

## Introduction

When Guru Nanak in his mystic trance was honoured by cosmic enlightenment, he, challenged the prevailing status quo by saying “I am neither a Hindu or a Musalmann”. The founder of Sikh religion created a multitude of enemies who went into “cognitive dissonance” and reacted very sharply to Sikhism as an independent religion. Historically speaking a positively actualized and evolved Sikh of Guru Nanak’s times, or Guru Gobind Singh’s Khalsa, has been enigma to the role dancing, docile, linear, convergent, myopic, “instrumental” Sikh researchers. H. Oberoi is one such pseudo-Sikh who has chosen to follow blindly Trumpp-McLeodian paradigms to make a living as a professor at the cost of a troubled Sikh community.

Sikhs had many enemies. The Mughal rulers, the enemies within, the close minded Arya Samajists, and finally the Eurocentric Colonial Missionary Research Scholars, have all taken sadistic pleasure in destroying Sikhism. These scholars, with their role dancing disciples, want to bring correctness to Sikh history. They use social science methods, developed in Europe, to understand Sikh Gurus and their mystic writings. Calvinistic thought and an arrogant belief in the inferiority of Asian religions, is at the root of their Euro centric research. Oberoi’s work, under cover of Academic Freedom, forgets all norms of civility, and even tramples over the guidelines set by Social Science Research Council of Canada (1993).

Dr Oberoi is a willing victim of “scholarly”, unsubstantiated arrogance when he calls Aad Sri Guru Granth Sahib an amorphous collated anthology without uniqueness. Clumsy distortions, mindless anthropological constructions and assumptions, producing ig-nominious forged postures, sacrilegious statements about mystic Gurus, effectless effort of a bland, blunted, unattached, constricted, shallow, pathetic Oberoi has produced a disjointed cynical, conscienceless and unscrupulous book called “Construction of Religious Boundaries” to attack the independent Sikh Identity. His parasitic personality has caused embarrassment, humiliation and disgrace to the independently emerging Sikh community of Canada. In writing this book, he has shown his pathological identification with Eurocentric paradigms, and has attempted to bring nihilistic depersonalization by biting the hands that fed him. A strong reaction formation to his childhood socialization gets verbalized in this book, which could be easily called an incoherent Eurocentric autoecholalia or anthropological word salad.

Many senior scholars of Sikh Studies have attempted to make sense of the garbled rambling of Oberoi, which can be seen from their credentials. All feel indignant because of the obnoxious, egocentric, and disdainful verbiages of Oberoi and other Eurocentric “instant” role dancing Sikh historians. We would recommend that Oberoi and his “think tank” will benefit if they read Dr Edmund Husserl’s book entitled “General Introduction to Phenomenology” (Allan and Urwin, New York). Some of the points are as follows:

Sikhs migrated to North America 100 years ago, and worked hard against racial discrimination and immigration bans. But still, they maintained their independent identity by establishing different Sikh Gurdwaras since 1907. Ever since the 1960s, as immigration policies in North America became more liberal, more educated Sikhs got the chance to migrate. Sikhs wanted to work with westerners at academic levels in the hope of getting a partnership which would secure best results at western universities, and paid with open mind to the U.B.C, U.O.T., Univ. of Michigan, and Columbia Univ. As the Sikhs have no political independent power to promote their Own identity, the Punjab crisis in the early 1980s forced the western Sikh community to take the responsibility on themselves to project the authentic image of Sikhism in the West (which was being eroded politically by anti-Sikh forces). Sikhs contributed generously so that a generation of promising young scholars would provide some long-term faculty appointments ending in long lasting results that would provide the future generations’ with the true Sikh identity and their roots as enshrined in Sikh scripture and early 17th and 18th century historical process in the making of Khalsa Sikh identity we documented in Persian and Sikh historical literature. The Sikh community gave all their trust, understanding, commitment and respect to the western university tradition of freedom of academic inquiry. They also thought that the western scholarship would also abide by the academic responsibility, honesty, humility, and integrity. They also hoped that the evidence and critical analysis would not mean hostility or insensitivity. But, all the dreams of the perspective donors were shattered at the U.O.T. by the planned attack on the authenticity of their Sikh scripture (original available in Kartarpuri Bir) by the use of unauthenticated MS#1245 (with no date, no history before 1987, no authorship). Somebody published articles under the authorship of Dr Loehlin while he was invalid or dead. The same author later on at Akal Takhat accepted the charges for doing such irresponsible research (for details, read “Abstract of Sikh studies”, July ’94). At the U.B.C there was a clear cut understanding in the memorandum

agreement that the chairperson would present in an accurate manner the Sikh doctrines, religious practice, and philosophy. In spite of this agreement, the chairperson academically suppressed the historical evidence by Dr Rose and the Sikh identity as established in Sikh scripture and early Persian and Sikh historical sources of 17th and 18th century. Dr Oberoi, masquerading as a Sikh historian, will identify with the aggressor “due to his repression, projection oriented personality and would become a ‘turn-coated Sikh Scholar’”, thereby inflicting subjective pain to 16 million Sikhs.

Dr Oberoi has openly admitted that he is not a student of religion. Then why did he write about the “religious boundaries”? Sikhs feel that he simply did this to make his masters happy, who helped him to get his job. S. Mohinder Singh Gosal, President of the Sikh Societies of Canada, said “that there is sufficient evidence to prove that the two year delay to start this chair was intentional under pressures from anti-Sikh political forces”. It is possible that the two year wait was a design to hire a groomed applicant. We request that the Multi-Culture Department, who is also a party to the contract with U .RC, should investigate this issue. Dr Oberoi did as Asad notes, “it is a notorious tactic of political power to deny a distinct unity to populations it seeks to govern, to treat them as contingent and indeterminate... It is precisely the viewpoint of interventionist power that insists on the permeability of social groups, the unboundedness of cultural unities, and the instability of individual selves’ (Talal Asad. “Multiculturalism and British Identity in the Wake of the Rushdie Affair”, *Politics and Society* 18(4) 1990). The Sikh Gurus made a new scripture with new ideologies and a new separate Sikh identity. The Vedas and Upanishads are without doubt the scriptures of all Hindu systems. Sikhism completely denies their authority and Guru Nanak even calls some of their injunctions to be wrong. The Sikh Gurus were clear and particular about the independent and separate identity of their religious system, and they compiled and authenticated the Sikh scripture in 1604. The Tenth Master took two important steps in this regard. First, he introduced the Nash doctrine, thereby making a complete and final break with all other Indian ideologies. Secondly, he sanctified Guru Granth as the living Guru and the sole scripture of the Sikhs, so that nobody would have the chance of any addition, alteration, or any departure from the authenticities or contents. To define Sikh identity without the basis of the Sikh scripture is inadequate.

The Sikh community is clearly aware of the implications of methodological atheism that characterize all rational empirical research today. We will give one example here that shows how these critical scholars manipulated the concept of rational empiricism. Numerous examples can be found in different books related to this issue. Perspective donors felt cheated and humiliated, when the famous doctrine of succession of Guru Granth as the living Guru of the Sikhs from October 6, 1708 was altered. There are enough historical sources (Sikh, Persian, Sanskrit, Indian and European historians as quoted by Dr Ganda Singh, Dr Harbans Singh, Dr Madanjit Kaur) available, which indicate that Guru Gobind Singh, on October 6, 1708, sanctified Aad Guru Granth as the living spiritual Guru of the Sikhs. Now let us see how these critical scholars at western universities suppressed the above historical evidence:

- 1) In 1994, Dr Oberoi's "Constuction of Religious Bounaaries" said "When in 1708, at the death of Guru Gobind Singh, there was no one to succeed him as Guru, the Panth turned into his collective successor. This was to be an abiding belief of Khalsa Sikhs, one that came in handy when waging battles for collective survival and political sovereignty over the course of the 18th century."
- 2) In 1991 Dr Pashaura Singh's unpublished thesis "Text and Meaning of the Adi Granth" on page 91 says "The Singh Sabha reformers sanctified this standard version and set aside all other versions used in earlier centuries."
- 3) Dr Gurinder Mann's "Studying the Sikhs" on page 147 says "The death of Guru Gobind Singh, in 1708, began a new chapter in the history of the Sikh community. With the limited sources at our disposal, it is hard to understand clearly how the community effectively filled the vacuum caused by the passing away of the Guru and the dissolution of this central Sikh institution. Why was the Guruship discontinued?"

Why couldn't the above western scholars find the historical evidence of such, crucial Sikh doctrine, which has been cited by famous Sikh scholar, like Dr Ganda Singh, Harbans Singh, and Madanjit Kaur. Is this western rational empirical approach ethical? According to

Collier's Encyclopedia, "academic freedom is never unlimited and the general social law including that of libel applies equally to it. Under academic freedom, individuals have the right to protest against re-search which can produce psychological pain, suffering and

misinterpretation of doctrines.” After the candidate gets his degree, PhD thesis becomes a public property. Why is the PhD thesis (Making of the Sikh Scripture) being locked at Columbia University since 1993? Why did Dr Lou Fenech, another McLeodian student who finished his PhD degree (Playing the Game of Love, Sikh Tradition of Martyrdom) on December 16, 1994, have his thesis restricted until January 31, 1997? (see appendix) What is there to hide? Is this a good example of methodological atheism? Good academics always have the ingredients of responsibility, honesty, humility, and integrity.

We regret, the Association of Asian Studies, which is the largest organization of Asian scholars in North America, issued an “open letter of concern” without clarifying in detail the issues raised by both sides. Sikh Studies in North America has been under siege of

one group of scholarship whose motive seem to be more political than academic. Dr Tarlochan Singh in his book “Ernest Trumpp and W.H. McLeod: As Scholars of Sikh History, Religion and Culture” quotes on page 254: “A reading of ‘Evolution of Sikh Community’ (1975) reminded me of a white and physically attractive Bull who entered a China shop of rare curios and broke as many precious glassware as his first momentous attack could. Considering it a great and impressive feat, the Bull came out, started wagging his tail and became the leader of a whole group of White Bulls. Sometime all alone, sometimes with a team of White Bulls, Hew McLeod entered his China shop of Sikh Studies again with the express motive of reducing all the precious possessions of this China shop of “Sikh Religious and Historical Studies” to rubble and rubbish in his four thin books having the same themes, the same chapters and repetitions of malicious attack on Sikh religion and history on the basis of misstatements, distortion of facts and calculated misinterpretations of Sikh history and religion.”

Asian scholars, after reviewing the “Construction of Religious Boundaries,” will also end up in the limited gaze of Sikh history provided by McLeod and Oberoi, because it is an attempt at vacuous theorization and destruction of the unique Sikh identity built by Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh (1469-1708). The full gaze of history for true scholars of Sikhism, who would like to find the ideal Sikh identity, should seek the Sikh scripture and early historical sources of 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. What kind of justice can the academic world expect anyway, from a scholar who is attempting to demolish the Sikh identity, and yet continues to occupy the chair funded by the community?

Any honest clarification is being dubbed as fundamentalism

and religious orthodoxy. Separate independent Sikh identity and authenticity of the Sikh scripture is being attacked. Main stream Sikh thought is being marginalized by this politically oriented scholarships. The accusation of intimidation is being thrown at every scholar or institution who tries to give his opinion on the issues. Wrong statements are being made about the fact that people who object to this unethical scholarship are not qualified historians or academic scholars of Sikh studies. All issues have been discussed in detail at different academic conferences and proceedings of such seminars are available for scrutiny. The issues have been clearly defined and must be taken up for dispassionate academic discussion. We request Association of Asian studies UBC, UOT, Univ. of Michigan, and Columbia Univ. to set up an immediate independent committee to review the issues. We will be more than happy to provide all books and articles published expressing such unethical and libellous issues of Sikh studies. We want cooperation from all concerned, and feel that South Asia council can take a lead on this, and it is only then that academic freedom for the scholars and the rights of the Sikh community will not be in danger.

Dr Oberoi has charged Dr Dhillon in relation to his thesis "Character and Impact of Singh Sabha Movement". Suprisingly, Oberoi has got all his published writings on Singh Sabha movement, containing extensive discussion and rebuttal of his arguments. Why hasn't he used this published work? Details of the objections raised by Dr Oberoi can be found in Dr Dhillon's review of "Construction of Religious Boundaries." Oberoi's entire effort seems to be con-centrated on eroding the religious base of the Sikh community. If, as perceived by Oberoi, the "religious boundaries" were not clearly demarcated between the Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims, then where was the need for Arya Samaj to launch its vituperous propaganda followed by proselytisation campaign known as Shudhi which polluted the com-munal atmosphere in Punjab, and sowed the seeds of communal animosity leading to language tension, ethnic clashes, bloodshed and the partition of 1947, and ultimately ending in Operation Bluestar and Delhi Riots in 1984.

Dr Oberoi has willfully indulged in an irreligious exercise knowing full well the sentiments and beliefs of the Sikhs. He has produced tremendous psychological pain and suffering to 16 million Sikhs for whom the Aad Sri Guru Granth is their living Guru. Many of his statements about the Guru and their works (including Amrit ceremony) are illogical and ill-conceived. The Sikh community ap-proached a

group of senior scholars who reviewed the agreement between the Sikhs and UBC (July 1994, see appendix for report) They also reviewed the publications of Dr Oberoi since 1987. They were of the opinion that Dr Oberoi's publications were incompatible with the objectives of the Sikh chair; an irrelevant exercise in historiography; and suppressed the crucial historical record, therefore grossly unfair and harmful to Sikh sensitivity. We request all Sikh institutions, SGPC and Akal Takhat to create a standing committee of unbiased scholars to review such irresponsible research which is destroying the independent Sikh identity and to take action according to the religious code.

The Sikh religion or its identity cannot be studied with such parameters as are applied to Judo-Christian studies, because the latter are based on the concept of phenomenology, as their religion and scriptures, which numbering over 60, make it a history grounded religion. S. Kapur Singh in his book "Sikhism: An Oecumenical Religion" says, "Dr. Otto who in his book 'Idea of the Holy' (1928) clearly showed that the core of religious experience consisted of an awareness of non-moral holyness as a category of value, which was quite distinct from the aesthetic and the moral experiences. This category of value he called, as numina, i.e., a spiritual experience of reality, peculiar to religion. This numinous experience which is the core and base of religion and its ingredients... Sikhism is essentially, and more than anything else, the religion of Numenon, and throughout the voluminous Sikh scripture, consisting of approximately 30,000 hymns, there are not many hymns or pages of this Book where it is not asserted through repeated statements, literary similies and allusions, that the essence of the true religious theory and practice is the Name". As Sikhism is not a history grounded religion, the application of Judo-Christian principles in Sikh studies will bring about the wrong results. Sikhism is not a product of history. Rather, the Sikh thought is its cause, and the historical events that followed, represent the unfolding of the philosophy preached by the Gurus, and enshrined in Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

The author of the 'Construction of Religious Boundaries' has obviously failed to see this fact, or deliberately ignored it.

Oberoi is no student of religion, and is hardly qualified to pass judgement on a delicate subject like religious boundaries. His knowledge of Sikhism is particularly superficial and borrowed from sources known for their hostility towards this great faith. No wonder,

therefore, that his thoughtless exercise attracted a sharp global reac-tion. The present volume is a collection of the views of 27 eminent scholars, known for their understanding of the philosophy of the Gurus and history of Sikhs, on the clumsy attempt of Dr Oberoi to dissolve or obscure the boundaries of Sikhism. The composition of the authors, and their opinions clearly show that condemnation of Dr Oberoi's publication is spontaneous, unanimous and universal. The articles examine his book threadbare, from all angles and expose the hollow-ness of his postulates.

In order that readers can properly assess Dr Oberoi's work, it seems necessary to provide some basic and authentic information on some of the issues raised in his book, as a background. This is provided in the first five chapters by distinguished authorities on Sikh religion, history and culture. In his article on Sikh Identity, Sardar Daljeet Singh has established that Sikhism is a revealed and an independent religion, distinct from all other religions, and that it is radically different from all denominations of Hinduism, particularly, Vaisnavism and Vedanta. The departure is evident in the concept of God, spiritual goal of man, the methodology prescribed to achieve the goals, and the world-view. This chapter in itself is a great contribution to an understanding of the Sikh faith. In another article, Dr Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon shows that Sikh identity is a continuing feature.

Dr Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon also gives a brief history of the Singh Sabha movement and establishes that its aim was revival of the pristine Sikh faith as preached by the Gurus. He has very ably and successfully rebutted the erroneous proposition of Oberoi, that it was a reform movement. In fact, Oberoi went to the extent of making the ridiculous suggestion that the present form of Sikhism has been given by the Singh Sabha in supersession of the one prescribed by the Gurus.

Dr Oberoi is never tired of painting Sikhs as fundamentalists, and attributing the recent Punjab problem to their fundamentalism. Since this suggestion runs in the veins of most of his writings, it has been considered necessary to include a chapter by Dr Kharak Singh, which clearly shows that Dr Oberoi's assertions are ill-founded.

After giving this background, the book presents the assess-ment of different scholars who have reviewed Dr Oberoi's book, in chapters 6 to 25. The contributors to this volume are no casual observers or amateur writers. They are world authorities like Dr Noel King. They



hold responsible positions in the disciplines of religion and Sikh Studies. They include Heads of departments of Religious Studies, and eminent professors, from the Panjab University Chandigarh, Punjabi University Patiala and Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar, besides a galaxy of internationally known scholars, who are authorities on Sikh Studies in their own right. Dr Oberoi has unethically used the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, as a base for his attack on the 'Boundaries of Sikhism', where he is currently holding a Sikh Chair. In order to understand the larger conspiracy against Sikhism and the clandestine designs of a group of 'Friends of Sikhism', Dr Jasbir Singh Mann has explained in Chapter 26 the history of this chair. He recalls how the Sikhs of Canada contributed their hard-earned money to create the chair in order to present the true image of their religion and culture. Dr Mann exposes the conspiracy of enemies of Sikhism who manipulated their hold on the chair and delayed the appointment for two years, until the present incumbent, who had been properly groomed for their purpose and perfectly fitted into their requirements, was available, although he lacks the essential qualifications prescribed for the job. The article also highlights the stubborn and partial attitude of the University and its surprising insensitiveness to the feelings of the entire Sikh Community. Dr Mann has built a case for investigation into the appointment of the author of the 'Construction of Religious Boundaries' to the UBC Sikh chair. The demand is fair, and we earnestly hope it will be conceded by the authorities. The specific questions that the enquiry should address are given in Appendix VIII. In a somewhat similar situation the Government of Canada has earned the appreciation of the Sikh Community by ordering a fresh enquiry into the 'Air-India' plane Kanishka crash of 1985. The suggestion is obvious that the earlier 'inquiry' and its 'findings' could be a part of a global misinformation campaign against the community. We trust the same spirit of justice will be demonstrated in the present case.

The three chapters that follow, also deal with this Chair. Appendixes added to the book, support the story.

It may be pointed out that a team of distinguished scholars from universities from Punjab, visited the UBC to assess the work done at the Chair. Their report is quite revealing, and appears in this volume as Appendix III.

Three reviews written in Punjabi are added at the end.

The present volume is a demonstration of the solidarity of the Sikhs behind their great faith, the latest among the revealed religions. It also indicates that the community is alert, as never before, and will no longer tolerate such distortion or misrepresentation of the philosophy or history of Sikhism, as have been going on for the last over one century and intensified during the last couple of decades.

The present invasion has been successfully repulsed. It will be dangerous, however, to assume that invaders will retreat into their shells, pledged to a life of peace. They are still in their trenches. Constant vigilance is necessary. This is a continuing challenge to the Sikh community.

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Jasbir Singh Mann  
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September 1, 1995.

## Sikhism: Its Identity

Daljeet Singh

For some years past there have, even in the academic field, been politically oriented writings, some open, some oblique, attacking the identity of Sikhism as an independent religion. In this article, we propose examining the issue with particular reference to the statements of a well-known writer. In 1963, he recorded in his "History of the Sikhs", under the caption 'The Teaching of Nanak': "Nanak not only founded a new religion and started a new pattern of living, he also set in motion an agrarian movement whose impact was felt all over the country"<sup>1</sup>. In 1984, he wrote about Guru Nanak in 'The Punjab Story': "Being himself a Hindu, was at the same time concerned with reforming Hinduism. But as the years went by and his message caught on among the masses, he decided to give his teachings permanency through a sect of his own".<sup>2</sup> Evidently, the 'sect' which he indicates is of Hinduism. In 1991, in the Illustrated Weekly he stated: "Sikhism is an offshoot of Hinduism and is only distinguished from it by the external symbols of the Khalsa faith. The theology is entirely Hindu". "Almost nine tenths of Granth Sahib, composed largely by Guru Arjun, is in fact Vedanta, an essence of all that you read in the Upanishads and the Gita".<sup>3</sup> Apparently, for a normal reader, these are three variant statements, although the usual plea taken by some writers is that the context has not been taken into account. The first statement clearly states that Guru Nanak's teachings and his religion are new. The second statement does give Sikhism the status of a sect, but within the Hindu fold. The last observation says that it is a Hindu branch, being virtually Upanishadic and Vedantic in character. Maybe, consistency has not been the virtue of political writers, or maybe, there are other reasons or compulsions for the seemingly shifting stand of the learned writer.

It is also reported that in an entry in the Encyclopaedia Britannica (15th Edition, Volume 27), considered to be authored by him, he observed, "Sikhism was a historical development of the Hindu Vaishnava Bhakti movement - a devotional movement among followers of god Vishnu- that began in Tamil Country and was introduced to the North by Ramanuja (traditionally, 1017-1137)".

Accordingly, it is necessary to analyse and compare the doctrines of Vedanta, Vaisnavism and Sikhism so as to understand the ideological stand of the three systems and to know whether there is any affinity between Sikhism, on the one hand, and Vedanta and

Vaisnavism, on the other hand; or, whether they are systems fundamentally opposed in their essentials. We shall consider the subject in reference to the spiritual experience of the Gurus, their concept of God, their goal, their methodology and their approach to the empirical life.

## SIKHISM

Sikhism is a revelatory religion, and this claim is made by Guru Nanak himself, "O Lalo, I speak what the Lord commands me to convey".<sup>4</sup> Other Gurus have also spoken similarly. In the Siddh Gosht he says in reply to a question that his mission in life is, with the help of other Godmen, to ferry people across the turbulent sea of life.<sup>5</sup> As to the Guru's concept of God, it is recorded, "Friends ask me what is the mark of the Lord. He is All Love; rest He is ineffable".<sup>6</sup> He is also called: 'Ocean of Virtues', 'Benevolent', 'Gracious', 'Eyes to the blind', 'Milk to the child', 'Riches to the poor',<sup>7</sup> etc. He is interested in the world. For, "True is He. True is His creation".<sup>8</sup> "God created the world and permeated it with His light".<sup>9</sup> "God created the world of life and planted Naam in it, making it the place for righteous activity".<sup>10</sup> "It is the innermost nature of God to help the erring".<sup>11</sup>

God being Love, it means He is Creative and Dynamic; second, He is the Fount of all values; third, He has a Direction or a Will; and fourth, He is deeply concerned with the world, since Love can be expressed only in a becoming universe. For, the Guru says that when God was all by Himself, and the world was not there, the question of devotion or love or time could not arise. Further, it is because of his concept of a Loving Divinity that Guru Nanak calls life a game of love, saying, "If you want to play the game of love, come with your head on your palm."<sup>12</sup>

There are five clear corollaries of 'God is Love', and, 'life being a game of love'. First, that the world is real, against its being *mithya*, a misery, or a suffering as in other Indian systems. The second corollary is that Sikhism involves a combination of the empirical life and the spiritual life of man. In other words, it is a whole-life system, a *miri-piri* system, where under man has to be both God-aware and Earth-aware. This is against the generally known life-negation of the Hindu systems. The third corollary is that the householder's life is accepted and monasticism and *sanyasa* are rejected. For, "The spiritual path can be trodden not by mere words or talk, but by treating all alike. Yoga does not He in living in cremation grounds, doing one-point meditation, or visiting places of pilgrimage, but by remaining God-centered and doing

the affairs of the world".<sup>13</sup> It is for this reason that Guru Nanak made Guru Angad, a householder, his successor, and by-passed his son, Baba Sri Chand, a recluse. The fourth corollary is that since God is working the world with His Altruistic Will, the goal of life of the seeker and the Gurmukh is not withdrawal, but to work actively according to God's Altruistic Will. 'One gets not to God by despising the world.,<sup>14</sup> 'One gets liberated even while laughing and playing.'<sup>15</sup> 'The God-centred lives truthfully, while a householder.'<sup>16</sup> Hence, the goal is not merger in Brahman, but an active life of the Gurmukh living truthfully. Fifth, such being the goal, Guru Nanak and the other Gurus prescribe a religious methodology of deeds: For, with God only the deeds one does in the world count'.<sup>17</sup> 'True living is living God in life'.<sup>18</sup> 'It is by our deeds that we become near or away from God'<sup>19</sup> 'Good righteousness virtues and the giving up of vice are the ways to realise the essence of God'.<sup>20</sup> 'Love, contentment, truth humility and virtue enable the seed of Naam (God) to sprout.'<sup>21</sup> 'Everything is lower than Truth, but higher still is truthful living.'<sup>22</sup> Guru Nanak was called a Gurmukh, and how a Gurmukh should live, has been historically demonstrated by the ten Gurmukhs and their 'truthful living'.

Next we come to the implications of living according to the altruistic Will of God defined above. Truthful living involves five responsibilities of the religious man. The first is to accept equality between man and woman, instead of considering her a temptress or an impediment in the religious path. In fact, considering the position of woman in other religions, including Christianity, it is a revolutionary step of Guru Nanak when he recommends the householder's path, and rejects celibacy which in other Indian religions is an essential discipline for the seeker. The second implication is of accepting equality between man and man. It was a major blow to the system of Varn Ashram Dharma and the allied concept of pollution. The Gurus have emphatically stated that the religious man must treat everyone equally. Guru Nanak by taking Mardana, a Muslim Mirasi, as his life companion, took a major step against untouchability, caste system and the Muslims being *considered malechhas*. The institution of *langar*, started by him, had also the same objective in view. The third implication of the Guru's system is work and production. Guru Nanak says: "The person in capable of earning his living, gets his ears split, (i.e. truns a Nath Yogi), and becomes a mendicant. He calls himself a guru or a saint. Do not look up to him, nor touch his feet. He knows the way who earns his living and shares his

earnings with others.”<sup>23</sup> Hence, work and sus-tenance of life and the world become an essential duty of the religious man. Upto the time of the Fifth Guru all the Gurus were married householders doing a profession or business. It is only when the organisation of militancy and confrontation with the Empire became an absorbing and hazardous duty, involving frequent movements and military clashes, that the later Gurus remained wholly concerned with the work of the Sikh Movement. Fourth is the important implication of the sharing of wealth. The Guru says, ‘God’s bounty belongs to all, but men grab it for themselves.’<sup>24</sup> ‘Man gathers riches by making others miserable’<sup>25</sup> ‘Riches cannot be gathered without sin, but these do not keep company after death’.<sup>26</sup> Guru Nanak’s acceptance of Lalo’s invitation and rejecting that of Malik Bhago, indicates his censure of exploitative living. The fifth implication is Guru Nanak’s condemnation of injustice and oppression. He calls God the ‘Destroyer of evil- doers’<sup>27</sup> and also the ‘Punisher of the demonical’.<sup>28</sup> The hymns that He is ‘Shelter to the shelterless; and showers His grace where the weak are cared for’,<sup>29</sup> also indicate the same thing. Guru Nanak decried the rulers who were unable to provide security and safety to their subjects, and condemned the tyranny of the invaders. His complaint to God for allowing the weak to be trampled upon by the strong, clearly means two things. First, that injustice and oppression are violative of the Order of God and that, as such, it is the duty of the man of religion to see that injustice and oppression do not occur, and, if they do, the man of religion must individually and socially confront such injustice and oppression. Since large scale aggression and encroachments are always done by political groups or the State, there is the essential need of organising a society that should take up such challenges and resist injustice. The important fact is that the five implications of Guru Nanak’s system mentioned above are not just paper directions. But in his system, these are the five responsibilities enjoined on the man of religion, and this is why Guru Nanak asks for total commitment while giving the call for the game of love. Similar total commitment was indicated by the Fifth Guru, when he advised Bhai Manjh that he should better continue being a Sakhī Sarwaria, instead of becoming a Sikh, which involved a major risk both to his life and his wealth.<sup>30</sup> And, it is the same total commitment that the Tenth Master asked for while selecting the Five Piyaras for administering Amrit. In Sikhism spiritual responsibilities and worldly responsibilities are combined inalienably, it being a *miri-piri* system.

It is in this context that the three uncommon steps, which Guru Nanak took, show the independence and radical nature of his system. The first step was the organisation of a *sangat* or society at his own place and at every place he visited. Because, Sikhism is not a salvation religion for a few individuals, but a whole-life system with socio-spiritual responsibilities both of God and man. The second uncommon step was his starting the institution of successors. As the society he had organised, was only at the infant stage, and as its principles were entirely different from the principles in vogue in the country, the motivation of his flock and its organisation into a well-knit society had naturally to take very long. The third step was his clear rejection of *ahimsa*. He stated, 'Men discriminate not and quarrel over meat-eating. They do not know what is flesh and what is non-flesh, or in what lies sin and what is not sin'.<sup>31</sup> He also states that life was in every gram of food. What he meant was to reject the seeming value or the piety of observing certain rituals or of religious prohibitions against meat-eating. Actually, his particular definition of God as 'Destroyer of the evil-doers and the demonical', mentioned above: also shows his rejection of *ahimsa*. He explained all this because he envisaged his society to take up political challenges. This was also repeated by Guru Har-gobind when he spoke to Sant Ramdas of Maharashtra, saying that Guru Nanak never gave up this world and that his sword was to protect the weak and to destroy the tyrant.<sup>32</sup>

So far as his whole-life thesis was concerned, it stood clearly explained in the *bani* of Guru Nanak; and yet he started the system of succession, indicating that his mission, as a whole, still required completion and for that reason continuance. In any case, Guru Granth Sahib, the Scripture, had been compiled by the Fifth Master, and yet the succession was continued until the Tenth Master created the Khalsa, introduced the Nash doctrine of the five freedoms from earlier religions, customs, lineage, taboos,<sup>33</sup> etc. He closed the institution of succession, obviously because the Sikhs had been well organised as a cohesive society, which under Banda Singh brought about an unprecedented social revolution.

We do not want to go into the details of how each Guru calculatedly enlarged, organised and motivated the Sikh society into a well-knit and responsible organisation. But we should like to state one fact as to how detailed was Guru Nanak's criticism of various evils in the contemporary society. He criticised the greed and hypocrisy of the priests, *pandits* and *andmullahs*, the corruption, injustice and blood-suck-ing practised

by officials of different levels in the administration, the discriminatory and high-handed misrule, oppression and tyranny of the rulers, the barbarity and brutality of the invaders, etc.. There was hardly any dark spot in the religious or the socio-political life of his times which he did not point out. His criticism meant two things. First, that faults in empirical life were the concern of the religious man and second, that their rectification was also the moral responsibility of the spiritual man. Guru Nanak's criticism was not idle rhetoric. The contrast between his criticism and point of view, and the approach of a religious man like St. Augustine, one of the greatest exponents of the Christian Gospel and theology and the author of 'City of God', is clear from the following observation of Bertrand Russell: "It is strange that the last men of intellectual eminence before the dark ages were concerned not with saving of civilisation, or expelling the barbarians, or reforming the abuses of the administration, but with preaching the merits of virginity and the damnation of the unbaptised infants. Seeing that these were the occupations that the Church handed on to the converted barbarians, it is no wonder that the succeeding age surpassed almost all fully historical periods in cruelty and superstition".<sup>34</sup> The contrast between the concerns of Guru Nanak, a Gurmukh of a *miri-piri* system, and the interests of a pious theologian from a pacifist system, is too obvious to need further comments. The spiritual experience and the concept of the Ultimate Reality of the founding prophet, forms the bedrock, on which are based the goal, the methodology, the ethics and the doctrines of a system. A brief outline of the essentials of Sikh Monotheism has been given above. Hereafter follows a corresponding description of Vaisnavism and Vedanta.

## **VAISNAVISM**

It is generally accepted that Bhagawatism arose as a non-Vedic cult<sup>35</sup> which for the first time, was included in the Hindu Complex, as an alternative mode of Moksha in the Bhagawad Gita, which is admittedly an eclectic compilation<sup>36</sup> The system is ritualistic, and involves: (i) visit to the temple, (ii) selection of material for worship, (iii) salutation and resorting to the feet of Hari, and (iv) surrender of the soul with devotion<sup>37</sup> It is significant that this Bhakti is entirely ritualistic, without any reference to socio-moral conduct. Second, it was accepted only as an alternative mode of Moksha, and as given a lower priority. Bhagawad Gita does not prescribe a unified system. Apart from the different modes of Moksha being unintegrated into any unified whole, the metaphysical position is also incongruous,



because the dualism of Yoga and the pantheism of Upanishads, exist side by side with the concept of Vedic ritualism and mysticism.<sup>38</sup> It is believed that the Gita was more concerned in bringing variant systems within the Hindu fold than with their integration into a systematic rational whole; and that the permission of Sudras and women to the path of devotion was allowed because Buddhists had allowed them to their monasteries without discrimination.<sup>39</sup> This is supported by the fact that the Gita gives full sanction to the discriminatory rigidity of the caste system. It says that the Lord created the four Varnas with their separate specified duties; and that it is more meritorious to do, even though inefficiently, the duties of one's own caste, than to do even though efficiently, the duties of another caste. "Congenital duty. O son of Kunti, though defective, ought *not* be abandoned".<sup>40</sup> "On the one hand, we purify our minds by non-attachment, and yet, on the other hand, we continue to perform all the ritualistic and other duties belonging to our particular caste or stage of life, i.e., the prescribed stages of Four Ashrams".<sup>41</sup> In the Bhagawad Gita and the system of Ramanuja, Bhakti meant only *Upasna* and just meditation with contemplative union with God as the goal. This Bhakti does not involve any devotional or personal love.<sup>42</sup> The duties prescribed are just those of one's caste or profession. Any mobility in choosing a profession is barred. In the social field, caste ideology was supreme. Arjun was induced to take up arms, because that was his caste duty as a Kshatriya. It has been the duty of kings to keep Brahmin advisers, maintain the caste order, and to do justice according to caste rules.<sup>43</sup>

Later arose the theory of Avtaarhood, meaning that God incarnated Himself in order to save man. This doctrine is a Vaisnava contribution. It is believed that, as in the case of eclectic Bhagawad Gita, the doctrine of Avtaarhood was only a way of absorbing heterodox and variant cults, by declaring their gods to be the incarnations of Vishnu.<sup>44</sup> Accordingly, founders of even dualistic systems like Sankhya and Jainism, Kapila and Rsabha respectively, were declared Avtaars. While this doctrine helped the absorption of heterodox creeds, and made the new entrants to accept the authority of the Vedas and the Brahminical ideology of the caste, it could evidently not make for the development of a coherent or unified religious or metaphysical system, prescribing an integrated methodology or goal.

The next phase in Vaisnavism is the period of Sandilya and Bhagawat Purana. Alwar saints appeared in the South, and saints like

Tukaram, Ramanand, Mirabai, Chaitanya and others, arose in the West, North and East of India. Or Tara Chand believes that this development took place, quite often in the lower sections of the Hindu society, following the influence and impact of Islam, which was non-hierarchical. Although there are many exponents of Vaisnavism like Nimbarka, or Madhava who is a dualist, Ramanuja, the author of 'Vashist Advaita', is considered to be the best among them. His system is pantheistic, Brahman being both manifest and unmanifest. The individual souls and the material world are considered the body or the attributes of Brahman.<sup>45</sup> He accepts the presence of Ahankara, and explains human activity virtually on the basis of dualistic Sankhya. Ishwara exists in five forms, (i) as Narayana or Paravasudeva, wearing jewels and ornaments, he lives in Vaikuntha on a throne, surrounded by Sesa (the Serpent), Garuda and other delivered souls, (ii) as in four other forms including that of Vasudeva to enable men to worship him, (iii) as in the Avtaras, Lord Rama, Fish, Tortoise, Swan and others, (iv) as in the soul of each being when it goes to heaven or hell, and (v) as in the idols kept in houses. Souls are of three kinds: (i) eternal souls like that of Garuda, (ii) the delivered souls, and (iii) the bound ones.<sup>46</sup>

The Bhakti is integrated with ritualism and Jnanayoga, which are its essential components. Ramanuja considers Vedic ritualism and Brahm Vidya of Upanishads as of equal validity, so much so, that ritualistic acts have to be practised even by a Jnani. This Bhakti is open only to the three higher castes. To Sudras, only the system of surrender or Prapati is open.<sup>47</sup> The caste ideology and ideas of pollution, are accepted and practised. Brahmins only can be priests for idol worship. The concept of pollution is so important that if while cooking or eating one's food, another person casts a glance on it, the entire food has to be thrown away.<sup>48</sup> Celibacy is recommended and women are considered sin-born. They are, therefore, neither admitted as Vaisnavas.<sup>49</sup>

In Bhagawat Purana nine modes of worship are suggested, which are all ritualistic, like listening to the praise of God, repeating the name of God, image worship, etc., without any socio-moral activity. Padma purana prescribes seven modes of worship, (i) imprinting of marks on the body and forehead, (ii) repeating *mantras*, (iii) drinking water used for the feet of the idol, (iv) eating food offered to the idol, (v) service of the devotees, (vi) fasting on designated days of the lunar

month, and (vii) laying tulsi leaves at the feet of the idol.<sup>50</sup>

Both Vallabha and Chaitanya accept Bhakti as the sole mode of Moksha. In Vallabha's system the modes of worship are all formal, like singing the praises of God, Aarti, image worship, etc. A householder's life is allowed, but the devotee visits the temple of the Guru for worship of the idol at fixed intervals.<sup>51</sup> For Chaitanya, Bhakti is extremely emotional, involving ecstatic dancing and singing. His devotees were from all castes and creeds, including Muslims. But, the followers, except for Bairagis, observed the caste system, regarding cooking and other matters. The spiritual teachers are celibates.<sup>52</sup>

It is necessary to state that Karma yoga meant ritual acts and not socio-moral deeds.<sup>53</sup> Because of general insistence on celibacy, socio-moral activity is virtually excluded. Maitra, who made a detailed study of the ethics of all Hindu systems, writes that a common feature of the doctrine of the ideal life, is "the conception of the ideal as a negation or at least as a transcendence of the empirical life proper and that this state is thus a supermoral spiritual ideal rather than a strictly moral idea."<sup>54</sup> "It is a transcendental state of deliverance from all struggles of life."<sup>55</sup>

In sum, Vaisnavism has seven fundamentals. Its scriptures, as of all Hindu systems, are the Vedas and Upanishads. Second, it accepts the doctrine of Avtaarhood. Third, the ideology of caste is accepted fully, as also the concept of pollution. Fourth, the methodology of worship or devotion is formal, ritualistic, contemplative, or intensely emotional, without any reference to socio-moral activity. Hooper, who has made a detailed study of Alwar saints, says that moral character is hardly a strong feature of their Bhakti.<sup>56</sup> Spencer, S.: op. cit., p. 58 Fifth, the entire approach is other-worldly, and for liberation from the tangles of life. Consequently, except in the case of Vallabha, celibacy is the rule, and the position of woman is distinctly downgraded, being considered a temptress. Ramanuja denies Vedic studies to women. They were not allowed to become nuns. Shankradeva, a liberal saint, says, "Of all the terrible aspirations of the world, woman's is the ugliest. A slight side glance of hers captivates even the hearts of celebrated sages. Her sight destroys prayers, penance and meditation. Knowing this, the wise keep away from the company of women".<sup>57</sup> This saint did not allow women to join the religious functions of men. It is stated that he was interested only in: "Establishing religious freedom and fellowship rather than a social overhaul. The trouble about the improvement of social conditions, perhaps, deemed to him as little

profitable.” Sixth, *ahimsa* is prescribed as a cardinal rule for all Vaisnavas. Seventh, the goal is union with or merger in God or Brahman. The Jivan Mukta has no role to play in life, although ritualistic duties are prescribed until the end of one’s days. In Hinduism, the sexual or Tantric method is accepted as an alternative system of Moksha, and a saint like Rama Krishana<sup>58</sup> also accepts its validity.

## VEDANTA

Basically Upanishadic thought is the Vedantic thought. This system is mainly opposed to the earlier Vedic ritualism (Purva Miman-sa). But, in itself it is very variant. It can form the basis of Pantheism, Monism, Materialism, etc., i.e., of the world being the emanation of Brahman, the world being just illusory, and Brahman alone being real, etc.<sup>59</sup> Philosophers like Shankra, Ramanuja, Madhava, Nimbarka and others, have all given divergent interpretations of the Upanishads. Upanishadic thoughts were not meant to be a religious system. These comprise teachings meant only for a small section most of whom had withdrawn to the seclusion of the forest. The search was for an intuitive and mystic experience of unity with Brahman, with the knowledge of which everything became known. The fundamental reality is not personal, like God of theists to whom one prays with devotion and love. Hence the concepts of “That thou art”, “I am Brahman”, of Katha Upanisad, “He who perceives diversity in this world, suffers the death of all deaths”; and of Brahman alone being real, the rest being false and illusory.<sup>60</sup> Upanishads being speculative, contained divergent and contradictory thoughts without any attempt to reconcile them. The methodology is primarily meditational with the ideal of four Ashramas, the last two Ashramas being basically other-worldly and ascetic, involving disconnection with the delusive secular life.<sup>61</sup> The final achievement is the result of one’s own efforts and not the gift of God or His grace. The Jivanmukta has no role to play and is indifferent to all activity, good or bad.<sup>62</sup> For, he transcends the condition of worldly existence. Later, the authors of the Upanishads also accepted the validity of Vedic ritualism and its social commands regarding caste. As such they have become a component of the overall Vedic system, and have got scriptural sanctity as a limb of the Vedas. This background of the various Upanishads has to be kept in view in understanding Vedanta. Hmyanna writes, The diversity of teaching noticed in connection with theoretical teaching of the Upanishada has its reflex in then means of achieving it.<sup>63</sup> For example, one Upanishad alone mentions three such different means of attaining immortality, devotion

to truth, penance and Vedic study and ascribing them to three specific teachers”.<sup>64</sup> Second, the Upanishads and the sanctioned social system of the period gave clear approval to the caste system. The Chandoya writes, “The wicked are born again as out castes, dogs or swine”.<sup>65</sup> The Brihadaranyaka (VI.2, 15-16) gives a similar account. Evidently, the Upanishadic system, although other-worldly and meditational, accepts the ritualism and the caste ideology of the Vedas. We have briefly indicated the views of Ramanuja and his Vashist Advaita. We give hereafter the Vedanta of Shankra, which is the most popular Vedantic system.

