

PANJAB ATE SHER-I-PANJAB (in Punjabi)

Panjab and the Lion of Panjab

By Dr. Harnam Singh Shan, Ph.D. (London), D. Litt.

Published by the Panjab University, Chandigarh.

Pp. 155 + Maps & Pictures: 16 Price: Rs. 300/- (hard cover)

*A Review by Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon**

** Professor of History, Panjab University, Chandigarh.*

The book in hand is a thoroughly revised and enlarged edition of his highly acclaimed work which has been considered a valuable contribution to the Panjab and Sikh history, and has received bouquets of appreciation from eminent historians like Prof. Dr. Ganda Singh and Prof. Dr. Hari Ram Gupta. It has been updated and enlarged with a supplement of 16 relevant maps and pictures of great historical value.

The celebrated author of this book does not need any introduction. He is one of the leading scholars of Sikhism and has particularly distinguished himself as such in his capacity as the Professor and Chairman of Guru Nanak Chair and Head of the Departments of Panjabi Studies and Sikh studies at Panjab University, Chandigarh.

This well-researched book offers a new perspective to the readers of the history of pristine Panjab and provides valuable information to scholars as well as lay readers. One cannot help taking cognisance of the fact that vast areas of source-material still remain unexplored.

Professor Shan is worthy of praise for this work of outstanding merit. The new edition of this book is the outcome of this unflinching zeal and dedication for, he has long been a source of inspiration for the new generation of budding scholars.

Historical research requires a rigorous regimen and absolute commitment. It needs complete focus, undivided attention and knowledge of historiography. A perusal of this book reveals that Dr. Shan has all these attributes in full measure.

A historian's job involves a lot of responsibility as it casts its reflection on the future, sometimes leading to far-reaching changes in the socio-political field. The author's perspective assumes great significance from this point of view. Indeed all those who love Panjab history must go through this book.

Pavitra Gurbani Saar - A Punjabi-Hindi Monthly

Published by Guruvani Study Circle, J-74, MIG Colony, Indore. 452 008. M.P.

Ed. & Pub: Sr. Rajput Singh, Mg. Ed. Jaspal Singh

Sikhs everywhere need to learn Punjabi in Gurmukhi script in order that they become aware of the eternal verities inscribed in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Among the easiest and the most phonetical of scripts, Gurmukhi opens the door to temporal as well as spiritual enlightenment.

Those families who have, for more than a generation, lived in the Hindi-speaking belt of the UP, MP and Bihar, use both Hindi and Punjabi in the normal course. But man does not live by bread alone. As a result the intellectual segments of the Sikh

society have naturally developed institutions and the media for spreading the Gurmat way of life. Notable among them are the Sikh Sangat of Kanpur and Lucknow in UP, Patna in Bihar and Bhopal, Indore and Jabalpur in MP. While the later boasts of an engineering college, Bhopal's Kendriya Sri Guru Singh Sabha has a long tradition of publishing a bilingual monthly journal.

We have recently come across an equally attractive monthly magazine - now in fourth year of publication issued under the auspices of Gurubani Study Circle, Indore. The Vaisakhi *Visheshank* offers thoughtful Gurbani analysis in simple Hindi and Punjabi, with an excellent centre-spread on little children sporting striking styles of *patkas*, *kirpans* and *dupattas*. The sponsors deserve compliments for this admirable enterprise.

- S.S.

