W. H. McLeod: Doyen among Historians of Sikhism

PROF. HIMADRI BANERJEE*

* 15/1B, Sahanagar Road, Kolkata 700026. Email: hbanerje@cal3.vsnl.net.in

HEW MCLEOD (1932-2009) is perhaps one of the greatest historians of our times. His life long commitment to critical scholarship sets him aside [and away] from many of his contemporaries. Hew's passing away is a great loss to them. He was also a gentleman who listened carefully, always open to the work of others. His own standards were exact and rigorous, and his meticulous research led to his 'convictions'. He, then, defended it against varied criticism which perhaps no scholar can 'anticipate and answer'.

Historian from 'Down Under':

McLeod was born to a New Zealand sheep farmer, decided against farming, went off to the University of Otago in Dunedin. It was followed by three years at a theological college. But at the time of his end [July 2009], he was holding Emeritus Professorship in the Department of History, University of Otago, with numerous pioneering scholarly works on the history of Sikhism to his credit. **His life long dedication to research on the dissimilar areas of Sikh history gave the discipline an international recognition in the present-day globalized world.**

He came to Punjab in 1958. After teaching in the well-known Christian missionary college at Batala for about nine years - and learning, simultaneously, many elements of Sikh history - he went over to England for further research. **These nine Punjab years represent a crucial period of his life.** It initiated him to Punjabi language and literature, which blossomed as a 'master's grip' in subsequent years of dedicated research. He was nurtured to be a Punjabi. It was also a period of silent training for further research residing [mostly] outside the province. Here, his early training in the analysis of textual sources of Sikhism was to reach a new height in many of his subsequent researches on the Sikh past.

Thus the '**Kiwi Historian**' began his journey in search of the Sikhs of history nearly four decades ago. It was an arena generally restricted to the Sikh scholarship, which was again predominantly located in Indian Punjab. He had no doubt before him a long tradition of British administrator-scholars who had enriched his understanding about the evolution of the Sikh Panth. But by the time of demise, his scholarly contributions have laid the foundation of an invisible link of bridging scholars cutting across religious communities who are scattered across the globe.

Pioneer:

With the publication of his pioneering work (1968) on the life and mission of the founder of Sikhism, he had to share accolades as well as bitter criticism. In course of another decade, he had to his credit two more equally significant scholarly contributions on the Sikhs and Sikhism (1976 and 1980). These works intensified the debate as well as stimulated new researches on the Sikh history.

He pioneered a new critical methodology of research, which differed significantly from what had been going on in the arena of Sikh Studies [in the past]. **A section of Sikh scholars found his scientific textual analysis of the different versions of *janamsakhi* 'blasphemous' because it raised new questions regarding their authorship and**

textual hybridism. This was even more shocking to a section of the devout Sikhs. McLeod's path breaking research was harshly condemned in different print media of Punjab. He was widely accused of demeaning the message of Sikhism. But it was appreciated by some contemporary scholars, like Ganda Singh and others.

Demography:

Sikhs residing in different parts of the world currently number over 22 Million. They scarcely constituted a monolithic bloc, nor should one expect any 'uniformity of vision and homogeneity of thought' among various religions. **This divergence in view and interpretation, in McLeod's view, underlines the vitality of the community, and suggests a flexible past relating to their Sikh faith.** It also underlines that Sikhs have a survival instinct'.

Troubled Years:

Perhaps never before, in twentieth century, a scholar of Sikh Studies had to pass through so many gruelling tests which Hew had to endure throughout his life. In the 1980s when Punjab was bleeding, Dr McLeod never lost touch with what had been taking place. But, as a historian, he knew his correct place is teaching and research, which he continued to pursue in the midst of an organized 'hate campaign' sponsored by a section of the community both within and outside Punjab. Unfortunate developments in Punjab deeply wounded the Sikhs. **As their sufferings gradually engulfed the political capital of the country (1984), their tradition of Sikh martyrdom reached a new height. A few of Hew's essays tried to contextualize contemporary Sikh experiences in the wider historical context of Sikh history. At least on one occasion, it communicates the voice of the minority trying to convey its own understanding of the past from the margin.**

Diaspora:

Tragedy in Punjab also galvanized a section of the Diasporan Sikh community to look back to their cultural roots and religious traditions. With their century-long experience of residence outside India and their intimate contact with the wider critical scholarship in the West, they took initiative in introducing academic courses in teaching Punjabi and the history of the Sikhs in the different universities. Financial support poured in and a new academic position was created at the South Asia Centre of the University of Toronto. Hew McLeod was their obvious choice.

