

SO SPAKE KABIRA

By Kartar Singh Duggal

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Pp 220 Price: Rs. 395/- (Hardcover)

The great soul that he was, Kabir epitomised the Oneness of God and the equality of mankind. He was a virulent critic of the absurdities of the caste system and ridiculed the prevalent notion that the status of an individual was the outcome of the caste or class in which he was born. Truthfulness and clean living were the cornerstones of Kabir's philosophy of reality and existence. For him, a meaningful life was one that was devoted to the Creator, and he ever repeated His Name. Kabir was hard on the so-called high and mighty of the society – be it the Hindu Brahmins or the Muslim clergy – who propagated but seldom practiced what they professed. Complete and absolute faith in the Supreme Being was the core of his belief.

Kabir's hymns are recorded in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. The present work brings to the reader a collection of some immortal hymns of the outstanding bard that are sung in the gurdwaras and congregations by Sikhs and non-Sikhs alike across the globe.

Kartar Singh Duggal: (Born 1917) is a leading Padma Bhushan writer of short stories, novels and poetry. He was conferred the degree of D.Litt. (Honoris Causa) by the Punjabi University in 1994 and nominated Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) by the President of India in 1977. Having served as Director, All India Radio, Director, National Book Trust and Adviser (Information), Ministry of Information and broadcasting attached to Planning Commission of India, he is currently devoted exclusively to literary activity.

[From the Book's jacket]



ART CALENDAR 2007 FROM THE SIKH FOUNDATION, USA

*A Review by Jasbir Singh Sethi**

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The Palo Alto, California based, The Sikh Foundation has, since its inception in 1967, been doing exemplary service to the Sikh community, all over the world in particular, and for all Punjabis in general, in the areas of Arts, Academics and Architecture, preserving and portraying their heritage, in style and dignity.

As is well known, Foundation has pioneered Punjabi Teaching Programs in University of California, Berkeley, Stanford University and San Jose State University in California. It has spearheaded the effort to establish Sikh and Punjabi Chairs in various Campuses of University of California. (Santa Barbara, Riverside, Irvine and Santa Cruz); also, in cooperation with US Federal Government, in developing a University level Punjabi Teaching Program, via Internet.

The First Sikh Arts International Exhibition was organized by the Sikh Foundation in 1992. Then in 1999, the Famous International Traveling Exhibition, "**Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms**" which gave birth to Permanent/long term Sikh Art Galleries in San Francisco, Smithsonian in Washington D.C. and New York; Toronto, London, Paris and Lahore are on drawing boards. Since 1999, the Sikh Foundation has been publishing, limited edition, collectors item Sikh Art Calendars.

This year (2007), The Sikh Foundation has expanded its horizon to the whole of Punjab and to Socio-Culture Heritage. It was a surprising and impressive revelation to us, that Punjab (Pakistan) is the most populous province in the world. Population of the Punjabis is the largest anywhere. The theme of the 2007 Calendar embraces the overall Punjabi Heritage, "**Games we Play.**" These twelve paintings (From Kapany Collection) are specially

commissioned paintings. The Artist, Sukhpreet Singh has done an admirable world class job in portraying our childhood moods, thrills, fears, agony of punishments, exhibition of personal strength, self confidence, agility, skills, competitiveness, competition and rapture of victory. The range of games covers the whole of Punjab and both male and female games.

Punjabi everywhere will enjoy this unique memorabilia.

To get your copy (The price is a nominal US\$10.00 plus S&H) please contact, The Sikh Foundation International, 580 College Avenue, Palo Alto, CA. 94306 (USA) or visit their website, www.sikhfoundation.org



BIOGRAPHY AND WRITINGS OF BHAJ SAHIB BHAJ NANDLAL JI

English Translation by Professor Ujagar Singh Bawa, Ph.D. (Cornell)

**Published by The Washington Sikh Centre/ The Sikh Forum, P.O. Box 7061. 7500
Warfield Road, Caithersburg. MD 20898, USA**

Pp. 450, Price: US\$ 20/- (Hard Cover)

A Review by Saran Singh

Much like England's greatest poet William Shakespeare (1564-1616) there is scant biographical information about the poet laureate of the Khalsa Panth, Bhai Nan Lal 'Goya'. One therefore marvels at the fact that a development economist of distinction, resident in USA should, in his retirement, have come up with a vastly impressive volume on the medieval poet who wrote almost exclusively in Farsi – the mellifluous language of Persia, the modern Iran.

In a short opening chapter, Prof Ujagar Singh Bawa traces the ancestry of Nand Lal, his birth in Ghazni, Afghanistan, circa 1633. Here it is necessary to mention that Indian merchants had long been exploring the 'Silk Route' to and from central Asia and Mainland China for centuries. Kandhar, Kabul and Ghazni had served as outposts, until Guru Nanak (1469-1539) consolidated the Sikh-Hindu Sangat (congregation) in these ancient cities. Ironically, the market town of Chazni, in East Afghanistan, has been notorious in Indian history as one-time capital of Mahmud Ghazni (A.D. 1000) who invaded and looted India nine times!

