh). The Sikhs completed the task with lightening speed and made the Purtgese forces surrender.

In view of the position discussed above, it is crystal clear that it was not only for attaining the freedom of the country that the Sikhs made supreme sacrifices, they also played a vital role in strengthening the position of free India in the very early days when some anti-national forces threatened the same. A large number of Sikhs who sacrificed their lives in all the above mentioned operations have immortalised themselves in the pages of history of free India.

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CHAPTER-XXI

THE WARS WITH CHINA AND PAKISTAN

CHINESE INVASION OF 1962

When China, betraying their faith in the “Hindi-Chinee Bhai-Bhai” slogan, launched an attack on our country in October 1962, the Indian Army was not in ready position to face such a formidable foe. Among the brave soldiers, who were made to face the better skilled and better equipped enemy, the Sikhs were at the forefront. They were pushed up to the Indo-Tibetan border in the NEFA area (Arunachal Pradesh) on its two extremes in Kameng and Lohit Frontier Divisions to face the odds. They were ill armed, ill clothed and ill equipped as no such war was expected in the near future, but in spite of the handicaps, they kept the high traditions of the respective Regiments and laid down their lives for their country. On the one end was Subedar Joginder Singh who was holding defensive positions at Malak Tongla and on the other end was Walong where L/ Nk Gurdial Singh’s party was manning one of the posts.

SUBEDAR JOGINDER SINGH

When the Chinese thrust commenced along the Himalayan frontier on October 20, Subedar Joginder Singh of the Ist Sikhs was holding the high ridge near Tong Pengla with his platoon. He had proclaimed that so long as there was life in him, no Chinese forces would dare advance in his sector. He went on enthusing his men with the shouts of “Bole So Nihaal, Sat Sri Akaal” and repulsed two attacks of Chinese. After every attack the Chinese brought more forces and attacked forcefully, but the brave lion, although wounded in the thigh, refused to evacuate and went on fighting till last. When the third attack was launched with more determination, Subedar Joginder Singh with bleeding wounds, manned a machine gun inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy. This time, with their superiority in numbers, the Chinese were able to press home their assault and were soon in the forward trenches. In spite of the near impossible situation, this JCO personally led the remaining few men with fixed bayonets and charged the enemy. The inevitable happened and positions were soon overrun. All through the fighting Joginder Singh displayed inspiring leadership, devotion to duty and gallantry of a high order.

In other attacks in the nearby locations too, the Chinese had an upper hand. Havildar Saroop Singh and his party also fought vigorously and caused

heavy casualties on the enemy. L/Nk Piara Singh showed extreme gallantry and presence of mind and killed the maximum number of Chinese. L/Nk Bachan Singh, the regiment's wrestler, who was mortar number one, came out of his shelter after exhausting his ammunition and shouted at the Chinese, challenging them to come forward if they dared. He had accurately fired his mortar bomb, which had literally wiped out the enemy in that narrow gap. By this time, orders were received from higher authorities to withdraw. The appetite of the Sikhs for battle was sharpened but their request to stay on and fight the Chinese was not accorded to.

LT. GEN. BIKRAM SINGH

Lt. Gen. Bikram Singh, who was commanding xv corps and conducting operations in Ladakh was a "dragon killer". The Chinese were afraid of him because of his boldness and bravery. The ravines along the Gurung Hills in eastern Ladakh also witnessed the scene of valiant Sikhs being men of steel. The brave Sikhs like Gurdeep Singh, Technical Assistant, Naik Pritam Singh, and L/Nk Sarban Singh killed the Chinese in great numbers. The Sikh gunners taught the enemy a lesson. For their steadfast devotion to duty and exemplary courage, the three heroes of the 13th Artillery Regiment who laid down their lives in this operation were decorated with the Vir Chakra. Major Ajit Singh, was asked to withdraw, but requested that he and his men be given an opportunity to fight and take back the post Nullah junction, fulfilled his promise, and was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra.

BATTLE OF WALONG

The most important battle with the Chinese in NEFA was that fought at Walong on 24th October 1962. When L/Nk Gurdial Singh noted that a long column of about 600 to 700 Chinese were advancing towards them, he sighted his light machine gun, with ample ammunition at hand, and patiently allowed the Chinese to come into his sight. Further description of this battle is reproduced here from "The Sikhs – Portrait of Courage, published by Delhi Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee.

"As the enemy massed on to the wire obstacle just 50 yards from his position, Lance Naik Gurdial Singh pressed the trigger. The trapped Chinese suffered very heavy casualties. They were in panic and utter confusion when a medium machine-gun from the east bank also opened up. Some of them ran towards Mithun where Jamedar Jaswant Singh's platoon picked them up and wrote off about 40 or more. Others ran along the main track.

Jamedar Pritam Singh, who was observing from the east bank, brought down an exceedingly accurate mortar fire concentration on the retreating

enemy, who had run astray for cover into one of their firetraps. The toll taken was over 200. This was how the Sikhs opened their innings at Walong.

During the night, the Chinese set fire to the whole ridge on which the Sikhs had taken positions. The long dry grass burnt rapidly and viciously. By dawn, the positions had been encircled by fire. At that time, in complete disregard for his personal safety, and in the face of enemy automatic fire, Sepoy Piara Singh jumped out of his trench and heroically fought the fire, not only in front of his own bunker, but also along the entire post. Having successfully accomplished this task, Piara Singh was returning to his position when enemy automatic fire hit him. Despite bleeding profusely, Sepoy Piara Singh refused to be evacuated to the regimental aid post, remaining on duty in the defence of his post. In this gallant act, Sepoy Piara Singh set an example of supreme sacrifice, by choosing to lay down his life for the safety of his comrades and the defence of his motherland.

MAHAVIR CHAKRA FOR KEWAL SINGH

The Chinese now launched another very fierce and determined attack on the positions. It was here that young Kewal Singh, with only 18 months service, earned the Maha Vir Chakra. An account of his courage and bravery is summarised in the following words:-

‘On the night of 26/27 October, 1962, a company of the 4th Sikh Regiment was holding a defensive position in the forward defended localities on the Walong garrison of NEFA. The enemy forces some of which had managed to get dangerously close to our defence threatened this position. Sepoy Kewal Singh on his own initiative rushed out of his section with fixed bayonet, killing a few in a hand-to-hand fighting. In this encounter, he was seriously wounded. Despite his grievous injuries, he bayoneted yet another enemy before he succumbed to his injuries. By this act of valour and self-sacrifice Sepoy Kewal Singh helped his comrades to repulse the enemy.’

Lal Bahadur Shastri, who was then Home Minister of our country paid a glowing tribute to this gallant son of his motherland who had died a hero's death, after killing a large number of the Chinese. The enemy troops had enough taste of the strength and courage of the gallant Sikhs, and were fully convinced that they could not affect a break through the main track. The Sikhs, had proved that their defence was impregnable, giving ample proof of their tenacious and stubborn fighting qualities. The Chinese called this position “Tiger Mouth” because they were unable to effect a penetration in spite of their repeated attacks. One of the enemy messages that was intercepted read:-

‘Very strong enemy defences hit near Walong. Request grant permission to

withdraw’.

Some Chinese automatic rifles, captured by the Sikhs, were presented to the Commander who congratulated the Regiment on their magnificent defence.

DARING DEEDS OF SIKHS

Later, in a skirmish, when the Chinese from three sides fired at a party, Naik Natha Singh was severely wounded in the stomach. This gallant hero, though badly wounded, displayed tremendous grit and determination. With a smile on his face, he was evacuated to the regimental aid post and then flown out next morning. It was miraculous how Natha Singh, with his intestines hanging out and his abdominal walls damaged by a mortar burst, could survive the ordeal of evacuation. The surgeon, on seeing Natha Singh's serious condition looked worried, but Natha Singh said, “Don't worry, Doctor Sahib. I am absolutely all right”. He recovered miraculously and is still fit as a fiddle.

After a short lull and an uneasy quiet, the enemy attacked again. Wave after wave of the Chinese tried to force themselves forward within yards of the defences but, despite heavy odds, the Sikhs held out. Havildar Labh Singh was wounded three times during the night and, every time after getting first aid, went forward to the defended locality and inspired his men to keep fighting, till he got a fatal burst. In fierce fighting the attack was finally repulsed, with heavy losses to the enemy.

Then came the final and main assault of the enemy. The Sikhs fought on tenaciously. Havildar Gurmukh Singh created another Saragarhi sacrificing himself and almost all his men, while fighting from the trenches. On receipt of orders to withdraw, Sepoy Tehal Singh, Sepoy Mela Singh and Lance Naik Santosh Singh volunteered to cover the withdrawal of their comrades to safety. It was obvious that it meant certain death but, undaunted, they collected all available ammunition with Tehal Singh behind the light machine gun. For some time just one gun could be heard firing – that was the gun of Sepoy Tehal Singh. But that also stopped.

Some of the best Sikh athletes and sportsmen were lost in the fighting for Walong, but the brave deeds of these fearless fighters will go down in history, inspiring the soldiers of tomorrow. The Sikhs fought their way out. Naik Gurdip Singh was seriously wounded in the shoulder but by sheer force of will and determination, he re-joined the Regiment 37 days later, all alone. Though his wounds had developed gangrene, this NCO remained cheerful and spirited. The standards of endurance and physical fitness displayed by Gurdip Singh would be very difficult to emulate.

The tenacious battle of Walong lasted for nearly three weeks during which, day and night, and Sikhs remained under heavy stress and strain. The casualties of the battalion were high, but in turn they inflicted maximum punishment on the enemy. The Chinese arms captured by the 4th Sikhs are perhaps the only seized by the Indian Army.”

WAR WITH PAKISTAN IN 1965

Pakistan, from its very inception, behaved as an enemy. The very first attack made by Pakistan by sending infiltrators in the Kashmir Valley has already been discussed in an earlier chapter. Since Kashmir had always been a bone of contention between the two countries, the enemy had always been trying to infiltrate large numbers of raiders into the state, whenever it got an opportunity. When heavy infiltration took place in August 1965, it led to an undeclared war. Considering the role of Sikhs in earlier battles with Pakistan and China, there was a high demand for Sikh troops by the Commanders to handle the difficult situation. Of the ten Sikh Battalions that crossed swords with Pakistan during the 1965 War, four were in Jammu & Kashmir.

The Pakistani infiltrators had entrenched themselves in various Pockets in the Kashmir Valley and in the heights above Kargil. The Sikhs had to fight heroically in these areas to capture the enemy-led positions. The supreme heroism displayed individually and collectively in all the spheres of our defences on the battlefield gave birth to a new epic of magnificent intrepidity which will live in the hearts of Indians for long. The tough Sikhs displayed a wonderful valour at all places right from the drudgeries of the western desert of the sub-zero temperature pockets of Zojila and Drass sector. The brave Sikh heroes like Lt. Gen. Joginder Singh Dhillon, Maj. Gen. Rajinder Singh, Gurbakhash Singh, Amrik Singh, Mohinder Singh and others were led by the bravest of the heroes, Lt. Gen. Harbakhsh Singh, GOC-in-C, Western Command. His name has already figured in the pages of this book while describing the 2nd World War and the wars fought after independence of the country. It was this great armyman, who, on the night of 16th/17th, May, 1948, when he was a Brigadier, had made a rapid advance and crossed Nastachur Pass (11000 ft. height) with a view to capture Tithwal. During this war he was an army commander responsible for the conduct of the operation in Punjab and in Jammu & Kashmir including the offensive operations in Lahore and Sialkot Sectors and Kargil. He had not only won Vir Chakra and was honoured with Padam Bhushan, but also remained the subject of tremendous applause for many years for his bravery and dedication. When the then Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri was presented a Siropa (sword and robe) by the Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee in Gurdwara Bangla Sahib in Delhi in appreciation of his outstanding leadership to the nation, Shastri Ji gave that sword to Lt. Gen.

Harbakhsh Singh by saying that it was Harbakhsh Singh who had skilfully and successfully conducted the most difficult task. The Prime Minister added “India needs many men like Gen. Harbakhsh Singh , who has displayed leadership of the highest order”.

In the valley of Kashmir, the 1st Sikhs cleared the Richhmar Galli objective and later on Pir Saheba feature after a fierce hand to hand fight. The Pakistanis tried to harass this battalion throughout the period of war as evidenced from the fact that they fired 1500, 25 pounder shells in the area, but the battalion did not move. So were the 3rd battalion in the Keren Sector. The battalion was stationed in the hilly terrain of Pharkian Ki Gali, north-west of Srinagar, situated at over 9000 Ft. The enemy’s strong pressure at this place was thwarted by just 32 men under Subedar Sunder Singh. It was a vigorous attack by the enemy who were shouting in Punjabi, *‘Sikho Hathiar Sut Deo, Post Chhad Deo, Assan Tuhanoon Ethay Naheen Rehn Dena* (O Sikhs lay down your arms and abandon the post, we will not let you stay here). But the gallant Sikhs replied with their usual vigour. The enemy, finding the indomitable Sikhs fighting back with zeal and determination and having suffered considerable losses, went away saying *‘Sikho Tuhanoon Dekhan Gay, Assen pher Anwan Gay* (O Sikhs we shall come again and deal with you). The Pakistanis attacked again more vigorously, but the Sikhs drove out the enemy from that Post once and for all.

BATTLE OF BURKI

The Sikhs were also given the task of capturing Burki which is located on the east bank of Ichhogil canal. The enemy position around this village was very strong . Behind the village, on banks of the Ichhogil canal the enemy had cited machine guns to cover the front with cross fire from a chain of concrete pill boxes each about 4 ft. wide and having a 0.50 Browning machine gun, a light machine gun, a rocket launcher and some rifle men. Mission of the Sikhs was capturing this post. The Sikhs formed up about 1000 yds. from the outskirts of Burki, and launched an attack, supported by artillery. Their Jaikaras were powerful and the enemy took up positions with heavy shelling and well coordinated firing from the pill Boxes. The valiant Sikhs went on the offensive, eliminating the pill boxes one by one and as they approached the enemy troops their formidable positions, leaving behind much equipment and dead, some becoming prisoners. One of the Pakistanis narrating his experience said “the reverberating Jaikaaras (war cries of ‘Sat Sri Akaal’) from all directions conveyed a terrifying feeling that the entire Sikh population of the Punjab had invaded Burki. This completely broke our morale and we ran completely confused and demoralised.”

CAPTURE OF RAJA HILLS

The capture of Burki was a gallant action which brought the Maha Vir Chakra for Subedar Ajit Singh posthumously and Vir Chakra for Havildar Ajmer Singh and Lance Naik Pritam Singh (Posthumous). A week later, another Sikh battalion captured ten posts in the Chhamb area with very few casualties on their side. In fact, the dauntless Sikhs had moped up the whole area and the infiltrators were made to abandon all the features. Lt. Keshav Singh led the triumphant party. From Chhamb, the Sikhs moved towards Poonch. In this area, there was still resistance of the Pakistanis in certain well entrenched and well constructed pickets. However, the Sikhs accepted the challenge and staked everything to live upto their reputation of matchless gallantry. The formidable "Raja Hill" was the most important objective and they were determined to capture it. Despite tough fighting and enemy fire, the Sikhs continued fighting with their machine guns and small arms and threw grenades into the enemy bunkers. A description of this battle as given in the publication, "the Sikhs Portrait of Courage", published by the DGPC is reproduced hereunder:-

"It was sheer cold courage, coupled with the unwavering will to win, '*Nishche Kar Apni Jit Karaun*,' the Regimental motto, that made the gallant fighters mount assaults again and again, in groups and individually. The battle became a point of honour and prestige for the Khalsa who were not to rest until success was achieved.

The enemy could not hold out for long against such determination. The grenade assaults were intensified by the follow-up echelon, inspite the fact that each assault resulted in heavy casualties. After many such attacks, at last with the grace of God a few Sikhs, shouting their war cry 'Sat Sri Akaal', reached the loopholes and lobbed grenades inside, silencing the most active medium machine guns and light machine guns. These bunkers then became footholds from which other bunkers were assaulted. The valiant Sikh soldiers entered the maze of communication trenches and bunkers, fought for every inch with bayonets and grenades, until the entire objective were cleared of the enemy.

Our victorious heroes, undaunted by enemy artillery fire, gave themselves up to a spontaneous outburst of jubilation. There was a brief 'Bhangra' and embracing without any distinction of rank, on the captured bunkers, situated at the top of the hill, presenting a picturesque silhouette visible from miles away. Some remarked that it was the Khalsa's characteristic expression of the feeling of the 'FATEH (Victory).

'The enemy guns, which had been firing air bursts over the objective, had strongly stopped perhaps after hard acceptance of the fact that nothing could now possibly dislodge the Sikhs who had captured the hill.

The capture of Raja Hill was one of the major achievements of the Sikhs. In addition to the capture of the Uri-Poonch road, they liberated a large part of Pakistan-held Kashmir. In this action, men of the Sikh regiment lived upto their lofty traditions, and by their determination and heroism, added yet another chapter to their glorious and enviable history.

THE 7TH BATTALION

Pakistani infiltrators were dealt with in the Mandi area by the young 7th Battalion (raised in 1963) and the battalion was successful in clearing in a number of features on the Poonch Uri road. Heavy counter attacks of Pakistanis were foiled. The great achievement of this young battalion was that of OP Hill. It was a major operation, as it rung the final curtain on a very difficult operation, and this act of steadfastness and determination of the brave Sikhs brought them a Signal battle honour. An attempt to capture Picquet 636 on the night of August, 22-23, by the Pakistanis was aborted as part of this achievement.

As reported by the American Time magazine. "The major Pakistani counter attack was directed at the Indians around Kasur, which was chosen as the objective because a Pakistani break-through would permit either a drive towards New Delhi or an attack northward that would cut across the Indian rear. The assault was mounted by the Ist Armoured Division reputed to be the best in Pakistan's Army. The Indian strategy resembled that of Hanibal when he caught the Romans in a baglike trap and decimated them at Canne. The Pakistani armoured column burst through but found itself entrapped inside a horse-shoe shaped line of a well fortified Indian position. Recoilless rifles, mounted on jeeps or dug into ground employments, poured a heavy fire into the massed Pakistani tanks. Support fire rained from the Indian 3.7 howitzers. With the temperature in the 100s. the buttoned down tanks were like ovens; the dust clouds raised by the explosions blinded the tanks which milled about like a frightened herd.

BATTLE IN LAHORE AND SIALKOT

The battlefronts of Lahore and Sialkot also witnessed very tough battles. In this Sector, the battle of Kakkar was the severest wherein the Baluchis gave in to the valiant Khalsa and retired in confusion. Brave Sikhs, like Lieutenant Gurcharan Singh, Lt. N.S. Ahluwalia, N/K Charan, Hav. Inder Singh, Sepoy Ujjagar Singh, Mohinder Singh and many others laid down their lives in this battle and live as immortal heroes. In the Sialkot sector too, the fields of Phillora and Chewinda witnessed one of the bloodiest battle of all times fought on this soil. Maj. Gen. Rajinder Singh Sparrow was the hero of this battle, whose Division destroyed 69 enemy tanks on the very first day. This was an achievement even

better than that of German Gen. Rommel who had fought the greatest of the tank battles during the 2nd World War. The enemy's losses in the Sialkot sector followed by their complete rout have left their imprints on the pages of history as conclusive evidence to prove that "as long as the Sikh Generals defend India, all enemies, whatever be their might, will meet a similar fate."

CAPTURE OF HAJI PIR PASS

Another Sikh hero of the Indo-Pak War of 1965 was (then) Maj. Ranjit Singh Dayal, of the 1st Paras who had been instrumental in the capture of Haji Pir Pass. It was on 26th August when this dare devil hero led his troops climbing at night and reached the Sankh Hill feature at 4.00 next morning. In the next five hours, they captured the second Hill feature next to fall was Lud Wali Gali and by the evening of August, 27 their position was fully consolidated. Reaching at around 7.00 in the evening Hyderabad Nullah, they started a steep climb of 4000 feet even while it was raining heavily. Despite heavy odds, they reached the road leading to the Haji Pir Pass on the morning of 28th August. Here, the men rested briefly before resuming the climb. At eight on the morning of the 28th, they reached a bund near the Jahi Pir Pass. Leaving some men behind to keep the enemy engaged, Dayal climbed another hill feature and from there rolled down and stormed the enemy position at the pass. The Pakistanis fled in confusion, leaving their arms behind. By half past ten, the Indian forces were in complete control of the pass. Later, in the afternoon, Captain Masood of the Pakistan Army came rambling along with his men, not knowing that the pass was now in Indian hands. It took him only a moment to realise what had happened and he surrendered at once.

The story of the capture of the Haji Pir pass would not be complete without mention of the remarkable achievement of the army engineers who, working against odds, built a road between Uri and Haji Pir in record time. India's flag soon fluttered proudly on top of a hill overlooking the pass, a strategic point situated midway between Uri and Poonch.

To conclude, it can be said that in the Indian victory in the 1965 war, the role played by the Sikhs was very crucial. When the ceasefire came about on September, 22nd, legendary stories were already in circulation about the patriotic fervour and bravery as displayed by the Sikhs who, within 21 days only, brought Pakistan to heel. The striking feature of this highlighting the role of the Sikhs was that almost all senior commanders in the Punjab Sector were Sikhs. Lt. General Harbaksh Singh, with his Chief of staff, Major General Joginder Singh, commanded the entire Western Zone and was as such, the principal architect of India's victory. Involved with planning at the army headquarters, was another Sikh officer, Major-General Narinder Singh, Lieut.

General Joginder Singh Dhillon, a brilliant tactician, with his Brigadier General Staff, Brigadier Prakash Singh Grewal, and artillery commander, Brigadier S.S. Kalha, commanded the corps operating in the Punjab and parts of Rajasthan. Major General Niranjana Prasad was replaced mid battle by Major General Mohindar Singh, a tough and shrewd soldier, as division commander in the Amritsar sector, the other division commander, in the Khem Karan sector, being Major General Gurbakhash Singh. The two divisions not only secured their first objective, the Ichogil Canal, but at certain points outstripped the target, holding Lahore within artillery range. North of Ravi, Major General Rajinder Singh 'Sparrow', commanding an armoured division, recorded a marvellous feat in the history of tank warfare by a lightning push towards Sialkot, Narowal, his Centurions humbling Pakistan's prestigious American gifted Pattons and Chaffees. The Khem Karan sector, too, was turned into what came to be known as the graveyard of the Pakistani Patton tanks. South of the Sutlej, Brigadier Bant Singh, commanding an independent brigade group, defended stoutly an extensive border covering the entire Ferozepur and Ganganagar districts. Both at Hussainiwala and Fazilka, Sikh battalion commanders held fast to their positions despite intensely heavy shelling by Pakistan artillery.

When one of the wounded Sikhs, Major Bhupinder Singh was lying in a hospital, Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri visited the hospital. For Bhupinder Singh it was a great honour that the prime minister came personally to see him. He tried to stand up to salute him but the nearby standing doctors and Shastriji stopped him. Major Bhupinder Singh narrated briefly to Shastri a war incident which was full of brave actions. During the talk Major mentioned to Shastri that all his wounds were on the chest and none on the back because his Guru had not taught his Sikhs to run away from the battlefield. This dialogue impressed Shastri and it made an ever lasting impression on his mind about the bravery of the Sikh people. In a day or two, Major Bhupinder Singh passed away but Mr. Shastri could not stop tears in his eyes on hearing the sad news and he uttered these words, "A precious hero of the country has passed away after fulfilling his duties to the nation. Great is his mother who gave birth to a supreme warrior hero India will be always proud of him. So long as we have warriors of the calibre of Major Bhupinder Singh, India's borders are in safer hands." These were his sentiments about a young brave Sikh soldier. In his heart he had a very healthy feeling for the Sikh religion and Sikh people. He started a new slogan of "Jai Jawaan, Jai Kisaan", mainly keeping in mind the Sikh sentiment of multifaceted humanitarian, benevolent character. This slogan created a new confidence, courage and spiritual strength in the country.

In honour of the Sikh nation he asked to arrange for the weapons of Guru Gobind Singh, which Lord Dalhousie had taken to England, to be brought back to India. He himself went to Palam airport to receive them with due regard and honour and he dedicated those weapons to the Sikh nation. Thus he related himself with the grandeur of Sikh nation and felt proud to be their well-wisher.



CHAPTER-XXII

THE 1971 WAR WITH PAKISTAN

BEFORE WAR SKIRMISH

The war with Pakistan fought in December 1971 was mainly aimed at liberation of erstwhile East Pakistan which, later emerged as a new country called “Bangladesh”. An armed confrontation was going on between the Pakistan Army and the revolutionaries from East Pakistan. By June 1971, the Pakistan Army had resorted to harsh and brutal measures for suppressing the locals. As East Pakistan was surrounded by Indian territory, no other country experienced the impact of such a mass movement across the borders and by August, their number had swelled to 10 million, a very heavy burden on the Indian economy. Thus, India wanted the solution of this problem and was on the look out for a suitable period for joining swords with Pakistan in support of the Eastern people.

Even before the commencement of war in December 1971, there were innumerable skirmishes in the Eastern Sector between Indian and Pakistani Forces. One of these skirmishes took place on 21st November of that year. It was on this day that Maj. Daljit Singh Narang was commanding the ‘C’ Squadron of Deccan Horse in Jessore Sector. The squadron had set up effective road-blocks around Garibpur. When the enemy in the form of two battalions supported by tanks attacked the Squadron’s position, a fierce battle followed for 30 minutes. Maj. Narang stood in the turret of his tank, directing the operations. Inspired by his presence, his men fought gallantly, inflicting severe casualties on the enemy. The Indian forces destroyed 10 Pakistani tanks, losing 3 of their own. However, Major Narang was targeted by the enemy and struck down fatally, having however, ensured a hard-tough victory for the Indian tanks. The nation duly honoured this gallant soldier, who was posthumously awarded the Maha Vir Chakra.

THE WAR BEGINS IN WESTERN SECTOR

The actual war with Pakistan started when their air force launched air attacks in the Western Sector on the evening of 3rd December 1971. In the Western Sector, among various other Indian troops, 8 battalions of the Sikh Regiment were holding strategic positions one of such at Poonch in the State of J&K. Poonch had become a scene of severe confrontation in 1947-48, when, as a result of

ceasefire at the close of 1948, the heights around Poonch remained under the direct occupation of Pakistan. These hills overlook the town. The Uri-Poonch road remained closed till 1965, when it was opened once again capture of the Haji Pir Pass. However, as a result of Tashkent accord, Pakistan once again occupied these heights overlooking the town. Before launching an attack in 1971, the posts overlooking the town were taken over by the Pakistanis. The 6th Battalion of the Sikhs held Banwar feature north of Poonch, on which Piquet 405 was the brigade's main position of capital importance. The battle that ensued following massive air attacks by the enemy, is described in history of the Regiment.

POONCH ENCOUNTER

“Immediately after the massive air attacks on our forward airfields on the evening of December 3, the Pakistanis opened up a terrific artillery barrage on the Sikh posts which lasted full two hours until 10 p.m.. Under this pressure, the forward listening posts had to be withdrawn. Immediately, the Pakistanis launched a full-scale brigade attack on the Banwat-Chhechian Bandi features from three directions, using three battalions. Our artillery and mortars did wonderfully well, even as the enemy formed up and started the assault with shouts of “Allah Ho Akbar”. The enemy also used feints to divert our attention, but none of them succeeded. These attacks were repeated time and again without any effect on our defences. So determined was the enemy that at one stage, some of their men got into the Sikh positions as also their mortar positions to the rear. Though it took some effort, all these attempts were repulsed.

Not prepared to accept defeat, the Pakistanis repeated their attacks again the next day, in broad daylight as before. By this time our Air Force was there in support, and the enemy was pushed back with heavy losses. More attacks followed during the next two days, which met the same fate. Lieutenant Gulab Khan, a Bengali officer of the Pakistan Army, who was wounded during the attacks and was taken prisoner later, disclosed that during the attacks on the first night they had lost over 300 men. Our forces in Poonch were strengthened soon after, and the Pakistanis did not make any more concerted effort as before for assaulting Poonch except on December 16, which was also beaten back by the Sikhs. The town was, thus, saved from falling into enemy hands, and would have met the same fate as Chhamb in 1965, if the Sikhs had not stood their ground.”

BATTLE OF CHHAMB JAURIAN

The 5th Battalion of the Sikh did a wonderful job in the battle of Chhamb. The Chhamb-Jaurian Sector lies between the rising outer hills of the Kalidhar

Range in the Naushera-Sunderbain Sector and the plains of Jammu bordering the Punjab province of Pakistan. It extends like a funnel, the area west of Tawi between Burejal (from where the erstwhile CFL as defined by the Karachi Agreement of 1948 emanated) and the lower hills. A distance of approximately 14,000 metres formed the broad base; with Akhnur on the Chenab River as its apex. The funnel gets progressively narrower by virtue of closer successive lines of hills in the north and Chenab in the south. Approximately halfway through the funnel area where the foot hills project further into the plains area, the narrowing of the funnel begins along the line of features Dhon Chak-Troti-Kalit lying between the Chenab River in the south and Tam Ka Tilla, a 527 meters high, very dominating feature in the north.

The Pakistanis had overrun the Indian strategic positions at this place in 1965 and with the hope that they would repeat it again they commenced a heavy assault on the evening of December 3 after considerable shelling. Although, as per the procedure for rotation of battalions, 5th Sikhs was to be withdrawn from this area in December 1971, it was destined for them to stay and fight the historic battle which took place in Chhamb . The valiant Sikhs fought for over 72 hours and gave much sacrifices for the nation. Although the Battalion had caused considerable casualties, they themselves suffered 76 casualties including two officers killed and one wounded. Lt. Col. Prem Khanna, who led this battalion to glory, saw to it that not a bit of ground could be taken by the enemy without paying a heavy price. A number of attacks were beaten back and the positions lost were recaptured by launching counter attacks. Apart from the award of MVC for Lt. Col. Khanna, for his inspiring leadership, Maj. Jaibir Singh was another recipient of the Maha Vir Chakra for his exemplary leadership. His company had defended the crucial Phagia Ridge position. From the 3rd December, the enemy began first of its offensives, to dislodge the Indian forces there. The first attack was successfully repulsed, but the Pakistani troops returned with a stronger force the next day. They broke through Indian defence and soon a bitter hand to hand fights ensued. The brave Major exhorted his men to remain steadfast. The Pakistanis were held back for the second time with a loss of twelve lives. The fighting was at its fiercest on December 5th. The Sikhs suffered heavy casualties, but led by a determined Major Singh, they not only repulsed the advance but recaptured the post on the Ridge lost earlier, Major Singh's inspiring leadership and shrewd planning had thwarted the enemy offensive.

APPRECIATIONS FROM FRIENDS AND FOES

The bravery shown by the Sikhs in this area elicited high appreciation both from friends and foes. The motivation and the inspiration as given by the Commanding Officers in the name of the Khalsa and nation, honour of the

regiment and formation, was of the highest order. The soldiers were guided to continue the fighting the enemy even when sometimes all seemed to have been lost. The brave jawans acted upon the directions and did not lose their cool even during the worst of adverse conditions. Their steadfastness and courage did not only bring the Vir Chakras for Maj. D.S. Pannu (posthumous) and L/Nk Richhpal Singh, but also proved infectious as it soon spread to all ranks of the Brigade and other battalions, dealing with each situation on its merits.

In retrospect, the enemy's own assessment is important for it is they who actually faced the 5th Sikh. As published in a subsequent report in Pakistan : "There was no enemy in front of 4 AK Brigade and at night it appeared only a miracle could save the Indians. This was achieved on 4 December 1971, when the Mandiala crossing was saved only thanks to the tenacious courage of the 5 Sikh and the tank troop of 9 (Deccan) Horse which were holding Mandiala South."

In an article on the Battle of Chhamb, the *Pakistan Defence Journal* has had this to state:

"It is significant to describe that it was 5th Sikh which was the real obstacle holding 66 Brigade and 4 AK Brigade from capturing Mandiala. This fact was well acknowledged by GSO of 23 Division in the following words:

"If the Indian Commander now knows full details of what was coming for him on the morning of 5 December, he can rightly congratulate the Commanding Officer of 5th Sikh and the tank troop Commander who held Mandiala South that day with so much grit and determination. They both saved a sad day for him."

THE 8TH AND 9TH BATTALION

There were two other battalions of Sikhs in the Kashmir Valley. The 8th Battalion was at Uri and the 9th Battalion was in the Tuthmar Gali area. The 8th Battalion was able to recapture one of our posts which had been wrested by the enemy in a surprise move at the beginning of the war. The 9th Battalion, on the other hand captured two enemy posts after a tough fight. The Sikh battalions moved deep inside Pakistan-held Kashmir, in established road blocks. Nouot was cleared in a Battalion attack and one mortar position, complete with 3 mortars ammunition and crew, captured.

SIKH RECIPIENTS OF MAHAVIR CHAKRAS

There were many other Sikhs who won laurels in the north-west regions during this war with Pakistan. They were Maj. Amarjit Singh Bal, Lt. Col. Sukhjot Singh and Subedar Mohinder Singh. These three brave persons won Mahavir

Chakras for their exemplary courage and spirit. The first two persons are associated with Shakargarh in the north-west. Maj. Bal, an officer in the Poona Horse, was in command of a Squadron which was to defend the bridge on the Basantar river. The squadron was stationed at Jarpal, overlooking the river, a position most vulnerable to enemy attack. Sure enough, the Pakistani forces began shelling the area heavily. The Indian troops foiled these attempts repeatedly, but the Pakistanis persisted and launched several counter-attacks over the next two days. The Indians were heavily outnumbered, but Major Bal inspired his men to repel several enemy attacks. As many as 27 Pakistani M-48 tanks were destroyed. For his inspirational leadership and able manoeuvring of his tanks in battle, Major Bal was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra.

Lt. Col. Sukhjit Singh (Maharaja of Kapurthala), Commander of the Scinde Horse armoured Regiment also displayed great skill and courage while dealing with a powerful armoured attack by the enemy for dislodging the Indians from Shakargarh. The resistance put up by this Regiment under Sukhjit Singh's command was so strong that ultimately the enemy had to surrender leaving behind 8 tanks and some Pakistani officers, captured by our forces. The Lt. Col. won a Maha Vir Chakra for his inspirational leadership, and the Regiment earned several battle honours for their exceptional courage.

Subedar Mohinder Singh of the 21 Punjab Regiment was commander of the platoon which had to engage in a close combat with the enemy in the Kargil Sector overlooking the critically vital Srinagar-Leh Highway. His men, inspired by his daring, fought ferociously and forced the Pakistanis to retreat. This victory was a morale booster and led to many other successes in this area. Subedar Singh was a worthy winner of the Maha Vir Chakra, awarded for his daring valour.

The battle of Shingo river valley in the Kargil sector was another notable battle of the 1971 War. The feature of Haathi Matha was an important feature which the Indian forces were trying to capture, but the Pakistanis were proving more than a match. Haathi Matha, located on the western bank of River Shingo, was ultimately taken as a challenge for the capture by the 5th battalion of the 3rd Gorkhas which was led by a Sikh, Lt. Col. S. Dawinder Singh Jaggi. It was under his able and inspiring leadership that the battalion captured the glaucous height of Haathi Matha. This capture made on 17th Dec., 1971 was of the last bastion of the enemy on the western bank of river Shingo. Maj. Bhanot of this battalion was awarded Vir Chakra along with Prem Bahadur Thappa (who won it posthumously). It also earned the Battalion the battle honour of Shingo River Valley and the theatre honour of Jammu & Kashmir in 1971.

LAHORE AND AJNALA SECTOR

In Punjab, Sikh battalions were active in Lahore and the Ajnala area. When the enemy launched an attack in Lahore, the Sikhs fought vigorously and got back Pulkanjri base, which had been captured by the Pakistanis. L/N Shangara Singh had shown conspicuous bravery and exemplary dedication to duty in destroying two enemy guns which were holding up their advance. He dashed through the enemy mine field, and hurled a grenade inside the gun post silencing it for good. He then charged the second gun post again single handed, leapt over the loophole of the gun pit, and snatched the gun from the occupants. As he stood with the gun in his hands, he received a burst in his abdomen. Bleeding profusely, he fell to the ground with the gun still in his hands, until he collapsed. In the Ajnala area, the 19th Battalion of the Sikhs captured Budhai Chima post on the night of December 5/6.

DERA BABA NANAK OPERATION

The Pakistani Army had held the vitally strategic bridge over the river Ravi at Dera Baba Nanak, threatening Indian positions at Pathankot, Beas and Amritsar. Lt. Col. Narinder Singh Sandhu was asked to lead the 10 Dogra Regiment to secure the eastern end of the bridge. In readiness, however, Pakistan had already set in place several fortified bunkers and machine gun positions. Lt. Col. Sandhu began his attack on the evening of 5th December. The supporting tanks were immediately stuck in the marshes, bordering the river. His men then dismounted and began the five-kilometre march to the bridge. When they were 15 metres away from the bridge, they sprang out at the enemy with the cry “Durga Mata Ki Jay” Lt. Col. Sandhu remained in the forefront all through this fierce engagement, inspired his men and they emerged victorious. Lt. Col. Sandhu was decorated with the Maha Vir Chakra for his skilful leadership.

RAJASTHAN SECTOR

In the Rajasthan sector, the 10th Battalion of the Sikh Regiment secured the heights near Khokhropar and cleared the village. They fought a number of engagements before reaching Prabhat Ali, whose capture brought them laurels. It was a grim battle in which bayonets were effectively used by either side. However, the more important battle in the Rajasthan area was that of Longewala.

The achievement of Maj. Kuldip Singh Chandpuri and his men of the 23rd Punjab Regiment has been immortalised in the Hindi film “Border”, which was a box office hit of 1997. This film recounts the saga of the troops led by Maj. Chandpuri, which held fast to the Indian base at Longewala, despite the fact

that the Pakistanis had attacked this base with a large number of soldiers equipped with sophisticated armament supported by tanks. On 5th December, two companies of the Pakistani Army well supported by tanks, attacked Longewala. As they neared, the Punjabis retaliated with mortar fire. They were assisted by the Indian Hunter aircraft which launched a simultaneous air attack, severely damaging enemy tanks. But a second attack soon commenced. The Punjabi put up a fierce fight, resisting the enemy attack through the night. At dawn, the IAF renewed their air attacks, effectively neutralising the enemy tanks. All through the operations, the Major kept up his men's morale, moving from bunker to bunker, urging them to hold on and fight back. His dynamic leadership and gallantry won Major Kuldip Singh the Maha Vir Chakra.

THE EASTERN SECTOR

The Eastern Sector was very important in this war with Pakistan. When our forces started advance into the erstwhile East Pakistan, the 4th Battalion of Sikh Regiment was part. The Pakistanis were making all efforts to delay our advance, but the Indians advanced and reached the first destination at Jessore. They had to fight tough battles on the way. One of the these battles was fought at Burinda. This battle cost us a number of casualties. However, the Indians won the battle and made the Pakistanis retreat, clearing thereby the road to Jessore. Our forces entered Jessore but did not stop there, but continued the advance to Khulna where there was heavy concentration of the enemy. The Sikhs were required to clear one of these strongly held concentrations at Sham Ganj. Some Pakistani tanks were also reported in the area. During the course of fighting which developed, Havildar Shamsheer Singh displayed dare-devil action in destroying tank. He stalked it with his rocket launcher, and then destroyed it with a sure shot.

Lt. Gen. Jagjit Singh Aurora, the Chief of the Indian Army's Eastern Command, who was the Hero of this War secured surrender of about 90,000 Pakistanis on December 16th, 1971. In one of his recent interviews recalled that the turning point of the war had come after the Indian troops crossed the Meghna river even though the Pakistanis had blown up a vital bridge.

“We knew the Pakistani forces would destroy bridges. They thought they had cut us off after they blew up a bridge over the Meghna river. But we took them by surprise and crossed it at night with the help of the local people”.

While recalling the events that led to the breakout of this war ending with surrender of the Pakistani Army at Dacca and liberation of Bangladesh, Gen. Jagjit Singh Aurora said “Wanting a greater say in their governance, the East Pakistanis forced (Pakistan President) Yahya Khan to call elections. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, a popular leader, got maximum votes. But Khan sent

Rahman to jail thus provoking a rebellion.

“Pakistan brought in enough forces from the west to control the east. But young Bengalis formed the ‘Mukti Bahini (Liberation Army)’. The Indian Government began helping them after millions fled to India.

“We realised this legal migration could pose a big problem and so asked (Yahya) Khan to act. But he showed no interest in resolving the issue. He eventually lost his nerve and carried out air strikes against Indian airfields.”

The third India-Pakistan war began on December 3, 1971, after Pakistani aircraft struck several airfields in northern India. Fierce fighting soon broke out involving all the three Services in both the eastern and western sectors.

THE SURRENDER OF PAKISTANIS

General Aurora further stated that when the Indian Army overran East Pakistan, taking 93,000 prisoners, Gen. Niazi finally signed the instrument of surrender. Giving the causes of Indian victory, the General concluded that Pakistan did not have enough forces to defend its eastern wing, secondly, most East Pakistanis opposed the west’s rule. This helped us train the Mukti Bahini.” The Indian Army offensive soon isolated forces in east Pakistan, coercing it to surrender.

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CHAPTER-XXIII

FIGHTING ON OTHER FRONTS

Although, after the Bangladesh war of 1971, India did not face any major war with some country, the Indian soldiers had to continue fighting at various fronts in several operations. One of such fronts was related to UNO peace keeping operations. Since when the UNO came into existence, one of its duties was to prevent any conflicts between the countries so that there was no war between them. As a matter of this policy, the UNO had to keep certain forces to be used for peace keeping operations. Since our independence, India has always been a major contributor of its soldiers for these operations. Around 40,000 Indian soldiers have so far taken part in more than 30 peacekeeping operations of the UNO. A significant number of officers and men of our armed forces have sacrificed themselves on the altar of world peace during these operations. Mention may be made of UN operations in Congo and Cyclone. A good number of Indians died in Kongo operation in 1960 including Captain Gurbachan Singh Salaria of 3/1 Gorkha Rifles, who was awarded the Param Veer Chakra Posthumously.

PEACE KEEPING OPERATIONS IN SRI LANKA

The brave Sikhs included in such operations had also played a significant role. Some of them, who died in Lanka operation and won honours, may be mentioned. S.R.S Sandhu was a part of 7 Assam Rifles in Sri Lanka in 1988. One day as he was leading a convoy of two vehicles back from Mangani, militants armed with AK-47 launched a sudden attack. A rocket struck his vehicle and Sandhu was grievously wounded. Though bleeding heavily, he crawled with carbine in hand. He waited for the firing to stop, knowing that when it stopped, the militants would emerge to claim the jeeps' weapons and ammunition. Sandhu was determined to prevent this. As the firing died away, a militant approached the jeep and Sandhu lifted his carbine and sprayed him with bullets, killing him instantly. This was Kumaran, a prominent militant leader. Sandhu continued firing, till his very last breath thwarting all militant attempts to approach the jeep. For his supreme sacrifice, 2nd Lt. Sandhu was honoured with the Mahavir Chakra.

BRIGADIER MANJIT SINGH

Brigadier Manjit Singh was a member of the 41 infantry Brigade, deployed in

Sri Lanka as part of India's Peace Keeping Forces. One of the brigade's first task was to clear Jaffna, a terrorist stronghold, and to establish a link with the Maratha Light Infantry in Jaffna Port. All the approach roads were heavily mined, and the Brigadier on arriving at Palali airfield, found several Indian troops facing stiff resistance at Anna Collai and Manipal. The Brigadier took charge. Deploying two companies of the Rajastana Rifles, he was able to break militant cordon and secure a link with forces at Jaffna fort. His able leadership inspired men to overcome onslaught militants. Brigadier Singh was honoured with Maha Vir Chakra.

THE BRAVE, SUBEDAR BANA SINGH

Apart from the Peace Keeping operations, the Indian Soldiers had to die for their country while fighting in various skirmishes with Pakistan. The Pakistani intruder had always been trying to capture certain Indian posts even in violation of agreements in this regard. For example, the Karachi agreement of 1949 had drawn a specific ceasefire line. Pakistan, later on illegally ceded more than 5000 sq. Kms. of Indian Territory to China. One mountain area covered with snow and ice called the Siachen Glacier has also been a bone of contention between the two countries. It is on this hill that a post was located at an altitude of 21153 ft. above sea level. The Pakistani soldiers had captured this post and for getting it freed from their intrusion a task force was constituted in June 1987. The hero of this task force was Naib Subedar Bana Singh. For his brave action; Bana Singh was awarded Param Vir Chakra. The citation of this award states the position as under:-

“Naib Subedar Bana Singh volunteered to be a member of the task force constituted in June 1987 to clear an intrusion by an adversary in the Siachen Glacier area at an altitude of 21,000 feet. The post was virtually an impregnable glacier fortress with ice walls, 1500 feet high, on both sides. Naib Subedar Bana Singh led his men through an extremely difficult and hazardous route. He inspired them by his indomitable courage and leadership. The brave Naib Subedar and his men crawled and closed in on the adversary. Moving from trench to trench, lobbing hand grenades, and charging with the bayonet, he cleared the post of all intruders.”