Shankra and his predecessor Gaudapada pursue the line of thought in the Upanishads which considers the world to be just *mithya* (illusion), and Brahman alone to be real. Gaudapada, writes, “The manifold universe does not exist as a form of reality, nor does it exist of itself”. “Having attained to non-duality one should behave in this world like an insensible object”.<sup>66</sup> According to Shankra, all diversity is false (*mithya*). Therefore, to work while accepting the phenomenal existence of the world is sheer *avidya* (ignorance). The goal is to realise the truth of Brahman alone being real, and to deny the world. Ishwara and individual souls are parts of Brahman. Man is ignorant, since he fails to realise that all change in the world is without meaning or validity. This view denies the very basis of all socio-moral life. Shankra says, “I am not born. How can there be either birth or death for me? I am neither male nor female, nor am I sexless. I am the blessed peaceful one who is the only cause of origin and dissolution of the world”.<sup>67</sup> Change in the world is due to Maya which is neither real nor unreal, nor related to Brahman. The methods of devotion or worship are considered fruitless, the goal being the Absolute and not Saguan Brahman, God or Ishwara, which is a lower stage to be transcended by the Jnani. The faith of devotion, he says, is for persons of narrow or poor intellect.<sup>68</sup> As he cannot deny the scriptural character of the Vedas, he says that the path of ritualism or sacrifices is prescribed out of compassion for persons of low or average intellect, and it can gain for them only heaven.<sup>69</sup> As in Sankhya yoga, Withdrawal from the illusory adjuncts or Maya is suggested. Starting with Vairgya and dissociation with the world, the mystic achievement can be made only as Sanyasin, by giving up all works, good or bad, and as one who is unwilling to accept even the grace of God. The goal is to realise, ‘I am Brahman, (Aham Brahm asmi).’ It is an intellectual realisation accompanied by Anubhava. The Jivanmukta has no role to play in life.<sup>70</sup> Swami

Sivananda writes, about the modern Jnanis, Kalkotswami and Mowni Swami, saying that they “were unconscious of the movement of their bowels, and the Sevakas had to wash their bottoms.”<sup>71</sup> Such a Videhimukta “whose individuality is absolutely merged in Brahman, cannot have the awareness of the world which is non-existent to him. If his body is to be maintained, it has to be fed and cared for by others. The Videhimukta is thus not in a position to engage himself for the good of the World”.<sup>72</sup> Self-realisation breaks the chain of causation and the world appears false to him. Even the idea of God, being of a lower level, has finally to be transcended. For, “God is only the most subtle, most magnificent, most flattering false impression of all in this general spectacle of erroneous self-deception.”<sup>73</sup> Evidently, celibacy is recommended and Shankra calls woman the ‘gateway to hell’.<sup>74</sup> No wonder Zimmer writes, “Such holy magalomania goes past the bounds of sense. With Sankara, the grandeur of the Supreme human experience be-comes intellectualized and reveals Its inhuman sterility.”<sup>75</sup> Such is Sankara’s monism for which the world is *mithya*.

## CLASSIFICATION

In the above background, we should like to give a broad classification of the different religious systems of the world. First, is the category of religious systems, including practically all Indians systems, except Sikhism. They are dichotomous in the sense that the paths of spiritual life and the empirical life are separate. The two Hindu systems outlined above, belong to this class. In them monasticism, asceticism, pacificism, *sanyasa*, celibacy, downgrading of women, caste ideology in the social life, and *ahimsa* are normal features. For that reason, they are considered life-negating, socio-moral activities, as concluded by Maitra, being irrelevant and of no consequence. The goal is merger in Brahman or the realisation ‘I am Brahman’. Metaphysically, these systems are either pantheistic or monistic.

To the second category, belongs Christianity. It is a life affirming system, but accepts pacificism, monasticism, celibacy and nunneries as a valid path of spiritual life. To that extent, there is dichotomy in Catholic Christianity. Women are still not ordained as priests. Life participation is accepted, but the Sermon on the Mount prescribes non-resistance or pacificism. It is a Theism, accepting participation in life and calls God Love. But, because of the appearance of monasticism and celibacy, it has, like dichotomous systems, become a salvation religion, more especially after the coming up of Science and Technol-ogy, when Secularism has become supreme in the empirical

life. The religion is exclusive in the sense that salvation can be sought only through Christ.

To the third category, belong the whole-life or *miri-piri* systems of Judaism and Islam. Prophet Moses and Prophet Mohammad were simultaneously spiritual and political leaders. In both the systems, organisation of social life and a religious society are accepted as the duties and responsibilities of the religious man. Similarly, the use of force for a righteous cause is also sanctioned. But, in both these religions, in the later part of their history, pacificism, monasticism, asceticism, withdrawal from life and even celibacy, have appeared, forming separate sects of these religions, like Essenes, Kaballists, etc., in the former case and different Silsilas or sects of Sufis in the latter case. This has led to dichotomous tendencies in the life of these otherwise whole-life or *miri-piri* religions. Besides, both these religions are exclusive.

To the fourth category belongs Sikhism. It is a whole-life or a *miri-piri* system, involving participation in life and total socio-political responsibility. In addition, it has three other features. By prescribing the Kirpan as a part of the wear of Sikhs, two things have been emphasised by the Tenth Master. First, that the Sikh should not at any time forget his social responsibility concerning injustice and oppression. The Kirpan as a hukumnama (order) of the Guru reminds him of the history and tradition created by the Gurus regarding the social responsibilities of the Sikh society. Second, the Kirpan stands as a warning that in Sikhism the paths of withdrawal, pacificism or monasticism are considered invalid. The point is clarified by the fact that the sufis never organised a resistance against the tyrannical rule of the times, although some of them did side with the Gurus; and it was left to the Sikh Gurus to confront the misrule of the Empire. Its two other features relate to its universalism. For, the Guru prays to God to help the troubled world by any means, He may be Gracious enough to do.<sup>76</sup> Second, it is Guru Nanak who says that his mission is, with co-operation of other Godmen, to ferry man across the troubled sea of life.<sup>77</sup>

Hence, the above four clear categories, each one of which has many of its essentials quite distinct from those of the other three.

## CONCLUSION

We have stated that the fundamental that determines the essential principles of a religious system, is the spiritual experience of

the Prophet, saint or seer, and his vision of the Ultimate Reality. In the case of Hindu systems, especially the Vedanta, the Reality is *satchit-ananda*. It is thus a quietist concept of tranquility, peace, truth and bliss. As against it, in the concept of the Gurus, God is Love and an Ocean of Values, a God of Will giving direction to the World, and a Benevolent Enlightener. This determines for the seeker, who is to carry out His Altruistic Will, total responsibility in all walks of life, God's domain being unlimited. The distinction about the Fundamental Reality, we have indicated, is real, and not just argumentative. For, this is the first and fundamental cause of difference between dichotomous religions mentioned above and the life-affirming religions like Sikhism, Islam and Christianity. Stace has tabulated the spiritual experience of mystics from the world over. He records blessedness, tranquility, holiness, unitary consciousness, paradoxicality, etc., as the features of their experience.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, William James also records that experience to be passive, noetic, ineffable, transient, and unitary in consciousness.<sup>79</sup> Neither of them states 'Love' as the feature of that religious experience. But Bergson, in his statement about the ultimate mystic experience calls 'love' the principal feature; the other or quietist experiences, he thinks, do not constitute the final achievement of the mystic path; and it is for that reason that such mystics are not fully creative and life-affirming. For him, the test of such experience is that for mystics having the summit experience, the love of God is transformed into God's love for all beings in the shape of their activities and functioning.<sup>80</sup> That is the reason that the parable of Abu Ben Adam is a model in a whole-life religion like Islam. That the distinction is not artificial, has also been stressed by Aldous Huxley: "The Indians say, the thought and the thinker and the thing thought about are one, and then of the way in which this unowned experience becomes something belonging to me; then no me any more and a kind of *satchit-ananda*, at one moment without *karuna* or charity (how odd that the Vedantists say nothing about Love)... I had an inkling of both kinds of nirvana - the loveless being, consciousness, bliss, and the one with love, and above all, sense that one can never love enough."<sup>81</sup>

Staying in this ecstatic consciousness and cutting oneself off from participation and commitment to the rest of the world - this is perfectly expressed today, in powerful slang, in the phrase 'dropping out'. It completely denies the facts, it is morally wrong; and finally of course, absolutely catastrophic". "Absolutely Catastrophic".<sup>82</sup> "Love and Work - if I



should put in a nutshell the essence of Aldous's life. I could not find a more precise way of saying it", writes his wife.<sup>83</sup> What needs emphasis is the fundamental difference between the spiritual experience of the Gurus and that of the Hindu mystics-cum-philosophers. It is because of this basic difference that one system becomes dichotomous, involving the separation of the empirical life from the religious life, with its features of monasticism, asceticism, *sanyasa*, celibacy and *ahimsa*, in the spiritual life, and the discriminatory and hierarchical caste structure in the empirical life; and the other system becomes whole-life, sanctioning moral activity and total responsibility in the empirical life as outlined earlier.

The Guru's God is both transcendent and immanent, *Sargun* and *Nirgun*,<sup>84</sup> as against the Vedantic concept of Brahman being higher than the concept of Ishwara of God. Second, it thus, remains unrelated to the delusive world. Third, following from the above, in one case life is real, and in the other case it is *mithya* and an entanglement. Fourth, as against monasticism, asceticism, withdrawal and *sanyasa*, a householder's life is accepted. Fifth, against the recommendation of celibacy and woman being considered a temptress, she is regarded as the equal of man and the mother of all life.<sup>85</sup> Sixth, against *ahimsa*, the use of force for a righteous cause, as a last resort, is accepted. It is no accident that of the ten Gurus, five kept armies, organised militarisation and confrontation with the oppressive Empire. Hence, also the warning through the *Kakka* of Kirpan against diversion or reversion to pacifism or monasticism ignoring social responsibility towards one's fellow beings, cardinaly essential in a whole-life system. Seventh, the goal life is to carry out the Altruistic Will of God,<sup>86</sup> involving creative activity, as against merger in Brahman or realization of 'I am Brahman'. Eighth, the methodology of virtuous deeds and an active moral life of securing justice, sharing and equality is recommended as against ritualism, reflection, contemplation or meditation alone, involving a super-moral ethic, and not a moral ethic as in a whole-life system.

Hence, there is a complete contrast between the world-view Vedanta and Vaisnavism, on the one hand and of Sikhism on the other hands. Sikhism, we may say, accept the "idea that specifically designated organised bands of men should play a creative part in the political world destroying the established order, and reconstructing society according to the Word of God."<sup>87</sup> It believes, as observed by Collingwood, "The discovery of a relation is at once the discovery of my thought as reaching God, and of God's thought as reaching me; and indistinguishable from this, the performance of an act of mine by

which I establish a relation with God, and an act of God by which He establishes a relation with me. To fancy that religion lives either below or above the limits of reflective thought is fatally to misconceive either the nature of religion or the nature of reflective thought. It would be nearer the truth to say that in religion the life of reflection is con-centrated in its intensest form, and that the special problems of theoretical and practical life, all take their special forms of segregation out of the body of the religious consciousness, and retain their vitality only so far as they preserve their connection with it and with each other in it".<sup>88</sup> The Gurus state that unless man reaches the fourth stage of evolution or of Gurmukh, whose consciousness is linked to the Univer-sal Consciousness or Will, man's problems of conflict, poverty, im-morality, and war will continue. It is stated, "God created first Himself, then *Haumain* (a sense of individualism), third *Maya* (multifarious beings and entities) and fourth the higher stage of Gurmukh, who always lives truthfully."<sup>89</sup> Thus, Sikhism is a system of hope, activity and optimism about the future of man, with willingness to co-operate with other religions, while accepting God's graciousness in creating other paths as well.

Our analysis of the three systems reveals that the world-views of the Hindu systems, namely, Vaisnavism and Vedanta, are entirely different, if not in some sense diametrically apart, from that of Sikhism. Their religious perceptions are different, and consequently their goals, methodologies, approach to the world, ethics, and world-views are entirely different. They belong to the class of dichotomous and salva-tion systems, while Sikhism belongs to a whole-life or *miri-piri* system in which the Gurus have particularly guarded the society against accepting a monastic, pacifist, or life-negating system.

In this context, we fail to find any relevance, meaning, or validity of any observation indicating that Sikhism is a sect or an offshoot of Hinduism, with a common theology, and 'with nine-tenth of Guru Granth Sahib being Vedantic in essence'. It is well known that neither Shankra, nor a Jnani, nor a Videhi Mukta would ever, contemplate participation in the world which is non-existent for him, and which activity they consider delusive and a fall. We hope that scholars with a variant view would concede that Guru Arjun who created a 'State within a State' and the following five Gurus, who started militarisation and confrontation with the Empire, well understood the *bani* of Guru Nanak and of the other Gurus. Guru Tegh Bahadur, whose *bani* is also in the Guru Granth Sahib, distinguished himself as a soldier,

and for that reason was called Tegh Bahadur. It is he who clearly spurned the offer of the Emperor that if he gave up socio-political activities, or organising what he considered to be 'a Millat and consequent rebellion', and confined himself to prayers and preaching, he would get official grants.<sup>90</sup> For, in the perception of the Moghul Administration: "The Guru was moving around with his disciples, quite intoxicated with pride, with a view to revolt".<sup>91</sup> But, in the Master was burning the same Light of spirituality, the same Spirit of Saint-Soldier as in Guru Nanak. Only because of our personal prejudices and predilections human perceptions vary.

Ideologically, the Sant-Sipahi or whole-life concept is based on the view that cultures that fail to provide for moral moorings, which can be supplied only by religion, so as to enable the society to meet the challenges of the destructive and aggressive forces of life, inevitably decay into dichotomy, involving monasticism, *sanyasa* and other-worldliness as the path of salvation, and unbridled greed and injustice in the empirical life. It is for this reason that the inequity of the caste ideology could survive unchallenged for over three millenia in India. Similarly, even though Christianity and Christ were life-affirming, it is because of its pacifism and the exposition of its early theologians that made it other-worldly, dichotomous and a religion for the search of a life in heaven. For, Saint Augustine in his 'City of God' clearly believed: "The spread of Christianity would not ensure political and economic improvement. The earthy city of self-will would continue to exist amidst the rise and fall of states and empires".<sup>92</sup> It is this dichotomy that led to large scale massacres, ghettos and crusades in the early centuries of the Christian Rule, and Hitler, Stalin and Hiroshima in our century.

We do not propose making any further comments and leave it to the readers to make their judgment on the issue of the independent ideological identity of Sikhism. It is not our intention, in any Way, to misunderstand or misrepresent the two Hindu systems. For that reason We have, by and large, purposely confined our interpretation of those systems to what has been expounded by scholars from that society.

In the end, it is essential to record that however honest and analytical may be the interpretation of a believer or of a non-believer in God or the Ultimate Reality, there will continue to be great differences between their views. King writes: "One general

conclusion which I draw from a long study of critics, of which the above is a sketch, that it is most important to remember the personality and circumstances of the critic. In a Natural Science like Chemistry, it may not be necessary to know anything about the human being who is writing. In any subject which entails human subjects the work must be put into a personal context. Accordingly, one feels every work of critical scholarship should have a government statutory warning that its consumption may be deleterious to the soul's health. If it is to do with religion, it should also have a statement of ingredients, including the religious standing of the writer. If he or she is a believer, it is necessary to know this, so that the critical reader can allow for bias. If he or she is not a believer, we should have some indication of that too, lest the disillusionment or enlightenment of a post-Christian, a post-Jew or a post-whatever, should give the critic rosy coloured spectacles or a jaundiced outlook".<sup>93</sup> It is not our argument that non-believers, atheists or agnostics should not write about religion of their own society or about any other religion. But, we should like to stress that any attempt on the part of a non-believer to be dogmatic about a religion or its principles would be plain naivety.

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## **Singh Sabha Movement – A Revival**

Dr Gurdarshan Singh Dhillion

**INTRODUCTORY:** In recent years some writings have appeared, which seek to suggest that the Singh Sabha Movement was a reformist movement, that made innovations in the Sikh thought and practices. Academically speaking, the method to determine whether a religious movement (Singh Sabha in this case) is reformist or revivalist is to study four aspects of it. The first aspect is the ideology of the original movement (Sikhism), and especially whether the movement under study created changes in that ideology or only invoked the original ideology of the system to bring about changes in the then existing practices. Second is the level of achievement in practices which the original movement (Sikh religion in this case), had made during its hey day and whether the leaders of the movement under study had invoked those achievements and the tradition as a model to follow. Thirdly, what was the fall, if any, in the state of things in the life of the community that was sought to be changed and how did it measure with the earlier high mark of the tradition, i.e. what was the then state of affairs and practices that were sought to be changed. Fourthly, how do the changes brought about by the leaders of the new movement (Singh Sabha in this case) compare with the earlier tradition and whether or not those were in consonance with it or entirely variant from it.

We are dividing our present paper into four parts so as to make a proper assessment of the Singh Sabha Movement. Side by side we shall be considering some variant views in the light of our discussion of the subject. We shall first state the fundamentals of the Sikh ideology especially those where Sikhism radically departed from the earlier Indian traditions.

**SIKH IDEOLOGY:** Sikhism arose in the 16th century as an entirely new ideology, opposed in its fundamentals to those of the contemporary religions. It challenged the fanaticism and religious hypocrisy of the Brahmins and the political oppression of the contemporary rulers. Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru, stressed the oneness of God, Immanent, Creator, 'who is the Timeless, Eternal Reality, Formless, Unborn, Unincarnated and self-existent without Fear and Rancor and who is realised by the Enlightener's Grace.' These attributes are incorporated in the 'Mool-Mantra' of Guru Nanak's Japji, which is the 'fundamental primal text expounding the beliefs of Sikhism'. He explicitly denounced all those religious traditions which denied the unity of God. He declared

that “the belief in gods and goddesses was the source of Maya (The great Illusion)”<sup>1</sup> which led people astray. The Gurus accept ‘Ek Onkar’ as a declaration of the unity of God. In Asa Rag, the Guru says: “Six are the (Hindu) Shashtras and six their authors who have laid down six different philosophical concepts. But the Guru of these gurus is God Himself.”<sup>2</sup>

Guru Nanak led a crusade against the caste system, idolatory, ritualism, asceticism and Brahmin’s claim to superiority. He put an end to the role of middle-men (Brahmins) in man’s relation with God. He advocated that man can be one with Him through his own good deeds. He emphasised moral virtues and considered rituals to be a hindrance in the salvation of man. He denounced idol worship of gods in most explicit terms: “The ignorant fools take stones and worship them, O Hindus, how shall the stone which itself sinketh carry you across?”<sup>3</sup> He rejected asceticism and emphasised truthful living based on good deeds and righteousness. He impressed upon his followers that salva-tion could be attain, through the fulfilment of one’s duties towards family and society. For Guru Nanak social responsibility forms an integral part of the spiritual attributes of the ideal man. It is this element that constitutes one of the essential tenets of the Sikh faith. It is this element that gives Sikhism its distinctive and historic charcter, role and personality.

Guru Nanak laid emphasis on the brotherhood of man and strongly condemned social inequality. He declared: “The sense of high and low, and of caste and colour, such are the illusions created in man.”<sup>4</sup> He raised his voice against economic exploitation and political despotism of his times. According to Guru Nanak, the world is not only real but it is a meaningful place where God’s Creative and Attributive Will works. That is ‘God being riches to the poor, milk to the child, and eyes to the blind’,<sup>5</sup> the seeker has to follow the ethical path of values and virtues laid down by God and the Guru. It is clear that in Guru Nanak’s mission of love, two objectives become logically uppermost; and these he emphasized unambiguously in his Bani, namely that he was to establish equality and fraternity among men, and that it was the duty and responsibility of the religious man and the religious society he was creating to resist oppression and safeguard human rights and values. The life affirming faith founded by Guru Nanak attracted a large number of followers who found in it a welcome escape from the debasing caste discrimination, Brahmanical domination and empty

ritualism. It is a revolutionary system in which the dichotomy between the spiritual life and the empirical life of man was emphatically broken for the first time in the East. It was Guru Nanak who laid and led the path of universal love and the emancipation of man without distinction of caste and creed. The call for this mission was given by him in these terms:

“If thou art zealous of playing the game of Love,  
Then come upon my path with head on thy palm  
Yea, once thou settest thy foot on this way,  
Then find not a way out, and be prepared to lay down thy head.”<sup>6</sup>

It is in this context that the importance of Guru Nanak’s criticism of the doctrine of Ahimsa should be understood. “Men discriminate not and quarrel over meat eating, they do not know what is flesh and what is non-flesh, or what is sin and what is not sin.”<sup>7</sup> “Life”, he said, “is in every grain of corn or seed.”<sup>8</sup>

**LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT:** It is in this background that we have to charter the course of Sikh history from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh. After Guru Nanak, the period of the next three Gurus relates mainly to the creation, expansion, and organisation of a cohesive society or Panth Guru Nanak had started. With each succeeding Guru, Sikhism became increasingly crystallised and institutionalised into a distinct faith and society. The next major landmark was the time of the fifth Guru, who not only compiled the scripture of the new society, thereby weaning it away from all earlier beliefs, sought confrontation with the empire, and made the supreme sacrifice of his life, but also created in his life-time what Dr. H.R. Gupta calls “a state within state”. No wonder Emperor Jahangir took note of this mounting challenge and attacked the Sikh society.<sup>9</sup> From this time onward, the Sikhs had to make tremendous sacrifices and undergo sufferings to preserve their faith.

Further, it is important to understand that the doctrine of Miri and ‘Piri’ proclaimed by the sixth Guru, Hargobind, is the natural and inevitable corollary of the path of love and true service of man, of the rejection of asceticism and monasticism, the acceptance of the householder’s life and responsibility, and of securing justice, equality and freedom for all, preached by Guru Nanak. The Guru justified the

use of force to uphold justice and righteousness and to defend the oppressed. The ninth Sikh Guru, Tegh Bahadur, carried on the Sikh tradition of martyrdom for the cause of justice and emancipation of man.

The tenth Sikh Guru, Gobind Singh, laid down baptismal (Amrit) ceremony for the Sikhs, initiated them into the Khalsa and prescribed the wearing of five K's. Those who went through baptism, became members of the Khalsa brotherhood. The organisation was committed to pursuing the right path and resisting and undoing injustice, tyranny and aggression, since in the Sikh society it was a religious duty and social responsibility to promote and maintain righteousness. The Guru also furnished the order of the Khalsa with the institutions of 'Panj Piyaras' (Five beloved ones or leaders) and Daswandh (voluntary contribution of one tenth of one's income to the exchequer of the Panth), thereby bestowing upon the organisation the character of a self-contained community. It is significant to note that of the five beloved ones (Piyaras) baptised by the tenth Guru, four belonged to what the Indian society then regarded as the Shudra caste. The Guru's object was to obliterate all distinctions of caste and creed and weld his followers into a cohesive society. The Sikhs and the five beloved ones were amazed when the Guru requested them to initiate him into the Khalsa brotherhood in exactly the same manner as he had initiated them. By this symbolic act the Guru invested the Khalsa with leadership of the Panth and the authority of his personality. Henceforward the Guru was the Khalsa and the Khalsa was the Guru. Sikhism, thus, emerged as the most democratic religion in the world.

The Gurus categorically rejected all those beliefs, rituals or ceremonies that implied the recognition of anything but one true Lord. In order to emphasize the complete independence and separateness of Sikh ideology, Guru Gobind Singh introduced the 'Nash' doctrine, involving 'Kritnash', 'Kulnash', 'Dharamnash', 'Bharamnash' and 'Karamnash' i.e. giving up of all those beliefs prejudices and traditions that stood in the way of the sole worship of the Supreme Being.<sup>10</sup> In this way they made a complete break of the Sikh society with the past religious systems, traditions and customs. The Guru accomplished this many-sided transformation in bold defiance of the age old beliefs, dogmas and conservatism of the traditional Indian religions. The Khalsa created by Guru Gobind Singh was unique both in its internal features and external form and was to play a vital role in the Indian History. In the words of J.D. Cunningham, "A living spirit possesses the whole Sikh people

and the impress of Gobind has not only elevated and altered the constitution of their minds but has operated materially and given amplitude to their physical frames.<sup>11</sup>

Let us here record the relevant and clean injunctions of Guru Gobind Singh, "He who keeps alight the torch of Truth and with love has faith only in One Supreme Being, and does not believe, even by mistake, in fasting, monastic life, or worship of graves or ancestors, is the true Khalsa."<sup>12</sup> Further, a few extracts from the report of a Muslim chronicler, Ahmad Shah Batala, as given in his book 'Twarikh-i-Hind', of the speech by Guru Gobind Singh given at the time of the Amrit (Baptism) ceremony are as follows: "I wish you all to embrace one creed and follow one path, obliterating all differences of religion. Let the four Hindu castes, who have different rules laid down for them in the Shastras, abandon them altogether and mix freely with one another. Let no one deem himself superior to another. Do not follow the old scriptures. Let none pay heed to the Ganges and other places of pilgrimage which are considered holy in the Hindu religion or adore Hindu deities, like Rama, Krishna, Brahma and Durga, but all should have faith only in Guru Nanak and his successors. Let men of four castes receive my baptism, eat out of the same vessel and feel no disgust or contempt or one another."<sup>13</sup>

The spirit of Guru Gobind Singh was carried on by Banda Singh Bahadur and his men, who fought against the Mughals under the most inhospitable circumstances. But they stuck to their faith and principles till the end of their lives. The Sikh devotion to their religion and their spirit is evident from the fact that out of 740 Sikh prisoners of war, who were executed in Delhi along with Banda, not one deserted the faith, even while given the choice to do so.<sup>14</sup>

**SIKHISM IN 19TH CENTURY:** Here it is necessary to give a demographic picture of the Sikh community from the 18th to the 19th century. The struggle and the persecution of the Sikhs was severest during the mid 18th century. A price was put on every Sikh head and three times it was reported to the authorities that the Sikhs had been exterminated root and branch.<sup>15</sup> During this period of struggle, it is reported that at one time barely two thousand guerillas were left.<sup>16</sup> This was spirit and character of the Sikhs, when they gained power in after half of the 18th century. The establishment of the Khalsa commonwealth, naturally, gave, opportunity both to Muslim and Hindu populations to seek conversion for reasons which were obviously

mun-dane. The Sikhs never started any proselytising campaign because it is not sanctified in their religion. Obviously, these new entrants were slow in shedding some of their old personal, family or customary prejudices and beliefs, which included faith in local gods and goddesses, saints, fakirs and Pirs. In the time of Ranjit Singh the number of Sikhs, thus, rose to 10-11 lacs.<sup>17</sup> The first census in 1881 reports that the number of Sikhs was 17 lacs.<sup>18</sup> It is evident that this large-scale increase in the number of Sikhs is certainly not due to the natural increase in the members of the faith, who had struggled to power in the 18th century. Regarding the Sikhs in the second half of the 19th century, Ibbetson reports that with the exception of the Akalis, who still adhered to the ordinances of the Khalsa, many of the original observances of the Sikhs had fallen in disuse but for the five external signs and abstinence from tobacco.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, the Sehjdhari group of Nirankaris, who were sixty thousand at the time of the census of 1891 never believed in any god or goddess and adhered strictly to faith in Guru Granth Sahib as the sole scripture and guide.<sup>20</sup>

A demoralising effect of the annexation of the Punjab was that some of the Sikh Gyanis, who were very learned in their special departments, did not find jobs for their talents. They, therefore, went over to the Hindus and taught their religious books. Apart from decline in the dissemination of Sikh thought, they, in order to please their employers, started giving Hindu tint to the Sikh doctrines and beliefs, causing thereby great harm to Sikhism. Secondly, it is also true that many of the Hindu entrants of the Sikh faith who had naturally curbed or shed Hindu rituals and customs during the Sikh rule, reverted to their old prejudices and practices.

Before the advent of the Singh Sabha Movement in 1873, the Sikh society was, thus, passing through a lean phase. With their uncertain political future, Sikhs had become a prey to Brahmanical Hinduism and the socio-religious fabric of the community was being damaged. Owing to the weakness of some of the Neo-Sikhs, the number of Sikhs embracing the other faiths was increasing steadily.<sup>21</sup> A contemporary observer noted, "Just as we do not see any Buddhist in the country except in images, in the same fashion, the Sikhs, who are now here and there, visible in their turbans and their other religious forms like wrist-bangles and swords, will be seen only in pictures and museums. Their own sons and grandsons clad in coats and trousers and supporting mushroom-like caps will go to see them in museums and

say in their Pidgin Punjabi, 'Look, that is the picture of a Sikh - the tribe that inhabited this country once upon a time.'<sup>22</sup>

The proselytising activities of the Christian missionaries also alarmed the Sikhs. The historic conversion of Maharaja Dalip Singh (son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh) and Raja Harnam Singh of Kapurthala to Christianity came as a rude shock to the Sikhs.<sup>23</sup> The loss of political power (Punjab was annexed by the British in 1849) also left a demoralising effect on them. It was at this juncture that the Singh Sabha assumed the leadership of the Sikhs.<sup>24</sup>

The Singh Sabha played a significant role in the socio-religious regeneration of the Sikh community. It made the Sikhs aware of their great spiritual and cultural heritage, and of their being the 'Khalsa is the pure. By emphasis on the Sikh practices, social laws, customs and Punjabi language, it welded the Sikhs, once again, into an independent community, bound together by faith in the teachings of their Gurus. The key-note of the Singh Sabha was 'Back to Guru Granth Sahib'. The object was to restore the purity of Sikhism by abolishing later accretions and superstitious practices, which did not stand the test of old Sikh Maryada or the teachings of the Gurus.

As stated earlier, the Sikh society consisted of the two distinct segments; those from the old Sikh stock who had struggled successfully through the persecutions and the revolutionary fire of the 18th century; and second, those large number of Hindu converts to Sikhism who had for the sake of convenience swelled the Sikh ranks during the Sikh rule. Ibbetson made it clear that the Akali section fully adhered to the injunctions of the Guru;<sup>25</sup> the same was the position of the old Sehjdharis or Narankaris.<sup>26</sup> Obviously, all the Hindu converts could not shed some of their old customs and prejudices in a generation or two. Almost three fourth of the Sikhs belonged to this stock. The position, so glibly talked about that in old days one member of a family was a Hindu and another a Sikh, related exactly to this converted section of the Sikhs, and not to the old Sikh families of the 18th century, when being a Sikh involved risk to life. It is this large section that carried a back-log of Hindu prejudices which the Singh Sabha was out to eliminate. There was also another problem. Some of the descendents of the Gurus, because of the wealth bestowed on them and the respect they commanded during the Sikh rule, started the cult of personal worship and collection of offerings. This practice, though in con-sonance with the old Hindu culture, was violative of Sikh doctrines, where the Gurus

“had prohibited touching the feet of so-called pious men and had stated that the religious path lay in working hard and sharing one’s income with others”<sup>27</sup> But, these wealthy Sikhs had got a vested interest in these cults, because personal worship brought them offerings from both their Sikh and non-Sikh followers.<sup>28</sup> Out of the sheer self-interest of maintaining their income and offerings from their Hindu followers, they started saying that the Gurus had preached the same religious system as in the Vedas, even though the Gurus had called “the Vedic doctrines to be misleading concerning caste, heaven, hell, etc.”<sup>29</sup> The Singh Sabha had, thus, not only to preach against Hindu practices, but had also to fight these Sikh vested interests who kept and patronised men like A.S. Vahiria and Gulab Singh, who wrote things which were palpably against the Guru Granth and its message.

Recently some scholars in the West have presented a distorted version of the nineteenth century Sikhism. H.S. Oberoi, (presently in the chair of Sikh and Punjabi Studies at the University of British Columbia, Canada) for example, is a clear instance of having mis-represented the Sikh Tradition<sup>30</sup> He has tried to romanticise the myths and glamourise the long-forgotten superstitions. His entire exercise seems to be devoted to projecting the late 19th century revival of Sikhism as neo-Sikhism. His evaluation of Sikhism is neither comprehensive, nor objective. In fact, it is obvious that his treatment of the subject betrays a major lapse in the methodology of study. Because, in his entire paper, he has completely ignored the two essential aspects of the issue discussed by us earlier. He has completely misrepresented the matter by harping only on some features of the late 19th century Sikhism and then wrongly projecting them to be the integral part of earlier or original Sikhism.

H.S. Oberoi in his paper entitled, ‘Re-reading Sikh Experience in the Nineteenth Century’, read recently at a seminar at Berkeley (U.S.A.), observes, “The word Sanatan derives from Sanskrit and has connotation of something that is ancient, almost as if out of secular time. The Sanatanist Sikhs, therefore, believed that these customs, rites and rituals had origins in the beginnings of time, when the universe came into existence and were beyond the pale of diachronic time’ ... ‘The fact that the Sikhs took part in the myths, worship and cults of miracle saints, goddesses and village gods does not imply that Sikhism was in a state of decline or irrational. These practices were an integral part of a coherent way of life and should not be judged from standards which were invented at the turn of the century.”



Let us now examine the position stated by Oberoi in his paper. He mentions four practices which he claims to be ancient and native to Sikhs of the times. These are the worship of Sakhi Sarvar, Guga Pir, Seetla Devi and village ancestors. A close examination of Oberoi's paper reveals that he has merely tried to conceal the reality by resort to vague generalisations and by giving unnecessary details of the concerned practices without specifying the extent of their prevalence in the Sikh Society.

We first take up the case of the worship of Sakhi Sarvar which is the only practice of which he has indicated some data in support of his argument by saying that less than 3% Sikhs had faith in Sakhi Sarvar. Otherwise, about twenty pages of his paper are filled with irrelevant verbiage giving just a journalistic description of the four practices. The entire structure of Oberoi's argument is based on the flimsy premises that these practices were native and ancient and no one ever prohibited them. He writes, "It was Sikh reformers in the 19th century who for the first time labelled many of the current beliefs and practices among the Sikhs as acts of deviance and expressions of a superstitious mind." This observation of Oberoi is a clear mis-statement. The Guru Granth is full of hymns rejecting the spiritual character of Devis, Jogis, Pirs, etc. "Afflicted are Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, afflicted is the entire world."<sup>31</sup> "The Vedas do not know His greatness. Neither Brahma, nor Shiva have any clue of Him. The Devis and Devtas have sought to know Him but failed."<sup>32</sup>

In the Sikh tradition there are four stories concerning the futility of Sakhi Sarvar worship. The first story is of a Sakhi Sarvaria, Bhai Manj, coming to Guru Arjan for religious guidance. The Guru's reply is very revealing of the Sikh thesis. He said, "You may go on with the easy path of Sakhi Sarvar worship, because Sikhism is a very difficult path and unless you are willing to be dispossessed of your wealth and to sacrifice your very life, it is no use coming to me." But, Bhai Manj did become a Sikh.<sup>33</sup> The second story also concern, Guru Arjan when he deprecated the Sakhi Sarvar practice of preparing a big cake and presenting it before the priest who read Durud (a verse from Quran) and then kept the cake, giving only a marginal part to the devotees. The Guru says, "Without the true Guru they must sit and Watch without eating until the Durud is read."<sup>34</sup> The Guru, thus, denounced the practice of seeking benediction of the priest, for, only a true Guru could lead one to the right path. The third story is of a Sikh's daughter having been married to the son of a Sakhi Sarvaria.

The bride seeks the blessings of Guru Hargobind and her husband also becomes a Sikh. A tussle develops between the groom and his father when the former demolishes the family shrine of Sakhi Sarvar. But the groom continues to be a Sikh. Later, his handsome son founds a village called now Bhai Rupa in Nabha State.<sup>35</sup> A similar story concerning the futility of Sakhi Sarvar worship relates to the time of Guru Tegh Bahadur, when he visited Patiala area.<sup>36</sup> In fact, Sikh writings and Rehtnamas or categorically prohibit the worship of Devi, Devtas, saints etc<sup>37</sup> Even Bhangu in his "Panth Parkash" (mid 19th century) specifically condemns the worship of Sakhi Sarvar. He says that the Sikhs did not believe in ghosts, spirits and graves nor did they have any faith in the Guga and the Sakhi Sarvar. He rather refers to the "frequent clashes between the Sikhs and the Sarvarias in the villages and towns of Punjab."<sup>38</sup> Therefore, in the face of a clear rejection of the Sakhi Sarvar practice by the Guru, the Sikh religious literature, and the tradition, the existence of a marginal residue of the Sakhi Sarvarias among the new Hindu entrants of Sikhism, only shows how insignificant is its value in drawing a correct picture of the Sikh society in that period. In fact, it is creditable that under the Sikh influence all except about 3% of the new entrants had given up their old Hindu practices.

In this context, Rose clearly endorses Bhangu's view, "com-paratively few Sikhs are followers of Sarvar and there is in fact a sort of opposition in the central districts between Sikhs 'and Sultanis. You hear men' say that one party in a village worships the Guru, the other worships Sarvar; that is that one party are Sikhs, the other ordinary Hindus who follow Sarvar. It has been suggested that the worship of Sarvar probably spread eastward among the Jats in the 15th and 16th centuries, and was the prevalent cult at the time of the great develop-ment of Sikhism in the days of Guru Gobind Singh; and that most of the conversions to the Khalsa faith were from the worshippers of Sultan. This appears a very probable account of the origin of such opposition as does exist between these two forms of faith. As between the Hindus generally and the Sultani there is no sort of opposition; there are instances in the popular legends of men opposing the cult of Sarvar, but in the present day the Sultanis are looked on as ordinary Hindus."<sup>39</sup> Oberoi while he gives irrelevant details of the miraculous powers attributed to Sakhi Sarvar and lavishly quotes Rose as evidence, seems to have deliberately concealed the above mentioned conclusion drawn by Rose and, instead, made the distortion that Singh Sabha leaders were the first to object to such practices. Such clear mis-

state-ments are generally made by partisan propagandists but never, we believe, by any academician. This indicates either a lack of in depth study or a conscious attempt to suppress facts with a view to mis-representing Sikhism.

There is another mis-statement when Oberoi says, “His-torians cannot simply reproduce these value judgements and employ categories invented by a section of the Sikh elite.” We have seen that prohibition of these practices was neither the invention of the Singh Sabha, nor was it the first to object to them. Nor is it true that leaders of the Singh Sabha formed a section of the Sikh elite. In fact, the pioneers of the Singh Sabha, namely, Bhais Ditt Singh and Gurmukh Singh were persons of extremely humble beginnings. Ditt Singh belonged to a poor Ramdasia family of a small village (Nandpur Kalaur) of district Ropar .<sup>40</sup> Gurmukh Singh’s father was just a cook in Kapurthala.<sup>41</sup> As against that, the persons with vested interests in personal worship were Baba Sir Khem Singh Bedi, Baba Gurbakhsh Singh Bedi and Raja of Paridkot. Men like Vahiria were the proteges of wealthy persons, whom they had kept to propagate their point of view, even though clearly opposed to the Sikh doctrines in the Guru Granth Sahib. And who constituted the elite and who represented the voice of the people and the Sikh culture is evident from the fact that in the tussle between them, all the local and base Singh Sabhas in the country shifted their loyalty to the Ditt group, except three which belonged to the towns or places of these feudal kings.<sup>42</sup> It is, therefore, just naive to suggest that these persons of small beginnings could achieve the tremendous success, they did achieve, by just innovations or Inventions, ‘unless what they promoted or preached had the clear sanction of the scripture and the Sikh tradition.

Regarding Guga, Sitla and ancestor worship., Oberoi has given no data at all in support of his argument, meaning thereby that the extent of these practices was even less significant than the practice of Sakhi Sarvar worship. Oberoi instead of being precise has written page after page of a journalistic account of the practices without suggesting the extent of these practices, their sanction by the Sikh tradition, or their existence during any earlier period of Sikh history. Every student of Hindu religion knows that the system, especially under Purva Mimansa, believes that spiritual and other benefits can be obtained by the practice of Yajnas, sacrifices, mantras, etc. On the other hand, even the most elementary student of the Granth Sahib is aware that all such

practices and worship of Devi, Devatas and the like are regarded as futile in Sikhism. Let us here just indicate two instances. Every scholar of Sikhism and Sikh history knows that the basic reason why the Hindu Hill Rajas refused to cooperate with the tenth Guru was his rejection of Devi worship and their rituals and caste observances.<sup>43</sup> The second instance is of a complaint made to Guru Hargobind about a Sikh having broken an idol of a Devi.<sup>44</sup> The Sikh explained as to what was the worth of a Devi idol if it could not protect itself. It indicates that no one respected the Devi or Devatas in the Sikh Society.

Without indicating any statistical evidence, Oberoi makes another assertion saying that “the popularity of Sakhi Sarvar among the Sikhs was matched by another Pir called Guga Pir.” It is necessary to understand that in the old Punjab, Sikhs were less than 14% and the Hindus were more than double the number of Sikhs; and even among the Sikhs about three fourth were 19th century Hindu converts of convenience. It is, therefore, highly misleading to talk in vague terms about some Hindu practices current among Punjab Hindus and then to relate them to the Sikhs on the mere ground that the Singh Sabha had also preached against them, as being contrary to the Sikh tradition.

Regarding Sitla worship too, Oberoi is equally irrelevant and vague. The Sikh position about Devi worship both in precept and practice, has already been indicated. In the article of the ‘Khalsa Akhbar’ of March 6, 1896, it is the entire Punjab population that has been addressed to give up Sitla worship, without even mentioning the word Sikh therein. And the advice to the people is to have themselves inoculated instead of suffering the disease.

About ancestor worship among Sikhs, Oberoi’s observations are even more far-fetched. He cites Dube’s, ‘Indian Village’ and Brubaker’s ‘A Study of South Indian Village Goddesses and their Religious Meaning’. The only reference to the Sikhs is a manual by an army officer mentioning that Satnamis, Hindus and Sikhs had a practice of ancestor worship.