Academia:

Dr McLeod had previously delivered lectures in the University at Oxford and several other places. Now his presence across the Atlantic was destined **to add a new dimension and dignity to the Sikh Studies**. Some of his course lectures there steadily took the form of newer publications (1989 and 1990). In these important works, he explored new ground relating to the Sikhs as well as the nature of their religious institutions and code of social behaviour. These widened the scope of debate which was no longer restricted among academicians. More people from the Sikh community grew interested - as well as bitterly critical of his [critical] methodology. It led to wider discussions fiercely criticizing some of his pioneering comments on the life of Guru Nanak as well as the birth of the Khalsa. There were occasions when the mercury of the debate rose unduly high questioning his academic credentials as well as his integrity as a scholar.

Expanding Frontiers:

These debates extending the frontiers of the Sikh Studies in the West also coincided with the development of the diasporan Sikh settlements into new centres of Sikh culture. **Such debates in the context of the deteriorating Punjab crisis generated newer questions about their ties with India and the community's future road map of academic enrichment in this part of the world. Through their struggling days of fund raising, numerous enthusiastic supports came forward to sponsor a number of 'Sikh Chair positions' in some of the front ranking universities of the United States of America. Some of McLeod's first batch of bright students have been called upon to take up their responsibilities.**

Dr McLeod's participation in the Sikh Studies, beginning with Guru Nanak in history, has encouraged a new generation of scholars to incorporate new method of field-study, as well as other tools of anthropologists, linguist[s] and sociologists in the discipline.

His life long struggle for critical methodology has provided new credibility to Sikh Studies which would continue to remain an important feature of it in the twenty-first century.

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W. H. McLeod (1932-2009) - An Obituary

PROF. GURINDER SINGH MANN*

* University of California, Santa Barbara, USA

HAVING BATTLED COURAGEOUSLY with cancer for seven years, W.H. McLeod had a fall and succumbed to his injuries on July 20, 2009. Known to be a caring family person, a generous teacher, and an outstanding scholar of the Sikh tradition, McLeod will be missed by family and friends spread around the globe.

New Zealander by birth, Hew McLeod and his wife Margaret arrived in the Punjab under the auspices of their church in the late 1950s, underwent a transformation to turn into self-proclaimed atheists, developed a special affection for the Sikhs, and McLeod went onto to dedicate the rest of his life toward studying the Sikh community.

His scholarly career began with ***Guru Nanak and Sikh Religion*** (Clarendon Press, 1968) and the extensive work that followed this can be placed under the broad categories of Sikh history, translations of early Sikh texts, and critical discussions of early Sikh literature. His seminal studies in these three areas include ***The Evolution of the Sikh Community*** (Clarendon Press, 1975) and ***Who is a Sikh? The Problem of Sikh Identity*** (Clarendon Press, 1989); ***The B-40 Janam Sakhi*** (Guru Nanak Dev University, 1980) and ***The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*** (University of Otago, 1987); ***Early Sikh Tradition*** (Clarendon Press, 1980) and ***Sikhs of the Khalsa Rahit*** (Oxford University Press, 2003), respectively. **In terms of range, depth, and usefulness for teaching the Sikh tradition, McLeod's writings constitute a class by themselves.**

McLeod's contribution to Sikh Studies includes mentoring students who now hold positions of prominence within the field. Tony Ballantyne (University of Otago, New Zealand), Louis Fenech (University of Northern Iowa, U.S.A.), and Pashaura Singh (University of California, Riverside) worked under his direct guidance, while many others-

myself includedhad the benefit of his advice at crucial junctures of their academic careers. In this role, McLeod was generous with his time and did whatever he could to help younger scholars find their own paths.