It may be mentioned here that at present, one of the peaks at the Siachen glacier, which is perhaps the post located at the highest altitude, is named after the brave Bana Singh. Number of Sikh Officers stationed at this coldest battle front, even stationed today is quite substantial. The President of India, Abdul Kalam Azad, when recently visited this place, was highly impressed by the valour and the high spirits of the officers on duty there.

OPERATION VIJAY IN KARGIL

The most notable act of infiltration by the Pakistani soldiers into the Indian territory took place in the summer of 1999, which was almost an undeclared war. The attempts to infiltrate started in May of that year and continued till October when Indian forces got ultimate success in uprooting them from the Indian territories. The operation undertaken by our forces for clearing land in the Kargil Sector from the terrorists-cum-infiltrators was called operation VIJAY.

The 5th Sikhs were deployed in Operation Vijay from May to October, 1999 and apart from the conventional defensive role, were responsible for prevention of infiltration from across the border. In September, 1999, a major bid by the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen to infiltrate into India, disrupt Lok Sabha Elections to be held on 11 September, 1999, and attempt destruction of major ammunition dumps in the Kathua region of J&K, was foiled in an encounter which lasted more than nine hours. Three hard core militants were killed on the spot and two days later, more militants were apprehended with the help of civilians from a nearby village. In an encounter. Sepoy Manjinderpal Singh and Sepoy Sukhpreet Singh made the supreme sacrifice and 15 men were injured.

THE 8TH SIKHS BATTALION

The most committed Sikh battalion, which played a vital role in clearing the Dras region from enemy infiltrators during Operation VIJAY were the 8th Sikhs. It was this battalion that fought for getting the Tiger Hill vacated after many casualties. The young Sikh boys, recruited only in the recent past, did not care for their lives. Although they did not have the training to scale steep snowy slopes, they made all efforts to go ahead and reach the heights which were occupied by the enemy. Scores of Sikh young boys lost their lives in this operation. The Chief of the Army Staff Gen. Ved Malik praised this battalion for their valour and steadfastness. The battalion won three Vir Chakras, 10 Sena Medals and a large number mentions-in-despatch.

REAR ADMIRAL PRITAM SINGH MAHINDROO

The victory in the Kargil war was won by the concerted efforts put in by all the three wings of the Indian Armed forces, namely, Army, Air force and Navy. The bravery shown by the Sikh soldiers and fliers has already been discussed in great detail in some of the chapters. So far navy is concerned, the names of some prominent Sikhs figure quite high in its achievements also. One of the highest ranking Sikh officers and the legendary mariner who had commanded various destroyers and cruisers, was Rear Admiral Pritam Singh Mahindroo,

popularly known as 'Peter.' He will be best remembered as the officer who was associated with commissioning and decommissioning of Vikrant. Earlier also, he was specially selected as the navigating officer of the newly acquired Frigate HIMS Godavari which was commissioned in England in 1942. Further, when INS Rajpoot, the 11th destroyer was commissioned in England and later brought to Delhi, it was he who was appointed the concerned officer for this purpose. When it went to Indonesia carrying the Prime Minister, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, his daughter and two young grandsons, 'Peter' escorted it to its destination. He was appointed commander of the cruiser, INS, Delhi and after successful completion of his term, with this assignment, he went to Wellington Staff College for giving training as an instructor. Before his association with Vikrant, he had also commanded fleet flagship INS Delhi. In all his assignments, he had won a reputation of an able seaman, ship handler and also a competent administrator.

INS Vikrant, the 1st Indian Naval Aircraft, was refitted at Harland and Wolf shipyard in Belfast, North Ireland. Lord Louis Mountbatten wanted that a British Royal Naval Captain having considerable experience should command it. However, Naval Headquarters at Delhi (Shri R.D Katari was Admiral) did not accept the view of Lord Louis Mountbatten and put Peter on this job. S. Pritam Singh Mahindroo performed this duty with such excellence, that he was selected for flag rank. Although, he retired, without commanding the fleet, he was given the honour to preside over the decommissioning ceremony of Vikrant in 1997 when he was 80 years old. He died in October, 1999.

SECURITY OF PORTS & SHIPS

S. Pritam Singh Mahindroo was not the only Sikh officer who made a mark in the navy. There have been a large number of Sikh sailors who proved this excellence in the sailor's duties as well as the administration. List of honours like Shaurya Chakras and Seva Medals includes various Sikhs. Merchant navy has also been an integral part of Indian Maritime history. This wing of navy is not only helpful for conducting the business through Ocean, but is also used in the times of war to prevent the ships of the enemy from carrying supplies and materials. The responsibility of security of ports and ships lies with the Director General of Shipping, which post is presently occupied by S.G.S. Sahni, who presides over the Indian Maritime Industry from his Mumbai office. In a recent interview reported in the Hindustan Times dated February 2nd, 2004, S. Sahni apprised that modernisation of Ports was also one of the major issues attracting attention. In this respect, he explained that drafts of the ports need to be increased. Ports like Colombo and Singapore have natural drafts of more than 12 meters, whereas in India, even the Mumbai port does not exceed eight metres. As a result, the newly-built bigger ships find it difficult to call on our

ports. Dredging, which is a very expensive operation is required to maintain good drafts. He further apprised that in the process of modernisation, as per the IMO regulations, ships carrying crude and bulk petroleum products must be double hull after 2007. We issued the regulations in May/June that ships more than 25 years should be scrapped. As part of this procedure, one ship will be scrapped in 2004, while four others will be scrapped next year.

TERRORISM IN PUNJAB & J&K

Since Pakistan had always failed to win a war, the hostile country adopted another method to disturb the peace in India. They started instigating terrorism, first in Punjab and later on in J&K and other parts of the country. They had inducted in Punjab a number of trained terrorists in the guise of Sikhs. The terrorism which hit Punjab for about eight years harmed the Sikhs more than anybody else. A few Sikh unemployed youth might have been misguided by the Pakistanis and joined the terrorists for such heinous act as killing of people and arson and plunder, but most of the Sikhs in the State had seen into the mischievous designs of the neighbour country and wanted that the period of terrorism should end at the earliest. That is why, they helped the police and other para military forces in the elimination of the terrorists. While doing so, they had to suffer most as the terrorists also hit them and the police in their attempt to liquidate the terrorists, many a times mistook many innocent persons, for the terrorists and killed them. However, it was the bravery of the Sikhs and their goodwill towards Non-Sikhs that the period of terrorism ultimately came to an end.

There were bold officers in Police and Para-military forces who bravely faced the position and took out the state out of the turmoil that existed for all these years. S. KPS Gill, known as the 'Super Cop' was heading the Punjab Police during this difficult period. The Congress Chief Minister S. Beant Singh had also to become a victim of the terrorist attack, but the willingness and the cooperation of the people in general and Sikhs in particular, lead to the restoration of normalcy in the state. When the terrorists became active in J&K, the Sikh officers in Police and para military forces were sent to fight them. There is a long list of those who sacrificed their lives while showing gallantry in fighting against the terrorists. However, mention here may be made of a Sikh Captain, S. Gurjinder Singh Suri, who was the lone recipient of the nation's second highest award for gallantry, Maha Vir Chakra, when the gallantry awards were announced on the Independence Day of 2000.

MAHAVIR CHAKRA FOR CAPT. SURI

He had attained martyrdom on November 9 while defending Falaud Post situated at a height of 11200 Ft. in Gulmarg Sector in Jammu & Kashmir.

However, before making the supreme sacrifice, Capt. Suri and his gallant men had killed 17 Pakistani soldiers and destroyed 14 bunkers. They had also been successful in snatching from the enemy, medium machine guns and two rocket launchers. The citation of Mahavir Chakra awarded to him reads as under :-

“On November 9, 1999, enemy launched an attack on our post which was successfully repulsed. Captain Gurjinder Singh Suri immediately deployed his support group to take care of any reinforcement/interference and set out to clear the enemy bunkers, one by one. When Capt. Suri saw that one soldier was seriously injured, he quickly moved on with the other to clear the bunker. He killed two enemy soldiers with his automatic rifle and silenced the machine gun. However, he got a burst in his left arm in the process.

“Unmindful of his injury, he continued to inspire his men. He then lobbed two hand grenades into a bunker and entered inside, spraying bullets and killed one enemy soldier. At this point, the officer was hit by an enemy rocket-propelled grenade and was critically wounded. He refused to be evacuated and continued to exhort his men till he breathed his last.

“Capt. Suri displayed extraordinary leadership, inspired by which the Ghatak (platoon) fell upon the enemy with vengeance and annihilated them.”

“Captain Gurjinder Singh Suri thus displayed conspicuous bravery and leadership of the highest order in the face of the enemy and made the supreme sacrifice in the highest traditions of the Indian Army.”

ASHOK CHAKRA FOR SURINDER SINGH

Another brave Sikh who sacrificed his life while fighting against the terrorists, was Subedar Surinder Singh, who was honoured with Ashok Chakra, the country's highest peace keeping gallantry award, equivalent to Param Vir Chakra. This brave Sikh soldier died while fighting with the terrorist and as such was honoured posthumously on 15th August, 2002. In 2003 also, Sikhs were included among the brave soldiers who were honoured for their acts of valour and devotion to duty. Brigadier H.S. Sandhu was honoured with VSM for his gallantry shown in Assam, whereas Major Pawan Deep Singh Bal of 21 Bihar was awarded a Seva Medal for his bravery in Kashmir. On Sept. 24th, when he was heading a search party in Baramullah (J&K), with utter disregard to his personal safety, dived and picked up a grenade hurled towards their party by a terrorist hiding in the maize fields, and in the next second, Major Bal threw the grenade back at the terrorists killing two of them even as he prevented escape of two other terrorists who were killed subsequently.

The story of the brave soldiers including Sikhs fighting terrorism is still

continuing. It has taken a big toll and a big number of our soldiers including Sikhs have lost their lives during the last ten years while fighting with the terrorists in J&K and other parts of the country. The spread of terrorism during this period has been so vast that they even dared to enter the Red Fort. They attacked mosques, temples and above all, the Indian Parliament. When the Parliament was attacked, those who fought bravely and foiled the attempt of terrorists, included a brave Sikh soldier also, named Sukhvinder Singh of Central Reserve Police, 23rd Battalion. He was on duty at that time near building no. 1. When he heard the voice of firing shots near gate no. 11, he rushed towards that place. In the meantime, two terrorists had jumped over the wall near gate no. 5 and were coming towards building no. 1 when Sukhvinder Singh came into confrontation. Sukhvinder did not allow the terrorists to enter the Sansad Bhawan and killed him. That terrorist being a human bomb, burst and the whole place was filled with smoke.

NATURAL CALAMITIES

Apart from the fight with the terrorists, the brave Indians have also been called upon time and again to show their valour in the times of natural calamities and those tragedies which were caused by human negligence or otherwise. In such situations also, the stories of the brave Sikhs have been numerous. Who can forget the useful service rendered by the Sikh soldiers when there was a devastating earthquake in Gujarat. In addition to the rescue operations in which they played a significant role, the Sikhs organised a free kitchen for the hapless victims for a very long period. The truck loads of food supplies, medicines and clothes were sent by them to their fellow brothers in Gujarat earthquake hit areas. A large number of Sikhs, mainly from the camp of Sant Baba Tara Singh, Kar Seva Wale, remained stationed there for serving the people with food and medical care for months together. The Sikhs living in Gujarat were also very helpful in this respect. Wherever there have been floods in the country, the Sikh soldiers were rushed for rendering a selfless service. The army have also been helpful in building bridges and dams. What to speak of soldiers, even Sikh civilians did a wonderful job when they constructed an almost impossible bridge in Nanded (Maharashtra). While talking of the difficult constructions, I am reminded of their venture in constructing a Gurudwara at Hemkunt at a height of 15210 ft.

DIFFICULT CONSTRUCTION-GURUDWARA HEMKUNT SAHIB

When Sant Sohan Singh, a retired Granthi from the Indian Army made enquiries about a place which is mentioned in many writings including Bachitra Natak, an autobiographical work of the 10th Guru, where the Master had performed the 'Tap', he came to know from certain pilgrims that such a

place conforming to the descriptions as were available, existed at a place called Lokpal. Sant Sohan Singh contacted Bhai Veer Singh and ultimately, it was accepted that this place at Lokpal was the possible Taposthan of the Guru. The senior army officers, who then came into action for building a Gurudwara at that height were General Harkirat Singh and colonel M.S. Sethi, task force Commander of the BRTP. The architect, S. Manmohan Singh Siali had to work very hard in designing the Gurudwara in such a way that it could accommodate upto 500 people and from within, they could see the picturesque surroundings of Hemkunt lake. While designing, he was also to take care of the other natural factors like land slides, snowload, wind forces and the earthquakes. The structure of the Gurudwara should have been strong enough to withstand all these natural probabilities. The fact that the Gurudwara has since been withstanding all such natural vagaries and accommodating the people as thought of proves, the grit and wisdom of the designer team led by S.M.S. Siali.

One wonderful fact about the construction of the Gurudwara at such a high altitude is the carrying of the building material to that place, which task appeared to be almost impossible. It was really the faith and determination of the persons concerned that they could perform such a formidable task. It will be interesting to read as how the initial steel structure was put up. "Transportation of the steel plates required for the foundation of the structure was an incredible task by itself. The foundation plates, measuring 6' by 4' and weighing upto 1 tonne each, were considered by Colonel M.S. Sethi, task force Commander of B.R.T.P, who realised the challenge that the size of the plates would pose during the latter course of the traverse. The heavy load of the plates has to be borne manually for nearly a distance of 15 kms and from 4800 ft. upto a height of 15,210 ft. And that too, over a narrow and difficult bridle track which was composed of steep slopes, occurrence of steps, hair pin bends and rickety timber bridges. Col Sethi devised a design based on the improvisation of zig of the bends-that of L shaped angle irons which were to be bolted to the plates on both the lateral sides while keeping the plates in vertical position. Two long G.I. Steel pipes (one on each side of the plate) were tied to thee extended portion of the 'L' of the angle irons. This arrangements permitted 8 to 10 men on either side of the plate to put their shoulders to the pipes raising the plate from the ground by about 18 inches and moving ahead, enabling the carriage of the five plates to their destination, which needed to be installed as the foundation plates to the steel structure. A reserve of another twenty men followed behind for replacement after short haulages. The task was completed in about ten days time." (Reported in Nishan III/2001 Page 15)

HINDU MUSLIM RIOTS & SIKHS

Hindu Muslim Riots have been quite frequent in our country. The role of Sikhs

in such riots have always been consolatory and helpful. So far Sikh Officials are concerned, whenever they were required to handle such riots, they acted very boldly and brought the situation under control. For eg. S. Joginder Singh, who remained very popular as Director of CBI was S.P. Bidar, in Karnatka in the year 1967 when he had to handle such a situation. In one of the write ups in the Sunday Tribune dated 31st March, 2002, S. Joginder Singh narrated the incident as how he tackled the riots without any firing or loss of life. The bold officer, who is also a prolific writer, has given useful observations in the end of this write up which may be quoted to show his bold views. "There is no particular method to deal with any communal problem. But firm action is the surest signal to the rioters that no vandalism would go unpunished. Videography will help in identifying the rioters. The government should not look over the shoulders of the police officers or sending signals to them to take a partisan attitude. The bottomline is that all political parties should arrive at a consensus, that vote bank politics will not be the guiding factor either in controlling or inflaming communal riots. Unless this is given up, we can't wipe out communal riots."

It is not only in Karnatka alone that riots were handled by a Sikh officer with such perfection. Similar situations were handled by many a Sikh officers at other places also. S. Amarjeet Singh Samra was the Bombay Police Chief when he had to handle such like difficult situations. A Sikh police chief was sent to J&K for this purpose. Recently, when riots paralysed the life in Gujarat, S. KPS Gill was invited for his advice for necessary action to make the atmosphere congenial. A very important role was played for creating a better atmosphere after the riots in Gujarat by S. Tarlochan Singh who was the then Vice Chairman of the National Commission for minorities. He organised a meeting between the Chief Minister of Gujarat, Muslim leaders and VHP leaders. The meeting had the desired effect and led to mutual discussions which calmed and cooled the situation. He acted as a bridge between the State Government and the Muslim leaders to sort out and resolve the problems, grievances and issues arising from the terrible violence caused by the riots. It was not only in this event of Gujarat violence that S. Tarlochan Singh took a prompt action to defuse the situation, he had always performed his duty to protect the interest of the minorities so vociferously that the minorities looked towards him as their voice. When certain priests and nuns were attacked in Orissa, Gujarat & Madhya Pradesh, he had organised a meeting between the RSS, VHP and Christian leaders for the removal of misunderstandings between them.

**S. TARLOCHAN SINGH, CHAIRMAN,
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR MINORITIES**

So far, Sikh religion is concerned, the role of S. Tarlochan Singh as the

protector of their interest has always been highly commendable. It was he, who raised voice before the Constitution Review Commission that Sikhs should be treated a separate, distinct and independent religion. He presented the Sikh case to the Constitution Review Commission headed by the Attorney General of India, Soly Sorabjee, on a number of occasions so diligently that the commission was convinced with this view. Further, he arranged meetings with RSS for convincing them of this view point and ultimately RSS made a declaration by publicly acknowledging the fact of separate identity of the Sikh religion. When the Sikh demand for not including Udham Singh Nagar in the state of Uttranchal was not accepted, S. Tarlochan Singh acting wisely prevented the Sikh community from agitating further on the assurance that their size of land holdings would not be curtailed. Further, with a view to give a moral boost to the Sikhs, a Sikh was appointed as the Governor of the new State (S. Surjit Singh Barnala).

When 36 innocent Sikh men were brutally shot dead in Chatti Singh Pura in Kashmir valley in March, 2000, S. Tarlochan Singh again handled the situation by suggesting some preventive and corrective measures to the J&K government for preventing Sikh migration from Kashmir. These measures included the induction of a Sikh in the J& K State Cabinet and more opportunities of employment to the unemployed Sikh youth. The Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpai approved such suggestive measures and the J&K Government took appropriate action in making Sikh a cabinet minister and also providing additional security to the Sikh populated villages and employment for the Sikh youth. When, it came to the notice that there were certain objectionable portions in the NCERT books whereby some derogatory and baseless remarks about the Sikh Gurus, particularly Guru Tegh Bahadur were published, the brave and devout Sikh, S. Tarlochan Singh took up the matter with all concerned and got those false and insinuating chapters expunged from the controversial books and the teachings of those portions of the books banned.

S. Tarlochan Singh has also made strenuous efforts for glorification of the Sikh religion by inviting the attention of the world to significant events and Sikh personalities. It was he who planned the celebrations of the 200th year of the coronation of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. A national committee was formed under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, for this purpose. Numerous functions were organised at national and state level. One of these functions organized at Amritsar was attended by the Prime Minister as the Chief Guest. Another significant function was organized on 12th December, 2003 at the residence of the French Ambassador, wherein a book written by the French Historian Jean-Marie Lafont on Maharaja Ranjit Singh

was released. The French Ambassador praised the Sikhs as a community of great soldiers, devotees and scholars. A very distinguished gathering of foreigners from various Embassies, who were present on this occasion were shown a Gatka show. All of them were amazingly delighted to watch the hair raising adventures by Gatka players. It was in view of such like celebration that a decision was taken for installation of the statue of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, riding on his horse back, in the Parliament House Complex, New Delhi.

When a statue of Master Tara Singh, an Akaali leader, was installed near Gurudwara Rakabganj and the portraits of Master Tara Singh and Baba Kharak Singh were unveiled in the Central hall of the Parliament house, in this respect also, S. Tarlochan Singh had played a vital role. Although, many other persons, including Jathedar Santokh Singh, who was among the first to raise the demand for making Punjabi a second language in Delhi, had made efforts, the role played by S. Tarlochan Singh in this regard was again very significant. Considering all these achievements of this bold Sikh, who is also an excellent writer and speaker, he was made the Chairman of the National Commission for minorities, when the Commission was reconstituted in February, 2003. He is the 1st Sikh Chairman of this Commission, in which capacity, he enjoys the rank of a Cabinet Minister of the Government of India and a Constitutional status.

SIKH GESTURES IN ACCIDENTS

To err is human, but sometimes, human error may prove disastrous for a large number of people. It is such an error which may cause serious accidents. Sometimes, an accident may occur because of some mechanical fault also. However, whether it is negligence or mechanical fault, an accident may sometimes present a ghastly scene. I remember when some years back, a mine was flooded in Bihar and many workers were entrapped therein, a Sikh engineer made all the efforts to save as many persons as possible. Similarly, I know a widow in our relationship whose husband saved more than eight persons from drowning in a lake at Kapurthala and ultimately, when he was trying to save another person, he got exhausted and was drowned himself. In such situations, it is only the brave who do not lose their balance of mind and prove strong enough to save others. The weak feel helpless and only cry for help and when some saviour comes, he appears to them and their dear ones, a God sent angel.

S. Ajmer Singh of Jalandhar was one such angel, who bravely helped his co-passengers in their rescue from the half hung coaches of Rajdhani Express, when the train had got derailed and some of its coaches had fallen into the river. Similarly, when some rail accidents took place in Punjab, during the last

two three years, the help rendered by the nearby villagers deserved all the appreciation. I remember when an accident took place, just after midnight, a call was given on the village gurudwara loudspeaker and all the people immediately reached the spot with milk, eatables, and all other possible necessary items. When Frontier Mail caught fire near Ludhiana, the two Sikh soldiers of the Corps of Engineers saved the lives of at least 200 passengers. Later on, they were honoured by the Indian Army Chief at that time, General N.C. Vij. When Uphaar tragedy took place at Delhi, Captain Manjinder Singh Bhinder saved over 150 lives after breaking open the exit door and asking his companions to muster help from the army authorities. In the end, he along with his wife and four year old son, perished in the fire. Such a tendency on the part of the Sikhs to help others in such difficult situations is all the more visible even in the countries abroad. When the terrorists attack on the World Trade Centre took place on 11th Sep., 2001, Dr. Narinder Deep Singh Nijjar was the 1st to set up a medical triage at ground zero immediately following the attack. Dr. Nijjar was recognised as a “9/11 Hero” by Newsweek magazine and later on, was presented the Sikh Coalition Service to Humanity award.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be said that it was not only in the battle field or in the air or at sea that the Sikhs displayed exemplary courage and valour, they proved their worth at all fronts whenever or wherever such a need arose. It is no exaggeration to say that the name ‘Sikh’ has always been considered synonymous with such human qualities as boldness, courage, patience and determination. They were always the first in many respects. For eg. Major H.S. Bhutalia was the 1st Commander of the 1st Air Observation Post flight of the Indian Force after independence. Similarly, Second Lt. P.S. Giani was the first Indian officer to be commissioned in 1935 into a field brigade and artillery unit comprising four batteries of horse drawn guns. The Sikhs apart from being 1st in many respects, have also been among the most decorated officers. Even today, the Sikh officers placed in high positions are highly decorated like Lt. General G.S Sahota (PVSM, AVSM), General S.J.S Sehgal (VSM), Lt. Gen. MPS Bhandari (PVSM, VSM, ADC), Lt. Gen. Avtar Singh (PVSM), Major General Charanjit Singh, and Lt. General J.J. Singh (presently GOC-in-C, Western Command). Similarly, Sikh fliers or Mariners of today are also holding challenging assignments.

Their position in police and other para military forces is also enviable. A number of persons remained police heads in Punjab and won laurels. S. Sat Prakash Singh, S. K.P.S. Gill, S. Gurdial Singh are some of these names. S. P.S. Bawa, who was a co-ordinator of Asian Games in 1982 was I.G. Arunachal Pradesh and Goa and was D.G.P. Sikkim. For his commendable services in

Asian Games, he was honoured with Asiad Vashisht Jyoti Medal. He is also the author of Six books on police matters including one on traffic management. When we talk of traffic, the name of S.P.S. Pasricha comes to our mind. He did excellent job in this field in Mumbai and also acquired a Ph.D. in this subject. Recently he was made the police chief for Mumbai for some time.

It may be added that even retired Sikh officers from the forces and police are rendering a useful service to the society. For eg. one of the Air Force Officers, S. Anup Singh Bedi has made a good number of documentary films including the one on Indian territorial army. His films are generally shown on Doordarshan. Similarly, S. Jasjeet Singh, is the writer, who often writes on military affairs. Recently, there was a news item, wherein it was pointed out that the Army and the Indian Air Force have decided to have their independent think tanks dedicated to military matters. In this respect, the Indian Air Force is linkaging with Jasjit Singh centre for the Air power studies and a good number of officers are being deputed to this centre for pursuing projects of relevance. S. Joginder Singh the ex-director of CBI also gives regular column in newspaper and has also written several books on police affairs and management.

So far security is concerned, it may be of ships, ports, important buildings or persons who matter, or that of the public at large, the Sikhs are considered the most suitable for this purpose. They are highly trusted and can be relied upon for any difficult situation. Although, their reputation in this respect had fallen when Sikh security persons shot the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi on 31st October, 1984, but that was for a short time. After some time, it was felt that because of the action of any two persons, the whole community should not be blamed and cannot be distrusted for such a task for which they are among the most suitable persons. It is a matter of controversy as why the persons from the security of the Prime Minister acted in such a manner, and as such, the same being not the subject of this book, there is no need to go into the reasons or discuss the provocations that led to such an act. However, the present position is again favourable for the Sikhs in this respect as they are posted with many VVIPs and for the security of crucial buildings. It has already been discussed that the incharge of the security of ships and ports is also a Sikh officer. It is not only in India, even in other countries, they are hot favourites for sensitive security postings. The most important company dealing with the supply of security persons named as Akaal Security is being run by Yogi Harbhajan Singh in America. It is, therefore, no wonder that tall sturdy Sikhs from India and those converted from Americans, can be seen on security duty at the most famous buildings in America and other countries. Yogi Ji had informed in this connection that their clients included Coca Cola, Thomson Consumer Electronics, Phelps Dodge Mining, Burlington, Northern Santa Fe

Railway and Yellow freight. In his words, “We provide protective services to the Hawaii State Airports Authority, the state of New Mexico, the US Army, Navy and Air Force, the U.S Marshals Service, and others. Akal is the largest provider of court security services to the U.S Marshals. Worldwide, more than seven thousand Akal officers provide security services to business and government facilities.” Truly, this is the Grace of the Almighty Akaal Purakh, that He enables the Sikhs to do wonders at all fronts, wherever they are, for they are always inspired by the divine words:-

ਅਸਥਿਰ ਰਹਹੁ ਡੋਲਹੁ ਮਤ ਕਬਹੂ ਗੁਰ ਕੈ ਬਚਨਿ ਅਧਾਰਿ॥

ਜੈ ਜੈ ਕਾਰੁ ਸਗਲ ਭੂ ਮੰਡਲ ਮੁਖ ਉਜਲ ਦਰਬਾਰ॥੩॥

(ਧਨਾਸਰੀ ਮ: ੫, ਪੰਨਾ ੬੭੮)

Asthir raho dolah mat kabhoo Gur hai bachan adhaar.

Jai Jai kaar sagal bhoo mandal mukh ujjal darbaar.3.

Remain firm, never wobble and have the mainstay of the Guru's Word.

Then you shall be hailed in the entire world and your face shall be bright in the court of Lord.

(SGGS, Page 678)



THE SIKHS IN THE AIR

Flying in the air, whether it is a commercial plane or a plane in some military operation, is an arduous task. It requires a considerable balance of mind, a sense of precision, a Himalayan stamina and a strong will power. A chicken-hearted person can never think of doing such an adventure. So far Sikhs are concerned, they are known for all such qualities which are required for adventure of flying. That is why the number of Sikh Commercial Pilots in various Airlines is much more than their percentage of population as compared to that of others. It is not only in India, but in various other countries also they are among the best pilots with considerable flying experience and honours in this field.

MAHARAJA PATIALA— THE FIRST POSSESSOR OF A PLANE

The story of the association of Sikhs with flying dates back to the British period when Maharaja of Patiala Sardar Bhupinder Singh became the first Indian or rather Asian to procure Aeroplanes for himself. By that time only 7 years had passed since the first flight took place on 17.12.1903 at Kitty Hawk in North Kerona, USA, and only a few French, German, Dutch and English men had built their own aeroplanes.

FIRST SOLO FLIGHT BY SARDAR MANMOHAN SINGH

The first prominent Sikh whose name need to be mentioned in connection with aviation is that of Sardar Manmohan Singh, who had gone to England for education in Engineering. It was in 1923, when he went to England, where apart from receiving his B.Sc. degree at the University of Bristol, he also completed a 2 years course in flying and Aeronautical Engineering for which he was given scholarship by the Govt. of India. When the Aga Khan (1887-1957) a leader of Ismile Sect of Muslims, announced a prize of 500 pounds for an Indian who could accomplish a solo flight between England and India, Sardar Manmohan Singh was one of the competitors. He made 2 attempts during January-Feb., 1930 in this regard. The first flight started from Groydon near London in a single engine light air craft, but it could not go beyond Naples, where he was forced to land in thick fog on a mountain road in Southern Italy. His machine was badly damaged and he himself suffered injury on the left thigh. In his 2nd attempt also, he had to abandon his efforts midway.

However, when another competitor Shri R.N. Chawla also failed to get the prize as he had carried with him a companion, Shri A.M. Engineer, another flier, and as such his flight was no more a solo flight, Sardar Manmohan Singh got the 3rd chance. This time he was successful in completing his solo flight from Croydon to Karachi but the Aga Khan prize was not given to him as he took more than one month. He could not reach his destination within one month because of loss of time in some forced landing in a swamp at St. Rambet near Marscellis (South France). The prize had gone to a spy Engineer, but S. Manmohan Singh was also richly honoured for his feat. Prize or no prize, Sardar Manmohan Singh became the first Indian to complete a solo flight from England to India.

Maharaja Bhupinder Singh was highly impressed by him as a result of which he was made the personal Pilot of Maharaja. In 1934-35 Sardar Manmohan Singh accomplished another solo journey in a light aircraft, again by a first Indian, from England to South Africa. When the 2nd World War broke out in 1939, Sardar Manmohan Singh joined the Indian Air Force as a Pilot Officer, later on promoted as Flying Officer and deputed for operations in the Philippines and Indonesia. Sardar Manmohan Singh, a man of strong determination died in an action in Western Australia on 3rd March, 1942. He was undoubtedly, a pioneer in the field of Indian Aviation.

DISTINGUISHED SIKH FLIER— SARDAR HARDIT SINGH MALIK

Sardar Hardit Singh Malik was another distinguished Sikh hailing from Rawalpindi in Punjab, who displayed his flying skill in an aerial combat on Western Front during the 2nd World War. Sardar Malik, born on 23rd Nov., 1892 was the very first Indian to fly by joining the Royal Flying Corps. He had joined the RFC as a Cadet at Alderslot as early as in 1917 and became the first Indian in any flying service in the world. He got his training from Barkar, who was considered at that time the greatest all rounder Pilot of World War-I. Mr. Barkar initiated Sardar Malik into the art and science of aerial combat, leading him into the first action after shooting down a German Fokkerond. Sardar Malik was to go to Notch another victory in the weeks ahead before he himself was wounded. After remaining for months in the hospital, he re-joined the service, now re-named as the Royal Air Force. He flew the Bristol Fighter, probably the best fighter of the war with 141 Squadron at Biggin Hill, a Specialist unit for defending London from raiding Zeppelins and Bothabombers. When the 2nd World War came to an end, Sardar Hardit Singh Malik was having 2 German bullets still embedded in his leg. The brave Flyer was then offered the prestigious Indian Civil Service in the course of which he was posted as Trade Commissioner in London, Hamburg, Washington and Ottawa. He also became Prime Minister of Patiala Estate. Later on, S. Hardit Singh Malik also served as

Indian High Commissioner to Canada and Ambassador to France. He used to spend a considerable time in sport, particularly Golf, in which he had become India's finest player ever. Thus, S. Hardit Singh Malik lived a highly useful and active life till the age of 91, when he passed away in Nov. 1985.

SARDAR AMARJIT SINGH & SARDAR BHUPINDER SINGH, THE MARVELLOUS AIR FLIERS

When the Britishers decided in 1928 that the Indians be made eligible for commissioning in the Artillery, Engineers, Signal, Tank and air arms of the Army in India, a combined competitive examination for this purpose was held in Nov. 1929. The topper in this exam was Giani Prem Singh, and he opted for the artillery. Those who topped the list for opting for Air Force College at Cromwell were two Sikh brothers Sardar Amarjit Singh and his cousin Sardar Bhupinder Singh. They belonged to a respectable Sikh family of Sargodha, now in Pakistan and had their education at Lahore. Both were excellent sportsmen and when they were finally absorbed in Air Force, became the Pioneers who formed "A" Flight of No.1 Squadron of the Indian Air Force on 1 April 1933. Tragically, both were killed in an air accident six months later during an air exercise near Hyderabad-Sind.

SARDAR HARJINDER SINGH AND SARDAR KARTAR SINGH

Another notable Sikh in the field of Indian aviation was Harjinder Singh from Hoshiarpur, who was an engineer and was among the first nine to be selected for the Royal Air Force in Nov. 1930. He proved to be an excellent officer of the Indian Air Force and rose to the rank of Air Vice Marshal in the early 1960s. He will be remembered as the person who laid the foundation for a civil aircraft industry based at Kanpur. Kartar Singh Tounque of Lyalpur was another engineer, who joined the Indian Air Force in Feb. 1934. He shot to fame as an air gunner. His performance in Bombing during operations in Waziristan in 1937-38 was marvellous. He could accurately judge the Bomb Site, the terminal velocity and could hit its target with great precision and accuracy. He was the first in the Indian Air Force to be mentioned in despatches for these operations.

When the Second World War was fought, there were many prominent Sikh flyers, whose valour was worth noticing. The name of S. Manmohan Singh, in this respect has already been mentioned. His long and varied flying experience had resulted in the latter's immediate command of a Sunderland flying boat with RAF Coastal Command, hunting German submarines during the battle for the Atlantic. S. Mahinder Singh Puji was another distinguished fighter pilot, who showed his excellence while flying hurricanes intercepting German bombers and reconnaissance aircraft during the 2nd World War. Later on when

he was promoted as Flight Commander, he was engaged in low level attacks on enemy targets. In his words, “during these operations, I was involved in many dog fights with Luftwaffe fighters and my total tally was two Messerschmitt Me 109s confirmed as shot down and three damaged”.

Flying Officer, Lal Singh Grewal, joined the last IAF formation raised during World War-II. In 1942, while on the Burma front, he flew hurricane fighters bombers first with no. 9 Squadron, upto the end of the Second World War. After the war, he was among those who flew the troops into the valley of Kashmir. He also participated in the war with China, after which he became instrumental for establishing the Aviation Research Centre (ARC) for special operations. Ultimately, he rose to the rank of Vice Chief of Air Staff.

INDIAN AIR FORCE

Lal Singh Grewal was not the only Sikh to become Vice Chief of Air Staff, there were many others like S. Pritpal Singh, S. Shiv Dev Singh, S. Prem Pal Singh, S. Pritam Singh Ben and S. Surjit Singh Malhotra, who rose to this rank. However, Air Marshal Arjun Singh and Air Marshal Dilbagh Singh had become the Air Chiefs of the Indian Air Force. S. Arjun Singh remained Chief for a long period and was the first to get the rank of Air Chief Marshal. Recently, he has been decorated by the Government of India as the Marshal of the Indian Air Force.

It is interesting to mention here that when a decision was taken by the British in 1943 that the Indian Air Force should go for the war, there were seven squadron commanders, out of which five were Sikhs, namely S/L Arjan Singh (Squadron No. 1), S/L Surjit Singh Majithia (Squadron No. 2), S/L Prithipal Singh (Squadron No. 3), S/L Dalip Singh Majithia (Squadron No. 4) and S/L Mehar Singh (Squadron No. 6). When the Japanese surrounded the Imphal valley in 1943 cutting it off by land route, Indian Air Force Officers proved their worth in keeping the valley withstand the siege. It was in this regard, that Sardar Arjun Singh was awarded Distinguished Flying Cross (DFS) by Lord Mountbatton. When after independence the first confrontation with the Pakistani infiltrators took place, the Air Force again rose to the occasion to play a crucial role. Baba Mehar Singh, who had already shown his bravery while fighting against the Japanese for which he was awarded Distinguished Service Order, acted daringly in flying men and material to those Himalayan heights where it was not possible to reach by any other method. His efforts were mainly responsible for enabling our country to get the valley vacated by the Pakistanis.

When the Indian Air Force had Air Chief Marshal Arjun Singh as its Chief, it played a wonderful role during the 1965 War with Pakistan. He became the first Air Chief Marshal of the Indian force, when in recognition of the air

force's contribution in the 1965 war, the rank of the Chief of the Air Staff was upgraded to that of Air Chief Marshal. S. Arjun Singh, in a recent interview, had told that when 1965 War started, and the infiltrators into the Kashmir valley attacked the Chhamb-Jauria sector, he was told by General J.N. Chaudhary that the army was finding it difficult to stop this attack.. Could the Air Force help? "We both went to the Defence Minister, Mr. Y.B. Chawan, who gave the permission within a few minutes. He asked: "We just can. If you give orders now, we may be able to attack before night". We were able to attack the Pakistan troops and, it was a major achievement. The Pakistani objective of capturing the Akhnoor bridge was never achieved." The Chief was honoured with Padam Vibhushan in 1965. It may be mentioned here that it was not due to only the Air Chief's guidance and direction that the Air Force played a vital role, there were other IAF Officers also, who did an excellent job, in this regard. For example, Air Marshal P.P. Singh one of the highly decorated officers of the IAF went on bombing various Pakistani Air Force bases and contributed considerably to the success story of this war. He was honoured with Maha Veer Chakra for his services.

When 1971 War was fought with Pakistan, the enemy country launched unprovoked surprise air attacks on several air bases in western sector. The Indian Air Force was fully prepared to meet any challenge and they extended coordination and cooperation with the other two arms of the Indian Defence Forces. A complete understanding between the army and the IAF was the main factor in the defeat of Pakistan. The march of Pakistan forces was effectively halted at various places. For example, at Longewala in Rajasthan, their whole Regiment was routed and ultimately destroyed by a handful of hunters. In the eastern sector also, the Indian Air Force was quick enough to cut off the withdrawal of Pakistani troops to Dacca from the Mymen Singh Area. Air forces also helped in heli-lifting the soldiers.

The brave flyers who played a crucial role in all the operations of the IAF included many Sikhs. However, the name of S. Nirmal Jeet Singh Sekhon need special mention as he is the only Param Veer Chakra winner of the Indian Air Force. This brave flying officer, born on 17th July, 1945 was pilot of Gnat detachment based in Srinagar for the Air Defence of the Valley. When on 14th December, 1971, Srinagar Airfield was attacked by a wave of enemy Sox Sanre aircraft. Flying Officer Sekhon was on readiness duty that time. Immediately, however, no fewer than six enemy aircrafts were overhead, and they began bombing and strafing the airfield. In spite of the mortal danger of attempting to take off during the attack, Flying Officer Sekhon took off and immediately engaged a pair of the attacking Sabres. In the fight that ensued, he secured hits on one aircraft and set another on fire. By this time, the other Sabre aircraft

came to the aid of their hard pressed companions and Flying Officer Sekhon's Gnat was again outnumbered, this time by four to one. Even though alone, Flying Officer, Sekhon engaged the enemy in an unequal combat. In the fight that followed, at treetop height, he almost held his own, but was eventually overcome by the sheer weight of numbers. His aircraft crashed and he was killed. The sublime heroism, supreme gallantry, flying skill and determination above and beyond the call of duty displayed by Flying Officer Sekhon in the face of certain death have set heights in Air Force traditions..... (Gazette of India, Notification No.7 Press/72.)

In addition to the Indian Air Force, there is an Army Aviation Corps., which is engaged in the observation of the ranges and lethality of field artillery weapons from the land based observation posts manned by trained Artillery Officers. This Corps. came into being in November 1986. Earlier, the observation task from such posts was done by the Air Force Officers only. It may be mentioned here that when the Royal Air Force was disbanded on 14th August, 1947 and the Indian Air Force became separate from the Pakistan Air Force, the first independent Air Observation Post flight of the IAF was commanded by a Sikh Officer, Major H.S. Butalia. It was a very significant flight as the first aircraft to land at Srinagar from the Air Observation Post flight, IAF carried on board, Shri Krishna Menon and Gen. K.S. Thimayya, who had gone to get the Instrument of accession signed from Maharaja Hari Singh of Jammu & Kashmir.

After the new Aviation Corps. became "Eyes of Artillery", it has done an excellent work in attacks and destruction of strategic enemy base positions in regard to machine guns and other light fortifications and also anti-insurgency operations particularly, in mountains and forests. The Corps has among its senior Aviators, highly decorated Sikh Officers like Lt. Gen. G.S. Sihota, PVSM, AVSM, Veer Chakra, VM and Lt. Gen. S.J.S. Saigel, VM, VSM. The man at the helm of affairs at present is also a Sikh Officer, Maj. Gen. Charan Jeet Singh.

Before concluding this chapter, it will be appropriate to say that most of the Sikh Flyers have been known for their excellent record of adventurous achievements. With a view to have a glimpse of their fearlessness, bravery and the adventurous spirit, we can have a look at the achievements of the most notable person in this regard, who cannot be anyone else but the daredevil Mehar Singh, popularly known as 'Baba'. He will be remembered for the number of sorties and the impressive manner in which he conducted them in the course of his watch and ward duty, while posted in North-West Frontier Province. In one of the sorties, he had to handle an enemy bullet hit craft. He had to crash land in the rugged rocky Shaidar hills in NWFP. Luckily, the

bombs that he was carrying did not explode. As soon as he alongwith his gunner crash landed, the tribes men started looking for their prey, but the master blazer managed to reach an army post before the day break just by crawling up the hill side into a cave and trekking the whole way by sheer instinct and mastery of astral navigation as all the maps and compasses had been lost in the wrecked aircraft.

Another unusual feat of Mehar Singh generally remembered in the history of the Indian Air Force relates to his attending a conference in 1943, which was to be opened "by the AOC-in-C". All the Squadron commanders were ordered to be present at the time of the opening of the conference in New Delhi. Mehar Singh was the Squadron Leader of No.6 Squadron., and as per records his squadron was leaving from Kalyan near Bombay for the Burma front, when he received the signal at 9.00 O clock on the night before he was supposed to report the next morning at Delhi. He took off at 10.00 p.m., on a moonless night to fly alone and without wireless aids to Delhi. He flew at fourteen thousand feet, landed at Allahabad to refuel and reached Willingdon airport, nine hundred miles from his starting point at 4 a.m. He was at the opening session of the conference that morning with all the others, as if nothing had happened. In any other case, such an action would have been treated as unwarranted, but in his case Sir Richard described this feat as "the one of which any air force in the world would be proud."

When Squadron No.6 moved under his command to Arakan on the Burma front, he displayed superb qualities of leadership and flying skill. He inspired his Pilots to be ever up in the air at any time in day and night. He generated in them a dedicated spirit for dangerous missions and the way he and his persons could perform the daring deeds, was simply wonderful. His brilliant exploits against the Japanese in Burma find a mention in the records in the following words:

"In one day alone the Squadron took 250 reconnaissance photographs and within 24 hours the photographic section had made 1000 photos for study by the Commanders and Intelligence officers. The Squadron carried out 2000 sorties, totalling 2500 operational flying hours. In February, when the battle of Buthidaung was at its climax, its pilots were averaging four sorties a day. Some made as many as six sorties daily".

Field Marshal Sir William Slim was so much impressed by the conduct of this Squadron that while describing its performance, he said " I looked in on the Squadron just at a time when news had come in that the last patrol had run into a bunch of Oscars and had been shot down. The Sikh Squadron Leader, an old friend of mine, at once took out the next patrol himself and completed the

mission.

