

TAKHT SRI HAZUR SAHIB: JOURNEY INTO ETERNITY

By Dr. Mohinder Singh

Published by Himalayan Books in Association with National Institute of Panjab Studies,
New Delhi (2008)

Price: Rs.595 Pp. 96

*A Review by Dr. HK Sagoo**

The 21st Century generation of Sikhs has been fortunate in celebrating several major historical events during 2004-2008. Earlier too - beginning with the tercentenary of *Prakash* of Guru Gobind Singh in 1966, and the Quincentenary of the earthly advent of Guru Nanak Dev in 1969, as also tercentenary of the initiation of the Khalsa in 1999, the Sikhs across the world celebrated two major events relating to the holy scripture, Guru Granth Sahib. In 2004 the quadricentenary of the installation of the *Adi Granth* in the holy precincts of Sri Darbar Sahib, (popularly known as Golden Temple) and - past year - the Tercentenary of the *Gurgaddi Divas* to commemorate Guru Gobind Singh's declaration of SGGS as the Guru Eternal. While Institutions, like the SGPC, DSGMC and others, remained spearheaded the traditional celebration, spreading the message of Guru Granth Sahib to larger audiences at home and abroad, strangely enough, the National Level Committee specifically formed to celebrate the tercentenary [with a whopping budget of over Rs 2,000 Crores] achieved little by way of promoting the SGGS as Fountain head of spirituality!

However, the Delhi based National Institute of Panjab Studies, (at Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan) took a major lead in correcting this imbalance between traditional celebrations and the academic work by taking up special publication programmes in a big way. The Institute published eight pictorial books under the '**Panjab Heritage Series**' to mark the Khalsa tercentenary and 400 years of Guru Granth Sahib. It has recently come out with three major publications: (1) *Guru Granth Sahib: The Guru Eternal*, and (2) *Takht Sri Hazur Sahib*, by Dr. Mohinder Singh, and (3) *In the Footsteps of Guru Gobind Singh* by Dr. J.S. Neki. The first title, was released by Mr Hamid Ansari, Vice-President of India, at an august gathering of scholars to mark the celebrations.

Takht Sri Hazur Sahib: Journey Into Eternity specially written for the Tercentenary by Dr. Mohinder Singh, keeping to serve the global body of devotees, was released at Hazur Sahib by President of India, Mrs. Pratibha Patil. The text embodies the historic events leading to Guru Gobind Singh Ji's extraordinary journey to the Deccan - to meet the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. Upon the latter's death, the Tenth Guru agreed to a rapprochement with Aurangzeb's son and successor Bahadur Shah Awal.

The book picturesquely narrates Guru Sahib's 'encounter' with Banda Bairagi and his subsequent initiation into the Order of the *Khalsa* as *Banda Singh Bahadur*. Even as the growing proximity between the Rajputs, Marathas and the Sikhs, under Guru Gobind Singh, posed a serious threat to the Mughal hegemony, Wazir Khan, the *Suba* of Sirhind, (responsible for many atrocities, including bricking alive of Chhote Sahibzade) felt uneasy at the growing proximity between Guru Gobind Singh and Bahadur Shah. He hatched a conspiracy to assassinate the Guru at Nanded. When he found that the Guru was fast recovering from the wounds of the attack by a Pathan mercenary, he hatched another conspiracy.

The book gives a detailed account of the origin and development of Takht Sri Hazur Sahib and other historical Gurdwaras across Nanded. It gives an account of the daily

routine at the Takht and explains various ceremonies. Now - in the wake of celebration, the sleepy town of Nanded has been transformed into a mega city, with a new Airport, wider roads, a new railway station, *Sarais*, and a Yatri Niwas, a Gobind Bagh, a Guru Granth Sahib Bhawan and state-of-the-art Museum. Apart from photographs of the historic Gurdwaras by eminent photographers like Sondeep Shankar and Malkiat Singh, the book contains paintings by eminent artists and photographs of historic relics.

Reasonably priced and beautifully brought out, this book should be of interest as much for libraries as for scholars and personal collections.



**“NITNAYM & OTHER BAANIS”
in`qnym qy hor bwxlAW
(With Roman Transliteration & English Translation)**

By Dr. Harjinder Singh Dilgeer

Published by The Sikh University Press, Waremm, Belgium

Pp: 402. Price: Rs. 120 [Indian Bookstore not mentioned]

The prolific writer, Dr. Harjinder Singh Dilgeer, who has mostly lived abroad because of the troubled decade of 1980's, has come up with a fresh, racy and lucid translation of the holy text of Daily Sikh prayers “in`qnym” at a time when the people are once again turning to the divinely inspired Guru-Vâni.

As the basic texts, meant for daily recitation, the Japuji Sahib (and other shorter prayers) need to be comprehended in all their majesty and profundity - as the step-by-step guidepost to inner peace and happiness.

Ordinarily, most Sikhs should be able to recite the text orally and follow the meaning and message without any support from foreign language translations. Considering, however, that the children of Sikh families living overseas are often unable to learn Gurmukhi script, there is a compelling need for transliteration / translation of the holy text. In that context Dr. Dilgeer's handy volume is a boon. Its special appeal consists in the unadorned simplicity and the avoidance of esoteric argument, not to mention the moderate price-tag.

