

FIVE PARAGONS OF PEACE
MAGIC AND MAGNIFICENCE IN THE GURU'S WAY
A FORTHCOMING PUBLICATION FROM GURU FATHA SINGH KHALSA*

A Preview

* Contact: (416) 888-8535 Email: gfs.khalsa@utoronto.ca.

Singh Sahib Guru Fatha Singh Khalsa is a frequent contributor to *The Sikh Review* and the author of the critically acclaimed *Badges of Bondage: The Conquest of the Sikh Mind 1847-1947* (1996). He serves at Guru Ram Das Ashram in Toronto and at the University of Toronto, where he is the Sikh chaplain.

Five Paragons of Peace: Magic and Magnificence in the Guru's Way is a missionary work in the best possible sense of the work. With enthusiasm, inspiration, and a veritable trove of background, it lays out the fundamental principles of Sikh practice in a wide-angled multicultural and multidisciplinary context.

Guru Fatha Singh's book portrays Guru Nanak as the harbinger of a dawning age of renewed holism and deep spirituality. Holism is a respectful appreciation of relations between inner and outer environments and spirit. Deep spirituality is distinct from tribe- (Judaism) or caste-based (Brahmanism) religion or cults of personality (Christianity). It summons the best of a human being through values and discipline that foster nobility, empowerment, peace, understanding, and simple joy.

Five Paragons of Peace draws on science and art, anthropology and sociology, philosophy and theology, physics and physiology, history and religious studies to illustrate the universal resonance of Guru's teachings. Respectfully, it looks at traditions where magic has been lost and magnificence compromised. In *Five Paragons*, we look at the racist underpinnings of early Christian conquest in the New World, the rationale for circumcision in Judaism and Islam, the history of divination in Judaism and Christianity, and the banning of long hair in the early Christian church.

The first of the book's five sections portrays the significance of the Guru's sense of profound oneness, *Ekongkar*, in the context of evolving science. It examines how Guru Nanak's unitary vision coheres with Copernicus's realization of the nature of the heavens in the sixteenth century, with Darwin's theory of evolution in the nineteenth, and with the twentieth century perceptions of quantum physics.

Part two depicts the concept of *Hukam* in the context of religious history, culture and science. It outlines the traditions of randomness and divination that have existed around the world through time. It also examines divination's other side, gambling, and the relationship of the two, the one sacred and the other profane, through history. Lastly, the quantum understanding of an unstable and largely unpredictable universe is appreciated in the Guru's light.

The middle section of the book portrays the practice of *Sarbat da Bhalla*. Here are depicted the most famous instances from Sikh history, such as the martyrdom of the Ninth Guru and the dispassionate service of Bhai Kahnaya. Also included are thirteen contemporary accounts of non-Sikhs, and their courageous efforts to serve the greater common good.

Part Four examines the treatment of the body as *Akal Moorat* in Gurbani and in cultures around the world and through history. The spiritual physiology of the human form is appreciated here, as are countless twists and turns of human ingenuity. Mutilation as punishment, helpful prosthetics, cosmetic surgery, hair fashions and tattooing all find mention here.

The last section lays out the Guru's path for a healthful, enlightened existence upon this Earth. It touches on everything from welcoming new life, to abiding in spiritual community, to preparing for death.

Following the text, an eight hundred year chronology charts some of the central events of Sikh history in the context of the centuries-long unfoldment of a global holistic sensibility. *Five Paragons of Peace: Magic and Magnificence in the Guru's Way* leaves the reader with a sense of optimism for the Sikh faith. It depicts Guru Nanak as an exemplar par excellence of a hopeful new paradigm. This work joins the dots of a dozen disciplines and draws a picture of a world on the cusp of a new era largely defined by the Guru's values and inspiration. Much of the underlying power of *Five Paragons of Peace* derives from the sublime strength of Gurbani translated into English and the awesome examples of its saints. Together, these comprise about twenty-five percent of the total six hundred pages of the book.