CONNECTING THE DOTS IN SIKH HISTORY

By Harbans Singh Noor (USA)

Published (2004) by Institute of Sikh Studies, Kanthala, Chandigarh. 160 002

Pp. 128 Price: Rs. 150/- (hard cover)

The dozen essays assembled in this elegant volume provide exciting insights into wideranging themes of historical and theological importnace. The author, a US based veteran journalist (who did a rather longish stint with the United States Information Service, lets his fancy roam to explore the corridors of history. In the process he weaves a rich tapestry of ideas, events and movement in the context of the advent and growth of Sikh religion and its tryst with sovereignty. His observations, unfettered by any conventional historian's dreary restraints, guide the reader through some of the defining moments of the Sikh struggle. The historian's loss is the reader's gain. Indeed his career with the prestigious USIS has evidently sharpened his faculties and deepened his faith as a practising Gursikh, in a manner that legitimizes his pseudonym "Noor" - the enlightened one. thus he illumines our perception of an assortment of historical personages and events. This quality imparts a romantic dimension to the selected subject. Indeed the author's subjectivity ["my reading of some of the issues or problems in Sikh history that had intigrated me"...] adds spice to the narrative even as it is exempts him from adherence to any logical framework. That is how he ranges from Europe in times of Guru Nanak to the grim sketches of Sada Kaur, Chet Singh and the tragic Prince Naurihal Singh, concluding with the controversial Ghadr of 1857.

- S.S.

CINEMA

"Khamosh Pani" Bridge over silent waters

REHAN ANSARI*

Hasan Abdaal is a town an hour's drive from Islamabad. It is up on a hill, so as soon as you leave GT (Grand Trunk) Road you are driving uphill. It would be any small town in the region: one main road, one bazaar, one girls' school and one for boys, except that it houses Panja Sahib Gurdwara, one of the fundamental sites of Sikhdom, and a spectacular location in Sabiha Sumar's feature film, *Khamosh paani*.

I was in Hasan Abdaal in the fall of 2001 scouting locations for the film. The film is set in the late 70s and if not for the dish antennae on the roofs, a mosque renovation and the consumer items in the market, things are pretty much the same in Hasan Abdaal now as they were 25 years ago, the time and context of the film.

The Gurdwara cannot be seen from GT Road. At the gate there is a sign that says absolutely no authorised entry, or something as redundant and forbidding. I was told you need an Indian passport to go in. This is the policy enforced not by the Gurdwara, but by Pakistani intelligence services. Entry into the Gurdwara in Pakistan is a border-crossing.

Panja Sahib was an essential location for the film, so we were forever bedevilled by the question of how we were going to be allowed inside. In those early days of pre-production we did not even want to address the issue of taking a film camera and actors inside!

The Gurdwara remains quiet and the town sleepy, until the week when Sikh pilgrims arrive from India and the rest of the world. They come on November 7, most for a week-long *yatra* that included going to Lahore and Nankana Sahib in Sheikhpura. I accompanied the cast of the feature film to the Gurdwara. Sikhs came by bus, train, by car.

One of the cast members at that time, Saba Pervaiz, the female lead, later dropped for Kiron Kher, is a star of Pakistan television serials. We all found shelter behind her fame and were suddenly allowed easy access. Some of the intelligence guys swarming around us, starstruck by her, no longer cared about our identity or our reasons for entering the Gurdwara.

In the centre of the courtyard of the gurdwara is a pool of water from which rises a newly-built marble structure, connected by walkways over the water, in which the Guru Granth is kept. The man showing me around was a Pakistani Sikh associated with the administration of the shrine. Either he was a very gentle man or he had developed a very gentle tone for showing Pakistanis around a Gurdwara, or both.

He showed me the *panja* of the Panja Sahib, a handprint on a rock that juts out on one side of the pool. He invited me to fit my hand into the *panja*, as the pilgrims do. I asked him for the story of how it got there. There were two saintly men in the area and there was a drought. A spring burst forth and both claimed it as their miracle. The sufi, who lived on top of the hill, rolled a boulder down on Guru Nanak who stopped with his hand. He told the story succinctly, soft tones underscoring the story of mystical realities.

It was very busy inside with the bathing rituals, the *langar*, babies, women, children, moneychangers furiously exchanging Indian for Pakistani rupees. Delighted faces everywhere. One of the women in our party had tears in her eyes. So did I, coming face to face with our absurd political heritage of sighting no Sikhs at all in the Punjabi countryside, except in Hasan Abdaal.

