

# Nankana Sahib: Sorry state of Local School

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During my last trip to Nankana Sahib, I visited the only Sikh School in Pakistan, near the Janam Ashthan. This is a private school, started, managed and funded by small Sikh community of about 70 households. Most of them are from lower middle class as per Pakistan/Indian standards. The school named "Sri Guru Nanak jee Khalsa Public school", has over 600 students from pre-school to high school, among them are about 200 Sikh students and rest a mixture of Muslim, Christian and some Hindus.

The school charges a small fee of about Pak Rs. 250 per month, as against that, other private schools charge over Rs 2000 per month. The Sikh male students are all keshadhari, wearing Patka or Pugri. The school has very basic facilities, grossly inadequate by any standard.

They do not have even text books for teaching Punjabi (Gurmukhi), although over 200 students learn that subject. The teachers use photo copies of some old text books at random. They do not have any text books to teach Gurmat, Sikh Studies, or Sikh history, use some self compiled notes to teach. The other subject text books are as prescribed by Pakistan Govt. published locally.

They have one small computer teaching room with a few old computers, donated by a Sikh pilgrim, the science laboratory has only one sink with one tap, no apparatus, just a few small items on display, but still they teach science subjects. The library had been just started, with about 20 books. The results in high school are indeed very good. The problem is lack of funds and utter lack of support from Sikh community and organisations in India and overseas.

I arranged to send a sizeable number of text books for Punjabi and Sikh studies for all classes, from level 1 to level 9, such as were available at Amritsar. I also approached Dharam Parchar Committee of SGPC to send books on Sikh History and Dharam Pothi for all levels, which they publish for free distribution. Despite a promise nothing has been done thus far, during five months since I sought their help. I also requested them to make a regular cash grant from education fund (of over Rs.5 Crores) SGPC annually disburse to Khalsa Schools in India. But nothing has happened. Though the former president of SGPC during her visit to Nankana Sahib, boasted of making the school so big to turn into a Sikh university soon, but nothing has been done.

I appeal to all those who can help to please donate money by direct remittance to School in the name written earlier, or send books to teach Punjabi, Sikh studies and other related material. They will also be grateful to receive books on all subjects and topics to build library for reference by the students. They will be grateful to receive relevant aids and equipment to teach all branches of science to students from class 1 to class 12. However, please contact the school prior to sending any equipment to ensure that they organised proper procedure to be able to get those goods cleared from customs. The books can however best be sent by sea mail post parcels, as those would be delivered to them.

Those Sikhs who go to Nankana Sahib, please do visit Khalsa School, in the same street, about a block away.

I located a copy of the monthly accounting report sent by school to all Sikh families at Sri Nankana Sahib, who support this school financially, as members and contribute to make up any shortfall. The original building has been provided by Pakistan Gurdwara Management Committee, but all major improvements and enlarging it is done by funds raised by the school committee.

It is interesting to note that the school teaching over 600 students from preschool (KG) to high school (year 12), their total fee income from students is Rupees 88165 (USD 1600.00 approx.) per month and their regular running expenses are Rupees 94231 (USD 1800.00 approx.) per month. This is for the month of September 2006, a typical case. Imagine running a school with 13 classes for over 600 students, with a running budget of a paltry USD 1800 per month. Those of us living in OECD countries and other well-off societies, will realise how hard it is for them. If only 500 Sikhs worldwide donate on average USD 5 per month, the school budget can increase to more than twice the current level, allowing them to increase the number of students and raise the standard of teaching by better-paid teachers and better school equipment.

Prominent Sikhs from India just go past the gate of this Khalsa school when they visit Janam Asthan, at the end of the same street. They spend millions for a Golden Palki, (now kept for display in an open pavilion) donate millions to make new Sarovars, where Sikh take a dip only on three or four Gurburabs a year; they are spending millions to make guests houses with 600 rooms, but have no funds to spare for this school!

The school has requested permission to use these 600-room guest house vacant for most of the year, to accommodate boarders for this school, as then Sikh students from other cities in Pakistan too can study at this - the only - Khalsa School in Pakistan. Is anyone listening?

