

SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB THE UNIQUE AND UNIVERSAL

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Introduction by the late Chief Justice R.S. Narula

Review by Dr. M.S. Rahi *

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Scriptural universality of Sri Guru Granth Sahib is an admitted fact from the very beginning. The contents of Sri Guru Granth Sahib and the list of the personalities whose *bani* has been included in it, makes its universal approach a self evident fact. As it is known, there are not mythological stories in Guru Granth Sahib but hymns in praise of the Almighty. The arrangement of the whole composition is such to raise the level of human consciousness step by step, helping the human beings to reach the highest stage in their life. Dr. Harman Singh Shan, a well-known scholar, has arranged some hymns from Sri Guru Granth Sahib suitable to project the universality of Sri Guru Granth Sahib and its uniqueness. Earlier also, at the time of 500th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev, he published his compilation under the title 'Five Hundred Thoughts of Guru Nanak', published by the Punjab Government, like the present one, on the occasion of 400th anniversary of the compilation and installation of Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

In 1993, I took some copies of his book i.e. 'Five Hundred Thoughts of Guru Nanak' for giving to my foreign friends in U.N. Conference at Budapest, Hungary. Professor John Feast, Head of Department of Law, Bremen University, Germany, after looking at the book published in English, Punjabi and Hindi said, "You Sikhs do not know how to make your Guru Granth Sahib known in Europe. Dr. Rahi tell them, how many people know English and your oriental language in Europe. At least, can't your people publish such small books in English, French, German and Spanish, if they want Guru Granth Sahib known in Europe people should know about the universality of Guru Granth Sahib."

The present monograph with its all good points suffers from the same malady of language limitations. English is not known much in Europe and many other parts of the world. The teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib deserve at this stage of Sikh history to reach maximum people of the world in as many languages as possible. The Punjab Government should have thought about this. Unfortunately, even the S.G.P.C. which has a budget of the substantial amount for Dharam Prachar, has not published Sri Guru Granth Sahib and other literature except in Punjab and the English language. When my small booklet – 'Guru Granth Sahib in the Eyes of Non-Sikh Scholars', was published in Spanish, English and French and distributed in many parts of the world and especially in the World Religion Conference at Barcelona, I received many letters from Spain and France to help them to get complete Guru Granth Sahib in their languages. I felt embarrassed as I was unable to tell them the source from which they could get complete Sri Guru Granth Sahib in Spanish and French. I wish that such an attempt would have been made by the Government of Punjab or the S.G.P.C. at the time of 400th anniversary of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. However, the sincerity of Dr. Shan's efforts, in the direction of espousing the uniqueness and universality of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, is really to be appreciated. His arrangement of ideas under different titles, aiming at the subject of the monograph, enhances its value.

However, the fact remains, if the Sikhs want the uniqueness and universality of Sri Guru

Granth Sahib known all over the world, then they would have to do that through their conduct as mere telling the people about Sri Guru Granth Sahib would not make much difference. In many parts of the world, well informed people of other nationalities, looking at Gurdwara built on the basis of caste and communities, sarcastically say, ‘This is what the Sikhs have learnt from Guru Granth Sahib. When the purpose of their Gurus was to create a casteless society?’ What goes on in the presence of Sri Guru Ganth Sahib in many Gurdwaras all around the world is also well known. The conduct of such Sikhs very poorly reflect on the Sikhs all around the world and indirectly on their Gurus. Much emphasis on conduct in Sikhism makes it different from other religions of the world. That is why, Sri Guru Nanak made it clear, when he said, ‘*Sachō Ora Sab Ko, Uppar Sach Achar*’ - Truth is higher, still higher is truthful conduct. This is the core teaching of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. If the people of other nations and races would find these teachings of Guru Granth Sahib projected in the lives and conduct of the Sikhs, only then they would feel attracted toward Guru Granth Sahib. It is only then, what Toynbee, Pearl S. Buck and Professor Archer, as quoted by Dr. Shan, have said, would become a reality in the real sense of the word — Sikhism ‘a universal and piratical religion’ spreading the message of ‘peace and love’ in all the corners of the world.

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HISTORY VIEWED FROM CLOSE QUARTERS (in Punjabi)

By Tarlochan Singh, M.P. [Chairman, National Commission for Minorities]

Edited (& compiled) by Dr. Pritam Singh Batra

Published by Lokgeet Prakashan, SCO 26-27,

Section 34A, Chandigarh. 160022.

ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀ ॥ ਸਤਿਨਾਮੁ ॥ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀ ॥

When a book in Punjabi (that too non-fiction) goes into a second edition within the space of a calendar year, one must sit up and take notice. However, that is not the only reason why *The Sikh Review* is delighted to commend this fascinating volume to book lovers everywhere.