When our country was invaded by the infiltrators sent by Pakistan immediately after independence with an evil intention of occupying Jammu & Kashmir, a very difficult situation arose for defending the valley against the well-armed and equipped Pathans. The high powered conference in J&K was mostly worried as how to send arms, ammunition, fuel and food to Puncchh Garrison. Baba undertook this arduous task although such an act was described by Gen. Russel as “sheer suicide”. The deeply committed hero of that operation created history by pioneering flights over the Himalayas through the uncharted mountain route at 23,000 ft. over the world’s highest mountain ranges without even oxygen and landed his plane at Leh at a height of 11,554 ft. on a dry river bed without even the apology of an airstrip. Never before had a plane ever landed or flown over Leh. With Mehar Singh’s landing at Leh, the supply route to the badly beleaguered garrison there was opened and it ultimately led to the retention of Leh with India, otherwise it could also have been occupied by Pakistan.

The Dakotas were not only used for sending the supplies, the same were also used as bombers for which the master mind had adopted an orthodox method of fusing the bombs inside the air-crafts and then rolling them out of the open door of the crew. He also knew that he was breaking the prescribed rules and regulations, but he could not forego the tremendous psychological advantage that his side gained by the unexpected rain of bombs over enemy positions. The unorthodox, though dangerous use of Dakotas in the J&K operations contributed immensely to India’s ultimate victory over Pakistan.

Mehar Singh was also an able administrator, an excellent humanitarian and a wonderful human being. He could do anything for anyone, which others considered as impossible. For example, in one case, during the partition days, when the sister of a Flight Lt. was stranded in Puncchh, he took him on board and flew his aircraft for evacuating the refugees.

As an administrator also Mehar Singh adopted unorthodox methods. However, whatever he did, it was highly effective as a result his Squadron always remained a happy, efficient and very gallant. If he found something risky to be done, he was always the first to take the risk. Once, he along with his Squadron pilots was in search of a missing aircraft which had failed to report back from a strafing mission. “The aircraft was spotted. It had force-landed in an awkward spot. The task was highly risky, but rather than ordering one of his pilots to land, he himself landed on that slippery short space available there. On inspection, he found the force-landed aircraft badly hit by the enemy gunfire. Eighteen inches of one of the propeller blades had been blown off. A

part of the wing root and its leading edge had also been damaged. However, the engine seemed to function well and he found the pilot in good shape. Without losing any time he ordered the stranded pilot to get into his trainer aircraft and go up in the air. Then, after some improvisation, fully aware of the grave risk involved, Mehar Singh climbed into the cockpit of the shattered aircraft, opened up the throttle and with God's name on his lips, manoeuvred the staggering machine of the dangerously hedged short space and with immaculate dexterity, he was able to take it back to the base. All through everyone prayed for the safety of their leader with their heartbeats almost stopped. The damaged wing collapsed as soon as Mehar Singh had landed smoothly. The dare-devilry of this Sikh, oblivious of all dangers to his person, was able to save an aircraft and a pilot from falling into the hands of the enemy".

There is also no dearth of instances to testify the humanitarianism of Mehar Singh who could do anything for anyone. There are people still alive, who remember him for what he did for them. For example, in one case, during the partition days, when the sister of a Flight Lt. was stranded in Poonch, he took him on board and flew his aircraft for evacuating the refugees.

Considering the achievements of Mehar Singh, he was promoted out of turn to the rank of Wing Commander in December, 1944 and further to the rank of Group Capt. On 1st January 1947. He became Air Commodore in the 11th year of his career although in normal times it takes not less than 20 years to reach this position. Everybody was expecting him to go even to the highest position in the air hierarchy, but one day, all of a sudden he resigned on 27th Sept., 1948. He did not disclose any reasons nor did he let anybody know anything about the same. During 12 years of his service, when he was only 33 years old, he had been decorated with DSO and MVC and had won tremendous applause for his work. It was unfortunate that the living legend, who could land and fly the Craft at any place, died in an air crash.

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SPORTS AND OTHER ADVENTURES

A playground is just like a battlefield and while playing any game, the sportsman has to show the best of the qualities of a soldier. These qualities include patience, valour, team spirit and tactful handling of situation. The experience of a playground helps a person to be disciplined, balanced and well maintained in body, mind and soul. The Sikh Gurus had realised the importance of sports in human life and that is why they always encouraged the Sikhs to play such games which enabled them to possess physical strength and develop a sense of fraternity for a spiritual cause. While taking great interest in the health of their followers, the Sikh Gurus, particularly selected the Martial sports and encouraged and patronized them. Considerable physical strength and endurance of the Sikhs proved assets not only in the battlefield, but also in this sphere. Gatka, swordsmanship (which is today's fencing) shooting, marksmanship (which in modern sports world is archery), horse riding (now equestrian) and also tent pegging were the natural forte of the Sikhs. These were born with them in their blood.

The fact that the great Gurus took keen interest in the games is evidenced by their observations and historical events. When Guru Angad, started his preaching centre at Khadoor, he also started encouraging the young ones as to play certain games for keeping fit. He selected a spot for playing such games including Kushti (wrestling game which is generally played in Punjab) and also started the practice of appreciating and rewarding the winners in such games. The place where the second Guru used to watch these games and give prizes is known as Mall Akhara even today. The Fifth Guru was also an expert in tent pegging. The sixth Guru also encouraged certain martial games like horse riding and use of weapons. The training in the use of weapons and horse riding etc. continued to be provided to those who wanted to play such games. This practice continued during the period of Guru Har Rai Sahib upto the period of Guru Gobind Singh. In Gurbani also, the 5th Guru presents an imagery of a wrestling Akhara wherein

ਹਉ ਗੋਸਾਈ ਦਾ ਪਹਿਲਵਾਨੜਾ॥
ਮੈਂ ਗੁਰ ਮਿਲ ਉਚ ਦੁਮਾਲੜਾ॥
ਸਭ ਹੋਈ ਛਿੰਜ ਇਕਠੀਆ ਦਯੁ ਬੈਠਾ ਵੇਖੈ ਆਪਿ ਜੀਉ॥ ੧੭॥
ਵਾਤ ਵਜਨਿ ਟੰਮਕ ਭੇਰੀਆ॥

ਮਲ ਲਬੇ ਲੈਦੇ ਫੇਰੀਆ॥

ਨਿਹਤੇ ਪੰਜਿ ਜੁਆਨ ਮੈ ਗੁਰ ਬਾਪੀ ਦਿਤੀ ਕੰਡਿ ਜੀਉ॥ ੧੮॥

Hau gosaaee da pehlwaanra.

Mai Gur mil uch dumaalra.

Sabh hoee chhinj ikatheeaa du baiatha vekhai aap jeeo.17.

Vaat vajan tamak bhereeaa.

Mal lathe laide phereeeaa.

Nihate panj juaan mai Gur thaapee ditee kand jeeo.18.

I am the petty wrestler of the Lord.

Having met the Guru, I have put on a tall plumed turban.

All the assemblage to witness wrestling is gathered and the merciful Master Himself is seated to see it. (SGGS, p. 74)

It were not only the Sikh Gurus, who patronized the sports, the Sikh ruler, Ranjit Singh was also very fond of martial sports. It may be mentioned here that when in 1838, he met the Governor General at Ropar, the Governor General was highly surprised to see Maharaja's Skill of tent pegging. During the British period, a large number of Sikhs working with police and army won applause as good sportsmen. In free India, their performance in this field has been so wonderful up to early 80s (after that their participation suffered a set back due to disturbed law & order situation in Punjab and other political factors) that in certain events they appeared to be dominating. This fact becomes crystalised when we analyse the history of Indian sports.

ROYAL FAMILY OF PATIALA & SPORTS

The contribution of the royal family of Patiala in the field of Sports will always be written in golden letters. As early as 1891, Maharaja Rajender Singh of Patiala had introduced the game of Polo in his State. Maharaja was so fond of sports that he patronised Polo with a keen interest, as a result of which S. Chanda Singh and S. Hira Singh emerged as the legendary Polo players. The Patiala Polo Team consisting of Maharaja Rajender Singh, Col. Chanda Singh and Col. Sewa Singh defeated many notable teams of those days. When Comte Jean de Madre, the great French enthusiast of Polo came to India in 1908, he specially visited Patiala and requested the Govt. to permit Col. Chanda Singh to visit Europe and play for his Polo Team, The Tigers in Europe. Col. Chanda Singh went there and proved his worth as the greatest Polo back in various Championships. His name was mentioned as a wonder player in the British Press. Col. Chanda Singh was then invited to Spain to play for the King's Team and won the Championship for them. By the time, Col. Chanda Singh returned to India, Maharaja Rajender Singh of Patiala was succeeded by Maharaja Bhupinder Singh.

Col. Chanda Singh's younger brother Capt. Thakur Singh was also a

superb horse man. He had taken part in the King Emperor's Cup race in 1911 during the coronation Darbar of King George V at Delhi. Capt. Thakur Singh won the Cup, which was presented to him by the king himself. The other prominent Sikh horsemen to play Polo for Patiala included Maj. Jaswant Singh and Col. Joginder Singh. Many a times, the Team had to play against Jodhpur Team, which was equally powerful. India produced a number of Polo players even thereafter, but the names of Gen. Chanda Singh and his brother Capt. Thakur Singh stand peerless in this sphere. This is evidenced by the fact that the Beresford Cup bears the name of Gen. Chanda Singh 18 times and that of his brother Capt. Thakur Singh 11 times. Never have two brothers participated in so many Polo Championships anywhere in the world. The love for this game in the family of these two brothers did not decline even after these two stalwarts were no more. Gen. Chanda Singh himself continued to play the game till the ripe of age of 84, i.e. only two years before his death on 29th Nov., 1950. His eldest son S. Fateh Singh followed in the foot steps of his father and captained polo team of 1st Rajendra Patiala Lancers which won the Viceroy's Staff Cup at Shimla in 1929, 30 and 31. He retired as a Brigadier. The second son, Teja Singh served in the Indian Military Engineers and retired as a Major. The third son, Hon. Capt. Anup Singh was also a good rider and polo player. He was also an expert roller skater which also had been introduced in Patiala by Maharaja Rajender Singh who constructed a world class skating rink in Baradari Garden. Capt. Bahghel Singh, the fourth son, was a dashing horse rider and won many races and trophies, very fond of keeping good horses.

In the present scenario also there are certain persons from Gen. Chanda Singh's family who are notable horse riders. They include Col. Gurdeep Inder Singh, and S. Jasjit Singh. S. Jasjit Singh is among those who are trying to keep the glory of Patiala in the sport of Polo. The Patiala tradition is also being emulated by some prominent Sikh Polo Players in Delhi and Rajasthan. These players include Col. Kuldeep Singh Garcha, Col. Rupinder Singh Baraar, Major Prabhjit Singh Bedi, Maj. Jitender Singh Ahluwalia, S. Gурpal Singh Sandhawaliala and Dr. Pawan Deep Singh. S. Navjeet Singh Sandhu from army had won the runners all trophy when some time back Polo tournaments were held for Hindustan Time Polo trophy.

Maharaja Bhupinder Singh, the successor of Maharaja Rajender Singh of Patiala, who remained Chancellor of the Chamber of Pinces of India, was also a great sportsman. He was not only the first rate Polo Player, but also a hard hitting batsman, who captained the Indian Cricket Team during their visit to England in 1911. He had so much love for sports that he endowed Gymnasium in London for use by Indian Students and several cricket grounds in India. One of these grounds at Chail near Shimla remains the highest playing field in

the world. His son Yaduvindra Singh was also an all round cricket player. He played against England in 1934. He was not only a cricketer, but also played Hockey, Tennis, Polo and took interest in climbing. In 1928 S. Bhupinder Singh was elected the founder President of Indian Olympics Association, which was formed after India had won its first Gold medal in the Hockey at 9th Olympiad in Amesterdum. After his death in 1938, Sh. Yadwinder Singh replaced his father and remained President of this Association until 1960 when he stepped down in favour of his brother Bhalendera Singh. During his 22 years term, he cemented Indian' connection with the International Olympic Movement, fostered the establishment of Branches of the Association in several Provinces and incorporated the formation of national federation for the Individual Olympic Sports.

INDIAN PERFORMANCE IN ASIAN GAMES

After the independence of the country, when India thought of becoming the sports leaders of the Asian Teams, it was decided to start an event called Asian Games in which Asian countries could participate in various sports. For this purpose an Asian Games Federation was set up. The First Chairman of this Federation was a Sikh, the Maharaja Yadvindra Singh of Patiala and it was under his supervision that the Asian Games Charter was made. When the first Asian games were held in Delhi from 4th March, to 11th March, 1951, wherein athletes from 11 Asian countries participated for six sports, namely, athletics, swimming, football, cycling, basketball and weight lifting, most of the winners of Medals for India were Sikhs. Mention may be made of athletes like Nika Singh, Chotta Singh, Bakhatavar Singh, Ranjit Singh and Makhan Singh, who all won gold medals. S. Teja Singh, Pritam Singh, Kulwant singh, Parsa Singh, Baldev Singh and S. Bakshi Singh won silver medals, whereas S. Kishan Singh, Gurbachan Singh, Keshar Singh, Ajit Singh, Gobind Singh and Surant Singh were the bronze medal winners. S. Gurdev Singh was the medal winner in the cycling event.

In the 2nd Asian Games at Manila (Philippines) in 1954, all the four Gold Medals won by India were won by the Sikh Participants. Their names were Praduman Singh, Ajit Singh and Sarvan Singh. Praduman Singh was the recipients of the two gold medals in short put and discuss, whereas Ajit Singh and Sarvan Singh won the medals in High Jump and 110 meter hurdles. During these games, Indians had won three Silver Medals, out of which two were bagged by the Sikhs namely S. Joginder Singh and S. Sohan Singh. Both of them had proved wonderful athletes by getting 2nd positions in the 400 meter and 800 meter races. Another athlete named S. Ishar Singh had won a bronze medal in the shot put event. Similarly, in 1958 also, when 3rd Asian Games were held at Tokyo, the recipients of five Gold Medals for India were

the four Sikh Sportsmen including Milkha Singh popularly known as the flying Sikh. Milkha Singh was also honoured with various other national awards and honours including Padam Shree. The biggest moment in his life was there when he participated in the historic 400 meter Race in the 1960 Rome Olympics. He would have surely won a medal at that time but for a tactical mistake. He was racing ahead of the field in the first 200 meters. But he misjudged his pace and in a split second, before he could revitalise his thoughts, three others had sped past him.

THE PROMINENT SIKH ATHLETES

The athletes who won applause in the Tokyo Asian Games included three Sikh players namely Praduman Singh, Balkar Singh and Mahinder Singh. In the Discus throw event Praduman got two medals, one Gold and one Bronze. He had improved upon his earlier record set by him at Manila. Balbir Singh also demonstrated his might in the Discus throw event and broke the previous record set by Praduman Singh in the earlier games. Similarly, S. Mahinder Singh established a new record in the Triple Jump event. When the 4th Asian Games took place in Jakarta in August-Sept., 1962, the world witnessed a spectacular event of 10000 meter race in which two Sikhs, participated one Gurnam Singh, representing Indonesia and another Tarlok Singh representing India. S. Tarlok Singh won this race by completing it in 30 minutes and 21.4 seconds. Gurnam Singh was the recipient for the Bronze Medal. S. Milkha Singh again won Gold Medal in the 400 meter race, whereas Mahinder Singh was the Gold Medal Winner for the 1500 meter race. There was another Sikh Gurbachan Singh who won Gold Medal. The Sikhs also won three Silver Medals and two Bronze Medals in these Games. In the 5th Asian Games at Bangkok, the first Sikh woman athlete, Manjit Kaur Walia won a Bronze Medal in the 80 meter hurdle race. S. Ajmer Singh won two medals, one Gold in the 400 meter race and 2nd a Silver one in the 200 meter race. Gold was also won by Joginder Singh when he tossed the 16 pond metal ball to a distance of 16.22 meters.

Another Sikh lady Kamal Jit Kaur Sandhu became the first Indian Women athlete to win a Gold medal for her country when she achieved a record in the 400 meter race in 57.3 seconds during the 5th Asian Games at Bangkok in December, 1970. S. Joginder Singh and Mahinder Singh Gill won Gold medals in Triple Jump and tossing the ball event respectively. There were two Silver Medals and 4 Bronze Medals for the Sikhs during these games. The Sikhs also won five out of ten medals won by the Indians during the 7th Asian Games at Tehran, though the medals won this time were Silver and Bronze and not Gold. However in the next Asian Games at Bangkok in December 1978, the Sikhs again won three Gold Medals, two in Athletics and one in Wrestling. When the

9th Asian Games were held at Delhi in 1982, the law and order situation in Punjab had started deteriorating. Then started a sad story of miserable times for the Sikhs as terrorism rose its head and the government's efforts to deal with it were also of such a nature that the sports became a lesser priority for the brave community. This period, which witnessed a number of events including an attack on the Golden Temple and Racial riots in Delhi and other parts of the country, was quite long, but towards the end of the century, when normalcy was restored in Punjab, the Sikhs again started figuring in the Sports making a mark for them in various games. In the 14th Asian Games at Busan in 2002 those Indians who won gold medals included the names of S Bahadur Singh and Manjit Kaur. Sardar Bahadur Singh won gold in Discus throw event and carried on the tradition of brave Sikhs. Sportsmen who had won applause in this event in earlier Asian Games. While talking of prominent Sikh athletes, one can not forget Baba Joginder Singh, whose name appeared in 2001 'The Guineas book of World Records' as the oldest athlete of the world. He was the World Champion of Discus Throw at the ripe age of 95. He participated in a race at Mumbai at the age of 107. He has died recently at the age of 112, a wonderful record holder athlete. S. Fauza Singh is another octogenarian Sikh athlete, who had participated in a number of Marathons in England, Canada and USA. He is settled in Essex and runs for BLISS, a charity that helps premature babies.

INDIAN HOCKEY & THE SIKHS

Hockey has been our National game. Before cricket started becoming a craze of the Indian people, Hockey was the most popular game in India. Indian hockey team won eight gold medals in Olympics and two gold medals in Asian Games. It also won the World Hockey Cup at Kualalumpur in 1975. Recently the Junior Hockey World Cup has also been won by the Indians at HOBERT (Australia). When we evaluate this performance of the Indian Hockey team, the role played by the Sikh players becomes crystal clear. Right from 1928 to 1956, the Indian Hockey team won the gold medal in Olympics. In 1932, when the Indian Team played at Los Angeles, S. Gurmeet Singh, the inside left player of the team attracted the attention of the people by showing his enthusiasm in the game. No doubt, the wizard of the hockey at that time was the magician of the game, the great Shri Dhyana Chand from Punjab, but the upcoming Sikh players were to write the history in the subsequent Olympics. These players like S. Balbir Singh, Sardar Dharam Singh, Sardar Udham Singh, S. Bakshish Singh, S. Gurdev Singh, S. Prithipal Singh, S. Charanjit Singh, S. Joginder Singh, S. Darshan Singh, S. Jagdev Singh, S. Harmeeek Singh, S. Ajit Pal Singh, S. Surjit Singh and many others carried on the flag of victory continuously till 1956 Olympics held at Melbourne, wherein India had to face the tough Pakistan

team but had clinched the game in their favour by defeating them by one goal.

When the game of hockey was introduced for the first time in Asian Games in 1958, the team sent to Tokyo was mainly a Sikh team. Similarly, in 1966, when the Asian Games were held at Bangkok in which the Indian Team was the winner of the Gold medal in Hockey, 10 out of 11 Players were Sikhs. With the only exception of the Goalkeeper Laxmanan, every other player was seen with a knot of hair on his head covered with handkerchief. It is because of the fact that so many Sikhs remained associated with Indian Hockey Team that there have been players more than one with one name. There have been three Balbir Singh and two Baljit Singh in the same team at one point of time.

VILLAGE SANSARPUR-

THE BREEDING PLACE OF HOCKEY PLAYERS

It is all the more interesting to note that a large number of Sikh players hailed from one village Sansarpur in Jalandhar district that is known as the breeding place for hockey players. Many a times a number of hockey players from this village played in National and International tournaments. It is true not only for the Indian team but also for the teams of many other countries for which the Sikhs played at various points of time. For example, in 1968 Mexico Olympics in the Kenyan Hockey Team there were two hockey players namely Sardar Hardial Singh and his brother Sardar Hardev Singh who belonged to this village. It is striking to note that at that time, Indian Hockey Team consisted of six Hockey Players from this renowned village. Such has been the association of a village with the sport.

S. Udham Singh ranks among the finest hockey players of the world. He is the player who has played hockey for the maximum period spanning about two decades. A product of renowned village of Sansarpur was at his best in the 1958 Asian Games in Tokyo, but unfortunately the gold medal at that time went to Pakistan on the basis of superior goal difference. He also played in Olympics in 1952, 1956, 1960 and 1964. His contribution was excellent when India won the Gold Medal in 1952 Olympics in Helsinki. Again, at Melbourn in 1956 he was there to enable India to win the Gold. Although in 1960, India had lost to Pakistan, but the versatile half back Udham Singh was again there to enable his country to win back the title from Pakistan in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics.

S. Balbir Singh, a living legend, who had enabled the Indian Team to win the gold medal in 1956 Olympics at Melbourne by scoring 9 of the 13 goals was honoured with Padam Shree in 1957. He was the captain of the Hockey Team in the Asian Games in 1958. Later on he became Manager and guided many a young sportsmen willing to earn a name in this sport. He was the Manager when India won Gold at the 1962 International Hockey Tournament

in Ahmedabad; Silver at the 1970 Asian Games in Bangkok; Bronze at the 1971 World Hockey Cup in Barcelona; Bronze at the 1982 World Tournament in Amsterdam; and Silver at the 1982 Asian Games in Delhi. He was the manager-cum-coach-cum-Chief selector for the team that won the Gold at the Third World Cup Tournament in Kualalumpur in 1975, thus helping India win a Gold Medal in Hockey after a gap of 11 years. He also managed the team at the Esanda World Cup in Melbourne in 1982.

Sardar Surjit Singh Randhawa was another Olympian Captain, who had won laurels. He was always interested in promoting the game of hockey and was making sincere efforts for organising hockey matches between the two most powerful teams of the world, i.e. India and Pakistan when his life was cut short by a road accident in January, 1984. Since then, his memory is being perpetuated by Surjit Hockey Society, which holds annual tournaments in memory of the great player. Similarly, Sardar Prithipal Singh was a notable player who was awarded Padam Shree.

S. Ajit Pal Singh, who was the Captain of the Indian Hockey Team which won the World Cup defeating Pakistan in 1985 at Kuala Lumpur was also honoured with Padam Shree in 1992. S. Pargat Singh is also remembered for the magic of his stick. He captained the Indian team in two Olympics, 1992 at Barcelona and 1996 at Atlanta. The team under his captaincy finished 7th in 1992 and 8th in 1996. A star of over 300 international matches, Pargat Singh earned the Padam Shree in 1994. It is worth noting that out of 13 Padam Shree awards to Hockey Players, majority of them have gone to Sikh players.

Sardar Rajinder Singh, who had recently shot into fame being the Chief Coach of the hockey team, which clicked against Pakistan in the Asia Cup and Asian Games, was a notable hockey player himself in the early 80s. He was the best scorer, 13 goals of the world cup played at Mumbai in 1981-82. The Indian hockey team playing at Kuala Lumpur and in the Busan Asian Games, was inspired by him as to defeat their arch rivals, Pakistan. Rajinder has been awarded Arjuna Award for his services.

SIKH WOMEN HOCKEY PLAYERS

It is not only the Sikh men who brought laurels for the country in the field of hockey, women were also there to show excellence in this sphere. The Sikh women who won high acclaim include Ajinder Kaur and Rajbir Kaur Rai. Ajinder Kaur was the Kho-Kho champion at the University level. She was also an active participant in relay races. She made her international debut at the Asian Women Hockey Championship at Delhi in 1968. She was in the team that won the Silver Jubilee Tournament in Osaque in 1970 and Begum Aizaz Rasul Trophy in Madras in 1976. She also played the international Women's Hockey

Tournament in Newzealand in 1971 and Womens Championship at the Edinburgh in 1975. She captained India at the 1971 World Cup held in France and played as a member of the team at the 1978 World Cup in Spain.

Rajbir Kaur had entered the National Women's Hockey Championship at Indore in 1981. She was the Captain of the Punjab Team in 1983, 1986 and 1998. She was in the Team that won a Gold Medal at the First Asia Cup in Japan in 1981, National Tournament in Singapore in 1981, Asian Games in Delhi in 1982 and Begum Aizaz Rasul International Tournament at Pune in 1982. Sh. Captained the team that won Gold at the Ist Indira Gandhi Gold Cup Tournament at Delhi in 1985; Silver at the 3rd Indira Gandhi Gold Cup Tournament in Amritsar in 1993; and Bronze at the 1986 Asian Games in Seoul, Pre-Asian Games in Beijing in 1990. F.I.H. International Tournament in Singapore in 1991 and the Asia Cup in Hiroshima in 1993.

Rajbir played the World Cup at Kuala Lumpur in 1983, Asia cup in Hong Kong in 1989 and the 2nd Indira Gandhi Gold Cup Tournament at Chandigarh in 1991. She also played the 1990 Asian Games at Beijing and 1994 Asian Games at Hiroshima. She twice captained the Inter-Continental Cup, first in Argentina in 1985 and then at Philadelphia in the USA in 1993.

She participated in the Indo-Russian Test matches in Delhi and Moscow in 1980 and 1981 and captained the Indian side to play similar matches in Moscow in 1986. She was also in the team that played Test matches in Germany in 1982 and China in 1984. She captained India in Test series against England, Ireland, Holland, Belgium, Germany and Australia in 1993 and 1994. Other notable names of the Sikh women hockey players include that of Chanchal Kaur Kohli and Pritpal Kaur.

SIKHS & FOOTBALL

The Game of Foot Ball, although not very popular in Punjab, and is mainly considered as the Game of Bengal, also produced atleast two Sikh players who won world acclaim in this regard. The first was S. Jarnail Singh Dhillon, who had played for Mohan Bagan Club for nearly 10 years. He was like a Rock in defence of Mohan Bagan which won the IFA Shiefl from 1960 to 1962, the Durand Cup three times in a row from 1963 to 1965, Santosh Trophy in 1962 and the Rovers Cup in 1966. The Club was runners-up in the Rovers Cup in 1961, 1964 and 1965 and in Santosh Trophy in 1964 ,1965 and 1967. He played for Punjab, which won the Nationals for the first time in 1974, defeating Bengal in the semi-final via the tie-breaker. He had represented India in 1960 Olympics, in 1962 Asian Games and in 1964 Asia Cup. It was he who scored the winning goal for the Indian Team in 1962 Asian Games, wherein India won Gold medal by defeating South Korea. He captained the Indian Team at the

1966 Asian Games in Bangkok. When and wherever he played, his performance was so impressive that he was considered as the hero of the game. It was merely because of the fact that as a penalty shooter he never missed penalty shot during his entire football career. When he went to play in Africa he was hailed as Singha Shiba (Singh Lion). Sardar Inder Singh was another footballer, who played for India from 1963 to 1975 and captained the Indian Team in 1969, 1973 and 1975. He is best remembered for lifting the status of JCT Football Club which he joined in 1974 and in that very year led it to the finals of the Durand Cup. He created many records like the highest number of goals scored by an individual in a single tournament and also the total number of goals scored. His score of 23 goals is yet to be broken by any other player. His son Harjinder Singh is also a great football player.

THE SIKH CRICKETEERS

During the last two decades, the game of cricket became very popular in a number of countries. In India too, this game picked up and the students in schools and colleges became its fans. It also entered the state of Punjab and many of those who were earlier fond of playing rural games like Wrestling and Kabbadi started playing with Bat and Ball. Many Sikhs youngsters also became fond of this game. It may be mentioned here that Sikhs were rather amongst the earliest Indians who started taking interest in this game. Maharaja's of Patiala had encouraged this game much before it became popular in other parts of the country. Sardar Bishan Singh Bedi was the first Sikh to win international fame after the independence of the country. Born at Amritsar on 25th Sept., 1946, Bedi had started playing cricket during his college and University days. When he appeared on the national scene at the time of a test match with the West Indies in December 1966, he won the hearts of both the spectators and the selectors. He became very popular in balling and created records. He was also the Captain of the Indian Team for a number of years. Many other Sikhs followed in the foot steps of S. Bishan Singh Bedi and represented India in many Tests and One Day Cricket matches. The names of Jasbir Singh, Rajinder Singh Ghai, Navjot Singh Sidhu, Maninder Singh, Gursharan Singh, Inderjit Singh, Harbhajan Singh and Sharan Jit Singh are well known to the people. S. Navjot Singh Sidhu is now one of the best commentators of Cricket and is generally seen on the TV offering his comments. S. Harbhajan Singh has recently won considerable appreciation as an excellent baller.

SIKH MEN & WOMEN IN OTHER SPORTS

So far other games are concerned, a number of Sikhs have distinguished themselves in other games also. Whether it is Table Tennis or Basket Ball, it is

Polo, Rowing or Shooting or whether it is an Equestrian event or a Paraplegic sport, there are Sikhs who have won national recognition. Now and then, we often find reports regarding achievements of Sikhs in various sports events. For example, recently, there was a report in national newspapers regarding the two Sikh brothers, Harkamal Singh Sandhu and Raj Kamal Singh Sandhu, who had stood sixth in Grand Prix internet tournament, which was the basis for qualifying for the chess world championship. Both of them are aspiring to be international Chess Masters and they are determined to make a mark in this game. There was another report regarding S. Sukhjinder Singh Rana, who is showing his adventurous spirit by participating in various car, cycle, scooter rallies and has won so far many prizes and medals.

Sikh ladies are also not behind. They have been in the lime light at various points of time. To begin with, we can start with Rajkumari Amrit Kaur. She was known for her contribution to Lawn Tennis in the Northern region before independence of the country. In fact she was the first Indian Woman to have made a mark in this regard. It was her performance in the notable wins in Women's and mixed doubles in the State Championship held at Lahore and Shimla during those days that made the Tennis a popular sport thereafter. Kanwal Thakar Singh won fame in Badminton whereas Raj and Prabhjeet Kaur were known Gymnasts. Varinder Jeet Kaur Lally has been known for Volleyball. It was recently reported in the newspapers that one Chetan Preet Kaur, a student of Punjab University is emerging as a fine shooter. She has won several gold medals in shooting championships and a silver medal in the national shooting championship held in Chennai. She has also participated in international events, and the day is not far when she will be recognised as an excellent shooter like Anjali Bhagawat in the present scenario.

SIKH SPORTS ADMINISTRATORS

The contribution of Sikhs is not only in playing the games, they have also remained dominant in the field of administration of sports. At present, they are running several sports academies, particularly that of hockey. It is significant to note that most of the nurseries of hockey are being run by the Punjabis, mainly the Sikhs. The same include the one at Bhaini Sahib, another one at Sansarpur, the acknowledged home of Indian Hockey and also the one run by the Surjit Memorial Society in memory of the Veteran Hockey player, S. Surjit Singh. However, it is not the game of hockey alone, but in respect of other sports also, like badminton, table tennis, volleyball, handball, wrestling, weightlifting and cycling that the Punjabis have been spearheading (including many Sikhs) various associations. The names of Buta Singh, Umrao Singh (athletics), Naurattam Singh Bhalla (Badminton), K.P.S. Gill (Hockey), I.S. Bindra (Table Tennis), Surjit Singh Majitha, K.S. Minhas (wrestling), are all well known names

in the country's sports administration.

NAME, FAME & AWARDS

One very significant fact about the Punjabis in general and Sikhs in particular is that because of their adventurous spirit, they have not only done well in the field of sports for India, their mother land, but also for many other countries to which they had shifted. A number of Punjabis have done extensively well in Hockey, Boxing, Wrestling, Weight-lifting and Kabbadi for their countries of adoption. In Hockey alone, they have played in the teams for England, Canada, Kenya and Malaysia. For example, in Kenya a large number of Sikh players like S. Surjit Singh, Sardar Santokh Matharu, S. Kirpal Singh, S. Man Singh, S. Manmohan Singh, S. Gursharan Singh Channi, S. Parduman Singh, Sardar Mahinder Singh, Sardar Hardial Singh and his brother S. Hardev Singh and Sardar Avtar Singh Sohal are among the promoters of the game of hockey in that country. Sardar Avtar Singh Sohal had led the Kenyan Hockey Team in four Olympics played in 1960, 1964, 1968, 1972. He also played hockey for Kenya in 1971 & 1973 World Cup at Barcelona (Spain) and Amesterdum (Holland) respectively. He would have been the only hockey player of the world who would have played in six Olympics had Kenya participated in 1976 and 1980 Olympics. Since Kenya boycotted these Olympics, S. Avtar Singh Sohal could not participate therein. He had played in 167 National level Hockey Matches till 1980 when he retired from the Game as a Player. However, in 1984, he was the main coach of the Kenyan Hockey Team which participated in Loss Angles Olympic. In Hockey, some Sikh players have been there in teams of some other countries also. Among those who excelled in other games, mention must be made of Safari brothers of Kenya, S. Joginder Singh and S. Jaswant Singh, known as flying Sikhs, they made a mark in motor racing. They were the first non-Europeans to win world championship rally in 1965. S. Joginder Singh won more than fifty times such rallies in Kenya, Uganda & Tanzania. He also achieved top places in Australia, Ivory Coast, Greece, Sweden, Ethiopia, Norway & Austria. In view of such achievements, he was declared the Motor Sportsman of the year 1970 and 1976. He entered the Hall of fame in 1995, wherein out of ten nominations, he was the only Asian (and Sikh). A large number of Sikhs are now working as guides, coaches & umpires in some countries. One S. Bir Singh Mhajan, formerly Hockey Coach, later on became a popular Wimbledon umpire. He has umpired in hundreds of major tournaments.

RURAL SPORTS FESTIVALS

A unique feature of Punjab's love for sports is reflected in the number of rural sports festival which are organised almost throughout the year at different

places. One can take note of such festivals, one after another particularly during the period starting from November to April. It may be Sahnewal or Killa Raipur, the Punjabi spirit of adventure is visible in these events. Killa Raipur, one of the oldest venues of rural sports in Punjab, is recognised world wide as the venue for rural Olympics. One can see here a number of such rural sports which cannot be seen anywhere else in the World. For example, Bullock Cart race, Camel Cart Race, Sack lifting race, Tent Pegging, Horse riding, become the main attractions in such festivals. Apart from popular events like Kabbadi and Wrestling there are uniquely different sports like Unloading of Tractors, trailers, Cycling, pulling vehicles with teeth or lifting heavy weight with teeth or other parts of the body. Although a number of Punjabis participate in these sports, but again a notable participation is by the rural Sikhs. One is wonder struck to see even the old people aged more than 70 years participating in amazingly spectacular adventures. The Sikhs have also started organising sports in their countries of adoption. Canada, Australia, Malaysia are some of the countries where Sikh sports events are organised periodically.

The contribution of Sikhs in the field of sports can also be gauged from the fact that the maximum national awards have been won by the State of Punjab in which Sikh Population is maximum. Similarly, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad Trophy, which is awarded annually to the University which gives the best all round performance during the year, has been won maximum number of times by Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar mainly because of the Sikh Sportsmen. It does not mean that they are confined to a particular State or a University. Sikhs have won honours and distinctions while playing for other states and for other universities also. Same is true of their participation in diverse sports. It is not merely hockey, but in all other sports also, they have won laurels. This becomes crystal clear from a number of Arjuna Awards won by them for various sports. The same are listed as under:-

Balbir Singh Bhatia	Weight Lifting	1965
Manjit Singh Dua	Table Tennis	1981
Randhir Singh	Shooting	1978-79
Jagjit Singh	Rowing	1999
Kuldeep Singh Garcha	Polo	1987
Sandeep Singh Dhillon	Paraplegic Sport	1994
Balbinder Singh Fidda	Kabbadi	1999
Hardip Singh Bhullar	Kabbadi	1990
Balbir Singh Kullar	Hockey	1999
Surjit Singh Randhawa	Hockey	1988
Baljit Singh Dhillon	Hockey	1998
Baldev Singh	Hockey	1998

Rajinder Singh	Hockey	1997
Surinder Singh Sodhi	Hockey	1997
Harmeet Singh	Hockey	1997
Pargat Singh Panwar	Hockey	1989
Mahinder Pal Singh	Hockey	1998
Jagbir Singh	Hockey	1990
Rajbir Kaur Rai	Hockey	1984
Harcharan Singh	Hockey	1977-78
Ajinder Kaur	Hockey	1974
Ajit Pal Singh	Hockey	1970
Jagjit Singh	Hockey	1967
Harvinder Singh Chimni	Hockey	1967
Udham Singh	Hockey	1966
Gurbux Singh	Hockey	1966
Pritpal Singh	Hockey	1961
Ashok Singh Malik	Golf	1963
Inder Singh	Football	1969
Jarnail Singh Dhillon	Football	1964
Jitinder Jit Singh	Equestrian	1987
Rupinder Singh Barar	Equestrian	1982
Amar Singh	Cycling	1975
Bishan Singh Bedi	Cricket	1969
Jaipal Singh	Boxing	1986
Bakshish Singh	Boxing	1979
Sajjan Singh Cheema	Basket Ball	1999
Manmohan Singh	Basket Ball	1971
Gurdial Singh	Basket Ball	1968
Sarvjit Singh	Basket Ball	1961
Gurmit Kaur	Athletics	1999
Parduman Singh	Athletics	1999
Balbinder Singh Dhaliwal	Athletics	1987
Raghubir Singh Bal	Athletics	1987
Bahadur Singh	Athletics	1976
Harnek Singh	Athletics	1969
Mahinder Singh Gill	Athletics	1979
Joginder Singh Bains	Athletics	1968
Manjit Walia	Athletics	1968
Ajmer Singh	Athletics	1966
Makhan Singh	Athletics	1964
Tarlok Singh	Athletics	1962
Gurbachan Singh Randhawa	Athletics	1961

SIKHS ON EVEREST

Apart from their excellent performance in the playgrounds, there are many other areas of adventure also wherein the Sikhs have displayed the qualities of valour, steadfastness, endurance, spirit and dedication for the cause. One such field of adventure is that of climbing, the formidable peaks of the world's greatest mountains. The valiant and the adventurous people had always been thinking of scaling those peaks, the beauty and majesty of which was a source of perennial attraction and inspiration. When the survey of India discovered that Everest was the highest mountain in the world with the height of 29008 ft., it were the Britishers who started efforts with their expeditions to be on the top of this highest peak. A number of British expeditions from 1921 to 1952 failed to surmount Everest. They could reach up to 28000 ft., the maximum. The first Major known to this expedition by the Swiss route was able to touch 28200 ft. However, the British expedition led by Sir John Hunt became successful to achieve its goal when on may, 29th 1953, it was able to land Tenzing Norgay and Admund Hillary on the top.

Although Indians started late in this respect, and their first and second expeditions in 1960 and 1962 could not go beyond 28600 ft., the 3rd Indian expedition led by S.M.S. Kohli was successful in the year 1965. It was a spectacular Indian climb, putting for the first time 9 persons on the top within 9 days. The story of this climb, although is the story of brave Indians who were determined to do or die, the subject of this book being the bravery of Sikhs, the role played by them need to be highlighted.

The leader of this Team, S.M.S. Kohli, a brave officer of the Indian Navy was attracted towards mountaineering career in 1956 when he underwent the basic course at the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute in Darjeeling. After that, he did the advance course and went with the Eastern Karakoram expedition led by late Major N.D. Jayal. He was the first Naval Officer selected for a major mountaineering expedition. Since then he has 14 major expeditions to his credit including Nanda Kot (thrice), Nanda Devi and Ratong (twice), and Saser Kangri (once), Annapuram-III 7578 Mtrs. And Trishuli 7134 Mtrs. He was also the member of Brigadier Gian Singh's team that attempted the Everest in 1960. In the second Indian attempt also, he was the Dy. Leader at that time, he had missed the summit by a mere 100 meter because of a raging blizzard and spent 3 nights at the last Camp (28000 ft.), most of the time, without Oxygen. His climbing adventure at Annuprana, wherein he along with Sonam Gyaetso and Sherpa Sonam Grimi had achieved success, is remarkable in the sense that such a climbing was considered as impossible by the famous British Climber "H.W. Tilman". It is also interesting to note that during this expedition the base camp was looted and two members had been

taken as hostages by the robbers. Despite this, the feat was achieved. He was honoured with Arjuna Award in 1965. He has also been honoured with Padam Bhushan, Ati Vishisht Sewa Medal, IMF Gold Medal, Distinguished Citizen of Delhi Award and the Order of the Khalsa. He has written a large number of books, the latest being 'Power of Ardas', wherein he has given several instances when 'Ardas' saved his life.

The nine Members of the Team led by Mr. Kohli, who reached the summit included three Sikhs, namely S.H.P. S. Ahluwalia, S. Chander Prakash Vohra, and S. Avtar Singh Cheema. S. Avtar Singh Cheema has the distinction of being the first Indian born mountaineer to climb the Mount Everest. He, along with Nawang Gombu, were the first group to step on the highest peak of the World on 20th May, 1965. He achieved this feat despite very little experience of high altitude climbing and no formal training like the basic or advance course. This achievement made him celebrity and brought him Padam Shri and Arjuna Award in 1965.

Sh. Chander Prakash Vohra had successfully undertaken Nanda Devi expedition under Colonel Narender Kumar in 1964 before his success to reach the top of the world. He, along with Ang Kami formed the third pair which set foot on the peak on May, 24, 1965. He also won Arjuna Award in 1965. Major H.P.S. Ahluwalia, was in the fourth Group which reached the summit on May, 29th 1965. His name has become synonymous with courage, determination and raising desire to continue with the fulfilling life. Shot in the neck on the Jammu and Kashmir border during the 1965 conflict with Pakistan, he could hardly speak or move. But the soldier in him waged a great battle and with the help from doctors of the Stoke Mandeville Hospital in England, fought all odds to make a grand recovery and today holds important posts on a number of organisations. He is also the author of some thirteen books, including an autobiography, "Higher Than Everest". While writing the forward of this autobiography, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the late Prime Minister of India gave a fitting tribute to Major Ahluwalia in the following words:-

"Major Ahluwalia has the distinction of belonging to a select band of men—the few who have stood atop the highest peak in the world – Mount Everest. He has distinguished himself equally on the field of battle in defence of our country. Courage has many faces. The manner in which Major Ahluwalia faced his long and dreary treatment and convalescence called for the same sort of grit and perseverance."

His greatest contribution to the country is his act of establishing "The Indian Spinal Injury Institute in Delhi." He is the Chairman of this unique organisation that helps the disabled people in rehabilitation. Major Ahluwalia,

himself a man of grit and strong determination, firmly believes that the handicapped should not be shown pity, as it hurts their self respect. "Instead of indulging in self pity, disabled people must demand a life like everyone else. He opines that it is the responsibility and the duty of the family to rehabilitate the disabled person and help him be part of the mainstream. Members of the family should shed the social stigma related to disability. Only then can a disabled person shed his inhibitions and achieve something in life." Says Major Ahluwalia.

There were other two Sikhs who were the Members of Indian Expedition on 1965, though were not included among the nine who reached the top. These two brave persons also did a wonderful job during the said expedition. S. Gurcharan Singh Bhangu, after completing his advance course in Mountaineering was selected for the pre-Everest Rahtong expedition in Nov., 1964. A graduate from the Punjab University, an excellent Hockey player representing the Punjab Police, Sh. Bhangu had climbed upto Camp 3 (23000 ft.) during the Everest Expedition. He continued his adventures of climbing thereafter and won laurels in successive attempts on Nanda Devi (23000 ft.), Nanda Kot (22000 ft.) and Sasar Kangri (22000 ft.). On 16th June, 1962, he climbed along with Subedar Bisht, Bachendri Pall and Anita Rekhi, the Kala Nag (Black Peak) in Bander Punch area of Garhwal. The same year he climbed Rudar Gaira in the Gangotri region. He was also honoured with Arjuna Award in 1965.

Sardar Bhupinder Pal Singh was included in the 4th Group of Mr. Kohli's Team which was to climb the top peak of the world, but when he was on one rope along with Mr. Ahluwalia, he suffered a cardiac arrest. He was immediately withdrawn from the expedition and was able to survive the heart attack. However, B.P. Singh was not fortunate enough to live longer as he died in a road accident in 1966. The brave fellow was an instructor in skying and Mountaineering at the high altitude warfare school. He participated in the Nanda Devi Expedition in 1964 and climbed Devistan II (21000 ft.), a Virgin Peak. For his courage and adventurous deeds he was honoured with Arjuna Award posthumously.