Furthermore, McLeod took upon himself the responsibility of helping the Western world become aware of the importance of the Sikh community and its traditions. At the invitation of the American Council of Learned Societies, he delivered a series of lectures at North American universities during 1986-1987, and **later appeared as 'expert witness' in the Canadian courts on issues ranging from the nature and importance of the Sikh turban to the understanding of the Sikh sword (*kirpan*) as a religious symbol.** Until 2002, when his health began to deteriorate, one cannot think of any major academic event concerning Sikhism in North America in which he was not present.

McLeod's career, however, was not without bumps. From the very outset, controversies dogged his research, and scholarly opinion remained split on the nature of his work. Some scholars were critical of his argument developed in ***Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*** and as a result he was not invited to the international conference held at Punjabi University, Patiala, to celebrate the fifth centennial of Guru Nanak's birth in 1969. Simultaneously, there were others who supported the publication of a Punjabi translation of the section on the Guru's teachings in the same book by Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, in 1974.

With his subsequent writings, these tensions turned into noisy public denunciations of McLeod's scholarship at Sikh forums both in the Punjab and overseas in the late 1980s. The publication of his provocatively entitled ***Who is a Sikh? The Problem of Sikh Identity***, in 1989, did not help this situation. McLeod was, however, fortunate to have the support of Margaret, a very special human being in her own right, and he stoically made his way forward through this period of agony and stress. He provides his reflection on this phase of his life in his book ***Discovering the Sikhs*** (Permanent Black, 2004).

The precise nature of McLeod's scholarly legacy will be sorted out in the months and years ahead. As I write, there are some scholars who consider his formulations on various issues of Sikh history as sacrosanct, and there are others who so profoundly dislike what he has written that they are not able to discuss it in a calm manner. **No matter what shade of opinion one may hold between these extremes, there is no question about the fact that McLeod's writings have remained at the center of Sikh scholarship during the past four decades. His imprint on the field stands unmatched by any other scholar of his generation.**

It is hard for me to miss this opportunity to publically acknowledge my gratitude for his role in my own scholarly growth. The fact that I hold different positions than those of Professor McLeod on a wide variety of issues ranging from the origin of the Sikh community to the dating of many early Sikh texts did not effect his support for my work and affection for my family. I salute this beautiful human being and outstanding scholar for his unquestionable integrity!

For me, the best homage to the memory of Professor McLeod lies in the continuation of his legacy of asking difficult questions, stating one's research results with candor, and defending them to the best of one's ability, if need be. While coming to terms with the hard fact of his departure from the scene, **I believe his admirers, critics, and others alike need to begin a more nuanced discussion about the future of Sikh Studies in the post-McLeod era. Nothing would please him more than seeing our concerted effort**

towards encouraging the growth of responsible scholarship and the coexistence of a wide variety of ideas in the field he so caringly nurtured for over four decades!

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Hew McLeod: In Memory of a Friend and Fellow Scholar

PROF. N.G. BARRIER (USA)*

* 1400 Stonehaven Rd., Columbia, Mo. 65203. Email: barriern@missouri.edu

WE ARE GATHERED to remember our good friend, Hew McLeod. Hew and Margaret asked me to say a few words. These will reflect the massive upswell of emotion and grief among Hew's many friends across the globe. My wife Joanne and I had the privilege of being with Hew and Margaret several times over the last decade. Hew and I go back a long way, with our first meeting in Batala (Punjab) in 1969. He was one of my two closest friends, and as he would say about his relationship with JS Grewal, I am his 'younger brother'. I appreciate Tony sharing these thoughts, both personal and a reflection of how a community of friends and scholars has 'experienced' Hew McLeod.

