

## Tradition of Spiritual Music

I greatly appreciate the editorial on *kirtan* (SR: August 2003). The author is very clear about the concepts and has written with precision. I fully support him on role of music in *Gurbani* that is aimed at penetration of the message into the inner recesses of the heart. However, I differ on concept of its recitation at open stages, because the awareness of the philosophy of Sikhism and the meditation (*Naam Simran*) are two different aspects. You can educate the people about the basic principles of religion on the stage through lectures and "*Kachi Bani*" with the help of musical instruments. You can then enthrall them. But you cannot bring them around to blissful meditation. I wonder if you have seen some '*Jagratas*' in Punjab and the kind of *Bhagti* carried out there. I am of the view that *kirtan* should be strictly confined to *gurbani* in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib in proper reverential sitting posture, in a tranquil state of mind.

(DR.) DILBAG SINGH  
47, Flower Dale, Barewal Road  
Ludhiana - 142 027

\* \* \* \* \*

## Tagore & the Sikh Religion

I am one of those privileged who were invitees to the Raghunath Reddy Memorial Lecture at Rabindra Bharati Society, Kolkata on 18 January, '03 to attend the learned dissertation of Mr. Saran Singh. (SR Aug. 2003) In context of his lecture, Mr. Singh mentioned that he had drawn on my book THE ECLIPSED SUN, much to my delight, which earned me a distinction among the audience. On my part, I am variously indebted to the Sikh community for the publication of my book. My debut in Tagore translation was with the poem '*Bandi Bir*', The Captive Hero, on Banda Bahadur's martyrdom, which I would not have translated but for the keen interest of a few of my Sikh friends at Delhi, which was published in the House Journal of Punjab & Sind Bank, in their late 1998 issue. A few more Tagore poems on the Sikhs followed suit, including one on Guru Govind Singh published in THE SIKH REVIEW itself (Aug. '01 issue), for which I had a few congratulatory e-mails from India and abroad.

Invited by the Guru Govind Singh Study Circle, Ludhiana, in May 2001, where I read out my Tagore translations to a large Sikh gathering where I met Sr. Anurag Singh, (worthy son of Late Dr. Trilochan Singh) who came close to Gurudev Tagore. Dr. Singh has left his rich contribution to Sikh literature/history, that remains a valued treasure. I feel delighted that my translation of Tagore proved very useful. As a Chartered Accountant, I wonder how I can redeem my debt to my Sikh friends who encouraged me in the first instance.

RAJAT DASGUPTA  
319, NeelKamal Apartment,  
Block BD 44, Rabindra Pally  
P.O Prafulla Kanas, Krishnapur  
Kolkata 700 010.

**"A View from America"**

Dr I J Singh's guest editorial 'View from America' (July 03 issue) is bold and timely. I am glad that there are eminent persons who are not afraid to expose the vanity, posturing and pretence of 'self acclaimed' leaders of the Sikhs claiming to be the true exponents of the Word of Gurus! These views help expose the pride and prejudice that our Jathedars (and indeed the SGPC) are prone to exhibit.

When asked by friends across the world as to the distinguishing aspects of Sikhism, I proudly mention, (inter-alia): "no gender discrimination, no caste system; no entrenched professional priestly class; no discrimination against any person on basis of race, religion or gender; no bar against any person, of whatever creed or caste, to come to the Gurdwara and participants in celebration of God's bounty.

The tyranny of latter day 'mahants' should be resisted. We must ensure wisdom, transparency, freedom of expression, welcome to Sehajdharis and access to the true world of universal brotherhood preached by our Gurus.

GURDIAL SINGH  
454, Sector 15-A  
Noida 201301. U.P.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Tracing Guru Nanak's visit to Mecca

Sir, - While reporting about Multimillion Gurdwara in Mumbai [SR July 03 issue], it is stated that Guru Nanak used Kandla, in Saurashtra, for the voyage to Mecca. To set the record straight, reference is invited to: "*Janam Sakhi Parampara*" by Dr. Kripal Singh. Indeed Guru Nanak visited and stayed at Lakhpat in Kutch District. From there, Guru Nanak reached Sonimiani Port by boat, both situated on the edge of sea. From Sonimiani, Guru Nanak reached Kalhat Port and then sailed to Aden, Jeddah and, finally, from Alaswad Port to Mecca. Alaswad port, 12 miles from Jeddah, is conventionally used by Muslim pilgrims going to Mecca.

Presently, a Gurdwara exists at Lakhpat, which was taken over by Archeological Deptt. Gujarat, being shrine of national importance.

Throughout the year there are visitors at Lakhpat and this place is gradually assuming the status of shrine for pilgrimage by the people of all religions as per the record in visitors' book being maintained at Lakhpat. "Guru Nanak Darbar Society (Regd.) Gandhidham, has been requesting the government of Gujarat for permission for repair and maintenance of this shrine which was in bad condition with leaking roofs, etc. The government of Gujarat granted permission for repair and conservation work. Mrs. Gurmeet Rai, Director, Cultural Resources & Conservation Institute, New Delhi has undertaken the job of repair/conservation from last about 6 months, at an estimated cost of about Rs. 20 lacs. Lakhpat is 140 km from Bhuj and 200 km from Gandhidham, there is good motorable road, as well as Bhuj is connected by air, and there is regular flight from Mumbai to Bhuj.