Apart from Mountaineering, the Sikhs figured prominently in other adventures also. For example Sardar M.S. Kohli was not only a prominent mountaineer, but also a great adventurer in different types of expeditions. He is one person who worked with Indian Navy then with ITBP and later on with Air India. In 1977 he had joined Sir Edmund Hillary in the famous "from the Ocean to the Sky" Jet Boat expedition up the Ganges and later in 1980 led the Indo-French Yamuna Hover Craft expedition. Similarly, Major Ahluwalia is not only the Chairman of the Indian Spinal Injuries Centre (ISIC), which is the

only centre of its kind in South Asia, but was also responsible for organising the central Asia Cultural Expedition covering the silk and trade route in China and Tibet and returning via Lhasa and Kathmandu to Delhi. He was also instrumental in organising the Thar Desert Expedition and Mrigithuni Ski Expedition among others. He also organised the first Trans Himalayan Motor Expedition in 1983. Major Ahluwalia has also involved himself with environment, studying the subject in the far-flung areas of Sikkim and Ladakh, including Nubra Valley, Pangong Lake and the ancient Aryan settlements of Da-Hanu. Further he has contributed to tourism, giving lectures in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Germany, England, Northern Wales, Singapore, China and the USA.

ANTARCTICA & SIKHS

One of the biggest adventures in the present day world is the exploration in Antarctica. In this respect also the name of S. Chander Prakash Vohra figures prominently. Well known for his work for development of glacier studies in the country and his experience of climbing, he was selected as the deputy leader of the first Indian Antarctic Expedition in 1981-82 and leader of the historic Landing Group. He personally ensured the success of the landing in a dramatic and daring effort and laid the firm foundation of exploration and research on Antarctica. His pioneering efforts are remembered even to this day. Regarded as the “father of Indian Glaciology”, C.P. Vohra was also a leader in his chosen field and headed the Geological Survey of India as its Director-General, having joined it at its lowest level immediately after college in 1956. He is the only Indian and second man in history to have achieved the double-climbing-the summit of Mount Everest and to successfully land and explore in Antarctica. The fact that he is the only scientist to have done so is an additional mark to his name.

Before we conclude this chapter, the adventurous spirit of a brave Sikh lady, Dr. Kanwal Bilku, who was the first Indian Woman who has spent 16 months in Antarctica, must find a mention. She had participated in the 19th Indian Antarctica Scientific Expedition in 2000-2001. Although she was more than 50 years old at that time, she displayed exemplary courage, patience and determination during her long stay in the wilderness of ice and glaciers. She was so actively associated with the activities of the team that despite her professional duties, she shared such routine duties also as cooking, house keeping, cleaning etc. Her high spirit is reflected when she narrates her experiences during this expedition in the following words:-

“Handling of the emotional turmoil of team members was the bigger challenge for me. The long polar nights, isolation from family and friends, continuous interaction with the same handful of team members and

perhaps vicinity to the magnetic South Pole hits the psyche of a person. The doctor has to remain on her toes perpetually. All eventualities have to be expected and the age-old formula of preferring preventive cure to a radical one is never more true. And so we resorted to regular counselling, both formal and informal. A person has to be kept occupied constructively and adequate entertainment be provided”.

The sense of duty as shown by the bold Sikh lady shows how much adventurous one can be and age and sex are no barriers if a person is determined to pursue his or her goals. One thing, which Dr. Bilku emphasizes upon is her unflinching faith in God. Another remarkable thing about her adventurous spirit is her sense of pride to be a Sikh. Her own words will be the most appropriate to conclude this chapter on the adventurous spirit of Sikhs. Says she, “when I recall the entire episode, I thank God Almighty in perpetuity, whose invisible and emanating all His blessings was always upon my head. I also express indebtedness to all my friends and family whose good wishes stood by me in the testing times at the Antarctic.

Today, I stand with towering pride that I belong to the great adventurers and explorers in the Sikh roll of honour. The believers carry out their resolve, not in the words alone, but also indeed and action, entirely in tune with the Sikh thought. I owe my success to the roots from which I derive my existence.”

It may be added here that a retired Sikh Brigadier S. TPS Chaudhary has written a book on ‘Adventurous Sports’ in India, be it trekking, hang gliding, skiing, white water rafting, scuba diving, mountaineering or cross country driving.

“The book gives a glimpse of some adventure activities and how to participate in them.” Brig. T.P.S. Chaudhary said, “The purpose of the book is not to make readers expert in a sport, but to explain the basics and inculcate the spirit of adventure in them,” he added. The book, he claimed, was the first of its kind to be published in the country.

Published by the National Book Trust, the recently released 370-page book describes about 25 adventure sports and activities, each contained in separate chapters, which can be pursued in the country. Separate chapters are also devoted to sports institutes, awards and visit to the north and south poles.

The book also contains numerous illustrations, explaining equipment used in each sport and the correct method to handle them and also stresses upon safety measures which need to be followed. Technical terms associated with sports are also explained. Addresses of clubs and institutions associated with each sport are also listed in the book (as reported in the Sunday Tribune, New Delhi, May 23, 2004).

SIKHS IN OTHER SECTORS- AGRICULTURE AND BUSINESS

After writing about the bravery of Sikhs on various fronts, I was thinking of writing the concluding chapter in regard to the concept of valour as enunciated in Gurbani. However, before I could complete the said chapter, I was transferred from Delhi and posted as Chief Commissioner of Income Tax at Allahabad with my jurisdiction over Eastern Uttar Pradesh. Some of my well-wishers advised me not to go to the eastern part of U.P. and get my posting changed. They had certain doubts and fears and pointed out some of the problems like casteism, bad law and order situation and presence of mafia which I could face there. I was also told that there will not be even many Punjabis in that region, what to speak of the Sikhs. I did not agree with their views and decided that in the spirit of Gurbani:

ਨਕਿ ਨਥ ਖਸਮ ਹਥ ਕਿਰਤੁ ਧਕੇ ਦੇ॥

ਜਹਾ ਦਾਣੇ ਤਹਾਂ ਖਾਣੇ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਸਚੁ ਹੇ॥ ੨॥

Nak Nath Khasam Hath Kirat Dhake De.

Jahan Dane Tahan Khane Nanka Sach He.2.

It is in God's hands that our earning drives us to the place of our feed, says Nanak, that is true.2. (SGGS, page 653)

and like other Sikhs, I should move to the place where destiny takes me. I was sure that there cannot be any significant town in the country where brave enterprising Punjabis cannot be found, and about Sikhs, I was reminded of an anecdote as narrated by S. Khushwant Singh in a light manner wherein it was stated that when Neil Armstrong landed on moon, he found a Sikh couple having a stroll there. When asked as when did they reach the moon, they told that after partition they had migrated to this place and since then were living there. What the learned Sikh writer wants to emphasize is that Sikhs can be found at any place. They are highly mobile, and wherever they go, with their enterprising nature and hard work they carve out a fortune for themselves. Moreover, Sikhs have no problem with any people as they mix up with them, learn their language and adjust with their culture so well that soon they become friendly with them. For them, as mentioned in Gurbani:

ਅਵਲ ਅਲਹ ਨੂਰੁ ਉਪਾਇਆ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਕੇ ਸਭ ਬੰਦੇ॥

ਏਕ ਨੂਰ ਤੇ ਸਭੁ ਜਗੁ ਉਪਜਿਆ ਕਉਨ ਭਲੇ ਕੋ ਮੰਦੇ॥ ੧॥

Aval Allah noor upaaiiaa qudrat ke sabh bande.

Ek noor te sabh jag upjiaa, kaun bhale ko mande. 1.

After creating light, he made all mortals

As His light is manifest in all,

Then who can be good or bad.

(SGGS, page 1349)

and their firm faith in the words of 10th Master that the entire humanity is one (MAANAS KI JAAT SABHE EKO PEHCHAANBO), they do not feel stranger anywhere

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

Na ko bairee nahee bigaana, sagal sang hum kau ban aae. 1.

There is no enemy or stranger, I'm a friend of all.

(SGGS, page 1299)

With all these ideas coming to my mind and a belief that:

ਗੁਰੂ ਮੇਰੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਸਦਾ ਹੈ ਨਾਲੇ॥

ਅਤੇ

ਜਹਾ ਜਾਈਐ ਤਹਾ ਸੁਹੇਲੇ॥

Guru mere sang sada hai naale and

Jaha jaaee-ai taha suhele.

Guru is ever with and near me (and) where-so-ever go, I am happy there.

(SGGS, Page 394 and 623)

I moved to Allahabad and took over the new assignment.

After my taking over the charge at Allahabad, I developed cordial relations with most of the people in my office within a few days and it seemed as I had been working there for a long time. Hindi being the main speaking language in this region, I did not have any language problem also. Within a few days, I came to know of many Punjabis including some prominent Sikhs, prosperous in business (eg. S. Joginder Singh, President, Singh Sabha, Allahabad). I also found that some important posts in Central and State Government were being held by the Sikhs. The G.M., North Central Railway (S. IPS Anand), the Chief Electrical Engineer in Railway Electrification (S.S.S. Khurana) the Senior Superintendent of Police of the city (S. RP Singh Chhabra soon after promoted as DIG) and the Director of Printing & Stationary U.P. (S. Gurinder Singh Sethi) were all Sikhs. This kind of position existed even in other areas of my jurisdiction.

I was fully aware of the fact that there were some IAS & IPS Officers in the U.P. Cadre who hailed from Punjab. When very few Indians could appear in ICS Exam. the number of Sikh ICS Officers was also small. (eg. Sirdar Kapoor Singh, S. Tarlok Singh etc.) Even after independence of the country, the Sikhs did not prefer to join the services for some years as they had more interest in

agriculture or their own professions. However, gradually, the concept of becoming a D.C. or S.P. became very popular in Punjab and a large number of Punjabis started appearing in IAS and allied services examinations. This number went on increasing and the Punjabis started securing very high positions in this important competitive examination of the country. Every year some toppers included Sikh officers also (this year, 2003 Civil Services Exam., the two top positions among the boys have been held by two Sikhs namely Ansh Deep Singh and Shoor Veer Singh), but most of them opted for IFS. However, there were many Sikh officers even in the State cadres including U.P.

When I took over my charge, even the Chief Secretary at that time was a senior Sikh IAS Officer (Shri D.S. Bagga). In IPS also some senior Sikh officers were there in this cadre. I noticed that there was a Sikh Judge also in the Hon'ble High Court (Justice K.S. Rakhra). These facts and figures brought a thought to my mind that the presence of the Sikhs at various places and in diverse spheres was also a part of their bold and enterprising spirit. It requires guts to move to any strange place and establish one self as to reach a prominent position. I therefore, decided that a few chapters on "Sikhs in Other Spheres" be made a part of this book as to show the best of adventurous spirit on their part. In this respect, the valiant had to fight against biases and prejudices and the dominating feeling of inertia and home sickness as to move to the new places for achievements.

SIKHS AS AGRICULTURISTS:

To start with the story of the achievements of Sikhs in other spheres, the first sphere which would attract attention will be that of agriculture. It is an admitted fact that till today, the majority of Indians live in villages, and agriculture has been their main occupation. The same has been true of Sikhs also who, before independence of the country were mainly concentrated in Punjab, the most fertile part of which was that which went to Pakistan after partition of the country. The Sikhs had cultivated the land in that part of Punjab with the sweat of their brow as a result of which they became prosperous and owners of huge properties. When the exodus of population took place in 1947, it was a great calamity for the hard working prosperous Sikhs as from affluent they became refugees. Everything owned by them was lost and abandoned. The land left in Pakistan was more fertile and canal irrigated. In the Indian side of Punjab, the quantity of irrigated land was much smaller and as such it was not as fertile and rich as left by the migrants in Pakistan. Besides, some highly revered Sikh shrines were also left on the other side of the boundary. They had to pay a heavy price for the freedom of the country for which they had made the maximum sacrifices. But, despite all this, they did not let their spirit go down and once again started hard labour for making a new beginning. Even in those

hard days, they remembered the Gurmat principles that begging or any illegal act for earning was not a brave man's task. They had only to work hard as ordained in Gurbani:

ਘਾਲਿ ਖਾਇ ਕਿਛੁ ਹਥੁ ਦੇਹਿ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਰਾਹੁ ਪਛਾਣਹਿ ਮੇਇ॥

Ghaal khaa-e kichh hath-ho deh.

Nanak raaho pachhaanhe se.

He who eats what he earns through his earnest labour and from his hand gives something in charity. O Nanak! He alone knows the true way of life.

(SGGS, page 1245)

The hardy Sikh farmers once again made the land of Punjab, the most fertile. Their faith in God and hard work helped them to expand the area under cultivation and develop new varieties of crops. They also used the latest techniques and equipments, with which they were able to bring green revolution for the entire country. The Government of Punjab was also helpful through Punjab Agricultural University, which was set up mainly with the purpose of bringing such a revolution. This university formally, inaugurated on 8th July, 1963 by Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India was organized on the model of the Land Grant Universities of the USA and as such it proved to be a powerful engine of change. The main distinguishing feature of this university has been that it combined teaching, research and extension in such a way that it benefited the university as well as the farmers. The university has been organizing 'Kisaan Melas' and putting on display the new varieties of plants with full details about their method of cultivation and merits. The farmers have been kept well informed of the improved varieties of seeds, machines and techniques of production. The university has been able to develop such a close relationship with the farmers that there was no problem which they could not take to the university scientists and get it solved.

The wheat production during the period of green revolution i.e. from the mid 60s to mid 70s of the last century, was tremendous. Average under high-yielding wheat varieties in Punjab rose from 1,30,000 acres in 1966-67 to 5,00,000 acres in 1970-71. Production rose from 17,00,000 tonnes to 56,00,000 tonnes during the same period. Similarly, the revolution occurred in the production of rice. The PAU developed new varieties of rice which enabled the farmers to bring more area under rice cultivation including those which were traditionally not considered as suitable. As a result, the production of rice in the State increased from 2.9 lakh tonnes in 1965-66 to 11.9 lakh tones in 1973-74. The State of Punjab contributed 8.5 lakh tones of milled rice to the central pool, which was 30% of the total procurement being a record in itself. In respect of wheat, the contribution of Punjab became so high that Punjab

became the granary of the country. Once again the land of Punjab became the most fertile. It was, perhaps, in view of such a change effected in Punjab by the hard working farmers that Professor Puran Singh wrote the following verses in their appreciation.

ਬੀਜ ਬੀਜਣ, ਇਹ ਹਲ ਚਲਾਣ, ਘਾਲਾਂ ਘਾਲਣ ਪੂਰੀਆਂ,
ਖਾਣ ਥੋੜਾ, ਪਹਿਨਣ ਮੋਟਾ ਸੋਟਾ, ਵੇਖਣ ਮੁੜ ਮੁੜ ਵਲ ਬਦਲਾਂ
ਇਹ ਹਨ ਜੱਗ ਦੇ ਭੰਡਾਰੀ,
ਰਾਜੇ ਹੱਥ ਅੱਡ ਅੱਡ ਮੰਗਦੇ ਏਥੋਂ ਰੋਟੀਆਂ।

*Beej beejan, ih hal chalan ghalan ghalanh poorian,
Khan thodha, pehnan mota sota, vekhan mudh mudh val badlan
Ih han jag de bhandari,
raje hath add-add mangede ethon rotian.*

In sowing seed and ploughing, they work very hard.

They eat less, wear simple dress and keep an eye on the clouds.

They are the custodians of food, even the kings beg for that from them.

The agricultural scientists and experts associated with the university also included a very large number of Sikhs. Although the contribution of the founder Vice-Chancellors Shri P.N. Thapar and Dr. M.S. Randhawa was very vital, the role played by Dr. Sukhdev Singh, Dr. A.S. Cheema, Dr. Khem Singh Gill, Dr. A.S. Khera, Dr. G.S. Kalkat and Dr. K.S. Aulakh (All Vice-Chancellors) was also very significant. There were a number of Sikh Directors like Dr. K. Kirpal Singh, Dr. A.S. Dhillon, Dr. K.S. Gill, Dr. G.S. Gill, Dr. J.S. Kolar and Dr. A.S. Sandhu, who also played a vital role for bringing green revolution in Punjab. It is in recognition of the great service rendered by this university in the field of Indian agriculture that a very large number of its Researchers and the Faculty Members have been decorated with highest possible honours including Padam Bhushan for three Vice-chancellors. Dr. Khem Singh Gill, being one of these recipients.

Another significant factor that led to the green revolution in Punjab was considerable improvement in the field of irrigation. The discharge of the Upper-Bari Doab Canal which irrigates the fertile lands of Gurdaspur and Amritsar districts was increased in 1954-55 from 9,000 cusecs to 21,000 cusecs. The irrigation from this canal which covered an area of 340,000 hectares in 1960-61 was extended to 510,000 hectares in 1969-70. The discharge of the Sirhind Canal was increased in 1954 from 9,000 to 12,500 cusecs. The Ropar headworks were remodelled to provide irrigation to new areas and to increase the water allowance of the existing areas. The Sirhind Canal system irrigates 531,514 hectares of land in the Malwa tract.

Besides improving the old canal systems, construction of new canals was also taken up. A new headworks at Harike, below the confluence of the Sutlej

and Beas rivers, was constructed in 1952-53. Total area irrigated from the canals taken from the Harike headworks is 500,000 hectares in the districts of Firozpur and Bhatinda.

The construction of the Bhakra Canal system is the biggest landmark in canal-irrigation development in Punjab after independence. Apart from remodelling the Sirhind Canal, the Bhakra Canal system includes the construction of the Bhakra Canal and the Bist-Doab Canal. The Bhakra Canal system completed in 1954 utilizes a discharge of 18,000 cusecs. The length of the main canal and the branches is about 1,100 kilometres and that of the distributories about 3,400 kilometres. The total area benefited by this canal is 1.46 million hectares. After the reorganization of Punjab in 1966, 0.68 million hectares of area irrigated by the Bhakra Canal has gone to Haryana. The other canal of the Bhakra complex is the Bist-Doab Canal which takes off from the right end of the Ropar barrage. The canal has an authorized full supply discharge of 1,601 cusecs and provides non-perennial irrigation to an area of 257,000 hectares in Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar and Kapurthala districts. In all these projects, the Sikh engineers and workers played a highly significant role. S.R.S. Gill, S. Gulab Singh, S.S.S. Gyani, S.T.S. Sodhi, S. Ardhaman Singh etc. were holding high positions. Without going into the names of many Sikhs and the importance of their role, I would like to mention only one fact, which speaks volumes in this regard. Slocum, the renowned American engineer, who supervised the construction of Bhakra project was so fond of Sikhs that he often used to say that many of them will be future Slocums of this country. One of the young Sikh engineers, S. Avtar Singh Paul was mainly known as future Slocum of India. He is the same engineer, who is now settled in Canada and is well known for his work for preventing earthquakes, the details in respect of which have been given by me at another place in this book.

It was not only in Punjab that they proved their mettle as farmers but also in various other parts of the country. Wherever they went, they gave wonderful results. For example, in Terai area of Uttaranchal State, the land given to them was considered as not worth producing good crops. However, the Sikhs like all other farmers considered land as their mother and hoped to get every thing from it. In a few years, even Terai area land started growing gold and made the Sikh farmers there, the richest of the inhabitants of those areas. The owners of barren pieces of land are now the owners of big farm houses. Similar position exists even in many other parts of the country.

In foreign countries also the Sikhs were invited to have difficult pieces of land to cultivate as to give the best of crops from them. For example, Australia is one such country where, on the basis of advertisements, the Sikhs went there to buy lands and convert them into granaries of food. Woolgoolga, a place

north of Brisbane is the living example wherein most of the land is owned by the Sikhs and they are rich growers of Avocado, pears and bananas. Some Sikhs, who were merely cane cutters in the beginning, now stand out for cane farming in the Cairns area up in Far North Queensland. S. Gian Singh Bains is one of the most notable cane growers of the country with more than 3000 acres of land and S. Prem Singh Bains is a renowned banana grower in Woolgoolga in Australia. In England, Canada and America, which are among the richest countries in the world, the richest farmers in those countries include Sikhs. Who does not know that S. Didar Singh Bains, has made his fortune by growing peaches in California. He is perhaps, the richest farmer in that part of the globe with more than 16000 acres of land owned by him.

DAIRY FARMING

The State of Punjab did not achieve a revolutionary success in farming only, it also made a significant mark in improving dairy and poultry. The production of milk, eggs and broilers was so high that a white revolution was around to happen when the situation in the State worsened due to increase in terrorism. Even now Punjab produces a very high percentage of milk, eggs and broilers. This is mainly due to the cattle improvement through cross-breeding using Hostein-Friesian as the improved breed and Murrah buffalo through Progeny testing. The elite herds of cross bred cattle and buffalo increased the milk production potential. The role played by the Punjabi farmers as per the guidance provided by the PAU in this respect is highly appreciable. A majority of these Punjabi farmers have been Sikhs. That is why some of the prominent cattle breeders in Punjab and other parts of the country were Sikhs only. Among the foreign countries, Newzealand is one country which is known for animal breeding. There are number of Sikhs living there who have huge cattle farms. They are owners of the cows and the bulls, which win prizes in the competitions.

SIKHS IN BUSINESS

Coming to business and profession, Sikhs are considered as one of the most enterprising communities in the world. They are so mobile that they can establish their trade, business or profession anywhere. That is the reason that no Sikh living outside Punjab, is a poor man. They believe in hard work and have also the faith that by dint of their hard work they can earn as much as they like. There are Sikhs amongst the top industrialists of the country. S. Raunaq Singh had started from a small beginning, but rose to become one of the top manufacturers. (After his death, his son, S. Onkar Singh Kanwar became the Chairman of Apollo Tyres). The same is the position of Jagson Paul and Ranbaxy Industries, who are among the top manufacturers not only of India

but of the whole world. Ranbaxy was declared this year as the 'Company of the Year'. Dr Parminder Singh was the person who brought name & fame to Ranbaxy. S. D.S. Brar's role in strengthening company's position has also been highly appreciated. It may be mentioned here that this company was floated by Bhai Mohan Singh, who deserves to be considered as the doyen of the drug manufacturing industry. It was not only Ranbaxy Laboratories, which was set up by him in 1950 and for which he was the Chairman and CEO for over 45 years, he was also the founder member of Max India Limited which company, is now managed by his family. He was a pioneer in the field of promoting research and development in pharmaceuticals, medical science and public health.

When he entered with his industry, in the State of Punjab, in appreciation of his contributions to the industrial development of the State, an industrial township near Ropar was named after his name as "Dr. Bhai Mohan Singh Nagar". Even today, he is associated with large number of business, social and religious organizations and holds key positions in most of them. In recognition of his services, he has won number of awards and appreciation including the Degree of Doctorate (Honoris Causa) by Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar and Padam Shri. In October, 2000, on the occasion of the national day of San Marino, celebrating 1700th year of founding of San Marino he had accompanied Madam Dr. Najma Heptullah, President, Council of the Inter Parliamentary Union to San Marino when she had been invited to be their Chief Guest of the said occasion. Both Dr. Najma Heptullah and Dr. Bhai Mohan Singh were awarded the title of "Cavaliere di Gran Croce" which is the highest title in San Marino, similarly to the top honour of the Indian Republic "Bharat Ratna".

MAIN LINES OF BUSINESS

The Sikhs have mainly left their imprint in garments, hotel, transport, real estate, electronics, communications and so on. There is hardly any significant town in the country, where the Sikhs will not be found in some kind of garment business, it may be manufacturing, trading, dyeing, weaving, fashion designing or that of readymade garments. There are numerous stories of the hard work put in by them in establishing their cloth business at different places. The stories tell their rise from rags to riches. Here, I would like to mention one such story of a brave Sikh who achieved the results in a small town of Eastern U.P. He was S. Sunder Singh, who was one of the unfortunate persons, who had lost everything in Pakistan. He had two small kids when he boarded some train for an unknown destination. It was sheer destiny that he got down from the train at one small station (Pratapgarh in Eastern Uttar Pradesh) to get something to eat for himself and his two sons. In the meantime, the train left the station and he found himself with his children even without a few clothes which he had to wear

as the same were left in the train. Without any money or any valuables, he went to the Garbara Bazaar, Distt. Pratapgarh and met 2-3 persons to tell his tale of woe. They helped him with some money and he assured that he will pay back the debt within a few days. He made a hut in the nearby village and started selling cloth (Markeen) as a vendor with his stock on the head. Gradually, he purchased a horse and carried his merchandise for sale on the horse back. His hard work, sweet nature and fair dealing with the people endeared him so much that within short time he became popular. It was only after a few years that he got a pucca house built and also a shop in the same bazaar. He managed to get good education for his children. Now, when S. Sunder Singh is not alive, his son S. Preetam Singh and his sons are among the most prosperous and reputed persons having a number of businesses in the city of Pratapgarh. Many other Sikhs also worked hard, and today, the Punjabi Market in Pratapgarh shows their prosperity. Such real stories of hard work, entrepreneurship, good nature and cooperation with the people of the respective places are numerous in respect of the people of this community. Their cloth business is well settled everywhere, whether it is Amritsar or Ludhiana, Lucknow or Kanpur, Surat or Ahmedabad, Bhiwandi or Mumbai or in the foreign countries. The famous fashion designer, JJ Walaya is not the only Sikh in designing and manufacturing garments, there are a large number of units, who are manufacturing garments for the purchase and sale in the country or exports.

In foreign countries also a large number of Sikhs are in cloth business in one or the other way. For example, S. Ishar Singh Bindra of New York is a leading businessman in cloth. He alongwith his sons S. Kuldip Singh and S. Tejinder Singh are the owners of JAEETISH Group of companies, which has one of its businesses in garments. In England, the name of S. Gurdip Singh Gujral is very well known. He imports garments worth million of pounds every year from India. S. Gujral is also associated with a number of social and religious organizations including International Punjabi Society and is a decorated person. He was honoured as the Commander of the British Empire (CBE). There is another Sikh businessman in England, S. Ajinder Pall Singh Chawla who is the owner of fashion house named NOVA in London. This fashion house is one of its own kind in women fashion garments. S. APS Chawla is also doing wholesale business by importing knitted wares from China, Taiwan and Korea. He also manufactures such knitted garments in Leicester. S. Chawla is also a social worker, and has set up a Therapy unit at Sri Guru Ram Das Rotary Cancer Hospital which has been constructed in the recent years. This therapy wing has been set up by him in memory of his wife. For his social service, he has been awarded "Freeman in the city of London" in the year 2000.

There are many other Sikhs who are living in other European countries and are engaged in several businesses including that of cloth. For example, S. Amrik Singh Kohli has made a huge fortune in fashion and boutique business in Germany. Similarly, S. Kulbir Singh Kharbanda of Frankfurt and S. Amarjit Singh are among the Sikh millionaires in Germany, the latter having the distinction of being the first turbaned Sikh to have acquired German citizenship. In the south-east Asia also, there are affluent Sikhs in this business. S. Narrotam Singh Narang is a well known name in Thailand. His 'Thai Penang Fabrics' is a famous name in textiles in Bangkok. When one visits the area of Phahurat in Bangkok, one finds a large number of shops of trading and wholesaling of cloth owned by the Sikhs. The Namdhaaris with their white turban can be seen in a number of shops including some in big departmental stores. There are some Sikhs in Thailand who are exporting cloth to USA and other European countries. For example, S. Kuldip Singh Madan is one of the leading business magnates in cloth in Thailand. Similar is the position in Singapore and Malaysia, where there are Sikhs doing import and export business of cloth with European countries and USA. Most of the Sikhs in cloth business in foreign countries have considerable dealings with India and Pakistan.

HOSPITALITY BUSINESS

Although hotel industry is very old industry, the concept of wayside Dhabas was mainly popularized by the Sikhs. Wherever they went, they started small eating places and prepared such dishes for the local people that their Dhabas became popular. One may wonder to find Punjabi Dhabas even in any such remote corners of India and other countries where there are hardly any Sikhs. In some cases, the owner's family may be the only family or one of the few families of the Sikhs living there. I found a number of Dhabas run by Punjabis in and outside the city of Allahabad. People are fond of visiting the road side Dhabas for enjoying delicious food. One Sikh gentleman running a Dhaba on the Faizabad highway told me that his Dhaba not only serves food and shelter to the truck drivers moving on the highway, but also attracts city's elite mainly on weekends when the families come for enjoying the non-vegetarian food. It was all the more wonderful to see that the names of the cottages now made by the Dhaba owners are those of the cities of Punjab like Amritsar, Jalandhar, Moga, Bhatinda and Patiala.

Many Dhaba owners, after becoming prosperous have started even big hotels or chain of hotels. This is all the more evident in foreign countries, where the Sikhs have considerably contributed to altering the food habits of people there. S. Sant Singh Chhatwal living in America, owns Hampshire Hotels & Resorts. He also runs restaurants in London, Montreal, Toronto, New

York, Houston, Los Angeles, Budapest and Kuala Lumpur. He manages his affairs sitting in a posh top floor of his 45 storeys high rise in Manhattan, where he runs a French and Italian Restaurant. His Hampshire Hotel and Resorts chain has 15 hotels with 3000 rooms. Whereas S. Chhatwal is the most well known hotelier in the west, S. Kartar Singh Thakral, stationed at Singapore holds an enviable position in this regard in South East Asia. Apart from the various other businesses including that of electronics spread over China, Australia, Japan, Thailand, Malaysia, Hongkong and Singapore, he also runs a chain of hotels, resorts and shopping complexes in Australia. S. Thakral was named as the 'Businessman of the Year' in 1995. There is another significant name in the field of Event Management, in Australia and he is S. Manjit Singh Gujral. He owns a number of restaurants in Sydney. He is considered as the undisputed king of Indian cuisine. Similarly, there are many Sikhs who run restaurants in various countries of Europe and South East Asia. They are so popular that people visit in large numbers for Indian delicacies. S. KBS Jolly's Eating Point in Berlin is one such place wherein the Germans relish Indian samosas. S. Manbir Singh is another German Sikh who is running the business of eatables under the name EAST WEST FOODS alongwith his partner S. Gurvinder Singh Dhami, who is the agent for ZEE TV is Scandinavia.

In the modern age, new trends have entered the hospitality business. Now the people are not interested in food only. They want entertainment while eating. That is why alongwith the new eating places, have developed certain water parks or other places with recreational facilities. Many businessmen have created resorts where the people enjoy the recreational items alongwith the food. Such resorts have come up in many towns in India as in Delhi, Mumbai, Banglore, etc. In this respect also, a Sikh S. Balwant Singh Chawla is the President of the Indian Association of Amusement Parks & Industries. His father S. Sewa Singh is the Chairman of Polo Group of companies which owns FUN-N-FOOD Village on Delhi Gurgaon road. Recently, when snow park was started at the FUN-N-FOOD Village, it was the first integrated Snow-N-Ice facility in the world. S. Sewa Singh has stated that there was a time when swimming pools and amusement parks were only dreams for the common men. Snow and ice was confined to luxuries of the rich. Since he had a vision of bringing world class recreational facilities to the masses, he introduced the snow park. This park is an amalgam of technology and equipments imported from Japan, Canada and Europe. Spread over 2500 sq. metres, the temperature of this park ranges between minus 5 degree centigrade to 18-20 degree centigrade. Thus, when the Delhities will feel tortured in the hot months of May and June with external temperature of 45 degree and above, they will be able to enjoy the cool and ice skating of international standards in this park. S. Santok Singh Chawla, the other son of S. Sewa Singh is another

Director of the company. They have also set up a Consulting group to advise and offer services to others who want to enter into the business of amusement and water parks.

The Polo group of companies have recently formed a joint venture company Polo Patine Leisure Pvt. Ltd. The basic idea is to bring the industrial expertise of Polo group in the field of amusement and water parks and the technical expertise and product support of Patine Corporation, Japan under a single umbrella. The two companies are working in the direction of improvising Snow parks and Ice skating facilities in the Indian sub-continent. (The Pioneer, dated 8th November, 2003)

Another new trend related to this type of business has been the emergence of multiplexes/cineplexes. In this concept, the promoters have developed certain shopping complexes wherein, two or three small theatres also form a part of the complex. In Delhi, PVR chain of complexes are quite well known. Some wealthy Sikhs have also started taking interest in constructing such complexes which may cater to the purchasing needs of the customer as well as take care of their entertainment. Sahni family of Delhi has joined hands with PVR group in converting one of their old established theatre into a multiplex of this type. However, the most notable Sikh family in this type of business are the Chadhas who have given a name “Wave” to their multiplexes/cineplexes. ‘Wave’ is quite popular in Noida and Kaushambi in Gaziabad. It is also coming up in some other cities in U.P. and Punjab.

There are many Sikhs who are adept in hotel management and possess the best of the qualifications in this regard. The training for hotel management course is also being imparted by some of the Institutes under the control and management of Sikhs. One prominent restaurant consultant is S.J.S. Kalra (Jiggs Kalra), whose cookery books are also popular. In one of the recent reports, he was in the news as a man of grit and gumption, for his victory over a massive stroke which had put him in a debilitated condition. He was stated to have expressed a desire to come out from the disease and do his work more vigorously – “To Embrace Life With Greater Zest Than Ever”.

SIKHS IN TRANSPORT BUSINESS

Transport is another line of business wherein the Sikhs have made a name. A very high percentage of trucks in India are owned by them. Similarly, the ownership of buses and taxis is also quite notable. Most of those who ply vehicles are also Sikhs. Sikh taxi drivers are very popular outside Punjab because of their integrity, efficiency and strong character. Even in foreign countries, the Sikh Cab Drivers, bus drivers and even those who run trains are known among the people. Truck driving is a tough job as the trucks have to

cover long distances for transportation of goods, but this field is also dominated by these strong and vigorous people. During Kargil operations, sturdy Sikh drivers of trucks would carry goods to dizzy heights. Related with transportation are some other businesses like that of manufacturing and trading of motor parts, batteries, tyres & tubes and running of petrol pumps. A significant number of Sikhs are engaged in all these activities in India as well as in foreign countries. Shops of motor parts, tyres and batteries owned/run by the Sikhs can be seen in any part of the country, be it Kolkata or Cuttack in the east, Mumbai or Pune in the west, Hyderabad or Chennai in the south. Some Sikh dealers of cars, two-wheelers, tractors, etc. are also having some roaring business. Sikhs in similar businesses can also be seen in Dubai, Mauritius and some south east Asian countries.

ELECTRONICS & COMMUNICATIONS

In the modern world, there has been a tremendous progress in the field of electronics including communications and computers. In this line also, the Sikhs stand in the front row of achievers. When the revolution started in electronics with the advent of televisions, S. Raja Singh was among the beginner manufacturers of televisions. The Texla TV manufactured by him was among the most popular models. Some of the other Sikhs who made televisions during early days included the manufacturers of Kingston, Binatone & Kasmic (S. Kulbir Singh also manufactured Decks and Sewing machines at Naraina in Delhi). When the coloured TV stormed the Indian market, S. Kartar Singh Thakral, a business tycoon of Singapore was among those who sold thousands of coloured TVs during early 80s in India. When it was thought of that sponsored programmes should be given on television, the Texla group was again the first to start a sponsored programme on television titled as "*Sarbh Sanjhi Gurbani*".

It is not only in respect of televisions that the Sikhs came forward, they started manufacturing even other electronics and electronic parts. M.S. Chawla & Company at Delhi started manufacturing TV parts and later on expanded to cover various other electronic parts. As the range of electronics became wider, some of the Sikhs started manufacturing coolers, tape recorders, decks and so on. Even today, there are such manufacturers as Ferry Radio Company, Singh Radio Company, Bhurji Electronics, etc. whereas Supreme Electronics is manufacturing car stereo, Space Electronics Pvt. Ltd. is manufacturing various other items like Video CD Players, DVD Players, Audio Systems and Air-conditioners (Window & Split). The brand name of M/s Space Electronics Pvt. Ltd. is MACKO. The Chairman of the company S. Gurdev Singh Jaggi, as per a newspaper report had stated that their brand was gaining popularity in the field of consumer electronics and AC market. According, to him, their quality

products having latest world class state of the art technology will become very popular in the coming days.

Whereas there are a good number of other Sikhs who are manufacturers of electronic items, there are some of them who are even exporting the items manufactured by them. Mention may be made of C.D.I. Ltd. who are manufacturing transistors used in various electrical circuits for the purpose of export. This company alongwith others is the group led by S. Gurpreet Singh. Similarly, there are a number of traders in all kinds of electronics and some of them have even started manufacturing. For example, the Hindustan Group started by S. Mehtab Singh is a trading-cum-marketing and service organisation. Since it started in 1947 at Daryaganj in Delhi, it has been representing most of the manufacturers of refrigeration and has played an important role in setting up of cold stores in northern India. S. Jaspal Singh, son of S. Mehtab Singh, an engineer and a professionally trained manager, is presently heading this group alongwith his son, whereas their trading activities, represent the leading icons like Voltas, Daewoo, Videocon, O General, Polaris, CIBIN, Canfoss, Bock, Kirloskar Copeland, Elco, Alco, Emkarate, Daikin Shriram, Chemplast etc., they are also manufacturing ice-cream manufacturing and dispensing equipment. Their manufacturing activities at NOIDA have led to the development of process chillers and innovative cooling equipments. They have also started their activities in the South by reactivating an ailing unit, M/s Refrigerators & Home Appliances Pvt. Ltd. at Chennai. The Group has also negotiated with European and Eastern manufacturers for Refrigeration equipment including components for cold rooms and which essentially are a part of the Cold Chain concept and food preservation, both at the point of procurement and at the point of disposal.

Even in foreign countries, the Sikhs have made a name in electronics and some of them are among the most reputed persons in this line of business. I have already mentioned the name of S. Kartar Singh Thakral, who had started his textile business in the beginning, but in the mid 70s when he included electronics in his business activities, it proved a turning point in his life. Similarly, S. Mahinder Singh Kohli of England is a known name in this field. When he went to England, he started his business with a welders' job and after a year shifted to jewellery imports. It was in the year 1973-74 that he added electronics trade and by the year 2000, his company STONEGALLEON LIMITED had entered Fast Track's Top 100 on the basis of growth, profits and potential. S. Kohli has offices in Hongkong, Canada, India and USA. His company imports items from more than 50 countries including China, India and Pakistan. In the year 2001, more than 2000 containers were imported by them.

There are Sikhs who have made a name in computer business whether it is software or outsourcing. To give one example, the name of S. Surinder Singh Chhabra, who had sold jeans at one particular time on a pavement in Manhattan, is now multimillionaire IT Business tycoon. He had bought a bankrupt company in 1992, but within a few years this company named AMC Corpn. has become a 100 million dollar venture which designs advance technology solutions for corporate giants. S. Surinder Singh Chhabra has won various awards and honours for his achievements. This hard working Sikh attributes his success to his mother's blessings and grace of God. Coming to the south-east Asia, there is another Sikh named S. Paramjit Singh, who runs Asia's largest Post Graduate I.T. Centre known as the Asia Pacific Institute of Information Technology in Kuala Lumpur.

OTHER MISC. BUSINESSES

Apart from the main lines of business as discussed in preceding paragraphs, a good number of Sikhs have earned name, fame and wealth in various other businesses also. For example, a number of Sikhs are associated with the rice business including its export. They are having their rice shellers and their own brands to sell. Lal Quila is one such brand which is famous not only in the country but also in various foreign countries. There are Sikhs in foreign countries who import the famous rice brands from India. S. Tejinder Singh Kalra, living in Denmark is one of such importers. He imports the famous Double Diamond and Double Elephant rice brands from India. His business is spread all over Europe. As per a report he sells about 3 containers of Double Diamond in England, 2 in Norway and 1 in Germany every month.

In sugar business, the pioneer in India was a notable Sikh named S. Umrao Singh Majithia (1870-1954) (he was the father of world renowned Painter Artist Amrita Shergill) who set up the first sugar mill near Gorakhpur.

There is a significant name in the trade of edible oils also, i.e. KHAIRA Trading Company run by Khaira Brothers in England. They deal in wholesale supply of edibles in Britain. S. Santokh Singh Khaira, the Managing Director of this company is justified in making a proud claim that they are the only Sikh family in that trade in Britain.

S. Mohan Singh Ahluwalia was a prominent figure of Delhi after independence of the country. He had a roaring business of soft drinks, because of which he was popularly known as S. Mohan Singh Coca Cola. Associated with a large number of social and religious organizations, S. Mohan Singh was not only a prosperous businessman, but also an excellent person. He gave employment to a very large number of Sikhs and also created branches of his company at various places in the country as Calcutta, Chandigarh and

Mumbai. After his death his two sons S. Daljit Singh and S. Charanjit Singh were also known figures in the soft drinks business. The family also constructed a famous hotel in Delhi named Le Meridian. At one point of time S. Charanjit Singh was Congress Member of Parliament from Delhi. Some other Sikh families are also associated with soft drinks business in one or the other way (eg. Kandhari group in Punjab).

When we talk of tea business, the name of Yogi Harbhajan Singh immediately comes to the mind. Yogi Ji has prepared a tea from herbs, which is quite favourite with the Americans and many others, who believe in his 'Kundalini Yoga Philosophy'. This tea is popularly known as Yogi tea and is believed to be a cure for many ailments. In India also, some Sikhs are engaged in herbal business in one or the other way. For example, Ayur group in Delhi is also manufacturing various herbal products including certain hair care products. Hair care being of vital importance for Sikhs, there are others also who are manufacturing shampoos and hair fixers (eg. Simla Chemicals (P) Ltd.). Among other consumer goods, a number of Sikhs deal in Kriyana items including spices (eg. Bawa Masala Company of Delhi).

In the recent past, when one of the Sikhs was killed in America, the world came to know that the victim of hatred was the owner of gas stations. Some other Sikhs are also having gas stations. The most famous in this regard is S. Darshan Singh Dhaliwal, living in America who runs more than 800 gas stations under the bulk petroleum corporation with an annual turnover of more than one billion dollars. S. Dhaliwal has given employment to more than 500 people. S. MS Anand of Leicester is a prominent Financer whereas S. MS Chaddha is a known name in industrial estate in England. There is one S. Spooni Singh who is owner of the Hollywood Wax Museum which is equivalent to that of Madam Tussaud's Museum in Hollywood. There are more than 200 wax replicas of Hollywood stars, past and present in this museum. There are certain 'Chambers of Horror' (Dracula, Franken Stein, etc.) More than 3 lakh persons visit this museum every year.

In other European countries and in India also many IT centers are being run by the Sikhs. The standard of excellence and perfection attained by them in this line is not less than that of other people, rather they are ahead of many others in this respect also. For example, S. Raman Deep Singh Suri, who is running his software business under the name and style of M/s Raman Software is among the top software development consultancy services. The most striking feature of his business is that S. Raman Deep Singh is a blind person, who lost his sight at a very tender age. Despite his handicap, he achieved his education and competence and does most of the programming himself. He is in the process of making a website for the handicapped that will provide matrimonial

services for them. In his own words:-

“I think my best contribution to society has been in changing the image of a blind person. Earlier the image of a blind man was limited to that of a religious person, beggar or even a musician. But I wanted to tell the world that there is nothing impossible for a blind person and I have done that.” Ramandeep wants other blind people to enter the field of software development. “If I can do it, others can do it too”, he says. According to him, “there is no other blind person in India developing software and providing software consultancy, though there are some who use the latest technology in computing to perform their jobs”. There could be no better example than that of Ramandeep for all those who think that a handicapped person is incapable of matching the able bodied. It is the inner confidence rather than physical fitness that get reflected in a person’s success.

In the world of today, when professionalism is picking up in every sphere, there is an emphasis on information technology and management courses. Such courses are being run by various institutes affiliated to certain universities as well private institutes run by prominent organizations. The Sikh Managers are among the best to manage such institutes, and some of them have made a name in this area. In Delhi only, Indian Institute of Management as well as Guru Nanak Institute of Management have Sikhs as their heads. Among the various such institutes, some have collaborated with the foreign universities for imparting such education. APEEJAY Institute of Information Technology (AIIT), Gurgaon, is one such institute which has collaborated with the University of Westminster, London, UK. This institute started in the year 2000 claims to be the only overseas partner of the ‘Queen’s Award Winner’ University of Westminster, which offers four year degree programmes in Software Engineering and Information System Engineering. Dr. Sarabjit Singh, heading this institute, apprised (vide a newspaper report) that “the courses are subjected to regular academic audits to ensure conformity with international quality standards. The institute has established effective contacts with the industry to provide full opportunities to the students for doing their industrial projects and ensuring better job opportunities.”

