

SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB: Konni Aani Mutyaalu (Telugu)

By Nanak Singh Nishter

Reviewed by Potturi Venkateswara Rao

Abundant literature in Telugu has been available on Vedic, Biblical and Islamic teachings almost from the beginning of the twentieth century. In recent years a few books have been published on Buddhism and, to a smaller extent, on Jainism too. However literature on Sikhism and Bahaism is scant, if not nil, though the Telugu people have some knowledge about the existence and spread of these religions in the latter half of the last millennium. Particularly, they have great respect for Sikhism, as educated sections know about the historic role it played in synthesizing religious beliefs and theories with a view to achieve a harmonious blend of spiritual truths and build communal harmony. Mr. Nanak Singh Nishter, a devout Sikh has done a great service to fill the gap, so far as Sikhism is concerned, by getting published a translation of his own English work "Selections from Guru Granth Sahib" in Telugu.

The book, titled "*Sri Guru Granth Sahib- Konni Aani Mutyaalu*", meets a long felt need for an informative but concise work in Telugu on Sikhism.

The translation is by Mr. Akunuru Gopala Kishen Rao, a competent and reputed literary personality, being himself an author of several Telugu books in different genres. The book gives an idea of how Sikhism was born, the then political and social conditions, a brief introduction on each of the ten Gurus, their essential teachings, their sacrifices and emergence and evolution of Sri Guru Granth Sahib as the 11th and eternal Guru of the community. It also briefly introduces the great bhagats or disciples whose verses find place in the Holy book.

During the British rule, and for some time after, the country became independent, textbooks at the school level used to contain lessons on saints and religious men like Guru Nanak and Kabir. But slowly, thanks to secularism as understood and practiced by our rulers and policy makers, they were being removed or reduced to the minimum. We now rarely find biographic sketches of Guru Govind Singh, Guru Tegh Bahadur and spiritual guides like Nam Dev and Kabir in the textbooks. We find reference to them only in the history books, as it is inevitable.

That being the situation today, Mr. Nanak Nishter's book in Telugu is a boon to all those who can read only Telugu but love to know about Sikhism. The language in the book is chaste and free from difficult words or hackneyed expressions. Most Hindus will be surprised, when they learn from this book the fact that the writings of Kabir and Jayadeva find place in the Granth Sahib. The songs from Gita Govinda by Jayadeva are popular among the connoisseurs of Music in Andhra Pradesh. So are the dohas (couplets) of Kabir among lovers of poetry and literature. Selection of sayings and verses from a sacred collection like Guru Granth Sahib is no easy task. Mr. Nishter has done it thoughtfully and with loving care. Mr. Nishter's "*Sri Guru Granth Sahib- Konni Aani Mutyaalu*" enriches the religious literature in Telugu and satisfies the urge of the Telugu spiritual seekers to learn the essential features of Sikhism. The author deserves all praise for his painstaking presentation of the sacred work to the Telugu people.

□

‘ਸਾਜਨ ਦੇਸਿ ਵਿਦੇਸੀਅੜੇ’ : PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

By Tarlochan Singh, M.P. (R.S.)

Published by Lokgeet Prakashan, SCO. 26-27, Sector 34!, Chandigarh.

Email: sales@unistarbooks.com

Pp. 176 plus pictures Price: Rs. 180.00

‘ਵਿਦਿਆ ਵੀਚਾਰੀ ਤਾ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰੀ’ – A truly learned person is one who enlightens the masses, said Guru Nanak. Sardar Tarlochan Singh is a many splendoured personality. From a brilliant scholar and youthful civil servant in the government of Punjab, to public relations officer and press Secretary to President of India, during the full tenure of the late Gyani Zail Singh, and now as MP (RS) he has acquired skills as well as deeper perceptions rarely available to public servants.

Indeed it is during these stirring times that he evolved a constructive system of values around which a larger role on the national canvas became his destiny. First, as the vice chairman, and later as chairman of the National Commission for Minorities, Tarlochan Singh made history of sorts by pursuing a vast gamut of human rights and making affirmative action as the sheet-anchor of the commission’s policy. His concern was not only the constitutional rights of the Sikhs whom he represented, but he also championed the cause of all other communities. This was a pleasant departure from the stereotype.

This book is a compelling collection of reminiscences, reflections and recollections, in chaste Punjabi, covering a stirring period in Indian public life, including the brutalizing effects of ‘Operation Bluestar’. Writing comes naturally to Tarlochan Singh who had drafted speeches for the President with as much facility as writing on developmental issues. His Punjabi writing is more intimate and less formal – a characteristic peculiar to one’s mother-tongue.

To comment on individual essays would be bad manners, for it is bound to spoil the pleasure of reading the original. Its thematic variety is truly formidable: from ‘Guru Nanak in Ladakh’ to the ‘Sikh Presence in Latin America’, from ‘Punjabi Teaching in Singapore’ to ‘Queen Elizabeth II’s pilgrimage to Darbar Sahib’, The reader has a huge bouquet to choose from, punctuated with a rare collection of colour pictures, of which the title ‘snap’ with the US President George W. Bush takes the cake. Best for random reading.

S. S.