Two events accidently coincided with Hew's fall a couple of weeks ago. Just a day or so before being hospitalized, he mailed the final proofs of a **revised Penguin volume on Sikhism.*** A little earlier, New Zealand TV ran that wonderful documentary on his life, family, and contributions to Sikhs abroad and in New Zealand. I laughed and cried when I heard Hew described as a New Zealand Success Story and an International Superstar. That he was, but I would have given much to see his face when those superlatives hit the screen. Although Hew had a much more modest view of himself, I am sure he enjoyed the discussions of his contributions and the story of his life and family. I personally learned many things from the documentary, ranging from a book he wrote, "*Punjab to Aoteara*," and never mentioned to me, to the poignant story about Ruthie's adoption and the letter promising to raise to her in a sectarian way.

Research - Beyond Comfort Zone:

For me, particular themes also stood out in the half hour presentation. Hew ventured beyond his comfort zone as a historian working with documents to become an ethnographer and anthropologist gathering oral material and working in great detail with the memories of individual New Zealand Sikhs. **Hew also appeared as a scribe, copying a rare document in Amritsar, soon to be destroyed in the attack on the Golden Temple.** Hew frankly straddled the old and new in technology. I remember his old decrepit computer and software, finally evolving into the use of a modern machine with a flat screen. Still, the documents that he collected and which were digitized by Harpret Singh originally were in Hew's careful handwriting.

In a broader sense, Hew was an accidental scholar. He had the training and personality to carry out great work, but not until the opportunity came to go to India, where he discovered the Sikhs, did he integrate those skills into a valuable lifetime pursuit of Sikh history. There he and Margaret explored their own values, and Hew made a dramatic pivot from activities relating to the pulpit to the University lectern. **Ainslie Embree's account of their discussions about whether to attend church services when he no longer believed dogma is illuminating.** Ainslie counseled "hold on" for awhile, but Hew found that

to be “hypocritical play-acting.” As Ainslie notes, “as I got to know him better, I realized that my advice while expedient was contrary to everything he stood for as a person and a scholar. That was at the heart of his greatness, a commitment to truth, and why I so greatly valued his friendship.”

Commitment to Truth:

There of course was nothing accidental about what Hew brought to the table once he began serious research on Sikhism. He had a unique intelligence coupled with a commitment to history, finding the truth, and getting every piece of evidence, small and large, from documents. He pulled no punches when examining Sikh tradition, although characteristically, he frequently interjected phrases such as “it is possible” or “the evidence seems to suggest” so as to open up dialogue with others who might have different perspectives and use different documents.

The products? A lifetime of unbroken scholarship, books, articles, and conference papers. Hew wrote or edited almost twenty books. He addressed most of the major issues concerning modern Sikhism. As numerous associates note in their reflections on Hew’s life, he helped define Sikh studies. He also trained a new generation of scholars and taught many students who built upon their experiences to move in a variety of directions. His oldest and most renowned student, Professor Pashaura Singh, holder of the Sikh Chair at the University of California Riverside, captures that experience: “As my mentor he taught me skills of scientific inquiry and guided me with gentle care. Right from the beginning of my association with him he encouraged me to become my own person in the field of Sikh studies. That is what I cherish the most from my experience with him. I still remember that day when it was heavily snowing in Toronto. During the class I had expressed the desire to see his forthcoming book from Columbia University. In that cold and heavy show he walked to my apartment and knocked at the door. When I opened the door, he offered me the galley proofs of his book.”

Controversy:

Questioning documents and re-examining traditions necessarily generates opposition, and Hew’s whole life, henceforth, was filled with controversy. He narrates the issues beautifully in his intellectual autobiography, *Discovering the Sikhs*. Often politics, academic jealousy, and a sense of “Sikhism in danger” lay behind the attacks. Specific groups and networks of Sikhs mobilized, publishing books, holding numerous conferences, and at one juncture, spending approximately $10,000 in memberships and fees to get a lot of supporters into an academic seminar for the purpose to challenging Hew and his associates. No problem, Hew and those of us on the panel held our own. Fighting Hew McLeod turned out to be a very expensive proposition for some Sikhs. Even so, many of his critics have admitted that, as one puts it, “his writings have done a lot toward furthering the systematic study of Sikh history at the international level….Sikhs have lost a good friend.”