There are numerous other businesses wherein the Sikhs have created a reputation for themselves. Ludhiana is one place in the country where there are maximum small scale industries. Whereas a good number of Sikhs are there in the business of hosiery, 90% of which is produced in this town, there are other prominent names in manufacturing, cycles, sewing machines, electricals and different kinds of machinery. Pahwa group is manufacturing Avon cycles which is also exported to many countries. There are a number of

farm machinery manufacturing units owned by Ram Garhia Sikhs, who are perhaps the best artisans. By manufacturing threshers, seed-cum-fertilizer drill cultivators and disc & ploughs, these people made a substantial contribution to the green revolution. They are also in good number in the business of manufacturing of leather machines in Batala & that of hand tools & sports goods in Jalandhar. These goods are also exported to other countries.

When S. Jiwand Singh of Delhi started exporting shoe parts to Russia, he became one of the leading exporters in the sphere. However, after disintegration of Russia, his family has become one of the leading manufacturers of footwear with their popular brands of Woodland and Aero shoes. Bawa family of Jalandhar is another Sikh family engaged in shoe-wear manufacturing (Lotus Bawa Brand).

Infact, there is no end to the businesses that can be mentioned to show the daring enterprising spirit and the hard work put in by the Sikhs, but, I would like to close the chapter by mentioning only one more name S. Surjit Singh Babra, a leading businessman of Toronto, who has a different kind of business i.e. running his own planes. The facts reported about him in the book by Gurmukh Singh reveal that his Skyline is mainly used by United Nation Organization (UNO) for peace keeping missions by flying them to the volatile zones of the world. Skyline has branch offices in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Montreal, Vancouver and Washington. He was recently in news when 150 Birs of Guru Granth Sahib were flown from Amritsar to Toronto. It was his plane which had carried these Birs.

In conclusion, it can be said that whether it is agriculture or business, the enterprising nature of the Sikhs has made them successful in both these sectors. Their hard working temperament and attitude to move to the green pastures have brought them name, fame and prosperity. The most important secret about their success lies in the fact that whatever they do, as per the commands of the Guru, they follow the principle of truthful living. The Gurbani says so:-

ਸਚ ਖੇਤੀ ਸਚੁ ਬੀਜਣਾ ਸਾਚਾ ਵਾਪਾਰਾ॥

ਅਨਦਿਨ ਲਾਹਾ ਸਚੁ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਨੁ ਭਗਤਿ ਭਰੇ ਭੰਡਾਰਾ॥੩॥

Sach khetee sach beejna saacha vaapaara.

Andin laaha sach naam dhan bhagat bhare bhandaara.

Let truth be the Farm, Truth the seed.

And let truth be the trade.

Night and day, then one reaps the profit,

And comes to possess the treasures brimful.

With the wealth of Lord's meditation.3.

EXCELLENCE IN OTHER SPHERES

It is not only in the sphere of agriculture and business that the Sikhs have figured prominently, they have excelled even in services, professions and vocations. It has already been mentioned that presently, a good number of Sikhs are working in higher services in various state cadres. Although, their preference was for the home state Punjab, they have been allocated to almost all the states of the country. It is, therefore, not surprising to see a Sikh Deputy Commissioner or District Collector, even in such far off places like Tamilnadu, Kerala or in the far east. Similar is the position in respect of police service or forest service. They have also adorned prestigious positions in the center including the post of Secretaries in various Ministries. For example S. Kewal Singh was Foreign Secretary, whereas S.S.S. Grewal was the Cabinet Secretary in 1980, the posts of the rank of the Cabinet Secretary like the Secretary of the Lok Sabha (S. Avtar Singh Reikhi) and Chairman of the Railway Board have also been held by the Sikhs. There have been three Sikh Chairmen of the Railway Board, namely S. Karnail Singh, S. MS Gujral and S. IIMS Rana. At present the two senior most officers (Chief Commission of Income Tax) in my department at Delhi are Sikhs. The present head of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) S. Pritpal Singh, generally remains in news because of the progress made by him in respect of communications. Whereas, the head of DTC in Delhi is a Sikh officer, National Insurance Company having its headquarter at Kolkata is also headed by a Sikh namely S. HS Wadhwa. Similarly, the Chairman of Central Bank at Mumbai and the Chairman of the Vijaya Bank at Bangalore are also Sikhs named as S. Dalbir Singh and S. M.S. Kapoor, respectively.

SIKHS IN INDIAN FOREIGN SERVICE

Since a number of Sikhs have joined so far, Indian Foreign Service (IFS), they have been holding several important diplomatic positions. S. Chattwal of Indian Foreign Service closed his career as chairman of Union Public Service Commission. The other important Sikhs who held high position included S. K.C. Singh and S. Hardeep Singh Puri. Some of the Sikh officers are occupying some top positions even today. Who can forget Manbir Singh, an IFS officer, who was the Chief of the Protocol of the Foreign Office, some months back and who handled such VVIP visits like that of Bill Clinton, Vladimir Putin, Pope

John Paul and Pervez Musharraf. When he was posted in Tehran, he had achieved proficiency in Persian and because of his good nature and adept handling of the situation during Iranian revolution, he earned several compliments from world leaders for the welcome accorded to them. Presently, he is India's Ambassador to Hungary. There are many other Sikh officers in Foreign Service who have made a name for their achievements. The present spokesperson at MEA, who can be seen on the television many a times, is not only an outstanding officer, but also a good writer. S. Navtej Singh Sarna, was recently in the news for his debut novel "We weren't like that" published by Penguin. Some Sikhs not from IFS have also remained Ambassadors/High Commissioners in various countries. The present Principal of Guru Gobind College of Commerce, Delhi, S. Jaspal Singh, was formerly High Commissioner to Moazam bique.

SIKHS AND CONSTITUTIONAL POSTS

The Sikhs have also held various constitutional posts like that of Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Judges of High Courts as well Supreme Court, Governor RBI and Chief Election Commissioner. S. Hukum Singh and S. Gurdajal Singh Dhillon were the Speakers of the Lok Sabha whereas Dr. M.S. Gill was the Chief Election Commissioner (he is now Member Rajya Sabha). Dr Manmohan Singh was the Governor of Reserve Bank of India. S. Trilok Singh had planned the setup and functioning of planning commission and won applause. He was later on the member of the Planning Commission. Dr. Manmohan Singh was also the Vice Chairman of the Commission in 1985. Many Sikhs have held the posts of Governors in various states (eg. S. Gurmukh Nihal Singh, S. Ujjal Singh, Dr. Gopal Singh, Col. P.S. Gill and S. Surjit Singh Barnala) and that of Vice-Chancellors in Delhi, Punjab, Agriculture University, Ludhiana, Punjabi University, Patiala and Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. They included a lady Mrs. Inderjit Kaur (Former V.C. of Punjabi University) who was at one point of time the Chairperson of the Staff Selection Commission at New Delhi, the biggest all India recruiting agency for Government of India.

SIKHS IN LEGAL PROFESSION

In respect of legal profession, the number of Sikh lawyers in India as well as in other countries is so large that it is not possible even to give illustrations by selecting a few names. There have been many Sikh Advocates who were later on appointed as judges of High Court as well as Supreme Court of India. For example, S. RS Narula remained Chief Justice of Punjab and Haryana High Court (He was also Governor of Haryana for sometime) and had also earned a name in practice. There have been many other Sikhs who became judges of Punjab and Haryana High Court, and some of them became prominent

because of their activities after retirement. Justice Harbans Singh was later on associated with Gurudwara elections, whereas Justice Ajit Singh Bains won a name in respect of his bold decisions on human rights. He was the Chairman of the Punjab Human Rights Organization and was bold enough to protect the rights of the Sikhs who were facing tortures during the black period of Punjab in the last century. When he was entrusted with the task of making an inquiry into the arrests made in the State during the last four years (ordered by S. Barnala, the C.M. on October 1, 1985), he did a thorough job to protect the citizens' fundamental right to liberty, vital for a democratic set up. For his truthful and bold actions, Justice Bains had also to suffer, but he remained firm in his views and convictions. In Supreme Court also, the Sikh judges were known for their boldness and fairness. Justice R.S. Sarkaria later on headed the famous Sarkaria Commission whereas Justice Kuldeep Singh who had come from the Bar, with a roaring practice in service matters, gave memorable decisions on various procedural issues like handcuffing and also on environmental matters. He is presently, the Chairman of the Delimitation Commission of India.

Apart from Punjab & Haryana High Court and the apex Court, there have been Sikh judges in other courts also. For example, S. Pritam Singh Safer (a renowned Punjabi writer) and Justice Jaspal Singh were there in the Delhi High Court, whereas Justice SS Sodhi was the Chief Justice of Allahabad High Court. Justice Sodhi was also known for his frank and bold decisions. When a large number of cases were filed against the Sikhs, a number of senior Counsels like Ram Jethmalani helped them by fighting their cases. In this respect, the name of S. HS Phoolka also deserves a mention. S. H.S. Phoolka has been fighting the cases of Sikhs involved in false cases and of those who are riot victims for the last 20 years. He has also launched a website carnage.84.org.

In foreign countries also, Sikhs have earned a reputation in the legal profession. The name of T. Sher Singh is very well known in Canada. He has flourishing practice in Guelph, Ontario. He had attracted world attention when he filed a suit against Prime Minister of Canada, Martin Brian Mulroney. Prime Minister had appointed John Buchanan to the Senate, when Buchanan was being interrogated by the Canadian Police on charges of corruption. Although, T. Sher Singh did not win this case, but it gave very important message that the people had a right to demand accountability from their elected representatives. The name of S. Mota Singh is significant in the British legal history as he was the first Sikh Barrister in British Court and had such a roaring practice that within 22 years he was made Queen's Counsel (Queen's Counsels are selected out of the leading Members of the Bar). Later on, he became judge in the British Circuit Court. When the Asians were expelled from

Uganda during the regime of Idi Amin, S. Mota Singh was nominated to represent their case before United Nations.

S. Mota Singh was not the only Sikh to have become Queen's Counsel. Infact, late Dr. Pritam Singh was the first coloured person in the British history to be appointed as Queen's Counsel in 1976. Similarly, the youngest so appointed so far is also a Sikh named S. Manjit Singh Gill who is a reputed advocate on human rights law. He has handled several cases on racial equality in many countries and has also appeared before United Nations Human Rights Committee. He was only 39 years old when he was appointed Queen's Counsel. Justice Choor Singh Siddhu was the first Sikh Judge of Singapore Supreme Court. He has also written books on Sikh History including one on S. Maharaj Singh, the great Sikh freedom fighter.

SIKHS IN POLITICAL POSTS

In political filed, Sikhs have always dominated the scene in their home state of Punjab. When the country became independent and PEPSU was not part of Punjab, after the Prime Ministership of S. Hardit Singh Mullik (1944-47) S. Gian Singh Rarewala became the Prime Minister and later on the first elected Chief Minister of a non-Congress coalition ministry formed in April 1952. He will be remembered for his sincere efforts to promote Punjabi. He had made knowledge of Punjabi compulsory for all government servants during his tenure. Even after the merger of PEPSU with Punjab, he remained a supporter of Punjabi speaking state for the progress of Punjabi language. Almost all the Chief Ministers of Punjab with a few exceptions were Sikhs. They included S. Pratap Singh Kairon, S. Gurmukh Singh Musafir, S. Gurnam Singh, S. Lakshman Singh Gill, S. Surjit Singh Barnala, Giani Zail Singh, S. Beant Singh and S. Prakash Singh Badal. The present Chief Minister of Punjab Capt. Amrinder Singh is from the royal family of Patiala having military background. S. Pratap Singh Kairon, the C.M. of Punjab from 1956 to 1964 was not only a highly educated and widely travelled person, but also a man of strong will and determination. He made new experiments to make Punjab a developed and prosperous State. His boldness led to the task of consolidation of land holdings which increased agricultural production.

Giani Zail Singh, another Chief Minister of Punjab, who will be remembered for making Guru Gobind Singh Marg from Anandpur Sahib to Talwandi Sabo, was one of the most seasoned politicians of the country, who rose to the highest position becoming the ninth President of India. Apart from Punjab, the Sikhs also held ministerial posts in other states like U.P., Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and Haryana. The present Speaker of the Jharkhand assembly also belongs to the Sikh fraternity. It was not only in

Mumbai, Delhi, Nagpur & Kanpur, that the Sikhs remained Sherrif or Mayor, a number of them have also held Mayoral posts in England and other European countries and New Zealand. It is also a matter of pride for the Sikhs that now a turbaned Sikh is a minister in the Canadian Government (S. Gurbux Singh Malhi). When he took his ministerial oath, he took in his own mother tongue, Punjabi. It was mainly because of the efforts made by him and another Punjabi minister Shri Herb Dhariwal that the Canadian Prime Minister, G.M. Chretien was made to release a postal stamp to mark the tercentenary of Khalsa in the year 1999. There are some Sikh members even in the Parliament of Singapore and Malaysia. S. Inderjit Singh and S. Davinder Singh are the MPs in the 85 members Parliament of Singapore. S. Mahima Singh was the first Sikh MP in independent Malaysia's first Parliament.

So far Govt. of India is concerned, Sikhs have held almost all the important portfolios at one or the other time. In the very first Cabinet S. Baldev Singh was the Defence Minister of India, S. Buta Singh was the Home Minister of India, whereas Dr. Manmohan Singh held the important portfolio of Finance. S. Swaran Singh held various charges at different points of time. As Minister for External Affairs from 1970 to 1974, he became very famous because of his gift of gab. He was very close to Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru and was his advisor on political and diplomatic matters. He assisted him in his talks with the Chinese leader Chou-En-Lai, on the Indo-China border question in 1960. "He was with the Indian delegation for its six rounds of talks with Pakistan, 1962-63. He led the Indian delegation to the United Nations several times. He attended all meetings of the Heads of Commonwealth nations and led the Indian delegation at all summit meetings of non-aligned governments during that period. He was named by Indira Gandhi her special envoy to Pakistan, Indonesia and Nigeria in 1980. From 1976-81, he was president of Indian Council of World Affairs. He was a member of the Eminent Persons' Group constituted by the United Nations General Assembly. Most of his retired years were spent working for UNESCO where he again earned a great name for himself for his application and readiness of mind. He was Vice-Chairman of the UNESCO Board, 1984-86. The last years of his life were reserved for the Bhai Vir Singh Sadan, an institute devoted to the study of Sikh letters." (The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism, Volume IV Page 293).

SIKHS IN MEDICAL PROFESSION

Coming to prominent professions and vocations, the Sikhs have proved excellent doctors, engineers, architects, academicians, writers, artists and economists. The medical profession has a number of Sikh doctors who are known for their professional competence and ethics. There is hardly any speciality in which the Sikhs have not come on top. For instance, in the field of

eye specialization, there cannot be any doctor, who does not know Dr. Daljit Singh of Amritsar, who has dedicated his whole life to this field of specialization. He had founded the technique of lens plantation (He is also an excellent poet). Similarly, Dr. Man Singh Nirankari, presently residing at Chandigarh, was at one time Head of the Eye Department and Principal of Amritsar Medical College (1971). Dr. Nirankari is a great scholar of Sikhism and has written a number of books on various aspects of this religion. He also often writes articles for various magazines and newspapers. Dr. Rajbir Singh is one of the top retina specialists of the country. Dr. H.S. Bedi, Dr. Balbir Singh and Dr. H.S. Rissam of Escorts are well known in the sphere of Cardiology, whereas Dr. Hardas Singh is an orthopaedist of repute. Dr. Jasjit Chachhi is a renowned Gynaecologist. Dr. Iqbal Singh Ahuja of Ludhiana is another well-known Gynaecologist of India. Dr. Meharbaan Singh is a renowned Paediatrician. There are many others who have done a wonderful job in their respective fields of specialization.

THE ENGINEER TO PREVENT EFFECTS OF EARTHQUAKES

The number of Sikh engineers is quite large and as usual is disproportionately very high compared to the percentage of their population. Malik Teja Singh was the first chief engineer of India who had got constructed the sectariate building. Many Sikh Engineers have won tremendous applause for their professional skills outside the country. Let me give an example of Dr. Avtar Singh Paul, who has won fame for developing a technique for constructing earthquake-proof buildings. A large number of buildings around the world right from Boeing Plan in Seattle to the Montreal Casino have been constructed under his supervision. Dr. Paul, settled in Canada, possesses a Ph. D. for Structural Engineering. He has developed dampers which work as brakes to prevent the effect of earthquakes. In fact, these dampers absorb 80% of the energy of an earthquake reducing the risk of the collapse of beams and columns holding up a building. His dampers have been tested on “shaking tables” used to simulate earthquakes 5 times the strength of the 1985 earthquake in Mexico city that killed more than 10,000 people. Concoridia’s J.W. McConnell Building was one of the first to be built with this technology; the crossbracing with dampers is plainly visible throughout the downtown structure, which was completed in 1991. Pall friction dampers were also used in 1993 to adapt the Casino de Montreal (housed in the French pavilion built for Expo’67) to meet the national building code. In 1999, the friction dampers were chosen for the retrofit of the Boeing commercial airplane factory in Washington, the largest building in the world, a 110-foot high, single storey plant where 747 jets are assembled. To date, the friction dampers have been used at more that 80 major sites in the U.S., Canada, China and India. Pall’s

design is now standard material in university textbooks. Pall's daughter, Rashmi, also earned a degree from Concordia, a master's in structural engineering in 1994. She now heads up Pall Dynamics' Vancouver office. In 1999, Pall established the Avtar Pall Graduate scholarship in Earthquake Engineering at Concordia. This year's recipient was Li Zhang, a master's student in building engineering. Pall continues to work with graduate students across the country. (The Gift, A newsletter Vol.IV Issue 2 March, 2004).

PROMINENT SIKH WRITERS

It is not only in India alone, but in foreign universities too, the Sikh Professors and Research Scholars will be found in large number. There are a number of foreign universities wherein chairs have been established for the research work in Sikh religion and history, and Sikh scholars alongwith others are contributing considerably in this respect. Similarly, the list of Sikh writers in English, Hindi, Urdu & Punjabi is so long that all such names cannot be mentioned. However, S. Khushwant Singh is undoubtedly one of the best Indian writers in English language. His truthful and bold works include his novel "Train to Pakistan", "History of Sikhs" and his autobiography, named 'Truth, Love and a little malice'. He was recently, again in news when his latest novel namely "Burial at Sea" was released in a function in New Delhi. There have been a good number of Sikhs who wrote in Urdu. S. Rajinder Singh Bedi, a prominent name in film industry as a Producer, Director and Writer was an outstanding writer in Urdu. The stories written by him in this language became so prominent (Bhola, Garam Coat) that he came to be recognized as a writer of repute. Whereas he wrote stories for certain well known films like Mirza Ghalib and Anupama, some films were made, based upon his earlier written stories like Ek Chadar Maili Si and Garam Coat.

Many Sikh writers in Punjabi and Hindi have won honours and appreciations for their works including the highest literary honour "Gyanpeeth" award. Some of the great Punjabi writers like Bhai Veer Singh (great poet) Professor Puran Singh (poet and prose writer) Professor Mohan Singh (poet) S. Gurbux Singh Preetlari (prose and short stories writer) S. Nanak Singh (father of Punjabi novel) Amrita Pritam (poetess) S. Kartar Singh Duggal (versatile writer) and S. Gurdayal Singh (Gyanpeeth winner) are so well known that their works have been translated into other Indian languages. Some Hindi movies have been based on the novels of S. Nanak Singh (e.g. Pavitra Papi). Whereas Amrita Pritam was honoured with Gyanpeeth for her autobiography in 1982. S. Gurdayal Singh has been honoured with this highest literary award in 1999 for his works.

S. Kartar Singh Duggal who was a member of Rajya Sabha till recently has

written not only in Punjabi but also in Hindi. His famous novel “Ab Na Bason Eh Gaon” (I will live in this village no more) has captured hearts of not only the Indians but also people of Pakistan as both had suffered the pangs of partition which find expression in this novel. The writer has given poetic touches at many places. His following verses touch the very core of heart.

“The eyes oil that side are wet
The eyes on this side are drenched
The eyelids flutter and remind
Someone remembers someone.

There are other Sikh writers also, who have written both in Punjabi and Hindi. They include Dr. Mahip Singh and Dr. Harbhajan Singh. Dr. Mahip Singh was honoured by Savitri Foundation and International Hindi Smiti in Oct. 2002. Dr. Harbhajan Singh was conferred Saraswati Sanman for his work “Rukh Te Rishi” in 1994. The second Punjabi writer to get this honour was Dr. Dalip Kaur Tiwana, who was conferred Saraswati award 2001 of K.K. Birla Foundation for her novel *Katha Kaho Urvashi* (Punjabi) by former Prime Minister I.K. Gujral on August 5, 2002 in New Delhi.

Although, Punjabi language has not produced many writers of drama and plays, the prominent figures in this regard like Balwant Gargi and Nora Richards include a number of Sikh writers like S. Harcharan Singh, S. Ajmer Singh Aulakh, S. K.S. Duggal (radio plays) and S. Gursharan Singh. S. Harcharan Singh wrote many plays including one act plays. The feature film *Sarbans Dani Guru Gobind Singh* was based upon his play “Chamkaur Di Gadhi”. S. Gursharan Singh also wrote some religious plays but he is better known for his Nukkad plays. He has made the theatre a very popular medium for consciousness raising by popularizing what is called street theatre. It has always been a tradition in Punjab that folk artists were doing jugglery, street magic, etc. for amusing and educating the people on topical subjects. The street theatre is an extension of such shows, and is meant to constitute a propaganda against social evils like dowry, caste system, female foeticide, etc. S. Gursharan Singh is known as the ‘King of Street Plays’ (Samrat of Nukkad Natak). Previously, he had been very active in Amritsar, where he was promoting Punjabi plays under the name of Amritsar Natak Kala Kendra. A number of popular plays were produced by him during that period. He is so bold in expressing his views representing the strong Communist ideology that when during the emergency, he staged his play “Takht Lahore”, he was to remain in jail for 48 days. Now he is residing in Chandigarh and is continuing with his street theatre. “His two recent plays are worth mentioning here. Laare is about Government’s promise to give old age pension to every man above 65 and every woman above 60 years in Punjab. Another play *Raj Maharaja Ranjit*

Singh Da Urf Inaam is a satire on Govt's policy of eliminating corruption in Punjab by declaring a cash prize of Rs.25000 to 50000 to any one providing proof of corruption.

Apart from the master playwright and actor, S. Gursharan Singh, there are many others, his old associates who are trying to do some good work for the promotion of the dramatic art. As the real promotion of the drama lies in staging the plays, the name of another Sikh enthusiast in this respect needs a special mention. S. Jatinder Singh Brar, a renowned businessman of Amritsar takes such a keen interest in promoting Punjabi drama that he has constructed a theatre at his own cost just opposite Khalsa College at Amritsar. In this theatre 'Punjab Natyashala' he often organizes shows of popular Punjabi plays, particularly those that present a satire on the society. S. Brar is also a writer and one of his plays "Toya", a social satire, has been staged many of times in various schools, colleges and theatre halls. He has been able to arrange to collect a team of devoted persons who are good artists, writers and musicians, and the combined talent of these persons is reflected in the plays that are staged frequently in this 'Natyashala', which has made a name for itself and its creator.

SIKH ART AND ARCHITECTURE

In the sphere of Art & Architecture, the contribution of the Sikhs deserves Kudos. Lot has been written about the Sikh Art and Architecture and the various prominent historical Gurudwaras reflect the best specimen of the same. The Golden Temple at Amritsar is the best piece of artistic and architectural excellence. The architectural get up of the Golden Temple is unique in this sphere. Principal SS Bhatti, in one of his articles on Sikh architecture has written in this respect as follows:

"Almost levitating above, and in the middle of, an expansive water-body the 'pool of nectar' (Amritsar), the Darbar (court) Sahib or Harimandir (Lord's Temple), as it is called, stirs one deeply with glitters of its golden dome, kiosks, parapets, and repousee-work and the enchanting evanescence of its shimmering reflections in the pool."

Although, there is no replica of Golden Temple, most of the Gurudwaras resemble the shrine in respect of Gumbad and domes. The domes on Sikh shrines spring from a floral base, and have inverted lotus symbol, top from which arises the Khalsa. There is always a Central dome and small four other Cupulas one on each corner of the usually Cuboid structure of the Shrine. The Art in the Golden Temple is reflected in the beautiful designs made on the walls with Gach, subsequently gilded and at many places made ornamental by means of coloured and mirrored cut glass as well as semi-precious stones.

Various other Gurudwaras also reflect such designs on the walls.

SIKHS AS PAINTERS AND SCULPTORS

While remembering the creators of beautiful designs as mentioned above, our attention goes to Naqqash (Fresco painters) Bhai Gian Singh. The art of fresco painting as reflected on the wall of the Golden Temple is mainly his work. He was an expert in executing '*dehin*' which is one of the most fascinating and imaginative artistic forms. It is an imaginative resemblance of forms taken by the artist from animal or vegetable life, so curiously intertwined as to present a composite and organized whole.

Structurally, '*dehin*' has three parts- a pedestal, a vase poised on the pedestal and a bouquet of flowers or a floral bush called '*jhar*'. On the pedestal are depicted birds or animals in various dramatic postures- in erotic clasp, in combat or one chasing the other. These figures are often intertwined with creepers. (The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism Vol.II, Page 80). Bhai Gian Singh also tried his hand at certain allied arts such as '*gash*' (stucco work) '*Jaratkari*' (Mosaic work) and '*Anksi*' (cut glass work). In appreciation of his exquisite work in the Golden Temple, he was presented in 1949, with a robe of honour by the SGPC. Before leaving the world for good, Bhai Gian Singh gave to the world another great artist, his son, G.S. Sohan Singh. G.S. Sohan Singh became famous for making portraits of the Gurus. Many of the famous portraits adorning significant places were made by him.

The most famous Sikh painter of the last century was S. Sobha Singh. Who was skilled in the western classical technique of oil painting. His most important paintings were of the Sikh Gurus particularly that of Guru Nanak made on the occasion of the 500th Birth Anniversary of the 1st Guru (1969) and that of Guru Gobind Singh made on the occasion of the 300th Birth Anniversary of the Master (1967). He also made certain portraits of contemporaries. Some of his murals can be seen in the gallery of the Parliament House in New Delhi. S. Sobha Singh was also a prominent sculptor and the busts made by him included that of some eminent Punjabis like M.S. Randhawa and Prithviraj Kapoor. The originals of his work are displayed in his personal art gallery at Andretta (Himachal Pradesh).

S.G. Thakar Singh was another Sikh artist, in whose name there stands an art gallery at Lawrence Road, Amritsar. He was a versatile artist who had made a large number of paintings on landscape and prominent paintings including Taj Mahal. One of his prominent paintings (after bath) had won prize in London. Thakar Singh has also made portraits of several state rulers of pre-independence period. Among other painters of repute, mention may be made of Mehar Singh, whose many paintings can be seen in Sikh museums, Master

Gurdit Singh (famous for his portrait of Shri Guru Gobind Singh), S. Jodh Singh & S. Hari Singh. S. Kirpal Singh is another notable painter of repute who will always be remembered for creating the Sikh history in colour. He was employed by the SGPC as an artist to produce exhibits for the Central History Museum in the Golden Temple Complex. Some of his portraits are also displayed in S. Baghel Singh Museum in Gurudwara Bangla Sahib in New Delhi, Anglo-Sikh War Memorial, Ferozeshah near Firozpur, Sikh Regimental Central, Rampur, Ranchi, Takhat Sri Patna Sahib, Takhat Sri Kesgarh Sahib, Anandpur, Punjabi University, Patiala, Punjab Agriculture University, Ludhiana, Chandigarh Art Gallery and Gurudwara Mahidiana Sahib, Jagraon, district Ludhiana. (Encyclopaedia of Sikhism, Vol.II, Page 513).

Some of the Sikh painters workings at present include Smt. Phoola Rani, S. Amolak Singh, S. Bhupinder Singh Nanda and S. Kulwant Singh Gill. Smt. Phoola Rani is an outstanding artist having her own academy at Amritsar. She has made portraits of the Gurus, prominent Sikh personalities and other VIPs. The very fact that the 2 portraits of the Sikh freedom fighters recently included in the exhibits at the Central Hall of the Parliament House, of Master Tara Singh & Baba Khadhak Singh were made by her shows her prominence and excellence. She was praised by all those present at the occasion. S. Kulwant Singh Gill is also known for making all kinds of paintings – landscape as well as portraits and some of his portraits are rare pieces of art. Similar is the position of S. Bhupinder Singh Nanda, whose portraits are popular in the picture galleries even in foreign countries like England, USA and Australia. When both these artists had prepared a unique calendar of Sikh paintings for Kes Sambhal Prachar Sanstha at Amritsar (Dr Bhupinder Singh is its president) in the year 2000, it was hailed as one of the rare calendars ever prepared. The unique feature of this calendar was not only this that there was a verse from Gurubani below every date in conformity with the subject and the mood of the month but also that some of the paintings on that subject were different from the traditional ones. For example, in one of the paintings relating to Bhai Taru Singh, the old concept of blood oozing out of the skull was replaced by showing Bhai Sahib in the high spirits. In foreign countries also, some Sikh artists have done excellent work as to attract the attention of the artistic world. Nishaan magazine being published by Nagaara Trust, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi, under the Executive Editorship of S. Pushpinder Singh (Editorial Director of the magazine is Professor Darashan Singh Maini) has highlighted a number of such artists who have done good work in India and abroad. They include Brij Mohan Kaur (who has made panel paintings on the Janam Sakhis of the Ist Guru), Manu Saluja (who has made many portraits in oil with colours) and Arpana Kaur, who has made some unconventional paintings like 'The Child Goddess', 'Sohni Mahiwal' and particularly a series in

oil on Guru Nanak to invoke “his secular spirit and his insatiable travels on foot with Bala and Mardana, the rababi, a Hindu and a Muslim, spreading his message of love and peace.” The artist has shown the prophet as Baba/Peer/Lama Nanak. Her depiction of Dr Manmohan Singh as a thinker is another significant work on paper.

In the field of sculptor, special mention may be made of Dr. Narinder Singh Kapany, who is internationally known figure as the father of fibre optics, who not only has an intense love for art, but is also a great sculptor himself. As an art collector, Dr. Kapany has specialized in Sikh art. He was the prime mover and provided major loan of paintings for the internally acclaimed Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms exhibition. The exhibition started in March 1999 at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, proceeded to the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco with the Sikh Foundation as its major sponsor, and opened in May 2000 for four months at the Royal Ontario Museum in Canada. The exhibition follows “Splendours of the Punjab” Sikh Art and Literature in 1992 organized by Dr. Kapany in collaboration with the Asian Art Museum and UC Berkeley to celebrate the 25th anniversary of The Sikh Foundation. As an artist, Dr. Kapany has created 40 “dynoptic” sculptures which were first displayed in a one-man show at the Exploratorium of the Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco in 1972. Since then, the collection has been viewed at museums and art galleries in Chicago, Monterey, Palo Alto, and Stanford (Nishaan III/2003).

SIKH ART IN OTHER BUILDINGS

It is not only gurudwaras wherein the Sikh Art and Architecture becomes evident, there have been a number of other buildings including forts, colleges and schools which show the excellent work done by the architects and the artists. The magnanimous building of Khalsa College at Amritsar is one of the best buildings of a college in the country. It was designed by Sardar Bahadur, Sardar Ram Singh, a self-taught genius of prodigious dimensions. The queen of England was so impressed by the many splendid creativity of this genius that he was given the coveted title of MVO (Member of the Victorian Order). Many of the beautiful Gurudwaras during the earlier part of the last century were also designed by outstanding Sikh Architects. For example, Sardar Balwant Singh Bhatti, was the architect who designed Gurudwara Panja Sahib (Hassan Abdal) now in Pakistan and Takht Sri Kesgarh, Anandpur Sahib. Among the best known architects and builders of non-religious buildings, the name of S. Sobha Singh will always figure at the top. In fact, the history of construction in the present day Delhi, the capital of India starts with S. Sobha Singh. When Indian capital was shifted from Calcutta to Delhi in 1911, S. Sujan Singh and his son S. Sobha Singh became the most important builders of the significant buildings which included South Block, some parts of Rashtrapati Bhawan, Vijay Chowk

and the Ward Memorial Arch (India Gate). Not only this, S. Sobha Singh himself purchased huge lands and constructed prominent buildings of today like Chelmsford Club, A.I.F.A.C.'s Hall, Broadcasting House (All India Radio), the National Museum, Dayal Singh College, T.B. Hospital, Modern School, Deaf and Dumb School, Red Cross Buildings and Baroda House. Outside Delhi, he built the High Court and Medical College at Nagpur and the Pasteur Institute at Kasauli.

Sobha Singh's success as a builder made him one of the wealthiest persons of Delhi, also a prominent member of the social elite. He was only modestly educated. Despite this handicap, he became the first Indian President of the New Delhi Municipal Committee. He was knighted by the government and appointed a member of the Council of States. He entertained lavishly and his guest lists always included a mixture of dignitaries from the local circuit as well as from the diplomatic corps. These weekly banquets became the talk of the city. Sobha Singh left the greater part of his private estate to a charitable trust and presided over some of the institutions funded by it like the Deaf and Dumb School and the Modern School. Among his last bequests was one for Bhagat Puran Singh's Pingalwara in Amritsar, home for lepers. (*The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, Volume-IV, Page 223-224).

SIKHS AS ARTISANS

Sikhs are not only good artists but also good artisans. In this respect, Ramgarhia Sikhs are among the most well known artisans of the world. They are known for their excellence in making furniture, tools and implements and all kinds of machines. If one visits the State of Punjab, and particularly, the town of Ludhiana, one will come across large number of families engaged in the business of manufacturing machines and machinery parts. Similarly, Jalandhar is a center for manufacturing hand tools. A large number of agricultural implements are made in Phagwara, Gurayan and other similar towns of the State. The Ramgarhias engaged in the fabrication of machines and other machinery parts, even when they are semi-skilled, are so perfect that it is difficult to find fault with their products.

The Ramgarhia Sikhs have made a tremendous contribution in the development of agro-industries in the private sector. They could foresee the agricultural development of the State of Punjab and came out with innovations which could influence agricultural mechanization in the whole country. "One such example is that of Sunder Singh, who started with Persian wheels in the early part of the century and now owns one of the most reputed thresher-manufacturing units in the country. The machine-Ludhiana Thresher-developed by him has become popular in all wheat growing regions of the

country and has been responsible for the development of a wide range of threshing equipment and establishment of a new farm machinery industry in Punjab and neighbouring States. In Punjab it would not have been possible to handle the wheat harvest during the last few years, if the power threshers were not there.” (Green Revolution in Punjab Author: Dr. M.S. Randhawa, Former V.C., PAU, Page 29).

SIKHS AND MUSIC

Music has a vital role to play in human life. This fact has been recognized by almost all sections of society all over the world. When Shakespeare said

“If music be the food of love, play on,
Give excess of it, that, surfeiting,
The appetite may sicken and so die.”

He also emphasized the importance of music. So far Sikh religion is concerned, its importance was appreciated by the Gurus, who composed their hymns in different musical measures. They considered that divine worship through music was the best way to achieve the state of equipoise. In fact in this state of blissfulness, what one listens is also a unique divine musical cord, which in Gurbani is known as Anhad Dhun or many other similar names. As the devotional music is popular among other religions, which becomes evident from the singing of Bhajans, Sufiana Kalam, Qawwali and Naat, so is the devotional music in Sikh religion called Kirtan. Kirtan in Sikh religion is different from other devotional singing in certain respects. Firstly, it is sung in a particular musical measures with specified notations as mentioned by the composer himself. Secondly, in kirtan, it is the content which has to be dominant and not the instruments. Thirdly, though it can be sung by anyone anywhere, when it is performed in congregation at the shrines, it is presently, sung only by the baptized Sikhs and not by others. In Kirtan, there is no clapping, moving body parts or dancing as may be combined with other devotional singing. It may be mentioned that the earliest singers of Gurubani i.e. who performed kirtan were rababis, who were mainly Muslims, which tradition started from Mardaana, the Muslim companion of Guru Nanak, the rebeck player alongwith him. The Muslim groups continued to recite Kirtan inside Harimandir, The Golden Temple, until the partition of the country in 1947, when these people migrated to Pakistan.

The compositions which can be sung as Kirtan are those incorporated in Guru Granth Sahib, the compositions of the 10th Guru, the compositions of Bhai Gurdas and also that of Bhai Nand Lal. The Ragas (musical measures) in which these compositions can be sung are 31 in number, as do they appear in Guru Granth Sahib. This clearly shows the vast knowledge of the Gurus

regarding music. In many of their hymns, the Gurus have 'described themselves as "bards of the Lord". Guru Nanak kept with him as a constant companion a Muslim musician, Mardana, who played the *rabab* or rebeck as the Guru rendered the hymns composed by himself. Guru Arjan, who compiled the Guru Grant Sahib was an accomplished musicologist, who is said to have designed a new string instrument, *saranda*, for use by ragis or performers of kirtan. The Gurus employed professional *rababis* (rebeck players) and ragis (musicians) to perform kirtan in their presence. *Dhadis*, using small hand-drums called dhads and a stringed instrument sang vars or ballads. Guru Arjan encouraged lay Sikhs to train as kirtan singers.' (Encyclopaedia of Sikhism, Vol.II, Page 517)

The most prominent ragis of the period of Gurus were Bhai Sahzada (son of Bhai Mardaana), Bhai Sadhu, Bhai Badhu, Bhai Deepa, Bhai Padha, Bhai Bhola, who sang the devotional compositions in the congregation of Guru Angad Dev Ji and Guru Amar Dass Ji. Others who sang during the period of the 3rd and 4th Guru Bhai Ugarsain, Bhai Nigorimal, Bhai Ramu, Bhai Jhajhu, Bhai Mukand and Bhai Kedara. There were certain Bhattas also who recited their compositions eulogizing God and the Gurus who showed them the way to the divine. Bhai Satta and Bhai Balwand were the joint singers of sacred hymns during the period of Guru Arjan Dev. They also played upon rebeck while singing. There are a few stories prevalent about them to show that once they refused to sing, whereupon Guru Arjan Dev started the practice of congregational singing by all. When these two singers felt alienated, they asked for pardon. The Guru was merciful and when he excused them, the two composed a Vaar in Raag Ramkali, popularly known as 'Tikke Di Vaar', wherein there is an expression of love and appreciation for the Gurus highlighting the fact that there was only one spirit, the same one light which was shared by all the Gurus.

When Guru Hargobind Sahib adopted the policy of combining Bhakti with Shakti, he patronized those singers also who could sing heroic ballads. Thus, whereas Bhai Babak was the singer on rebeck, Bhai Abdulla and Natt Mal were the Vaar singers. Such Vaar singers continued to sing during the period of later Gurus also. In the time of Guru Gobind Singh, the rebeck singers were Bhai Saddu and Bhai Maddhu.

Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, the brave Sikh warrior of the 18th century had learned kirtan from his mother and had become well versed in devotional singing. When he stayed with Mata Sundri Ji in Delhi, he used to sing in the congregation in her presence. It was because of this great quality of singing in him that Nawab Kapur Singh selected him as his successor to lead the community. During 19th century also, there were prominent kirtan performers

like Baba Sham Singh Ji, Bhai Mansa Singh Ji and Bhai Hira Singh Ji. Bhai Sham Singh used a different musical instrument called '*tanti*' for singing in his melodious voice. This instrument can be seen in Amritsar Museum.

Some old instruments like rabab and tanti were gradually replaced by harmonium and tabla, but there were always excellent singers of Gurubani. When the Singh Sabha movement became prominent, there started appearing a good number of ragis. In the early part of the 20th century, there were ragis like Bhai Santa Singh, Mahant Gajja Singh, Bhai Chand Ji and then came Bhai Surjan Singh, Bhai Samund Singh, Sant Sujan Singh and Bhai Chela Ram Ji, who provided their melodious voice to satisfy the spiritual quest of the people. Bhai Samund Singh Ji had started singing Gurubani at a tender age of 9 years only, and when he sang for the first time before a large gathering at the time of first Sikh Educational Conference, he became so popular that people started inviting him for his performance even at far off places. Bhai Surjan Singh Ji was a blind musician, but his voice was so melodious that he attracted huge crowds who were eager to hear him singing '*Aasa Di Vaar*'. Bhai Chela Ram Ji was a Sindhi, devoted to Sikh scriptures so intensely that he became a popular kirtan singer. Some of his family members are still known reciters of Gurubani.

During the last 2-3 decades, there has been a spurt of Gurubani singers. It is mainly because of the expansion of the electronic media that a large number of such *raagies* have achieved prominence. However, with the passage of time Gurubani singing have become a lucrative profession. It need to be mentioned here that the main object of singing Gurubani is to propagate religion and not to mint money. As per Gurmat, some reasonable money need to be possessed for meeting the basic needs. As in the modern age, the needs have increased, the *raagies* may also get more money for their livelihood, but any kind of greed on their part or intention to extract money is not in the true spirit of propagation of religion. That does not mean that all *raagies* are alike, there are a few who have not commercialised this aspect of propagating the divine tenets. Bhai Jasbir Singh Khannawala is one such group of devoted *raagies*, who have a mission in this regard. Bhai Sahib has spent most of his earnings in establishing a religious center and ultra modern eye hospital at Suhana near Mohali in Punjab. Some more Nishkam Jathas are appearing on the scene.

Devotional music is not the only branch of music, wherein Sikhs are known singers. They have also figured prominently in other kinds of music. So far classical music is concerned, Patiala Gharana was promoted by Maharaja Narinder Singh, who was himself a great lover of classical music. This Gharana further flourished during the reign of Maharaja Rajinder Singh. One of the Patiala Prince Mrigender Singh is himself a noted musician. Even today, there are classical singers present in Patiala including in music and other faculties of

Punjabi University, Patiala. In classical music Singh Bandhus have also earned a name. They are among the best classical singers of the present age, S. Surinder Singh, one of these two brothers, has been honoured with Padam Shree this year.

In the field of light music also, the role of Sikhs has been significant. The number of Punjabi singers who sang folks and other traditional songs came into prominence in the early 60th of the 20th century. The two sisters namely Surinder Kaur and Prakash Kaur, Jagjit Kaur, Gurmeet Bawa, Asa Singh Mastana, Hazara Singh Ramta were some of the prominent singers. Surinder Kaur came to be known as the Nightingale of Punjab and is still singing at various important occasions. Her daughter is also a notable singer. Surinder Kaur and Gurmeet Bawa were honoured with lifetime achievement award recently, which are included in the various awards in the field of Punjabi music started by ETC Punjabi channel. Another Punjabi singer, Jaswinder Bitty also won applause when she gave her programmes in Mumbai in recent past. In the film industry, whereas there are bold Sikh film producers like Bobby Bedi, there have been music directors like S.K.S. Narula, S. Sardul Singh Kwatra. Even now, S. Jaspal Singh is a famous singer & S. Uttam Singh is very well known in composing music. The team of S. Uttam Singh as the music director and Dev Kohli as the lyric writer had become very popular in the film "Hum Aap Ke Hain Kaun". When S. Uttam Singh and his daughter Preeti Uttam Singh sing Gurubani in *raagas*, they create really a divine atmosphere. Apart from devotional singing, Preeti is otherwise also a very good singer, so is Jaspinder Narula who also sings kirtan and for films in her melodious voice.

While in Allahabad, it was noticed by me that two young Sikh brothers were also very good singers of Gurubani as well as all kinds of songs. They are determined to achieve fame like Singh Bandhus. Both of them work very hard and do practice 6-7 hours every day. As per a recent press report, they were also well known for singing in Bhojpuri. They have already given performance on Lucknow Doordarshan and at various places in Punjab. Their hard work and their faith in Gurus may one day make them known Komal Bandhus. The present generation of singers, who have popularised pop music and mixed songs (DJ) also include a large number of persons who have Sikh family origin as Malkit, Daler Mehndi, Bobby, Mika, Pummy Bai, etc. Although, this kind of music is just a distortion, its popularity has made the younger generation very fond of it. In a way, they have also contributed to make the Sikh form, familiar and popular on different TV channels. Daler Mehndi alone has given hundreds of shows in south Indian cities like Bangalore.