From Oberoi’s own paper, it is evident that Sitla, Guga and ancestor worship among the Sikhs were even less significant than the worship of Sakhi Sarvar prevalent among less than 3% Sikhs. It is suggested by Oberoi that though the practice of Sakhi Sarvar worship was insignificant in 1911 it must have been wide-spread and native to the Sikh society before the Singh Sabha propaganda. The argument is quite meaningless. If in the earlier four hundred years of preaching by the ten Gurus themselves and others, the Sikh tradition could not

eliminate these Hindu practices entirely, how could the Singh Sabha workers, with humble beginnings, work this miracle in about one generation? It is quite significant that in order to prove his point that in the 19th century there was not much of an ideological difference between the Hindu and the Sikhs, Oberoi has quoted neither the *Gum Granth* nor any *Rehnamas*, nor any earlier Sikh Literature or traditions, but only A.S. Vahiria and Gulab Singh, both spokesmen of the Bedi group with vested interests in maintaining the cult of personal worship. So far as the loyalist Gulab Singh is concerned, his propagandist statement that the four Vedas are also the religious books of the Sikh”is quite understandable. But for Oberoi to quote him approvingly shows either poor scholarship and a gross ignorance of the contents of *Gum Granth Sahib*, the Nash doctrine of Gum Gobind Singh, the *Rehnamas* and the Sikh religious literature and practices, or a deliberate attempt at distortion by his avoiding all references to the *Guru Granth* and Sikh literature. Even in the article of the *Khalsa Akhbar*, dated March 29, 1901, it had clearly been argued by the Sikh paper, by quoting the *Guru Granth*, that the Gurus had specifically repudiated the doctrine of the Vedas. But by the use of pointless phraseology, Oberoi suggests that in the 19th century, Sikhs like the Hindus were believers in Devis, Devatas, Guga, Sakhi Sarvar and the like. His conclusion is that the key to understanding Sikhism is that it is a peasant faith as of a peasantry elsewhere in the world. Even a most elementary knowledge of the *Guru Granth* and the teachings of the Gurus, shows that the Gurus severely condemned these Hindu practices. The view of Vahiria or Khem Singh Bedi were, thus absurdly in contradiction to the Sikh religion. And, obviously, it was such clear misrepresentations of the Sikh Scripture, the leaders of the Singh Sabha were out to oppose. But, interestingly, it is these very distorters, and promoters of the malpractices whom Oberoi quotes as authorities so as to prove what, he asserts, was the norm of Sikhism. Oberoi has also failed to record the categorical contemporary evidence that the Akalis, the core of the Panth, were fully adhering to the norm prescribed by the Gurus. If his conclusion were correct and Sikhs like the Hindu peasantry were more superstitious worshippers of Devi, Devatas and Guga and Sakhi Sarvar Pirs, how does Oberoi explain that (i) the Sikhs, an insignificant section of the population, were able to supplant the Mughal Empire in the entire north-west and stem once for all the wave after wave of invaders that had plagued India for a thousand years, (ii) a leaderless community gave to the British the toughest

fight, almost to the point of their defeat and annihilation, on the Indian soil, (iii) the Sikhs were predominantly the people who organised and manned the first rebellion (Ghaddar rebellion) against the British, (iv) of the 121 persons executed and 2646 sentenced to life imprisonment during the entire freedom struggle during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, 93 and 2047 respectively were Sikhs<sup>45</sup> and (v) during the period of Emergency from June, 1975 - March, 1977, involving the suspension of the Indian Constitution and the abrogation of all human rights and individual liberties, it was only the Sikhs who conducted a regular civil disobedience movement (Save Democracy Morcha) suffering imprisonment of over forty thousand persons,<sup>46</sup> while in the rest of India, not even half that number courted arrest or imprisonment,<sup>47</sup>

**CHANGES MADE BY SINGH SABHA:** Now, considering the fourth aspect of the Singh Sabha Movement, namely, the revival it brought about in the Sikh society, we find that every step they took and change they made had the full sanction of the Sikh scripture and tradition. One has only to read *Ham Hindu Nahin Hain* by Bhai Kahn Singh and *Nakli Sikh Prabodh* by Ditt Singh to find that almost every page quotes the Bani of the Gurus, in support of their suggestions.<sup>48</sup> The only new step they took was the establishment of educational institutions on modern lines and the publication and propagation of religious literature, not available earlier, because the services of the Printing Press had then become an easily available facility.

Oberoi denies that Sikh resurgence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century derived its inspiration from the teachings of the Gurus and the Sikh scripture. The greatest contribution of Sikh Sabha lies in projecting Sikh religion in its traditional perspective. Sikhism is a revealed religion and has a recorded scripture authenticated by the Guru himself. Oberoi looks upon Sikhism as a rural religion, which "by definition is a part of the oral culture of people and it is always difficult to reconstruct and recover all the elements which go into its making," Such statements completely misrepresent the reality in so far as there is a clear blackout, of the teachings of the Gurus, of Sikh tradition and practices, and of Sikh history in the earlier three centuries. In his entire paper, Oberoi has not quoted even one line from the Guru Granth Sahib, indicating he principles of the Sikh faith; nor has he mentioned any of its fundamentals on which the Gurus insisted. To talk of the characteristics of the Sikh faith and beliefs without reference to the Gurus, Guru Granth Sahib, and the Sikh tradition and history is something completely incomprehensible, if not deliberately biased. One wonders, how Oberoi

found a free and easy access to the so-called 'Oral tradition' to the exclusion of the actual Sikh history.

The burden of Oberoi's thesis is to highlight the points of deviation and departure from the Sikh tradition. In analysing the nature of Sikhism he forgets the historical perspective and the Sikh ideology. Marked by descriptive profusion and meaningless rhetoric, his thesis betrays an obvious ignorance of the basic tenets of the Sikh faith. By characterising the aberrations in the 19th century Sikh Society as the original or ancient Sikhism, he has identified Sikh norms with the Hindu practices of the neo-converts. He has made a particular black-out' of the Sikh history and the Sikh literature and injunctions that specifically prohibited pre-Sikh Hindu beliefs and practice. The author has taken it upon himself to select or reject any opinion; thus completely ignoring the traditional model and negating the original sources and opinions of many earlier or contemporary scholars. His contention that 'Sanatan Sikhism,' (a term coined by him to name pre-Singh Sabha Sikhism) constituted real Sikh tradition is self-contradictory and deceptive. This term has had no place or relevance in the entire history of Sikhism or any earlier writings pertaining to the Sikhs. A Sikh movement, Singh Sabha or any other, should be judged in terms of what the Gurus had taught and the Sikhs had practised in the Guru or the revolutionary period. Any attempt virtually to legitimize the Hindu practices or the aberrations against which the Sikh Gurus, the Rahtnamas and Sikh writings had launched a crusade, is nothing but misleading. Apart from the clear injunctions of Guru Gobind Singh quoted earlier, a near-contemporary source also records that 'Guru Gobind Singh rejected the paths of both the Hindus and the Muslims and created his own Panth.'<sup>49</sup> The Rehtnamas emphasized that 'The Sikhs should maintain their separate identity from the caste society.'<sup>50</sup> Rattan Singh Bhangu in his *Prachin Panth Prakash*, talks of "separate Identity of the Panth, its egalitarian character, and the plebian political objectives and character of the Khalsa."<sup>51</sup> The testimony of earlier injunctions, writings and contemporary observers, cannot be ignored. Therefore, to designate the lean period of Sikh ism, when Hindu practices had crept into it, as Sanatan Sikhism is a misnomer. To assess and measure the significance of an aberration in the period of decline of the Sikh movement, without reference to the norms, the long standing tradition or the injunctions in the scripture or Sikh writings, suggests a lack of sense of proportion or an attempt at distortion.

The Singh Sabha leaders aimed at “restoring the pristine purity of Sikhism,”<sup>52</sup> without propounding any philosophy of their Own or introducing a new practice un sanctioned by the ideology or the tradition. Any Sikh, who adhered to the injunctions of the ten Gurus and was ready to serve the community could be admitted to the fold of the Singh Sabha.<sup>53</sup> There was no ceremony to be gone through for this purpose nor was there any distinctive dress, badge or mark to be worn. The movement was not a new cult. It retained its democratic character, despite the efforts of some persons to style themselves as Gurus and wield control over its affairs. Baba Khem Singh Bedi introduced a new cult and tried to gain supremacy over the activities of the Sabha. Being a direct descendent of Guru Nanak, he virtually aspired to become a Guru.<sup>54</sup> He wanted a well-furnished seat (gadella) for himself, even in the presence of the Granth Sahib.<sup>55</sup> Baba Khem Singh Bedi wished his authority to be regarded as paramount and absolute in religious matters and himself to be looked upon as the Guru in succession to Guru Nanak.<sup>56</sup> Bhai Avtar Singh Vahiria, was a chosen associate of Baba Khem Singh Bedi. In his books, ‘Khalsa Dharam Shashtar,’ ‘Sikh Dharam Tat Darshan’ and ‘Gurdarshan Shastar,’ he writes that the Sikh Gurus did not prohibit the worship of gods and goddesses and it was wrong to remove caste distinctions.

Actually, it was such obvious mis-statements that Prof. Gur-mukh Singh, Giani Ditt Singh, Bhai Mayya Singh and Bhai Jawahar Singh of the Lahore Singh Sabha were out to controvert. They aimed at checking “outside influences and undesirable elements which had crept in Sikhism and thus to restore it to its former purity.”<sup>57</sup> Whereas the appeal of the Khem Singh Bedi and Vahiria group, who had their own vested interests, was mostly confined to their personal circles, that of the Lahore Sabha went further and touched the hearts of the general mass of the community.<sup>58</sup> Missionaries (*Parcharaks*) were sent even in the interior of the province to spread the message of Sikhism among hundreds and thousands of the village folks, who constituted the backbone of the Sikh community and without whose cooperation no movement could acquire a mass base. They made them aware of the fundamentals of the Sikh religion, thereby removing all doubts, regarding the identity and practices of the Khalsa. In the words of Giani Ditt Singh, “Having sprung from the Hindus, the Sikhs are yet a separate community, clearly distinguished from them in outward form, religious and social outlook, conception of God and Gurus, mode of worship, language of the scriptures and their ideas regarding caste,



pilgrimage and priesthood.”<sup>59</sup> In fact, the pamphlets and writings of the Singh Sabhaites profusely quote the scripture and religious writings in support of their views, exhorting Sikhs to shed the wrong practices that had crept in the Sikh fold following the political confusion after the defeat of the Khalsa. Bhai Kahan Singh’s book, *Ham Hindu Nahin*, (We Are Not Hindus) was a conscious reaction against the propaganda by some of the Hindus and Sikhs like the Khem Singh Vahiria group. Giani Gian Singh’s ‘Panth Parkash,’ Naurang Singh’s ‘Sikh Hindu Nahin,’ Jodh Singh’s *Sacha Dharmi*’ and many others, also quoted several passages from the Sikh scripture to prove that the Sikh religion was an independent religion and had nothing to do with Hinduism. In fact, Sikhism had controverted almost every fundamental of Hinduism.

Such writings inspired the Sikhs with self confidence and gave them a renewed sense of distinctiveness and direction.<sup>60</sup> The masses became sufficiently enlightened not to be misled by the Sikh vested interests and the Arya Samajists, who tried to say that the Sikhs were a part of the Hindus. The Singh Sabha leaders had a clear and firm grasp of the issues facing the Sikhs. They rightly realised that the form and spirit of the Khalsa could be kept intact only if the Sikhs conformed to the code of conduct prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh. Any laxity in maintaining the five symbols (the five K’s), they knew would mean a fall from the faith and would lead to the gradual erosion of the basic Sikh ideals.<sup>61</sup> Bhai Kahan Singh in his books, *Gurmat Parbhakar* and *Gurmat Suddhakar* quoted several passages from the Sikh scripture in order to prove that the worship of images was contrary to the teachings of the Gurus.

The Singh Sabha leaders laid emphasis on the inculcation of such virtues as love of God, service of one’s fellow beings, purity of living, charitableness and truthfulness. They made it clear, as the Gurus had emphasized in their Bani, that the way to one’s moral and spiritual uplift lay through good deeds and not through miracles, mysteries and mantras. “The worship of the Almighty in homes is the best of all to obtain eternal happiness, rather than going to the pilgrimage, where one was bound to be misled by the selfish and greedy priests.”<sup>62</sup> Misguided notions regarding the worship of graves, tombs, Samadhs and cremation marks, which were contrary to Sikh religious injunctions and traditions, were clearly condemned in the preachings of the Singh Sabha.<sup>63</sup> Giani Ditt Singh’s booklet, *Durga Parbodh*, was written primarily to dispel the belief in Pirs and Fakirs which was of no avail and diverted man’s attention from the path of righteousness. That is why, as indicated

already, all the thirty seven Singh Sabhas, except the three Sabhas of Rawalpindi, Faridkot and Amritsar which were personally connected with Khem Singh and Raja of Faridkot group, followed the lead of the Ditt Singh Gurmukh Singh group.<sup>64</sup>

As a result, the period of diffidence was over and Sikhism regained its self confidence in its historic mission. The Census Report of 1921 noted: "Sikhism is a religion with a very distinct worship of its own and having attained a position of independence, is fully entitled to rank as a separate religion."<sup>65</sup>

The passing of the Anand Marriage Act in 1909, legalising the Sikh form of marriage was a significant achievement of the Singh Sabhas. Various Sikh organisations and Singh Sabha, sent telegrams and petitions signed by lacs of Sikhs, demanding the passage of the Act<sup>66</sup> The Government was Impressed by this demonstration of Sikh unity in favour of this legislation which involved separate Sikh entity. It was an important step forward because the State was forced to accept the self assertion of the will of an independent socio-religious community.

The Sabha periodicals, the *Khalsa*, the *Khalsa Akhbar*, the *Khalsa Samachar*, the *Khalsa Advocate* and the *Sikhs and Sikhism* helped a great deal in projecting the true image of Sikhism. The influence of these periodicals was tremendous and they greatly helped in quickening the pace of revival. They succeeded in counteracting the attack of the Arya Samajists and the Christian Missionaries, who were misrepresenting the teachings of the Sikh Gurus. These periodicals were run by persons like Giani Ditt Singh, Bhai Gurmukh Singh, Bhai Mayya Singh, Bhagat Lakshman Singh, and Bhai Vir Singh who had been nurtured in the Sikh tradition.

People came in large numbers to receive baptism. A major plank of the Singh Sabha was a crusade of Amrit Parchar because to revive the institution of baptism and the connected doctrine of 'Nash', making a complete break with all earlier religious and social traditions, was the best means of eliminating the Brahmanical practices that had appeared among the Sikh ranks.<sup>67</sup> The Singh Sabha preaching being in line with the earlier tradition, and having the sanction of the Gurus and the scripture, no Sikh could ignore or defy them. In fact, the tremendous success the Singh Sabha revivalists had in bringing back dynamism in the Sikh life, was entirely due to their ability to invoke the authority of the Sikh Gurus, the Guru Granth Sahib and the Sikh tradition in support of everything they said and preached. The chief pillars of the movement,

workers like Giani Ditt Singh, Bhai Gurmukh Singh, Bhai Mayya Singh, Bhai Jawahar Singh and Bhagat Lakshman Singh, were very ordinary persons of hardly any consequence in the socio-economic or the political life of the community. There was nothing to recommend them except their devotion to the cause of the great tradition which the mass of people understood very well.<sup>68</sup> It would, therefore, be naive to suggest that these simple Singh Sabha workers could have the capacity to impose on the community a new system, or make innovations in the Sikh ideology or even a major reform, without their suggestions and programme being strictly in line with the thesis of the Gurus, especially when many socially and politically influential persons in the Sikh community continued to oppose them.<sup>69</sup>

The Chief Khalsa Diwan formed a sub-committee to suggest ways and means to reform the Gurdwaras that had gone into the hands of Brahmanical priests and vested interests<sup>70</sup> But it could not take effective measures because *Mahants* and *Pujaris* who controlled the Gurdwaras enjoyed the support of the Government.<sup>71</sup> After this tussle, the *Mahants* and the *Pujari's* became hostile to the Singh Sabha leaders.<sup>72</sup> The Sikh public was rudely made conscious of the evil designs of the Pujaris when they condemned the *Komaghata Marn* Sikhs at the Akal Takhat and presented a robe of honour to General Dyer after the tragedy of Jallianwala Bagh.<sup>73</sup> This made the Sikhs furious. It took the Sikhs quite some time to get their shrines liberated from the *Mahants* and the *Pujaris*.

Nevertheless, the Singh Sabha succeeded in renewing a sense of self-awareness among the Sikhs. The movement, which derived its inspiration from the great spiritual heritage of the Gurus, did not 'invent' any standard of its own. It is highly incorrect, rather misleading, to attribute innovations to a movement which was wholly revivalist in its nature and character. In fact, to propound a new ideology was against the very basic principles of the Singh Sabha. A scholar who sets out to study and understand the true nature of Sikhism should do so in the context of the Sikh scripture and the historical background of the emergence of Sikhism. Oberoi's assertion that Sikhism is first and foremost a peasant faith or rural religion, displays a complete lack of knowledge and understanding of Guru Granth Sahib and the fundamentals of Sikhism. This deficiency is common with those who use social-science methodology in studying a religion and its history. No where in the history of India or elsewhere in the world, is there any evidence to suggest that the peasantry could, on its own, devise a

radically new religious system or sustain a social revolution of the kind that took place in the Punjab.

Throughout the ages, Sikhism has shown a remarkable potency and will to grapple with all crisis, without compromising the basic and enduring values of its faith. It is through tremendous sacrifices and sufferings that the Sikhs have maintained their identity, ideals and ethos and carried out the mission entrusted to them by their Gurus. Their birth, training, tradition and history have marked them out as a people separate from the rest. It is quite idle to draw simplistic conclusions about the Sikh religion and its history, without an in-depth study and analysis of the Sikh scripture and the role of each doctrine and institution in shaping the Sikh movement and the revolutionary changes it brought about.

The study of the Singh Sabha movement in isolation, and in complete disregard of the Sikh ideology and the earlier Sikh history, apart from being methodically inadequate and faulty, shows very clearly the failings of a narrow and lopsided approach. Lloyd has drawn a very interesting caricature of an anthropological view which would first magnify a very narrow aspect of a social phenomenon' and then try to draw inferences therefrom. The social anthropologist who views religion as a social institution, quite often, fails to take into account the socio-cultural complex, "constituted by institutions, rules, beliefs and intentions" and arrives at erroneous conclusions<sup>74</sup> Lloyd has provided a rather amusing account of what a tribal anthropologist might see if he visited the Brighton beach in the middle of summer. The anthropologist's account, he says, may read somewhat like the following:

"The people of England are religious and devout worshippers of the sun. Each year they leave their homes and travel to the coast for the purpose of worship and often take up small accommodation in tents or in what they call caravans, or live with other people during their short stay. Each day they begin worship by prostrating themselves on the shingle in the heat of the sun, which is often so hot that they wear shields over their eyes. Their bodies become burnt and some become ill, but few are deterred by this, such is their devotion. At various times people will baptise themselves in the waters, calling to each other and waving their arms in ecstasy. At midday, families group together when a symbolic ceremony takes place. Three-cornered pieces of bread, known to the natives as 'sandwiches', are passed around

and eaten. During their afternoon they throw symbolic, large, inflated, multi- coloured orbs to one another, illustrating the dominance of the sun in their lives. Throughout all this, elders lie motionless in their canvas seats with their faces covered, in deep and prolonged meditation. These observances may continue for a family for upto fourteen days, when they return to their work until the following year.”<sup>75</sup>

Lloyd says that such an interpretation of what the people of Brighton beach were doing seems quite consist ant with their physical movements. That is to say, if these people really were sun-worshipping, instead of sun-bathing and enjoying themselves, their bodily move-ments may be no different. The difference lies in how they saw their movements. What the anthropologist did not do was to see things the way the natives did, to entertain the ideas they had, to understand the significance that these things had for them. If we wish to understand what a person is doing we have to understand not only his beliefs and intentions but also the socio-cultural context and institutions, norms and rules which provide the framework within which he forms his purposes in terms of appraisal of his situation. Oberoi’s study is equally narrow and inept in its vision.

## **CONCLUSION**

Unless there is a conscious or unconscious effort to damage and erode the very roots of the Sikh ideology and the Sikh religion, a correct evaluation of Sikhism cannot be made by a lop-sided or isolated study of a few rituals and beliefs prevalent in a very small section of the community during a particularly lean period. The worshipping of a ‘Sakhi Sarvar’ by less than three percent of ignorant and illiterate villagers or a similar local aberration or belief cannot be regarded as the views and practice of the entire Sikh community, especially when the Sikh scripture, tradition and writings had specifically and repeatedly condemned them, and when there was hardly a trace of them in the Sikh community of the Guru period or of the 18th century.

People of different religions are quite often found harmonising together in social life and mutually respecting, understanding and taking part in each other’s modes, ways and doings. For example ‘Purdah’ system which crept into the Hindu society bore the stamp of Muslim culture. It is misleading to draw inferences about the form and dynamics of a religion on the basis of socio-cultural practices and usages, which are local and temporary in character. A visitor to a Christian Sunday worship in a Punjabi village observed that “many aspects of the worship were strongly influenced by Punjabi village

culture - the timing of worship, taking off shoes outside the church, the separation of the men from the women, the noise and informality of worship, the music and musical instruments.”<sup>76</sup> If some Sikhs and Muslims worshipped the Sakhi Sarvar, it does not mean that Islam and Sikhisms are not independent religions or that such worship is native to the two religions. “Saturnatia, the Roman winter festival of 17-21 December, provided the merriment, gift-giving and candles typical of later Christmas holidays. Sun worship hung on in Roman Christianity and Pope Leo I in the middle of the fifth century, rebuked worshippers who turned round to bow to the sun before entering St. Peter’s basilica, some pagan customs which were later Christianised,…” In short many pagan customs continued in Christianity in one form or the other for centuries on end.<sup>77</sup>

There are features which are particular to Punjab and there are practices derived from the surrounding culture which give it a particular flavour not found in other parts of the world. Popular legends of ‘Heer-Ranjha’, ‘Sassi-Punnu’ and ‘Sohni-Mahiwal’ (men-mentioned by Oberoi) which found mention in the Punjabi literature placed no impediments in the recognition of Sikhism as an independent religion.

There are certain features of a culture which are local and temporal and cannot by any stretch, be deemed to be a part of the prevailing religious system. Just as the pop music that is a common feature of the urban life of the Indian community today, could not be called an integral part of the Brahmanical religion, in the same way it would be wrong to characterise folk fables and love stories of Hir Ranjha, Sassi Pannu, etc. as a part of the Sikh religion.

Our discussion of the four related aspects of the Singh Sabha movement shows that while it played an important and significant regenerative role during a lean period of the Sikh history, it was wholly a revivalist movement working strictly within the parameters of the Sikh religion and its tradition. In fact, the very reasons that it invoked the authority of the Guru and the Gurus Granth Sahib and placed before the public examples of the Sikh society and Sikh heroes who had suffered and sacrificed for the principles of Sikh religion, account for the success of the Singh Sabha leaders in safely and creditably steering the Sikh community towards its goals.

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# **Sikh Identity: A Continuing Feature**

Dr Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon

## **INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, some western writers, as also a few Indian writers, particularly sociologists and historians, while writing about Sikh religion, its injunctions, doctrines and practices have made two fundamentally fallacious observations by calling Sikhism a tradition and a pluralistic religion. Such descriptions, apart from being doctrinally incorrect, give an entirely wrong image of the fundamentals of the religion and the Sikh society as a whole.

In this paper, we intend clarifying the issue by showing that Sikhism is not only a well-defined religion but is far from being pluralistic. To outsiders not acquainted with Sikhism such misrepresentations might seem plausible because Hinduism with its innumerable sects and cults and undefined doctrines has generally been taken to be a tradition and a pluralistic system. But, for scholars in India there could hardly be a ground for confusion about Sikhism. Another two factors have also led to such loose statements even in the academic field. First, studies in sociology and anthropology have become so specialised and narrow in scope that scholars sometimes lose the overall perspective. Unfortunately, after independence the political factor and the ensuing tensions have also led to some skewing of visions.

We have taken up this issue because in the writings of W:H. McLeod<sup>1</sup>, Rajiv Kapur<sup>2</sup> and in papers contributed at Berkeley (U.S.A.) and Toronto (Canada), an entirely wrong perspective has been presented. Our essay deals with, as a case study, the paper of H.S. Oberoi (presently in the Chair of Sikh and Punjabi studies at the University of British Columbia, Canada), read at the Conference held at Toronto in February, 1987 (published in the book, 'Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century' (Joseph T.O. Connel, Milton Israel, Willard G. Oxtoby, eds., with W.H. McLeod and J.S. Grewal, visiting eds.), brought out by Center of South Asian Studies, University of Toronto, 1988). We have chosen this paper, 'From Ritual to Counter-Ritual: Rethinking the Hindu-Sikh Question, 1884-1915', because W.H. McLeod, book, 'Who Is A Sikh?', also suffers from the same drawback, which H.S. Oberoi<sup>3</sup> quotes liberally, and presents practically the same faulty and narrow point of view.

Oberoi in the opening para of his paper writes, “Until then (late nineteenth century), the Sikhs had shown little collective interest in distinguishing themselves from the Hindus. Sikh notions of time, space, corporality, holiness, kinship, social distinctions, purity and pollution, and commensality were hardly different from those of the Hindus. Also, the two shared the territory, language, rites de passage, dietary taboos, festivals, ritual personnel and key theological doctrines. The construction of personhood within the two traditions and their solutions for existential problems were quite alike. In brief, the semi-otic, cultural, affective and territorial universe of the Sikhs and Hindus was virtually identical.”<sup>4</sup>

The confusion in the paper starts from the very loose and incorrect connotations accepted by Oberoi of the words ‘tradition’, ‘holiness’, ‘societal distinctions’, ‘purity’, ‘pollution’ ‘commensality’, ‘key theological doctrines’, etc. Oxford dictionary defines tradition as something which is supposed to have divine authority but is not committed to writing:-

(1) Opinion or belief or custom handed down, from ancestors to posterity especially orally or by practice. (2) Theological doctrine etc. supposed to have divine authority but not committed to writing, especially. (a) laws held by Pharisees to have been delivered by God to Moses, (b) oral teaching of Christ and Apostles not recorded in writings by immediate disciples, (c) words and deeds of Muhammad not in Koran.

## **IDEOLOGY**

In no religion of the world key theological doctrines, ideas of purity and pollution, holiness, societal distinctions, commensality, etc. have been more rigorously defined and authenticated than in the Sikh scripture, Guru Granth, which the Gurus call the revealed Words (Shabad)<sup>5</sup> But in making his descriptions in reference to theological Ideas and doctrines, Oberoi completely distorts their meanings since he never makes any reference to the Guru Granth. Because, a cultural practice or the acceptance of an idea, if contrary to the injunctions in the scripture, is an aberration and can never be deemed to redefine the doctrine or be made the basis of the presence of a deviant group.

Oberoi’s basic fault is that he neither defines Sikhism nor clarifies how a deviant practice forms the faith of a pluralistic group in Sikhism. For, in a religion, persons violating the vows of marriage are not taken to

form a new sect of that religion, or a pluralistic group. Therefore, in order to show the contrast between Sikhism and Hinduism, and the two societies, it is necessary to state briefly the fundamentals of the Sikh ideology and their difference from the doctrines of Hinduism. Significantly, the basic principles of Sikhism were defined by Guru Nanak and he also laid the foundations of its social structure.<sup>6</sup> The later Gurus, only developed that structure and built the Sikh society clearly in pursuance of those principles. Guru Nanak is the first man in India, who broke the dichotomy between the spiritual life and the empirical life of man and made an inalienable combination between the two. Further, in the Japuji he defines 'who is a Sikh' and 'how to be a Sikh' by saying that to be a true person (Sachiara) and break the wall of darkness, obstructing man's vision one has to carry out His Will, the same being Altruistic<sup>7</sup> It is this clear definition that brought about a fundamental departure from the earlier Indian religion, including Hinduism. At one stroke, Guru Nanak made the following revolutionary changes; (1) Instead of the world being Mithya, or a suffering, he called it real.<sup>8</sup> (2) He rejected monasticism, asceticism and withdrawal from life and instead recommended total participation in life and acceptance of social responsibility<sup>9</sup> (3) Instead of down-grading the status of woman in relation to spiritual life and recommending celibacy, he recommended a householder's life and equality of man and woman.<sup>10</sup> (4) Instead of the religious doctrine of Varna Ashram Dharma and consequent rules of caste, pollution, social segregation and professional immobility, he accepted equality of all men.<sup>11</sup> (5) He rejected Ahimsa as an inviolable religious doctrine.<sup>12</sup> (6) Instead of life-negation, he recommended life-affirmation in all fields of life.<sup>13</sup> (7) In his ethical monotheism, the Guru Granth clearly denies the idea of Avatars and their worship, including those of gods and goddesses.<sup>14</sup> (8) Instead of religion being a matter of personal devotion and salvation, he, because of his fundamental doctrine of combining the spiritual with the empirical, organised a society in which promotion or defence of righteousness became essential.<sup>15</sup>

Accordingly, Guru Nanak not only organised a society, but he also created a system of succession so as to develop it on the lines of his thesis. Hence, the clear difference between Hindu and Sikh societies, their value systems and social practices. The call Guru Nanak gave to every seeker was, "If you want to tread the path of love, then enter upon my path with your head on your palm".<sup>16</sup>

Guru Nanak's successors from the second Guru onwards created

various institutions of Manjis and Masands, centres of Sikh organisation, etc. For, according to Guru Nanak, he was a prophet ordained to carry out a mission. The Sikh Gurus thus weaned away the Sikhs from the old Hindu society and created new motivations among their followers to pursue the mission. Exactly the same words as of Guru Nanak were spoken by Guru Arjun when Bhai Manj, a Sakhi Sarvaria, came to seek his advice. The Guru's reply is very revealing of the Sikh thesis. He said, "You may go on with the easy path of Sakhi Sarvar worship, because Sikhism is a very difficult path, and unless you are willing to be dispossessed of your wealth and to sacrifice your very life, it is no use coming to me." But Bhai Manj did become a Sikh.<sup>17</sup> Guru's statement made *two* things very clear, namely, the risk and sacrifices involved in following the Sikh faith, and, secondly, that a dual loyalty to Sikhism and to any other religious system was out of question. The Sixth Guru while creating the institution of Akal Takhat only institutionalised the fundamental doctrine of Guru Nanak combining spiritual and empirical lives of man. Guru Hargobind made it clear to Sant Ram Das that he was simply pursuing the mission of Guru Nanak.<sup>18</sup> Guru Nanak's mission of creating whole men motivated to accept total responsibility in respect of all spheres of life (Sant-Sipahi ideal) was continued by the subsequent four Gurus till Guru Gobind Singh did the epitomic work of creating the Khalsa, closing the line of personal Gurus and entrusting the ideological Guruship to the Shabad (Guru Granth). He directed the Khalsa to shoulder the total responsibility of defending and pursuing righteousness and justice. It is extremely significant that demand for total commitment to the mission, and willingness to sacrifice everything for the cause was the same as had been made by Guru Nanak and repeated by Guru Arjun to Bhai Manj. Just like Guru Arjun, Guru Gobind Singh also made it clear by his Nash doctrine that multiple loyalties and plurality of beliefs were out of question in Sikhism.<sup>19</sup> The only difference was that whereas both the Khalsa and non-Khalsa Sikhs were Sikhs, every Sikh was not member of the Khalsa till he had made the necessary commitment required by the Tenth Master.

### **FAULTS IN THE ASSUMPTIONS AND METHODOLOGY OF OBEROI**

This conclusion is evident so far as the doctrines were concerned, everything laid down in the Guru Granth was final and unalterable. Secondly, that so far as plurality is concerned one could only be a Sikh or a Khalsa with unalloyed loyalty to the Scripture.

Accordingly, there is no scope for accepting any doctrine of ‘holiness’, ‘theology’, ‘rituals’, ‘practices’, ‘customs’ and ‘rites’, variant from those embodied in the Guru Granth. Nor is there any scope for plurality of sects and sub-sects, tradition and sub-tradition, big tradition and small tradition in any sense different from the Sikhs and Khalsa defined above. Accordingly, it is ridiculous for Oberoi to call groups like Udasis, Suthreshahis, Sangatshahi, Jitmalis, Bakhatmalis, Mihan-shahis, Sarvarias, etc. as lying within the framework of the Sikh faith<sup>20</sup> Further examination of Oberoi’s paper will proceed in the light of the doctrinal position stated above.

Oberoi’s statement that, “In the absence of centralized Church and an attendant religious hierarchy, heterogeneity in religious beliefs, plurality of rituals, and diversity of life styles were freely acknowledged”<sup>21</sup> is obviously baseless. For, elimination of the Brah-minical hierarchy was a major achievement of the Sikh Gurus. However, there was no bar to attending festivals, fairs, or be a part of institutions so long that partaking was not incongruous with the doctrines of the Gurus. The Sikh cosmology stood well defined and there was only a single Sikh identity, impossible of variation or trans-gression. It is strange that without defining Sikhism Oberoi writes, “Most Sikhs moved in and out of multiple identities, defining themselves at one moment as residents of this village, at another as members of that cult, at one moment as part of this lineage, at another as part of that caste and yet another as belonging to a “Sect”. The boundaries between what could be seen as the centre of the Sikh tradition and its periphery were highly blurred. There simply was no single source of authority within the Sikh tradition and thus several competing definitions of what constituted a “Sikh” were possible”.<sup>22</sup>

We have indicated the definitions laid down by the Gurus both for Sikhism and a Sikh. It makes it also clear how essential was Guru Gobind Singh’s step of Amrit ceremony and the related Nash doctrine clearly defining the Sikh. In this context, Oberoi’s statements about Sikhism and Sikh identity are just unwarranted by facts. He makes another observation, borrowed from Arya Samaj writings of the late 19th Century, that Sikh separatism was the result of economic competition between Sikh and Hindu middle classes, and it had some backing from the British. He gives no evidence whatsoever to support his observations regarding the supposed competition and the economic distress. With this preamble, he proceeds to make a detailed description of some social and superstitious practices prevalent in Punjab.



Before we proceed to examine his statements regarding the Hindu and Sikh societies, it is necessary to expose the basically wrong assumptions in his preamble and his method of study. All social studies, if those remain unrelated to earlier periods or religious doctrines, and are done in isolation for a narrow period of time would be distortional, unless, they appropriately give some background of the societies that are under study. This is far more true of emerging religious societies, especially prophetic religions that make a major and radical departure from the earlier religious societies. Oberoi's paper makes an entirely baseless assumption that for four hundred years, before the end of the 19th century, the Hindus and the Sikhs formed one society. This means that in those four hundred years there was a single and peaceful Hindu society without any major historical events. In short, he makes a complete black out of the Sikh epoch, the Sikh Scripture and its radical doctrines, the ten Gurus and their mission, the Sikh society and a century of its persecution and revolt, and the phenomenal achievements of the Gurus and the Sikhs in those four-hundred years. No student of social history can ignore the radical regeneration brought about by the Sikh Gurus by introducing the creative institution of martyrdom, practically unknown to the Indian society. No understanding of the 19th Century Sikh society is possible without a clear grasp of its religion, history and achievements. Obviously, this gross omission by Oberoi, evidently deliberate, vitiates his entire paper and shows its motivated slant.

What we have emphasised above is the presence of an entirely new Sikh society with radically different motivations, ideals and ethos as separate from the old Hindu society. Those motivations and ethos were created by the Guru through the glorious institution of martyrdom over a period of more than two hundred years. In the 18th Century, started the period of Sikh revolt, struggle, intense persecution by the state, ending finally in triumphs of the Sikhs and their freedom from socio-political oppression. Sikh society alone went through this fire of turbulations and trials. It is during this period of four hundred years, that their ideological, social, ethical and cultural separateness from the Hindu society was defined and welded clearly. But all this has been naively ignored by Oberoi.

After their success came the fifty years of Sikh rule in the Punjab. Some facts and features of this period are necessary to state. Apart from the fact that power brought some weaknesses, it also drew the flock of fair-weather friends, who had stood clearly apart during

the earlier centuries, especially the Century of struggle and persecution, but for the first time entered the Sikh fold to reap benefits of the Sikh Raj. Here, some demographic facts are extremely important. During the Guru period, the question of plurality of Sikhs did not and could not arise because Sikhism was led and defined by the Gurus themselves. In the 18th Century, when there was price on Sikh heads, and thrice it was reported that all Sikhs had been exterminated,<sup>23</sup> the chances of plurality of faith were still less. It was a completely homogeneous society with singleness of faith, with its members ready to sacrifice their all as desired by the call of the Gurus. It is this history of persecution, struggle and martyrdoms that welded the Sikh society with a unity of ideals, ethos and practices, entirely different from the surrounding Hindu society. We have given this background, because in the 18th Century, the population of Sikhs was once reported to be only twenty thousand,<sup>24</sup> but in the period of Ranjit Singh it rose to the peak figure of 10-11 lacs.<sup>25</sup> We just wanted to indicate that it is naturally these converts of convenience, who formed a significant part of the Sikh Community in the second half of the 19th Century.<sup>26</sup> These were drawn largely from the Hindu society, who naturally did not shed straight away many parts of their earlier practices. The characters of these two segments of the Sikh society were found notably different by discerning observers.

John Malcolm in his book, 'Sketch of the Sikhs', published in 1810, writes, "The character of the Sikhs, or rather Sinhs, which is the name by which the followers of Guru Govind, who are all devoted to arms, are distinguished, is very marked. The Sikh identity is shared by the Sikh merchant, or cultivator of the soil, if he is a Sinh, not merely by the soldiers who so conspicuously paraded it. The followers of Guru Govind or Khalsa Sikhs are clearly distinguished. Another category of Sikhs whom he calls Khalasa Sikhs he considers them quite different in character. "Their character differs widely from that of the Sinhs. Full of intrigue, plaint, versatile and insinuating, they have all the art of the lower classes of Hindus, who are usually employed in transacting business; from whom, indeed, as they have no distinction of dress, it is difficult to distinguish them."<sup>27</sup> A similar distinction is made by Forester and J.D. Cunningham. Malcolm also indicates Nanak Putras, who were Bedi descendents of the family of Guru Nanak from Lakhami Das.<sup>28</sup> It is these Nanak Putras who because of the favours gained by them during the Sikh rule, later continued the practice of personal following among Sikhs and Hindus, a practice distinctly censured by the Gurus.

It is in this context of a distinct and radical difference between the Hindu and the Sikh societies of the earlier three centuries, that we proceed to examine the sociological observations made by Oberoi in the rest of his paper. He has prefaced his description with the wholly incorrect statement that in the earlier four hundred years, the Sikhs and the Hindus formed a single homogeneous society, and the gap was created by the Singh Sabha on account of economic competition among the middle classes and stringency of resources among the traders and agriculturists. We have indicated the serious methodological fault of Oberoi and his deliberate exclusion of important facts about the earlier period of Sikh history and Sikh struggles and achievements. Religious societies are formed only if they have an ideology and successfully emerge out of the fire of persecution. It is these struggles and the institution of martyrdom for the faith, which frame and mould their character. Students of history know that there would have been no Christian religion or society unless the followers of Christ had gone through decades of persecution and shown their defiant response of suffering and martyrdoms in the early two hundred years. A view is held even today that Christ never wanted to create a religion separate from Judaism, but it is his martyrdom and the subsequent response of his followers, the Christians, who created Christianity, and the Christian society.

We have to make another general observation. Anything not prescribed by the Sikh scripture or the Gurus, a Sikh is not barred from practising in relation to his social and cultural life. But something barred by the Scripture or the Gurus or contrary to clear injunctions is an aberration, and its practice by some cannot indicate plurality of the Sikh faith or constitute a sect of the Sikh society. Sinners and adulterers are there in every religious society but they form no sect of the faith. We have noted this point because in his description. Of practices, Oberoi makes no distinction between sanctioned and un-sanctioned practices, thereby creating confusion and obliterating the line between cultural practices and aberrations. Here, we might also record that rituals and ceremonies are, broadly speaking, of three kinds:

(1) Acts or rituals performed as the result of religious or ethical injunctions of the concerned faith. (2) Those which cater to customs or social practice unrelated to any particular faith. (3) Utilitarian practices following mundane needs of the local society. Oberoi in describing his rituals has neither indicated the extent of their prevalence nor related them to religious injunctions of the Sikhs, Hindus or

Muslims. The Punjab society of the times was constituted of about 52% Muslims, about 12% Sikhs and the remaining were Hindus. Sakhi Sarvar was a Muslim Pir from the largely Muslim populated area of Punjab. His following among the Muslims was naturally the largest, numerous of his followers were Hindus.<sup>29</sup>

## **EXAMINATION OF OBEROI'S PAPER**

Now we proceed to examine his paper which suffers from lack of methodology substituted by irrelevant profusion of details, thereby creating confusion and drawing inferences unsupported by precise facts. In his opening paras, Oberoi again makes a curious statement that cultural practices were not “an extension of their religious traditions, but were embedded in a complex idiom of kinship, patron-client relationships and asymmetrical reciprocity.”<sup>30</sup> In the background, we have explained how obvious is his misstatement that, “Religion, I would like to argue, is not, as has often been assumed, a key to understanding the pre-British society.”<sup>31</sup> He makes a similar misstatement when he says that, “In the Indian religious tradition, unlike the Judeo-Christian, there was not notion of a well-demarcated religious community possessing a centralized ecclesiastical hierarchy. People did not conceive of themselves simply as “Hindus” or “Sikhs”.<sup>32</sup> Anyone with the knowledge of Brahminism would [find] such statements to be just groundless. For, Brahminical rules rigidly governed every phase and act of life whether religious, social or cultural; and Brahmins were the exclusive to supervise and conduct all related acts and ceremonies concerning human interests. Brahminism and Brahmin hierarchy have been considered the bane of the Hindu society. Guru Nanak and the Sikh Gurus purposely rejected both. But, Oberoi brands this as the elimination of a necessary feature of a society. Again, it is Oberoi's complete ignorance of the Sikh religion when he says that religion is for the individual salvation of man.<sup>33</sup> It is a Hindu idea that was specifically discarded by the Gurus by creating and organising a separate religious system in which social responsibility and social salvation of man were an essential part, following Gurus' doctrine of combining the spiritual and the empirical concerns of man.<sup>34</sup> This combination exists both in Sikhism and Islam which distinguishes them radically from the other societies in the East, where the dichotomy between the spiritual and the empirical continues, creating thereby a wide gap between the householders and recluses who openly withdraw from the social sphere to seek personal salvation.<sup>35</sup> The observations of Oberoi show his complete ignorance both of the Sikh religion and its society and the Hindu religion and its

society. In the Hindu society, there is a wide social and cultural gap between its main stream and its saints, yogis, sanyasis and other religious group pursuing Moksha. That is why Maitra's study of Hindu ethics clearly concludes that the ethical injunctions of that religion hardly relate to the empirical, social or cultural life of the society. His ignorance also explains his observation that religion was a highly localised affair. For that reason, his views based on studies in South Asia or peasant societies elsewhere are quite irrelevant in respect of the Sikh society in Punjab.