Something else grew out of the controversies. Hew demonstrated to all of us how to deal with arguments and still preserve one’s dignity and balance. IJ Singh, one of his admirers and a lay scholar in his own right, notes “What I saw and admired was a man under siege, but calm as in the eye of the storm. **“A close friend in Canada, Sher Singh, has written eloquently about how Hew personified a central Sikh concept, sahaj, or equipoise, solemnity. He had seen Hew honored and rebuked, healthy and weakened by illness, contemplative and energized in debate, acceding to error and defending his findings**

— He concludes: ”I had the pleasure of seeing him in all these facets and never, not once, did I see him lose poise or his ability to smile—that lovely disarming smile of his—or his gentleness or his gentility, or his humanity. There was always grace about him. Frankly I learnt about Sehaj not from the teacher or the friend, but from the Man.”

Sang-froid:

Hew managed to convey that calm and judgment to many of us who were ready to take up arms against the often silly and very personal charges against him and by extension, the “McLeod” gang. Many times I learned to send him a draft of a response to a chatroom challenge and he often talked me down or at least had me revise and temper my hot-headed rhetoric. Doris Jakobsh catches the spirit of such interactions: “Hew was an example for those of us who tend to jump first and think later. On occasion I would get an email from him urging quiet, restraint—something that never did come easily to me. His quiet graciousness towards those who called him “foe” was startling. Moreover, it never wavered. He was and will continue to be in my eyes the finest gentleman scholar I have ever met.”

Hew’s academic contributions were irreplaceable, but there is the very human side that made us not only respect him but love him.

Dedication:

First, he was a model for total dedication, often shutting out all seemingly extraneous activities. As he noted in the documentary, others have hobbies, Hew had his study. His work ethic was legend. Books and articles rolled out regularly, even as he fought valiantly against a disease that zapped his strength.

While focused, he seemed to be open to everyone and could share his time with others. He changed the lives of scholars and friends around him. All have their Hew McLeod stories. We would send in papers, and almost immediately get detailed replies, queries, and supportive suggestions. I can think of no better example than the way Himadri Banerjee describes his relationship with Hew. Himadri never met Hew in person, but carried on an extensive correspondence for two decades. He describes Hew as “good as my answering machine in the domain of Sikh studies.” Hew introduced him to those leading the 1987 Toronto Sikh Conference.. Himadri’s participation threw open a whole new area of understanding Sikhism, in India, but in the Bengal and Orissa area, and conversely, that experience introduced him to the wider scholarship of Sikh studies. Hew followed Himadri’s rise to international prominence, reading his work, making suggestions, and in general, being a long-range friend. **Van Dusenbery also remembers how Hew encouraged Rashmere Bhatti and Van when they were working on a book about the Sikh community in Wollgoolga. Rashmere venerated Hew as a truly selfless Sewadar (one who gives service). Hew gave service to each one of us, and we all are better scholars and human beings because of that sharing and empathy.**

The Sahajdhari:

Hew identified strongly with the Sikh community. On numerous occasions he ventured into social settings that potentially could have erupted in calumny and nastiness. At the invitation of I.J. Singh in New York, for example, Hew met with a group of Sikhs, many of whom had heard untrue claims about his research and his intentions. That event ended in Hew resolving issues, with some Sikhs reporting back to IJ that the meeting was unexpectedly useful and broadened their perspective. All now know of Hew’s service to the

New Zealand Sikh community. The documentary makes clear that his dedication and tedious research helped preserve the record of an evolving Sikh presence and contributed to local Sikhs' sense of community and family. As another summarized Hew's work, "The WHOLE Sikh world should be in mourning, his passing is a huge loss to the quom (nation or community)"

In his last years, Hew became central to the evolution of a new cyber community of scholars. He and I exchanged ideas and news almost daily. **Others recount how Hew served as a "walking encyclopedia," answering endless queries with supportive, gently corrective comments when necessary, and with a humourous edge.**

Again, a person who never met Hew personally but knew him well through internet exchanges, Himadri Banerjee, sums it up well: "The world is big, but for a few moments he could make us feel that we belong to a larger family….It is the invisible deathless Hew who has stimulated us over the years. For more than forty years, he has silently been constructing an invisible human bridge that keeps us together."

