

SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB THE UNIQUE & UNIVERSAL SCRIPTURE

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

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A 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 Ganth 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 tells 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 Eye~ 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 Ganth 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 Grant 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 allover 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 Granth 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, ‘*Sacha Ora Sab Ka, 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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LEADERSHIP BY TURBAN AN AMERICAN STORY

By S. Ravi Singh

Pages: 88 Price: Rs. 450/-

*A Review by Dr. Komal Avtar Singh**

** Retired Diplomat/Gurmat Advisor.*

S. Ravi Singh, an American Citizen, was born in Illinois and graduated from Marmion Military Academy. Though an autobiography, it is a true American story about a young Sikh seeking to balance his religious identity in today’s America. He has vividly brought-out his daily struggle for religious identity.

Ravi Singh appears to be a devoted Sikh who has released his valuable efforts, “LEADERSHIP BY TURBAN”, at a very appropriate time, when “Turban” is a hot issue in France, where Sikh Community has been struggling against a ban on Turban for Sikh Students.

It was through “trial and error” that the writer, he had to learn the hard-way to stand-up for himself with a turban. Today, the younger generation of Sikh Community all over the world in general and Punjab, in particular, have been degrading their identity. Writer’s experience should motivate them, in case, they follow the “Code of Conduct” devotedly and strenuously.

Ravi Singh himself wears an elegant turban. From academics to politics, to business and religion, these experiences made him proud to be an American and ultimately to be proud to wear turban. Truth is the most valuable gift we can share with other people. Hence, the writer, in his work, is sharing his truths.

There is no doubt that the writer has acquired the truthful history about turban from his ancestors. The history of turban goes back to the “Creation of the order of the Khalsa in 1699” on the Baisakhi Day. One of the commitments of a true Sikh is to wear the five K/s (kakars) : Kesh, Kangha, Kachcha, Karah and Kirpan unshorn hair, wooden comb, underwear, steel bangle and a miniature sword, symbols of Khalsa. Male followers are enjoined to wear the turban.

Thus, turban was first given as a gift to the Sikhs. Giving the highest regard to this religion, the writer says, “Sikhs believe in one Universal God”. Turban, being essential to keep the

hair neatly tied up, thus, became an obligatory item of dress for the Sikh male. On the unparallel Baisakhi of 1699, Guru Gobind Singh declared, "Unshorn hair with turban shall ever be the INSIGNIA of Khalsa". Take the turban away, the glory is gone instantly, leaving behind the dishelmed figure and a forsaken self.

How proudly but daringly with faith and devotion, the writer says, "I wear my turban in public, because Sikhs are not allowed to cut their hair. My knee-length hair symbolized my strength, like the story of Samson in the old testament. It represents my faith, reminding me that The Creator is God to all.

We all know that during British Rule in India, Sikhs were known for their chivalry. Sikhs are committed to the "Code of Conduct" (REHAT MARYADA). How forcefully but devotedly the author says as under :-

If you are a Son, be a good Son.
If you are a Daughter, be a good Daughter.
If you are a Brother, be a good Brother.
If you are a Sister, be a good Sister.
If you are a Husband, be a good Husband.
If you are a Wife, be a good Wife.

The above sentiments of the author shall not only mould the character, it will motivate the present and coming younger generation of Sikh Community.

Again, emphasizing his faith with devotion the writer says, "My turban and my uncut hair define me, my moral values and my commitment to God and Country". The turban identifies the 26 million Sikhs around the World, making it the 5th largest religion in the World. Turban allows us to be mingled-out in a crowd. It obligates also to meet the honourable Code of doing good at all time. Sikh Dharma is not a ritual or a philosophy: Sikh Dharma is a living practical experience of reality.

The writer loved his academy, his county but he also loves his turban. How truthfully he says, "If you do not fight this, there no one else will. You need to set the example, since you are the first."

"I did not want to be the first one with a turban in the Military Academy. But I did not want to be the last one either." Originally, I wore the turban for my religion, then for my family. Now, I wear it for myself.

The military academy taught him the importance of honour, duty, loyalty, and tradition. The writer realized that the only way to live up to all these values was by embracing his turban.

"Leadership by Turban" read with the historical background will certainly "motivate" our present and the coming younger generation.