In addition to the pop singers like Malkiat Singh and Daler Mehndi, who are frequently seen on the various channels of television, a good number of

other Sikhs have also started appearing on the small screen in various advertisements and serials. Jaspal Bhatti is a renowned name in the sphere of comedy (films & serials). His sarcastic comments and presentation show his intelligence and boldness to express his views on topical subjects. Earlier, it was considered that Sikhs could not become models with their beard and moustaches on their face and turbans on their heads. One of the Sikh gentlemen was told by a modelling agency that if he wanted to become a good model he should shave off his hair. This gentleman named G.S. Gill was courageous enough to say that he will not do so and added he will himself make Sikh models in good number. He started his own modelling agency under the name and style of 'Launchers' in Delhi, which has since been doing this job satisfactorily. Further, S. Jaspal Singh Saigal of Mumbai had proved that a model could participate in Sikh form in any fashion competition, when he competed in Grasim 'Mr. India' competition in 2002 and became the first runner up in that competition. There was a report in the newspaper a few days back that a Sikh gentleman Gurpreet Singh Ahluwalia, who had obtained a fashion degree in modelling was getting many assignments. One Sikh boy S. Balwinder Singh Suri is appearing in many TV serials.

The appearance of the Sikhs on television which is the most popular media in the present day world is not only confined to advertisements and serials, rather it has been associated with this media in many other ways also. When the television first appeared in India, among the earliest faces of news readers, one Avinash Kaur was quite conspicuous. Similarly, there were other male Sikh news readers. Whenever there was direct telecast of the republic day celebrations, the voice of S. Jasdev Singh as the commentator could not be missed by the listeners. This celebrated commentator who was conferred Padamshri in 1985 had been associated with commentary on various occasions, most notably that of republic day and independence day celebrations. He was rather the first Hindi commentator, who was awarded Olympic Order by the Olympic Committee. In the recent past Navjot Singh Siddhu has also made a mark for his commentaries and discussions on cricket and other subjects. His accent in speaking English attracts everyone. He has been so impressive that recently, on his joining Bhartiya Janta Party, when he was taken on tour for canvassing, he spoke so well at different places in the South, that everyone praised him. He also does a wonderful compering of TV programmes and cultural shows (eg. Punjabi music awards function organized by ETC Punjabi Channel).

So far as dancing is concerned, in Sikh religion, the same is prohibited as a mode of worship, while singing praises of the Lord, but, culturally it has always been a mode of expressing happiness among the Sikhs also as in case of

all other people. As an art, there have been Sikhs in this sphere too to show their best. I remember when rock-n-roll had become popular all over the world. One S. Jaspal Singh was considered as the king of rock-n-roll. He appeared to show his performance in a film named “Ek Phool Char Kante”. Since then the Sikhs having settled in most of the western countries, have always been keen to learn number of western dances. It was no wonder to see a young Sikh boy teaching in Melbourne, such dances like Salsa, Lambada and Merengui shaking legs so swiftly that even foreigners could not do it. When this Sikh young dancer came back to his home city, Lucknow, Charanpreet Singh Bagga, became the talk of the town. His father being the owner of a hotel, Charanpreet started the teaching of this dance and many youngsters became crazy to learn it. Charanpreet told that the sequence of this dance was shown in a film ‘Kal Ho Na Ho’. He added that it was not merely a dance, it was also a tonic for the health. The dances are not only enjoyable but also have lot of health benefits. “Not many know that salsa helps tone the body and reduce weight from specific parts of your body,” says Charanjeet. It was all the more wonderful to see another Sikh with beard and moustache on his face performing a south Indian classical dance which is generally the area of perfection for the south Indian ladies. However, the most favourite dances of the Sikhs are, of course Bhangra for men and Gidda for women. These dances have gained tremendous popularity in the recent past.

A number of TV channels in India show Bhangra in one or the other form. The same is true of Indian films and TV serials also. Bhangra beat is introduced to make the film or serial lively. The pop Punjabi music coupled with Bhangra steps is so popular even outside Punjab that Daler had to give 25 shows in Banglore alone as against 13 in Punjab. Malkiat Singh is the most popular Bhangra pop singer. His ‘Tootak tootak’ and other numbers became so popular world over, that upto now, he has sold his albums for more than 50 lakh dollars. The tremendous popularity of Punjabi pop and dance has given rise to roaring business doing in Punjabi music industry. The impact of increasing popularity of Punjabi music and dance is visible in the huge investment being made by the NRIs in the music companies and channels. It was recently reported in newspapers that even in America and Canada, many academies have started giving training in these cultural dances of Punjab.

Although, now we can see more Sikhs in television advertisements, modelling and films. It is unfortunate that the film and serial makers are not making efforts to find suitable talents among the Sikhs to perform Sikh roles which are still being given to others by making them Sikh like. There are many roles in which the Sikhs need to be shown. For example, the roles of Army officers and sturdy farmers. We may recall that when a hero was shown, a smart

IAF flier, this was the role of a Sikh in film 'Vijeta' played by a non-Sikh. Again, a Sikh hero in Punjabi film 'Nanak Naam Jahaj Hai' was played by a non-Sikh. Even the most popular actors are being shown as Sikhs for these roles. Amitabh Bachchan, Sanjay Dutt and Sunny Deol are among them. The forthcoming films like 'Ab Tumhaare Hawaale Watan Sathiyon' will show Amitabh Bachchan as S. Jagjit Singh Arora, a senior Army officer. Sanjay will be seen in the role of S. Ranjit Singh who is taken as a prisoner of war in the film 'Sarhad Paar'. Sunny Deol, who has successfully acted as a Sikh in the film 'Border' will again do the attire of a Sikh in the film 'Jo Bole So Nihale'. It is however important to mention that one Sikh boy Vikram Chatwal (son of S. Sant Singh Chatwal of America) is playing the hero's role in an English movie 'One Dollar Currie' being made in U.S.A. I would, therefore, like to invite the attention of film and serial makers that if suitable roles are given to real Sikhs, they can do better justice as they will be emotionally involved therein. They should also project the Sikhs in such form as corresponds with their known-qualities of heroism and valour, and in no case they should be shown in ridiculous situations or rolls as this will reflect a bad taste on the part of the creators of such characters and situations.

SIKH JOURNALISTS:

Punjabi journalism was born because of the Singh Sabha Movement, and most of the Punjabi journalists at that time were Sikhs. I have already discussed the position of Punjabi journalism in the relevant chapter. Since then, a number of Sikhs have remained associated with this pursuit. S. Khuswant Singh, has been one of the most notable journalists of the last century. His association with various journals, magazines and newspapers is very well known. It was he, who had made Illustrated Weekly of India published in the early 70s from Bombay, the most popular magazine during those days. In Punjabi, a number of newspapers became prominent during the last quarter of the century which include Punjabi Tribune and Daily Ajit. S. Sadhu Singh Hamdard (1918-1984) figured as the leading Punjab journalist of the 60s of the last century. He was Chief Editor of the Punjabi Ajit, the birth of which was a landmark in the history of Punjabi journalism. S. Hamdard got so much popularity as a journalist by giving a new face and format to the Punjabi journalism that he was awarded the title of Shiromani Patrakar in 1963 by the Punjab Govt. He was also awarded Padam Shree in January, 1984, but he surrendered that in protest against the army action in Golden Temple in June, 1984. He was also a versatile writer of prose and poetry. His collection of Ghazals is considered as an outstanding contribution to the genre of Punjabi Ghazal. He was also awarded Ph.D. Degree by Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar for his thesis on 'Origin and Development of the Punjabi Ghazal'. One of his works is appearing now a

days in weekly serial in Punjabi Ajit.

S. Barjinder Singh Hamdard, son of S. Sadhu Singh is also an outstanding journalist and a writer. He did a commendable job for Punjabi Tribune and made it popular. After that he became associated with Daily Ajit, which is now being published under his editorship. Punjabi Ajit is undoubtedly, the most popular Punjabi newspaper now a days. S. Barjinder Singh Hamdard is also a prose writer and a poet. His collection of Ghazals, entitled *Jazbaat* has been released, recently. His contribution to journalism becomes significant with the fact that a Hindi edition of daily Ajit has also been started by him.

Sikh journalists have also displayed their ability in foreign countries. They have started a number of Punjabi and English journals and newspapers in these countries with a view to keep their people attached to their place of birth, language and culture. There is hardly any country where some such type of newspaper or magazine is not published. Some of these are on small scale, whereas other have a wide circulation. So far Europe is concerned, Des Pardes, is a notable newspaper which is being edited by S.G.S. Virk. It is claimed to be Britain's largest Punjabi newspaper. Late S. Amar Singh Chatwal had started Sikh Courier in 1960 which is still being published with Dr. Sukhbir Singh Kapoor as its present editor. In America, S. Mahinder Singh, a former Deputy Press Secretary to the late President Giani Zail Singh started the first ever Indian publication from Los Angeles (India Journal). Similarly, in Australia and South East Asian countries also a number of publications are now available which keep the Indians settled there informed about India and its heritage. These include some publications which are exclusively related to Sikh religion.

ECONOMY AND THE SIKHS

The above noted discussion in this chapter as well as in earlier chapters shows the contributions made by the Sikhs towards Indian economy and to the economy of the countries of their adoption. Punjab, their home state, is not only richest in the agriculture output, irrigation facilities and the small scale industries, but has also the distinction of having the highest per capita income for its people. Punjab is also slightly ahead of the average national standards in education. It is also on top of other states so far as the general standard of living of the common man is concerned. The incidence of unemployment is also much less than that of other states. Further, a large number of people from U.P. and Bihar are working there in the farms, transport, building construction and other labour jobs. Anyone can see a high degree of modernization process by rural urban economic integration in the country. Punjab economy is also enriched and modernized by those some of the members of whose families are settled in foreign countries.

SIKHS IN BANKING

The economy of any country becomes stronger with its banking. The role played by the Sikhs in banking is also so important that the history of banking in India cannot be written without making their mention. The most important Sikh associated with banking in India was late S. Inderjit Singh, the founder of Punjab and Sind Bank. He had made this bank so strong with its branches spread over the entire country as well as abroad that the govt. took notice of it when the banks were nationalized by Mrs. Gandhi. By the time, this bank became a nationalized bank, S. Inderjit Singh had already done a great service for the bank as well as for the community. He gave employment to so many Sikhs and accelerated their promotions that many of them reached the top in their career. He gave them such a training that with their experience and training, they could hold the highest positions in different banks. It is a known fact that all these persons from Punjab and Sind Bank went as EDs' and Chairmen in different banks whether it was Allahabad Bank, Punjab National Bank, Central Bank, Oriental Bank of Commerce or Vijaya Bank. Even today, the Chairmen of some of the banks are those persons who were trained by this Master Banker. During the fag end of his life, he floated another bank namely Bank of Punjab, which is now progressing under the command and supervision of his sons.

There is another Sikh, who is known as the Super Banker, S. Jaspal Singh Bindra, who was till a year back, the head of Standard Chartered Bank in India. When Grindlays Bank was merged with Standard Chartered Bank, S. Bindra, the CEO of the bank led it to become bigger, better and more profitable. It made a net profit of Rs.642.32 crores in 2001-02, that made the third most profitable bank in India after State Bank of India and Canara Bank. Bindra Sahib made strenuous efforts because of which it also became the second most profitable multinational in the country after M/s Hindustan Lever. Considering his achievements and merit, S. Bindra was elevated to a much higher position and posted in Singapore wherefrom he is controlling now, the said bank branches in a large number of countries.

It may be added that there are some other Sikhs also in foreign countries, who have played a significant role in banking. For example, S. Prithpal Singh Chawla is a banker based in London. He had earlier worked in Punjab and Sind Bank, where from he was sent to London in 1979 to turn around its country branch. S. Chawla strengthened the bank and became popular in the banking sphere. After that he headed the Middle East Bank in Nairobi and then Delphis Bank of Mauritius. When S. Inderjit Singh opened Bank of Punjab, Dr. Amarjit Singh Marwaha of Los Angeles in America helped him in launching the bank in the 1990s.

While talking of the economic history of our country, one cannot forget that crucial period when the Indian economy was being controlled by two well known Sikh Economists, S. Montek Singh Ahluwalia, the Finance Secretary and Dr. Manmohan Singh, the Finance Minister of India. It was Dr. Manmohan Singh who opened economy for the outsiders by introducing the concept of globalisation and liberalisation. Since then, this economic policy has yielded results. As it is not possible to go into further details to emphasize the role of the Sikhs in the economic progress of the country, It will be appropriate to quote Professor Milton Friedman, an American Economist, Noble Prize Winner when on a visit to India, he remarked, if the economy is given to the Sikhs, there will be no problem of development.

SERVICE TO HUMANITY

Before this chapter is closed, it is necessary to mention that the three golden principles of Sikh religion are remembrance of God, earnest living and sharing with others (Naam Japna, Kirat Karni te Wand Chhakna). The Sikhs have worked hard in every sphere and earned the maximum. However, they have made achievements not only in such fields and spheres where they could earn considerable money but also in the sphere of social service, wherein one works without thinking of the reward. This concept of service aimed at sharing with others, whether it is money, labour or knowledge, is a significant feature of Sikh religion. Right from the period of the first Guru, there were people who served the Guru personally, and became so close to him that they succeeded on the spiritual throne. The three Gurus following Guru Nanak were selected successors on the basis of their services only. Then, there were Sikhs who served the Gurus in one or the other way and also their co-religionists by serving in the 'Langar' by doing such jobs like bringing wood, cooking, serving food, washing utensils, etc. Bibi Kheevi Ji, the wife of the second Guru was the incharge of the Langar and that she herself served food is evidenced by the following verse composed by Satta and Balwand, hymn singers in the Guru's court, as per following verses :

ਬਲਵੰਡ ਖੀਵੀ ਨੇਕ ਜਨ ਜਿਸੁ ਬਹੁਤੀ ਛਾਉ ਪਤ੍ਰਾਲੀ॥

ਲੰਗਰ ਦਉਲਤਿ ਵੰਡੀਐ ਰਸੁ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਖੀਰਿ ਘਿਆਲੀ॥

Balwand Khiwi nek jan jis bahuti chhao patrali.

Langar daulat wandia ras amrit kheer ghiali.

O Balwand! Guru Angad's wife, Kheevi is a good consort

Who gives dense leafy shads of solace to all.

She distributes Guru's wealth in his kitchen Nectar sweet rice pudding mixed with clarified butter.

(SGGS, 967)

Bhai Gurdas in one of his verses has named many Sikhs who were doing some kind of service during the period of the early Gurus. A very well known story of

Bhai Manjh in the Sikh circles is an evidence to show how the Sikhs served in the days of the Gurus. When, one day, he was carrying firewood on his head, he fell into a shallow well. He kept standing in the water the whole night holding the load on his head for preventing the wood to get wet as the wood was to be used as a fuel in the *Langar*.

SERVICE BY SEVA PANTHIS

When Bhai Kanaiyya served the enemies with water and also bandaged them as per the instructions of the tenth Guru, he added a new concept of serving even the enemy in distress. The sect of Seva Panthis started with Bhai Kanaiyya. Since then a number of Sewa Panthi personalities have played a significant role not only in the sphere of social service, but also in the propagation of Sikh religion through preachings and literature. They are having their headquarter at Gouniana (Bhatinda) in Punjab, and Baba Tirath Singh is presently heading this organization. There are a number of educational institutions being run under his stewardship.

SERVICE OF THE SICK

Although, service can be done in many ways, the service of all such persons who suffer from some serious disease is perhaps the best mode of service. The physically suffering person needs not only sympathy, but also proper attention and medication. When Guru Nanak visited a leper, his divine words proved a balm for the leper as he was feeling neglected after having been discarded by all his dear ones. Guru Arjan Dev also got a leprosy center constructed at Taran Taaran for their treatment and attention. Guru Har Rai Sahib used to give herbal medicines to the patients of various ailments. Tradition records that he had sent medicines even for Dara Shikoh when he was suffering from a serious disease. Guru Harkrishan's service to the people of Delhi when they were hit by the epidemics, brought relief to many. Since the times of the Gurus, the Sikhs have been doing such a service to mankind as and when need arose. A unique example of such a service could be seen in the life of Bhagat Puran Singh, who was undoubtedly, "The Mother Teresa of Punjab".

Bhagat Ji was always in search of shelterless, succourless, neglected people and brought them with him for care and protection. First of all, he picked up a sick poliostricken child from somewhere named as Piara Singh and for the next 14 years, a lanky, poorly traced person with unkept beard moving about in streets with a growing boy seated on his neck became a familiar scene for the people of Lahore. His efforts in looking after such persons increased with the passage of time, and then was born an institution known as Pingalwara. When the Pingalwara was set up at Amritsar, Bhagat Ji remained with his patients most of the time. He ate the same food as was provided to all inmates and more

often slept on the floor using the same bedding as were given to patients admitted there. Bhagat Ji served the unfortunate, neglected people till the last day of his life. His service to humanity was not only confined to the patients, rather he did a magnificent job in the field of environment. He delivered lectures and wrote profusely about this subject. In one of the articles on Bhagat Puran Singh, Professor Pritam Singh of Patiala, himself a learned scholar on Sikh religion, has written about Bhagat Ji in the following words:-

“He had a socially relevant advice for everyone: “Plant trees, do not cut them,” and then followed an informed lecture on the economic and ecological advantages of trees. “Always travel by train; avoid bus travel”, and then he went on to tell you how deteriorative to health the Carbon Monoxide exhausts are and painted an alarming picture of the steeply mounting toll of human lives in road accidents; “Beware of the impending doom of our beautiful world by nuclear and other arms,” and then you heard from him a hair-raising description of the devastating prowess of the malignant fission of atomic nucleus: “Produce less children”. “Do not throw fruit skins on the road,” and the list of such Do’s and Don’ts went on and on. Bhagat Puran Singh was voracious reader. He employed three readers to provide him with cuttings of socially useful and informative writings from national newspapers and journals and reproduced them on any sort of paper in his own press in the form of handbills, booklets, pamphlets, etc., for free distribution among the people. Books published by him, such as biographies of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh and the English translation of the Japuji of Guru Nanak, all by Professor Narain Singh and some other covering as many as 500 pages, were distributed free, in spite of the fact that the amount spent on them ran into lakhs of rupees. “Money comes to me in dribblets from my people. I give it back to them in the form of character-building and nation-building literature”, explained Bhagat Puran Singh in justification of this expenditure. It is not easily possible to sum up a multi-dimensional institution that Bhagat Puran Singh surely was, in one introductory article. Had the Bhagat been a little more exposed to the clinical standards of cleanliness and business management and had the information media of our country, been a little more observant of the constructive and inspiringly voluntary servants of society, instead of over-indulgence in the game of inflating and deflating by turns, the political actors, there is no reason why Bhagat Puran Singh’s name should not have been the common property of the whole world, like that of Mother Teresa’s.”

I know one senior IFS Officer who left his service at Paris for making himself available for serving the lepers. This bold and dedicated Sikh namely

S. Bhagwant Singh Dalawari who is a good singer of Gurbani, an excellent orator and an outstanding writer on Sikh religion, has been serving the lepers for more than 25 years at Leprosy Centre in Amravati (Maharashtra). He really projects all the qualities of a true Parcharak. Again, when on the International Day for Disabled Persons, a function was organized at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi recently, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, the President of India honoured S. Prem Singh, who has done an excellent work in his individual capacity for the treatment and rehabilitation of the leprosy patients in Punjab.

The concept of Kar Sewa in Sikh religion is unique. It originally meant clearing of the holy tank at Amritsar, which the Sikhs used to do themselves. However, with the passage of time, the scope of Kar Sewa extended to construction & repair of old Gurdwara Buildings. Recently, the prominent persons in this sphere rightly thought of constructing other buildings like that of colleges, hospitals etc. Baba Harbans Singh is the most well-known name in the field of Kar-Sewa. Some other prominent persons include Baba Kharak Singh, Baba Darshan Singh. Baba Sewa Singh was recently in news when he undertook such a service at Khadoor Sahib keeping in view the celebrations at this small town for observing the 500th Birth anniversary of Guru Angad Dev. It was the IIInd Guru only, who had started the great tradition of 'Sewa', but he had made it clear that it was to be done with sincerity and devotion and not under compulsion.

ਬਧਾ ਚਟੀ ਜੇ ਭਰੇ ਨਾ ਗੁਣ ਨਾ ਉਪਕਾਰੁ॥

ਸੇਤੀ ਖੁਸੀ ਸਵਾਰੀਐ ਨਾਨਕ ਕਾਰਜੁ ਸਾਰੁ॥ ੩॥

Badha chati je bhare na gun na upkaar.

Seti khusi sawaareeai Nanak kaaraj saar.3.

If the one pays the fine in compulsion.

In this neither lies merit nor any goodness.

O Nanak! The act which performs mortal

With his sweet will, is the best.

(SGGS, p. 787)

Thus, In conclusion, it can be said that whatever may be the field or sphere, service, profession/vocation, music, art, literature, politics, economics or social service, the Sikhs have proved their excellence. It is worth noting that the best and the excellent Sikhs in every sphere have always given credit to their Gurus for their success. This is the real spirit of boldness and success with humility in the spirit of Gurubani which makes the successful Sikhs realize the grace of God & say:-

ਹਮ ਰੁਲਤੇ ਫਿਰਤੇ ਕੋਈ ਬਾਤ ਨ ਪੂਛਤਾ॥

ਗੁਰ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਸੰਗਿ ਕੀਰੇ ਹਮ ਥਾਪੇ॥

Ham rulte phirte koe baat na poochhta.

Gur Satgur sang keere ham thaape.

I was wandering about in dust
And no one cared about me.
But through the association of Great Guru,
I a worm, an installed on the exalted position.

(SGGS, p. 167)



THE SIKH DIASPORA

One of the most striking features of the recent Indian History has been the increasing trend of immigration from India to various other countries. The importance of Indian Diaspora has been recently recognised and appreciated by starting an annual conference of the NRIs from the year 2003 when the Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas was celebrated for the first time in January, 2003. It was also noticed that a number of State Chief Ministers visited foreign countries as to attract investment from their Indian Residents settled in these countries. The main reason for such a vast immigration is the fact that Indians were able to have more opportunities to prosper and achieve outside India. Although, they had to work very hard, they rose to such positions which they could not dream of in their own country. There were many other factors like better administration, better working conditions, better educational & medical facilities, better law and order situation, cleanliness, etc. which attracted all those Indians who had a tendency to be mobile.

The Sikhs are among those Indians who are the most mobile and versatile people. During the period of the Gurus, people living in different parts of the country as well as Afghanistan became their followers. There are references to such followers living in Kabul in the Hukamnamas issued during the period of Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh. The number of Sikhs in Kabul went on increasing after Maharaja Ranjit Singh won a victory over Afghans. During the period of Ranjit Singh, the Sikhs were sent to various places as to assist the Nizam of Hyderabad and the ruler of Assam, and thereafter, those who went there, settled there. Similarly, those who went to Kabul, made it their permanent place of stay. As the Sikhs in Hyderabad, who have since been looking after the Shrine of Hazur Sahib came to be known as Dakhni Sikhs, the Sikhs in Kabul became Kabuli Sikhs.

AFGHAN SIKHS

In the beginning of the last quarter of the 20th century, the Sikhs in Afghanistan were estimated between 1,50,000 to 2,00,000. They were distinguishable with their own turban styles. It is also on record that many preachers were going from time to time to Kabul and other Afghan towns for the propagation of Sikh religion. For example, one Udham Singh, a Gadar revolutionary, had escaped from the British Jail and went to Kabul, where he set up Khalsa Diwan and

sought the Afghan King's permission for Sikhs to assemble in religious congregation at Gurudwara Chashma Sahib, sacred to the memory of Guru Nanak, situated around 10 kms. from Jalalabad. However, after the Mujahideen upsurge in 1990s, a large number of Sikhs left Afghanistan. Many more left Kabul after American attack in 2002. Many of them went to U.K. and North America, whereas a good number of them are now settled in India, mainly in Delhi.

MAHARAJA DILIP SINGH AND RANI JINDAN IN ENGLAND

A large number of Sikhs also went to African countries and became prosperous. They had made fortunes in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Their number was so significant that Sikhs could be seen there in every walk of life including the sports teams of those countries. Large number of them were Namdharies with white small round turbans. They soon made Gurudwaras, and also set up one hospital. However, they had to leave these countries also, particularly, when Idi Amin expelled them from Uganda. Many of them shifted to Britain and other European countries. So far Europe is concerned, Maharaja Dilip Singh can be treated as the first Sikh who went to England but as he was converted to Christianity, his mother Rani Jindan should be treated as the first Sikh to visit that country. When she was given an opportunity to meet her son, after many years, she was almost blind. It is on records that she touched her son from head to feet as a gesture of love, but when she found that he had no hair on his head, she expressed her doubt that it was not her son. When assured by Dilip Singh, she wept bitterly and said that she had not felt so sad when her empire and her husband had gone, but now, she feels hurt as her only son has abandoned his religion. Dilip Singh assured his mother that he will come back in the Sikhi form and be baptised at the earliest. After this, some Sikhs started visiting England and gradually to other European countries also.

THE BEGINNING OF SIKH DIASPORA

In the meantime, when the first World War commenced, Sikhs recruited in the British army were sent to European fronts for fighting for the British. A large number of Sikhs were recruited for the police also and many of them were sent to such countries as Burma, Hongkong, Singapore and Malaya. When these people retired, they decided to settle in those countries. Similarly, the British Sikh soldiers going to European countries during the First and Second World Wars were either killed and those who survived, some of them settled there only. From Europe, the Sikhs moved towards U.S.A. and Canada. In these countries, they had gone to do such dirty, dangerous and difficult jobs which the people there were unwilling to do or for which they lacked the skills. In the South East, they used Singapore as the base for moving to Sumatra in

Indonesia, Australia, Newzealand, Fiji, Tonga and Philippines. They also spread over the main land of China and Japan. In some of the countries, they went as labour for constructing Railways as in case of Uganda, Kenya railway in East Africa. As in Afghanistan, their number in Burma also became quite large and they established Gurudwaras in many major cities of Burma like Rangoon, Mandlay etc. Before the last quarter of the 20th century started, they had spread to almost all the countries of the world. After 1984, the number of Sikh immigrants increased all the more as they did not find the atmosphere in India congenial for them. The figures of immigration as now in respect of this community are astonishing. They constitute about 40% of the Indian diaspora in USA and Britain and about 70% in Canada. A visit to South Hall in London, Yuba city in California and Surrey in British Columbia makes one believe that there are many mini Punjabs now, away from their Punjab in India. There are a large number of Gurudwaras now in all these countries. When the Gurupurabs are celebrated, the Sikhs assemble in big numbers, and the celebration looks like as in the city of Punjab.

After 1984, a number of Sikhs preferred to shift to Australia and Newzealand where they got an opportunity to buy lands and cattle farms. A number of persons going there were from Punjab agricultural university, Ludhiana. It was due to the old association of Punjabis with the Australians as a group of Australia trained farm scientists including Dr. Gurcharan Singh Sidhu had played a significant role in pioneering the Green Revolution in the 60s. That is why, now a significant number of persons from this university hold important positions in that country. Now, there are more than 15,000 Sikhs in Australia and around 5000 in Newzealand. As per the latest census, the position of income of Sikh families is also quite encouraging and shows their increasing prosperity. More than 50% of them enjoy an annual income of 40,000/- dollars, whereas the % of Australians with this much income is around 40% only. It was perhaps because of their notable position in Australia that a rare honour was given to them when S. Harmohan Singh Walia was included among those Australians who carried the Olympic torch through Sydney during the 2000 Olympics.

It is interesting to note that there was a time when the Sikhs were not allowed to enter Canada as is evidenced by the Kama Gata Maru incident, and now there is a turbaned Sikh Minister in the Canadian Cabinet and most of the Sikhs are living in Canada in high positions and with a very high standard of living. Similarly, the Sikhs were not allowed to own land in the USA in the early period of the last century, and they married Mexican woman for purchasing land in their name. S. Bhagat Singh Thind, who served in the U.S army during the first world war, was not permitted to become a US citizen for which he had

to fight a battle, which he ultimately won. S. Dalip Singh Saund had also a tough time for getting American citizenship, but in 1956, he became the first Asian Congress man and headed the prestigious foreign affairs Committee.

SIKH DIASPORA BECOME PROSPEROUS

A large number of them, who migrated to foreign countries gained popularity because of their hard work and enterprising nature. They became prosperous to such an extent that they purchased huge and best of the properties in those countries. As per a report in the Punjabi Tribune, one S. Resham Singh Bhangal in Canada, had a desire to buy the most palatial house in Brompton. When he got an opportunity to strike a deal, he became amused as it was the most expensive transaction of residential property in that area. S. Resham Singh bought it for 2.65 million dollars. This huge property spread over 2.5 acres of land has many rooms. S. Resham Singh has also made his office in this very building. Both the residential and official premises have been furnished at a very high cost. Similarly one S. Iqbal Singh bought the Royal property at the village of Lesmahagow near Glasgow in Scotland, which one time belonged to King Henry VIIIth. This prosperous Sikh who made millions from his real estate business, is now known as a lord of Butley Manor.

All such persons remind of the royal splendour of the rulers of the Erstwhile Indian States. It may be mentioned here that even in those days of the Royal splendour, the Sikh rulers like Maharajas of Jind, Kapurthala and Patiala were among the topmost royal dignitaries who enjoyed not only the best of the luxuries and comforts but also the best of relations with the Britishers and other elite of the country. Recently, when an exhibition of the Portraits of Princely India was opened at the 'Lafayette' studio in 'Bond street', London, such portraits were displayed by the studio in association with the Victoria and Albert Museum, London and British Council. These photographs show the influence and the grandeur which those rulers enjoyed. The details given under these photographs as appearing in a report in the Tribune dated 23rd November, 2001 shed significant light in this regard.

SIKH IDENTITY & PROBLEMS

In the initial stages of immigration, the Sikhs had to face a lot of problems, mainly because of their distinct identity. They were finding it difficult to get jobs as their appearance looked odd to many of the employers, who had a mind to keep the odd man out. Even with their ability and talent for the jobs, they were made to move from one person to another for employment. Similarly, in their profession and businesses also, they had some difficulty in interacting with the people. It was a testing time for the Sikhs to remain firm in their religious beliefs or to give in and give up their identity to avoid any

distinction and discrimination by others. Those who were weak and whose beliefs were shallow rooted, they immediately decided to do away with their distinctive look having facial beard and moustaches and hair on the head covered with turban. There were many who only made their difficulties an excuse for giving up their religious symbols. There were such fickle minded persons who gave funny reasons for shaving of their hair after varying periods of stay. For example, one of them said that he used to feel warm and uncomfortable sitting in the office with hair and turban. Those who knew him could very well see that the person who was living in Rajasthan for more than 20 years without feeling uncomfortable with these necessary attributes of a Sikh, how could he feel uncomfortable in an air conditioned office in a cooler country. As my subject is to deal with brave people, I will not be talking about all those who did not prove worthy of the religion they belonged to and the specific attributes like bravery and valour of Guru's Sikhs.

THE WEAK GO ASTRAY

I am sure that all those persons who failed to stick to their separate identity were not only weak in strength and convictions but also suffered from psychological complexes. They were of wavering nature and felt shy of looking different from others. They could not face the eyes of the people fixed on them and instead of being proud of their distinctiveness, succumbed to their feeling of inferiority complex causing embarrassment to them. The bold and brave are always few and they can always be distinguished from others. Those people did not realise the importance of their unique history and traditions. They seem to be unaware of the fact that the Guru who gave us this code of conduct had himself sacrificed everything for our sake. When his four sons had attained martyrdom, he said that instead of four, many thousands living are his sons. Thus, all the Sikhs, being his sons cannot be oblivious of the fact that the history of the 18th century was soaked in the blood of those martyrs who did not give up their religion for any temptation or out of any fear. What to speak of a job, many of them were offered all the comforts and luxuries, but they could not betray the faith of their Guru as reposed by him, evidenced in his own words, when he said:

ਖ਼ਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਰੂਪ ਹੈ ਖ਼ਾਸ ॥
 ਖ਼ਾਲਸੇ ਮਹਿ ਹੋ ਕਰੋ ਨਿਵਾਸ ॥
 ਜਬ ਲਗ ਖ਼ਾਲਸਾ ਰਹੇ ਨਿਆਰਾ ॥
 ਤਬ ਲਗ ਤੇਜ ਦੀਉ ਮੈਂ ਸਾਰਾ ॥
 ਜਬ ਇਹ ਗਹੈ ਬਿਪਰਨ ਕੀ ਰੀਤ ॥
 ਮੈਂ ਨ ਕਰੋਂ ਇਨ ਕੀ ਪ੍ਰਤੀਤ ॥

Khalsa mero roop hai khaas,

Khalsa meh hau karau niwaas,

*Jab lag Khalsa rahai niaara,
 Tab lag tej deeo mein saara,
 Jab eh gahai bipran ki reet,
 Main na karaun in ki parteet.*

The Khalsa is my unique form,
 In the Khalsa my spirit abides,
 As long as the Khalsa remains distinct,
 So long will I endow them all my power,
 When Brahminic customs they partake,
 Then I, too, will the Khalsa forsake.

Those who backed out forgot that the Guru had given them honour when he said that he got his inspiration, his victories because of them being with him. After leaving that form, which God had given to them and which the 10th Guru had upheld to be maintained for being distinguishable, can they think that what Guru is saying in the following verses, they are worthy of these praises.

ਜੁੱਧ ਜਿਤੇ ਇਨਹੀ ਕੇ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ,
 ਇਨਹੀ ਕੇ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਸੁ ਦਾਨ ਕਰੇ॥
 ਅਘ ਅਉਘ ਟਰੇ ਇਨਹੀ ਕੇ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ,
 ਇਨਹੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਫੁਨ ਧਾਮ ਭਰੇ॥
 ਇਨਹੀ ਕੇ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਸੁ ਬਿਦਿਆ ਲਈ,
 ਇਨਹੀ ਕੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਸਭ ਸਤ੍ ਮਰੇ॥
 ਇਨਹੀ ਕੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕੈ ਸਜੇ ਹਮ ਹੈਂ,
 ਨਹੀ ਮੋ ਸੋ ਗਰੀਬ ਕਰੋਰ ਪਰੇ॥ ੨॥

*Judh jite inhi ke prasaad,
 Inhi ke prasaad su daan kare.
 Agh augh tare inhi ke prasaad,
 Inhi ki kripa phun dhaam bhare.
 Inhi ki prasaad su bidiya laee,
 Inhi ki kripa sabh satar mare.
 Inhi ki kripa ke saje hum hain,
 Nahin mo sau garib krore pare.*

Battles were won through their grace.
 They enabled me to give gifts to others
 Due to their grace, all my troubles were overcome
 Their support has increased my prosperity
 Knowledge has been acquired through their grace
 Their support has exterminated all my rivals.
 My honour is all due to their grace
 Otherwise Millions are there like me.

(Khalsa Mehima)

Some of them may say that the times have changed and we have to look

modern with modern thinking and also the looks. They forget that modernism does not mean that we should start interfering with the desire of the Almighty. He made us in his own form considering the human being as his best creation and we have no right to find fault with his work just for the sake of a little convenience or comfort. These people do not seem to be conversant with the fact that even in the last century, when Sikhs were deployed to fight for the British against the Germans, they were advised to wear helmets instead of turbans for the purpose of safety, but none of the Sikh soldiers agreed for the same and gave it in writing that the consequences of endangering their lives will be borne by them. They also do not know that when Baba Kharak Singh was given severest of the punishments and he protested, he remained without clothes to face the harshest winters but he kept high the dignity of his turban. They might also not be aware of the story of Guru Sant Singh as published in the Los Angeles Times of 23rd December, 1992, whereby it was revealed that when the Authorities told him that he could not be taken in army as he could not use a mask in case of use of poisonous gas by the enemy, the bold Sikh had argued that he could do without the mask. When another argument was put forward, that it was not possible to run fast, by wearing the mask on the turban, another Sikh A.V.S. Grewal, proved this contention wrong by running a two mile race with his mask tied on his turban and defeating all others. When he was declared the fastest runner, it was proved that he could run without his mask or turban falling off.

When in Wolver Hampton, the Sikhs fought for the right to keep hair unshorn and wear turban, they got a massive support and won the fight. Similarly, when they were required to wear helmets while riding a motorcycle or a scooter or a two wheeler in England, they again agitated that they were quite safe with their turbans and they should have been exempted to wear helmets. Many parliamentarians supported them and the battle was again won. When the question arose in Canada regarding attending of legion's function, the Sikhs again had to fight for their right to attend the function with a turban. When they could serve in the army, why could they not attend such a function. The victory was again their's. Similar battles were fought for becoming members of club, participating in certain proceedings and so on at different places, but they always fought for their rights, and never were they defeated, whether it was England, Canada, America or Woolgoolga in Australia. Now both Sikh gents and ladies are there in army, police or other revenue and intelligence agencies in their Sikh form in all these countries.

THOSE GONE ASTRAY SHOULD COME BACK

I am aware that there may be some genuine cases of hardships or under pressure who would have done this after feeling a heavy weight on their hearts.

I am also aware of the fact that there are Sahejdhari Sikhs who have a deeper faith in Sikh religion than the persons with Sikh looks, but such cases are exceptional. Even in some of these cases where they had committed this act of apostasy under compelling circumstances, but now, they have risen high in positions and wealth, they should realise that Guru had been merciful to bless them with the success in life and in case they still follow Sikh religion, they have a duty to respond to Guru's call and revert back to the Sikh image. Gone are the days when people did not recognise them or there were only few Sikhs and it was very difficult to interact with the people living there. Now their number has increased and their positions have improved. Now there is no reason that one should give up the religion just for selfish motives. Now there are a large number of Sikhs who are working considerably for the promotion of their religion. They need to be emulated. It is a time for all the Sikhs (those who follow this religion, and not those who have given up and follow some other religion) to strengthen the hands of those, who, despite their Sikh form, by dint of their hardwork, sweet nature and sincerity got high positions and developed the best of the relations not only with people in general but also with dignitaries. This is the time when by coming back in their identity, they can make all of us proud of them.

THE BRAVE NEED TO BE CITED

Let me cite the example of S. Nav Bhatia. He wanted an employment in a company dealing in sale of cars. The employer refused him as he was wearing a turban. However, when Nav insisted that he should be given one chance, the employer called him one day as he was in need of a person and gave him a chance to make sale of cars. Nav worked so hard that the losses of the company were converted into huge profits only in one year's time. He was made General Manager of the branch. However, it was only after a short period that Nav was able to buy the company and presently he is the proprietor of that company. This story shows that the person should work hard and show his work rather than surrendering to the demand of others and giving up one's faith.

No wonder that Yogi Harbhajan Singh is visited by highest world personalities with respect. S. Sant Singh Chatwal, the Tsar of Indian hotels abroad, became so friendly with President Clinton, that he visited alongwith him the earthquake affected areas of Gujarat in March-April, 2001. Similarly, Prem Singh Vinning has been among the closest friends of Jean Chretien, the Prime Minister of Canada. A number of Sikhs have been honoured by the royal dignitaries of England and Thailand. To give examples, S. Gurdeep Singh Gujaral was honoured by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II with MBE (Member of British Empire), whereas, Prince Charles honoured S. Sekhon with this decoration. S. Narrotam Singh Narang, was honoured at the Royal Palace,

Bangkok in Thailand. Similarly, Seth Tarlok Singh Chawla was honoured by the Thai King. In fact, the position of the Sikhs in Thailand is very good and as such, the royal family also gives them due importance. It becomes evident from the fact that when Giani Arjun Singh, the Granthi of the Singh Sabha Gurudwara, died in 1995, the Royal Palace sent the flame to light the pyre.

In view of the position of Sikh diaspora as briefly discussed above, the main problem before them is to keep their younger generation in touch with the Sikh cultural and spiritual heritage. Many an elders are making sincere efforts in this direction. They have formed such organisations as are meant for promotion of Punjabi language, organising religious and cultural programs, seminars and such like activities which enable all the Sikhs to interact with their co-religionists. Now there is no country, where Punjabi is not being taught to the Sikh children on big or small scale. Similarly, most of the raagis and katha vachaks from India are invited in all these countries to give their programs for days together. In some of the countries, Khalsa naujwaan sabhas have also been constituted (Hongkong and Malasia). Efforts have also been made to establish Sikh chairs (eg. Sardarni Kuljit Kaur Bindra, Chair in Sikh studies) in foreign universities, art galleries and exhibitions of Sikh arts and art crafts. However, all these efforts made by different organisations, need to be consolidated and expended for the desired effects & results.

THE ELDERS SHOW THE WAY

Coming to the individual efforts made by the Sikhs to promote Sikh religion in foreign countries, Yogi Harbhajan Singh's name needs to be mentioned first of all. Yogi Harbhajan Singh, popularly known as Yogiji, is the most important Sikh in this regard as it is because of his efforts that a large number of Americans got converted to this faith. The converted Americans admit that Yogiji followed the fundamental principal of Sikhism as not to convert anyone by coercion or temptation. He only tried to improve the life of those hippies who considered drugs as their life. He convinced them to give up that path and follow a spiritual path based upon the teachings of the Masters. He taught them Yoga with a view to regulate their life as per the disciplined norms of a religious person. He satisfied their queries and undertook extensive touring to meet all those who are in quest of truth. There was considerable opposition from the main stream Americans, but neither Yogi nor who followed him in his footsteps, gave in. Yogiji made all efforts to make arrangements for their education, for their jobs and for their living. In fact, he gave them a new philosophy of life which meant the acquisition of power to project oneself properly. It is a power of mind and not the power of the machine as is relied upon by the Wester people. He gave discourses in the universities and also to distinguished gatherings of elite and intellectuals in America and other

countries.

In the present scenario, one can see hundreds of Americans converted Sikhs not only in America but also in several South American countries as well as in India. There is an academy known as 'Miri Piri Academy' in Amritsar, wherein, a large number of children from these converted American families study and live in conformity with the Sikh religion. All these students visit the Golden Temple in the small hours of the day, render service, perform daily Maryada, recite Baani and sing hymns from Guru Granth Sahib. When they complete their education at Amritsar, they have no problem in getting higher education in their country as Yogiji has considerable influence and set up to help them. There is a series of business corporations run and under the patronage of Yogiji, wherein they can get employment and live a useful happy life. Yogiji has spread the message of the masters, made the people to lead a simple life wherein vegetarianism, Ayurveda and the true Dharma have a place. Infact, Yogiji has done such a wonderful job for promoting his religion and spreading the message of the Gurus that he should be considered as one of the most important Sikh personalities of the 20th Century.

Apart from Yogiji, there are many other Sikhs in various parts of the Western Hemisphere whose efforts for the promotion of religion deserves special mention. Dr. Narinder Singh Kapani, known as Father of Optics, is also a devout Sikh with a burning desire to do his utmost for the propagation of the teachings of the Gurus. He had established a chair in Sikh studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, by virtue of which, S. Gurinder Singh Mann, who headed the chair, was able to do pioneering work on Sikhism at Columbia University. Dr. Kapani was also instrumental in organising the 1st international exhibition of Sikh artistic heritage on the occasion of the celebration of the tricentenary of the birth of the Khalsa. This exhibition has done a wonderful job in spreading the knowledge regarding Sikhism at various places wherever it was held. It started in March, 1999, at Victoria and Albert Museum in London, then in 2000, it was organised in Asian Art Museum, in San Francisco and later on, it was taken to the Royal Ontario museum in Toronto, Canada. Dr. Kapani has an ardent desire to ensure that Sikh traditions are passed on to the next generation of Europe and North America and to introduce them to rich history, scriptures and tradition of heroism of the Sikhs.

The other celebrities living abroad like S. Sant Singh Chatwal, S. Gurbax Singh Malli, who is the only turbaned minister in the Canadian Cabinet and T. Sher Singh, a renowned lawyer in Canada have also made considerable efforts for promoting the Sikh religion in the right perspective. It was due to the efforts of S. G.S. Malli that the government of Canada released Khanda Postal

stamp in April 1999. This stamp was released by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Canada acknowledging thereby the Sikh glory on the Canadian soil. S. Malli has so much impact in the Canadian Parliament that he was able to get the books written by S. Sarup Singh Alag of Ludhiana presented to the Prime Minister and all other Ministers in the Parliament House on 21st April, 1999. It may be mentioned here that S. Sarup Singh Alag has written a large number of books in English, Hindi and Punjabi and all his books including the books translated in Bengali are distributed free of cost. It is indeed a remarkable service for the propagation of Sikh religion and in such services, S. Gurbax Singh Malli takes lot of interest and encourages them.