A Benchmark of Honor:

Hew is gone, but his presence remains. Speaking to the Indian nation after Gandhi's assassination, Nehru gave one of the most beautiful eulogies ever delivered: "The light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere. Our beloved leader, Bapu as we called him, the Father of the Nation, is no more. Perhaps I am wrong to say that. Nevertheless we will never see him again as we have seen him for these many years. We will not run to him for advice and seek solace from him, and that is a terrible blow." Then Nehru added, "The Light has gone out, I said, and yet I was wrong. For the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light. The light that has illumined this country for these many years will illumine this country for many more years".

Hew was no Gandhi, but his light continues to shine. For his friends and fellow scholars throughout the world, he personified serving truth, reminding us of the right path, helping to draw us from error, and establishing a benchmark of honor and trustworthiness. Hew Mcleod lives in our hearts and memory.

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Hew McLeod: Bouquets & Brickbats

GURMUKH SINGH (UK)*

* Ret'd Principal (policy), UK Civil Service. Email: sewauk2005@yahoo.co.uk

DR W H MCLEOD OF New Zealand passed away on 21st July 2009 at the age of 77 years. He dominated Sikh studies in the West for some four decades. He introduced Western methodology, contributed much himself, and questioned and challenged traditional Sikh lore. With a jolt, Sikh scholars were brought face to face with the need for application of rigorous western objectivity to the study of Sikh religious tradition.

That was not always the case before his arrival on the Sikh studies scene with his PhD thesis of 1965, published in 1968 as, "Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion".

In a different context and time frame, he was perhaps in the same league for taking Sikh religion to the West as J D Cunningham who completed his **"A History of the Sikhs"** at

about the same time as the annexation of Panjab in 1849, and Max Arthur Macauliffe who completed **"The Sikh Religion"** towards the end of the 19th Century. Hew McLeod will be remembered for his catalytic role in promoting Sikh studies in the West. He will also be remembered for creating more controversy about the authenticity of some parts of Sikh religious tradition than any other Western scholar in the 20th Century.

From New Zealand he went to Panjab in 1958, as a Christian missionary, and later "converted" to an atheist - and a student of Sikh religion. As was to be expected, by mixing atheism and religious study, McLeod was bound to apply "rigorous and critical methodology" to the study of any faith! The scene was set for much controversy in the years to come.

Nevertheless, despite controversy about McLeod's methods and even intentions, his great contribution to the recognition of Sikh religion at world level has been accepted by most Sikh scholars. In fact, the controversy itself has contributed to that recognition by raising the standard of Sikh studies in response to McLeod's desire to separate fiction from historical fact. One outstanding response is the "Perspectives On The Sikh Tradition" invited and edited by Justice Gurdev Singh (Academy of Sikh Religion & Culture 1986).

Cunningham clearly showed that the Sikh nation arose out of the founding ideology of Guru Nanak which unfolded as the Sikh *miri-piri* tradition up to the time of Guru Gobind Singh over a period of over 200 years spanning ten human Guruships. To quote, **"It was reserved for Nanak to perceive the true principles of reform, and to lay those broad foundations which enabled his successor Govind to fire the minds of his countrymen with a new nationality, and to give practical effect to the [Guru Nanak's] doctrine that the lowest is equal with the highest, in race as well as creed, in political rights as in religious hope."**

Max Arthur Macauliffe's starts his six volumes of "*The Sikh Religion*" with the words, **"I bring from the East what is practically an unknown religion. The Sikhs are distinguished throughout the world as a great military people, but there is little known even to professional scholars regarding their religion."**

Hew McLeod wrote extensively about Sikh religion. The list of his publications on Sikh studies is quite mind boggling and shows his total dedication to this subject. His stress on "rigorous critical methodology developed in the West during the last two centuries" was bound to question every aspect of Sikh beliefs and established practice. However, no matter how much we disagree with McLeod, as those like Dr Ganda Singh have stressed, charges of any "mala fide (in bad faith) intentions" on his part cannot be justified.