Not much is known of the younger days of Nand Lal except that his scholarly father vigorously carried forward the Sahajdhari tradition, and felt compelled to serve the Mughal durbar in early 17th Century. The pert-scholar son, however, become known for his erudition and theological profundity. With the advent of Aurangzeb (1618-1707), who ascended the Mughal throne by imprisoning his father Shah Jahan, and decimating his brothers, Nand Lal become apprehensive about his own safety and escaped to the sanctuary of Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) at the Fortress town of Anandpur, where he not only re-discovered the kindred spirit of poetry but also the illustrious object of his poetic genius in the young and handsome Guru Gobind Singh already known for the celestial splendour of his durbar.

Since the partition of India in 1947, there has been a grievous set-back in the traditional teaching of the Farsi language and literature, which, as court language had attained a remarkable felicity as well as philological profundity during and after the Mughal period, right upto the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1781—1839). **Significantly – if sadly – the book under review uses the Gurmukhi script for the Farsi text of Bhai Nand's ghazals, thus shutting out the vast Punjabi populace in India and Pakistan (and indeed in Iran) from the ineffable quality of his poetry in classical Farsi.**

The sizeable output of Bhai Nand Lal 'Goya' is easily divided into: Ghazaliyat, Rubayaat and

the more spiritual-philosophic Zindagi Naamaa and Jang Naamaa. Zindagi Naama is a long ode to the Divine Grace and a plea for moral re-assertion. Jang Naama, on the other hand, celebrates the poet's heroic vision of Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh as the messengers of God – inspired expression of the poet's adoration. The translator's proficiency in Farsi language is evident from the outset. He captures the Poet's devotion and depth, his pathos and felicitous phraseology, to an incredible degree. The themes range from history, folklore and morality, to philosophy, to adoration of the Divine Master.

The format, as well as Romanized version in Gumukhi script, makes it easier for the lay reader to comprehend and enjoy the poetry, with text on the left hand page and translation – in Punjabi and English – on the right-hand page. It is abundantly clear that enormous effort and patience have gone into the production of such a lucid translation of rare quality. Transliteration can, at times, be jarring: E.g. P. 234: “gYr XwdS eIN ieilmw Swd nlsq” in Roman: ‘Dile’ Maa Neesat’ is inexact for Neest “.

This volume, worth its weight in gold, offers fresh insights into the life and times of Guru Gobind Singh, as the Badshah-Darvesh, the incomparable hero who liberated the spirit of India forever and, while engaged in lifelong struggle, probed the depths of theological philosophy, even as he presided over the Royal court complete with a clutch of poets – including Bhai Nand Lal – who poured forth their-Soul in classical Braj Bhasha, Farsi and Punjabi, to convey the insightful universality of the emergent Sikh value system. Indeed the translation is welcome and long-awaited re-assertion of South Asia's composite culture. □

EXPLORING SOME SIKH THEMES

By Prof. Pritam Singh

Published by Singh Bros., Bazar Mai Sewan, Amritsar. 143006.

Pp. 268, Price: Rs. 375/- (Hardcover)

Prof. Pritam Singh is scholars' scholar and a legend in his life time. His contribution to the Sikh Review in 1970s and 80's represents the finest writing on a comparative study of Sikhism. Indeed it is heartening to see at least three of the 25 Essays that were first published in Journal. A whole generation of Sikh intellectuals have benefited from the erudition and philosophic profundity of Prof. Pritam Singh even in his 90th year in his lucidity remains unimpaired. A critical appreciation of the Essays must await scrutiny by a more qualified reviewer.

- S.S.

SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB: TEACHINGS FOR MUSLIMS

By Nanak Singh Nishter

**Published by International Sikh Centre for Inter Faith Relations, Sant Bhavan,
15030137, Gowliguda Chaman, Hyderabad. 500012.**

Pp. 200, Price: Rs. 100/-

This is an innovative work, opening the doors of Gurbani wisdom and catholicity to the Urdu-knowing people. In post 1947 India, the knowledge of Urdu has been regrettably circumscribed to pockets of Muslim population, which is hardly conducive to harmonious understanding among various faiths. Sardar Nanak Singh 'Nishter' has filled a void, and built a bridge for Urdu knowing people – Muslims, in particular – to have an insight into some of the most evocative and appealing poetry of Guru Granth Sahib. There is a treasure for people of other faiths in the holy Granth. Guru Nanak's verses in Farsi, Baba Farid's lyrical references to Islam's teachings, Kabir and Nam Dev's hymns – all have a universal appeal.

The book has an evocative Foreword by eminent educator/administrator Saiyid Hamid, and

note by Dr. Jodh Singh. Only a deeper study can reveal the relevance of Gurbani for Muslims, who are exhorted to be good Muslims in the spirit of peace and amity. SGPC could promote inter-faith understanding by picking up all the 1000 copies for libraries and college in North India.

- S.S.