- S.S.

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BETRAYED BY THE STATE: THE ANTI-SIKH POGROM OF 1984

By Jyoti Grewal, New Delhi

Published by Penguin (2007).

Price: Rs. 275 (Paperback)

A Review by Himadri Banjeree*

Come November, 2009, Sikhs would be re-visiting the 1984 tragedy, after twenty-five years. On this occasion the community intelligentsia need to read this book - and as a significant attempt in introspection. The young author makes a critical study of the anti-Sikh Pogrom of 1984. It is based on printed sources, field notes and other material skillfully assembled and mulled over a number of years. The author takes special care to make her book gripping. She suggests that the entire plot was executed as per the blueprint drawn by a powerful section of the ruling party of the country.

During those fateful days, the state had virtually also agreed to abdicated its authority in favour of a caucus in India's capital. A horrendous massacre of marginalised Sikhs took place in Trilokpuri and other colonies on the fringes of Delhi. The author points out that the Indian 'nation state' deliberately remained passive so that the Sikh subalterns could be butchered in a systematic manner. The entire plan was drawn to teach them 'a lesson' for assassinating Mrs Gandhi by her two Sikh bodyguards. Showering of bullets on the body of the prime minister was certainly a heinous act. The Delhi Sikhs were bracketed to pay a heavy price. Hundreds of lives were lost, and properties were destroyed while fragmented families had to witness many untold social indignities in the next two decades.

Grewal underlines the fact that the anti-Sikh Pogrom did not convey any popular outburst against the prime minister's assassination against Sikhs. On the contrary, she emphasizes that the entire plan was executed at a measured speed by hundreds of hoodlums. They had been equipped with necessary explosives and lethal weapons for attacking unarmed Sikhs in their home, gurdwaras, factory, business place, public transport and elsewhere. Indeed the hoodlums had, possibly, access to electoral role so that different Sikh houses could be quickly identified in any particular locality. The massacre continued for three days; the army was asked to intervene only after ruffians had already accomplished their mission.

Mass killings apart, there were incidents of desecration of Guru Granth. The pillaging of Gurdwaras Golaks figured prominently in many of their plans. Instead of portraying the experience of Delhi as a bloody battle between two communities, Grewal finds it a one-way traffic directed against Sikhs. That is why they prefer to remember it as another *ghalughara* of their history. The author does not agree that mere apology, or a package of financial compensation, would heal the community's wound. She observes: 'if Sikhs think and feel that they are firmly on the margins, never to be allowed into the centre, then that is their reality.' It led to 'a Second Migration' of Sikhs residing in different Indian provinces towards Punjab, and created a sense of 'homelessness' among them.

Grewal's volume is a critical projection of what had happened to thousands of Delhi Sikhs in 1984. The author does not claim that the Delhi Pogrom was an aftermath of a Jat and non-Jat divide of the community as suggested by Khushwant Singh (*Tribune*, December 15, 2007). Nowadays his powerful pen is unpredictable, by misreading many powerful Sikh narratives while remaining silent when his readers expected righteous indignation from the veteran.

Khushwant Singh's critics may be precisely correct with reference to one minor area of the study. The author misses caution while commenting on Punjab bound migration of Sikhs residing in different eastern Indian states following 1984 Pogrom. It is a point of debate whether the majority of Sikhs of these states did really respond to the pattern of Grewal. The Delhi experiences produced unfortunate 'trickles' in a few urban centres. But these did not stimulate any large scale Sikh migration to Punjab. India's latest Census estimates suggest (2001) that nearly one-fifth of the total Sikh population is still there in different non-Punjab provinces. It points out their significant rise in the recent years though their behaviour with the local indigenized Sikhs does not respect her framed rules of 'model minority' (p. 189).

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Limca's Book of Records: Meet Mr. Long Beard

I felt like saying, "Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair", as the Sikh gentleman went on unwinding his long beard - beard longer than himself! I am talking about Jagmohan Singh, the one time record holder in the *Limca Book of Records*, for growing the second longest beard. He is 5.2 ft tall, while his beard is 6.4 ft and he resembles the eldest dwarf in "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs". Here are some excerpts from a lively interaction I had with him.

Your inspiration ...

I am a *sardar* and it is our tradition to keep long beard and long hair but I always wanted to keep a long beard.

When did you make it to the *Limca Book of Records* and the Guinness World Records?

In 1992 for the former and in 1994 for the latter.

How long did it take to grow this long?

At the age of 25 my beard started growing abnormally long. I then decided that I would keep an exceptionally long beard. I used to massage it with *malai* and *ghee* to soften it.

How does it feel?

I feel delighted.

Your future plans ...

I aspire to continue to have my name in the Book and now that I'm 50, and my beard has grown longer, I stand better chance of winning!

Contributed by: Nabina Dey, XII, Coordinator, Central Modern School, Baranagar, West Bengal.