Doubts were expressed about his treatment of the Janamsakhis in his first publication "Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion". However, scholars defended the right of a historian to discard "fiction". Serious debate started with McLeod's provocative "The Evolution of the Sikh Community", published in 1975, in which McLeod chose to ignore much traditional and contemporary evidence. Instead he promoted his views about the impact and influence of environmental factors in changing the direction of Guru Nanak's Panth. Ignoring the essential continuity of Guru Nanak's mission, he regarded the martyrdom of Guru Arjun Devji's as a watershed (change of direction) in Sikh ideology.

McLeod seems to have missed the "political" (*miri*) aspect inherent in Guru Nanak Sahib's Gurbani which combined *simran* (meditation) with serving humanity, **here and now, by creating a just society in which no one inflicted pain on another. He gave too little importance to the underlying political idiom in Guru Nanak Sahib's thought and the**

institutional and organisational developments which took place during the Guru period from Guru Nanak Sahib to Guru Arjun Dev, which became the cause of Guru Arjun Dev's martyrdom. Contemporary evidence shows that these developments were noted with apprehension by rulers like Jehangir. He gave too much importance to the consequences of Guru Sahib's martyrdom and the influx of Jat peasantry of Panjab into Sikhism. He ignored Guru Hargobind Sahib's lead in taking Guru Nanak-Gobind Singh mission to the next (miri) stage.

Wrote Dr J S Grewal:- "Jagjit Singh put forth the idea that acquisition of political power for a noble cause could be "a legitimate spiritual pursuit". Unfamiliar with the idea, most of the scholars failed to appreciate the novel doctrine of "miri-piri". The hypothesis that the Sikh movement was a purely religious movement before it took a political turn with the martyrdom of Guru Arjun was a "distortion". Guru Arjun's "direct political involvement" was evident from the fact that he helped the rebel prince Khusrau……**Thus, it was not Guru Arjun's martyrdom which gave a political turn to the Sikh movement; rather it was the political ethos of the Sikh movement that contributed to his martyrdom**."

"Even a casual study of Guru Nanak's Gurbani brings out, "The distinctive Sikh view of *Naam marg* was not wedded to the doctrine of *ahimsa*. The obligation to bear arms and to be linked with *naam* was considered by the Khalsa to be complementary and not mutually exclusive." (Above quotes are from Dr J S Grewal's remarkable publication, **"The Sikhs: Ideology, Institutions and Identity"**, collection of essays (2009), (Oxford University Press).

Dr Hew McLeod did not revise the obvious flaws in his understanding of the **Sikh political ethos, which was always an inseparable part of the *bhagti-shakti* (meditation & acquisition of power to create an egalitarian society), *deg-teg* (community sharing & the sword), *miri-piri* (temporal & spiritual), twin-track revolutionary egalitarian mission of Guru Nanak Sahib.** That political aspect comes through in Guru Sahib's "political" reaction to Babar's invasion and cruelty; and in Banis like Asa di Vaar.

To quote Ishwinder Singh (IOSS), "The author [Hew McLeod] trained in the Western tradition did much for bringing Sikhism to Western academia's attention but often missed the point of Sikhism. His death may provide an occasion and trigger an in-depth look at, not just his position and location in the Sikh scholastic mindscape, but also the Sikh Nation's continuous fight to safeguard its traditions, history and spirit."