Seen in the light of our observations, and in the background of the prophetic and monumental work of the ten Gurus in creating a new religion and organising the Sikh society, and the extreme sacrifices the Sikhs made to maintain their identity created by the Gurus in the earlier centuries, it is ridiculous for Oberoi to assume that, "religion as a systematized sociological unit claiming unbridled loyalty for its adherents is a relatively recent development in the history of the Indian peoples. Once this phenomenon surfaced, probably sometimes in the nineteenth century, it rapidly evolved, gained wide support and became reified in history. Out of this reification process, it easily turned into something separate, distinct and concrete; what we today recognise as Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism."<sup>36</sup> Though the phraseology is slightly different, in essence Oberoi is voicing the views of a Hindu scholar who says, "But when it comes to the Indians belonging to religions which originated in India, such as Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs, many a Hindu regard them as downright unpatriotic or unspiritual or both, if they wish to maintain their distinct identity from the Hindus,"<sup>37</sup> And so far as Parkash Tandon's statement, Oberoi quotes, we have already noted the phenomenon of certain Hindu castes entering the Sikh fold during the period of Ranjit Singh. "From the fact that Hindus and Sikhs shared positions within a single social structure, and from the 'peculiar' nature of religion in Indian society, there flowed an important consequence: the religious categories 'Hindu' and 'Sikh' were ambiguous, fluid and fragile."<sup>38</sup> This is not correct, because the distinction continued right through the 19th century as observed by Malcolm, except for the new entrants, who entered because of socio-political considerations.

As for the Sutak and other such superstitious practices, We have to state that the Guru Granth clearly deprecates this and other Chhut practices in the Hindu societies. The difficulty is that in making his observations, Oberoi seems to make a deliberate confusion by

neither giving the extent of those practices nor of making a distinction whether or, not such practices were confined only to Hindu castes. He concedes that in the case of the birth ceremony, the child was named by Sikh Granthi and Sikh prayen. were made. Vague and general statements like, "There was an immense variation in ceremonial not only among the different castes of Sikhs but also within caste groups among Sikhs of different localities,"<sup>39</sup> are numerous in the paper of Oberoi. There are also statements concerning the employment of messengers (Prohit or Nai) from certain castes. Similarly, many cul-tural features like the use of drums, singing and dancing are equally without any meaning and consequence. Since, in every society, there are local cultural practices that contravene no religious injunctions. These have no relevance for our discussion.

It is well known, and Oberoi concedes it, that Guru Amar Das distinctly provided for the Sikh society separate non-superstitious practices, regarding birth, marriage and death ceremonies.<sup>40</sup> The disappearance of Hindu practices during the Guru period and the revolutionary period has been evident and their re-appearance in the 19th Century among some sections of the neo-converts is understandable. In all his statements, Oberoi seems purposely to have avoided indicat-ing their extent. The only practice about which there is some evidence of its extent, is about Sakhi Sarvarias who were only 3% among the Sikhs,<sup>41</sup> and Oberoi mentions it as an evidence of Sikh pluralism. The argument is ridiculous, for it is Guru Arjun who stated that one could either be a Sikh or a Sakhi Sarvaria. Followers of Sakhi Sarvar, a Muslim saint, formed a separate sect. It is known that this Muslim practice, was quite common even in the Hindu society and later was also brought in the Sikh society when in the 19th Century section of the Hindus accepted Sikhism. Therefore, such aberrations, unsanctioned by the. Sikh Gurus, disappeared progressively. But it proves pluralism neither of Islam nor of Sikhism. So far as the Sikh society of the 18th Century is concerned, the observations of Malcolm and others are unambiguous. By the Amrit ceremony, the tenth Guru obliterated all distinctions of caste and the rest, thereby separating Sikhs from the Hindus. The Guru's intention found expression in the initiation ceremony and those who understand the meaning of that ceremony will appreciate that Guru Gobind Singh had separated his followers for ever from the Hindus. The Singhs, Akalis and Shahids strictly observed the injunctions of the Gurus. Obviously, those who sacrificed their all for their religion and its symbols would not indulge in any Hindu

practice prohibited by the Gurus. It is also meaningless for Oberoi to quote Barbara Myershoff and Sally Falk Moore to suggest that, “ritual practices help people to overcome indeterminacy in life.”<sup>42</sup> The argument is irrelevant concerning the Sikhs whom the Gurus had given a new Scripture and a distinct identity regarding their form and beliefs, including ceremonies for birth, marriage and death. If Brahmins or others were employed for ancillary purposes that hardly affected the identity of the Sikhs.

The most revealing part of Oberoi’s paper, which virtually demolishes the entire structure of his argument, is when he says, “All this, no doubt, can be qualified to some extent. Within the pluralistic framework of Sikh tradition in the nineteenth century, there was a significant Khalsa ‘sub-tradition’ that did not blend very well with the amorphous state of the Sikh faith. The Khalsa Sikhs had their own notion of what constituted the Sikh pass and more importantly they possessed a distinct life style ritual in the form of Khande-da-Pahul or baptism rites. Those who underwent this rite had to maintain the five well-known symbols of the Khalsa and, in addition, strictly to observe the injunctions laid down in the Rahit -namas or manuals of conduct. “<sup>43</sup> “These manuals most clearly manifest the aspirations and ethos of the Khalsa sub-tradition. They visualised a considerably deritualized Sikhism, shorn of polytheism, idolatry and Brahminical dominance. But a great deal of historical and linguistic research needs to be carried out before we can be sure how precisely the Rahitnama texts related to the aspirations of the Khalsa. However, one point is clear: in many ways the Rahit-nama literature foreshadowed the homogeneous Sikh identity and religious boundaries of the late nineteenth century.”<sup>44</sup>

The existence of the body of Sikhs, whom he calls Khalsa, he cannot conceal. But nothing can be a bigger distortion than, for Oberoi to state that the community which the Gurus created, led and motivated for over two hundred years, whom they gave a new Scripture fully governing their religious and empirical life, to build whom the Gurus suffered unparalleled martyrdoms, and who went through a century of struggle, involving extreme sacrifices and persecutions at the hands of the state were only a ‘sub-tradition’ of the amorphous Sikh faith. Oberoi’s statements in this para cross all bounds of sense when he states that the practices of the Khalsa or the statement in Rahit-namas embodied aspirations of the Khalsa and not the epitomic work and injunctions of the ten Gurus in creating the Sikh religion. For him, the creation of the Sikh religion and the Sikh society by the Gurus, whom

he calls the Khalsa, and its self perception of having a distinct religious identity, has no meaning, unless the same is accepted by the Hindus or the rest of the population of the province. Another misstatement of Oberoi is that Sikhs comprised two sections, those who took Amrit or aspired to take Khande-Da-Pahul, and those who took Charan-Pahul. After 1708 AD., when the Tenth Master passed away, who were the Sikhs getting the Charan-Pahul from, and who was the Guru whose Charan-Pahul they were getting to baptise them as Sikhs, and where were those Sikhs and Gurus during the 18th Century, when Sikhs of the ten Masters, whether Amrit-Dhari or otherwise were fighting their life and death struggle. Evidently, these new Gurus and their followers, like mushrooms of the rainy season, appeared only in the rule of the Sarkar-i-Khalsa. It has already been noted that in the second half of the 19th century, this tribe of the Gurus and Sikhs continued their trade of having Hindu followers on grounds of their being Nanak-Putras through Lakhmi Das. And, it is this very group who later appeared in the Amritsar Singh Sabha, whom Oberoi calls genuine Sikhs<sup>45</sup> and their practices in violation of the Sikh religion as authentic and valid, forming the 'great tradition', and Sikhs of the ten Gurus as the 'little or small tradition'. Such gross misstatements have hardly ever been made before in academic discussion.

The next part of Oberoi's essay is based on the, validity of these premises and assumptions. For, he clearly argues that the Singh Sabha that tried to revive the Sikhism of the Gurus (or the small tradition) by invoking the injunctions of Guru Granth, were innovators, thereby destroying Sikhism of the Charan-Pahul Sikhs and their Gurus (great tradition), whose history is non-existent in the earlier four centuries. **In** making such statements, Oberoi has surpassed all records of "Gobellian truths".

All Oberoi's inferences suggest that his study lacks reliable information, depth and objectivity, and he draws conclusions that have no rational basis. His bias and ignorance of Sikh religion and history are too obvious to be concealed. Vagueness and confusion are a specific feature of his style and description. It is an evident fault for any precise academic discussion. He says that among Sikhs, two elites were fostered by colonialism. He does not indicate as to who they were, what was the origin of the members of each. He concedes that many members of one came from families and castes who enjoyed high ritual standing. He admits that the members of the opposite group were from the lower socio-economic strata, but they emerged as a power block, the like of which "had not existed in the Sikh society."<sup>46</sup> He conceals



the fact that the first elite, who had a higher social status, were exactly the ones who enjoyed favours and privileges from the British masters. And the others were persons drawn from what the Hindu society considered the lowest castes. He gives no reason, whatsoever, why the second group swept away the influence of the gilded gentry from among the Sikh masses. He conceals the truth, because if he told it, his entire house of cards, he had structured, would fall to pieces. The fact is that the second group with no socio-economic backing invoked the authority of Guru Granth, Sikh injunctions and the heroes of Sikh history, who had sacrificed their all to maintain the Sikh faith and its identity. The other group failed because their stand was wholly con-trary to the Sikh scripture and four hundred years of Sikh history. Some of the big ones of this group were Nanak Putras through Lakhmi Das, who had never been a part of the Sikh society of the earlier centuries. They failed because their stand was as spurious as the arguments of Oberoi that Singh Sabha innovators created a new Sikhism, entirely different from the Sikh religion and society the Gurus had structured, during earlier four centuries.

It is very unfortunate that in making a misstatement or con-cealing a fact, Oberoi has no inhibitions, if it should serve this argu-ment. An instance is his calling 'Prem Samarag' a mid-nineteenth century or a late Reht-nama. According to the established view of experts of Punjabi literature like Mohan Singh and S.S. Kohli and historians like I.S. Grewal and Randhir Singh, 'Prem Samarag' is a production of the first quarter of the eighteenth century (near 1716-18) and it contains mention of Sikh practice of birth, marriage and death.<sup>47</sup> Oberoi conceals this fact because unless he did that the very basis of his paper alleging innovations on the part of Singh Sabha, and no revival of old Sikh practices, is completely knocked out. Use of such academic ethics is unfortunate. May be, Oberoi has followed McLeod in the use of such tactics because McLeod has also used the same method in avoiding the clear evidence of 'Prem Samarag'.<sup>48</sup> It only records the existence of those practices in the beginning of the 18th century. Actually, these distinct practices about birth, marriage and death were introduced during the time of the third and fourth Gurus.<sup>49</sup>

The issue in the paper is the commonness of Sikh religion and Hindu religion. The presence of numerous bards, genealogists, story-tellers, ministerals, diviners and healers is hardly relevant since these categories catered to all members of the Punjab society composed of three religions. Nor is it relevant that myriad of literary traditions

that were kept alive through oral texts. Islam is an exclusive religion with Quran as its sole guide. Similarly, Sikhism has its authenticated and unalterable Scripture which has to be followed by every Sikh. Con-travening its injunction is a clear aberration. Hinduism, too, has its scriptures, but their interpretation and rites prescribed by custom are many. Hence, reference to “little tradition” and practices or customs, social code, myths or legends unrelated to any religion, or not violative of Sikhism, have no meaning or relevance to our discussion. Here, it is also necessary to state and emphasize that the category of “Sanatan Sikhs”, “Nanak Panthis” or like groups arose only in the 19th century, when the umbrella of Sikh Raj became available.<sup>50</sup> They were never a part of the Sikh society either during the Guru period or during its struggle in the 18th century. The Udasis, because of the ascetic tradition of Baba Sri Chand, never joined the Sikh society.<sup>51</sup> Udasis did take charge of the virtually vacant Sikh shrines and continued there undisturbed because even the Mughals considered them not to be a part of the Sikh society. In fact, because of the Udasis being ascetic celebrates and life-negating, they remained distinctly demarcated from the Sikh society which is completely life affirming, socially responsible and anti-ascetic.<sup>52</sup> Rather, because of their being in many respects near the Hindu Sanyasis and sects in their practices, they became the instrument of introducing Hindu practices at the Sikh shrines. Accordingly, removal of the Hindu idols from the Sikh shrines was natural. Whereas, there are numerous hymns in the Guru Granth-rejecting, gods and goddesses and worship of idols,<sup>53</sup> Oberoi has not quoted a single hymn sanctioning their worship or any historical evidence of Hindu idols at the Sikh shrines during the Guru period. As to Udasis, the story about Baba Gurditta becoming an Udasi ascetic is a myth. The evidence of Mehma Parkash, Gurbilas Patshahi Chew and Bansavli Nama (K.S. Chibber) shows that Baba Gurditta married twice, had two sons and expired following a hunting incident.<sup>54</sup> Even Parchian Sewa Das, written by an Udasi author, never mentions Baba Gurditta becoming a part of the Udasi tradition, which remained, because of its ideology, always outside the Sikh Panth. Infact, Chibber writing about Sikh Reht clearly records that Sikhs should never give up their religion and become Bairagis or ascetics, the two systems being contradictory.

Oberoi’s statement that the Hindu-Sikh religious differences appeared only in the nineteenth century, can only be made by one who places an iron curtain between the Singh Sabha period and the

four hundred years of earlier Sikh history. The history of different religions show, that generally a religion has flourished the most under its own flag, but never has a religion gained a new shape or identity after the fall of its political umbrella. Nothing can be more contrary to facts and history than the statement that after the loss of Ranjit Singh's empire, the Singh Sabha created the miracle of a new religio-cultural system with new definitions and a new identity and consciousness, without the sanction of its religious past and Scripture.

## CONCLUSION

Anyone acquainted with the Sikh religion and its four hundred years of history knows that after the fall of the Sikh Raj and during a lean period of Sikh history, the Singh Sabha did a commendable task in steering the community to a safe harbour, thereby enabling it not to lose its socio-religious moorings, but the sole weapon it used was to ask the Sikhs to draw their inspiration and strength from the profound and great base of their religion and tradition the Gurus had created. The wisdom of the Singh Sabha leaders lay in deciding not to fight on two fronts, the political front in relation to the British and the socio-economic front facing the far too numerous Hindus and Muslims. The efforts and role of the Singh Sabha have to be understood and appreciated in their restoring the self-confidence of the community and linking it firmly to their Gurus and religion.

It is indeed amazing that Oberoi has tried to raise a structure, which has entirely no basis in facts, logic or history. The reason for raising this phantom, simply does not exist in the field of academics and has therefore, to be found outside it in the domain of what Oberoi calls "material, pragmatic or economic interests."

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- 2 Rajiv A. Kapur, 'Sikh Separatism: The Politics of Faith' (London, 1986)
- 3 McLeod, W.H; Who Is A Sikh?, pp.65 n.10, 68 n.12, 69 n.26, 72 n.11, 78 n. 48, 79 n. 49, 80 n. 50, 81 n. 51
- 4 Oberoi, H.S; 'From Ritual to Counter-Ritual; Rethinking the

Hindu-Sikh Question,' 1884-1915 in O'Connell, T. Joseph et. al. 'Sikh History and Religion in Twentieth Century' (Toronto, 1988), pp.136-137

5 Daljeet Singh; 'Essays On The Authenticity Of Kartarpuri Bir and The integrated Logic and Unity of Sikhism' (Patiala, 1987), pp.1, 88

6 "Any student of Sikhism and Sikh society cannot fail to notice how the Sikh Gurus, especially Guru Nanak, Guru Arjun and Guru Gobind Singh, were very sensitively awake to and critical of not only the social but also the political abuses and consequent miseries of people, which is another aspect of their attitude of social criticism and protest." Ray, Niharranjan; 'The Sikh Gurus and The Sikh Society' (Patiala, 1970), p.68.

7 ਕਿਵ ਸਚਿਆਰਾ ਹੋਈਐ ਕਿਵ ਕੂੜੇ ਤੁਟੈ ਪਾਲ ।

ਹੁਕਮਿ ਰਜਾਈ ਚਲਣਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਨਾਲਿ ॥ Guru Granth , p. 1

8 ਸਚੇ ਤੇਰੇ ਖੰਡ ਸਚੇ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੰਡ ॥ ਸਚੇ ਤੇਰੇ ਲੋਅ ਸਚੇ ਆਕਾਰ ॥

ਸਚੇ ਤੇਰੇ ਕਰਣ ਸਰਬ ਬੀਚਾਰ ॥

ਸਚੀ ਤੇਰੀ ਕੁਦਰਤ ਸਚੇ ਪਾਤਸਾਹਿ ॥

ਇਹ ਜਗੁ ਸਚੇ ਕੀ ਹੈ ਕੋਠੜੀ ਸਚੈ ਕਾ ਵਿਚਿ ਵਾਸ ॥ Guru Granth, p. 463

9 ਵਿਚਿ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਸੇਵ ਕਮਾਈਐ ਤਾ ਦਰਗਾਹ ਬੈਸਣੁ ਪਾਈਐ ॥ Guru Granth, p. 26

10 "It is by woman, the condemned one, that we are conceived, and from her that we are born; it is with her that we are betrothed and married.

...

Why should we call her inferior who gives birth to great men?"

Asa-di-Var, quoted by Teja Singh; Essays in Sikhism (Lahore, 1944), p.65;

ਹੁਕਮੇ ਧਰਤੀ ਸਾਜੀਅਨ ਸੱਚੀ ਧਰਮਸਾਲਾ ॥ Guru Granth, p. 785

ਮਾਨਸ ਜਨਮੁ ਦੁਲਭ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਪਾਇਆ ॥ Guru Granth, p. 75

11 "Think not of race, abase thyself, and attain to salvation" Nanak, Adi Granth, Sarang Rag (trans). Cunningham, J.D; History of the Sikhs (New Delhi, 1966), p.334; "The heart gets impure with

greed, and the tongue with lying: The eyes get impure by staring at another's wealth, his wife or her beauty; The ears get impure by devouring the slander of others. Nanak, these impurities lead the soul of man bound to hell. All other impurity supposed to be contracted from touch is superstitious. Birth and death are ordained; we come and go by His will. All eating and drinking, which God gave as sustenance, is pure. Nanak, those who have realised this through the Guru do not believe in that impurity." Asa-di-Var (trans.)

Teja Singh, *Essays in Sikhism* (Lahore, 1944), p.16-17

- 12 "Men discriminate not and quarrel over meat eating; they do not know what is flesh and what is non-flesh or in what lies sin and what is not sin."Guru Granth, pp.1289-90 love of God without active service." Japuji, (Trans.) Ibid. p.20
- 13 "House-holder and hermits are equal, whoever calls on the name of the Lord." Asa Ragni (Nanak from Guru Granth) (Trans.) Cunningham; op. cit., p.334; "Touch not the feet of those, who call themselves Guru, and Pirs, and go about begging. They who eat the fruit of their own labour and share it with others are the people, Nanak, who have found the right way." Var Sarang, (Trans.) Teja Singh; op. cit. p.24; "There can be no
- 14 "Numerous Muhammads have there been and multitudes of Brahmas, Vishnus, and Sivas, Thousands of Pirs and Prophets, and tens of thousands of Saints and Holy men; But the Chief of Lords is the One Lord, the true name of God.  
O Nanak! of God, His qualities, without end, beyond reckoning, who can understand Nanak, 'Ratan Mala" Cunningham; op. cit., p.330
- 15 Daljeet Singh; 'Sikhism-A Comparative study of its Theology and Mysticism' (New Delhi, 1979), pp.194-97; Dhillon, GS; 'Researches in Sikh Religion and History' (Chandigarh, 1989), p.2
- 16 Guru Granth, p.1412
- 17 Macauliffe, MA; 'The Sikh Religion,' Vat, pp.7-8.

The second story also concerns Guru Arjun when he deprecated the Sakhi Sarvar practice of preparing a big cake and presenting

it before the priest who read Durud (a verse from Quran) and then kept the cake, giving only a marginal part to the devotees. The Guru says, "Without the true Guru they must sit and watch without eating until the Durud, is read." Macauliffe, Vo1.III, p.419

- 18 Teja Singh; 'Sikhism: Its Ideals and Institutions' (Calcutta, 1964), pp.80-81
- 19 In order to emphasize the complete independence and separateness of the Sikh ideology, Guru Gobind Singh introduced the Nash doctrine, involving Kartnash, Kulnash, Bharamnash, Dharamnash and Karamnash i.e., forsaking of all those beliefs, prejudices and traditions that stood in the way of the sole worship of the Supreme Being.
- Cunningham, J.D; Op. cit. p.64;
- Bannerjee, LB; 'Evolution of the Khalsa' Vo1. 11 (Calcutta, 1963), pp.116; Daljeet Singh; op. cit.,60;
- Dhillon, G.S. 'Religion and Politics: The Sikh perspective' (Chaudigarh, 1989), pp. 17-18
- 20 Oberoi; op. cit., p.137
- 21 Ibid
- 22 Ibid
- 23 Gupta, Hari Ram; 'History of the Sikhs,' V 01.11, pp.39-45.;
- 24 Kohli, Sita Ram; 'Foreword to Umadat-ut-Tawarikh' of Sohan Lal Suri, Daftar iv, p.ii.
- 25 Devi Prasad, Pandit; 'Gulshan-i-Punjab' (Lucknow, 1872), pp.224  
Also see Cunningham; op. cit., p.301
- 26 Dhillon, G.S; 'Character and Impact of The Singh Sabha Movement on the History of the Punjab' (Ph.D. dissertation, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1972), pp.28-29
- 27 Malcolm, John, 'Sketch of the Sikhs' (Calcutta, 1810), pp.220
- 28 Ibid pp.26-61
- 29 Dhillon, G.S; 'Researches in Sikh Religion and History' (Chandigarh, 1989), p.80
- 30 Oberoi, op. cit. p.140

31 Ibid

32 Ibid

33 Ibid

34 Daljeet Singh; op. cit., pp.194-197; Dhillon, G.S. 'Religion And Politics: the Sikh Perspective' (Chandigarh, 1989) pp.1-2

35 Ibid

36 Oberoi; op. cit., p.141

37 Mann, Jasbir Singh and Saraon, Harbans Singh; 'Advanced Studies in Sikhism' (Patiala, 1989), p.28

38 Oberoi; op. cit., p.142

39 Ibid., P.143

40 Ibid., p.151

41 Dhillon. G.S. 'Researches in Sikh Religion and History' (Chandigarh, 1989), p.79

42 Oberoi; op. cit., p.146

43 Ibid

44 Ibid., p.147

45 Ganda Singh; 'Kukian Di Vithiya' (Amritsar, 1946, p.36);

Avtar Singh Vihiria, also stressed the need for human Gurus and declared that Bedis, Bhallas, Trehans and Sodhis deserved special reverence due to their descent from the Sikh Gurus. For details see Vihiria, Avtar Singh; 'Sikh Dharam Tatdarshan' (Lahore, 1894), pp.20-25, 55-60;

Hari Singh, Bhai; 'Prem Parkash' (Amritsar, n.d.) p.2-3 Vihiria, Avtar Singh; Shok Pattar (Lahore, 1905), p.38; Khalsa Akbhar, Lahore, March 26, 1897; Vihiria, Avtar Singh; 'Khalsa Sudhar Taru' (Amritsar, 1894), pp.252-57;

Also 'Gurdarshan Shastar' (Amritsar, 1916), p.157

46 Oberoi; op. cit., p.147

47 Ibid. p.155, n.46

48 Mohan Singh; 'An Introduction to Punjabi Literature' (Amritsar, 1951) pp.121-42; Kohli, S.S; 'Punjabi Sahit Da Itihas' (Ludhiana, 1955), p.216;

Grewal, J.S; Prem Samarag: 'A Theory of Sikh Social Order' in 'The Sikh Review,' September, 1989;

Randhir Singh; Prem Samarag Granth (Patiala, 1953) p.9

49 Dhillon, Balwant Singh;, 'Guru Amar Das And The Mughal State' in the 'Journal of Sikh Studies.' Vol.XI, No.II, August, 1984. (Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar) p.88

50 'Khalsa Akhbar,' Lahore, March 26, 1897, Vahiria, Avtar Singh;, 'Sikh Dharam Tatdarshan' (Lahore, 1894), pp.21-24, 50-60

51 "Sri Chand, the son of Nanak, justified his father's fears, and became the founder of the Hindu sect of 'Udasis', a community indifferent to the concerns of the world". Cunningham, J.D., op. cit. p.43 Malcolm; op. cit., p.27

53 Guru Granth, pp.310 and 1102;

The author of Dabistan, who visited Punjab in the times of the Sixth and Seventh Gurus, says about the Sikhs, "The Sikhs of Guru Nanak condemn idolatry and believe that all the Gurus are identical with Nanak. They do not read the Hindu Mantras, nor do they pay any regard to their shrines. They do not believe in Hindu Avtars and do not study Sanskrit, which according to Hindus is the language of the gods. The Sikhs do not have any faith in the ritual and ceremonies enjoined by the Hindu Shastras. A learned Hindu named Partap Mal, seeing that his son was inclined towards Islam said to him, "There is no need for you to turn Muhammedan. If you want to get freedom in eating and drinking you may better join Sikhism, Quoted by Teja Singh; 'Sikhism; Its Ideals and Institutions' (Calcutta, 1964), pp.80-81

54 Bhalla, Sarup Das, 'Mehma Parkash' (ed.) Lamba, Gobind Singh and Khazan Singh; Part II (Patiala, 1971) pp.527-31; 'Gurbilas Patshahi Chhevin' (Patiala, 1970), p.511; Chibber, Kesar Singh; 'Bansavli Nama Dasam Patshian Ka in Parkh' (ed.) S.S. Kohli, 'Research Bulletin of Punjabi Language And Literature' Vol. II, 1972, Panjab University, Chandigarh, pp. 70-72



## **Sikh Ideology, Fundamentalism and Punjab Problem**

Dr Kharak Singh

In a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Anaheim, November 1989, Harjot Oberoi, department of Asian Studies, University of British Columbia, Van-couver, RC, says that fundamentalism among the Sikhs today is apparently the basic cause of the current political unrest in the Punjab.

<sup>1</sup> Without giving any evidence in support of this contention, he proceeds to describe it as 'primarily a movement of resistance' and 'a universe that is characterised by incoherence and disorder.' And then 'as a social scientist' he seeks to provide 'meaning and shape to what appears to be chaotic and meaningless' or to discover 'what may be termed as theory and practice of Sikh fundamentalist,' although on the authority of Jurgen Habermas, quoted by him in the epigram, he maintains that 'Meanings can be made accessible *only from the inside.*' Readers would like to know whether he is interpreting the movement as an insider or outsider.

The author points out that 'Sikh fundamentalists have not succeeded in articulating their vision of world in any great detail'. He attributes this 'lack of an elaborate model' to the 'social origins of Sikh activists.' He says, 'A great majority of them come from the countryside and would be classified as peasants by social anthropologists. Historically, peasants have not been known to come up with grand paradigms of social transformation. Peasant societies are by definition made up of little communities and their cosmos is invariably parochial rather than universal.' This is his favourite theory which can explain all major questions relating to Sikhs and Sikhism. In an earlier paper read at Berkeley<sup>2</sup>, the author wrote: 'if there is any such thing as a key to hislorical problems, in case of the Sikh tradition it is to be found in its social constituency. Sikh religion is first and foremost a peasant faith. Sociologists have often spoken of how Islam is an urban religion. Sikhism may be spoken of as rural religion. When dealing with beliefs, rituals and practices of the Sikhs - be they religious or political - it is always worthwhile to constantly remind ourselves that we are fun-damentally dealing with the peasantry.'

The above explanation is obviously unsatisfactory and inadequate. So, the author also looks at 'correlations between Punjab's

political economy and the nature of dissent in Sikh society, the demand for a new personal law for the Sikhs and finally the famous Anandpur Sahib Resolution, a document that may be considered as the 'Magna Carta' of Sikhs.

The discussion of political economy revolves around the size of holdings, which is not of much help, since their distribution and size are not significantly different from those in other states. Green Revolution is also prominently mentioned, particularly its social costs and the 'polarisation of Punjabi Society over the last two decades.' Some of the inferences are difficult to accept. For example, it has been stated that small holdings, ranging from 2 to 5 hectares have become increasingly less viable. Green Revolution entails adoption of high yielding varieties and modern farming techniques, which raise the productivity per unit of land. So, if at all, the Green Revolution should make small holdings more viable than before. This enabled even the subsistence farmer to spare something for the market after meeting his family requirements. Also, the author has not explained why the Green Revolution occurred only in the Punjab, while the two major requirements, viz., better varieties and modern techniques of farming, were available in all the countries of South Asia, including other states of India. Is it not due to the more progressive attitude of the Sikh peasants of Punjab towards modern methods of farming? However, in the author's judgement, using Weber's litmus test for modernity, Sikh fundamentalists 'badly fail.'

In the entire discussion of the political economy and the Green Revolution, the author has not suggested anything with fundamentalist connotations on the part of the Sikhs. Nor has he been able to point out any such thing while dealing subsequently with the other two major topics that fill the body of his paper, viz., the demand for Sikh personal Law and the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. Hindus have a personal law. So have the Muslims. They are not dubbed as fundamentalists on that score. Then how could Sikhs turn fundamentalists by merely making such a demand? The suggestion that the Sikhs do not have a uniform code at the present moment, is no disqualification for making such a demand. Similarly, in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution the author himself does not find anything wrong, which is no more than a demand for greater provincial autonomy, already voiced in several other states. The author himself concedes that it is, like 'an election manifesto of a political party' in India or any other country.

The author's own discussion lends little support to his thesis of Sikh fundamentalism. He is, however, determined to put this tag on the Sikh struggle. Therefore, in the conclusion he formulates three new 'arguments', which convince nobody except himself. These are: First, "in the Punjabi word 'moolvad' Sikhs possess a term that exactly corresponds to fundamentalism." Is it an argument? Second, "many orthodox Sikhs have no patience for textual analysis of Sikh scriptures." The statement is baseless. But even if it were correct, how could views of a few orthodox Sikhs expressed today, impart a fundamental character to a demand made over 40 years ago? Third, "the current Sikh movement manifests many tendencies like millenarianism, a prophetic vision, revivalism and puritanism, trends that are commonly associated with fundamentalism." No evidence is given in support of this contention. The statement appears to be a product of the author's own 'prophetic vision.'

In the quest for material to support his unsustainable thesis, the author (who is probably an anthropologist) has wandered into areas of religion and politics where he does not belong. That is why he has wasted his scholarship on matters which are completely irrelevant to the Sikh struggle. He has missed the real issues.

Normally we should have been reluctant to take up current issues for academic discussion. But as Oberoi and some other scholars have ventured to make uncalled for and ignorant observations concerning the Punjab problem, it appears necessary to give a perspective historical account of the major issues underlying the current crisis. In this paper we shall mainly confine ourselves to the paper of Harjot Oberoi read at Anaheim. In his paper there appears an evident attempt to camouflage the realities of the situation by introducing unrelated matters like Sikh ideology, the Miri Piri concept, modernity, Sikh pluralism, secularism, the Nirankari issue, Turner's theory of social structure, etc..

For our discussion we shall first take up the Punjab Problem and its genesis, which the author has carefully avoided and then discuss his observations to show their irrelevance, except as an attempted cover to hide the realities in Punjab.

## **PUNJAB PROBLEM**

## COMMITMENTS WITH SIKHS BEFORE 1947

In 1929, when Shri Jawahar Lal Nehru was the President, a formal resolution was passed by the Indian National Congress at Lahore, that no constitution of India would be finalised, until it was acceptable to the Sikhs<sup>3</sup> The second assurance was the clear statement of Nehru in 1946 that there was nothing objectionable in the Sikhs having an area demarcated in the North West of India, where they could enjoy the ‘glow of freedom.’<sup>4</sup> It was a significant statement, since it was given in the context of Jinnah’s offering to the Sikhs constitutional guarantees in a separate state in the Eastern part of the contemplated Pakistan.<sup>5</sup>

Third, there was the statement of Mahatma Gandhi<sup>6</sup> saying that his words should be accepted and that the Congress would never betray anyone, and that if they did the Sikhs knew how to use their Kirpan. Finally there was the statement of Nehru<sup>7</sup> in the Constituent Assembly in December 1946. While proposing a federal system with autonomous states, he moved the executive resolution, which envisaged “The Indian Union as an independent sovereign republic comprising autonomous units with residuary powers, wherein the ideals of social, political and economic democracy would be guaranteed to all sections of the people, and adequate safeguards would be provided for minorities, backward communities and areas.” Nehru described the resolution as a “Declaration, a pledge and an undertaking before the world, a contract of millions of Indians, ‘and therefore in the nature of an oath which we want to keep.” These were some of the commitments regarding an autonomous area in a federal system, which the Congress had solemnly given to the Sikhs, on the basis of which they had agreed to throw their lot with India.

## COMMITMENTS VIOLATED

Unfortunately, after 1947 the Congress completely changed its views and stand. The Sikhs were aghast, when the draft of the proposed Indian Constitution was circulated to the State Assemblies in 1949, because, instead of autonomous states and a federal constitution, the draft was for a purely unitary type of structure. Unanimously, all the Sikhs of the Punjab Assembly, objected to the draft and wrote as follows:<sup>8</sup> “It has been the declared policy of the Congress that In a is to be a union of autonomous states, and each unit is to develop in its own way, linguistically, culturally and socially. Of course, Defence Communications and Foreign Affairs must remain the Central Subjects. To change the basic policy now, is to run counter to the oft-repeated

creed of the Congress.” “In the considered opinion of the Akali Dal the residuary powers should be with the states.” “The list distributing legislative powers should be based on the principle that the Centre or the Union Parliament should be limited to Defence, Communications and Foreign Affairs only.” But in 1950 the Congress, violating the earlier assurances and policies, framed a constitution, leaning heavily towards a unitary form of government. In protest the Akali members declined to sign it. It is evident that the Anandpur Sahib Resolution of 1978<sup>9</sup> is just a reiteration of Nehru’s commitments in the Constituent Assembly in 1946 and of the reminder the Sikh Legislators unanimously gave in 1949 to the Central Government, that it was violating its repeated assurances. Hence it is sheer ignorance on part of the author to suggest that “The Federal views, in it are a document of secession.” Neither was Nehru secessionist, nor would he or the Congress have made a commitment that could be detrimental to the interests of the country. Is the function of a scholar just to be the mouthpiece of the Establishment and echo its voice, or to detail and examine the problem? The latter the author has failed to do either out of ignorance or design. In fact, while the Sikhs in 1949 suggested three subjects for the Centre, the Anandpur Sahib Resolution proposed Currency, too, to be a Central subject. Thus, factually, it is the Congress and the Central Government who have shifted their stand, and not that the Sikhs are asking for anything new and unreasonable.

## **A DIAMETRIC CHANGE**

It was soon after Independence that the Sikhs felt that the Centre or the Congress had diametrically deviated in their approach and policy towards them. The major indication was its framing a unitary form of constitution, with Sikhs to be kept a permanent minority in the State. A very significant indication of the Central approach to the Sikhs is what Patel conveyed to Tara Singh, when he wanted a Punjabi Suba to be carved out. No less a ‘person than the Prime Minister Charan Singh, has described it thus:<sup>10</sup> “When Master Tara Singh was there, he was talking of Punjabi Suba. Then he had a talk with Sardar Patel. Sardar Patel said: I am ready to concede it. But you will have only that much land that falls to your share on grounds of population. So Punjab area will: be halved. Now you form 17% of the Army. They will have to be dismissed. Are you prepared for it?”

The above made it plain what would thereafter be the Central approach towards the Sikhs.

The Sikhs are known for their love and struggle for freedom. This new policy, the Sikhs feel, is aptly described by Machiavelli's observations, <sup>11</sup> "Those states which have been acquired or accustomed to live at liberty under their own laws, there are three ways of holding them. The first is to despoil them; the second is to go and live there in person; the third is to allow them to live under their own laws, taking tribute of them, and creating within the country a government com-posed of a few who will keep it friendly to you. Because this govern-ment, being created by the Prince, knows that it cannot exist without his friendship and protection, will do all it can to keep them." We shall see if the events of the subsequent years, justify the feelings and apprehensions of the Sikhs.

## **THE STRUGGLE STARTS**

Following this complete change in the Central policy and disregard of its commitments, the Sikhs started an agitation for crea-tion of a Punjabi speaking linguistic state in the North West. The Congress had been committed to creating homogenous linguistic states in the country and reorganising provincial boundaries. Accordingly, a States Reorganisation Commission was set up to propose boundaries of new linguistic states. But strangely enough, while it recommended the formation of other linguistic states it specifically suggested that Punjabi linguistic state should not be formed. Another indication of Central policy was that in 1956, instead of forming a Punjabi linguistic state, as in other areas, it merged the Pepsu State, in which the Sikhs were in a majority, in Eastern Punjab, thereby reducing the Sikhs to a minority in the new state. The struggle for Punjabi speaking linguistic state continued for over a decade. In 1965 the war with Pakistan broke out, and against all apprehensions, the Sikhs suspended their agitation and whole-heartedly supported the war effort. This they did in the national interest, merely on a promise of the Prime Minister that their demand would be considered later on. The Sikh contribution to the War was so impressive, both by the people and the soldiers, that after the War, the Prime Minister appointed a Parliamentary Committee to report regarding the formation of a Punjabi speaking state. At the same time the Congress Party also resolved that a linguistic Punjabi speaking state should be carved out of the then Punjab. But it is very interesting and revealing to know of the mind of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, then Infor-mation Minister, and Sh. Gulzari Lal Nanda, the then Home Minister to the Government of India, who was at the government level to give effect to the proposal of the Parliamentary Committee. Hukam

Singh, <sup>12</sup>then Speaker of the Lok Sabha writes:

“The Prime Minister was reported to have observed on November 26, 1982, when releasing some books published by the Delhi Gurdwara Committee (HT. Nov.27), that ‘When the Punjabi speaking State was formed the suggestion made by the committee headed by S. Hukam Singh had been accepted.’ This was not so according to her statements in “My Truth” (p.117), “Unfortunately, Mr. Shastri had made Hukam Singh, the Speaker of the Lower House, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Punjabi Suba, although he was very biased in favour of Punjabi Suba .....

“I went to Mr. Chavan and said, I had heard that S. Hukam Singh was going to give a report in favour of Punjabi Suba, and that he should be stopped .....

“Once the Prime Minister’s appointee had declared himself in favour of Punjabi Suba, how could we get out of it”.

“Mrs Gandhi along with Mr. Chavan, could see Mr. Shastri with much difficulty and when they did, Mr. Shastri just said, he was fully in touch with the situation and we need not bother. (p. 118). “But I was very bothered and I went around seeing everybody. Of course, once the report came, it was too late to change it.”

“Lal Bahadur Shastri continued the policy of Jawahar Lal Nehru and was as dead against the demand of Punjabi Suba as was Nehru. So, when he was urged upon by Mrs. Gandhi to stop Hukam Singh, he did not waste any time. Mr Shastri called Mr. Gulzari Lal Nanda, then Home Minister, to his residence, and conveyed to him the concern about the feared report. I was contacted on the telephone. Mr. Shastri disclosed that Mr. Nanda was with him, and had complained that he had suggested my name (Hukam Singh) for the Chairmanship of the parliamentary committee under the mistaken impression, which he had formed during a casual talk with me, that I believed that Punjabi Suba would n,)t be of any advantage to the Sikhs ultimately, but that now I appeared determined to make a report in its favour.”

## **GOVERNMENT’S INTENTION**

“I answered that the facts were only partly true. I had told M Nanda that Punjabi Suba would not ultimately be of much advantage to the Sikhs. But I had also added that the issue had by then become one of sentiment and had roused emotions. Therefore, it was not possible to argue with, much less to convince, any Sikh about the

advantages or disadvantages of Punjabi Suba. Every Sikh considered the denial as discrimination. I further enquired from Mr. Shastri, whether I had not expressed the same opinion to him and his answer was in the affirmative. I myself offered to confront Mr. Nanda by immediately rushing to Mr. Shastri's residence, but he said there was no need. This disillusioned me. The intention of the Govt. then was to use me against my community, secure an adverse report, and then reject the demand."

"The Govt. has never seen merit in any Sikh demand. The Das Commission in 1948 recommended postponement of reorganisation on the plea, inter alia, that if once begun in the South, it might intensify the demand by Sikhs in the North. The J.V.P. Committee (Jawaharlal, Vallabhbhai Patel and Pattabhi Sitaramayya) when reviewing the Das report gratuitously remarked that no question of rectification of boundaries in the provinces of Northern India should be raised at the present moment, whatever the merit of such a proposal might be."

"And this became the future policy. Nehru stuck to it Shastri continued the same, and Indra Gandhi has made no departure."

"Every effort was made by Mrs. Gandhi, Mr. Shastri, and Mr. Nanda to stop me from making my report"

Why the government had been so strongly against the parliamentary committee making a report in favour of Punjabi Suba and why Mrs. Gandhi had felt bothered and ran about seeing everybody to stop Hukam Singh, has been explained by Mrs. Gandhi herself. "The Congress found itself in a dilemma, to concede the Akali demand would mean abandoning a position to which it was firmly committed and letting down its Hindu supporters in the Punjabi Suba (p. 117, My Truth)." The government has always been very particular about not "letting down its Hindu supporters." The Congress could not depend upon Sikh voters and out of political considerations could not suffer losing Hindu votes also. Therefore the Congress failed to do justice to the Sikhs.