S. T. Sher Singh is the one person who gave a large number of T.V. programs on Sikh religion. He hosted a weekly (13 part) TV talk show on Sikh issues and perspectives entitled "Sat Sri Akaal" with his daughter Gehna Kaur; he appeared each week on another 26 part TV series, 'Conversations on Sikhism.' He has also produced three documentary videos: Sikh Canadians, The Promise and the Challenge, The Golden Temple of Amritsar and Ranjit Singh: Emperor of Punjab. In 1987, he produced the Governor General's Award winner Sharon Pollock's play *The Kamagata Maru Incident*, at the downtown Toronto theatre, and in London, Ontario".

It also needs to be mentioned that when T. Sher Singh was invited in October, 1999, by the Vatican to attend the inter faith assembly, organised to celebrate the advent of the new Millennium, he was thoughtful enough to get such a sculpture made which could remind the world of the Sikh concept of universal brotherhood. Later on, when this sculpture was presented to Pope John Paul-II, depicting thereby Catholic and Sikh men and women, linking arms in unity and sport, the same got a world wide appreciation. There are many other Sikhs, who have rendered a useful service for popularising the Sikh mission through art, literature, and music. Some of the associates of Yogi Harbhajan Singh in America have become so popular singers of Gurbani that even foreigners feel spell bound by their renderings. Bibi Amarjit Kaur, alongwith her sister and brother constitute such a group. S. Daya Singh, living in Melbourne, Australia is another remarkable singer of Gurbani. Even otherwise, he is a great musician and artist and has won a large number of awards and appreciations including the award for the male artist of the year, at the world music awards held in Sydney, Australia in March, 2000. In the recent past, another American Sikh lady, named Satnam Kaur, figured in news when one of her albums on Gurbani got an entry for the Grammy award competition. She has so far given a number of albums on Gurbani which include 'To Heaven & Beyond', *Amrit Vela*, *Ades True Ades*, and *'Shanti'* (to be considered for the award).

Among the writers of repute, who have written profusely about the Sikh religion, the name of Harbans Lalji, who is a Sehajdhari Sikh, needs special mention. Although he is a scientist, and has worked with distinction in the area of behavioural pharmacology and toxicology, he is better known in Sikh Circles for his academic excellence. Even as a student, he had considerable interest in Sikh religion, and had become president of the All India Sikh Student Federation in 1954. Since then, he has been writing articles on various aspects of Sikh religion. His writings regularly appear in the Sikh review, Sikh Sansar, the Sikh courier, the Spokesman, Journal of Sikhism and comparative religions. He is so accommodating in this respect that even for new magazines, he sends his contributions, whenever his is requested for the same. Recently, when we made a request to him for an article in 'Jeevan Rishma', he immediately responded and gave us the benefit of his scholarly views.

Another important name associated with Sikh scholarship is that of Dr. Nikky Gurninder Kaur Singh. Daughter of a renowned professor, Harbans Singh, she inherited the brilliance of writing from her father. Now she is regarded as one of the leading experts in Sikhism who has delivered lectures in various universities and institutions and has published several books including 'Verses of the Sikh Gurus' (translations published by Penguin). She often participates in seminars and presents research papers on Sikh studies.

Yogi Harbhajan Singh's influence is visible even in the sphere of Sikh writing in America. Yogiji himself has not only influenced the people with his speeches, but has also written on Sikh religion, Yoga and Ayurvedic therapies. His articles generally appear in various Indian and foreign magazines including Aquarian times of which he is the spiritual guide. Bibi Inderjit Kaur Khalsa, wife of Yogiji is the real power behind him. She is not only the most important source of inspiration for Yogiji, but is also known for her various qualities of head and heart among the large followings of Yogiji. She is known for her professional counselling and therapy and religious writings. Shakta Kaur and Kartar Singh Khalsa are also among those American Sikhs, who have written about their religion of adoption. Some other persons, settled abroad, who generally write on Sikh religion, include S. Dalip Singh, S. Gurinder Singh Mann and Dr. Murjendra Singh, who is considered as an expert on comparative study of world religions & philanthropies. The efforts made by Sardar Kartar Singh Thakral of Singapore for the propagation of Sikh religion are also noteworthy. He has not only given huge donations for the construction of Gurudwaras, in Singapore and Australia, but has also made a notable contributor of money for all kinds of charity in these countries as well as in India. Being highly religious, he attributes his success to God and makes every effort to conduct his business in an honest manner as envisaged in Gurmat

tradition. The contribution made by Dr. Raghbir Singh Bains of Canada in the promotion of his religion is unique in the sense that he created world's first ever Encyclopaedia on CD-ROM. This encyclopaedia on Sikh religion was released in 1997 by Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien. In India, it was launched by Prime Minister Sh. Atal Bihari Vajpai.

THE YOUNG-ONES, WHO MAKE US PROUD

The above discussion does not mean that it is only the elders who are making efforts in propagating Sikh religion. There are people in the younger generation too, who are proud of their heritage and are quite vocal in expressing their pride over their distinctive identity. The celebrations of the 300th year of the birth of Khalsa and later on, the 200th day of coronation of Maharaja Ranjit Singh all over the world, created a new enthusiasm among the Sikhs. The celebration in all the countries attracted the attention of the people and aroused an interest in them to know more about the Sikhs. When, after the terrorist attacks on the Trade Centre in America, the Sikhs became victims of hate crimes, and one, named S. Sodhi was shot by the Americans, the younger generation among the Sikhs all the more realised their responsibility in making the people know about them and their separate identity. In this respect, some instances of the younger people need to be given here for appreciating the stand taken by them and their efforts in this direction.

Let me first refer to the young Sikh millionaire Ruben Singh, who aspires to become Bill Gates of Europe. Although there is no dearth of Sikh multimillionaires in foreign countries, Ruben Singh was particularly in news when he got a Bentley car made for himself with highly expensive fittings, a number plate of choice and a walnut Dash Board with a gold Khanda Kirpan, which all cost him 27 lakh pounds. Although he is fond of cars and has more than a dozen of them, all the renowned models, but regarding Bentley, he claimed that it was the only one car in the world. Ruben, born in 1976, was the owner of a company known as 'Miss Attitude' in 1995. The company dealt with various items like handbags, watches, purses etc, all available under one roof. Thereafter, he went on opening various other such shopping complexes and by the year 1999, he had 500 outlets, with over 1000 employees. When he sold this entire chain, he became the youngest millionaire in England. When he visited India and went to Amritsar, he was asked regarding his identity to which he replied that he always felt proud of his heritage and the separate identity by virtue of his religion. He said "My religion is very important to me. People respect somebody when they stand by their basic beliefs. And no one can ever say that Ruben Singh has ever cheated them.' It may be mentioned that the Guinness book of World Records has listed him as the world's youngest millionaire, but he is looking forward to become the world's youngest

billionaire before he becomes 30 years old.

There is another young Sikh who had recently contested for Senate, and is a millionaire doctor living in America, Dr. Chiranjeev Singh Kathuria, had stated in one of his interviews that his turban was not only good for his personality being a part of his religion, it was also useful for him as to attract a lot of attention. "I get a lot of attention- - - - - and my appearance helps voters distinguish me from the rest of the candidates," said he. He is also eager to let the people know about the Sikhs and that is why, in his brochure, for the purpose of campaigning he devoted a good part of it to the history of Sikhs. He added that for preventing hate crimes, people must be made aware of Sikh history and culture. Another young Sikh, Navdeep Singh Bains, aspiring for nomination as liberal candidate for Mississauga, Brampton, South in Canada, also holds similar views and is eager to serve his community.

While talking of Sikh youngsters, who were bold enough to defend their identity and religious symbols with a view to create awareness among the foreigners, S. Ravi Singh, aged 30, also needs a specific mention. After 11th September, incident in America, many weak minded Sikhs might have become scared and thought of taking off their turbans for their protection, but Ravi did not do so, and instead of that, he thought of educating Americans by releasing an Audio and E book on the 1st anniversary of 11th September. This book, "Leadership by Turban" informs the people as what the turban is all about. When Ravi Singh was in India, for releasing his book, he asserted "The one thing I have never compromised is wearing a turban. Its about my identity and keeping your identity, can be an asset."

Ravi Singh was the 1st Sikh American with a turban to graduate as 2nd Lieutenant from the Marmion Military Academy. He also took part in politics, and now he is a successful internet entrepreneur. He is the owner of Election Mall technologies, which company provides political parties and candidates the necessary on line tools, services and products and also outsources technology work to India. Apart from being a wealthy Sikh American, it is his ardent desire to guide younger members of his community in the US to accept the high values of their culture. It is only such brave people who can keep the younger generation attached to their roots.

Sandeep Singh, another young Sikh born in November, currently working in marketing research with Johnson & Johnson, also subscribes to the view that looking different is advantageous. "I am easily recognisable and I dress better than most of them. I take a keen interest in my job and have a sense of humour." He adds that all these things take you a long way in a Corporate environment. Sandeep Singh is highly optimistic of the future of the Sikhs. In

his view, they have done very well for themselves. However, the only fear is that the next generation may not forget the values which our forefathers cherished. He is sure that if those values are cherished and our younger lot does not forget our cultural heritage, they can do wonders.

So far the young ones among the converted Sikhs are concerned, they are equally energetic to make efforts for making their identity known and the tenets of the new religion promoted among the people of the world. Kartar Singh Khalsa is an American Sikh. His wife Shakta Kaur is also an American converted to Sikhism. Both of them are now observing the Sikh code of conduct, both in form and actions. When Kartar Singh was asked as how did he feel to be a Sikh and what was his relationship with the Guru, he replied to Dr. Surjit Kaur as recorded in her book. "Now I know that I can do whatever I want to in this world and still be a Sikh. My turban is like the Guru's protective hand on my head. I have a special relationship with the Guru Granth Sahib I can read Gurmukhi and understand *paath*. I read the *vaak* and know what the Guru wants me to do. We all have a special relationship with Guru Ram Dass. Once while meditating Yogi Bhajan had a vision of him. That is how he was called upon to spread Guru Nanak's message in the Western World."

It is not only in America that the people have turned to this youngest religion of the world, in other countries too, a good number of people have taken interest and adopted it by choice. For eg., Chris Moony Singh is from Australia. When he was asked as why did he chose this religion, he replied that he liked this religion mainly because it treated all the people equal. He was also impressed by Gurbani, particularly its close association with music, which he is fond of. Chris came to India with a view to study the Sikh religion and popularise those musical instruments which were used in the times of Gurus. He lived in Taran Taran for a long period and manufactured *Rabaabs* with a view to revive it for the promotion of Sikh and Punjabi culture. He has influenced many youngsters in Australia and he is hopeful that if the Sikh religion is promoted in the right earnest, a large number of people will like to adopt this modern religion which makes no distinction between man and man. Chris is well versed in the Sikh philosophy and appreciates that it is the concept of 'Naam' as propounded by the Gurus which has always given strength to the Khalsa.

LOVE FOR THE MOTHER LAND

The love of Sikhs living abroad for their religion also keeps them attached to their motherland, Punjab. Some of them are trying to do something for the betterment of their places of birth. In one of the reports in the newspaper, the reporter Rita Sharma had given an example of a village named Kharaudi in

Hoshiarpur District. She says “the entire village has been transformed by just two NRIs. This village has given the message of nurturing the roots and improving the quality of life of people through collective efforts. It is a case study unparalleled and unprecedented. On a visit to this village, I was told that two sons of this village who had migrated to Canada, immediately after partition in 1947, decided to actively involve themselves and change the lives of the people of their village, Kharaudi. The two NRIs are Dr. R.S. Basi, former Vice-Chancellor of Alaska Pacific University, Canada and Dr. G.S. Gill, the first medical practitioner to start private practice in Vancouver. They were joined by Dr. Sukhdev Singh Basi (younger brother of the Vice-Chancellor), an electrical engineer, who has taught in Canada for 33 years. The three appealed to all fellow NRIs of Kharaudi to donate money for the project they had conceived. Incidentally, every third house in Kharaudi has a member who has migrated abroad. Within no time Rs.50 lakh was collected. Thus began the work of transforming the village. Today, there are no open drains or dirty by-lanes and streets, there is a sewerage treatment plant and part with a statue of village martyr Arjan Singh ‘Sach’, who was jailed for 12 years during India’s struggle for freedom. There is also solar street lighting. A ‘pillar of appreciation’ is under construction to carry names of donors of Kharaudi who have contributed more than Rs.1 lakh or more. Both Dr. Gill and Dr. Basi began working on the project titled ‘Nurture your roots’ in September, 1999, and within three years the village has been transformed beyond recognition. Today, it has concrete streets connecting each house. The sewerage lines flow through the village with a concrete cover on it and each house is connected to it. Unlike most of our State Government’s half baked ideas of engineering, the sewerage water has not been allowed to pollute at its final disposal.” The learned Reporter has also given other example in this newspaper column, wherein she says “just close to Kharaudi is village Bharata-Ganeshpur, where an individual, Pammi Bains, has done remarkable work for the welfare of the surrounding area. He has constructed a modern mortuary, which can house six bodies and is available to anyone free of cost. But NRIs say that they still want collective effort to optimize the improvement in village lifestyle. Take the case of Parmar, a contractor with the US Govt. He is in the process of building a hospital in village Panjaura in Kotfatui, again in district Hoshiarpur. It is estimated to cost around Rs.10 crore. Mr. Parmar has already invested Rs.3 crore and the hospital has started functioning. Yet another hospital, involving an investment of Rs.3 crore, is coming up at village Dahan in district Nawanshehar. One Budh Singh of Canada is constructing it. The hospital is already working, though expansion is still on. Another NRI, Baldev Singh of village Majatri, near Chandigarh who left his native place 27 years ago, has built a school and gifted it to the people. It has cost him 40 lakh.”

With all their qualities and the position presently held by the Sikh Diaspora, we can say that they have a bright future in those countries. The very fact that the trend of accepting multi culturalism is on the increase in most of the countries and also all the countries are inclined to give religious freedom to the people living there, goes in favour of all the immigrants including Sikhs. However, Sikhs are a unique minority, the most distinguishable of all because of their distinctive identity. In this respect, it is, therefore, incumbent upon them to maintain this identity for their own benefit. Prince Charles had rightly advised them on the occasion of the tricentenary celebrations on the birth of Khalsa that they should never lose this identity, otherwise they will be lost in the sea of humanity and their culture will also vanish like that of many other immigrant communities. They should observe the teachings as contained in Guru Granth Sahib as a part of their life. If they are firm in their beliefs and form, they are likely to succeed in every sphere.

The Sikh community in India looks forward to the Sikhs abroad as they are stronger in wealth and positions in those countries. They are also our messengers in the outside world and as messengers, it is their duty to spread the message of the Masters. Macauliffe had made it clear by quoting verses from Guru Arjun Dev that the Divine word be translated into different languages and be universally spread. They can do it better than the Sikhs living in our country. They can present their life style to the foreigners in such a way that they can have a fair idea of the living of a Sikh. With their best qualities of good behaviour, sweet tongue & helping nature, they can win the hearts of the people of the countries where they are living. At the same time, they can help their brothers in India economically as well as intellectually. In this computer age, the world has become so small that any information, any knowledge can be passed on anywhere within seconds. The Sikhs living abroad must have a stronger interaction with their people and roots so that they are benefited by mutual knowledge. Those who are having large businesses with a considerable potential for employment, they should provide employment to those who are having requisite qualification and ability but are without any work in this country.

Before closing this chapter, the Sikhs living in foreign countries must be reminded that for their bright future, in their countries of adoption, as well as for the welfare of the co-religionists in their birthland, they may have still to fight certain battles against the biases, prejudices and wrong notions entertained by certain people against them. For example, presently, they are faced with a legal problem in France. The National Assembly of France has made a law to ban Muslim head scarves and other religious symbols from Public schools. The Sikhs have raised their voice against this law as it will affect

them by depriving them to have their heads covered with turbans. The protests were made by them both in India and France. S. Simran Jit Singh Maan, an Akaali leader had led such an agitation in France. When, the French Foreign Minister Dominique de Philipine came to Delhi, he had to face the agitating Sikhs supported by many others. He was told that in the present day world, the migrants were all tied with their roots in respect of religion, language and country, particularly, the religious identities were quite strong in the minds of the people. A French Law required them to make a completely unwarranted choice between an over arching national identity and a personally valued sub-identity. The visiting foreign minister assured the Union Minister, S. Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa and National Commission for Minorities, Chairman, S. Tarlochan Singh that he will bring to the notice of the authorities, the problems of the Sikhs. Even Pope, the religious head of Christianity has supported the cause of the Sikhs in this regard. The Indian Government is also in touch with the French Government for getting the issue solved amicably. The Bishop of Paris is also taking up the issue with the French Government in favour of the Sikhs. Thus, such like problems may arise in some countries. But the Sikhs, as usual, are sure to win the battles. However, they must remember that they will win any battle only in case they follow the commands of the Guru and remain firm and united. Even those, who have given up the Sikh identity should come back to the Sikh fold by making amends and getting a pardon from the merciful Guru. They should remember that by doing so, they will feel themselves dignified and exalted and bring glory to the entire Sikh world. They should also not forget that the Guru has said in Gurbani, that with the obedience of all the commands of the Guru, we get branded and it is only the branded who can fight battles with zest, the unbranded runaway as Renegades. Sant Kabir has realised this state of ecstasy in his following words:

ਰਾਮਕਲੀ ਕਬੀਰ ਜੀਉ॥

ਤੇਰੇ ਦੁਆਰੇ ਧੁਨਿ ਸਹਜ ਕੀ ਮਾਥੈ ਮੇਰੇ ਦਗਾਈ॥ ੨॥

ਦਾਗੇ ਹੋਹਿ ਸੁ ਰਨ ਮਹਿ ਜੂਝਹਿ ਬਿਨੁ ਦਾਗੇ ਭਗਿ ਜਾਈ॥

ਸਾਧੂ ਹੋਇ ਸੁ ਭਗਤਿ ਪਛਾਨੈ ਹਰਿ ਲਏ ਖਜਾਨੈ ਪਾਈ॥ ੩॥

Tere duaare dhun sahaj kee maathai mere dagaaee.2.

Daage hohe su ran meh joojheh bin daage bhag jaaee.

Saadhoo hoe su bhagat pachhaanai Har lae khajaane paaee.3.

The celestial music resounds at Your door

And on my forehead is inscribed Your seal.

They, who are branded fight bravely in the battle.

But the unstamped one's flee away.

He, who is a saint knows the worth of Lord's service,

And the Lord puts him in His treasury.

(SGGS, page 970)

BRAVE INDEED

The word brave is used for a person who is bold and courageous in his actions. In Gurbani, the words used for brave are *Soora*, *Soorma*, *Veer*, *Soorvir* and *Wariyaam*. Since the entire philosophy of Sikh religion revolves around the belief in the existence of God, He is considered to possess all the attributes in unparalleled degree of perfection. Thus, he is considered as the bravest of all. There is none brave like him, and whosoever considered brave is just a shadow of Him. It is, therefore, the first duty of any brave person to remember God at all moments and in all circumstances. Remembrance does not mean the mechanical recitation of His name, but implies a deep-rooted love for Him and accept whatever is His will. In other words, whatever God does for his devotees or gives Him is acceptable. The will of God becomes the will of the devotee. Such a devotee is the really brave person. The fifth Guru clearly says that who is imbued with God's love in this age is the warrior because he has conquered himself. In other words, he has been able to efface his ego and identify his desire with that of the supreme will. In his words:

ਜਾ ਕਉ ਹਰਿ ਰੰਗ ਲਾਗੋ ਇਸੁ ਜੁਗ ਮਹਿ ਸੋ ਕਹੀਅਤ ਹੈ ਸੂਰਾ॥

ਆਤਮ ਜਿਣੈ ਸਗਲ ਵਸਿ ਤਾ ਕੈ ਜਾ ਕਾ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਪੂਰਾ॥ ੧॥

Ja kau har rang laago is jug meh so kahee-at hai soora.

Aatam jinai sagal vas ta kai ja ka satgur poora.1.

He who is imbued with God's love;

Is Really Brave of this age

Conquering self by Guru's Grace

Enables one to conquer all .

(SGGS, page 680)

EGO, OUR WORST ENEMY

The Gurbani explains in various hymns as how to get rid of our worst ailment, i.e., our ego which comes in between our union with the divine. The specific word used for ego, pride and haughtiness in a combined manner is "*Haume*". This *Haume* is obliterated only by ever remembering the Almighty, by recitation of his name or by singing of praises of his numerous attributes. His grace is invoked for obtaining victory over *Haume*. Infact, what gives birth to *Haume* are the five vices i.e. *Kaam*, *Krodh*, *Lobh*, *Moh* and *Ahankar*. These five enemies of our peace prevent us from treading the righteous path leading to the divine union. Gurbani, therefore, emphasizes upon the fact that a brave person is he who is

triumphant over all these vices. The Fifth master says so in raag *Aasa*,

ਆਸਾ ਮਹਲਾ ੫ ॥

ਜਿਨਿ ਮਿਲਿ ਮਾਰੇ ਪੰਚ ਸੂਰਬੀਰ ਐਸੇ ਕਉਨੁ ਬਲੀ ਰੇ ॥

ਜਿਨਿ ਪੰਚ ਮਾਰਿ ਬਿਦਾਰਿ ਗੁਦਾਰੇ ਸੇ ਪੂਰਾ ਇਹ ਕਲੀ ਰੇ ॥ ੧ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

Jin mil mare panch soorbir also kaun bali re.

Jin panch maar bidaar gudaare so poora ih kali re.

Who is there so powerful, who has destroyed the five puissant heroes

Perfect is one in this dark age, who has defeated and slain them.

(SGGS, page 404)

CONCEPT OF KAAM

Since the Sikh religion does not promote escapism, it does not envisage a position where the feeling of *Kaam* is completely eliminated. This impulse standing for the sexual pleasure is to be kept under check as to avoid the unrestricted gratification of carnal desires. It may be mentioned that the Brahminical concept of *Kaam* had made the position of women highly deplorable. She was considered a thing to be used for the purpose of enjoyment and as such was treated as an obstacle on the path of spiritual upliftment. Under the Brahminic supremacy there was a stage in life when *Kaam* had to be abandoned for following the path of Dharma. According to the Buddhism and Jainism also, like the Yogis of the Sankhya school, such a desire was to be suppressed for achieving the Moksh. That is why celibacy and asceticism were preached. Sikh religion, however, promotes the *grahasth* concept. It is a brave person's task to lead the life of a householder and even then to remain attuned to God just like a lotus flower. However, for getting such a control, God's name was the only resort. The masters also sounded a precaution when it was said that no body should go for sexual gratification outside the marital bounds. Bhai Gurdas advised the Sikhs to regard all other women as mothers, sisters, and daughters. The 10th Guru made such a requirement as mandatory part of the code to be followed by Sikhs. This concept of Kaam in Sikhism made the Sikhs satisfied with their own life and this satisfaction provided them strength to be bold and courageous. It may be mentioned here that any person who is dissatisfied will never be able to act boldly. The satisfaction of the Sikhs is reflected from an acknowledged truth that whenever they won some battle, they did not behave like other victors and paid respect to the women of losing enemy. They never took advantage of the women of enemy group and rather helped them in leading a normal and settled life. Many Hindus and even Muslims would come to them for help when their ladies were taken possession of by some cruel rulers or administrators or were made hostages by invaders like Ahmad Shah Abdali. The fierce battle of Kasur was fought mainly for rescuing a Brahmin woman from the clutches of the debauch ruler of Kasur.

HONOUR FOR WOMEN

The concept of Grahasth and restricted Kaam was also helpful in raising the importance of the women in Sikh religion. They were given a glorified position by the Gurus and were always treated as equal in all respects and spheres. So much so that they were free even to enter the battlefield and show their valour along with their men folk. We cannot forget that when the battle of Mukatsar was fought Mai Bhago had shown her bravery while fighting in the battlefield wherein she was injured. Thus, she was not only a source of inspiration for those Sikhs who had deserted the Guru but was also a brave soldier herself who participated in the battle. Some other brave Sikh ladies of the period of Guru Gobind Singh include Bibi Deep Kaur and Bibi Sharan Kaur. Bibi Sharan Kaur is believed to have cremated the Martyrs of the battle of Chamkaur. It was a dark cold night. The Guru along with his companions had left the battle field after his Sikhs decided that he should go from there so that the struggle against the tyrannous Mughal rule could continue. Bibi Sharan Kaur was well aware that as soon as the sun rises, the Mughals will defy the dead bodies of the brave Sikhs. Thus, when the Mughal soldiers were deep in sleep after day's fighting, she went to the battle field with an earthen lamp and started her difficult task of identifying and collecting the dead bodies of the Sikh Martyrs at one place. The whole night she remained busy and when the night was going to be over, she consigned all these bodies to fire. When the Mughal soldiers noticed a fire in the battlefield, they came running and caught hold of the brave lady. They tried to find out the truth from her, but in vain. Ultimately, she was thrown into the fire by them and this made her a Martyr for her religion alongwith her brothers.

In the history of the 18th Century, the number of brave Sikh women is so large that it is not possible to name them. Whereas, as per Lupal Griffin (Rajas of Punjab) the state of Lakhnaur ruled by Sardarni Daya Kaur, was one of the best managed in the protected territories, Bibi Sahib Kaur played a prominent part in protecting the state of Patiala from falling into the hands of Marathas, Bibi Dharam Kaur was the leader of those 26 brave women who had to fight against Zafar Beg and his battalion. Hundreds of Sikh women suffered severe punishments during the times of ruthless governors of Punjab, particularly Mir Mannu who had tested their patience while making them do arduous tasks and see their children dying before them at the hands of the rulers. The children were cut into pieces before their eyes, but even such torturous punishments and scenes could not make them give up their faith. They were bold enough to see all this and face death without any compromise. It was at this critical period of Sikh history that Sikhs used to say:

ਮਨੂੰ ਸਾਡੀ ਦਾਤਰੀ, ਅਸੀਂ ਮਨੂੰ ਦੇ ਸੋਏ।
ਜਿਉਂ ਜਿਉਂ ਮਨੂੰ ਵੱਢਦਾ, ਅਸੀਂ ਦੂਣ ਸਵਾਏ ਹੋਏ।

Mannoo sadhi daatri, asean Mannoo de soe.

Jion-Jion Mannu wadhda, asean doon swaae hoe.

Mannoo is our sickle and we are Mannoo's oniseeds.

As Mannoo is cutting us, we are flourishing leaps and bounds.

It is because of the boldness and bravery of Sikh women that they always commanded respect and are remembered in daily prayer of Sikhs all over the world. The Sikh women also participated in various Morchas launched by the Sikhs towards the end of 19th century and in the beginning of 20th century. For example Sardarni Balbir Kaur made the supreme sacrifice at Jaiton. She moved forward in a batch of volunteers to defy the British authority and face the raising bullet. When her infant child in her lap was hit by a bullet, she verily laid him by on the wayside, and herself went on going ahead till she herself faced a shot from the machine gun. In addition to their sacrifices, Sikh women, remained a source of inspiration for their man folk to rise above the carnal pleasures and perform the marvellous feats of valour, steadfastness and patience.

KRODH CONVERTED INTO ENERGY

So far as *Krodh* is concerned, it is another sinful passion. However when *Krodh* is converted into energy to fight against the forces of injustice, tyranny and oppression, it becomes a useful weapon. A brave Sikh knows that anger is to be avoided and remain calm even in adverse situations. However, as the 10th Master said, if it was not possible to solve the issue amicably, and the enemy did not come for a peaceful settlement, it was justified to go for a war. It does not mean that the Sikhs should always fight, fighting is rather the last resort. But, when fighting is a must then the Sikh has to win or die for the cause, he cannot retreat. Bhagat Kabir says in Gurbani

ਰਣਿ ਰੂਤਉ ਭਾਜੈ ਨਹੀ ਸੂਰਉ ਥਾਰਉ ਨਾਉ॥ ੩੪॥

Ran rooto bhaajai nahee sooro thaaro naao.34.

Brave is he who doesn't flee from the battlefield.34.

(SGGS, page 342)

It may be added that even when in the course of the battle, some enemy accepting his defeat, begs pardon earnestly, the Sikh ethic is to pardon him and let him go. However, if the enemy is not sincere and his act of pardon is just an excuse to escape, he has to be punished. The Sikh ethics of war have also emphasized upon a strong character of all those, who fight in the battlefield. Even those persons who fought against them confirm this fact regarding their strong character. It was for such ethical qualities of Sikhs that

they were praised even by enemies like Quazi Noor Mohammed.

NOOR MOHAMMED'S OBSERVATIONS ABOUT SIKHS

Quazi Noor Mohammed, who had accompanied Ahmad Shah Abdali, has recorded his observations in his well known work "Jangnama". He calls the Sikhs, their enemies, as dogs, but at the same time, he mentions their good points and emphasises upon the fact that they being good marksmen, and very brave, could create havoc while fighting a battle. Thus, it was not right to call them dogs because they acted like lions in the battlefield. Quazi Noor Mohd. also makes it clear that in the time of peace, they are so generous and compassionate that even Hatamtai was no match. They observe their religious code of conduct very strictly and are very truthful, honest, sincere and pure in their feelings. They have no bad habits like adultery or prostitution and have a great respect for ladies. What Quazi Noor Mohd. wrote has been supported by many other historians. This proves that the Sikhs did not lose temper on trifles, and sometimes tolerated many such things which makes a weak person angry. It is a brave man's quality to remain calm and peaceful even in adverse circumstances. The Sikh history is full of examples, where the Sikhs suffered torture and atrocities, but even then did not lose their patience and balance of mind. It is mainly because of their firm faith in God. The 5th Master had taught them the golden principle of accepting the will of God. The two Sikh Gurus had to sacrifice their lives, but they did it calmly, remembering the Almighty. Thousands of Sikhs who laid down their lives for the cause of religion or later on, for the independence of their country followed the path of their Gurus. This path, as reflected in Gurbani is that of humility and invocation of God's grace, instead of getting angry and agitated. So says Guru Arjan.

ਰੋਸੁ ਨ ਕਾਹੂ ਸੰਗ ਕਰਹੁ ਆਪਨ ਆਪੁ ਬੀਚਾਰਿ॥

ਹੋਇ ਨਿਮਾਨਾ ਜਗਿ ਰਹਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਨਦਰੀ ਪਾਰਿ॥੧॥

Ros na kaahoo sang karoh aapan aap beechaar.

Hoe nimaana jag rahoh Nanak nadaree paar.

Be not angry with any one and search of your own self.

Oh Nanak! Abide humble in the world, through God's grace you shall be delivered. (SGGS, page 259)

The immortal couplet of Baba Sheikh Farid is also significant, wherein the saint poet says that we should do good to even those who do evil with us. If we do not nurse anger in the heart, no disease will afflict the body. The Gurbani further tells us that if we adopt the virtues and learn to pardon others, we may control our anger. The quality of contentment and goodwill for all saves us from the feeling of vindictiveness and revengefulness. It is very difficult to pardon a person when he has committed an excess with you than to pay him in the same coin, But there are numerous instances in Sikh history where the

Sikhs pardoned even the worst of their enemies. Despite the fact that Hill Rajas were always hostile to the Guru, when they approached him for his help, the Guru readily agreed for the same. Howsoever, cruel and despotic was Aurangzeb towards the Sikh Gurus, when his son Bahadur Shah sought the help of the 10th Guru, the Guru agreed to render such a help. Such like instances show that the Guru never had any feeling of revengefulness even towards the enemies. The Sikhs have always been following this policy of the Guru in genuine cases of pardon. The latest instance of this is the case of S. Balbir Singh Sodhi, who was shot by Americans under mistake identity. His parents in all the generosity pleaded with the President of USA for the pardon of the killer.

When Guru Arjan Dev in Sahaskriti Slokas recounts the evil effects of anger, he concludes that one can get rid of this enemy passion only by grace of God.

ਹੇ ਕਲਿ ਮੂਲ ਕ੍ਰੋਧੰ ਕਦੰਚ ਕਰੁਣਾ ਨ ਉਪਰਜਤੇ॥
 ਬਿਖਯੰਤ ਜੀਵੰ ਵਸੁੰ ਕਰੋਤਿ ਨਿਰਤੁੰ ਕਰੋਤਿ ਜਥਾ ਮਰਕਟਹ॥
 ਅਨਿਕ ਸਾਸਨ ਤਾੜੰਤਿ ਜਮਦੂਤਹ ਤਵ ਸੰਗੇ ਅਧਮੰ ਨਰਹ॥
 ਦੀਨ ਦੁਖ ਭੰਜਨ ਦਯਾਲ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਰਬ ਜੀਅ ਰਖਾ ਕਰੋਤਿ॥ ੪੭॥

He kal mool krodhang kadanch kruna na uparajate.

Bikhyant jeevang vasang krot nirtang krot jatha markato.

Anik saasan tarant jamdooto tav sange adhamang naro.

Deen dukh bhanjan dyall prabh Nanak sarab jee rakha krot.47.

O Wrath! You are root of strife, with in you compassion never rises.

You take in your power the sinful mortals and they dance like monkeys.

In your company man is debased.

And Death's lashes tease him with various punishments.

Nanak says, "O my Lord merciful Master and destroyer of the sorrow of the poor! Protect all the human beings from wrath. (SGGS, page 1358)

A Sikh knows how to pray to God to rid him of this wild passion.

PASSION OF GREED

Similarly a brave person in this world can only have control over his passion of greed (Lobh), which implies a mad craze for money or worldly possessions. Even mighty kings and emperors are unable to get rid of this kind of obsession. The Gurbani rightly points out :

ਵਡੇ ਵਡੇ ਰਾਜਨ ਅਰੁ ਭੂਮਨ ਤਾ ਕੀ ਤ੍ਰਿਸਨ ਨ ਬੂਝੀ॥
 ਲਪਟਿ ਰਹੇ ਮਾਇਆ ਰੰਗ ਮਾਤੇ ਲੋਚਨ ਕਛੂ ਨ ਸੂਝੀ॥ ੧॥

Vade vade raajan ar bhooman ta kee trisan na boojhee.

Lapat rahe maaiaa rang maate lochan kachhoo na soojhee. 1.

The craving of even great kings and the big land lords is not quenched.

Intoxicated with the pleasure of wealth.

They are so engrossed in that their eyes do not see anything else.

(SGGS, page 672)

ਤ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਨਾ ਬਿਰਲੇ ਹੀ ਕੀ ਬੁਝੀ ਹੇ॥ ੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ॥

ਕੋਟਿ ਜੋਰੇ ਲਾਖ ਕ੍ਰੋਰੇ ਮਨੁ ਨ ਹੋਰੇ॥

ਪਰੈ ਪਰੈ ਹੀ ਕਉ ਲੁਝੀ ਹੇ॥ ੧॥

Trishna birle hee kee bhujhee he.1. Rahaa.

Kot jore laakh karore man na hore.

Parai parai hee kau lujhee he.1.

The Thirst of desire of only a few is quenched.

Man amasses millions of millions but does not control his mind.

He longs for more and more.

(SGGS, page 213)

When the Guru says that only rare persons are free from this passion, his followers, the Sikhs emerge powerful enough to be such rare persons for such a contentment. It is because of the fact that they know that such a desire is illusionary and happy is the person who remains contented. The brave Sikh only prays for such a contentment following the command of his Guru as appearing on page 682 of the Guru Granth Sahib.

ਤ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਨਾ ਬੁਝੈ ਹਰਿ ਕੈ ਨਾਮਿ॥

ਮਹਾ ਸੰਤੋਖੁ ਹੋਵੈ ਗੁਰ ਬਚਨੀ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਸਿਉ ਲਾਗੈ ਪੂਰਨ ਧਿਆਨੁ॥ ੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ॥

ਮਹਾ ਕਲੋਲ ਬੁਝਿ ਮਾਇਆ ਕੇ ਕਰਿ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਦੀਨ ਦਇਆਲ॥

ਅਪਣਾ ਨਾਮੁ ਦੇਹਿ ਜਪਿ ਜੀਵਾ ਪੂਰਨ ਹੋਇ ਦਾਸ ਕੀ ਘਾਲ॥ ੧॥

Trishna bujhai har kai naam.

Maha santokh hovai Gur bachnee prabh sio laagai pooran dhiaan.1. Rahaa.

Maha kalol bujeh maaiiaa ke kar kirpa mere deen diaal.

Apna naam deh jap jeeva pooran hoe daas kee ghaal.

Thirst of desire is quenched with the God's Name
Through the Word of Guru, great contentment comes.

And one's mind is perfectly attuned to the Lord.

O My Lord! Be merciful and take pity on me.

So that I may abandon the supreme flirtations of mammon.

O my Lord! Bless me with your name.

So that by reciting it I sustain my life-flame.

(SGGS, page 682)

Guru Nanak had preached that one should earn by the sweat of his brow and then share it with needy people. Hard work is the basic trait of a brave person. A Sikh knows as how to work hard and earn whatever is required and is necessary for a smooth living. The requirement of basic necessities is recognised in Sikh religion as becomes evident from the verses of Bhagat Dhannaji and Bhagat Kabirji. The requirement of sufficient money for purchasing the necessities is also admitted. The Sikh remains contented with

whatever is given to him by the Almighty. He does not have the feeling of jealousy or envy for others who possess more than him. Guru Nanak had preferred to visit the house of such a brave Sikh, who was the embodiment of qualities of hard work and contentment with a feeling of greatness towards God, than to visit a person who had amassed huge wealth by torturing others.

Even after the Guru's period, the Sikhs displayed the highest sense of contentment. When in the times of Banda Singh Bahadur, they got the opportunity to plunder, their leader prevented them to do so, and if at all, some booty fell to their share, they distributed it among all concerned. Had the Sikhs wanted, they could have ruled over Delhi, which had once fallen in their hands and the Sikh forces were able to enter the Red Fort, but in their broad minded spirit, they left Delhi for Punjab only by making the concerned authorities to agree to help the Sikhs in identifying the historical spots associated with their Gurus and getting the Gurudwaras constructed there upon. They did not plunder Delhi like Nadir Shah or Abdali, nor did they carry the valuables alongwith them as a treasure. Whatever little they had, they thought it sufficient for them. That has been the spirit of the Sikhs. There were times, when they had to live in the Jungles or on hills without any shelter or even sufficient food to eat. However, they never had any grudge and remained in high spirits even in those difficult times.

MOH & AHANKAR

Moh means to have attachment with the relations and with material things. However, a Gursikh, though lives with his family, gets more attached with the Almighty in whom he has full faith. His bravery lies in the fact of his realization that it is the Lord who gives everything, and need not to be forgotten. The human relationships in this world are short lived. However, the Gurus also realized that it was a Herculean task to give up *Moh*. Everyone is so attached with his sons and daughters, wife and parents that he does not want to leave them even for a minute. The remedy, therefore, as suggested by Gurbani, is to join the congregation as much as possible.

The word *Ahankar* is derived from Sanskrit, which implies egotism, egoism, self conceit, self-centeredness, vanity or pride. In Punjabi the synonyms of this word are *Abhiman*, *Garb*, *Guman* etc. In Gurbani, another synonym with a wider connotation has been used i.e. *Haumai*. Like all other vices, *Ahankar* has been severely condemned in *Gurmat*, rather it has been considered as worst of all the evils. A person possessed of *Ahankar* cannot think of treading the path of God realisation as this trait of human character has never been liked by the Supreme Being. That it has been criticized in all the religious become clear from the following verse of Gurbani:-

ਹਰ ਜੀਉ ਅਹੰਕਾਰੁ ਨ ਭਾਵਈ ਵੇਦ ਕੂਕਿ ਸੁਣਾਵਹਿ॥

Har jeeo ahankaar na bhaavee ved kook sunaaveh.

The Vedas tell us that God does not like arrogance.

(SGGS, page 1089)

Time and again, it has been reminded in Gurbani that Ahankar must be given up. Says Guru:-

ਮੇਰੇ ਮਨ ਤਜਿ ਨਿੰਦਾ ਹਉਮੈ ਅਹੰਕਾਰ॥

Mere man taj ninda haume ahankaar.

O my mind! Abandon slander, self-conceit and arrogance.

In Gurbani, an equivalent of Ahankar i.e. Haumai has been considered as the worst disease and the main cause for our separation from the Divine. Haumai is suggestive of I, my and mine, which means that a person obsessed with haumai cannot think of anything else except of him or himself. Calling it a Deerag Rog, Gurbani emphasizes that haumai creates a wall between man and the Divine. However, one can get rid of haumai if one remembers God and starts living as per His will. A saintly company/congregation helps us in being closer to God. When Guru Nanak in the very beginning of Japuji Sahib says that the wall of falsehood between man and God can be broken only by obeying the will of the Supreme Power. There are numerous verses suggesting remedies for the eradication of haumai but the panacea remains remembering of God's name. The Guru makes it very clear:-

ਹਉਮੈ ਮਮਤਾ ਮੋਹੁ ਛੁਟਾ ਜਾ ਸੰਗਿ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਸਾਧੇ॥

ਜਨੁ ਕਹੈ ਨਾਨਕ ਮੁਕਤੁ ਹੋਆ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮ ਅਰਾਧੇ॥ ੨॥

Haume mamta moh chhuta ja sang miliaa saadhe.

Jan kahai Nanak mukat hoaa Har Har naam araadhe.

When a person joins the holy company;

Self conceit, ego and worldly love depart.

O Nanak! Deliverance is thus obtained with meditation over the name of the Lord.

(SGGS, page 452)

The boldest act in today's world is to do whatever one says. In other words, there should not be a difference in saying and doing. Majority of the people speak good things, but in practice, they act in a wicked manner. Whenever, our leaders and preachers tell the people to do for the betterment of life, they themselves do not adopt it in their own life. Since a truthful living is an essential requirement for a Sikh, he cannot afford to act contrary to whatever he says. It does not mean that all the Sikhs follow this principle, as preached by our Masters, but in that case, a Sikh saying and doing different things cannot be considered as an adherent of the Sikh ethics.

Thus, in view of the position discussed above, a brave Sikh is that who

devotes his life to *Naam Simran*. He remembers God with every breath. While remembering God, and doing Simran, he learns the art of fighting with the greatest of human foes i.e. *Kaam, Krodh, Lobh, Moh, Ahankar*. When the 10th Guru says in Chaupai that God should help him in killing his enemies, he refers to these enemies. Once, these enemies are overcome, the brave Sikh gets rid of his ego and starts considering all the human beings as his brothers and sisters, the sons and daughters of the same father. His love for mankind makes him serve the humanity in every possible way. His virtues like humanity, truthfulness, fairness and human approach take him closer to the creator.

As there is no difference between his saying and doing, he becomes an embodiment of love and peace. Only a brave Sikh like Bhai Kanaiyya can serve water and apply balm on the wounds of enemy soldiers. History testifies that a brave Sikh remains calm and peaceful even in adversities and possesses the best of patience and highest tolerance. However, he does not tolerate any injustice, tyranny and oppression for himself as well as for others. If others cannot face the ruthless perpetrators, the Sikh comes to his rescue and takes a firm stand against them. Whosoever the authorities may be, the brave Sikh will not hesitate nor be scared of to speak the truth. When all the peaceful methods fail to prevent the cruel despotic administrators from committing the sins against humanity the brave will follow the advice of the Master and unsheathe the sword in defence of self or those who are afflicted being weak and down trodden. Once in the battlefield, the brave Sikh knows that he has to fight till victory or the sacrifice of his life. He fights till the last breath with utmost vigour, strength and sincerity. He never gives in, nor does he compromise with the evil and wicked forces. In Other words, he is the best example of the perfect of human being, who combines Bhakti with Shakti. This type of bravery, boldness and strong determination to do always good for others, fight for the rights of others and sacrifice one's life, and for that matter everything for the righteous cause, is the particular trait of these people. They are really brave indeed.



THE STORY OF THE VALIANT TO CONTINUE

PUNJAB DE JAMMIAN

NU NIT MUHIMA

The above noted well known phrase in Punjabi rightly points out that for the people of Punjab, there is always a warfare. It is a historical truth that all the foreign invaders came to India from North and Punjab was always the first state to face them, whether it was Alexander, Nadirshah, Abdali or Babur. This truth about Punjabis more appropriately applies to the Sikhs who were not only to face the foreign invaders, but also the persecution at the hands of the Mughal rulers, and attacks from within by Marathas and rulers of places surrounding Punjab. Even after independence, the policies of the Governments from time to time had been more or less opposed to the wishes of the Sikhs. In the times of Nehruji, the Sikhs had to suffer the pangs of partition of Punjab mainly because of the decision taken by the politicians of India and Pakistan. Afterwards, when as a matter of policy of Government, different states were constituted on linguistics basis, the Sikhs had again to fight a tough battle for getting a Punjabi speaking state. In a long drawn agitation, launched by the Akaalis, there were peaceful marches, arrests of thousands of workers, and even a *lathicharge* on 12th June, 1961, when a peaceful procession was taken out in Delhi. On this day, a large number of Sikhs were injured. Apart from Master Tara Singh, some other leaders like Sant Fateh Singh, Jeevan Singh Umranangal, Lachhman Singh Gill, Gurcharan Singh Tohra etc also played an active role in this agitation. Sant Fateh Singh even undertook a fast unto death in December, 1960, which went on for 22 days, and came to an end only when Master Tara Singh made an appeal with an assurance that their demand will soon be accepted.

