

In Memoriam: Prof. Sahib Singh (1898-1977)

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Prof. Sahib Singh - the distinguished theologian and commentator - died on 29 October 1977, and this year in October, when we are celebrating 300 years of Guru Gaddi Diwas, I would like to pay my homage to him for his unique contributions that make the celebration meaningful.

Prof. Sahib Singh in his autobiography, "*Meri Jeewan Kahani*" in Punjabi writes on Page 175 that the Khalsa Yateemkhana, an orphanage was very close to his house and he used to go there every morning for *satsang*. There after the *keertan* of *Aasa di Vaar* the head master of the institution Chabber Singh used to do discourses. One day, during the discourse he asked Prof. Sahib Singh if he was in agreement with what was being said. Prof. Sahib Singh kept quiet but, after the session, he approached Chabber Singh and said that he did not feel like contradicting him in front of so many people. He suggested that if we could hold our discussion sessions before the discourses, this way we can get each other's viewpoint and narrow down disagreements, if any, and this way any unsavory controversies can be avoided. According to Prof Sahib Singh that thought became an impetus and they started meeting everyday for one and half hour between 3:00 PM and 4:30 PM for these sessions. They created this study group in which there were four founding members. The discussions in this study group centered on understanding Guru Granth Sahib based on the grammar.

What struck me was the fact that the seed sown in 1927 by Prof. Sahib Singh, was kept alive, nurtured and nourished by him, yielded a bumper crop. Although, he was involved in teaching and writing books, yet he kept this interest in the subject alive all his life. Others who joined him in these discussions and study group provided him with valuable input, critique, support and counter arguments which helped him refine his thoughts, test them and further develop them. Finally, this whole exercise crystallized in form of ten volumes of books titled **Darpan Shri Guru Granth Sahib**. The last volume was published in August 1964. Today these ten volumes has become a standard reference material for any one trying to understand what Gurus have said and written. **This year, 2008 when we celebrate 300 years of Guru Gaddi Divas let us pay our respects to Prof. Sahib Singh as his single handed efforts have made the understanding Guru Granth Sahib's teachings possible and available to every one.** How many of us can imagine keeping our passion, interest in a subject alive for the entire life span and produce such a monumental work despite abject poverty, and poor health?

Today, with this living legacy in our hand we can understand what our Gurus have said three hundred years back over a period of two hundred years. This legacy is a lasting legacy as it enables us - not just connect with our Gurus, understand their message, but enables us incorporate it in our lives.

Prof. Sahib Singh was passionate about Gurbani and it made him a Gurmukh. His dedication, perseverance, commitment, patience, scholarship and scientific bent of mind has created unprecedented collection of jewels. Any one who can develop understanding of Gurbani because of the jewels left behind by him will be indebted to him for the rest of his/her life.

This tribute from a keen student of the Gurus' teachings will be the true homage to him,

which no memorial building build in his honor can ever match. By his unique contribution he has become an institution and a legend.



Dr. Kharak Singh (1922-2008): A Tribute

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[Dr. Birendra Kaur is the daughter of Dr. Kharak Singh.]

Dr. Kharak Singh, who passed away at his home in Chandigarh on August 07, 2008, was a truly patriarchal figure in present day Punjab. With an uncommon zeal for the advancement of Sikhism he devoted a quarter-century to Panthic mission as Founding Father (with Late Sr. Daljit Singh, I.A.S) in setting up the prestigious Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh, with help from many renowned personalities, undertaking an array of religious, social, educational and cultural projects which he pursued till the last breath of his life.

He was a person with a vision, aware of the present day challenges that the Sikhs have been facing in the context of changing socio-political scenario across the world. He also knew that, to achieve his *panthic* goals, it is imperative to create a pool of talent and intellect, such as retired senior Army Officers, I.A.S, Doctors, judges, writers and scholars to form a durable nucleus organization so that their combined moral and intellectual experiences can be used in a systematic and collective manner, for the wellbeing of the global Sikh Community. It is for this reason that he formed International Sikh Confederation, which achieved great success in building better co-ordination among various socio-religious organizations, and its success is proven by the fact that the ISC have received all round recognition and support from premier Sikh bodies in its Educational, Employment, *Dharam Prachar*, Sikh History Research, and many other on-going community welfare projects.

Dr. Kharak Singh was born in village Raiyan Khurd, district Amritsar, in the historical year of 1922 when the Panth launched a united struggle for the freedom of their historical Shrines from the clutches of *Mahants*. By a unique co-incidence, the day happened to be the Birth Anniversary of the founder of Sikh Religion, Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji. When he was born, his father, Sardar Saudagar Singh Ji, who had been actively involved in Gurdwara Reform Movement "*Guru Ka Bagh Morcha*" - was in jail. His mother Sardarni Achhar Kaur was a pious religious woman who played a vital role in giving shape to her big family. She not only helped her children to acquire higher education but also taught them to lead a *Gurmat* inspired life.

Dr. Kharak Singh was an outstanding agricultural economist, who completed his M.Sc. and Ph.D from America in a record period. He served in prestigious positions under the Punjab State and Government of India and had a successful stint with FAO/UN.

Today, he might not be physically present with us, but his overall contribution for Sikh Community's various affairs will be always remembered. The successful continuity of the *Gurmat mission* he initiated is the best tribute to him. He had a unique quality of winning confidence and support of different *Panthic* organization, such as SGPC, DSGMC, Central Singh Sabha,

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, and Chief Khalsa Diwan, for launching *Panthic* projects.

Some of his scholarly writings were sponsored by SGPC, including "**Sikhism: Its**

History & Philosophy, History of the Sikhs and their Religion", now available in bound volumes. He undertook the translation (into English) of Ratan Singh Bhangoo's classic "*Gur-Panth Parkash*". The Institute of the Sikh Studies has been publishing a quarterly journal "**Abstracts of Sikh Studies**" as editor from its inception. The journal has been publishing articles of many eminent scholars, particularly his editorial, effectively dealt with the burning topics related to the Sikh Community in an analytical and balanced way. Under his Editorship the journal has touched new heights and extended its circulation across the world.