"The first schedule of the Regional Committee Order 1957 contained Ropar, Morinda and Chandigarh assembly constituencies in Ambala district in the Punjab region."

"The subsequent reference to the Shah Commission was loaded heavily against Punjab. Making the 1961 census as the basis and the tehsil as the unit was a deliberate design to punish the Sikhs. The



language return in the 1961 census were on communal lines.

Therefore, the demarcation had to be on a communal rather than on a linguistic basis.”

“Consequently merit was again ignored and justice denied. Naturally tensions between the two communities increased. If the Sachar formula, worked out in 1949, had been accepted there would not have been any further conflict, if the Regional Formula had been allowed to be implemented, there would not have been any further discontent. And if Punjabi Suba had been demarcated simply on a linguistic basis, and not on false returns in 1961, there would not have been any extremist movement”

It clearly shows that the demand for a linguistic state, a policy which was an old one with the Congress and which had been implemented in the rest of India, was to be denied in the Punjab, because Sikhs would become a majority there, and come in power under the democratic process. Hence forward, it would seem that the Central Government has been following the three pronged policy of despoiling Punjab, ruling it by stooge governments, and imposing the President’s rule, if and when, by the democratic process, a non-Congress government came into power in the state. The subsequent history of the Punjab has been just a struggle between the Sikhs, historically known for their love of liberty, and the Centre pursuing the above policy. Both Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Shri Nanda were concerned and worried about the proposal for a Punjabi Suba, having been accepted by the Congress. The proposal had been conceded after over fifty thousand Sikhs had courted arrest, and scores had died during the peaceful agitation.

## **A SUB-STATE CREATED**

The Parliamentary Committee having recommended the creation of a Punjabi Suba, the Home Minister got passed an Act, the Punjab Reorganisation Act, 1966, which in its implication was not only a denial to Punjab of a status equal to that of other states in the country, but also involved a permanent ceiling on the economic, social and political growth of the state and its people. The Act had the following crippling provisions and limitations:

1. For the development of every state in India two things are basic namely, water and energy. As it is, Punjab, because of its rivers and very great hydel power potential is fortunate. Under the Constitution of India, and everywhere under international law

and practice, Irrigation and Power are state subjects (Item 17 of the State List read with Article 246 of the Constitution). These are under the exclusive executive and legislative jurisdiction of the states. But by the provision of Section 78 to 80 of the Reorganisation Act, the Centre unconstitutionally kept the power of control, maintenance and development of the waters and hydel power of the Punjab rivers. This was a clear violation of the Constitution. In other words, Punjab became a state which could do nothing for the control and development of its rivers, utilisation of their waters and exploitation of their hydel power potential. Thus, Punjab became administratively and legislatively an ineffective and inferior state, which could do nothing for the economic development of its people. The question of political growth could not arise, because it had permanently been reduced to a sub state without scope for regaining control of its waters and hydel power. Hence, progress towards autonomy became out of question.

2. The second limitation concerned the territorial boundaries of the state. In 1949, under the known Sachar Formula, the state government indicated, upto a village, the boundaries of Punjabi speaking and Hindi speaking areas. Later, under an Act of Parliament, known as the Regional Formula, Punjabi speaking and Hindi speaking areas of the old Punjab were demarcated and separate legislative Committees representing the two areas were constituted. The Sachar Formula and the Regional Formula had been accepted and worked without any objection from the people, legislators or Ministers of the areas concerned, until 1966. Instead of accepting the settled boundaries, as had been recommended by the Parliamentary Committee proposing the formation of the Punjabi Suba, Government appointed a Commission to redetermine the boundaries, reopen and make controversial a settled issue. In fact, areas which were Punjabi speaking or were under the functional control of Punjab, were excluded from the Punjabi Suba, and the Commission excluded not only settled Punjabi speaking contiguous areas, but also the State capital from the Suba, even though it had been constituted by acquiring Punjabi speaking villages, and in every other reorganised state the capital had remained with the parent state. An area almost equal to half of the present Himachal Pradesh, was transferred from the Punjab to Himachal Pradesh, including

known Punjabi speaking areas. Even the site of Bhakhra Dam which was constructed solely by the Punjab Government and had always been under its functional control, was kept out of Punjab, although the area is Punjabi speaking and even though Simla and other hill stations were transferred to Himachal Pradesh.

## **DEMANDS AFTER 1966**

The new state being basically handicapped, an agitation for redressal of the grievances started soon after 1966, because it was anticipated that its future under the created discriminations would be ruinous for the people. The salient demands of this agitation were as follows:

- (a) Satluj, Ravi and Beas, being purely Punjab rivers, and their waters and hydel power being very essential for the economy of the State, no water or hydel power should be allotted to non -riparian states like Rajasthan, Haryana or Delhi, because such an allocation would be unconstitutional. The issue could, there-fore, be referred to the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court. In no other state at the time of reorganisation, the provisions of the Constitution had been violated to deprive it of its wealth of water and hydel power as in Punjab.
- (b) The boundaries that had been accepted by all concerned including the people and the legislators, should not be disturbed to deprive the new state of known Punjabi speaking areas, through Centrally-appointed Commissions.
- (c) The Central Government order that recruitment to Defence Services should be based on the population of a state, was unconstitutional, being violative of Articles 15 and 16 of the Indian Constitution, which state that in the matter of recruitment to Public Services no distinction could be made on the basis of place of birth of an individual. The object of this order could evidently be to reduce the strength of the Sikhs, which was originally 20%, to about 2% which was to be the share of Punjab on the basis of its population during future recruitment to Defence Forces. Actually the strength of the Sikhs in the Defence Forces had already been reduced to about 8%, and the Sikhs apprehended that the new policy would further reduce their strength to 2% or less. This unconstitutional policy of the

Government has been a major cause for distress in the rural areas of the Punjab. As lakhs of families were dependent on the profession of soldiery for their livelihood, and since the percent-age of the Sikh soldiers in the Army became increasingly reduced, this caused serious economic dissatisfaction among the youth in rural areas of Punjab, especially when they found that in other states candidates with lower physical fitness stand-ards were accepted. As this policy related only to the Defence Services, where Sikhs, because of their tradition, aptitude and fitness were eminently suitable of selection, it created a serious sense of discrimination against the policy of the Central Government.

- (d) Even before Independence, the keeping of Kirpan (sword) was accepted as a religiously prescribed wear for the Sikhs. Its wear by a Sikh has been guaranteed under the Law and Indian Constitution. During British days there had been a specific agitation for this freedom. But now the Central Government issued an order placing restrictions on the carrying of Kirpan in certain situations. This order was considered violative of the Indian Constitution. Hence, the demand was for withdrawal of the unconstitutional restrictions.

Apart from the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, which will be discussed separately, the above were the four major demands of the Sikhs after 1966. These demands were reasonable and legitimate, and since the Constitution provides a specific forum for their solution, the Government, if it intended, could have lawfully settled them without the least objection from any party or State. No one could say that the constitutional issues should not be referred to the Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court, which was the body to give a verdict on them, and once the decision had been made, no party could raise any objection. So far as the territorial matter was concerned, the demand was equally valid, because it required that the borders that stood settled and accepted by the people of the areas, and the decision embodied in an Act of Parliament, should not be arbitrarily altered through a Commission. But what could be settled in one day, has been made to linger on for decades, and the Central Government has consistently failed to follow the constitutional path or to maintain the status quo on a settled issue. Instead of giving the long history of the Akali agitation over the last about quarter of a century, we shall, for the sake of brevity, continue our discussion mainly to the two issues of rivers waters and the Anandpur Sahib

Resolution.

## **RIVER WATERS AND HYDEL POWER ISSUES**

After independence, roughly 38 MAF of river waters fell to the share of East Punjab in India. Of these, about 32 MAF were carried by the three Punjab rivers, Satluj, Beas and Ravi, and the remaining 5.6 MAF were carried by the Jamuna in Haryana area or the Jamuna Basin. Excluding 5.6 MAF of Jamuna (only part of which was utilised in Haryana area of erstwhile Punjab), of the remaining over 32 MAF about 9 MAF were being utilised in the Punjabi Suba area, and one MAF was used in the Gang Canal for the Bikaner State, which had an agreement with Punjab for a limited period, on payment of royalty to Punjab for the use of that water. In short, about 22 MAF of Punjab waters were still available for use of the State. Actually, considerable part of the 22 MAF was being used in Pakistan area, before 1947. But after partition these waters fell to the share of Indian Punjab.

The second essential point is that Punjab is short of water as Dr. Lowdermilk<sup>13</sup> has pointed out that sweet water is going to be scarce commodity and a limiting factor in the development of an area or state in the coming century. Agricultural experts have estimated that 5 to 6 acre feet of water are the annual requirements of an acre for growing two crops like wheat and paddy, the recommended rotation in the state. The cultivable area in Punjab being 105lakh acres, the annual requirements of surface water come to about 52.5 MAF. But the available waters are only 32 MAF, of which about 0.6 MAF have to go to the co-riparian Jammu and Kashmir. In sum, Punjab is woefully deficient in the availability of river waters to meet the requirements of its cultivated area. Here we should like to state two points:

First, we cannot, for want of space, give the entire history of the allotment of the river waters. We shall record only the result of the decisions made by the Central Government. Second, we shall give only approximate figures, because these have been marginally changed by different assessments and are still under controversy. The figures given will be the accepted data during the period before 1970.

The Reorganisation Act has a provision that in case of any dispute between Punjab and Haryana regarding the Beas Project, the Centre would be the arbitrator. Apart from the provision being considered violative of the Constitution, it was really unnecessary, because the Beas Project had been framed and finalised long before

1966, and envisaged the allotment of only about 0.9 MAF to the Haryana area. Such projects are always drawn in great detail, including plans for utilisation of water, channels, commanded area, and water to be supplied to each channel, distributory or water course. As such, the very provision in the Act was superfluous, except as a lever for its unwar-ranted use, as has been revealed later. After 1966 Haryana drew up a project, Satluj Yamuna Link Canal, which is supposed to carry 5 MAF of water from Punjab rivers. The Central Government approved of it. Punjab did not accept its validity, being a post- Reorganisation project and not a part of the Beas Project. Because of the dispute the Centre gave an award, and the final result broadly is that out of the 22 MAF, only about 5 MAF have been allotted to the Punjab, while 8 MAF go to Rajasthan and the remaining to Haryana. In short after 1947, about three fourths of the available waters have been allotted to non-riparian areas of Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi. We shall briefly mention the three stages of this long controversy. The first stage is the arbitration award by the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, in 1976 allotting, excluding flow of Satluj waters of the Bhakhra Project, 3.5 MAF each to Punjab and Haryana, 0.2 MAF to Delhi, leaving the remaining for Rajasthan which had been earlier earmarked under an executive order of the Centre. Following the defeat of Mrs. Indira Gandhi in the 1977 elections, an Akali-cum- Jan Sangh Ministry was formed in the Punjab. After obtaining expert legal advice, they filed a case in the Supreme Court questioning the award of the Prime Minister and the Vires of the Punjab Reorganisation Act of 1966. The third stage is that soon after Indira Gandhi returned to power at the Centre, she dismissed the Akali Ministry in Punjab, and later called a meeting of the three Congress Chief Ministers of Rajasthan, Haryana, and Punjab who signed an agreement virtually endorsing the earlier award. It gave 8.6 MAF to Rajasthan, 3.5 MAF to Haryana, 0.2 to Delhi and 4.2 MAF only to riparian Punjab. Following the agreement, the case pending before the Supreme Court was withdrawn by the Punjab Government, and the Prime Minister Mrs. Gandhi laid the foundation of the SYL Canal. Thus a constitutional attempt to have a decision of the Supreme Court on the fundamental constitutional issue was frustrated, following executive agreements. The conclusion is incontrovertible that the diversion of Punjab's water and hydel power resources to non-riparian states, has been done by the Centre by resort to extra- judicial measures and by frustrating the constitutional process, which the Akali Ministry had sought to follow. It only shows that all through, the Centre was aware

that the allotment was not constitutional and the Supreme Court would not endorse the validity of the unconstitutional provisions of the Reorganisation Act, 1966, and what it had decided regarding the allotment of Punjab waters and hydel power to non-riparian states.

Here, two other points need to be mentioned. There is a provision in the Reorganisation Act, that hydel power from Punjab rivers will go to Haryana in proportion to the allotment of water. Second, the agreement of 1981 among the three states only related to water of Punjab rivers. The constitutional issue about the provision concerning hydel power of these rivers was outside the scope of that agreement. Accordingly, it was still open 'to a future Punjab Government to raise before the Supreme Court the constitutional issue about the validity of the Reorganisation Act concerning hydel power. As such the entire Reorganisation Act could be got declared unconstitutional, thereby upsetting the apple cart of all allotments of water and hydel power to non-riparian states. The Centre's consciousness about its unconstitutional course appears evident from the fact that in May 1984, during the President's Rule, the Punjab Governor entered into the extra judicial agreement with Haryana and Rajasthan, providing that future disputes, if any, among them shall not be referred to the Supreme Court, but shall be decided through a nominee or a Tribunal appointed by the Central Government.

Without going into the history of such decisions regarding the Narmada and other rivers waters in India, we shall quote only one decision made by a California Court<sup>14</sup> in February 1988. The case related to a petition by the Federal Government that its lands situated in California be allowed some irrigation from a stream in South California. Until then the private land owners on the basis of their riparian rights were not allowing the use of the river water to even government lands in the state. The Court decided that while the Federal lands might be allowed waters, the water use for state lands would be subordinated to the needs of the current water users in the State. This is to emphasize that not to speak of allowing water to nonriparian states, the priority of private water users is so strong and universal that until Feb. 1988 the private land owners were not allowing water to even government lands. This priority is evidently based on the Principle that since for centuries on end, it is the people of a state that suffer loss in property, land and life from the floods and vagaries of rivers, they alone in equity have the corresponding right of having benefits from the waters or hydel power of those streams.

In no democratic country in Europe, America or India is there a decision contrary to the riparian principle which is also embodied in the Indian Constitution. One fact alone will show the equity of the riparian law. In 1988, the Punjab floods caused a havoc. The loss in erosion and silting of the land, damage to crops, houses, property and cattle, apart from the loss of scores of human lives, was estimated at over a billion Dollars<sup>15</sup> in that single year. Neither Rajasthan, nor Haryana, nor Delhi suffered even a penny worth of loss or damage from Punjab rivers of which they had been made the principal beneficiaries. The above highlights the contradiction and evident injustice that while riparian Punjab continues to suffer such damages, the non-riparian states reap each year benefits and production of over a billion dollars.

In India too there is clear cut decision in the Narmada waters case<sup>16</sup>, saying that Rajasthan being a non-riparian state has no rights in its waters whatsoever. In that case Rajasthan itself pleaded that even though non-riparian, it was getting Punjab waters, and on that analogy it should be allowed waters from the Narmada. But it was held that Rajasthan was non-riparian vis-a-vis Punjab rivers, and Punjab's commitment to Rajasthan was that it would supply water, only if it was surplus to its needs. This is to stress that knowing full well all this and other judicial decisions and rulings of the Indian Courts on the subject, the Central Government has consciously violated the riparian principle, and when challenged, avoided a judicial verdict on this constitutional issue.

## **DISASTROUS EFFECT OF DRAIN OF PUNJAB WATERS AND POWER**

The ruinous and despoiling effects of Central decisions are large-scale both in the fields of agriculture and industry. At present out of 105 lakh acres of cultivated land in the Punjab about 92 lakhs are irrigated including about 37 lakhs by canals and the rest by tubewells. This indicates that the major part of irrigation and Punjab prosperity and production are due to private effort and enterprise. First, the capital cost and maintenance and running costs of these over 8 lakh tubewells are a heavy burden on the production costs of crops in the state. Current cost of tubewell irrigation is 3 to 10 times more expensive than canal irrigation, depending upon the source of power. Apart from the fact that uninterrupted supply of power from diesel or electricity is hardly assured, the heavy overdrawal of subsoil water exceeds the annual recharge by rains, seepage, etc. This is lowering the water table each



year from one to ten feet. The present position of tubewell irrigation is that between 80 to 90 percent of the Community Blocks in the state have been branded as unsuitable for irrigation by tubewells. The clear warning given is that by the close of the century majority of these tubewells would become non-functional because of the continuous fall of water table. The second point is that available estimates suggest that ten lakh acres of existing canal irrigated areas especially from the Sirhind Canal area, would lose facility of canal water because water at present used in the state will have to be diverted to Haryana and Rajasthan under the present decision. In short, because of the lowering water table and diversion of canal waters about 60% of the area or about 50 lakhs acres would become barani or unirrigated. Under the present cropping system the question of dry farming does not arise. The holdings of small farmers being what they are, the resultant misery of a major part of the rural population can well be imagined. Its very serious effects on economic and social conditions in the state and their disturbing influence on the political life should be obvious. The annual loss of agricultural production would be of the order of 1.2 billion dollars. The loss in consequential industrial production and in the diversion of hydel power to other states would be still greater. The unfortunate part is that whereas hydel power from Punjab is being allotted to other states, thermal power plants are being installed in Punjab. Those being dependent on coal from distant states, the electricity generated by them is obviously several times more expensive than hydel power.

### **ANANDPUR SAHIB RESOLUTION**

As explained, the basis of Anandpur Sahib Resolution is not any snap decision or secessionist trend in Punjab politics, but it follows the assurances given by the Central leadership before 1947. Since 1949, the Akalis have been pressing the Central Government to give effect to their earlier policies and assurances. Since then the following additional factors have arisen to make it necessary that the state should have autonomous powers:

- a In 1971, the Tamil Nadu Assembly adopted the Rajmanner Report which requires that the Centre should have only four subjects as in the Anadpur Sahib resolution, and in addition, there should be a consultative Committee of Chief Ministers of states presided over by the Prime Minister to advise the Centre regarding the four Central subjects. Such views have also been

expressed by West Bengal and other non - Congress Ministries.

- b In the preceding 40 years, the Centre has amended the Constitution a number of times to make it more centralised. For example, Education, Administration of Justice, Constitution of Courts, have been made either concurrent or Central subjects. The percentage of discretionary grants to be given to the states from the Central revenue has been raised very considerably, thereby enabling the Centre to favour or punish any state it may like to do.
- c The Centre has created non-statutory or extra-constitutional bodies like the Planning Commission, the Water and Power Commission, the University Grants Commission, etc. which have great power not only to make financial allocations, but also have unfettered discretion to approve or disapprove state schemes which fall exclusively within the sphere of state functioning. By this method, the Centre could completely throttle all development in the state, should it choose to do so. A classic case is the construction of the Punjab Project of Thein Dam which was to cost originally only 70 crores, but Punjab failed to receive final approval even though in the mean time its cost has risen to over 800 crores.
- d Another factor is the frequent Central intrusion in state affairs by creating instability in a state and introducing President's rule. For example, whenever a non-congress Ministry was constitutionally formed in the Punjab, it was destabilised, followed by the President's rule. This was felt to be a negation of the democratic will to the people.
- e As the disastrous shackle of the Punjab Reorganisation Act makes Punjab a sub-state, the only way to promote socio-political progress in the state was to have full autonomy in the sphere of all development, planning and administration including control of water and hydel power of Punjab rivers.
- f Under the existing political set-up, as in the Punjab Reorganisation Act, the Centre has insisted on the construction of the Rajasthan Canal, despite all expert advice to the contrary. International experts from the World Bank and other institutions clearly emphasized that the Project was economically unjustifiable and wasteful, and that, at far less expense, the use of Punjab river waters could be far more productive if utilised within the state.

It shows that the Central decision neither served the national interests nor those of the Punjab.

- g Economic exploitation of Punjab in other fields has also been going on. Over 75% of the savings in Punjab Banks are diverted outside the state in order to develop other areas. Industrial licensing and approval of projects being in Central hands, it has not allowed more than 2% of the cotton produced in the Punjab to be processed within the state. Similarly, while Punjab is a major sugar cane producing area, large scale imports of sugar still take place from other states. Another way of serious curtailment of the wealth of rural Punjab, which sustain about 80% of the population, is by low pricing and monopoly procurement of wheat and rice which are in Central hands. Punjab suffers the most because about 60% of wheat and a considerable part of rice are procured from Punjab by the Centre for distribution in deficient or urban areas in other states.

We have indicated above some of the Central measures that have seriously curtailed Punjab's agricultural and industrial growth. In fact, the Reorganisation act has put a permanent ceiling on the economic, social and political development of the state. It is in this context that the demand contained in assurances of the Congress leaders, and the Akali demand of 1949, was revived in 1973 because it became evident that in the existing set-up, the economic and social growth of the people of the Punjab stood completely arrested. Hence the need of autonomy in the field of development and administrative subjects, as envisaged in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, became inevitable.

Evidently, it is sheer bias on the part of a scholar to make a complete black-out of the context, the steps taken by the Centre and the political events in the Punjab and other states that have given rise to the Anandpur Sahib Resolution demanding state autonomy, and approvingly to endorse that Anandpur Sahib Resolution is viewed 'as a document of succession.' In the current political thinking, both in the world and in India, it looks so incongruous for even a journalist, much less for a scholar to brand a simple demand for autonomy as secessionist. We give below by way of a sample a recent statement of a Central Minister, George Fernandes, who observed at a seminar on Indian nationalism, Problems and Challenges, that<sup>17</sup> "The growing militancy by the youth was a clear indication that the politicians had failed to solve the problems of the country. The only answer was to

have a new constitution, providing a genuine decentralised state with development activity being the responsibility of the people.” “If the country had adopted decentralisation instead of going in for centralised planning, there would not have been a single village in the country with a drinking water problem.”

The author has unnecessarily and illogically raised the issue of Sikh Personal Law, and tried to relate it to so-called Sikh fundamentalism. First, there is nothing fundamentalist in making a political demand. Second, Sikhs have undoubtedly a separate religion, a separate scripture and a separate socio-political identity and world-view. Accordingly, there is nothing abnormal or irrational, if the Sikhs, like the Muslims or the Hindus, want to have a separate personal law; it is the right of every ethnic community to make such a demand. It is just ridiculous for anyone to suggest, as has been done by Oberoi, that after the grant of autonomy, the Sikhs would ban tobacco, drugs or alcohol. Nothing of this sort was done by Ranjit Singh even in the nineteenth century. The Punjab Assembly has Power even today to ban tobacco or alcohol, but nothing of the kind has happened, although some other states have introduced prohibition. It appears hardly rational to raise such a bogey. It reminds one of the fears expressed by some politicians that hens would stop laying eggs, if the steam locomotive invented by Stephenson were introduced. As explained earlier, the real object of Oberoi appears to be political, and the aim seems to be to misrepresent the justification and political necessity of the demand for state autonomy. For, otherwise it is difficult to accept that he is absolutely unaware of the basic importance of water and hydel power, territorial, recruitment and other issues in reference to Punjab, and the demand for autonomy in many parts of the country.

## **SIKH IDEOLOGY**

Now we shall take up issues concerning fundamentalism, Sikh pluralism, Miri-piri concept, Nirankaris, modernity, secularism and agrarian situation, which Oberoi has irrelevantly introduced in order to sidetrack the main issues of the Punjab problem.

First, we take up the alleged fundamentalism. From the point of view of academic studies, the point is completely irrelevant to the subject under consideration, because fundamentalism is related only to the literal acceptance of many of the stories and assertions in the Bible, which under modern conditions are not accepted by many. For example, it has been stated that the world is only a few thousand years

old. There is nothing in the Sikh scripture or the Sikh ideology, which appears in any way illogical to modern thought. In fact, it is the modernity that is its basic feature and is the reason for its departure from the earlier Indian religions. It is not our intention to give offence to any old religion, but we all know that they have their statements which are questioned even by men of the faith. Hence, it appears necessary to give the Sikh world-view, so that Oberoi's contentions could be assessed in the correct ideological perspective.

Sikhism is free from any historical or mythical assumptions. It is a monotheistic faith with the belief that the basic Force or God is Love, and He is both transcendent and immanent in His creation. Love being dynamic, the mother of all values, and directive, God is deeply interested in His creation, and operates through His altruistic Will. As such, the seeker's goal is to carry out His Will. This makes for the reality of the world, instead of its being an illusion (*mithya*) or a suffering, as it is considered by some other religions. Hence, Guru Nanak emphasizes four things: First, that in life the spiritual dimension must be combined with the empirical dimension in order to live a full and fruitful life. This forms the basis of the *Miri-Piri* doctrine laid down by him. Second, that the ideal of man is not salvation or merger in Brahman, but working in tune with the altruistic Will of God. Our present malady is that we live an egoistic life and remain alienated from the real force of Love, that is operative in the world and forms the base of all moral life. Third, in pursuance of the above logic, Guru Nanak rejected the system of monasticism, asceticism, other-worldliness, caste ideology and pollution, and woman being considered a temptress. No prophet in the world has made such radical changes in religious thought as did Guru Nanak. Fourth, he prescribed that man's assessment would purely be made on his deeds alone. It is in this context that he stated that "Truth is higher than everything, but truthful living is higher still." A major corollary of his system of truthful living which is its central element, is man's duty to participate in social life and accept total social responsibility. For that end he suggested that for the religious man, work, production and equitable distribution are essential, as also the responsibility of confronting or resisting injustice and oppression. Because he calls God to be the Destroyer of evildoers and the demonical. In order to enable the religious man to discharge the responsibility of resisting oppression, he rejected the doctrine of Ahimsa or pacificism, which had been an integral part of all Indian religions. And it is in this context that he gave the call that his system,

being a game of love, whoever wanted to join his society, should be willing to sacrifice his all. For that end he organised a society, and created the institution of succession to enable his successors to develop and mature the Panth. Finally, it is that society which the Tenth Master created as the Khalsa, again giving the call for total sacrifice, and breaking completely from the earlier religious systems, traditions, customs, etc. Hence it is sheer ignorance about Guru Granth and its system to relate it to something of the kind of Christian fundamentalism, in order to create a prejudice in the minds of those who have no knowledge of Sikhism. The Guru Granth or its ideology can be summed up as was done by Guru Nanak thus: Give up egoism and live a life of love, virtue, equality and justice. Accordingly, there is no obscurantism or pluralism in the ideology of Guru Nanak. As to the Miri-Piri doctrine, it is the fundamental of Guru Nanak's thesis to combine the empirical life with the spiritual life of man. It is the same principle as was accepted by Moses and Prophet Mohammad, both of whom were simultaneously religious and political leaders.

As to the Nirankaris, he has again completely misrepresented the position either out of ignorance or otherwise. The Nirankaris are neither a Sikh sect nor a break-away group, nor do the Nirankaris themselves make any claim to be Sikhs. The clash between the Nirankaris and the Bhindranwale group might well have been a created problem in order to sidetrack the Sikh political struggle for its rights. In any case, such a conflict could be between the two ideologies. Further, it is a misstatement that the death of Gurbachan Singh was followed by mass killings in the Punjab. Nothing of the kind happened, and Oberoi has not given any evidence to support this unfounded statement. In any case, the alleged clash has nothing to do with the political problems of Punjab and the issues involved therein. A minor clash between two communities can hardly be a relevant reason either for denying autonomy to a state or for sidetracking the real issues of injustice we have discussed above.

Oberoi has also incongruously introduced the point of Green Revolution, which is chronologically a baseless assertion. The Sikh agitation for Punjabi Suba and autonomous status, is a political issue of pre-Independence days and even the demand of Punjabi Suba and its autonomy arose in the life of Sardar Patel. Long before the Green Revolution, the agitation for the Suba had started. Over fifty thousand went to jail and suffered imprisonment and other hardships. All this happened before the onset of the Green Revolution. As even a student

of Punjab agriculture is aware, the first import of high yielding seeds from Mexico took place in 1966, and the impact of the Green Revolution was not felt before the mid-seventies. By that time, the agitation for Sikh demands including the fasts of Sant Fateh Singh and Darshan Singh Pheruman, as also the death of the latter, had taken place. Second, the occurrence of the Green Revolution in Punjab is an accomplished fact. But the important question is why it took place in the North West corner of India among the rural Sikhs and not anywhere else in India or Asia, which had been deficient in food. It is the life-affirming ideology of Sikhism that is the sole explanation for it as has been explained by Upinderjit Kaur in her publication. Oberoi's difficulty appears to be his complete ignorance of the spirituo-empirical life combination or the Miri-Piri system of the Guru Granth. That is why he seems to be unnecessarily beating about the bush. As to the subdivision of holdings, he has again made an irrelevant contradiction; subdivision is a natural consequence of the system of succession. The Green Revolution has not in any way accentuated it, but it has made small holdings more productive and life sustaining than before. Higher yields and greater production have relieved the economic situation, and this is supported by no less a person than Subramaniam, the Agriculture Minister of India.

Oberoi has harped a lot on modernity and secularism, and has only displayed an ignorance of the broad forces that are involved in the current century. It is Toynbee who laments that for the last three hundred years, religion has been driven out of the cultural life of man, and instead parochialism of the worship of the national state as a goddess has started. He also laments that the Western technologist has lost his self-confidence and is in confusion, whether the technological genii which he has released would not destroy all human culture and "whether his "professional success may not have been a social and moral disaster." For him "the great world religions have been replaced in modern times by three post-Christian ideologies, nationalism, communism and individualism. All three are equally impersonal and dehumanising." Similarly, Pierard believes "Secularism in the nineteenth century, aided by Marxism, Darwinism and Positivism chipped away the Christian underpinning of Western thought." This thinking considers that secularism and nationalism eventually give rise to militarism, imperialism, racism and despotism. The history of the current century hardly seems to suggest that secularism leads to cultural or moral progress. In fact, the indications, both historical and current,

seem to be quite different. For, in Europe and the USSR millions were destroyed by Hitler and Stalin both of whom were secularists without any belief in religion. It is in this context that the American Churches have raised the voice that Secularism is a major danger to life and that Christianity should co-operate with other religions in order to avoid the present decline in moral values of the culture. It is doubtful, whether Hegel, as Oberoi suggests, can be associated with the thinking of divorce between religion and politics. But whatever be his belief, he is certainly associated with German militarism and is considered to be the precursor of Kaiser, Hitler and despotism. In fact, it is the post-modern thinking of men like Huston Smith <sup>18</sup> that suggests the recognition of the role of religion against the limitation and potential harm that is contained in the power-over-na-ture approach to life that governs much of our modern culture. This philosophy appears to lead towards “only a dead end; annihilation of mythology, religion, all value systems, all hope.”

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## “Fundamentalism”, “Modernity”, and Sikhism: A Tertium Quid

Dr Noel Q. King

“Fundamentalism” in its strictest technical use refers to a movement within American Protestant Evangelicalism of fairly recent origin. The word has come to be linked with various literalist, evangeli-cal and charismatic groups and televangelists. Thence it has been applied to religious extremists who claim to be returning to fundamen-tals<sup>1</sup>. We find the media and some scholars using it of the Pire pinis cargo cultists of yesterday in Sepik River, New Guinea, onwards to the *Babri masjid/Ram janam bhoomi* folk in today’s India. Recently in his *Defenders of God, the Fundamentalist Revolt against the Modern Age*, Bruce B. Lawrence with great scholarly care and erudition defines terms and deals mainly with what he considers Prime examples-American-style Protestant Fundamentalists, the Ithna-ashariya Shia of Iran and such defenders of “The jewish collectivity” as *Gush Emunim*.<sup>2</sup> He refers the movements back to some of the major concepts of modern world history as it has developed since World War I. We will turn back to this shortly.

“Modernity” and “Modernism” refer to a tendency among religions to update themselves by accepting concepts and techniques from the modern secular world around them. The words are sometimes used as a kind of second part in a dichotomy “Fundamentalism versus Modernity/Modernism”. They easily fit into the academic discussion on the “modernization” of religions like Islam or the influence of modern America of the Third Republic in France on their own Roman Catholicism early in the century.<sup>3</sup> But easily the concepts leads towards association with western dominance and the Great Western Trans-mutation (abbreviated to GWT) by which the world was transformed between 1492 and 1947.<sup>4</sup>

Here it is necessary for our purposes to interject that the word “fundamentalist” has been applied to Sikhism too by both media and scholars especially in the time leading up to and since the tragic Operation Blue Star. Recent examples include Angela Dietrich’s ‘The Khalsa Resurrected: Sikh Fundamentalism in the Punjab’.<sup>5</sup> In this article which struggles to rye sympathetic and respectful, the essay on the Sikhs rubs shoulders with those on Fundamentalist Muslims in West Africa, Iran and Eygpt, Secularists in Turkey, Sri Lankan Hindus in

Britain, Protestant Tamils in Madras, as well as the American Moral Majority. Again, late in 1989 at a meeting of the American Academy of Religion at Anaheim in California, a panel discussed these issues in connection with Sikhism. A paper which has not to date been published and which requests it be not quoted for it had not been finalized, was read by Professor Harjot Oberoi of Vancouver. It was entitled "Sikh Fundamentalism: Ways of Turning Things Over?"

In the discussion generated it became clear that though a religion which used a *mool-mantra* and was given to *mulvad* obviously got down to fundamentals, the word Fundamentalist could hardly be used in the same way as it was of American Fundamentalists. There was also considerable objection to the way in which by the use of social science and Marxist historical methods it was to be supposed that Sikhs were mainly peasants who were led along by a few people who drew them out from the main body of Hinduistic Indians. The idea was also hotly contested that deep changes in Sikh History from 1699 onwards came in response of outer stimuli on the part of a body in which it was alleged increasingly Jats had taken over leadership from Khatri. If we reject such explanations of evolution into modernity and other similarly based arguments and hypotheses, what better propositions can we put forward to explain the Sikh situation today? In answering it is necessary to note that modernizing thought since the so-called Enlightenment, a European movement especially reflected in philosophy of the eighteenth century, has tended to discount any use of hypotheses of explanations which include the supernatural or that which passes human understanding. Recently some cracks in this carapace have begun to show.

It is now possible to tune back and take up our consideration of the position of Fundamentalism, Modernity and Sikhism over against their background in some major trends of thinking about World History. World History is not a modern western invention. In the eighth century before the Common Era strata of the Jewish Torah, building on much older West Asian and Egyptian ideas, and the Jewish Scriptures as a whole give us a *schema* of how the nations came to be and how they interact and the plan of their history. In the Puranas Indic thinkers give us concepts of world ages and world movements. In the eighth/ fourteenth century Ibn Khaldun gives us in his *Muqaddimah* a pattern which looks back to the earlier thinking of Arabs and Jews.

It is impressive how many older Sikhs of my generation read

at high school H.G. Wells' *Short History of the World* which originally came out in 1924. I have also met a good number who have read Toynbee. Although Karl Jaspers wrote in German, many of his ideas have come to be known to users of English. Thus a number of us take it almost for granted that there is a kind of intellectual spirit of the age (*Zeitgeist*) which seems mysteriously to affect thinkers across the world with the same kind of ideas just as it is said new bird songs will spread from bird to bird across an island. Jaspers especially juxtaposes the Athenian philosophers, the Hebrew prophets, the Upanishadic seers and the Chinese sages in an Axial Age.<sup>6</sup>

Joseph Needham in his eighty-eighth year remarked that if he had time to carry the implications of his *History of Science and Technology in China* into World History he would very much desire to trace Taoist ideas and techniques for instance with regard to chemistry and the use of gun powder in their influence upon Muslim scientists such as the alchemists.<sup>7</sup> One could follow this up to try to postulate a transmission of thinking even in a perverted way between the original Chinese invention of gunpowder and the Portuguese floating fortress. There are many such transmissions which suggest themselves but lack of sound historical evidence interdicts even their formulation. We turn back to trying to trace some factors in History of Religion which, if not transmitted, naturally overtake or take place in an ecclesiastical body or corpus at a certain point in her life.

At Chicago William McNeill and Marshall Hodgson formulated ideas which have deeply affected Bruce Lawrence whose book was mentioned above. In her years of Empire, Muslim civilization was according to this hypothesis breathed through and through by a religion which was its conscience and shaper. But during the time of "the Great Western Transmutation" of world history, religion was apparently not a predominant controlling factor or an effective conscience.<sup>8</sup> However, when some thinkers in great cultures and civilizations, including western culture, see their societies disintegrating, their young being lost to them, their best traditions destroyed, they turn desparately to their religions as a means of hope and a way of working for survival, recovery and resurgence. This is a comparatively late movement which of its own nature must come after the modernizers have brought the threatening outside influences into their own most cherished holies of holies. As a movement it too will use the language and methods of the enemy in its attempt to recover the fundamentals as it imagines them: It too will invent tradition. It too will

use science and technology and be dependent on them and indeed be transformed by them. Broadly and approximately Fundamentalism may be considered such a movement or a manifestation of this tendency.

Let us turn back to Sikhism. Sikhism was presented to the world by the first Guru who lived from 1469 to 1539. The tenth occupied the *takht* from 1675 to 1708. During those centuries the Punjab faced yet more of the Muslim invasions which had gone on since the days of Mahmud of Ghazni, and the Europeans arrived and began to weave India into their world web. In the nineteenth century they broke in with full force bringing their world diseases, economics, their philosophical, religious and political ideals and failures. They brought their ways of education, science and technology. Everywhere the local product seemed to be swept away. Even their intellectual history with its tale of revolutions in politics, literary critical method, social and gender structure, its divorce between religion, ethics, philosophy and politics found local supporters and exponents and some partial acceptance. But the response in Sikhism was not just one of meeting one emergency after another, or the evolution of an overall response by anyone person nor of a committee nor of a group of leaders. Rather at base it was the continued unfolding of the enseeded, encoded nature of Sikhism as originally propounded by the first *Mahala* and the other nine. After the tenth it was vested in the Book and in the *Sangat* and the same Spirit told forth the same truths as they applied to that stage of life. Let us give but one brief example. It was not one person, however brilliant, saying *Hum Hindu nain hai* late in the nineteenth century but the First Teacher coming up from the Three Day Waters saying *Hai nain Hindu, Hai nain Mussulman* which is basic. The nineteenth century remark is but a working out of the early teaching. In that dichotomy we find posited a third something (the *tertium quid* of our title): Sikhism.

In the debate about Fundamentalism and Modernity other buzz words are appearing. These include "Primitivism," that is, the seeking for a primitive pure state and the attempt to imitate it under present day conditions. This may be called the restoration ideal or a quest for a return to the primordial, a seeking for a renewal of a primal vision. At the same time many are talking of ours as a post-modern age. There is growing suspicion of Western ways just as they penetrate more and more places. A colleague brought back from former East Germany a copy of a poster which shows an attractive young western woman giving a cigarette in a packet labelled West to a Russian official who is choking on his own cigarette. The Caption in Russian says "Try out the

West” or more “Test the West.” A caption in German says “This applies in East Germany too.” On the packet there is a printed warning in English about Life in the West with “its banal culture and brutal extremes of poverty.”

In their day thinkers both Eastern, Western and from Africa and the Pacific have done their best. We test their best, each time the teachings of Sikhism may seem to be fitted into their categories. Then we find it escaping their fingers and passing on its way. Young Sikh scholars thoroughly grounded in their own inheritance who are encouraged and enabled to devote the years of detailed and disciplined study to the age-long international debate from China to California via the Punjab and Olduvai Gorge will contribute much to a genuine theory of World History.

#### REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> For dictionary definitions see for instance any recent edition of ‘Webster’s College Dictionary’. Compare also handbooks like Roger Scruton’s ‘A Dictionary of Political Thought’, London: Pan Books 1982. These works do not really attempt to define so much as to sum up current usage. However, the article on “Fundamentalism” in edited Mircea Eliade: ‘Encyclopedia of Religions’, Free Press and MacMillan: New York 1988 volume gives some definitions and bibliography (This Encyclopedia is disgracefully inadequate on Sikhism.) The works of James Barr culminating in his ‘Fundamentalism’ (London 1977), though written from a British point of view, have an exactness of scholarship and originality which make fascinating reading
- <sup>2</sup> Published by Harper and Row: San Francisco, 1989
- <sup>3</sup> Again for bibliography see in edited Mircea Eliade: ‘Encyclopedia of Religion’, Volume 10, the articles on ‘Modernism and Modernity’
- <sup>4</sup> G.W.T. is a term used by Marshall Hodgson whom we mention below which has come into jargon use in American Universities. Like the Ninja Mutant Turtles of present day fame it is by no means purely western. The British would not have got far in India in any of their enterprises without widespread and gifted local help and cooperation. The G.W.T. is a world achievement even as it is a world tragedy

- <sup>5</sup> Essay number 6 in a collection edited by Lionel Caplan: 'Studies in Religious Fundamentalism', London: McMillan press, 1987
- <sup>6</sup> With Karl Jaspers it is impossible to pick out a few titles but ed. Edith Ehrlich, etc., 'Basic Philosophical Writings, Selections', Athens: Ohio University Press, 1986 and man in the modern age, London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1959, give an inkling.
- <sup>7</sup> The writer had the privilege of two visits with Dr. Joseph Needham in July 1988. He made the remarks quoted in conversation. When I asked after his middle name "Noel," he said he was born on the first Christmas of the century. Volumes 1 and 2 of his 'Science and Civilization in China' Cambridge (England): University Press, 1956 and 1958, are the most relevant to our purpose.
- <sup>8</sup> On William Hardy McNeill see his 'Readings in World History', New York: Oxford University Press, 1968 and 'A World History', 1967, subsequently re-edited. On Marshall G.S. Hodgson see the 'Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization, Chicago': University Press, 3 volumes, 1974. Other "display options" as the bibliographical retrieval systems say, include Sir Herbert Butterfield, Christopher Dawson and a host of others.

## **The Siege Perilous (Hot Seat) And the Divine Hypothesis.**

Dr Noel Q. King

(Some remarks on Dr Harjot Oberoi: *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994)

It was with rejoicing the public learned a few years ago that the Sikh community in Canada had from Gurdwara to Gurdwara across the country raised a sum of money, and that the Canadian Government had matched it, to set up a chair to be devoted to Sikh studies at Vancouver. The Sikh money was not big donor Rock-efeller/Ford stuff, but included the mites contributed among others by little old pious Sikh ladies who sometimes had difficulty meeting the gas bill. The government money of course was only the taxes paid by the Sikh public recycled “of thine own, give we unto thee,” as the ancient offertory prayer says. It was a noble effort, hopefully signifying a recognition of the need to promote for the good of all the cultural and civilisational gifts migrant communities brought to the larger community. There was good hope that this might also prove an attempt to let the community have an active and on-going partnership and symbiosis in its own University.

