

Guru Nanak's Travels

Sir, - Dr. Kirpal Singh in his book *Janam Sakhi Parampara* (Punjab University) has written that Guru Nanak Devji went to Kailash and Mansarovar, via Chander Kala Pass, which is near Rohtang. On the other hand, Col. Dr. D.S. Grewal in his book, "*Guru Nanak's Travel to Himalaya and East Asian Region - A New Light*" has written that he went through Mansa Pass (page 44) and reached Kailash region, where he had philosophical discourses with the Siddhas. On return he travelled along Kali Nadi and entered wester border of Nepal (page 61). He visited various places in Nepal. From Nepal, he proceeded to Tibet through Nanal La Pass and reached Sikkim through this route. We are aware of the Gurdwara in North Sikkim located at Guru Dongmar which he has visited. As per Col. Grewal, from Sikkim he entered Bhutan at Haa and later visited Thimpu, capital of Bhutan (at present).

However, during my recent visit to Bhutan, I tried to investigate any clues about Guru Nanak's visit to Bhutan. I asked many people, but nobody was aware of it - in fact nobody had heard of the great Guru. Then, I met director of National Library and had long discussion with him. According to him, the archive records mentioned only three Portuguese visiting Bhutan in 1628. There is no record about Guru Nanak, unless he was called by some other name. Normally when any religious head visits Tibet, a Tibetan name is given to him and that is recorded in the book. I am not aware of Guru Nanak's name as recorded in Tibetan.

Can any historian, or learned scholar, throw more light on this subject, so that I can continue with further investigation in Bhutan?

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God and Karma

Sir, Thank you for publishing my essay "God and Karma" in the April issue of *The Sikh Review*.

Let me point out an omission as I could not let it pass, considering the fact that misquoting or misinterpretation are deadly sins in Sikhism, and Baba Ram Rai was severely reprimanded and banished by his Guru-Father for such a folly.

On page 13, my reference to "*Hindu Moole Bhule*" has been translated to read "Common Hindus", which is gross violation of *Gurbani*. Guru Nanak did not tone down to "common" or "few" among Hindus. He found Hindu ritualistic perception, as such, at fault. We need not placate the ruling class in the sycophancy mode of Baba Ram Rai!

On page 12 there is a printing error where after "in exchange of alms, *mantra* recitation," *Havan* has been rendered as "heavens."

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Maharaja Ranjit Singh & the Present Day Sikhs

Sir, - My letter in *The Sikh Review* (May 2002) has evoked considerable interest among the Sikh intellectuals. Add the fine contents of the editorial of *Nishan* (II/2002) on Establishment, with "double think & doubletalk", by Prof. Darshan Singh Maini, and a beautiful expose on conversion from Hinduism to Islam in the early history of Jammu & Kashmir, leading onto Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the British rule in India by Dr. Kuldip Singh from Chandigarh. I am attempting here to link up, the various stages in the history of Sikhism in particular, and of India, in general. The development of Sikh thought and its interaction with the social & political background of J.K. region, makes fascinating reading.

In so far as Dr. Kuldip Singh has enriched my knowledge of Jammu & Kashmir, I quickly sum up his findings and those known to me.

Hinduism had prevailed in J & K, till Raja Jaipal was defeated by Mahmud of Ghazni in a major battle on 28th November, 1001, with repeated assaults on that part of India, and other areas of north India, by Mahmud of Ghazni, apart from plunder and slavery from India, he had forcibly converted Hindus to Islam. This process had continued through various centuries, with Muslim population on the steep rise and Hindus down the hill. The converts had become staunch followers of their new religion, either by force or by reason and state patronage. These converts had become fanatical.

Then, we move on to the nineteenth century, to notice the annexation of J & K kingdom by General Hari Singh Nalwa under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, from Lahore. It was 6th May, 1834. That annexation by Ranjit Singh was hailed by the local population, as registered by Captain Wade, the British political agent at Ludhiana: "In the evening, there are illuminations in the city, hailed both by Hindus and Mohammadans of the country, as harbinger of their deliverance from the tyrants."