Sardar Tarlochan Singh never ceases to surprise. His many splendoured, pro-active role, first as member and-currently-as chairman, National Commission for Minorities, doubtless places him in the limelight. But the volume under review transcends the boundaries of the run-of-the mill bureaucratic derring-do; Arguably, his imaginative and human handling of the national issues over a long period of time has earned him respect of friends and foes alike. The secret of his skilful handling of complex and knotty problems is perhaps traceable to a robust, crowded and challenging career of public service in some of the most sensitive capacities: politics to public relations, to the economics of cooperative marketing, to his assuming the trouble-shooting responsibility of press secretary to the President of India during the tumultuous tenure of Giani Zail Singh.

No wonder the Memoirs now published in Punjabi – the mother tongue he loves most - cover a huge gamut of events, issues and experiences. Typically, the blurb (cover) shows him escorting Lady Margaret Thatcher, the former British prime minister. Some of the key issues touching the Sikhs as a community are naturally uppermost in the narrative: The Constitutional fall-out for the Sikhs is deftly dealt with: lumping Sikhs with Hindus, via a footnote to Art 25, the Hindu Succession Act, and the complexity of schedule caste reservation continue to be major irritants that the Sikh leadership has failed to address, even as Sikhs seem to have run into a stonewall of governmental inertia.

For obvious reasons, the blunderous and bloody 1984 figures prominently and poignantly – especially because the author was precariously placed as press secretary to the President and thus privy to many painful details – spread across several chapters. This INSIDER’S VIEW itself makes the book worth its weight in gold. The evolution of Shiromani Akali Dal, its infighting and fissiparous leadership make exciting – if melancholy – reading. Several essays on Youth, Sindhi Sehajdhari Sikhs, Heritage, etc. should be compulsory reading for the Sikhs intelligentsia because of their challenging insights. The book is punctuated with some of the most revealing and evocative collage of photographs, as also with intimates, thumb-nail sketches of eminent personalities.

Saran Singh

isD gosit – bhup~KI AiDAYn
SIDDHA GOSTH: Baho-pakhi Adhyayan (Punjabi)

Edited by Dr. Shashi Bala

Published by Jagjit Singh Walia, Director of Publications,
 Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar 143005.



This comprehensive collection of essays on Guru Nanak’s *Siddha Gosth* (SGGS: 938-946) is a significant addition to the literature on the basic philosophy of Sikhism. The *Siddha Gosth* is quintessentially a challenging, insightful even provocative – scriptural text. *Siddha* (Sans.) is understood as a man of self-discipline through *yoga kriya* who ultimately acquires occult powers – *Siddhi* – i.e. miracles. Guru Nanak as the prophet of the toiling masses decries such super human practices as self-delusionary and impediments to spiritual progress. Guru Nanak was candid in his disapproval of the yogis’ escapism. The stark text, in versified question-answer format, plunges from the outset into the profound verities of life on earth. Indeed Guru Nanak’s humility accentuates his relentless reasoning urging the holy recluses to redeem the common man from his poverty and ignorance.

The present volume owes its origin to a seminar in 1990’s on the philosophical analysis of *Siddha Gosth* which the Guru Nanak Dev University hosted. Scholars in diverse disciplines of Sikh scriptural studies offered rare insights into the historical, ontological, geographical, philosophical and social aspects of the famous discourse. Notable are the essays on the concept of *Shunya*, the *Shabda* as the elemental sound, of *Mann* (or Mind), *Hukam* or Divine Order, *Naam Mukti*, *Gurmukh* (or God-inspired), Morality, mysticism, and even the context of linguistics, sociology and economics. The contributors, who are mainly academicians of distinction, are eloquent as well as analytical in their approach to the challenging text.

As a resource book this rare anthology should be a welcome addition to libraries and homes where knowledge is cherished.



“SICQUES, TIGER OR THIEVES:”
Eyewitness accounts of the Sikhs 1606-1809

By Amandeep Singh Madra and Parmjit Singh

Published by Palgrave Macmillan 2005



As the subtitle implies the book “Sicques, Tigers or Thieves” charts the history of the Sikhs in the 18th century through eyewitness accounts. This period of Sikh history saw this

remarkable new faith transform from outlaws to sovereigns of one of Mughals India's most important states, the Punjab.

In a recent review in the Royal Asiatic Society Journal, Prof. Christopher Shackle, the author of numerous books on the Sikhs, the language of Gurbani and the Punjabi language wrote "This is a splendid compilation of documents which should have an appeal beyond the narrowly academic to a range of readers, including many with general interests in the expansion of British rule in northern India as well as those particularly interested in early Sikh history at whom the book is most directly targeted." he went on to say "Although it is thus also suitably designed for reference purposes, this is perhaps a book meant more for enjoyable browsing than for a systematic read-through. Like all such anthologies of quite heterogeneous content, it will provoke its readers to making sense of the material it presents in their own varied ways."

Khushwant Singh, a noted Sikh historian described the book as "delightful" in *The Tribune* and went on to say "A fascinating account of the Sikhs as seen by foreign travellers in the land which was to become their kingdom. They give us an insight into the *macho* self-image that Sikhs have to this day - anything you can do I can do better. This spirit of upmanship has sustained the community miniscule in numbers but grand in achievements."

A treasure for those interested in Sikh history as well as academics and researchers.

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