Then fell some years of pregnant silence. The kind of stupid mistakes, institutional chicanery, impossible and arbitrary deadlines, outside interference subtly done, plus the manipulations of the old-boy network which every profession breeds, were probably not better nor worse at the University of British Columbia than they are at Amritsar, or Delhi or Harvard or Santa Cruz. Equally serendipity and some Larger Plan may have operated.

Into this heritage and onto this *siege perilous* entered the author of the book before us. (It is the vacant chair in the King Arthur stories reserved for the purest and noblest of the Knights. Birth, bravery or skill in arms are apparently not the most important qualifications.) The book sets before us too the substance of the written material on which his doctoral committee and then in due course his tenure committee based their decisions. *Quamdiu se bene qesserint*, ‘as long as they behave themselves,’ the tenured are with us for life. It is a great moment in a scholar’s career. But there is more to come. Every young



scholar's dream is to have his or her book published by Oxford University Press, bulky enough to have the crest and motto in full printed across the back. For better or for worse, in bookshops from Timbuktu to Tokyo, anyone looking for books on Sikhism will be given this book and its kin, coming out of the same *parampara* (succession). It is a magnificent piece of the book producer's art. On the dust cover a procession of Sikhs with elephant, arms and banner ascends to a door. On the back cover that door and entrant motif is repeated. The crest does not give the motto, *Deus, dominus scientiarum omnium*, "God the Lord of all the sciences (knowledge)", one of the slogans of the original Oxford, nor even *Dominus illuminatio mea* "The Lord is my light", the quotation from Psalms which appears on many crests of the University. The logo enshrines an "O" which is a western version of the sign Indian mathematicians gave the world for *shunya* "nothingness, the void." Dr. Oberoi's middle initial is not given. It has presumably joined Dr. McLeod's "Reverend." (People who love "needling Sikhs" will forgive this one playful needle from an old friend.)

So far as the University game of critical scholarship is concerned, Dr. Oberoi can certainly do all the necessary dances and tricks and name the critical names that should be named. Perhaps those of the feminist hermeneutic and their repentant male chauvinist hangers-on will tell us Sikh Woman is strangely overlooked. If this is a legitimate accusation, it is a howling omission when dealing with the only major religion which from the beginning has given the feminine her due.

Again, if one has spent some time working in History as it has been enriched by recent thought in Anthropology and Sociology, there appears here to be an apparent lack of systematic consultation of the community's oral tradition and anything of the spirit of participant observership. Those Victorian census writers were collecting religious groups as an entomologist collects beetles. They should not be taken too seriously; camaraderie and *communitas*, All-join-in-for-Christmas or *for-Muharram* do not make Christians or Muslims of us. Asking Dr. G. S. Mansukhani in his eighties, before his lamented death last year, questions about the old *Siraiki* festivals and pilgrimages firmly told one that Sikhs around Multan at least knew what they were doing and who they were certainly from the early days of Maharajah Ranjit onwards.

Sikh voices lodging other criticisms can also be heard. Already one can record the faculty of the North American Universities and their friends grunting: "Here those trouble-making Sikhs go

again.” It will be different to get them to listen for they are very sensitive and at the same time brilliantly clever with every trick of argument on how to put down opponents. One has to be very patient and loving and follow the *hadith* of the Holy Prophet about swallowing one’s own spittle. The hypocrisy is nauseating, coming as it does from a world corporate body which accommodated the requests of Hitler, Stalin, Franco and the American Cold-War mongers. “Donor money is given unconditionally, the University cannot be expected to consult the wishes of the Sikh community.”

Interpreting the situation is worse than playing hop-scotch in a minefield. Part of it goes back to the early days of the self-styled European Enlightenment. In the mechanistic universe of the eighteenth century God was envisaged as detached Totality which wound up the universe like a clock-maker and withdrew. To tell why the path of a planet wobbled, one had no need of the God hypothesis. One can be sure that God too agrees there is no need of such hypothesis. So for the sake of human intellectual growth and under such conditions it was perhaps a service to leave God out. Sadly western philosophers and ethicists could not keep up, so morals and ethics on a universal scale could not even have such support as religion once gave them. During these centuries, individualism and the breakdown of the old corporate and family entities also took place in the west. Just as dentists and medical people built up a phalanx of weaponry to patch things up as our unnatural diseases mount, so critical scholarship assembled tools of greater or lesser utility to help our one-sided minds. It is at its weakest when it comes to dealing with the soul of a community, revelation and God.

Sikhism is basically a teaching about God and community. It is not God as envisaged by westerners or indeed by any of the other great religious and pseudo-religious systems. It is not syncretistic but the greatest features of all the other systems are to be found in it and even then Sikhism goes beyond. (This is not to belittle the others. Each has its own place.) God is immanent in all creation. God is the *hukm* (ordering, *command, fiat*) which brought into being and provides those laws of science which we are beginning to understand. At the same time God is utterly transcendent and unknowable. Yet *nam* (name, very Being) and *rada, bhana* (will) are made known. The universe is the place where these things are played out. This underlying Being of the Universe made herself/himself/itself known directly to the ten Gurus and the Guruship ‘was vested and lives on in the Book (Sri Adi Guru

Granth Sahib) and in the community. If an observer spends time steeped in the life of the Sikh people she or he will find it permeated, directed, indeed obsessed by the Granth and the spirit of the Panth. Sikhs, from those who cannot read to those giving a lead in world communication, know large portions of it by heart and even repeat it continuously by committing portions to the sub-liminal. It is repeated as a Sikh comes to birth, murmured as a Sikh dies, it fills the heart continually. Who and what constructed the boundaries of the Sikhs and laid down the fundamentals of their ways? Who and what shaped their tradition and their ways, constructed the boundaries of their traditions, culture, identity and diversity? It was the belief in Waheguru working through the Granth and the Panth.

The North American academic community grunts "Here go those Believers again." We are not asking people to become believers, we are asking people who take it in hand to describe a community to take into account the basic factors that constitute the community for believers and we are merely asking whether a book which attempts to tell us what shaped the Sikh community and then in effect ignores the Book and the embodiment and working out of the Teaching in the Khalsa, can be considered adequate. One is not asking that the author be a believer, we are asking for mere fairness and common decency in service to the Sikhs and the public that a book like this should clearly and without bias somewhat adequately state what the teaching is as it stands in the Book and in the broad consensus of the Sikh community over the generations. If this is not done, the unwary reader is a victim to any hypothesis which might serve as an explanation. For example, the suggestion that these things came to be as a result of the pushing and work of certain individuals or of a group of men whereas it was the outworking of a Scripture through a total community.

These things are difficult to state coherently out of context. Just at this point there has come to hand Dr. Wilfred Cantwell Smith: *What is a Scripture?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993) which in a way sums up the work of a series of academic studies by a number of scholars some of whom Dr. Oberoi mentions in his bibliography. Dr. Smith consistently and brilliantly makes room for non-Muslims and indeed non-believers to appreciate something of the glory of the Quran. He does the same one by one for the other Scriptures and religions he considers in his book. (He certainly accepts Sikh Scripture among the world Scriptures but does not in this particular work use it to illustrate

the points he is making.) He proves it is possible within the strictest application of modern western University usage to make room for full emphasis to be given to the divine hypothesis as envisaged by believers working itself out as a major element in a Scripture and a community.

There is no higher calling than to be a hermeneutist, someone who tries to explain things to both sides. Dr. Oberoi may wish to make a magnanimous public declaration and turn again to the work. If he wishes, the University may be able *by* reshuffling to give him general South Asian and Community Studies work and re-appoint to the Sikh chair. But one must beg and beseech the two sides not to disintegrate into stand-off or hostility. The University may refuse to listen to what the Sikhs are trying to say about the divine hypothesis and community. The University may fall back on the narrowest interpretation of the First Amendment and on University privilege to refuse “outside in-fluence.” But Canada has a living tradition even higher than that Amendment, and Sikhs include so many University women and men and they are the first among those who uphold professional and academic ‘freedom. Let not the Sikhs hive off into lawsuits and separate institutions. Theirs is a whole-life tradition which participates fully in the life of its surroundings and tolerates no hierarchy or castes. If they leave us and turn in on themselves, the whole world, not only the University, suffers loss. Perhaps even yet the great Game-player (*Mahala 1, Shlok Varan te Vadhik* page 1412), the Mighty Juggler (*Mahala V, Suhi*, page 736), can bring some good out of this heart-breaking situation.

## ‘Construction of Religious Boundaries’

Dr Bhagat Singh

Dr Harjot Oberoi’s work, ‘The Construction of Religious Boundaries,’ is mainly based on a very wrong assumption that “A pseudo-synthetic historiography comforts contemporary practitioners of the (Sikh) faith that their present vision of the world and their religious practices simply continue all that was enunciated and established by the founders of the Sikh tradition... I argue for a series of highly complex ruptures, rapprochements and transitions which eventually resulted in what we recognize as the modern Sikh community”(p.47).

Here we mean to tell the author that the religious practices enunciated and established by the founders of Sikhism have continued to the present day. It is a matter of history that Guru Nanak’s mission has been regarded as the promulgation of a new religion that remains distinct and complete in itself. The pattern of religious life produced by him endured unaffected over the centuries. The Guru did not identify himself with the existing forms of religion. He condemned and discarded the contemporary forms of religious belief and ritualistic practices of the Hindus altogether, and he was convinced that he had something more valuable to offer. He adopted for himself and for his followers his own revealed composition. This clearly meant the rejection of the old Hindu scriptural authority and also Hindu deities and the scriptures of the contemporary religions. Wherever Guru Nanak went during his missionary travels he established *sangat* with instruction to his followers to build *dharamsalas* where they could regularly meet and sing the Lord’s praises and remember the Guru’s teachings. The centres of his missionary activities included those established in Kamrup (Assam), Bihar, Cuttack, Surat, Nanakmata (in the Kumaon Hills), Khatmandu, Jallalabad and Kabul.

The Guru’s Sangat and Pangat aimed at levelling the invidious distinctions between man and man. Guru Nanak outright rejected caste system on which the structure of social and religious life of the Hindus was based. The religious doctrine and practices introduced by Guru Nanak and his successors came down to us with the same undiminished emphasis against the thinking of Dr Oberoi.

The author Oberoi wrongly remarks that, “just as there is no fixed Guru Nanak in the Janam Sakhis there is no fixed Sikh identity in the early Sikh period” (p. 56). ‘Fixed Guru Nanak’ must be searched in

his *bani* (spiritual composition) and not in his Janam Sakhis. Sikh identity was enshrined in Guru Nanak's challenge to the use of various Hindu rituals and in the introduction of many practices that raised the dignity of man and status of woman. Dabistan informs us that "the disciples of Nanak do not read the mantras of the Hindus. They do not venerate their temples or idols nor do they esteem their *avtars*. They have no regard for the Sanskrit language which according to the Hindus is the speech of gods".<sup>1</sup>

In Sikhism, rituals do not so much define Sikh identity as the ideology and the deeds practised. When doctrinal factors of a religion are avoided or ignored and only sociological factors are emphasised, the religion is the casualty. Oberoi failed to notice the development of Sikhism under Guru Nanak's successors. During the two centuries under the Gurus, the Sikh institutions were mainly the interpretation or extension of Guru Nanak's ideals with no let-up in the following period. In the words of Dr Gokal Chand Narang, "Guru Gobind Singh himself, in fact, as well as his work, was the natural product of the process of evolution that had been going on ever since the foundation of Sikhism. The harvest which ripened in the time of Guru Gobind Singh had been sown by Guru Nanak and watered by his successors. The sword which carved the Khalsa's way to glory was undoubtedly, forged by Guru Gobind Singh, but the steel had been provided by Guru Nanak".<sup>2</sup>

Guru Angad condemned ascetism, popularised Gurmukhi letters and preserved the spiritual compositions of Guru Nanak. Guru Angad and Guru Amar Das enthusiastically pursued and promoted the institution of langar. Under the third Guru, *sangats* spread far and wide. He divided his spiritual domain into twenty two *manjis* or bishoprics or dioceses under the charge of devoted Sikhs who preached the mission of the Sikh Gurus. Guru Amar Das initiated the Sikhs into new ceremonies regarding birth, marriage and death and forbade the Hindu practices of *sati*, *purdah*. According to Indubhusan Banerjee, "Guru Angad had, no doubt, done something to give the Sikhs an individuality of their own but it was under Guru Amar Das that the difference between a Hindu and a Sikh became more pronounced and the Sikhs began gradually to drift away from the orthodox Hindu society and form a class, a sort of new brotherhood by themselves".<sup>3</sup>

Guru Ram Das gave the Sikhs a rallying centre at Amritsar where they could occasionally meet and maintain closer relationship with their brothers in faith. Guru Arjun, the fifth Guru, gave the Sikh

scripture in the form of the Adi Granth, which embodies, in addition to his own writings, the compositions of his predecessors and a number of Indian saints.

The author Oberoi perversely observes that, “its (Adi Granth’s) heterodox textuality and diverse contributors were far more the manifestation of a fluid Sikh identity than a signifier of exclusivity” (p.55).

The author’s charge regarding ‘heterodox textuality’ and ‘diverse contributors’ is preposterous. He does not seem to know that the compositions of the outside contributors were not accepted hap-hazardly. Guru Arjun kept certain spiritual ideology in mind. For him the essential thing was the expression of fundamental truth and...the harmonious unity of spiritual emotion and thought. And thus only those compositions that agreed with his religious doctrine and came up to his standard were incorporated in it without any other consideration than that the contributor must be an enlightened soul.

The Gurus whose compositions were incorporated in the holy Granth could not be considered as ‘diverse contributors’. They were the same in spirit though different in body. This fact has been again and again impressed upon. The Guru continued to be the central unifying personality and in spite of change in succession he was held to be one and the same as his predecessor. Satta and Balwand, the Guru’s bards, sang: “Lenha, the scion of Guru Nanak exchanged body with him and took possession of his throne Lehna had the same light, the same method, the master merely changed body. The wise being, Guru Nanak, descended in the form of Amar Das Thou Ram Das art Nanak; thou art Lehna, thou art Amar Das, so I deem them”.<sup>4</sup>

Bhai Gurads (the amanuensis of Guru Arjun) also wrote about the oneness of the Sikh Gurus known to him.<sup>5</sup>

Zulfiqar Ardistani Maubid (popularly known as Mohsin Fani), the author of *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, completed in 1645, and a close acquaintance of Guru Hargobind, the sixth Nanak, very correctly understands the fact that “the succeeding Sikh Guru inherits the spirit of his predecessor. When Nanak left his body he absorbed himself in Guru Angad who was his most devoted disciple and Guru Angad entered the body of Amar Das, and Ram Das in the same way got united with Arjun Dev. And people said that whoever does not acknowledge or believe in Guru Arjun to be the very self of Guru

Nanak becomes *manmukh* or a non-believer. The Sikhs beleived that all the Gurus are identical with Nanak".<sup>6</sup>

In the holy Guru Granth Sahib, we read all Gurus writing themselves as Nanak. The author of Dabistan informs us that Guru Hargobind in his letters to him always signed himself as Nanak. The author says that he was in correspondence with Guru Hargobind. Similarly, Guru Gobind Singh wrote about his predecessors, "Know Guru Angad to be Nanak, Guru Amar Das to be Angad, Guru Ram Das to be Amar Das, Guru Arjun to be Ram Das, and Guru Hargobind to be Arjun".<sup>7-8</sup> Guru Nanak's spirit was believed to be working in all his successors. So to talk of heterodox textuality and diverse contributors in respect of the Guru contributors is irrelevant.

It is enlightening to note that the compositions of Bhai Gur-das, a *savant* or saint Paul of Sikhs whose *vars* were evaluated by the Guru as the key to Guru Granth Sahib were not incorporated in the holy Granth, perhaps being not fully in tune with the spirit of holy compilation. Similarly, the compositions of some Bhagats as Kanha, Chhaju, Shah Husain and Peelu were not accepted by the compiler.

The tenets enshrined in the Guru Granth Sahib were final and inviolable fundamental laws of Sikhism, to be in no case altered by any Sikh people singly or collectively.

Dr Oberoi argues that, "although in the present state of re-search it is hard to specify the factors that prompted the fifth Guru of the Sikhs to collate an anthology of devotional literature (The Adi Qranth), it is easier to discuss its impact" (p. 49). These remarks exhibit the lack of the researcher's knowledge of Sikh history and Sikh religion. According to Macauliffe, Guru Arjun strongly felt the need of compiling the holy Granth for the spiritual guidance of the Sikhs and for the unity of their faith.<sup>9</sup> Secondly, he realised that it was absolutely necessary to secure the revealed compositions of the Gurus from adulteration which was easily possible to happen due to the oral recitation of the same. And thirdly, to grow as an independent community and a distinct religion, the Sikhs needed a scripture of their own.

Author Oberoi continuing his tirade against the sacred scripture of the Sikhs writes, "While propagandists of modern Sikhism see in the collation of the Adi Granth in 1603-04 under Guru Arjun a powerful public declaration of the separation of the Sikh Panth from other religious traditions, historically it is difficult to admit such an



interpretation” (p. 54). Guru Arjun did not need to care about the other religious traditions or make any public declaration as referred to by Oberoi. He was exclusively concerned with what Sikh doctrine was. He compiled the holy Granth not as a challenge to other religions but as a sacred anthology of Sikh scriptural compositions whose appeal did not change with the passage of time. The sublime truth embodied in the Adi Granth is eternal which elevates the reader and the listener spiritually and morally.

Guru Gobind Singh formally bifurcated the Guruship, vesting the spiritual part of it in the Adi Granth as finalised by him and the secular one in the Khalsa. The former was to be the Guru Granth and the latter to be the Guru Panth. The *bani* had been given the status of the Guru earlier by Guru Ram Das who had said that there was no difference between the Guru and his revealed word. The Sikhs had already been told emphatically that the *bani* (spiritual composition) is the Guru and the Guru is the *bani* (his word), and the *bani* contains all the virtues of righteousness. (*Bani Guru, Guru hai bani, with bani amrit sare*).

Oberoi talks of numerous *gutkas* and *pothis* (p.54) prevalent in medieval India. Whatever their intent - sectarian or otherwise - the Sikh scripture - the Adi Granth-has nothing to do with that or the motives of their compilation. About the Adi Granth Oberoi says, “It was certainly neither the first nor the last such collection” (p. 54). How does this observation affect the spiritual glory and eternal spiritual appeal of this holy Granth? Does the author mean to place it among the *gutkas* or the *pothis* or he aims at an attempt to assail its noble status? The Adi Granth was always the same to the Sikhs, unchanged and sublime in appeal forever.

Arnold Toynbee, an eminent British historian, believes that, “the Sikh religion and its scripture, the Guru Granth, will have some-thing special of value to say to the rest of the world”. It seems, in all probability that Oberoi has not studied the Sikh holy scripture at all. That is why he never quotes from it. It is a pity that he makes a lot of Comments about the Guru Granth Sahib without knowing as to what it contains.

Oberoi writes that while “the Adi Granth has become a key cultural marker of Sikh ethnicity, it would be a gross misinterpretation to view it in the same vein for the early seventeenth century” (p. 55). Does it mean that this holy Granth had different levels of guidance and message for the Sikhs or with the passage of time its contents and meanings

underwent changes or alterations that consequently affected its appeal and its status in the eyes of the Sikhs. The author's observation is absurd and totally irrelevant and betrays his lack of insight into the predominantly stable ethos of the holy Sikh scripture over a long period of time. His comments on the holy Granth, at places, border on blasphemy in which the young researcher, intentionally or unintentionally, indulges. We clearly see that the first five Gurus gave their followers a well defined religious doctrine, religious and social practices, their own places of pilgrimage and holy scripture.

Under Guru Hargobind, the Sikhs assumed additional responsibilities of self-defence. The Guru had to play a dual role of a *mir* (an army leader) and a *pir* (a Guru). The Sikhs called the Guru the *Sacha patshah*, the true king as against the temporal king, who ruled only by the force of arms and concerned himself with the worldly actions of the people.<sup>10</sup> He introduced congregational prayers which added further religious fervour and social cohesion among the Sikhs and strengthened unity and co-operation between them.<sup>11</sup>

Guru Tegh Bahadur registered his peaceful resistance against the policy of forcible conversion. Guru Gobind Singh felt that the Sikhs needed further internal cohesion and external defence. Retaining the basic ideas of administering *pahul* to the Sikhs, a new ceremony of giving the nectar of the double-edged sword was introduced in place of the old practice. Guru Gobind Singh strengthened the organization of the community by making steel an integral limb of a Sikh to fight tyranny and injustice. He invested the panth with his personality, or in other words, the Khalsa *panth* was to be the Guru in future. The Guru said, "I have bestowed the Guruship on the Khalsa. the Khalsa is my very self and I shall always live in the Khalsa". As told earlier the spiritual Guruship was invested in the Adi Granth.

Oberoi's contradictions again and again leave a sickening effect upon the indulgent reader's mind. Relating to the late 18th century, he observes that "finally the Adi Granth had not become the exclusive focus of Sikh religiosity (p.90). It is a reckless statement indeed and again he argues that "in the unsettled conditions of the eighteenth century Khalsa Sikhs were in desperate need of cohesive principle that would replace the institution of living Gurus ... An older principle of Guru Granth or scriptural Guru was successfully put into service by Khalsa Sikhs... In the absence of any clear leadership within the Sikh ranks, the doctrine of Guru Granth served as a useful substitute for the line of Sikh Gurus by providing much needed

cohesion for a panth faced with political turmoil and serious internal dissen-tions... For a social historian it is unimportant whether or not Gobind Singh formally declared the Adi Granth a Guru". (pp. 69-70). The author, sadly enough, ignores and belittles the role of Guru Gobind Singh. To him the need of the Guru was just for political purposes and for the unity of the Sikhs. He considers the Guru Granth Sahib just a useful substitute for the line of Sikh Gurus and thus lowers its position as a Guru.

Oberoi writes that the Sikh peasantry also resisted the mainly evolved Sikh norms of the Khalsa quality. The author seems to be ignorant of the marvellous contribution made by the Sikh peasantry to the cause of Sikhism throughout the span of five centuries of Sikh history. Guru Arjun converted almost the entire peasantry of the Majha tract of the Punjab, and by the time of Guru Hargobind they had become deeply devoted Sikhs. They fought the battles which the Guru was forced to fight against the Mughals. Soon thereafter, the Malwa and Doaba peasantry also embraced Sikhism. When after return from the Eastern India, Guru Tegh Bahadur went to the Malwa villages to meet the Sikhs, crowds after crowds came to see him wherever he went. According to Ghulam Husain, the author of 'Siyar ul-Mutakherin' (1781), the official news-writer, conveyed to Delhi about 1673, that the Guru was inciting the Malwa peasantry to revolt against the govern-ment.<sup>12</sup> Though the report was a total lie, at least it proves that the peasantry was the staunch follower of the Sikh Gurus. Later the Punjab peasantry predominantly participated in the battles of Guru Gobind Singh.

When Banda Singh Bahadur, after having been duly baptized at the hands of Guru Gobind Singh, came to the Punjab from the Deccan he carved out a strong social base in the villages to fight against the repression of the Mughals and to make a determined bid for the liberation of the land from the oppressive masters. We find a marked role of the peasants and the zamindars in the activities of Banda Singh who moved almost unchecked in the major parts of the Punjab. When he was captured in 1715 and taken to Delhi, all of his 740 companions, who were mostly peasants, refused reprieve contemptuously whenever offered. They were deeply attached to Sikhism.

Sikh movement during the times of Zakariya Khan, Mir Mannu and Ahmad Shah Durrani was mainly manned by the Sikh peasantry. Most of the members of the daIs and the Dal Khalsa were the Sikh peasants, who were along with their leaders, amritdhari Sikhs. None

could join their *derahs* without having been duly initiated to Sikhism. All the Sardars (rulers) of the Sikh Misl, including Maharaja Ranjit Singh's predecessors, belonged to peasantry.

At no stage of Sikh history we find the Sikh peasantry faltering in their faith in Sikhism. To argue arbitrarily that after rising to the top by a ladder of religious faith and distinct identity the Sikh peasantry kicked the ladder down is historically unacceptable.

Oberoi suggests that there were vague and unclear identities of the Sikhs till the closing years of the 19th century. One feels sad to note that this author is always desperately in search of an opportunity to make a pronouncement that is anything but the truth. There could be nothing more unhistorical than the author's above comment. As it has already been observed, the Sikh identity had absolutely become clear during the time of the earlier Sikh Gurus. The Khalsa *rahit* was promulgated among the Sikhs by Guru Gobind Singh and it was strictly adhered to after him. The Mughal government knew it for sure that the order of the Khalsa was the direct consequence of Guru Nanak's teachings. The Sikhs had the same unbedimmed identity under all the Gurus and in the following period.

If the Sikhs had no clear identity then to whom Emperor Bahadur Shah referred when he gave his edict:

*Nanak prastan ra har ja kih ba-qatl rasanand.*<sup>13</sup>

[An edict ordering a wholesale genocide of the Sikhs (the worshippers of Nanak) wherever found]. The same order was repeated a few years later by Emperor Farrukh Siyar.

Who were these people, who under Banda Singh's leadership, shook one of the mightiest empires in the world to its very foundation with such terrible force that it was never able to re-establish its authority as firmly as before? Who were these people for whose heads, prices had been fixed under Zakariya Khan (1726-45)? For whom did the punitive parties of Zakariya Khan comb the villages and forests and who were the people brought in chains every day, batches after batches and publicly beheaded at Lahore at Nakhas (horse market) now called Shahidganj? And who were these people about whom once Zakariya Khan said, "By God, they live on grass and claim kingship."<sup>14</sup> Who were these people before whose religious zeal and determination, the tact and skill of the greatest military genius of the time in Asia (Ahmad Shah Durrani, 1748-67) gave way and at whose hands, meeting his Waterloo in the Punjab, the Durrani bowed out of the province in

abject humilia-tion? Who were these people who expelled from the Punjab its three masters: the Mughals, the Afghans and the Marathas and established their principalities, and later under Ranjit Singh a kingdom as big as that of France? Did these people have vague and unclear identities or it was just the figment of author Oberoi's imagination?

Oberoi writes that, "the history of Sikh tradition, radically different from, say, Christianity, which from the very beginning had a dominant concern with demarcating believers and non-believers. Christian church leaders had begun to excommunicate those within the church who transgressed its systematized beliefs. Such modes of exclusion, of publicizing the boundaries of belief and practice, were quite alien to early Sikh tradition." (p. 48).

Let Oberoi be informed that in Sikhism also, transgression in belief was not tolerated. A few examples would not be out of place here. Guru Har Rai's elder son, Ram Rai, was deprived of his position at the Guru *darbar* for intentionally giving a wrong interpretation of a verse from Guru Nanak's *bani* at Delhi when he attended Emperor Aurangzeb's court to answer his questions about Guru Granth Sahib. Guru Har Rai never permitted Ram Rai to see him for the rest of his life for want of truth and courage.

Guru Arjun's elder brother Pirthia and Guru Har Rai's elder brother Dhirmal, were deprived of their privileges because of their anti-Sikh stances.

According to Senapat, a poet at Guru Gobind Singh's *darbar*, the *Sikhsangats* played an important part in the life of a Sikh in keeping him to the right path. It was fully competent to punish or forgive his faults and lapses.<sup>15</sup> Even ordinary breaches of the rules of conduct could be taken up for action in the *local sangats* and no person, however highly placed he might be, was considered above the jurisdiction of these conclaves. When a guilty person presented himself before an assembly for punishment, he stood with folded hands at a place where shoes were put off. His case was referred to a commission of five, who reported their decision to the congregation for the confirmation of their verdict. Guru Gobind Singh punished the Sikh *masands* who indulged in anti-Sikh and corrupt practices.

Jassa Singh, ruler of the Ramgarhia Misl, was charged with killing his new-born daughter. He was excommunicated. But later, on his expressing remorse, he was excused and readmitted into the fold of

Sikhism.

No Sikh could ever consider himself above the Panth. The supreme example of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's surrender to the verdict of the *sangat* is provided, as the tradition goes, by his readiness to receive punishment at Akal Takht for a moral lapse on his part. He confessed his guilt, and punishment 'of flogging was announced. At the last moment, he was spared the punishment in view of his honouring the authority of the congregation. Many more examples of such punishment in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries can be given. In the 20th century some top-ranking leaders of the Sikh community, Sikh mini-sters, chief ministers, central ministers, Sikh scholars and eminent writers were called to the dock by the Sikh *sangats* at Akal Takht for their anti-Sikh activities and were punished with excommunication or voluntary community service as cleaning the utensils in the Gurdwara *langars* and dusting the shoes of the Sikh votaries in conformity with old traditions. None could ever flout the verdict of the Panth. The main object of the punishment was to reform the guilty rather than condemning him or permanently throwing him out of the community.

So, it is wrong to believe that transgressors in Sikh faith could get away with it.

It is amusing to note that Oberoi contradicts himself within a space of 24 pages of his work. He writes, "The dramatic political triumph of the social movement in the second half of the 18th century gave the Sikhs a vast empire but ironically the attainment of power and the process of state formation stalled the crystallization of a uniform Sikh identity." (p. 47)

He writes again, "The increasing political power of the Khalsa allowed it to begin recasting Sikh society after its own image. During the course of the 18th century, tens of thousands of Sikhs took to the Khalsa identity, some in pursuit of worldly power and others out of religious conviction." (p. 71).

According to the first statement, the attainment of power, by the Sikhs in the 18th century, obstructed the emergence of a uniform Sikh identity. And according to the second, due to the rise of the Sikh political power in the 18th century, a large number of people assumed the uniform Khalsa Sikh Identity.

In these two statements, the author alone can better tell us as to where he actually stands.

What is ‘dramatic’, as Oberoi notices above, about the ultimate success of the long-drawn Sikh war for their independence from the foreign masters? It was the inevitable consequence of the life and death struggle of nearly half a century under the stewardship of a galaxy of valiant and competent Sikh leaders. But, for the Sikh victory the credit should legitimately be given to the entire community, not to any individual. That would be against the spirit of the whole enterprise. This struggle brought out the internal strength of the community which not only survived half a century of persecution and war, it created a state.

By introducing Sakhi Sarvar, Gugga and goddesses among the Sikhs. The author is unmeritedly adulterating and profusely corrupting the pure Sikh religious practices as prescribed by the Gurus. Those who followed the practices of the non - Sikh cults could not be Sikhs. It is a fact-plain and simple. The following example would suffice to drive home the point.

Macauliffe writes that Manj, a follower of Sakhi Sarvar (a Muslim saint), prayed to Guru Arjun to make him a Sikh. The Guru told Manj that Sakhi Sarvar’s way was easy and that of Sikhism was difficult to practise. He could not sail in two boats at the same time. Either he should continue to worship the shrine of the saint or accept Sikhism. Manj demolished the niche appropriated to Sakhi Sarvar’s worship in his house and returned to the Guru and became a Sikh.<sup>16</sup>

H.A. Rose tells in his ‘Glossary of Castes and Tribes in the Punjab’ that the Sikhs in the villages were not favourably disposed towards the Hindu worshippers of Sakhi Sarvar.

Surprisingly enough, Oberoi devotes hardly a couple of pages to Guru Nanak and his teachings in his book but devotes fourteen pages to Sakhi Sarvar (pp. 147-160). This reflects his tilted and lop-sided approach to the subject in hand. He also links Gugga *Pir*, a person known for overpowering snakes or curing his worshippers of snake and scorpion bites. Gugga was worshipped in the form of a snake. The Sikhs had absolutely nothing to do with Gugga who preached non-Sikh practices. The Gurus *Granth* strongly rejected the worship of the *Pirs* and *Devis*. We have repeated references of such rejections in the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Oberoi names Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Raja Fateh Singh Ahluwalia as having undertaken pilgrimage to Jawalamukhi in the

Kangra district to worship at the Devi's shrine. And the Maharaja gifted large amounts of money to the shrine and had its roof gilded (pp.202-03). The district of Kangra was under Ranjit Singh. He showed respect and regards to other religions and their shrines,' and donated funds to identify himself with his subjects. He had some Hindu and Muslim ladies also in his harem whv had been allowed to retain their faiths. He got constructed, at state expense, temples and mosques for their use. Earlier Guru Hargobind had built a mosque at Har-gobindpur for the use of Muslims at his own expense. This showed toleration and regard for the religion of others and not that the Maharaja had departed from his own faith.

It is not understandable as to what Oberoi aims to infer from a visit to Jawalamukhi by Ranjit Singh who in the words of Osborne (who visited the Maharaja in 1839)" was a devout believer in the doctrines and punctual observer of the ceremonies of his religion (Sikhism). The Granth, the sacred book of the Sikhs, was constantly read to him and he must have been familiar with the moral precepts it inculcated."<sup>17</sup>

The Maharaja referred to his government as Sarkar-i-Khalsa. All correspondence was carried in the name of the Khalsa and all ceremonies were performed in the presence of the Holy Book-The Guru Granth Sahib. He issued coins in the name of the Guru and visited Harmandir Sahib (Amritsar) at short intervals tp pay homage. The princes were addressed as Khalsa Kharak Singh, Khalsa Sher Singh, Khalsa Naunehal Singh, etc.

Feteh Singh Ahluwalia was a staunch Sikh and performed his *nit-nem* (daily prayer) even in the battlefield. He got all his undertak-ings endorsed by the Guru Granth Sahib.

Does Oberoi, in the heart of his hearts, believe these rulers to be the worshippers of Devi? If he does, I have every reason to deeply pity him.

The Hindu Sanatanists have never been accepted as Sikhs by the Sikh Community. The Sanatanists did not believe in Sikhism because of their Hindu practices and beliefs. Oberoi's considering these Sanatanists among the Sikhs is misconceived. The Sanatanists, according to the author, gave the same status to the Dasam Granth which Guru Gobind Singh gave to the Adi Granth. These Sanatamsts "paid the same attention to Puranic literature as they would to the Adi



Granth.” Could, by any stretch of imagination, Gulab Singh Sanatani be considered a Sikh who believes, “Sikh faith is the true Sanatan religion. The four Vedas are also the religious books of the Sikhs”. (p.102). A Sanatanist author of ‘Gurbilas Chhevin Patshahi’ portrays Guru Hargobind “as the twenty-fourth reincarnation of Vishnu”. Koer Singh, author of “Gurbilas Patshahi Dasvin” also views the Guru “as a reincarnation of Vishnu”. (pp.102-03). These Sanatani authors were Hindus trying their hands at Sikhism in a bid to counteract the Sikh identity.

“The Dasam Granth becomes paradigmatic for the entire religious culture of Sanatan Sikhs” (pp.98), observes Oberoi. For holding such views the Sanatanists seek support from the Dasam Granth’s mythical narratives like those of the goddesses known by the names of Chandi, Durga, Bhavani and Kalka, who helped the gods fight battle against demons and ultimately emerged victorious. Some stirring stories from Ramayan, Mahabharat and Puranic literature have also been given in the Dasam Granth. But the author himself wrote.

“I have no other object behind this composition except to infuse war-like spirit and inspire people to fight a holy war against the enemies of righteousness and goodness.”

Dasam Katha bhagaut ki bhakha kari banai

Aver vasna naha dharam yudh ko chai

To quote Malcolm, “Guru Gobind Singh wrote an account of his own in terms more calculated to inflame the courage of his followers than to inform the historian.”<sup>18</sup>

To talk of the Sanatanists and to use the term ‘Sikh’ with them is just losing a judicious sense required to differentiate between a Hindu and a Sikh. Let Oberoi hear Guru Gobind Singh say:

“I do not invoke the name of Ganesh

I never worship Krishan or Vishnu” (Krishna Avtar)

“Ram and Rahim, the Puran and Quran express various opinions but I accept none of them. The simritis, the Shastras and the Vedas speak of many mysteries, but I recognise none of them”. (Rama Avtar-863).

These Sanatanists, who had taken possession of the Sikh shrines to the extent of barring the entry of the Rahitias Sikhs into the Golden Temple and other Gurdwaras, could not be the Sikhs but the enemies

of Sikhism.

Oberoi wrongly suggests that “the Khalsa/Sahajdhari duality became firmly enshrined within the great tradition.” (p.137). There were never two Sikhisms as Sahajdhari or Sanatan Sikhism and Khalsa Sikhism.

Oberoi says that “Sanatan tradition, however, was primarily the religious universe of the Sikh elites. We could even call it an official religion, for it was closely aligned to the Sikh kingdom of Lahore and its elites.” (p.138)

How ridiculously the author argues that Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s official religion was Sanatanism. He shows utter ignorance of the fact that Ranjit Singh liked to be addressed as Singh Sahib. He always referred to his government as Sarkar-i-Khalsa. His official salutation in the state was *Wahe Guru Ji Ka Khalsa, Wahe Guru ji Ki Fateh*. His courtiers and officials: Hindus, Muslims and Europeans, had full grown and unshorn long flowing beards, tied turbans and tried to be as close to the Sikh form and code of conduct as possible. He ruled in the name of the Gurus, wielded power in the name of the Khalsa, all diplomatic correspondence carried in the name of the Khalsa. He called himself the drum (Ranjit nigara) of Guru Gobind Singh. Ignorantly enough, Oberoi brands him and his courtiers as Sanatanists.

The author Oberoi writes that to the Sanatanists even in the late 19th century, “The Khalsa doctrine of Adi Granth being the Guru of the Panth was still far from fully subscribed” (p.104). Still Oberoi calls these Sanatanists as Sikhs and not stark enemies of Sikhism. We should dismiss these Sanatanists with no attention at all.

So did the Sahajdharis have little to do with the Sikhs. They did not follow the Sikh *rahit*. The Guru said that only he who adopts the Sikh way of life is his Sikh (*Rahni rahai soi Sikh mera*). The *rahit* was prescribed for all Sikhs by the tenth prophet. The author Oberoi does not differentiate between the conformist Sikhs and the non-con-formist Sanatanists and Sahajdharis.

Oberoi observe that “for Sanatan Sikhs the caste system and its taboos had undoubtedly become an integral part of the Sikh faith”. (p.104). The author should have put it like this:

Sanatanists who were wedded to the anti-Sikh practice of caste system and its taboos could never be a part of Sikh faith. A religion does not turn bad because a particular cult or a section of society does

not follow its code of conduct. So, let Oberoi keep the non-conformists away from Sikhism and not mess up things to damage the Sikh faith.

Singh Sabha movement could not have been conceived if its leaders had not violently felt the urgent need of restoring the message of the Sikh Gurus. First leaders of a movement are always more determined, more radical, more enthusiastic, more committed and more revolting. But, as usual, Oberoi is a victim of perverse thinking and Sanatan phobia when he argues that “the early leadership of Singh Sabha sought to transmit the Sanatan religious culture and the radical transformation of Sikh consciousness was not on their agenda”.(p.257)

Oberoi has made a very unhistorical and unacceptable observation that “the colonial state and its institutions played a significant role in the emergence of a homogenous Sikh religion” (p.423). Elaborating his point, the author argues that “all Sikhs who sought recruitment to the British army had to undergo Khalsa baptism and uphold the five symbols of the Khalsa”. Does the author mean to say that the British were very much interested in promoting the Khalsa *rahit*? It is awfully funny. Oberoi needs to be informed that during the 18th and 19th centuries, it was essential for every Sikh to take *amrit* prepared with the double-edged sword and to follow Sikh *rahit* strictly before joining the Khalsa army. The British realised that the Sikh soldiers were best in their performance when they were in their true form and spirit. Hence, the Sikh form was emphasised by the British.

Sikh religion has been homogenous forever but under the British it received a damaging touch through the government patronage of the Pujaris and Mahants who sacrilegiously controlled Harmandir Sahib (Amritsar) and most of the major gurdwaras, and also through the activities of the Christian missionaries.

Oberoi writes that the Khande Ki Pahul or Amrit ceremony Was performed by the recitation of five quatrains from the writings of Guru Gobind Singh (p.640). In fact, the *banis* recited during the preparation of *amrit* were: Japji (of Guru Nanak), Anand Sahib (of Guru Amar Das) and Japp Sahib, Das Swayas and Chopai (of Guru Gobind Singh).

A chapter on ‘An Enchanted Universe’ including popular saints, goddesses, village sacred sites, evil spirits, witchcraft, sorcery, magical healings, astrology, festivals and fairs, etc., is irrelevant to this work. Many more superfluous things discussed in the book need to be weeded out.

The author Oberoi has unnecessarily used the unusual terms of

Khalsa Sikhs and Tat Khalsa for the Sikhs to bring some un-Sikh and non-Sikh cults into the fold of Sikhism. He wrongly and unwisely considers the religious text of Adi Granth as amorphom. (p.22), that is shapeless, not conforming to normal structural organization and not having any crystalline form.

The use of terms like, religious diversity in Sikhism, religious fluidity in the Sikh tradition, multiple or plural identities in Sikhism is irresponsible and misleading, and awfully blocks the emergence of Sikh identity. How conveniently he forget that “the spiritual composition of Guru Nanak constantly kept alive in the minds of the followers of the Guru, the consciousness that they were distinct from the common mass of the Hindus”.<sup>19</sup> How miserably the author fails to understand it when he argues that “in the early Guru period, Sikh as a category was still problematic and empty”. (p.53)

What Oberoi cannot understand about the Sikhs today, Qazi Nur Muhammad understood in 1765 when he was in the Punjab for a short time during Abroad Shah Durrani’s seventh invasion, that “Guru Nanak was not a mere reformer bur the founder of a new religion. The Sikhs are .not from among the Hindus. They have a separate religion of their own”.<sup>20</sup>

To areader of this work, it clearly seems that the author makes a strenuous bid to disintegrate, disorganize and demolish the distinct Sikh identity, the doctrine enshrined in the Sikh scripture and the glory of Sikh history created by a determined community steeped in its religious direction and inspired by unshaken constancy in Sikh heritage. The self-opinionated propaganda of the author, undoubtedly, damages Sikhism immensely and far from being an addition to the domain of Sikh literature, this work renders unmerited disservice to it.