The above makes sense, as the tyrants were not Hindustanis, but Afghanis and Mongolians. Though they too were Muslims, but nothing else was in common with the local people. Citing from Dr. Kuldip Singh's repository, I quote W.R. Lawrence of Cambridge University, "the Pathans proved to be the cruelest masters, the valley (J & K) had ever seen." The period of 1753-1819, with passing from the Mughal period to the Afghan, was a time of brutal tyranny.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh's reign had brought peace and stability in J & K, with women safe, and not picked up at will by the Afghani and the Land Tax was considerably reduced. It had still fetched seventy lacs of rupees annually to Ranjit Singh's treasury. Hindus and Muslims felt safe. As reported earlier, Ranjit Singh had exhibited religious tolerance, throughout his reign.

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Hard Times for Sikhs

Thanks for *The Sikh Review*'s MARTYRDOM SPECIAL - June 2002.

It appears that after eighteen years of the 1984 assault on Amritsar, Sikh Leaders, Jathedaars and SGPC have learnt nothing. Despite the killings in 1978 and from 1982 to 1999 - including massacre in Kashmir during 2000-02, the Badal Dal and his cohorts continue to hobnob with the Brahminical BJP. Most Newspapers, Film Makers, TV/Radio broadcasters, RSS/VHP/Shiv Sena/Bajrang Dal are hostile to Sikhs, Muslims, Dalits and Christians, but they won't unite!

In regard to "B for Bin Laden and B for Bhindranwale" (vide p. 52) Dr. Kharak Singh could have added: "B for Bal Thakrey -Bajrang Dal - Brahmin"

Still nothing is lost. Let the Sikhs disassociate from BJP-Congress-Communists, and let Barnala, Dhindsa/others resign from the posts and serve the Akal Takht Sahib and SGPC and also say BYE BYE to Badal-Tohra and other tarnished leaders as well as Jathedars. Then only Sikhs will get justice and regain glory.

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Australia

Wanted: A Gurdwara in Austin, Texas (USA)

Sir, - My wife and I spent sometime last year in Austin, Texas, where our son, Dr Inderjit Singh Dhillon teaches at the University of Texas. Though the state capital, Austin has no Gurdwara for Sikh worship. The nearest Gurdwaras are in Dallas and Houston, over 3 hours' drive from there.

As you know the state is the largest in USA and the home of the President George Bush. In many ways, Punjabis and Texans have common attributes, especially their earthiness, hospitality and

valour. In my view Austin qualifies for the establishment of a Gurdwara not only because there are some 25 families, but also because the *sangat* meets regularly at a church building.

Indeed we attended a congregation for reciting *Sukhmani Sahib* and a discourse in English on *Japuji Sahib*. For obvious reasons the *prakash* of Sri Guru Granth Sahib could not be arranged.

After 9/11, time is ripe for disseminating Sikhism and facilitating interfaith understanding.

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From Canada with Love

Sir, - Please allow me to thank you for the continuing issues of the venerable *The Sikh Review*, which I appreciate each month. In recent years, if I am not mistaken, the tone of the magazine has taken on a wise mixture of laudation for the laudable and criticism of that which fails to serve the larger common good, *Sarbat da Bhalla*, for which I must commend you for.

As I have advised you, I am engaged in a larger project which, I hope, will enhance our situation as apostles of Guru Nanak. I do hope that it does not so much swerve from the given path in some novel direction, as render a wider, scientific and global approach to what we so love. By Guru's grace, this project seems now to be nearing completion, with the necessary search for a publisher. I will be certain to keep you informed and send you a copy for your considered evaluation.

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No Proxy Prayer!

Sir, - The Sikh *Sangat* and leaders are fully aware of the circumstances under which Sikhs are living in Punjab, India, and the rest of the world. Every Sikh to bear the brunt of being a Guru-ka-Sikh courageously, with faith in God and pride in our heritage. God gives punishment for

transgression. We are to continue to work hard, be truthful in action, and be regular in our *Nitname* and read Guru Granth Sahib ourselves, for which we must spare time daily and regularly. Reading of SGGS by Granthis, *Pathees*, or any one hired for the purpose, is not enough - read *Gurbani* and find a gems of thought yourself.

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