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SRI GUR-PANTH PARKASH

By Rattan Singh Bhangu

Edited by Dr. Balwant Singh Dhillon

*A Rejoinder to H. S. Virk's review by Sarjit Singh Sandhu**

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This refers to review of Sri Gur Panth Parkash by Dr Hardev Singh Virk [SR, August, 2005]. It is a happy coincidence for me to have obtained a copy of this publication from Singh Brothers, a few months ago. No doubt it is a valuable historical document for Sikhs to study as a reference book for research related to Sikh history and theology. However, tampering of any information, whether due to ignorance or ingenuity, is the least we would expect from an editor or his staff employed for assistance. If, at all, any change is warranted it should be

supported by some documentary concrete evidence, or by use of valid arguments to support it. The most visible and theologically important error has been observed in some of the foot notes which relates to

Khande de Pahul. First of all, evidence from Sri Guru Granth Sahib is presented to demonstrate what *Amrit*, in Gurbaani, means for Sikhs.

mn ry iQru rhu mqu kq jwhl jlau]
bwhir FUFq bhuq duKu pwvih
Gir AMimRqu Gt mwhl jlau]rhwau]1]9]
soirT m: 1 A:g:g:s: pMnw 598
ijn vifAwel qyry nwm kl qy rgy mn mwih]
nwnk AMimRqu eyku hY dUjw AMimRqu nwih]
nwnk AMimRqu mnY mwih pwelAY gur prswid]
iqnHI plqw rMG isau ijn kau iliKAw Awid]1]4]
swrg m: 2 A:g:g:s: pMnw 1238

This meaning of *Amrit* is further confirmed if Pauri 38 of Japu is studied by taking cognizance of metaphors etc. used to hammer out this concept. Undoubtedly this distinct and novel meaning of *Amrit* distinguishes Sikhism from other religions of the world. *Khande dee pahul* is clearly defined in Rehatname by Piara Singh Padam and others. This information is given below:-

Bwel gurdws dUjw: plvuh pwhul KMfyDwr hovih jnm suhylw [{rihqnwmy, pMnw 29}
mihmw pRkWS {bwww srUp cMd B'lw}: KMfy kl pwhul PurmwXw [{rihqnwmy, pMnw 41}
B't vhl prgnw Qwnysr: KWfy kl pwhul dl nwm isMG rwKw [{rihqnwmy, pMnw 168}
{rihqnwmy, ipAwrw isMG pdm; isMG bRdrz, AMimRqsr 1995}

In the text of aforementioned book reviewed on pages: 31{slok 4}; 32 {slok 31}; 33 {slok 35}; 34 {slok 6}; 37 {slok 7}; 39 {slok 32}; 66{slok 20}; and 67{21} the word *Khande dee pahul* is used by Rattan Singh Bhangu. However, in the foot notes listed on pages; 34{ft-1,4,5,6,7}; 35{ft-1}; 51{ft-2}; 60{ft-2}; 65{ft-3}; 66{ft-5}; 67{ft-2,4,5}; 69{ft-1,2,4} and 85{ft-1,2,3,4} the Editor or his staff has corrected this word *Khande dee Pahul* by replacing it with *Amrit sanchar*. Certainly it is a gross violation of authenticity of meaning of word *Amrit* in SGGGS because it differentiates Sikhism from all other religions of the world. Please note that the Department of Guru Nanak Studies was established by the founders of Guru Nanak Dev University for the study of SGGGS by Scholars and to convey its authentic, true and universal message to Sikhs in the diaspora as well as other people in the world at large.

The evidence from Sikh history; for instance, Bhatt Vehi Thanesar and Mehma Parkash by Sarup chand Bhalla quoted in Rehtname by Piara Singh Padam certify the use of *Khande dee Pahul* by Guru Gobind Singh for initiation ceremony of Khalsa [Rehtname by Piara Singh Padam, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 1999]. Rattan Singh Bhangu, too, uses word *Khande dee Pahul* in whole of his Book [Sri Gur Panth Parkash, editor Balwant Singh Dhillon, Singh Brother, Amritsar, 2004] for initiation of a Sikh into a Khalsa.

Some confusion about the use of word *Amrit* is found in Sikh history, too. In *Guru kian Sakhian*, [written by Sarup Singh Kaushish in 1790 AD, and edited by Piara Singh Padam, Singh Brothers Amritsar, 4th time published in 1999, p 184] an interesting dialogue between Guru Gobind Singh and Rai Dalla is recorded. Guru Gobind Singh, “ Bhai Sikha! You have not taken *Khande dee Pahul* so far. Let your entire family joins the Khalsa Panth”. Bhai Dalla, “Defender of the poorest and helpless! We take *Amrit* every day twice from your langar.”

Surprisingly, Bhai Kahn Singh has not included the words *Kande dee Pahul* in Mahan Kosh. Under *Khanda*, he has given *Amrit Sanchar*. The sad story is that even Bhai Kahn Singh

has denied the existence of historical information in *Mahan Kosh* and defied the existence of factual information available in AGGS which may be due to ignorance or lack of analytical approach to separate grain from the chaff. Certainly it is a historical mistake to call *Khande dee Pahul* as *Amrit* which is the most important word of all the SIX Sikh Gurus recorded in SGGS for more than 717 times. In fact **Dharam Parchar Committee** of SGPC is requested to take up this matter of editing *Mahan Kosh* with the help of experts in gurmat and Sikh history. There are some other words, too, meaning of which are out of context and need correction in Mahan Kosh.

If anybody has construed that Rehat Maryada, produced by SGPC in 1945, is the primary source of correct information, it is a travesty of holy text of SGGS.

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