Despite his profession of being, although, a student and scholar of history, his approach to his subject has been that of a man of sociology and anthropology. The language he uses is neither that of history nor of religion. His language ill-fits the subject in his hand and his verbosity negates his command over it. Sometimes, he tries to hide his irrelevance under the garb of superfluity. To be able to say a thing in a style and language that keeps the reader comfortable is the measure of maturity of ones style.

In his preface, the author has given a long list of foreign and Indian scholars to whom he feels indebted for help and guidance in the writing of this book. Generally speaking, the foreigners are ignorant

of the spirit of Sikhism, its doctrine and history. Unfortunately, most of the Indian scholars referred to are unfavourably disposed towards the Sikh religion and Sikh history. And from this originated his wrong approach. He does not seem to have benefitted from the scholarship available in the departments of Sikhism and Sikh history at the three universities in the Punjab at Patiala, Amritsar and Chandigarh. There are abundantly informative contemporary Persian sources relating to the period under this study, regarding Sikh history and Sikh religion. Oberoi having not used any of these Persian sources, is apparently considerably disadvantaged by his lack of knowledge of Persian.

The author has used second or third rate sources of information. On page 31, he mentions besides Max Arthur Macauliffe the names of John Gordon and Ernest Trumpp to have recorded the ideals of Sikh faith. John Gordon's is a small and an elementary book titled 'The Sikhs', Trumpp (a German missionary) was deputed by the India Office (London) to translate the Adi Granth into English. Macauliffe says that, "Trumpp gave mortal offence to the Sikhs. Whenever he saw an opportunity of defaming the Gurus, the sacred book and the religion of the Sikhs he eagerly availed himself of it."

In the early seventies of the 19th century, when Trumpp, with the help of the English Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, arranged a meeting with some Sikh scholars at Amritsar, he pulled out unreverentially the Adi Granth from his suitcase and placed it on the table before him and lighted his cigarette. The Sikh scholar dispersed in protest. To me it seems that many of the scholars listed in the preface are Trumpps rather than Macauliffes. Through wrong guidance and the use of improper sources of information, Oberoi has undermined the status and the role of the Sikh Gurus and the Guru Granth sahib in providing direction to the Sikhs. There lies the very sad tragedy of the author's very negative contribution to the Sikh religion and Sikh history.

In the end, I am pleased to say that Harjot Oberoi is a brilliant scholar but I am displeased to point out that his brilliance and scholarship have been misdirected and have strayed away from the right path. He could try his hand successfully on any subject other than Sikh religion and Sikh history. In that case, in the event of disagreement with him I would have said after Voltaire. "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend, to the death, your right to say". But religion does not permit wrong, especially deliberate attempts to trivialize and unmake the image of its scripture, its doctrine, its prophets and its followers. The research should not clash with the religious susceptibilities or

senti-ments of millions of people in the name of some novel approach to the subject or just for the fun of it, under the excuse of a licence of freedom of expression, or more correctly, under the licence of misrepresentation of religion. Religion is a very sensitive territory, one must cautiously step into it. Beyond a certain limit, one enters into the bounds of blasphemy where one forfeits the very licence.

I would sincerely advise the young scholar to revise his work and make the necessary amendments to be more explicit in regard to the distinct Sikh identity and the true spirit of Sikhism. In its present form, the work fails miserably rather deplorably to stand the test of historical and religious scrutiny.

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- 13 'Akghar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla' (Persian), December 10,1710, Dr Ganda Singh Private Collection, Punjabi University, Patiala (India).
- 14 Miftah-ul- Tawarikh (Persian), p.398
- 15 Macauliffe, 'The Sikh Religion,' Vo1. 3, p.7
- 16 Macauliffe, 'The Sikh Religion,' Vo1. 3, p.7

- 17 Osborne, 'The Court and Camp of Ranjit Singh,' London, 1840, pp. xli-xlii
- 18 Malcolm, 'Sketch of the Sikhs', London, 1812, p. 100
- 19 G.C.Narang, 'Transformation of Sikhism,' p.48
- 20 Qazi Nur Muhammad, 'Jangnamah' (Persian), 1765, MS. Ganda Singh Private Collection, Punjabi University, Patiala, p.159

## **Dr Oberoi's Journey into Obscurity'**

Dr Darshan Singh

Dr Harjot Oberoi's book "The Construction of Religious Boundaries" is a comparatively new adventure in the realm of Sikh Studies. Its sub-title "Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition", prefaces the contents of the book. It suggests the nature of material collected, analysed and presented in it. To me it appears that the sub-title of the book and the contents of the book are mutually contradictory. Because the sub-title suggests the positive angle of the Sikh identity whereas its treatment throughout the book belies this sense.

This book begins with a sense conveyed by two quotations from; Lucien Febvre, "Religion? What a crude word you are using there! Are you going to get tangled up in faith, belief and all that?"<sup>1</sup> and Victor Turner "Otherwise we must all perish, for behind specific historical and cultural developments, East versus West, hierarchical versus egalitarian systems, individualism versus communism, lies the simple fact that man is, both a structural and an anti-structural entity, who grows through anti-structure and conserves through structure". These words seem to be his source of inspiration. Therefore, these two quotations sufficiently reveal the mind of the author. They also foreshadow the things which he is likely to discuss in the subsequent pages of the book.

All that he wants to suggest is that no religion has its boundaries well-constructed. Second, all religions have some kin of looseness in their approach. For him, boundaries are often illusory and, therefore, not sustainable. Going a step further, he suggests that, religious boundaries should not be strict and unalterable, meaning thereby that they should be adjustable. Mutual acceptance, tolerance and sharing of the same experience should be fundamental to every religion. This kind of thinking, left to itself, deserves praise. Actually, problem does not arise with the theme but with the product of "scholar's imagination". He continues to be unmindful of the empirical reality, even unfair to every religion, and, therefore, feels no hesitation in twisting, misinterpreting and distorting the factual position. Thus, the approach becomes purely unacademic, sometimes motivated and un-related to



the actual reality.

This book deals with the historical reality of Sikh religion during the 19th century. Dr Oberoi has taken special pains to prove that Sikh religion, during this period, did not have any well constructed boundaries. It had no central place for worship, and in the process, it had no well defined identity. It had un-specified ideology and philosophy, un-identifiable identity and un-fused response of its fol-lowers to the idea of being a Sikh. The followers of Sikhism, that is the Sikhs, were found to have a casual approach towards their deity, they were abundantly found joining the religious rites of Hindus, Muslims and a number of their sub-sects.

This kind of approach to the actual reality of Sikhism is not only casual in itself but well thought out distortion. First, there is no religious institution, worth the name, in the world, which does not have well defined boundaries. Then, Sikhism is more identifiable than any other religion in terms of its ideological and philosophical frame-work and visible identity of its followers. Second, if some ignorant Sikhs or some members of the census staff commit a mistake, it cannot be made basis for the conclusion that the boundaries of a religious community are 'fluid'.

Boundaries are a part of life. Every institution has constructed these around itself. They are mainly for the purpose of management, identification and self-satisfaction. Therefore, the real question should not be addressed to the boundaries of an institution, it should rather be addressed to the objectives of a religion, particularly, in terms of its ability to conceive and capacity to achieve them. But Dr Oberoi has no such specified goal. He, on the other hand, tries to build his above said thesis on the following points:

1. He quotes an elderly respected man Lala Ruchi Ram Sahni. According to the author Mr. Sahni used to go through the Sikh religious code (Nit Nem) as well as worship Hindu gods. At the same time, he would not mind visiting a Muslim shrine.
2. He takes up the case of a bearded coolie who smokes tobacco which is strictly prohibited in *Sikhism*. (*Having an unshaven beard does not necessarily mean a Sikh.*)
3. He refers to the tribe of Meharata Rajputs who were not clearly identifiable in terms of their being Muslim or Hindus or members of any other religion.

4. He draws his conclusions from the details of census conducted by British Government from time to time.
5. Dr Oberoi is of the opinion that Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs would not mind undertaking pilgrimage and participating in religious functions conducted by each other, suggesting that even Islam has no demarcated religious boundaries. Let us see if the audacious author, who prefers to take undue liberty in making unwarranted observations regard-ing Sikhism, dares to do so in the case of Islam also.

Further, he says, “Indian languages do not possess a noun for religion as signifying a single uniform and centralized community of believers.” As a result of these arguments he comes to the conclusion, “there was much interpenetration and overlapping of communal identities.”<sup>12</sup> These and such like other arguments cannot be sustained, in substance, when they are academically scrutinised. For this purpose, these arguments can be divided into two sections: First, some of the arguments relate to mutual policy of give and take (*Lokachar*) adopted by different religious communities, living in a neighbourhood. There is no doubt that sometimes, within the parameters of above said be-haviour, the number of immediate gains also determines such steps of an individual of a particular religion. The case of Mr. Sahni, of having equal interest in all the three religions falls in this category. The second category is the one of aberrants who, due to ignorance, casualness and the social or political pressure, commit aberrations. The case of tobac-co-chewing or addicting oneself to any such intoxicant, prohibited in Sikhism, falls in this category. Sikhs are no exception so far as the existence of these categories are concerned. But, I feel, this parameter should not be applied in order to determine the religious boundarics of a particular religion. Like many other things in life, many a time, such things are committed out of habit, ignorance or for some greed. They are not sanctioned by the religious scriptures. The interesting point is that he wants that the identity of a religious group should have been established from outside the realms of religious texts, say: Islam without Quran Sharif, Christianity without Bible and Sikhism without Guru Granth Sahib. In this context he says, “Historically, it is hard to build a correspondence between the Veda and Hinduism, for at no point do the Vedas make the claim that they represent Hindus”. If Vedas and Hinduism do not correspond to each other, then he assumes a similar lack of congruence between practice and religious text in

other religions also. Can there be a more irrelevant argument? Religion, actually originates from the text and grows in the history of its followers. In order to understand a religious structure we have to go a little deep into a given perception of a religion. For example, let us take the case of a follower of Islam. A Muslim believes in one God (no idol-worship), observance of Shariat and a distinguishable physical identity. He does not worship in the way a Hindu or Sikh does. His mode of prayer and conduct is entirely different. When he enters the doors of Islam, circumcision has to be performed. The difference between a Hindu and a Muslim, particularly in India, existed to the extent that if a Muslim touched the food and water of a Hindu, it was considered polluted and unfit for consumption. The mutual distinction, sometimes led to the mutual hatred and to subsequent clash. In this context, Hindus would call the language of Muslims *malecch bhasha*, which meant the speaker of that language was a *Malecchh* (impure). Similarly, a Muslim would call a Hindu *Kafir* i.e., non-believer. A Hindu would not go to the mosque. He would not conduct *Namaz* etc. and also he would not go through the rituals a Muslim had to. In this way a Hindu has his own concept of God, of worship, of character, of language and of ritualism. May I know how many Hindus observe fast, like Muslims in the month of *Ramzan*?

Dr Oberoi draws his conclusions mainly from the gatherings on the monuments of local heroes like *smadh* (tomb) of *Guga Pir*, *Sakhi Sarvar*, etc. These gatherings can never be called religious gatherings. Instead, they are cultural gatherings. Such people were never religious heroes. They were cultural heroes. Ignorant people, in pain and distress, prostrate before them for help (little realising that their heroes had themselves suffered the same). No Hindu or Muslim or a Sikh while attending to such functions abandons his earlier religious connections.

As far as the Sikhs are concerned, their identity is well established since the days of Guru Nanak. He discarded both the churches i.e., Hindu and Muslim.

When Guru Tegh Bahadur learnt about Aurangzeb's intention of building India into an Islamic state, he decided to assert the existence of another religious identity, that is Sikhism, in addition to Islam and Hinduism. Sikhism believes in a plural society. Therefore, diversity is an obvious and respectable phenomenon. God has created his kingdom of living beings in multiple names, forms and colours. This multiplicity is the

beauty and grandeur of nature and is created by God himself. Therefore, it must be maintained. No individual, however high he may be, on earth, has the right to dictate anyone else to follow his way of life. Freedom and equality for all, is the fundamental principle of Sikhism. In this context, the existing churches had exhausted their possibilities. Therefore, an alternative was an obvious and urgent need of the time. This decision to work for promoting freedom and equality, invited the wrath of the State. This in turn promoted the assertion of a separate identity of those who supported the above said values. The Sikhs had to undergo persecution for upholding these ideals, distinct and unique. For example:

1. If a Hindu boy embraced Sikhism, he was declared to be as good as dead by his family.
2. When during the later Mughal rulers Sikhs suffered persecution, everytime a Sikh was asked to declare himself a non-Sikh i.e., Hindu or Muslim, so that his life could be spared. Besides the numerous other examples, the two events related to the Haveli of Meer Manu and the persecution of the army of Banda Singh Bahadur are clear evidences of this fact. If Sikhs were not committed to their identity, how come they were massacred by the state? Their single declaration that they belonged to a faith other than Sikhism could easily save their life.

Even otherwise, Sikhism had its own ideological and philosophical base, its own social structure and its own religious ceremonies and identities. It had its own life-style.

Sikhism is one religion which is marked by a continuing process of spiritual advancement. Unlike other religions, it has no concept or ritual for conversion. A person who joins the Caravan of Sikhism has to continue the process till fulfillment. It is in this context that Guru Gobind Singh defines Khalsa as one who is constantly engaged in struggle. When a person joins Sikhism, he is *Sahajdhari*. In the course of his progress he transforms himself into a *Kesadhari* and ultimately, he has to reach the stage of *an Arnitdhari*. *Sahajdhari* is a beginner and the *Arnitdhari* stage is the goal. *Arnitdharis* are those few who are completely committed to the Guru's cause. All the three stages are of a Sikh. Therefore, the theory of replacing (p. 25) is not applicable to Sikhism. In fact, no paradigm related to Sikhism was ever replaced.

The founding principles of Sikhism, which were laid down by Guru Nanak, in his *bani*, have remained intact throughout history. All Sikh institutions were developed on these principles. Guru Gobind Singh gave final touches to these institutions, like in consonance with the concept of Guruship of the Granth and Panth, 'Administration of Amrit', 'Panj Pyaras' 'Meeri and Peeri' or *Badshah Darvesh* or *Sant Sipahi*, etc.

The working of Dr Oberoi's mind can very well be understood from his definitions of different stages. For example, when he defines *Sahajdhari*, he says, "A Sikh who neither accepts baptism into the Khalsa nor observes its code of discipline". Does this definition not look funny?

The question arises then how such a *Sahajdhari* is a Sikh? Similarly, he defines a Khalsa, "The Sikh order or brotherhood instituted by Guru Gobind Singh". Perhaps Dr Oberoi does not know that the concept of Khalsa is in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. This word is used by Guru Hargobind and Guru Tegh Bahadur in their prescripts to the Sikh *sangats* and also by Guru Gobind Singh before he instituted the Khalsa with the *Amrit*, in 1699 A.D.

As stated earlier, Sikhism is a continuing process, a march towards '*gurmukh*' stage. The first entrants of Sikhism were *Sahajdharis*. Therefore, this section of the *Sahajdhari* continues till today. In fact, *Sahajdharis* are the source material for the *Kesadhari*, and similarly, *Kesadhari* are the source material for *Amritdhari*. The fundamental principles, laid down by Guru Nanak in his *bani* and manifested through a number of institutions constructed by Guru Nanak and his successors are accepted by all the three sections of Sikhs alike. The principles are the same and a must for a *Sahajdhari*, *Amritdhari* and *Kesadhari*. Some of them are:

1. God for every Sikh is one and formless. Therefore, omnipresent and omnipotent.
2. Because He is formless, he does not take birth, therefore, the theory of messengers and *Avtaras* finds no place in the fundamental principles of Sikhism.
3. Therefore, no Sikh is expected to worship any idol of a god or goddess.
4. Sikhism believes that God is the Guru. He has revealed himself through *Shabad* (word). Therefore, *Shabad* is their real Guru.

Guru Granth Sahib contains *Shabad* and, therefore, Guru Granth Sahib is the Guru of Sikhs.

5. A Sikh will have no faith in superstitions like good and bad omens, spirits, auspicious or un-auspicious days, etc. Adultery and smoking constitute a grave breach of discipline (*bajr kurahit*) in Sikhism.
6. Institutions like *langar*, *sangat* and *pangat* are same for all. This is irrespective of the category to which one belongs.

Therefore, when these principles are translated into social structure, every Sikh has to believe in the freedom and equality of mankind. No distinction of caste, class, colour, race or sex would find place in this structure "One Father (God) and everyone else is His child", is the underlying principle of Sikhism.

The meaningless and pretentious structure of rituals which throughout the history had become a part of the narrow religious considerations was completely discarded by the founder of Sikhism. The real meditation is the awakening of a soul through another soul. Therefore Sikhism has laid special emphasis on the moral development of an individual. A Sikh must be a morally sound person.

These principles are common to all the three sections of the Sikhs as stated above. It is true that some *Sahajdhari*s do not keep hair unshorn like an *Arndhari*, and do not wear the five Ks. But, his identity as a Sikh manifests through adherence to the above said fundamental principles, and a firm belief and conviction that his final goal is that of being an *Arndhari* Sikh.

Dr Oberoi is of the opinion, "Early-period Sikh tradition did not show much concern for establishing distinct religious boundaries". Further he says, "However, a dramatic change came about with the rise of the Khalsa in the eighteenth century; sections of the Sikh population now consciously began to push for a distinct and separate religious culture". Dr Oberoi's ignorance about the subject is well established by this definition. It seems that he has not gone through the *bani* of Guru Nanak, and the subsequent developments in the Sikh history. For example, the *bani* of Guru Nanak and, particular-ly, *Asa Di Var* and *Majh Di Var* are very clear in demarcating the distinctiveness of his faith. He has elaborately dealt with the existing two great, rich

traditions, i.e. Hinduism and Islam. And at the same time, he initiates a new religious tradition which he himself defines in *Asa Di Var*, “*Sikhi* consist in learning and giving thought to whatever is learnt”. This religious faith is absolutely distinctive, not similar to Hinduism or Islam. So much so that Guru Nanak deliberates upon the new definitions of a deity, a devotee, his cultural breeding and psychological make up. A Sikh was forbidden to follow the life-style advocated by the other contemporary religions. Then Guru Arjun Dev very clearly asserts that the followers of his faith were neither Hindus nor Muslims. Bhai Gurdas has clearly and abundantly narrated the fundamental principles of Sikhism, the distinct Sikh way of life, the Sikh character and the duties of a Sikh. I do not understand which ‘early -period Sikh Tradition’ Mr. Oberoi is referring to.

Another surprising feature of Mr. Oberoi’s writings is that he contradicts himself at every step. For example, “Above all, what kind of a spatial and temporal boundaries did they establish to create pan-local communities, and how exactly were these defined, perceived and activated?” Look at the absurdity of Oberoi’s observation who thinks of different boundaries for the Sikhs residing in other parts of the globe. In these lines, at least one fact which he clearly accepts is that boundaries were established. In fact, the construction and the attempt to demolish boundaries are never new. They are attempted at for the purpose of identification, management and self-satisfaction and sometimes for immediate gains too. My point here is only to bring out the inherent contradiction between the title of the book, the objective laid down by the author and the meaning of the above said words. In this connection, three points need our attention:

1. Sikh and Khalsa are mutually identifiable since the days of Guru Nanak. It is only in the process of history that Khalsa gained precedence.
2. The issue of separate identity and the construction of its boundaries was settled by Guru Nanak himself. The subsequent history only made it more visible and functional.
3. Therefore, ‘*Nanak-Panthis*’ and ‘Khalsa’ are neither mutually separate nor contradictory. The name and *bani* identify the follower of Guru Nanak’s faith and thus he is *Kesadhari* and his name is Sikh. *Sahajdhari* is a step behind and *Amritdhari* is a step ahead. An *Amritdhari* Sikh represents the humanly

possible perfection in the model of a human-being. This, in fact, is the unique beauty of Sikhism that its creation is secured by committing it to the ever continuing process.

But the alienated mind of Dr Oberoi is unable to align itself with the mixed principle of Sikhism. Therefore, in the same context, he continues to say, “Unlike *Nanak panthis*, the Khalsa wished to be viewed as a separate religious identity”. Viewed closely, this observation of Dr Oberoi would make us believe that the Khalsa made a conscious departure from the Sikhs of Guru Nanak. This view is erroneous and is borne out of the stubbornness of the author to insist that Guru Nanak is different from Guru Gobind Singh.

His observation about Singh Sabha Movement is also self-contradictory. He says, “A new cultural elite aggressively usurped the right to represent others within this singular tradition”. Writing in the same vein, he further observes, “It gained currency because its dominant characteristics represented an unchanging idiom in a period of flux and change”. In the late 19th century, Dr Oberoi’s myopic vision sees the usurpation of others’ religious rights, forgetting completely that the *Singh Sabha* Movement was not the crusade by the ‘cultural elite’ as the learned author would like us to believe. It was, instead, a movement of the Sikh masses aimed at hammering the pristine tradition of Sikh identity into the consciousness of the Sikh people. It gained currency because it bore the stamp of the Guru and was not the result of its happening during a period of ‘flux and change’. The terminology used by the author matches the vagueness of his conception of reality regarding the Sikh tradition. Needless to say that the Sikhs were disheartened after the loss of political power in the middle of nineteenth century and the Singh Sabha made an earnest effort to help them come to terms with themselves.

Dr Oberoi has made another astounding reference about the Sikh faith. He says, “In the absence of a centralized church and an attendant religious hierarchy, heterogeneity in religious beliefs, plurality of rituals, and diversity of lifestyles were freely acknowledged”. He has brought out three points. One, that diversity of life-style was an acknowledged fact in Sikhism. Second, that Sikhism pleads for plurality of rituals, and third, that this was because there was no centralised church. About the first point, if we examine carefully,



the Gurbani is clearly for a plural society. Therefore, Sikhism does not interfere in the diversity of life-styles. About the second point, Sikhism completely and strongly forbids ritualism. Therefore, the question of plurality of rituals does not arise. The third suggestion that there was no centralized church, is rather ridiculous. Sikhism believes, as a fundamental principle, that everything seemingly good or bad originates from God. He is the central point and any institution which placed Him in the centre cannot be without a centralised church, Sikhism does so, and this view is manifest through the construction of Harmandir Sahib (popularly known as Golden Temple). It is one religious place which is central to Sikhs and open to everyone from every corner, signifying the centralism as a core principle (of one God, one religion, one sacred scripture, one central place of pilgrimage) in the midst of diversity of life-style as a manifesting principle. I do not know whether there can be a more magnificent and systematic argument. Equally magnificent is Dr Oberoi's ignorance about this well settled fact of history. Then Dr Oberoi himself contradicts this point. He says, "One of the early anecdotes in the *Janam-Sakhi* tradition tells of how Nanak was commissioned by God to launch his own distinct religious community in the world."

The central theme of this book is the diversity of behaviour in a religion. He asserts that this diversity was not limited to one religion. It was in all the three prevailing religions, that is, Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism. But, at the same time, he would not mind saying, "Historical texts are virtually silent about religious diversity". I fail to understand then wherefrom he has got the central theme of his book. This is surely a self-defeating mission. Second, wherever Dr Oberoi has found diversity, it is not a religious diversity. Actually this diversity is of religions and in the cultural patterns of the people living in the same area.

Quoting Senapat, an 18th century poet, Dr Oberoi writes, "On one side stands Khalsa, and on the other, the world." On the next page, he concludes, "Khalsa identity only becomes dominant in the late nineteenth century under British sponsorship", by which he means through the Singh Sabha Movement. This movement came in nineteenth century. He refers to a number of points through which he agrees that Khalsa identity was clearly codified and promoted in eighteenth century. Then, the book deals with the religious diversities in the nineteenth century. That is how, he has created a mess for himself by accepting the distinct Sikh identity through Senapat in 18th century and through Singh Sabha Movement in the 19th century. Then what

about his main thesis? Clearly it has no ground to stand upon.

Above all, he refers to the rise of Singh Sabha Movement as one sponsored and nourished by the British Government whereas the fact of the history is, and this has amply borne out in British records, that British Government feared only the Sikh revolutionaries, the product of Singh Sabha Movement. Then Singh Sabha Movement had attempted at reinforcing the religious code, which was the product of Gurbani. Their fault is that they did not deviate.

Dr Oberoi again contradicts himself in his remarks on 25th, 26th and 63rd pages. First he says, "No other (than Singh Sabha Movement) re-working of the Sikh movement has been so enduring and successful as the one worked out in the late 19th century". The suggestion is preposterous as it tends to suggest that the Sikh identity was 'worked out' and did not exist previously. On another page he says, "But in the 18th century the Khalsa Sikhs became keenly aware of the absence of the distinct life-style rituals and took urgent steps to rectify the situation by introducing new rites particularly to mark birth".

On page 76, Dr Oberoi has referred in detail to the difference between *Sahajdhari* and Khalsa Sikhs. He emphasises the fact that both did not see eye to eye on any issue whether philosophical, social or those relating to code of conduct. This seems to be another fantasy. Because, his subject is the contradiction, not between the *Sahajdhari* and Khalsa, but between the Sikh and non-Sikh. The tragedy with Mr. Oberoi is that he starts with the assumption that *Sahajdhari* is a non-Sikh. His description in the second para on page 77, confirms this stand. His misinformation is further confirmed by his statement about the role of the *Udasi* sect. *Udasi* signify "renunciation of or indifference to worldly concerns",<sup>78</sup>. It is a well recorded fact of Sikh history that *Udasi* played a significant role in the history of north- India, particularly, the struggle of the Sikhs. Baba Sri Chand himself was very active in the worldly affairs, sometimes even in political affairs of that time. When the Rajput hero Maharana Pratap was disheartened by his mostly unsuccessful and futile hostilities with the Mughals, he was given solace by him and inspired to continue his struggle abandoning his despondency. Baba Gurditta, a heir-designate of Baba Sri Chand, himself was a warrior. During the battles fought by Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh a number of *Udasis* participated in it. Probably, Dr Oberoi is transplanting the image of a Hindu *Udasi*, to fit in the image of a Sikh *Udasi*.

Referring to almost every kind of source-material related to Sikhism, Dr Oberoi's standard explanation is that this does not tell us a great deal about popwar religion. Then from where has he got the material for his insistence upon this kind of religion. To me it appears that there is no such thing as 'popular religion', 'village religion', 'religion of the elite', etc. Religion as such can never be divided into such categories. Every religion has its following in villages, in cities, among rich and poor, educated and uneducated. Then, he himself says that no source informs about such kind of religions available during this period. Then why is he making an issue out of non-issue?

If, as pleaded by Dr Oberoi, no religion has definite boundaries, then, does according to him, a village religion or a popular religion has it? Such formulations only speak of the weak edifice that Dr Oberoi has built for himself.

In order to arrive at a solution of the riddle of Sikh identity, Dr Oberoi elaborately seeks support from the Census reports. The fourth chapter of the book begins with this objective. But, at one place he himself concludes, "Since no separate data on Hindu 'sects' were included in the 1881 census report, one cannot easily correct the distorted nature of the Sikh returns." This means the source material, which he is using, represents a distorted picture of Sikh identity. Then how can it be dependable?

Dr Oberoi has committed a number of mistakes in his book, which ordinarily are not expected of a student of Sikhism, much less of history and an occupant of a Sikh chair in a university. For example, while referring to the *Arnrit* ceremony, he says, "All this was done to the recitation of five quatrains from the writings of Guru Gobind Singh". It is a well known fact that all the five *banis* (compositions) were not from Guru Gobind Singh's writings. They are Japu Ji (of Guru Nanak), Anand Shaib (of Guru Amar Dass), Jaap, Swaye and Chaupai (of Guru Gobind Singh).

At another place, he says, "Most of them lived in the Doaba, where Dera Baba Nanak in Gurdaspur was traditionally regarded as their headquarters". Dera Baba Nanak and Gurdaspur are not part of Doaba, they are in Majha.

Referring to Baba Budha Ji, he says, "He was contemporary of seven Sikh Gurus and installed four of them to Guruship". This statement carries two historical mistakes. One, Baba was contemporary

of six Sikh Gurus and second, he installed five of them to Guruship.

A cursory look at the way he translates the phrases again reveals the mind of the author. He translates '*Vahe Guru Ji Ka Khalsa, Vahe Guru Ji Ke Fateh*' into "Hail to the Guru's Khalsa! Hail the victory of the Guru". The correct translation should be, "Khalsa is of the Guru/God. Victory (of the Khalsa) also belongs to Guru." Similarly, at another place he translates *Gurmat* as "The view of Guru", whereas it should be the philosophy of Guru'. A Sikh is translated as 'disciple's whereas it should be a 'student' or a 'learner'. This speaks of the casualness towards or the lack of understanding of the *Gurbani* vocabulary or Sikh tradition.

Dr Oberoi's attitude towards basic principle of Sikhism is very casual. This tendency is well-reflected in the choice of his words. For example, he would say, "The greatest taboos with Sikh Tradition". Not only this, he uses the word 'categories, for Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims, apparently it is in place of religion.

He says, "Singh Sabha, a wide-ranging religious movement, began to view the multiplicity in Sikh identity with great suspicion and hostility". Probably the gentleman has not cared to see an entry on page 103 and a photo on page 519 of Mahan Kosh (1960), written by Bhai Kahan Singh, a great exponent of Sikhism. He refers to nine forms of Sikhs. Suspicion and hostility are the product of the writer's own mind.

He says, "A new cultural elite aggressively usurped the right to represent others within this singular traditions". Can, in such an age and also in such an area of work, anyone aggressively usurp the right of any group?

Similarly, the definition of Khalsa is wrong. Dr Oberoi, quoting Dr J.S. Grewal, believes that it is derived from the concept of "lands that were under the direct supervision of Crown". Khalsa means pure, and as stated above in Sikh literature, a Sikh was known as Khalsa much before the *Vaisakhi* of 1699. Second, a large majority of those Sikhs, who did not go for Amrit were also under the direct supervision of Guru. No one was appointed to look after them or supervise them, like the lands, which were not directly in the supervision of Crown.

He says, "While the Sikhs in their recent history, have tended to treat Punjab as their home-land, they did not belong exclusively to Punjab; they were settled all across India". Mr. Oberoi does not know

the difference between the home-land and land of settlement. Home-land of the Sikhs means, the native land, the land of birth of Sikhs, or Sikhism. Therefore, if he is now settled in Canada, it does mean that Canada is the home-land of Sikhs. Similarly, on the next page, he tries to identify the importance of Majha region on the basis of the Sikh population living in this area. The concentration of Sikh population in Majha is not more than in Malwa. But even if it were so, the importance of Majha was not simply because of the concentration of Sikh population. It was important for the Sikhs, because the Central place of the Sikhs (which is dearer to them even than their life) is located in this region.

Comrades in arms, fellow soldiers or workmen of Baba Banda Bahadur are mentioned as “his major *collaborators*.” *Gurmata* is described, “The ritual”, *Arnrithhari* Sikhs are described as, “Initiated Sikhs”.

Similarly, the use of words; Paradox, duality, allies, alliance, worship before Guru Granth, Corpus of Sikh myth, Sect, Cult, and many more speak about the author’s lack of grip over the culture of words. Oberoi should be questioned regarding the use of such terminology.

Dr Oberoi is in the habit of delivering perfunctory judgments even on serious matters. For example, he says, “The new print culture brought Sikhs together as never before”. It is debatable whether the so called ‘Print Culture’ has really any bearing on bringing ‘the Sikhs together’. It may well be argued that the opposite has happened. Many forces inimical to Sikh culture have benefited more from this culture, as is evident, especially after the loss of state power after the death of the legendary Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Then by implication this means the Sikhs were never together before the arrival of the ‘Print Culture’. The author is here ignoring all known historical facts relating to the origin and growth of Sikhism. Their very survival through the ever hostile process of history is in itself a proof of their unity and solidarity.

Again on the same page, he says, “In conventional histories of the evolution of Sikh tradition it is common to treat the rise, spread and consolidation of Sikhism as a single unitary whole. Such a narration, like much else in academic discourse, seeks to dispel disturbing contradictions and synthesizes Sikh experience in order to give it coherence. By this means the Sikh past, to use Nietzsche’s illuminating term, is made ‘painless’ for the minds of those who seek to live by it”. By implication this means that Dr Oberoi, while ignoring the factual position, is again

trying to make the Sikh experience 'painful'. Probably it gives him pleasure.

While quoting Dr S. S. Hans, he says, "Increasingly, the word *Gurmukh* came to be identified with Sikhs alone, and non-Sikhs were called *Manmukh* (self-oriented)". Throughout the Sikh period, nowhere a non-Sikh is called *Manmukh*. In fact, *Gurmukh* and *Man-mukh* are two terms, giving the contrasting meaning, relevant only in the fold of Sikh studies. Therefore, this is the product of the imagination of a particular category of scholars; in the past and present.

Dr Oberoi says, "*Janam-Sakhi* is the name given to mythical narratives on the life of Guru Nanak". *Janam-Sakhis* are not a piece of mythical narratives. On the other hand, they are a piece of literary work. Guru Nanak, throughout his *bani*, has tried to de-mythify human consciousness.

Similarly, again referring to the *Janam Sakhi* literature, he says, "As a consequence, there is no fixity to Nanak's image in the *Janam-Sakhi* stories: much like *Puranic* gods and goddesses, he is always transforming and wandering". In fact, each word of the whole *Janam-Sakhi* literature moves around the image of Guru Nanak. He is the only central figure, that is hero of the entire *Punjabi Janam-Sakhi* literature. Second, his movements are not similar to those of *Puranic* gods and goddesses. He, throughout his life, keeps his feet placed in the culture of the soil. Third, his attempt at transforming and wandering does not take away the fixity of the image of Guru Nanak.

Again, he repeats his figment of imagination in the words, "Just as there is no fixed Guru Nanak in the *Janam-Sakhis*, there is no fixed Sikh identity in the early-Guru period". Yes, there is no fixed Nanak for those who stubbornly refuse to see the reality or go by argument.

Dr Oberoi on pp. 54-55, has tried to argue that *Adi Granth* was not the first attempt of its kind. Another manuscript, which he names Fatehpur manuscript, was edited about 21 years before the compilation of *Adi Granth*. He has not produced any evidence to this effect. But it seems, even here, he could not contain his impulse for passing on unauthentic judgement unworthy of a scholar.

Dr Oberoi says, "while there is no denying the fact that the *Adi Granth* has become a key cultural marker of Sikh authenticity, it would be a gross mis-interpretation to view it in the same vein for the early seventeenth century. Its heterodox textuality and diverse

con-tributors were far more the manifestation of a fluid Sikh identity than a signifier of exclusivity”. According to him, because there are ‘diverse contributors’, therefore, it impaired the exclusivity of Sikh identity. Diversity is a fundamental principle of nature. Sri Guru Granth Sahib has not only exemplified it, but preached it, knowing full well that ultimately every diverse element of nature is not only con-nected, but placed in its base which is always unified single Being. Basing on this model, Guru Arjun Oev compiled the *bani* of the contributors of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Therefore, the visible diversity springs out of the single unified base and in the process returns to it. Thus, it seems to be the argument of a person who knows very little about the core of the issues.

Dr Oberoi while quoting a *Janam-Sakhi* says, “One *Janam-Sakhi* episode relates the story of a highly impoverished Sikh who, in his efforts to buy food for Guru Nanak and his companion, cuts and sells his long hair”. He, like his mentor Mr. W. H. McLeod, has misunderstood the real purport of the *Sakhi*. It absolutely does not mean that *Sakhi* is giving relaxation for cutting the hair. *Sakhi* means, serving the guest is dearer to a Sikh than everything else, which is dear to him. Therefore, for serving a guest, a Sikh can sacrifice the dearest of his possessions. In this context it is hair. It may be remembered that the Gurus have been subjecting the Sikhs to various tests to ascertain their unflinching faith in the religion of Guru Nanak. Guru Angad, before being offered the Guruship, was once asked by Guru Nanak to eat a corpse. Only an ignoramus would have us believe that it amounts to Guru Nanak asking the Sikhs to eat dead bodies.

Dr Oberoi says, “Taking the last line as the key to this hymn, many have argued that Guru Arjun is proclaiming here that Sikhs are neither Hindus nor Muslims, and therefore form a distinct religious community. There are several textual problems with this reasoning. As pointed out by Sahib Singh, the most eminent Sikh exegete of this century, Guru Arjun wrote its hymn in a definite context; he was responding to an older verse by Kabir, included in the *Adi Granth*”.

First, Oberoi is trying to distort the meaning of this line, ‘I am neither Hindu nor Muslim’. Second, if it was written in a given context while responding to an older verse of Kabir, it makes the proclamation all the more meaningful. This means he was making the things abundantly clear. Third, where is the need to prove otherwise?

Dr Oberoi says, “Just as in traditional Indian thought each *vama*

is supposed to perform its *dharma* or moral duty, the Khalsa brought forth its own *dharma*”.

First, Khalsa does not believe in *Vama-Ashram*. Second, it does not believe in fixing the duty according to *varna*. Third, Khalsa is brought in by bringing the people of different *vamas* into one single unit, thereby attempting at demolishing the caste in society. But, Oberoi insists that the institution of traditional *vama ashram* and that of Khalsa are similar.

The above stated are only a few examples. Otherwise, this tendency of passing judgement is frequent throughout the text of this book.

Similarly, Dr Oberoi is hardly conversant with the basic issues in Sikhism. For example, he inter-mixes Sikh and Punjabi on page 33. He has taken special trouble to contradict Dr G.S.Dhillon's four points on pages 33-34, though his attempt to contradict him is baseless and unconvincing. So much so, that he himself commits the mistake for which he criticises Dr Dhillon. He expects Dr Dhillon to deal with the issues according to the model given by him!

The ego of the writer is so inflated that in the end of his introduction, he says, “Sikh studies needs to be fully open up to the cage of history”, as if before and after Dr Oberoi nobody has done it. Whereas the fact of the matter is that most of the material found in this book is found in earlier treatises on Sikh studies, particularly, written by Dr J. S. Grewal and W.H. McLeod. Dr Oberoi has only collected their unfounded formulations and put them together in the form of this book. Thus, this book is only a collection of material, unoriginal and of course unintelligently arranged, aimed at serving a particular end, and a pre-conceived motive.



## **Dr Oberoi's Work: Academics or Imagination?**

Dr Gurnam Kaur

### **INTRODUCTION**

On July 22, 1994 Dr Harjot Oberoi (he does not write 'Singh' with his name, perhaps to influence Western scholars or because he does not believe in the Gurus) arranged a meeting with some scholars from the U.S.A. and Canada as well as the Chairman of Guru Nanak Studies in the Punjab University, Chandigarh, Professor and Head, Sri Guru Granth Sahib Studies Department, Punjabi University, Patiala, a Reader from the same department and a Professor, Political Science Department, Punjabi University, Patiala, at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. We participated in this meeting at the request of the Sikh community in order to give our opinion whether the occupant of the Chair fulfilled the objectives for which he was hired. The real issue before the community is not academic freedom, but whether they got what they paid for, and whether the objectives, as outlined in the agreement between UBC and the Sikh community, have been honoured or not. In the meeting, time and again Dr Oberoi was reminded of the fact that the Chair was established with the money contributed by the Sikh community to fulfil its academic aspirations for objectives and ideals, laid down in the agreement. These terms very clearly indicate that the chairperson would engage in research on Sikh religion, Sikh philosophy and Sikh doctrines, Punjabi language and Punjabi literature which unfortunately, during the last seven years, were not carried out properly. For example, there was no qualified teacher to teach Punjabi language and literature. We have prepared a special report after reviewing the work done by the occupant of the chair during the last seven years.

Similarly, there is no one qualified to teach Sikh doctrines, religion and philosophy. Dr Harjot Oberoi is only qualified in history. When asked questions about this, Dr Oberoi admitted that he is not well acquainted with the Sikh Scripture and Sikh doctrines, although he is teaching it. While discussing the terms laid down in the agreement of the Chair, he time and again pressed the point that his newly published book "The Construction of Religious Boundaries" be discussed, although the meeting had been convened to discuss how far the objectives of the Chair had been achieved, and not his book.

However, some observations concerning his book, especially

the methodology used by him, may not be out of place. I have been in the field of religion for twenty-five years, studying the Indian tradition, especially the Sikh Scripture. My field of research is the philosophy of religion, mainly Sikh philosophy. Dr Oberoi has started from the wrong angle, and used wrong assumptions, and that is why he has reached wrong conclusions. As far as I have gone through his book, he seems to be ignorant about the Indian traditions, their scriptures, the philosophy given by them, their religious practices, and the impact of a particular religious practice, or thought on the culture of its adherents. He is also apparently unaware of the difference between the concept of revelation in Indian traditions, particularly Sikhism, and the Semitic religions, i.e., Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It is recognised that the models, the tools, and the methods which are used to study the Semitic traditions, cannot be blindly applied to the Indian traditions. If we do so, the results are bound to be negative, wrong and dangerous, as has been the case with Dr Oberoi's book. To make it more clear I would like to make some general observations before coming to Sikhism.

The idea of revelation found in Indian traditions earlier to Sikhism is considered generally of four kinds :

1. The world at large is a revelation of Supreme Reality. God is the central principle of the individual soul and the physical world.
2. The Vedic Revelation: The Vedas are considered as revealed. The knowledge contained in them is considered irdestructible. The Veda is promulgated at the beginning of each world cycle by *Ishvara*.
3. God incarnated through *avtars*. According to all the schools of *Vedic* thought, whenever there is decline of *dharma*, to reveal the way of *dharma* and restore righteousness, God incarnates Himself in human form or any other form, e.g., as Krishna, the son of Devki.
4. Revelation in *anubhati* or meditation: *anubhav* is that state of knowledge in which distinction between subject and object does not remain any more, and the truth of the Supreme self is realized. This is the direct experience of Brahman (or God).

We know that in Jainism and Buddhism, the revelation is in the form of enlightenment. Gautama Buddha and the Jaina *Tirthankaras*, especially Mahanvira Varadhmana got enlightenment after long and deep meditation.