Dr Noel Q King put it in a nutshell about Dr McLeod's works, that despite "meticulously and exhaustively carried out drills in certain methods of Western criticism," "the reader seeking the well-springs of what Sikhism is will not be assisted. The only successful opponent [Sikh nation] to thousands of years of passing conquerors must have something that makes him tick!" ("Perspectives On The Sikh Tradition") **Regrettably, due to his "static" approach and failure to appreciate the progressive "continuum" of Guru Nanak's miri-piri mission, Dr McLeod failed to discover what made the Sikh nation "tick".**

I conclude with a quote from a post on Gurmat Learning Zone (GLZ) by Professor Nirmal Singh, **"Hew McLeod came in at a low point in Sikh studies and gave it a jolt to remember that the era of Macauliffe, Theosophical Society, Teja Singh, Ganda Singh, Puran Singh had passed by, and that the Sikh academia could do with some fresh thinking. For this we owe him thanks and must honor his memory."**

Postscript:

[On one occasion Dr J S Grewal, who was passing through, dropped in for an evening chat. He explained the background to the controversy in Sikh studies, which centred around Hew McLeod. I asked, what about applying similar "rigorous analytical methodology" to the orthodox world religions? He smiled and said something like, **"No point, because they lost the argument centuries ago! Sikhism will always stand up to such scrutiny."** That sort of confidence assumes a high standard of Sikh scholarship from within to withstand the external threat and challenges.]

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Halifax Gurdwara mourns the death of Dr. Hew McLeod

J.S. TIWANA*

* President, Maritime Sikh Society, Halifax, Canada

Halifax(Canada) Gurdwara, on Sunday August 2 , 2009 paid tributes to Dr. Hew McLeod, the celebrated scholar of Sikh studies, who breathed his last on July 20, 2009.

Jagpal Singh Tiwana, President of the Gurdwara recalled the visit of Dr. Hew McLeod to Halifax in October 1992 at the invitation of the Maritime Sikh Society, Halifax. Dr. McLeod was accompanied by his charming wife, Margaret . He presented a paper, 'The Sikh Struggle in the Eighteenth Century and its Relevance Today' at the International Centre Saint Mary's University, Halifax, spoke in the Gurdwara on 'Punjabis in New Zealand' and attended a reception in his honor in the evening at a local restaurant.

Mr. Gursharan Singh Toor, ex-president of our Gurdwara, was the chief speaker for the occasion. He paid glowing tributes to Dr. McLeod while appreciating his solid contribution to Sikh Studies. He said originally McLeod came to Punjab as Christian missionary, but was "spellbound by these new and different looking people called Sikhs. As he began to know them more, his fascination for their culture, history and their life style intensified. Ultimately, he not only quit the missionary service but also left Christianity and became a self proclaimed atheist..."

Mr. Toor remarked that McLoed was not only a scholar of high caliber, he had the qualities of character which impressed every one who came in contact with him, "I found Hew McLeod a very calm, stable, consistent but persistent person. His serenity could not be disturbed by any loud mouth. To me, he displayed the aura of what in Gurbani (Sikh scriptures) is called "Sehaj Avastha" or total serenity." remarked Mr. Toor.

Mr.Toor specifically pointed out Dr. McLeod's contribution on the turban issue in Canada. **In 1994, McLeod appeared as an expert witness in a court in Calgary and stressed the importance of turban to a Sikh when Baltej Singh Dhillon's right to wear a turban in the Canadian Police was challenged.** With his testimony, case was won and Sikhs are indebted to Dr. McLeod for the historic decision of the court. World Sikh Organization (WSO) thanked Dr. McLeod in its newsletter.

Mr Toor also had few words of praise for his wife Margaret who was not only his customary wife but a rock solid loyal friend through every thick and thin ready to face the

consequences of their decisions. With such loyal and supportive company, he followed his new passion in life: “Understanding of Sikhs, Sikhi and various aspects of their history.”

Mr. Toor concluded his tribute with an advice to members of Gurdwara Sangat, “This is the man whom I salute today. The best homage I can pay to this serene person is that we follow his methods of research and dedication relating to all fields of Sikh studies.”

At the conclusion of Gurdwara ceremonies Mrs. Satpal Kaur Sodhi, auothor of a book, “Sikh Ardas”, led the Ardas and prayed to Akal Purkh for granting peace to the departed soul.

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