

Gurbani Music at Centennial of Fifth Guru

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To mark the quadcentenary of the martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev Ji., Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan, a premier literary and cultural organization in the Indian capital, arranged a unique function of devotional kirtan wherein prominent Ragi Jathas sang Shabad-Kirtan based exclusively on *Rag Asa* from Sri Guru Granth Sahibji.

Bhai Balbir Singh, Hazoori Ragi of Amritsar (who has sung over 3,000 Shabads and has, in his repertoire, 250 Ragas), enthralled the audience by singing two Shabads on *Rag Asa*. The octogenarian, Bibi Jaswant Kaur, perhaps the only living Ragi with real mastery over Rababi tradition, captivated the audience with her musical rendering of the Shabads from Gurbani. Ustad Abdul Aziz Khan, grandnephew of legendary Bade Ghulam Ali Khan of Patiala Gharana, also rendered three Shabads from Gurbani based on *Rag Asa*. Dr. (Ms.) Gurinder Harnam Singh, through her musical rendition of Shabads from Guru Granth Sahib, displayed a profound understanding of musical tradition of the Sikhs and knowledge of Gurbani. Bhai Baljeet Singh Namdhari and his companions made good use of *Dilruba* and a clutch of other traditional instruments. An interesting feature of the programme was the rendition of Shabads through traditional instruments by the students of Akal Academy, Baru Sahib.

Earlier, while welcoming the guests, Dr. Jaswant Singh Neki, (Hony. General Secretary of the Sadan) explained the importance of *Rag Asa* in the Sikh tradition. Highlighting the importance of *Rag Asa* in the Sikh tradition, he mentioned that *Rag Asa* is more relevant to the Sikh **congregational singing** than any other Rag. The morning service in the Sikh tradition starts with *Asa di Var*, which is a daily reminder of the moral values, beliefs and codes of conduct, central to the Sikh way of life. He also emphasised that the programme was being arranged to pay tribute to Guru Arjun Dev, who compiled the Adi Granth and introduced the tradition of singing of Gurbani.

Dr. Amrik Singh (officiating President of the Sadan) and Maj.Gen. Joginder Singh, Vice-President honoured Mrs. Gursharan Kaur, Mahant Kahan Singh Sewapanthi, Baba Iqbal Singh from Baru Sahib and S. Harvinder Singh Sarna, President, DSGMC by presenting them Sadan's publications and *saropas*.

The function was organised in association with the Department of Culture, Government of India and Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee. A souvenir based on *Rag Asa* and a pictorial book on *Guru Arjun Dev: Life, Martyrdom and Legacy*, jointly edited by Prof. P.S.Kapur and Dr. Mohinder Singh were also released by Mrs. Gursharan Kaur, wife of the Prime Minister of India. Prominent citizens of the capital including S. Tarlochan Singh, M.P., members of the faculty from Delhi University, visiting Fulbright scholars from United States and Principals of various colleges attended the function.

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Prof. Ajit Singh - The Cambridge Don's Achievement

Born in Lahore, brought up in Amritsar and Chandigarh, educated at Panjab University and the University of California, Berkeley, and now teaching economics at Cambridge University. Professor Ajit Singh is a man familiar with change. The last 40 years that he has been teaching economics at Cambridge - a profession he is passionate about - have also seen him play several other roles. For one, Prof. Singh has also been a senior economic

adviser to the governments of Mexico and Tanzania. And a consultant to various UN developmental organisations, including the World Bank, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). He is also the author of several books, among them *Takeovers; Their Relevance to the Stock market*, the *Theory of the Firm* and *Global Economic Trends and Social Development*. Excerpts from an interview:

The Future of Indian economy

Very bright, Indian enterprise is finally finding its own momentum. There are huge problems of poverty and deprivation, but if the country is able to sustain and renew its institutions of democracy and is able to ensure that the fruits of economic progress are widely shared, India should be able to claim its rightful place in the world economy proportionate to the size of its population. In terms of absolute size, India could certainly become an economic superpower, but its per capita income will still be a fraction of the US per capita income.

Life post 9/11 and 7/7

'In the academic world, I have not come across any sustained discrimination, either by colleagues or students. I never felt at a disadvantage as a Sikh. My colleagues and students showed respect for my beliefs and my way of life as I did for theirs. I am however, aware that the academic world is not the whole world. There has been widespread discrimination against Sikhs and Indians in a number of professions. Incidents like 9/11 and 7/7 tend to put the clock back. It is against these handicaps that one needs to appreciate the work of so many Indians who have emerged into the mainstream of these societies, in the process changing both themselves and the host communities.'

On looking homewards

'I can envisage circumstances where I may think of returning to India for good. But have long learnt that as an economist, one is much more influential offering advice from abroad than "playing" as an economist in India! But I do miss the cultural autonomy of the Indian people, with their insistence on continuing with their own way of life despite all the pressures of globalisation and homogenisation.'

[Courtesy: Hindustan Times]

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