This was followed by talks between the government and the Akaalis, but in vain. Then there was a conference named as Nalva Conference wherein was passed a resolution drawn up by Sirdar Kapoor Singh, formerly an ICS officer, an eminent Sikh Scholar and intellectual. It was resolved as per this resolution, that the Sikhs should move an impartial international tribunal, for justice, and for getting their political demands accepted, they should seek a self-determined political status within the Republic of Union of India. This resolve was considered as anti national and later on when an elaborate resolution was

passed on these lines in 1973, which came to be known as Anandpur Sahib resolution, it was misunderstood by the people leading to a strong bias against the Sikhs. However, considering all the circumstances and mainly the fact that the 1965 Pakistan war was won by India because of the Sikh commanders and soldiers giving a tough fight to the enemy, the government agreed to make a Punjabi speaking state. Although, Sant Fateh Singh being very happy on this development, had made an announcement that a handsome baby was born into his household, the baby born in the shape of a new state was in fact trifurcated with so many rough edges left behind. It was on 1st Nov., 1966 that such a state was created, but even this creation proved highly dissatisfactory as not only the state was trifurcated, but also issues like the allocation of the city of Chandigarh, adjustment of some of the territorial claims and the distribution of river waters remained unresolved and the same are continuing still to rankle in the Punjabi consciousness.

The two prominent Sikh leaders who lost their lives in connection with the lingering issues associated with Punjabi Suba, were S. Darshan Singh Pharuman and Sant Harchand Singh Longowal. S. Pharuman (1885-1969) had participated in the freedom movement and in Gurudwara agitations, and was later on elected as the General Secretary of the SGPC and afterwards a Member of the Rajya Sabha as a nominee of Indian National Congress. In August, 1969, he undertook a fast unto death for getting all the issues including Chandigarh decided in favour of Punjab. He had not liked Sant Fateh Singh's giving up the fast merely on words. He was determined that unless the demands were met, he will not give up his fast. The devout Sikh went on with the fast for 74 days and on 27th October, 1969, he died while on fast giving the supreme sacrifice for this cause. Sant Harchand Singh Longowal was a holy man, who was called upon to lead the agitation against emergency in 1975. He became President of Shiromani Akaali Dal in 1980, which period was that of turmoil and trial for the Sikhs. He was shot dead in an attack by an extremist on 20th August, 1985.

The story of black period of the Sikhs had in fact started with emergency only. When Mrs. Gandhi proclaimed emergency, in 1975, no organised protest was made across the country by any section of community, except for the Sikhs who conducted daily morchas and got themselves arrested in large numbers. As per the report of Amnesty international, 1,40,000 persons were detained without trial during the emergency period out of which, 60,000 were Sikhs. This agitation by the Sikhs represented by Akaalis estranged their relations with the Central Government, and the estrangement became the main cause for all the sufferings and hardships of the Sikhs in the subsequent period.

Whatever may be the political game, played by the leaders including some

Akaalis, the Sikhs in general had again to suffer considerably during the two decades from mid 70s to mid 90s of the last century. Their confrontation with the Sant Nirankaris on April 13th, 1978 at Amritsar was the first major event of this dark period. The authorities knew that the Sant Nirankaris being quite vocal in making unwholesome references to the Sikh Gurus and Sikh scriptures, the Sikhs will not like their holding a special Diwan on the auspicious occasion of Baisakhi, April 13, 1978 at Amritsar, the holy city of Sikhs. However, the Sant Nirankaris got the permission which at one point of time in the course of their Diwan, lead to the confrontation wherein, Sant Nirankaris used firearms leading to the killing of 18 persons including devout Sikhs from the Akhand Kirtani Jatha of late Bhai Randhir Singh of Narangwal, and the Damdami Taksal. There occurred another episode at Kanpur where because of the confrontation between the Sikhs and the Nirankaris, the police had to resort to firing leaving 12 killed and 80 injured. In the meantime, the forces working against the Sikhs started highlighting the Anandpur Sahib resolution of 1973 giving an impression to the people that it was aimed at Sikh's resolution to create a separate country called Khalistan. The thought of Khalistan was not a thought in the minds of the Sikhs, rather, it was created by the politicians who wanted to exploit the situation for their personal benefit. In any case, as rightly put by Professor Darshan Singh Maini, a Sikh scholar & editorial director of Nishan, "It should be obvious to any unprejudiced mind that the idea never became a movement, and that it was meant purely as a political ploy and a pressure tactic to gain political concessions from an obdurate adversary———. It never had a wide, a motive base or a spiritual dimension in the manner of the idea of Pakistan in 1947."

Thus, those who wanted the Sikhs to suffer, took advantage of this false notion and made them the victims of all kinds of atrocities and sufferings for more than 20 years. They were covered by MISA, were implicated in false cases and subjected to humiliations. S. Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, who was merely a religious creature was brought in politics in such a manner that he became a slave of circumstances. Then came the unprecedented event of Blue Star operation, an attack on the Golden Temple and various other Sikh Shrines on June, 05, 1984. The way in which these operations were undertaken, clearly indicates that it was a step borne out of unnecessary anger on the part of the authorities. In the words of S. Sangat Singh, "Army units acted in total anger and unwittingly shot down all suspects rounded from Golden Temple Complex———. The Armed forces killed in cold blood, a large body of peaceful Sikhs in the Golden Temple Complex and outside, during the operations in violation of all norms of national or international laws including the Hague and Geneva conventions." The learned author in his "The Sikhs in History" has, narrated various instances of cruelty and high

handedness as reported by various writers, scholars and journalists namely, S. Khushwant Singh, S/Shri Kuldeep Nayar, Chand Joshi, Tully and Jacob, Inder Malhotra, Tavleen Singh, G.K.C Reddy etc. He has quoted G.K.C Reddy to say “The operation Blue Star will go down in history as one of the biggest massacres of unarmed civilians by the organized military force of a nation.”

The story of tortures and afflictions of the Sikhs did not end here. Their psyche was hurt in such a manner that many of them revolted and had to leave their service. S. Harjinder Singh Khalsa, Charge-de-affairs in Oslo, resigned from Indian Foreign Service. S. Simran Jeet Singh Maan had to leave Indian Police Service and then suffer extreme tortures in the prison. S. Khushwant Singh, the renowned English writer and following him, a number of other Sikhs renounced their Padam Shree honours. S. Amrinder Singh, Congress I, M.P., presently the Chief Minister of Punjab, had resigned from the Parliament and the party at that time. Another Congress I M.P. S. Davinder Singh Garcha also resigned from the Parliament.

The Sikhs were still in a mood of resentment, when Mrs. Gandhi was assassinated on October, 31, 1984 by her security men. What followed Mrs. Gandhi's assassination made 1984 one of the worst years in the Sikh history. The riots that took place at various places, particularly in Delhi, Kanpur and Bokaro caused a heavy toll of Sikhs. The quickness of action and the manner in which the Sikh houses were located and the brutal way in which they were murdered clearly gave an impression that it was a planned thing. The mobs indulging in acts of massacre and looting led by certain identifiable leaders did not spare even the most vulnerable Sikh shrines like Gurudwara Sis Ganj and Gurudwara Rakab Ganj associated with Guru Tegh Bahadur, who had incidentally laid down his life to save Hinduism, and the prominent Sikhs like S. Charanjeet Singh, Congress I M.P from South Delhi, whose soft drinks complex was damaged and even Giani Zail Singh, the President of India, whose car was stoned.

In short, operation Blue Star and then Operation Wood Rose and then the riots, all these events, shattered the Sikhs to such an extent that it took many years for them to come out in their real colours. These events made them a beleaguered community. There was such a setback to their reputation that people started thinking all Sikhs as terrorists. It became very difficult for them to show their excellence in all those fields in which they were considered as unmatched so far. In case of army, their recruitment was reduced considerably. It was so undigestible for them that when the mega event of Asian Games in 1982 took place in Delhi, they were not even provided proper opportunity even to witness the same. Is it not strange that the people forgot their glorious past, their achievements, their contributions and whatever they did for this

country which is their own and with the people of which they had always stood through thick and thin.

The wave of terrorism that followed, instigated by the neighbour enemy country and supported by criminals and detractors of Sikhism put Punjab to such a heavy loss both in human and economic resources that the people of Punjab will not be able to forget the same for years to come. Who was responsible for all this, why it all happened, all these questions need not be dealt here as my subject is not to deal with those who were instrumental, but the bravery and the valour of all those Punjabis, particularly the Sikhs, who had to face the maximum, who passed through these difficult times with all the hope and optimism and confidence in their prayers to the Gurus and the Supreme Being that the bad times will pass off and the period of peace and prosperity will again come to Punjab.

As there are ups and downs in the life of every community or nation, the Sikhs too had their good and bad periods. If they had to fight for their survival in the 1st half of the 18th Century, they became rulers of vast territories in the second half of that very century. If they found their religious condition so miserable, that everybody thought that they will cease to exist within a few years, their efforts towards the end of the 19th century brought them back in their full shape and glory. Similarly, towards the middle of the 90s, of the last century, their position again started improving in various fields and spheres. Those who had left the country in the bad times, and settled in foreign countries, became so prosperous and powerful in their countries of adoption that their worth in all the spheres again came to be recognised. Their number increased in armed forces and services and the persons like Dr. Manmohan Singh and S. Montek Singh Ahluwalia became the leaders of the Indian economy. Before the advent of the new century, the 300th year of the birth of Khalsa, was celebrated in the country at National level as well as in most of the foreign countries where the Sikhs were settled. The processions and congregations in the countries abroad, were so impressive that it looked as a new renaissance of the Panth was to commence in near future. In 2001, the 200th coronation of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was also celebrated, so enthusiastically that it made the people of the world anxious to know more about this great religion.

Considerable literature has since been produced about various aspects of Sikh religion in different languages. New researches in Sikh history and its source material have been made. For example, one Sardar Surinder Singh, has done a considerable numismatic research for the study of Sikh history. In one of the newspapers reports appearing in *Ajit* magazine on 25th April, 2004, he is stated to have discussed a large number of coins with some noted historians,

as to reach his conclusions. His book entitled “Sikh Coinage” in this regard, released recently, may thus prove very useful for future researches.

Thus in the new millennium, at the time of the advent of the 21st Century, Sikhs were more than 22 millions (as per Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1997 the population of the Sikhs was 1 crore 95 lakh as against that of Hindus 79 crore, Muslims 112 crore and Christians 195 crore) constituting the 5th largest religion in the world. Their Mini Parliament, SGPC exerts an unparalleled influence over its people. The Sikh centres of worship are now found in every nook and corner of the world. There are Sikh chairs established in a number of Indian and Foreign Universities.

Although, the present position of the Sikhs appears to be rosy and comfortable, as they are highly prosperous, well settled in high positions, and are recognised for their qualities of head and heart, yet they are at cross roads as their very existence has been threatened again by various factors and forces. The unfortunate incident of attacks on Sikhs following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre on 11th September, 2001, confirmed that the Sikhs abroad had not yet been able to make their identity known and appreciated by the people living in those countries, who were merely mistaking them for Arab terrorists and were provoked by racial hatred. In their country of birth, particularly in their own state of Punjab, also, the younger generation seems to have been ignorant of their rich values and traditions as is evidenced by their becoming apostate in a big number. It is true that the impact of religion is gradually decreasing among all the people of the world and the same is true of the Sikh young ones also. However, the apostasy among the Sikh youth becomes quite visible when they get their hair shaved and do not wear a turban. The requirement of unshorn hair and wearing a turban is not a mere ritual among the Sikhs, but the very basis of their existence and progress on the spiritual path.

The most important reason for increase in apostasy among the Sikhs is the failure on the part of the Sikhs to follow the teachings, the unwritten commands and the code of conduct as given by the masters. When a Gursikh keeps his majestic look with his facial beard and moustaches and head hair covered with crown like turban, and also follows the divine word in his life he leads a perfect blissful life. He knows that the will of God has to be accepted in all circumstances, rather he identifies his own will with the divine will and this union makes him immune from all the problems, worries and tensions. He remains happy and contented and is always grateful to God for whatever he has got. This is the state of equipoise, the ultimate destination of the human soul, which always craves for the union with the divine.

Further, reasons for apostasy may include the lack of proper education among the younger generation regarding Sikh values and traditions and the increasing materialistic approach among the parents, teachers and leaders which makes them negligent of their responsibility in this regard, the western influence and the so called concept of modernisation. There are many hidden and apparent forces which are working against the very idea of distinctive identity and ideology of Sikh religion. These forces include a very large number of Sant Babas who have shown a mushroom growth all over, particularly in Punjab.

The decline in the moral standard, attendance in Gurudwaras and the increase in number of youngsters who have shaved their hair and removed their turbans is a matter of great anxiety for the wise thinkers and the respected elders of this religion. Many of them have become pessimistic and hold a similar view which was once expressed in the British reports and later on towards the end of the 19th century by Hindu scholars and also some Sikhs thinking in those terms. Even a great writer like Khushwant Singh had expressed the view that by the turn of the century, there may not be Sikhs to be seen with beard and moustaches and head hair covered with turbans. However, such a thinking was not based upon correct analysis of the past history. In the 18th century, when there were only a few thousands of Sikhs and the powerful Mughal empire, was determined to exterminate them, they still survived. So, now when they are many more in number and are politically and economically very strong, there is no reason to be pessimistic.

I personally do not subscribe to the view that there is a decline in the number of Sikhs. I also do not agree that the younger generation is going astray and have no interest in religious matters. I personally feel that all those Sikhs who really follow the teachings of their Gurus are still fully conscious of their responsibility towards their children. They still have the desire that the younger generation should follow the path of this religion. There are good parents, good teachers and also a large number of intelligent and learned Sikhs who are making efforts for passing on the Sikh values and traditions to the next generation. There are raagis, writers and scholars who are doing their utmost to carry forward the teachings of Guru Granth Sahib. I am very optimistic in thinking that there is a bright future for this religion. I should not be considered as presumptuous if I say that the whole world will recognise the significance of this great religion in this new century. I think so mainly because the teachings contained in Guru Granth Sahib are so secular that the same can provide the requisite peace of mind to the afflicted world. In the coming times, when there will be more problems for the people, there will be more diseases and sufferings, the people of the world will find solace in the divine words of

the masters. Noble Prize winner, Pearl S. Buck clearly states “I have studied the Scriptures of other great religions but I do not find else where the same power of appeal of the heart and mind as I find in the Guru Granth. It speaks to me of life and death of time and eternity of the temporal human body and its needs of the mystic human soul and its longing to be filled.”

The views expressed by the American Noble Prize winner as given above are supported by many great souls of the world. Macauliffe, Duncan Greeves, Pandit Dandi Sanyasi, Sri Krishna Murthi, Dr. Radha Krishnan and many other great persons have held the view that it is a scripture par excellence. In the words of Swami Tirath, Dandi Sanyasi, “Whatever is available in the Guru’s house, is matchless and nothing is better than that.” That is why, in the “Sacred Writings of the Sikhs” published by UNESCO, Professor Arnold Toynbee, has stated that “Guru Granth is part of mankind’s common spiritual treasure. It is important that it should be brought within the direct reach of as many people as possible.” However, it is unfortunate that despite the views expressed by some of the greatest men of the world, that the people of the world should come under the shelter of Guru Granth Sahib, there are Sikhs who prefer to go to false Sants and Babas who are mere exploiters. It is because of the misguided people and the political patronage of the Sant Deras that controversial Babas like Piara Singh Bhaniara became powerful. It was he and his followers who had burnt the copies of Guru Granth Sahib and shown the real face of these persons, who can be equated with Mahants of the pre SGPC era. There may be Sikhs who are misled by such Babas or leaders of other sects who generally tell their followers that Guru Granth Sahib is merely a holy book like other books or some people even make a remark that it is just like idol worshipping if we worship the holy book. Let it be made clear to such persons having wrong notions that Guru Granth Sahib is not merely a religious book, but a living Guru. The 10th Guru had made the holy book his successor when he departed from the world. He told his disciples not to grieve as even if they would not see him in physical manifestation, he would remain ever present among the Khalsas. “Whenever the Sikhs needed guidance or counsel, they should assemble before the Granth in all sincerity and decide their future line of action in the light of teachings of the Master, as embodied in the Granth. The noble ideas embodied in the Granth would live forever and show people the path to bliss and happiness.”

The above quoted words have been taken from the decision of the Supreme Court of India in the case of SGPC versus Somnath Dass (2000) 4 SCC 146, wherein the apex court stated the legal position holding thereby that Guru Granth Sahib was a juristic person in the legal jurisprudence. While deciding a legal issue, the honourable court made it clear that as no other

religious book was the Guru, Guru Granth Sahib could not be equated with any of other sacred books or with an idol. In their words, “When the tenth Guru declared that after him, the Guru Granth will be the Guru, that does not amount to idolatry. The Granth replaces the Guru henceforward, after the tenth Guru.”

In this year, when the Sikhs are to celebrate the 400th year of the installation of the Holy book in Harimandir Sahib, Amritsar, let them realise the importance of the day and the fact that the real Guru is only the Word Divine as contained in this secular scripture meant for the whole world. We cannot forget the command of Guru Gobind Singh as communicated to us through Panth Prakash by Giani Gian Singh.

*Aag'aa bhaee Akaal kee tabee chalaai Panth
Sabh Sikhan ko hukam hai Guru maaneeo Granth
Guru Granth Jee maaneeo pargat Guraan kee deh
Ja ka hirda sudh hai khoj sabad meh leh.*

As ordained by the Lord Eternal

A new way of life is evolved.

All the Sikhs are asked

To accept the Holy Granth as the Guru

Guru Granth should be accepted as the true Guru.

Those who wish to meet God

Will find him in the true holy Word.

The major problems of the Sikhs in today's world are that they are becoming apostate and going away from Guru Granth Sahib. With a view to solve these problems and certain other issues which have intensified the same, it is essential that the Sikh intelligentsia should meet and identify the issues and resolve them with concrete solutions. If need be, an alternative body to SGPC be formulated for taking firm decisions and enforce remedial actions. They should see to it that a uniform Rehat Maryada be followed in all the Gurudwaras, in and outside the country. They should bring major changes in the educational set up for the Sikhs, so that all the Sikh institutions should ensure imparting of religious education and enforcing of discipline as per the Sikh code of conduct. The teachers/professors should be selected on the basis of merits and their sincerity in adherence to the Sikh tenets. Sikh study circles must be established in all the villages, cities and towns. Where Punjabi is not taught in schools and colleges, arrangements should be made to teach Punjabi to all Sikh children. Free literature in the form of tracts and pamphlets be distributed through Gurudwaras, schools and colleges. The Sikh owners of hotels should make arrangements for making such literature available free of cost. In addition to Kirtan darbars, & Katha programs, there should be

seminars, declamation contests and cultural programs for the propagation of religion. The apex body should remain in contact with T.V. channels and production units of films and serials to ensure that the Sikhs are not shown in bad taste. It should be emphasised that their salient traits like valour, patience, sweet tongue, helping attitude and good behaviour should be highlighted. Those who want to make films and serials on Sikh history and culture should be guided and encouraged.

There are many persons who are interested to make good films on Sikhs, but they feel discouraged when there are unnecessary queries and restrictions put by our uneducated leadership. S. Kuljit Singh Malhotra had recently made a good movie entitled as “Khalsa Mero Roop Hai Khas’. It is the first movie which has touched the subject of shaving of hair by a Sikh boy, and guides as how to deal with such a problem. However, S. Malhotra did not get any help from any organisation, nor any major appreciation for doing this wonderful job. In fact, such like *pracharaks* (preachers) are the need of the day. They should be encouraged. Media, both printing and electronic, can play a vital role in the propagation of any religious ideology. Although, there are some good Punjabi newspapers in India, as well as abroad, there is still no such paper which can be read by the people all over the world. Daily Ajit in Punjabi published from Jalandhar under the editorship of S. Barjinder Singh Hamdard is no doubt doing a very good job with its weekly supplements and special numbers on Sikh religion, but the readership of Punjabi being small, its approach to the people living in other parts of the country and abroad is limited. Similar is the position of Punjabi Tribune. In respect of electronic media also, some Punjabi T.V. channels or a few programs on radio cannot do justice in making *prachar*. ETC channel, Punjabi has again done an excellent job by telecasting direct programs from Harimandir Sahib Amritsar and from other religious places on special days as from Anandpur Sahib on Baisakhi and from Khadur Sahib, on Guru Angad’s 500th Birthday, (S. Jagjit Singh Kohli, Director & S.P.S. Sahni deserve to be appreciated for the same), but the sense of exclusiveness for the propagation of Sikh religion is again missing. For that purpose, such a channel is required on which not only kirtan and katha programs are given, but there are other such programs for the propagation of Sikh religion also, such as serials, films, news regarding various programs and coverage thereof, contests and competitions. These programs may be made available to all the people of the world by giving English titles or some of the programs even in English. Such programs will be able to enlighten the world of Sikh principles, history and philosophy. Various organisations and individual *pracharaks* must reach all, in cities, towns and villages, and in every nook and corner, where the people need to be apprised of our rich heritage. Thus, a strong printing and electronic media is a must.

The propagation of Sikh religion is not the work of SGPC or Delhi Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee or a few leaders alone. It is, the duty of every Sikh to perform his role for its promotion. Howsoever small in status a Sikh may be, or whatever may be his occupation, the work of propagating religion can be performed by him every time simultaneously with his work. For example, a truck owner or a driver, who takes his truck to different parts of the country should project himself as a gentle person with a decent behaviour as the first step to let the people know about the Sikhs. He can impress the people with his hard work, good behaviour, honesty and service to the people. Whenever he gets an opportunity to interact, he should tell them about his religion, the scriptures and glorious Sikh history and heritage. The teachings of the masters based upon oneness of God and universal brotherhood can be spread. It can be done by writing in different languages such verses on their vehicles so that when people read them, they should express their desire to know its meaning. The propagation can also be done by playing the cassettes of Gurbani on their vehicles and when the people will hear the sweet melodious verses, the same may touch the very core of their heart. Their melody and music will compel to listen and appreciate the contents also. Thus in short, the Sikh drivers who adopt a living according to gurbani can leave a lasting impression on the minds of a large number of people with whom they meet in the course of their tours to far off places.

Similarly, all others can adopt one or the other method for propagating the religion. It was noticed by me that in some hospitals, run by the Sikhs, Gurbani cassettes were always played at a low tone, particularly, at those places where the patients were not disturbed by that. S. Shamsheer Singh, the Secretary of Chief Khalsa Diwan, was using this method in Guru Nanak Hospital being run by him on behalf of Diwan in Nehru Nagar in Delhi. S. Dhanraj Singh a prominent businessman of Amritsar, (cloth merchant), also used the Gurbani cassettes for Baba Deep Singh Charitable hospital being run by a Trust under his stewardship at Amritsar. He has also used certain banners in the outer compound of the hospital as well as on other conspicuous places, wherein, those verses of Gurbani are mentioned which speak of the grace of God in curing the patients. The spirit of 'Mera Vaid Guru Gobind' (my physician is Guru Gobind) emanates from the environment in that hospital.

Opening of training centres for preparing qualified *pracharaks*, who may be singers of hymns or those who can give discourses, is also an important step which need to be taken by concerned organisations and individuals. More and more trained persons for *prachar* will be able to deliver the requisite results. It has already been mentioned that Sikhs Student Federation used to organise camps, which proved very useful. In the recent past also, some organisations

have organised useful camps for Sikh students. The continuity of holding of such camps will definitely pay in the long run. I am reminded of S. Sukhdev Singh Sandhwalia, who, as an individual also, has organised several camps in the village Mallunagal, where he is teaching in a school. In the summer camps organised by him, he trains the students in Sikh way of living by organising lectures and other programmes of interest for them. More and more people should come forward with such types of programs and camps so that the young children at a tender age are trained in such a way that they do not go astray when they grow up.

Whatever, may be the method of propagating the religion, the Sikh who does it, must bear in mind that his reputation should correspond to his actions and sayings. In other words, there should not be any difference between his saying and doing. Gurbani makes it clear that whatever one preaches, one should himself adopt in his own life. For example, if a person tells that as per Sikh religion, one has to live a truthful living, he should himself act truthfully and not as a liar. The preacher has to show his life as an example for the living of a good Sikh to others. He should not behave like those leaders who moralise others in their lectures, but in their own life, they lack moral values and standards as are expected from them. Guru Arjun Dev makes it clear when he says :

ਆਵਰ ਉਪਦੇਸੈ ਆਪਿ ਨ ਕਰੈ॥ ਆਵਤ ਜਾਵਤ ਜਨਮੈ ਮਰੈ॥

Awar updesai Aap na karai. Aawat jaawat janmai marai.

He who does not practice, what he preaches, Remains in the circle of births and death. (SGGS, page 269)

Thus, a Sikh has to be truthful in living, hardworking in earning and uniform in doing and saying. His education makes him a benefactor as the Guru says

ਵਿਦਿਆ ਵੀਚਾਰੀ ਤਾ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰੀ॥

Vidiaa veechaari ta parupkaari.

That who ponders upon his education turns a benefactor.

(SGGS, page 356)

His life is like a lotus flower, which, although remains in mud and water, always keeps itself high to avoid any dirt and pollution. Similarly, a Sikh does everything with his hand and feet and shoulders all responsibilities of his family members and towards society and the nation, but whatever he does, his mind is always riveted upon God. He does not forget the Almighty, who has blessed him with everything. All these qualities of a good Sikh (as have been elaborately discussed in various chapters), have been summed up by the 10th Guru, when he describes a truly brave Sikh in the following words :

Blessed is he in this world
 Who has God's name on lips, and is ever ready to fight
 Who knows that Body'll perish, and thus earn such name
 And fame as'll enable him cross the ocean (of the world)
 Body should be made a seat of contentment
 And mind, a lamp, to show the way
 With broom of divine knowledge
 Let the filth of cowardice be swept away.

When we analyse the present situation, it seems that the number of such brave Sikhs is dwindling. Various persons give various reasons which, according to them are weakening the position of the brave Sikhs and making them go astray from the path shown by the Gurus. They consider selfish leaders, materialistic parents, the careless teachers, the uneducated preachers or such forces as the increasing modernism, the false Sant Babas or RSS or even Rashtriya Sikh Sangat as the main reasons and forces affecting our religion. In fact, there is one very significant factor which is above all and that is the lack of cooperation and understanding among the Sikhs. They fail to understand that the Gurus wanted us to remain united and uniform for our religious cause. Even if there is difference of opinion, the same should be sorted out by peaceful discussion and not by unnecessary arguments. Bhagat Namdev has warned us in Gurbani that we should avoid such arguments and use our tongue only for drinking the God's elixir (page 1164). Gurbani also teaches us as that there is no person our enemy, or our adversary, then how can we have differences with our co-religionists. For the sake of unity, we have to avoid groupism. The group of all Sikhs is that of those who always remember God. However, there have to be some persons who are to lead, but for selecting such leaders also, we should devise such methods that there is unanimity in selecting them and then they must be followed by all without further divisions among the Sikhs. Bhai Gurdas in one of his Kabits gives an example of ants and birds who always follow their leader and express their unity.

ਜੈਸੇ ਏਕ ਚੀਟੀ ਪਾਛੈ ਕੋਟਿ ਚੀਟੀ ਚਲੀ ਜਾਤਿ,
 ਇਕ ਟਕ ਪਗ ਡਗਿਮਗਿ ਸਾਵਧਾਨ ਹੈ॥
 ਜੈਸੇ ਕੂੰਜ ਪਾਂਤਿ ਭਲੀ ਭਾਂਤਿ ਸਾਂਤਿ ਸਹਜ ਮੈ,
 ਉਡਤ ਅਕਾਸ਼ ਚਾਰੀ ਆਗੈ ਅਗਵਾਨ ਹੈ॥
 ਜੈਸੇ ਮ੍ਰਿਗ ਮਾਲ ਚਾਲ ਚਲਤ ਟਲਤ ਨਾਹਿ,
 ਜਤ੍ ਤਤ੍ ਅਗ੍ਭਾਰੀ ਰਮਤ ਤਤ ਧਿਆਨ ਹੈ॥
 ਚੀਟੀ ਖਰਾ ਮ੍ਰਿਗ ਸਨਮੁਖ ਪਾਛੈ ਲਾਗੈ ਜਾਹਿ,
 ਪ੍ਰਾਨੀ ਗੁਰ ਪੰਥ ਛਾਡਿ ਚਲਿਤ ਅਗਿ ਆਨ ਹੈ॥ ੪੧੩॥

Jaise ek cheetee paachhai kot cheetee chalee jaat,

Ek tak pag dagmag saawdhaan hai.

Jaise koonj paant bhalee bhaant shaant sehaj me,

*Udat aakash chaaree aagai agwaan hai.
Jaise mrig maal chaal chalat talat naahe,
Jatar tatar agarbhaagee ramat tat dhayaan hai.
Cheetee khara mrig sanmukh paachhai laagai jaah,
Praanee Gur panth chhaad chalat agiaan hai.*

The millions of ants follow one leader ant,
And move very cautiously without fluctuation,
The curlews fly in the sky in a row very peacefully,
And go forward and forward following their guide.
The flock of deer runs leaping and jumping without stop,
And following their leader keep their mind on him everywhere.
As the ants (insects) curlews (birds) deer (animals) follow their leader,
So the Sikhs should follow their Guru.
Who do not follow him, are ignorant and fools.

In case, the Sikhs forget their differences, develop love and affection for their fellow brothers and maintain uniformity in all religious practices, they can face any organisation or the front, and nobody can harm them. If RSS or the Rashtriya Sikh Sangat or anybody else glorifies the Gurus, there is no harm. Further, if anyone wants to go through the scriptures, or quote therefrom, or interprets the same, he is free to do so as Guru Granth Sahib is not meant only for Sikhs, but all the people of the world. However, if there is any misinterpretation, or misrepresentation, or any sacrilegious act on their part, the Sikhs must point out and get the wrong corrected. For example, the very name, Rashtriya Sikh Sangat appears to be a misnomer as Sikhs all over the world are one community having faith in Guru Granth Sahib, and there are no differences among them on the ground that they are living in a particular country or have their loyalty to a particular country. Their religion is of universal appeal and it does not offend anyone in any manner. Thus, in case the Sikhs are to have some organisation, it should be on international basis leading to a well knit fraternity.

It may be added here that the Sikhs should not themselves do such things which may make them a subject of mockery or criticism by others. For example, if different Gurudwaras are made on caste basis, it is contrary to the Sikh concept of equality. If the same are made merely because some people are interested in getting posts and positions, it again violates the principle of humility. It has also been noticed that under the influence and false notion of modernism, some Sikhs, though they are in the Sikh form and maintain their identity, have dropped the words "Singh and Kaur" as a part of their names. This is again ridiculous as many other people in various parts of the country have started using the suffix of Singh with their names to make it sound forceful and vigorous, such Sikhs have stopped using such a suffix and belittled

the force and the beauty of their names. In the words of S. Patwant Singh, it is regrettable that “there is an increasing inclination of some persons to stop using Singh after their names and to use a capital S instead, followed by the family name. Are we self-conscious about using Singh just as we are of keeping our hair unshorn ? It would not be out of place to mention here that Guru Gobind Singh gave each Sikh the surname Singh, or Lion, as a final stamp of distinction and dedication- a fitting tribute to a people who had been fighting for their identity for almost 230 years.”

A United community can always see through the dirty tricks or bad intentions of any one, but if there are people like Lal Singh and Tej Singh, who are in the habit of betraying and joining the opponents, such black fish should always be identified and appropriate action be taken against them. The Sikhs should also make efforts to bring those people nearer to Sikh religion who have been associated with it in one or the other way. Who does not know that Guru Nanak had tremendous influence in Sind and most of the Sindhis have always been inclined to follow the teachings of the Gurus as contained in Guru Granth Sahib. Sadhu T.L. Vaswani, had so much reverence for the Gurus that he is often quoted in Sikh literature. Bhai Chailaram, a renowned singer of Gurbani was no less than a devout Sikh. His family members and many other Sindhis are still devoted singers of Gurbani. They have also got Guru Granth Sahib translated into Sindhi and recite Gurbani everyday in their various centres like the one in Delhi, Solan and Mumbai.

Apart from Sindhis, there are many other people of lower castes in various parts of the country who have a faith in Sikhism, and if adequate attention is given to them, they can be brought within the Sikh fold. These people include, Bihari Sikhs, (a number of biharis in Patna and Sehsaram districts can be seen), Assami Sikhs (they are living there since the times of the 9th Guru), Vanjaras and Sikligars, who are mainly centered in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, U.P. and Rajasthan. It was a Vanjara Sikh, Makkhan Shah from Kashmir, who had identified Guru Tegh Bahadur when he visited Baba Bakala. The term Vanjara is referred to even in Gurbani, written by the earlier Gurus which meant a trader or a merchant. As the Vanjara Sikhs in those days were doing some kind of trade, they came closer to the Gurus and became Vanjara Mitra. Now they are people of smaller castes living mainly in South. Although, they do not adopt the Sikhi form, they have faith in Sikh tenets. Sikligars have always been the makers of such articles like knives, sickles, locks etc. They had come into contact with the Guru's house during the period of Guru Hargobind, when they were given the task of making swords and other traditional weapons. Presently known as Lohars, they still have great faith in Sikh religion. The very fact that some of them were even killed during the riots in Delhi, proves their

affinity. Those Sikhligar Sikhs living in Central and South India, generally visit Takhat Sachkhand, Sri Hazur Sahib at Nanded. They are given a privilege to clean and oil the old weapons, lying there as sacred relics on specified days. Such types of people deserve attention and protection as to prevent their going away from this universal faith. Efforts should be made to educate them and help them in Economic advancement to bring them closer to Sikhs.

It is unfortunate that instead of uniting people with us, we are estranging them. There has been a strongly disputed point of discussion in the recent past, whereby, one group of Sikhs supported the Sehajdharis for voting rights in the SGPC elections. The other group has been arguing that they should not have any such right as it may enable them to enter the mini parliament of Sikhs or to send their such representatives who may not support the Guru given Sikh identity and the code of conduct relating to five Kakkars. Although, this argument is not without force, but at the same time, Sehajdharis being an integral part of Sikh religion, it will be appropriate to distinguish between a Patit and a Sehajdhari. A Sehajdhari is one, who gradually follows the path of adoption of Sikh religion, and as such, he may not be observing five kakkars, but he has full faith in the Gurus and their teachings, and he does not follow any other religion or creed. A patit is that who is already a Sikh with unshorn hair, beard and moustaches and a turban on his head, but he takes a retrograde step by getting his hair shaved off and moustaches and beard trimmed. A patit should, therefore, not have any right of voting or fighting for election for the SGPC or any similar Sikh religious body or organisation. So far Sehajdharis are concerned, they may not be given the right to vote till they become Sikhs, so that there should be no confusion regarding them. However, there are sehajdharis who are scholars or who have rendered a useful service for this religion. Such persons be nominated in all such bodies including SGPC so that, the benefit of their services is availed off by the community. This should never be forgotten that the fundamental principle of Sikh religion is not to discriminate between man and man on the basis of caste, creed or sex. The principle of equality is in the secular spirit, which is the very basis of Indian Constitution. It is the secular spirit of our holy Guru that has influenced most of the people. In the words of W. Owen Cole "Sikhism is the only religion which welcomes each and everyone to its 'Langar' (free community kitchen) without any discrimination of caste, creed, colour or sex. Remember the tenets of Guru Nanak, his concepts of oneness of God and Universal Brotherhood of man. If any community holds the key to national integration of India, it is the Sikhs all the way."

That the Sikh splendour and the story of their bravery, is continuing is evidenced by some of the incidents in the recent past which again have

attracted the word attention. For example, the Kaar Sewa undertaken by the Sikhs for removing the mud and silt from the tank at the Golden Temple, Amritsar in the last week of March, 2004 shows their enthusiasm and religious fervour. Lakhs of people were there to do this service. The Sikhs had come not only from various parts of the country, but also, from foreign countries for participating in the said Kaar Sewa. Although the leaders were also vying with each other for showing their interest in the noble cause, but it was the general public, whose love and reverence for the shrine was exuberant for which there are no words to express. The task, which was to be completed in some days was over in hours only. The desire of the people to take some part of mud and silt to their houses presented such a scene of devotion, which was difficult to imagine. They were smeared in sludge and mud and were raising slogans of 'Sat Sri Akaal'. They held the view that the silt of Darbar Sahib had the essence of years of devotional singing, and as such, nothing could be more pious than that. The Kaar Sewa this time was historic as it was for the first time, that the entire cleaning and desilting had been done with hands. After the first 'Tuk' by a gold spade, no spade was used. Instead, bowls, metal vessels and buckets were used to lift the silt. Following this, the infrastructure of the filtration plant and other subsidiary and ancillary fittings were made.

Another scene of the religious fervour of the Sikhs was noticed when 150 copies (Birs) of Guru Granth Sahib were flown from Amritsar to Canada in a unique manner. The Birs were taken by the people in a procession from Gurudwara Ramsar Sahib to Raja Sansi Airport. There were more than 200 gates on the way which were erected and decorated in honour of the procession. There was an aerial shower of rose petals on the procession during the entire journey. Thousand of devotees lined on the way to greet the procession. When the procession reached the airport, it was among slogans of Sat Sri Akaal that the Birs were placed in the specially chartered plane in which, the seats on which the Birs were to be placed were covered by canopies. Although there were certain organisations like Sacha Sauda Prachar Committee and Akaal Purkh ki Fauj, which were instrumental in arranging such a despatch, it was the entire community which showed its interest in the whole project, which aimed at sending the Birs to Canada, where there is a big demand for the same by the Sikh families. This demand has increased in view of the forthcoming 400th anniversary of the installation of the Guru Granth Sahib. A large number of Birs are likely to be sent to Canada and other countries in the coming months.

This year, being of special importance for the Sikhs, as a number of centuries are to be observed to mark occasions of great religious importance, there is considerable enthusiasm among the Sikhs to celebrate all the occasions

in a befitting manner. At the time of closing of this book, the 500th Birth Anniversary of Guru Angad Dev Ji is being celebrated all over the world, the main celebrations being at Khadur Sahib. Whatever may be the attitude or intentions of our leaders, it cannot be denied that the Sikh public in general is fully prepared to show to the world their unity, their sense of reverence for their Gurus and their enterprising spirit and boldness to make their celebrations unique and remarkable. It is, therefore, high time for our leaders to rise to the occasion and come up to their expectations. An ordinary Sikh like me feels hurt, when he sees that separate world Punjabi Conferences are held by forming different groups or separate groups of Sikhs are constituted to criticise and condemn others. Recently, when S. Gurcharan Singh Tohra, the well known Akaali Dal Leader died, one section of religious people decided to honour him as Panth Ratan, whereas another group held a separate meeting to criticise such an action. Similarly, one group mainly led by Jathedar Akaal Takhat Sahib blacklists certain Sikhs, whereas those Sikhs and their companions consider it as an attack on their right to express their views through their writings, and conduct researches on different issues. I fail to understand as what is the need of titles and honours which are not recognised by the entire community. Why can't we appreciate other Sikhs and share our happiness with them? Why can't we allow the genuine research and expression of views and why can't those who are considered as researchers and scholars perform their duty in the right earnest with a view to glorify their religion, explain and bring it to the notice of the world and propagate the tenets of the master in the right spirit? Let the Sikh intelligensia identify our problems or disputed issues or existing differences of opinion and sort out all such matters unitedly as our ancestors were doing in the 18th century. The Fifth Master had also expressed his desire in the similar vein, when he said:

ਹੋਇ ਇਕਤ੍ਰ ਮਿਲਹੋ ਮੇਰੇ ਭਾਈ ਦੁਬਿਧਾ ਦੂਰ ਕਰਹੁ ਲਿਵ ਲਾਇ॥

Hoe ikatar milho mere bhaaee dubdha door karho liv laae.

My Brethren ! Join and meet together,

Dispel duality and imbibe love for your God.

(SGGS, page 1185)

So let us remember that we are not Ramgarhias, Radha Soamis, Namdharis or Khatri/Aroras, we are only Sikhs of the same Guru. We should all feel proud of achievements of our brothers/sisters anywhere in the world and have full faith in God. Lo, see the glory of God, at the time of closing this book, after the Parliamentary elections of 2004, a prominent communist Sikh S. Harkishan Singh Surjeet assumes the role of a Pitamah in the formation of the new Government and it is wonderful to see that a Sikh has become the Prime Minister of India. I am fully aware of the fact that his appointment to hold this prestigious office is not due to his belonging to a minority or for any other consideration, but, because of his extra ordinary qualities of head and

heart.

Dr. Manmohan Singh, who was born in Gah, South West of Rawalpindi (now in Pakistan) on 26th Septmeber, 1932 is one of the greatest economists of the world. He is a man of impeccable integrity with an excellent administrative career, wherein he has held such high positions as Chief Economic Adviser, Finance Secretary, Governor of Reserve Bank of India, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission and the Peerless Finance Minister of the country in the early 90s of the last century. Apart from his high qualifications, and assignments abroad, it was he who had given a new policy for restructuring India's ailing economy. The process of liberlisation as started by him was followed and continued even by the previous government. As a person, the Prime Minister, like a true Sikh, is humble, soft spoken, and a sensitive human being. He is known for being low profile, which, as per Gurmat means free from ego. With his appointment, the country can look forward to strong and prosperous India.

The decision to appoint him to hold the esteemed office was taken by Mrs Sonia Gandhi, who had every right and all support for herself for becoming the Prime Minister of the country. However, she took a historic decision, which not only shows her attitude and strong will power to make a great sacrifice as it was, but also her wisdom, far sightedness and deep rooted concern for the welfare of this country. She has, indeed acted great in showing this sense of renunciation. Whether it was a decision taken after hearing the voice of her conscience or because of some other reasons, she definitely made the right choice of a person to lead the country. She knew that if there was a person, who was non-controversial and competant, whom nobody could question or raise finger against him, it was Dr. Manmohan Singh. She not only made Dr. Singh the Prime Minister of the country but also agreed with him for including in his team, another notable Sikh economist, Dr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia as the Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission. Dr. Ahluwalia has also a rich administrative experience both in the country and abroad. The Sikhs will also feel happy on the appointment of S. Charanjeet Singh Atwal as the Deputy Speaker of Lok Sabha. With all these positions, and also the induction of certain Sikhs like S. M.S. Gill, and S. Tarlochan Singh (From Haryana) into the Rajya Sabha, the dignity and the patriotic spirit of the Sikh community will stand confirmed. It will also make their distinct identity better known all over the world. It will also definitely reduce the anguished feelings of Sikhs against Congress Party, which fact may have a bearing on future events.

Thus, in conclusion, I would like to state an optimistic note that, in case the Sikhs continue to follow the teachings of the Masters, serve the humanity in the Gurumat spirit treating everyone as a child of one God and maintain their

identity as per the code given by the 10th Guru, they will feel like me what the Guru said, and is enshrined on page 618 of Guru Granth Sahib in the following verses.

ਮੇਰੇ ਗੁਰੁ ਰਖਵਾਰੋ ਮੀਤ ॥

ਦੂਣ ਚੜ੍ਹਣੀ ਦੇ ਵਡਿਆਈ ਸੋਭਾ ਨੀਤਾ ਨੀਤ ॥

Mero Gur rakhvaro meet.

Doon cha-oonee de vadiaaee sobha neeta neet.

My Guru, being my protector friend

Our honour and glory is multiplied every day.

The story of the valour of Sikhs will continue to inspire the people of the world for all times to come and then nobody will doubt that as whether their identity and existence will be there in future or not. The whole mankind will start believing what Arnold Toyanbee, one of the greatest historians of the world has said, "The Sikhs are burliest men on the face of planet, tough and capable and slightly grim. If human life survives the present chapter of man's history, the Sikhs for sure will still be on the map."

✽

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