MOHINDER SINGH  
Post Box 13  
Gandhidham 370 201  
Gujarat

\* \* \* \* \*

## Sikh Heroes of World War II

Thank you for the kind words you have written about my book, "They Died For All Free Men". [SR: July 2003] I was inspired by an Australian lady who had come all the way from Sydney to pay her respects to a close relative who had died during WW II. She wanted to know about the martial spirit of the Sikhs. The chapter on "Martial Spirit in Sikhs and the Role played by the Sikh Gurus" is a result of that enquiry.

The National Heritage Board in Singapore wanted a chapter on the Sikh religion and the contributions made by the Sikhs since their coming and settling in Singapore after 1880, in order for the book to be of 'heritage' value. The support was given after these chapters were included. This helped me in another way. The big Chinese organizations, such as the Shaw Foundation and Lee Foundation, came out with significant financial support.

The black and white photographs were purchased from the Imperial War Museum in London. They are rare photographs most of which have never been published previously. These photographs and maps were enlarged and displayed at the Exhibition held at the launching ceremony on 20 April 2003. The exhibits have been since donated by the Sikh community to the Singapore archives.

Justice Choor Singh, 92, could not attend the launching ceremony, due to ill health, he is unable to move about. He is however, mentally alert.

The article in Mandarin appeared in a local Chinese daily. The translation is by a local Sikh lady - Ms Kairon Kaur Dhillon.

SURJAN SINGH  
34 Bodmin Drive  
Singapore 559633

\* \* \* \* \*

## Guru Granth Sahib Swaroop in homes: *Pujari-vad* in Delhi

Please accept our many thanks and congratulations on publishing the thought provoking article "Futility of *Akhand Paths*" by Sardar Gurvinder (Dimpy) Singh. [SR April 2003] I personally consider these paid *Akhand Paths* as sheer and futile *Karam Kand*. It only creates a set of parasites on society called *Akhand pathis* around our Gurdwaras.

Unfortunately, the ritual is booming, and the Sikh Psyche is struck with the cancer. It is also being encouraged by the Gurdwara management. Vested interests for continuation of this worthless ritual are at play. I do get the feeling that the *Sangat* is being actually *discouraged* from reading - and thus understanding - the Guru Granth Sahib/ doing *path* themselves. You can visit any Gurdwara Sahib and you will not be allowed to do *path*.

Now that the SGPC has taken over control of printing of SGGS (a very correct step), one reads about instructions being issued by the SGPC that SGGS Sarup

should not be given to a *Sahejdhari* Sikh, or to anyone who drinks. At the same time, the same august body is not prepared to accept this requirement (non drinking) for candidates for election to its own house.

Here, I will like to share my experience with your readers, which makes me feel that all is not well on this front. While working with the United Nations, and on an assignment in Tanzania (Africa), I was able to visit India (1999) for 10 days. We have kept SGGs *Sarup* with us since my marriage, except when I was posted to field stations. Unfortunately, while moving to Tanzania, I had moved alone initially and my wife joined me few months later. She could not bring the SGGs *Sarup* with her. During our visit to Delhi we decided to take a medium size *Sarup* with us to Tanzania. At the Gurdwara Sees Ganj, we were directed to Gurdwara Rakab Ganj. In the manager's office, he was busy in casual conversation with two other gurdwara employees. After waiting for few minutes to attract his attention, I ventured to enter the room and make my request for the SGGs *Sarup*. This is how the further conversation went:

Manager: Where have you come from?

Reply: We have come from outside India, Africa.

Manager: Are you staying in a hotel?

Reply: No. We are staying with our relatives. But is there any problem if we were staying in the hotel?

Manager: If you were staying in the hotel then you cannot get it.

Reply: Why?

Manager: Because the hotel rooms are not clean.

Reply: Sardar Sahib, unfortunately there is no flight direct from Delhi to Mwanza (Tanzania) where I am presently posted. Perforce I have to stay in the hotels both at Bombay and Dar-el-Salaam, en route.

Manager: How are you going to carry the SGGs *Beer*?

Reply: I have a suitcase in which we will carry it with us and have a car waiting down below.

Manager: Have you brought five Singhs with you?

By then, I was at the end of my patience. I replied that both I and my wife are Sikhs. I presume he and the other two blue turbaned gentlemen sitting in front of him - were also Sikhs. That does make us five and could we have the SGGs *Sarup* now?

We were not so lucky. Sardar Sahib now cursed the 'book-binders' who had not done the job as promised by them. He asked us to come two days later, which we dutifully did. The same 'book-binder' story was repeated and we were again asked to come two days later. We were there yet again, because we were very keen to take the SGGs *Sarup* with us. Sardar Sahib asked us about the time of our flight back next day. On being informed that it was at 0930 in the morning, he wanted us to come at 0800 hrs next morning. I should my inability to do that and we departed from Delhi sadly without it.

The whole conversation raises certain key questions about our attitude. Obviously we have completely forgotten that we Sikhs owe allegiance to the **Shabad Guru, and not to the format. Format i.e. SGGS Sarup is also important and must be given all the respect and revered at all times. Are we on the right lines? By not allowing and discouraging SGGS Sarup to be kept at home, are we not discouraging Sikhs from reading the Gurbani themselves?**

Through your esteemed columns, I invite your readers views on the subject. Also, the main purpose of this letter is to explore, in view of my sad experience, how can we make the *SGGS Sarup* available to all those Sikhs who wish to keep it at home, do regular *sewa* and do daily *path* themselves as much as possible.

Col. AVTAR SINGH  
Toronto. Canada  
Email; gmalik@mindspring.com

□