The earlier Indian religious thought is divided into two categories, viz., Vedic and non-Vedic. The Jainism, Buddhism and Charvaka systems of religious thought are non-Vedic, also called the *nastika* (atheistic), because they do not believe in the authority of the Vedas. All other earlier systems of Indian religious thought were known as theistic (*astika*), because they believed in the authority of the Vedas, i.e., they consider the Vedas as the verbal testimony or *Shabad Paymana*, or the highest source of religious knowledge. The theistic literature is divided into two categories: the *sruti* (from *sur*, to hear) is the revealed knowledge in which are included Vedas and Upanishads. The *smriti* is the remembered word, and includes the Puranas, Itihasas, the Shastras and the epics. What is *dharma* and what should be the *dharma* are described in the *sruti* as well as in the *smriti*. The important thing to be noted is that Varan-Ashram *dharma* is the axle of Vedic religions. Different kinds of *dharma* are prescribed for different sections of society and for different stages of life-span. The rules are very strict in the matters concerned with *dharma* and no deviation is allowed. It is so strict that even after concerted efforts made during the last century or so, it has not been possible to erode the system from the Hindu society. The idol-worship was the result of the conception of the revelation through *avtars* and different gods and goddesses.

Now we can easily understand that Indian religions are not historic religions. To study them one has to evolve a model out of these traditions themselves. To determine how much deviation has taken place, or how they influenced history, culture and life of the people, one has to start from their scripture. In India, even philosophy and religion have not been independent of each other as in the West. Similarly religion and culture have not been separate. Religion has been their way of life, their culture. Everything is determined by religion. So, to study its culture one has to go into its scriptures. There are religious and cultural boundaries which are not easy to cross. Anybody who ignores this factor, cannot produce any worthwhile research in the history of Indian religions.

## **SOME EARLIER TRADITIONS**

Before the Revelation of Sikhism took place, the Shaivism and Vaishnavism were the popular cults in India. They are not independent religions because they have no independent revelation. They are cults within the Yoga system of thought. They are known by many different names, but most popular among them is the Nath Sampradaya. Islam

came to India with the Sufis and the Muslim invaders, and, thus, Was an alien religion in India.

The followers of the Vedic religions had no religious mixing up. They were closed religions and strictly kept their boundaries. But in the Yoga cults which developed in the later periods, there were no such restrictions. The Hindus (the common word given by the foreign-ers to the Indian people, Vedic or non-Vedic traditions, as described earlier) and Muslims could both become members of these cults. These cults also depend upon initiation. They observe restrictions only in matters concerning eating.

If Dr Oberoi had gone into the right sources of Indian religious thought, such as Surindernath Dasgupta or any other popular thinker, he could easily have understood the religious boundaries in their right perspective. The Sakhi Sarvar, Guga Pir or other such legends do not belong to the main tradition. They are not the main personalities. They are minor, local personalities in Yogic cults or Sampradayas belonging to Nathism. Dr Oberoi is very much ignorant of the mysticism, theology and spirituality of the Indian religions, and has not gone deep into the right sources, and his methodology is wrong.

## SIKHISM

Now let us come to the Sikh religion. To study any aspect of Sikh religion, be it history, mysticism, theology, philosophy or even sociology, it is most important that the researchers have the basic knowledge of Sikh revelation. Without this, one cannot understand any aspect of the Sikh religion as mentioned above, because all of them are deeply rooted in the Revelation.

The idea of Revelation in Sikhism is unique. It is in the form of the *bani*. According to Sikhism, man can have direct communion with God through meditation on His *Naam*. The revelation of Truth, the insight to the Guru, is referred to by the Guru himself. The Guru had the direct experience of truth which he expressed through *bani*. We find many references to this effect in Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the sacred scripture of the Sikhs, which is a record of the revelation, in the Guru's biographical literature, and in writings of Bhai Gurdas, the first Sikh theologian. The *bani* is the primal word of God according to the Guru, "*ihu akhru tini akhiya jini jagatu upayia.*" Guru Amar Das has made distinction between true and false *bani* in Anand in Rag Ramkali. Guru Ram Das also makes a distinction between the embodiment of truth (*sat-sarup bani*) which is uttered by the Sat Guru and false prattle

(*kach-pich*) which is uttered by others in imitation. Guru Ram Das has given the status of Guru to the *bani*. According to him, there is no difference between the Guru and the revelation made by him. It is the unique feature of Sikhism that the Guru is accepted as perfect and permanent in the form of *bani*, not in his corporeal form; because corporeal form is ephemeral and his *bani* is eternal. Guru Gobind Singh formally bestowed this status on Sri Guru Granth Sahib. He ordered Sikhs to accept the Granth as Guru after him and to seek guidance from it.

The idea of *avtarvad* or incarnation has been rejected in Sikhism. The *avtars* are creation of God like all other creation. Their worship as God has not been approved in the *bani* (the word) in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Whatever is not approved in Sri Guru Granth Sahib, is not acceptable to the Sikh faith. According to Sikhism, the Reality is One Universal Being, the Real, the Spirit, the Creator, without restraint and enmity, above generation and cessation. The whole creation is moving towards Him and in the end merges in Him.

The Sikh revelation is independent of the previous traditions in India. The independence of any revelation is judged by the type of personality it creates. It is a continual process from Guru Nanak, the First Guru, to Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth and the last Guru in physical form. It took almost two hundred and forty years to transform the whole psyche of man on Indian land, and only then was the *sangat* converted into the Khalsa. Khalsa is the *brahm-giani* or the *gurmukh* of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. What type of person a Sikh should be, is described in Sri Guru Granth Sahib and the works of Bhai Gurdas and no deviation is allowed in practice from the ideals laid down by the Guru. One has to be capable of being a Sikh, a Khalsa. It is a religion of conversion. The Sikh culture is not different from Sikh religion because Sikhism is a way of life. The Sikh Gurus are very clear and emphatic in their rejection of irrational and superstitious beliefs. These are seen as bondage from which an enlightened person must seek release. This effort would relate man with the Higher Order of Being.

## **OBEROI'S WORK**

On the basis of the above general discussion, I would like to make some observations about the study done by Dr Oberoi in his book:

- a. He is not well acquainted with the original sources of Sikh religion, philosophy and history, and has not used the right methodology to deal with these subjects. Sikh revelation is in the form of *bani*, not in the form of events in history like Christianity. You have to go from scripture to practices. Whatever is not approved by the scripture, its primary source, i.e. Sri Guru Granth Sahib, cannot be a part of Sikhism. For his studies, he should have gone deep into the question how and why the deviation started from the very beginning, from the time of Guru Nanak, by Baba Sri Chand. Due to this deviation, Sri Chand's line of thought was not acceptable to Guru Nanak. Asceticism has no place in Sikhism. The theory of Varan-Ashram *dhamta* was rejected by the Guru very strongly. All the Gurus led a family life, which is stressed time and again in the revelation. Those who are quoted by Dr Oberoi, are themselves not well-acquainted with the tradition and its primary sources, e.g. Dr W.H. McLeod. He depends upon *Janam Sakhis* which are not the primary sources of Sikhism. Sikhism created history in Indian religions as well as in the world religions. It is not a product of history. Its history should be judged in the light of its Scripture. It transformed the whole psyche of man.
- b. Dr Oberoi is ignorant of the fact that categories like Hindu, Muslim and Sikh, not only found expression in the consciousness, actions and cultural performances, but there are categories like Jaina and Boddhi and the different creeds which had clear-cut boundaries. We can find references to this effected as early as in Sri Guru Granth Sahib and the compositions of Bhai Gurdas. It is a different matter that they co-existed with each other. They were not hostile to one another, as were Christians and Jews.
- c. If anybody violates the teachings of the Gurus, he cannot claim himself to be a Sikh. What a Sikh should be is clearly laid down in Sri Guru Granth Sahib and the Rahatnamas. Sikhs worship the One Supreme Being and none else. They do not believe in superstitions. It would have been worthwhile, if Dr Oberoi had understood *Asa Di Var* in the right perspective. Guga Pir, Sakhi Sarvar and Mata Rani have nothing to do with Sikhism. Sikhism is an independent religion with its own revelation. Its Scripture was compiled and authenticated by the Guru himself, and is the final authority to judge anything related to Sikh religion or

culture.

- d. Dr Oberoi is as confused about the Vedas as about Sikhism. He is ignorant of the fact that once the Vedas were systematized, even though they were not committed to writing, slightest change was not made even in the pronunciation, while passing from teacher to disciple. Rishi Vyas compiled the Vedas into written form. Vyas's period is considered the period of Mahan Bharata. If there were no printing techniques, this does not mean that the Vedas were not available in the written form. Scripture and Religion, both these words belong to Western languages. But again this does not mean that the concepts like *Dhanna* and *Dhanna-Grantha* did not exist in Indian religions. Both these words *Dhanna* and *Dhanna-Grantha* have deeper meanings. The Western scholars hold a general view that the Indian religions are the religions of the basket, and that the Western or Semitic religions are the religions of the book. It is a wrong conception, based on ignorance regarding Indian religions. The Vedas are called the *srnti* which means revealed knowledge. They are the recorded revelation. Similarly Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism have their own revelations, and their scriptures or *Granthas* are the record of their revelations. As opposed to this, the Semitic religions were revealed in the form of historical events, especially Judaism and Christianity, and their scriptures are the record of those events and stories. They were recorded many years after the passing away of their prophets. Dr Oberoi has committed blunders, because he is following the Western thinkers and their line of thought, not applicable to Indian religions.
- e. While talking about some cults or clans as Meherats, he forgets that Islam was the religion of the invaders, and that many people from different religions were converted into Islam by force by the rulers. The new religion was adopted under compulsion and many came into the fold of Islam. But to know about Quran, one would have to know its language i.e. Arabic. The new converts were not well versed in Arabic language. The Vedic religion had been so strict that once a man got converted into some other religion, it was not possible for him to come back to the Vedic religion. It had been very strict in its following; and no relaxation in the rules, or code of conduct was allowed.

- f. Dr Oberoi's discipline is history. How has he ignored the facts mentioned in the compositions of Bhai Gurdas, while writing about Sikhism? We find in the writings of Bhai Gurdas how different sections of Indian society, viz., the Hindus, Muslim, Buddhists, different cults of yogis, interacted with each other. At the same time, we come to know how a *gursikh* was taking a unique position, following the path of the Guru. He is missing the fact that a Sikh was recognizable very easily even in the late 17th and 18th century. A price was fixed on the head of a Sikh in those periods by the Muslim rulers. Why has he not gone into the original sources of Sikh history?
- g. Sri Guru Granth Sahib, compiled by the Guru himself, is a revealed scripture. In this scripture the Guru time and again reminds us that we should try to understand the *shabad* through *vichar* (reason), and imbibe it in our mind. He does not ask for a blind faith. There is no place for a man without brains in this scripture, and Dr Oberoi brands it as an amorphous religious text. It seems to me that he has some preconceived notions in mind, and is trying to prove them by imposing models from here and there.
- h. Dr Oberoi has clearly suppressed historical facts well recorded by Sikh, Muslim, Persian, Hindu and European sources. Dr Oberoi, as a Sikh, should have been very clear about the fact (which has been established by historical documentation) that after Guru Gobind Singh, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the *shabad*, is the Guru for the Sikhs. Guru Gobind Singh himself bestowed guruship on the *shabad* in the traditional way of the Gurus. Why has Dr Oberoi concealed this historical fact? Does he have any special interest or group compulsion hide this fact? Even Dr McLeod has accepted this historical fact in his personal communications, because all the historians are unanimous on this point. Any creed or cult may appear important to Dr Oberoi, but he must keep in mind that no creed or cult which grants a line of Guruship to living persons after Guru Gobind Singh, and not to Sri Guru Granth Sahib, cannot claim to be part of Sikhism, even though they recite *gurbani*.

Every student of Sikhism clearly understands how deterioration crept into Sikhism after the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Under the English rule, many people, especially young students, started coming into the fold of Christianity under the influence of Christian



mis-sionaries while studying in the missionary schools and colleges. This was the reason for the start of the Singh Sabha movement by conscious Sikh intelligentsia. It is a sheer academic dishonesty on the part of a scholar to distort facts just to support his preconceived notions. If he has done it under ignorance, then it must be regretted. He should have gone into the authentic primary sources before writing such a book, because he is holding a very important Chair in the Western world, and the Sikh community worked very hard to establish this Chair. Academic freedom demands academic responsibility, academic humility and academic honesty at the same time. To write a book on any religion or its history and culture demands that the researcher must review the primary sources and become familiar with its doctrines. It is not fiction writing where you can depend purely on imagination. The review of Dr Oberoi's book shows that it is not an academic work but an imaginative writing primarily focused to fulfil interests alien to Sikhism.

## **Oberoi - A Stranger to Sikhism**

Dr Madanjit Kaur

Dr Harjot Oberoi's book "The Construction of Religious Boundaries Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition" is a strange combination of micro-study of sociology of Religion, Anthropology and Theology imposed in interpreting Sikh Religion, Sikh Tradition and Sikh Identity. At the outset, the-foremost shortcom-ing of the book is the very selection of the title, covering huge area of folk religion and original, historical religion (Sikhism). The author claims this voluminous thesis is an outcome of his questions related to the Sikhs and Singh Sabha Movement, subject of his M. Phil. dissertation, and further extention of this area in his Doctoral dissertation on Social History of Modern India. The author himself admits that he had to take a long journey of fourteen years to complete his project. It is apparent from the text and contents of the book that Oberoi had combined the folk beliefs of the Punjab into the frame-work of Sikhism, and focuses on what it meant to be a Sikh in the nineteenth century. After losing political power, Sikhs were engulfed in identity crisis until it was redefined by the Tat Khalsa and the Singh Sabha Movement. The author looks upon Sikhism as a stranger with no insight into the Sikh history and development of Sikhism and its fundamental concerns. That fact of the continuity of the Sikh tradition and the established Sikh identity distinct from the Hindu identity (see Dabistan-i-Mazahib, Extracts of Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Muhalla Jang Nama by Kazi Nur Muhammad, Ham Hindu Nahi by Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha etc.) has been ignored by Oberoi. With a bias and prejudice or some motive he views Sikhism as a religion of plurality. Even a simple rustic of the Punjab understands Sikhism better than Western scholars engaged in studying Sikh theology, Sikh beliefs, Sikh identity and Sikh history.

Oberoi is neither familiar with original resources of the Sikh history nor can he perceive the concepts and essence of Sikhism because of his subjective attitude. The author must realise that he is dealing with an original and historical religion and not with the study of some sect, tribe or folk beliefs. In our view the project should have been divided into two separate studies. The first one dealing with the origin and development of Sikh traditions and the interpolation of Punjab folk-beliefs into the Sikh society; keeping in view the contem-porary socio-political milieu and the pre-dominance of Brahminism in the nineteenth century Punjab.

The second study could have covered issue of Sikh identity crisis, the Singh Sabha Movement, the Sikh resurrection and the attitude of the British Raj towards the minorities, specially the Sikhs and the Muslims in the context of procuring their services in the armed forces and police.

Fundamentally, Sikhism is the only modern religion in India which is not a melting-pot of religious plurality. It is neither a sect nor an eclectic or a mixed religion. It has its distinct theology, beliefs, practices, value system and cultural identity. Oberoi's approach is subjective and motivated with some pre-notions which he has tried to project in his thesis whether they have any connection with Sikhism or not. He is following the projection of Sikhism from the point of view of some Western scholars concentrating on Sikh Studies.

History of Punjab is the greatest evidence of the fact that the Sikhs kept their tryst with death rather than abjure their faith. The history of Mughal period is full of sacrifices made by Sikhs on this issue. Oberoi does not bother to distinguish between the out-group religious boundaries and the mixing and interpolation of folk-beliefs in the Punjab society during the 19th century, particularly in the rural areas. If worship of Devi cult, Guga Pir and Sakhi Sarvar was observed by some of the Sikhs, that does not mean that these rituals and practices became part and parcel of Sikh religion. Therefore, one cannot legitimise the observance of folk-beliefs as part of the Sikh theology. We should remember that history of religion has two aspects, viz. socio-religious and mytho-religious. Local cults and myths help us to classify folk-beliefs and folk traditions. Although they prove useful too in tracing the development of the religious movements, they do not bear testimony to the spiritual essence or fundamentals of any original religion. In fact, these beliefs and practices were the borrowing features of Indian religious traditions and an indication of religious beliefs behind faith and superstition of the contemporary Punjab society. Therefore, the adoption of the Hindu deities and Devi cult, worship of the shrines of Guga and worship of Muslim Pir Sakhi Sarvar, formed an eclectic pantheon religion of the contemporary society and not a part of the real Sikhism.

In the history of the nineteenth century Punjab, the most important socio-religious phenomenon was the impact of Vaishnavite, Shaivite and Sakti cults as result of Hindu revivalism and popular response to folk-beliefs. A social scientist would interpret such

phenomenon as interaction of different religious traditions in society rather than consider them as introduction of some new development or classify them as introduction of religious boundaries as been deciphered by Oberoi.

The above mentioned practices of folk-traditions are indication of the religious beliefs behind faith and superstitions, belief in evil spirits, witch-craft, sorcery and magic healing, astrology and divination of mythical objects, rituals and participation in local festivals and fairs of the contemporary Punjab society. This development of mass beliefs is also an evidence to the revival of Brahmanic cults. The impact of witch-craft is equally dominating the folk psyche, particularly in the Hindu and Sikh communities. But they never formed a part of transformation in the philosophy of religion. The impact of Hinduism was so strong that some of the Sikhs who were weak in their faith and determination, fell prey to the allurements of some popular practices and usage. The presence of such a situation demands a revision of the author's opinion regarding the personal religion of these folk as well as the true nature of the Khalsa Panth during the period under study. Had Sikhism been a religion of plurality the Mughal Emperors need not have issued *firman*s against the Sikhs and declaring them as out-laws and political offenders. No *such* *firman*s were issued against any other minority or religious community of the contemporary India. These *firman*s had clear instructions about the identity of the followers of Guru Nanak. Even foreign invaders like Nadir Shah and the Court Historian of Ahmad Shah Durrani, Kazi Nur Mohammad, had clearly described the distinct identity, revolting spirit, astonishing courage, valour and high character of the Sikh soldiers, although they have been condemned with all sorts of abuses.

In spite of producing a bulky volume on Sikh tradition, Oberoi is not in a position to enter into any satisfactory speculation or to make a statement on the precise religious boundaries, culture, identity and diversity issues among the Sikhs and the out group plurality of Hindu society. That is the reason why Oberoi failed to understand the core idea behind the action of the Sikh leaders who looked upon the interpolation of plurality in Sikh culture and identity with disdain and tried to purge the outside practices which had crept into the Sikh society. We have to remember that the Singh Sabha leaders did not introduce any innovation or new doctrine, dogma or any tenet in Sikhism. They only stressed restoration of pristine Sikh practices, and ejected every belief or practice which had no connection with Sikhism.

During the Sikh rule many new converts of convenience were attracted to Sikhism. They adopted symbols of Sikh identity but never shed their previous beliefs and practices. But the proportion of this class of Sikh society did not lead to dilution of Sikh doctrines. The Sikh code of conduct, the Sikh values and Sikh doctrines remained the same. The inner strength of the Sikh community lies in its psyche for meeting the challenges of situation and crisis which is more vividly apparent in the functional role of Sikhism than in its metaphysical aspect. Oberoi fails to realise this factor and generalizes his conclusions, blindly following the pattern of "Who is a Sikh?" by Hew McLeod.

No doubt Oberoi is well acquainted with Western style for Sikh Studies introduced by McLeod, and his colleagues, but Indian scholars who are well versed in Sikh history and understand Sikh religion, find Oberoi's work lacking in authenticity and historical context of the period under study. Sikhism is an original religion and not a complex pluralism like Hinduism. Oberoi has unnecessarily involved himself in issues and problems which are not directly related to Sikh doctrines, Sikh culture, Sikh identity and Sikh tradition but are by products of the dynamics of the religious attitude and belief system of the nineteenth century Punjab society. Although profusely documented with notes and references Oberoi's hypothesis, formulations, logic and conclusions are all conceptualized on borrowed framework of Western Sikh scholarship based on pre-notions.

## **‘Construction of Religious Boundaries’**

Dr S.S. Sodhi & Dr J.S. Mann

Dr Harjot Oberoi is a second generation dislocated Punjabi Sikh from West Punjab. While living in Delhi he got his exposure to History at the Centre of Historical Studies at the Jawahar Lal Nehru University in Delhi. At JNU, he came under the influence of Marxist professors, such as Bipan Chandra, Romila Thapar, K.N. Pannikar and Satish Saberwal. He also wrote his M. Phil. thesis on Bhai Vir Singh. From the style of his writing English as his second language, it appears he must have gone to an English medium school in Delhi where the elect and the elite sent their children in the 60's.

At the Australian National University, he studied for his Ph.D. degree with Dr J.T.F. Jordan, who shaped his thoughts on Indian religion from an Eurocentric point of view.

The Eurocentric gang of self-appointed researchers on Sikhism led by Dr W.H. McLeod, J.T. O'Connell, Milton Israel, Bruce de Brack, J.S. Hawley, Mark Juergensmeyer, Jerry Barrier and Rolin Jeffey, after reading Dr Oberoi's thesis entitled "A World Reconstructed: Religion, Ritual and the Community - among Sikhs (1850-1901)", Faculty of Asian Studies, AN. University Canberra 1987, advised him to expand it into a book by collating into it the following few articles that he had written earlier from time to time:

- i. 'Bhais, Babas and Gyanis: Traditional Intellectuals in Nineteenth Century Punjab', "Studies in History" (Vol. 2, 1980, pp. 33-62).
- ii. 'Prom Gurdwara Rikabganj to the Viceregal Palace: A study of Religious Protest', "Punjab Past & Present" (Vol. 14, 1980, pp.182-98).
- iii. 'The Worship of Pir Sakhi Sarvar: Illness, Healing and Popular Culture in the Punjab', "Studies in History" (Vol. 3, 1987, pp.29-55).
- iv. 'A Historiographical and Bibliographical Reconstruction of the Singh Sabha in the Nineteenth Century', "Journal of Sikh Studies" (Vol. 10, 1983, pp. 108-30).
- v. 'From Ritual to Counter-Ritual: Re-thinking the Hindu-Sikh Question (1844 -1915)', J.T. O'Connell, Milton Israel, W.G. Oxtoby, eds. with W.H. McLeod and J.S. Grewal visiting eds.

“Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century.” South Asian Studies, University of Toronto (1988, pp. 136-158).

So the present book entitled, “The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition,” is a careful mixing of his thesis and articles (paragraphs lifted from articles to the book). It also clearly shows that Dr Oberoi has become prisoner of McLeodian Eurocentric research paradigm.

As Dr Oberoi is very fond of quoting Sapir-Whorff to show how language constructs the thought and reality of persons, a Sikh psychologist would like to construct Dr Oberoi’s reality by using the written statements taken from his book (CRB) and the articles.

1. “Adi Granth is an amorphous religious text.” (CRB, p:22). ‘Amorphous,’ according to Webster’s Dictionary (1988, p. 30), means formless, not conforming to normal structural organization, having no crystalline form, unstratified.
2. “By the closing decades of the Nineteenth Century, the Singh Sabha, a wide ranging religious movement, began to view the multiplicity in Sikh identity with great suspicion and hostility.” (CRB, p. 25)
3. “A new cultured elite aggressively usurped the right to represent others within a singular tradition.” (CRB.p.25)
4. “*Tat khalsa* imposed monolithic, codified, and closed culture on the Sikhs by dissolving alternative ideals.” (CRB.p.25)
5. “This effort created many marginalized Sikhs who turned their backs on Sikh tradition and went their own way.” (CRB.p.25)
6. “Pluralist paradigm of Sikhism was replaced by a highly uniformed Sikh identity, the one we know today as modern Sikh existence.” (CRB.p.26)
7. “Through the process of silence and negotiation Sikh historians of the past have not given true picture of what Singh Sabha did to the un-Sikh beliefs of the population.” (CRB.p.27)
8. “The ideas of what Sikhism ought to be were picked up by the *Tat khalsa* from men like Ernest Trumpp, John Gordon and Macauliffe.” (CRB.p.32)
9. “Ideological blinkers imposed by various complex forces led by *Tat Khalsa* produced many distortions in understanding the

Sikhs.” (CRB.p.32)

10. “Mr. G.S. Dhillon’s Ph.D. thesis on Singh Sabha movement is based on the principles of negatives of Sikh Studies.” (CRB, p. 35). Dr Oberoi is upset because Dr Dhillon has given what could be called ‘Khalsa centric’ view rather than the Eurocentric social science anthropological view.
11. “Sikh Studies need to fully open to this gaze of history so that the Sikhs become ‘sociologically respectable’.” (CRB.p.35)
12. “Guru Nanak’s paradigm of interior religiosity was cut with the axes of identity by;
  - i. Producing allegiance with Guru Nanak.
  - ii. Identity with Guru *bani*.
  - iii. Foundation of *sangats*.
  - iv. Setting up pilgrim centres at Goindwal and Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar.
  - v. Convention of a communal meal (*iangar*) was introduced.

And compilation of an anthology commonly known as the *Adi Granth* whereby the Sikhs became a textual community.” For further information on this topic, Dr Oberoi recommends that Dr Pashaura Singh’s Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, (1991), is a major contribution to the study of *Adi Granth*.

Please note how Dr Oberoi is under the influence of Dr McLeod’s writings. It is strange that he, a professor of Sikh Studies, accepts everything that Dr McLeod has formulated and even endorses Dr Pashaura Singh’s very controversial thesis as a major study. It is group thinking of “birds of an Eurocentric research get-together” to further trample over the subjective faith of Sikhs. (CRB.pp.52-53)

13. According to Dr Oberoi, in the early Guru period, Sikh as a category was still problematic and empty. It needed to be correlated with historical intervention.
14. Dr Oberoi thinks that “*Adi Granth* was collated” (CRB.pp.54-55), whereas Pashaura Singh thinks that Guru Arjun Dev *ji* used a process to change Guru Nanak’s *bani* before formally including it in the *Adi Granth*, and that Guru Arjun Dev *ji* was also influenced by social and political considerations



to produce the Adi Granth. Like Trumpp, Dr Oberoi thinks that Adi Granth is the most voluminous and structured early seventeenth century devotional anthology. Is Guru Granth an Anthology? According to Webster Dictionary, 1988, p. 38 an anthology is a collection of poetry or prose chosen to represent the work of a particular writer, a literary school or a national literature.

15. Dr Oberoi compares Adi Granth with Surdas Ka Pada, Fatehpur Manuscript of 1582 AD. As Surdas Ka Pada had the same features as Adi Granth, Dr Oberoi feels that “Adi Granth was neither the first nor the last of such collections.” So the uniqueness of Adi Granth as a sacred *dhur ki bani* is called in question by Dr Oberoi (CRB.p.54).
16. “Stories of Guru Nanak’s travels are created out of *janam sakhis*, which are mythical texts” (CRS, p. 55). “These stories take Guru Nanak to Mecca or Hardwar and make him behave as if he has no fixed identity.” (CRB.p.56). (Here Dr Oberoi is dancing to the tunes of Dr McLeod’s research *onjanam sakhis*).
17. “Just as there is no fixed Guru Nanak in the *janam sakhis*, there is no fixed Sikh identity in the early Guru period” (CRB.p.56). “Sikh world view of earlier Guru period allowed Sikhs to cut and sell their long hair to feed Guru Nanak.” (CRB.p.56). It is important to note that the Eurocentric Social Sikh historians will readily pick up such episodes from *janam sakhis*, (which they call mythical texts) as suit their purpose. Dr Oberoi forgets that the quest for early Sikh identity was enshrined in challenging the *status quo*. The displacement of Brahmin, the non-use of Sanskrit, the challenge to *sati* and *pardha* custom, the institution of *langar* to get rid of the caste system, and the writing of *gurbani* in Panjabi, so that the common man could benefit from it, were the pillars of Sikh identity in the early Guru period.
18. “Guru Arjun was executed, not martyred.” (Oberoi, Pashaura Singh, McLeod and J .S. Hawley do not use the word martyrdom for Guru Arjun. It appears it comes out of their collective group thinking).
19. The Jat influx into Sikhs produced the real Sikhs. So the Sikhs became Khalsas with their own *dharma*.

It is sad that a “Sikh Scholar” sitting on an University of British Columbia Sikh Chair is so anti-Sikh, that he does not seem to respect the Sikh Scripture, the Sikh Gurus, and the Sikh traditions because of his Eurocentric-Racist Scholarship.

He has no idea of the pain and hurt he is causing to those who collected money, so that a Sikh Chair could be started to enhance the image of the community.

He is a misplaced Marxist anthropologist who should be removed from the “Chair” and sent to teach Social Sciences in other departments of the University of British Columbia.

If he stays longer in the Sikh Chair, he may do further damage. If the University of British Columbia does not respect the sentiments of Canadian Sikhs, legal and political measures should be taken.

What Freud was to females, Jensen and Rushton to Blacks, Oberoi is to Sikhs.

## **An Attempt at Destruction**

Dr Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon

Harjot Oberoi's book "The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition" seems to be a motivated attempt to distort the Sikh identity by purposely ignoring the historic role of Sikh ideology in establishing an entirely new system as opposed to earlier Indian traditions. The book does not differ materially from the formulations of W.H. McLeod, who has been his examiner for his Ph.D. thesis, which has now been published in book form. The book seems to be aimed at making a systematic misrepresentation of Sikhism, its basic beliefs, ideals, institutions and history. By twisting and distorting the Sikh history Harjot Oberoi has tried to cast doubts regarding the well-entrenched and long cherished Sikh traditions, and thus to erode the very foundations of Sikh identity. His approach is not only biased, but also lop-sided and negative. The author's difficulty seems to be that he is absolutely ignorant of history and growth of religion, nor does he seem to be interested in knowing it.

The major drawback of Oberoi's work relates to the methodology adopted by the author in the study of Sikhism. A proper study of religion involves a study of the spiritual dimension and experiences of man, a study which is beyond the domain of Sociology, Anthropology and History. Any materialistic interpretation of religion, which does not go beyond the physical reality, perceived by senses, is bound to be lop-sided, limited and partial. Religion has its own tools, its own methodology and principles of study which take cognisance of a higher level of reality and a world-view which is comprehensive and not limited. The study of religion requires sharp insights into the totality of life including transcendental knowledge concerning God, the universe and the human spirit.

Harjot Oberoi's book is a typical example of verbose style through which he can succeed to some extent in misleading lay readers. But those who have knowledge and understanding of the history of religions cannot be misled. In the introduction of his book, he writes: "It is all very well for historians of religion to think, speak and write about Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism, but they rarely pause to consider if such clear-cut categories actually found expression in the consciousness, actions and cultural performances of the human actors

they describe. When reading religious histories, biographical texts mythical literature, archival materials, political chronicles, and ethnographic reports from nineteenth century Punjab, I was constantly struck by the brittleness of our textbook classifications. There simply wasn't any one-to-one correspondence between the categories that were supposed to govern social and religious behaviour on the one hand, and the way people actually experienced their everyday lives on the other hand." (pp. 1-2).

The premises on which the author is trying to build his thesis are too flimsy to make an indepth study. It is within the knowledge of every student of history that the pre- and post-1947 history of the Indian sub- continent is nothing but the history of ethnic, linguistic, cultural, social and communal tensions, clashes and even massacres. In the pre-Muslim India, the Buddhists were the victims of a religious crusade launched against them by the Hindu orthodoxy. The Bodhi tree at Gaya under which Buddha had attained his Nirvana was burnt, and in its place a Hindu temple was erected. A large scale massacre of Buddhists and burning of their monasteries took place, resulting in the virtual disappearance of Buddhism from India. The Hindu rule that followed, is looked upon by the Hindu historians as the golden epoch in the Indian history. This past was closely linked with the ideology of caste which over the centuries has been the foundation of a religiously ordained social fabric. The Maratha Peshwa rule, a period of Hindu revival, was known for the rigid perpetuation of the Brahminical caste system. In that rule some lower castes could not enter the city of Pune before 9 A.M. and after 3 P .M., because their long shadows could defile the higher castes, especially the Brahmins. The Muslim state in India was entirely subordinate to its church, and waged a relentless religious war (*Jehad*) against non- Muslims, who had to suffer political and social disabilities and pay toll tax (*Jazia*) and pilgrimage tax. Under Aurangzeb, there was large scale destruction of non-Muslim religious temples and other religious institutions in Northern India. In sharp contrast to this, the Sikh rule under Ranjit Singh witnessed a policy of religious tolerance and large hearted liberalism which had its roots in the Sikh ethos. During his reign, there were no outbursts of communal fanaticism, no forced conversions, no attempts at bloody revenge, no language tensions, no executions and no tortures. These being the historical realities well known to students of history, Oberoi's vision and senses seem too blurred to see the evil depths of division that have marked and ruined the course of Indian history leading to four divisions of the Indian sub-continent in the brief span of a single

eneration. This reminds us of Prof. Neol King's warning that in the field of history and religion, it is very necessary to know the background of the person. For, Oberoi's perceptions seem to be typical of a town-bred sheltered school boy, who lacks sense of proportion and assessment.

The author emphasises that 'the Sikh studies need to fully open up to the gaze of history', but at the same time chooses to ignore the overwhelmingly strong historical evidence, which distinguishes Sikhism from other religions. The martyrdom of the Sikh Gurus was to uphold the religious freedom of their own followers as well as that of others. Four sons of the Tenth Master laid down their lives for the same cause. Catholicity of Sikhism with its emphasis on universal brother-hood and tolerance of other people's beliefs cannot be confused with the lack of religious solidarity among the Sikhs. Even the contemporary Muslim chronicler, Mohsin Fani, bears testimony to the clearly demarcated features of Sikh ideology and ethos. The spirit of the Sikh Gurus was carried on by Banda Singh Bahadur and his men, who fought against the Mughals under the most inhospitable circumstances. But they stuck to their faith and principles till the end of their lives. The devotion of Sikhs to their religion and their spirit is evident from the fact that out of 740 Sikh prisoners of war, who were executed in Delhi, along with Banda, not one deserted the faith, even while given the choice to do so.

Qazi Nur Mohammad, who came to India with the famous invader Ahmed Shah Abdali, testifies in emphatic words to the separate religious identity and ethos of what he calls the followers of Nanak. Was it not the religious ideology of the Sikhs that equipped them to face intense persecution during the mid-18th century? If, as stated by Oberoi, the religious boundaries were not clearly defined before the advent of the British, then who were those Sikh heads on whom the Mughal administration, which knew its enemies well, fixed a price? Sikhism has had a long chain of sacrifices and martyrdoms which find no parallel in the history of other Indian communities. It was surely on account of its glorious heritage of sacrifice, that the Sikh community played a vital role not only in stemming the tide of invaders but also in the country's struggle for independence, a role which was out of all proportion to its small numbers.

The partition of India into two countries in 1947 was preceded by a long period of communal turmoil and clashes extending

over the past few centuries. Seen in this light, Oberoi's assertions that communal boundaries in India crystallised only in the 19th century, are absolutely baseless. Oberoi's entire understanding of the past, that there were no deeply marked communal boundaries, appears too naively simplistic, for, it leads to the suggestion, that the blood baths of the Blue Star attack at Amritsar, the large scale November 1984 massacres in the capital and elsewhere, and the blood soaked Babri Masjid episode at Ayodhya, are just post-independence developments that have no roots in the past.

Oberoi is fond of suggesting terms like 'multiple identities in Sikhism,' 'several competing definitions of a Sikh', 'religious diversity in Sikhism', 'religious fluidity in the Sikh tradition,' 'religious pluralism in Sikhism,' 'amorphous growth of religion,' etc. in order to prove that Sikhism has no clear definition. This is typical of a person ignorant of the Sikh scripture, which rigorously defines the doctrines and a world-view which are entirely independent and different from the fundamentals of contemporary religious systems. Had Sikh identity been vague or plural, the entire history of persecution and martyrdoms of the 18th century would become meaningless and un-understandable both for the Mughal administration and the Sikhs. Oberoi's major failing is that he does not understand that, unlike Protestantism or Vaishnavism, Sikhism is not a sociological growth or sect, but it has its ten Prophets, who created entirely a new society with radically different motivations, ideals and ethos, separate from the old Hindu society.

In fact, Sikh history is nothing but the expression of Sikh ideology. In sharp contrast to the dichotomous and life-negating systems, Guru Nanak's system is a whole-life system like Islam and Judaism, and takes an integrated view of the spiritual and empirical aspects of life. Consequently it categorically rejects monasticism, asceticism and withdrawal from life. It sanctions a householder's life with full social participation and social responsibility. Brotherhood of man and equality of men and women and of all castes are repeatedly emphasised in the *bani* and the lives of the Sikh Gurus. It is a radical departure from the Hindu social ideology of Varna Ashram Dharma, looked upon as divinely ordained. Hierarchical caste system is the pivot of the Hindu society, and has religious sanction. Guru Nanak's egalitarian mission provides the key to the understanding of the social significance of the Sikh movement. While putting Hindus and Sikhs in the same category, Oberoi again shows his typical ignorance of religion and religious history, when he observes: "Religion was basically a

highly localised affair, often even a matter of individual conduct and individual salvation Islam may have been the only exception to this.” (p. 14). Sikhism like Islam and Judaism is basically a societal religion. No serious scholar can deny that Sikhs have always been in the forefront in any struggle for universal causes and human rights. They have been trained to resist and confront injustice.

Oberoi includes Guru Nanak’s religion of ‘*nam simran*’ (remembrance of the Divine Word) in the ‘paradigm of interior religiosity’. Here the author fails to understand that Guru Nanak set himself apart from the crowd of quietistic Sadhus, Bairagis and Udasis who mused over life’s futilities, and mourned over the state of man in an evil world and who in the pursuit of their spiritual aims sought alienation from the world and its problems. Guru Nanak had a positive outlook on life, in contradiction to denunciation and renunciation of worldly life. With the Guru, Sikhism became a religion of householders. It was given an explicitly social character through a series of measures adopted by the Guru. The institutions of Dharmshalas (the earlier nomenclature of Gurdwaras, meant for public worship), Sangat (a corporate body of the Sikhs), Pangat (seating of the devotees in rows to stress the egalitarian principle), Langar (public kitchen) and Kirtan (singing of hymns in public) have come down to the Sikhs from the days of Guru Nanak. The Guru did not confine his activities to *Nam Simran* in the seclusion of his home. He was very mobile. He undertook extensive travels and organised Sangats at a time when foreign travel was a taboo, and caste Hindus felt themselves defiled by it. Guru Nanak looked upon the world as real and meaningful and not as ‘Maya’ or illusion.

Guru Nanak inaugurated a virile movement with an activistic approach to the problems of life. His heart melted at the sight of the debilitated Hindu society and the tyranny of the foreign invaders. He clearly saw that by neglecting to take proper steps for the defence of his subjects against the onslaughts of Babur, the Lodhi sovereign of Delhi was preparing the way for his ultimate ruin. ‘The dogs of Lodhi have spoiled the priceless inheritance, when they are dead, no one will regard them’. And very soon circumstances took such a turn that the Guru’s prognostication was literally fulfilled. The Guru regretted that the yogis of spiritual worth had hidden themselves in the safety of high mountains. His own response to the challenge was reflected in identifying the task. He wanted his successors to take up the task and devise practical responses according to the gravity of the challenge.

Unlike Buddha or Christ, or any other Prophet of a movement who left the work of its organisation incomplete, Guru Nanak purposely appointed a successor to complete it.

Oberoi makes vague and irrelevant observations regarding Sakhi Sarvar, Gugga, Seetla and ancestor worship among the Sikhs, about which he gives no data at all to support his argument. A correct evaluation of Sikhism cannot be made by a lop-sided or isolated study of a few rituals and beliefs prevalent in a very small section of the community during a period when some Hindus found it convenient to enter the Sikh fold. Any student of Guru Granth Sahib knows that it is full of hymns rejecting the spiritual character of Oevis, Pirs, gods, goddesses, etc., and that both the Guru Granth Sahib and the Sikh history record that the Gurus deprecated their worship. The Singh Sabha never invented anything. The mis-statement of Oberoi is coupled with another suppression by him of H.A. Rose's clear observation (whom he otherwise quotes) that in the Sikh villages there was known enmity between the Sikhs who did not worship Sakhi Sarvar and the Hindus who believed in Sakhi Sarvar. Apparently, Oberoi has concealed this clear observation of Rose. Instead, he makes the distortion that the Singh Sabha leaders were the first to object to these wrong practices. Such mis-statements, coupled with suppression of material facts, are generally made by partisan propagandists interested in mis-representation of Sikhism, but never by academicians. To draw conclusions about the ideology of Sikhs from a microscopic minority of converts who were Sakhi Sarvarias in the 19th century, ignoring the evidence of all injunctions and doctrines in the Guru Granth Sahib, of over two hundred years of the lives and practices of the Gurus, and of four centuries of Sikh history contradicting profusely the worship of Devis and Pirs, is an epistemological absurdity. It is worthwhile to stress that religion can be usefully studied only with the tools of its own discipline.

Oberoi tries to prove that 'the colonial state and its institutions played a significant role in the emergence of a homogeneous Sikh religion' (p. 423). It is well known that the British efforts were concentrated not on promoting, but undermining the Sikh identity. As in the case of the suppression of the conclusion of Rose's study, here again Oberoi seems to avoid known facts of Punjab history, like the large-scale missionary onslaughts under the wings of the colonial administration. Darbar Sahib and all the major Gurdwaras were



controlled by the Mahants and the Pujaris, who were under the Government patronage. The colonial rule had been extra-vigilant about the control of the Sikh shrines, as is clear from the letter written by Lt. Governor R.E. Egerton to Lord Ripon, the Viceroy, on August 8, 1881. "I think it will be politically dangerous to allow the management of Sikh temples to fall into the hands of a committee, emancipated from government control, and trust, your Excellency will resist to pass such orders in the case, as will enable to continue the system, which has worked successfully for more than thirty years." (British Museum Additional Manuscript No. 43592, Folio 300-301). It was only after a prolonged struggle that the Gurdwaras were liberated in 1925.

It is well known that Trumpp, a missionary commissioned by the colonial Government, to please his masters, wrote a deliberately damaging and distorted translation of the Sikh scripture and version of the Sikh ideology. On the other hand the same government in one form or the other punished and disgraced historians and scholars like J.O. Cunningham and M.A. Macauliffe, who gave an authentic and honest account of the Sikh history and religion. The anti-Sikh bias of the colonial missions is so strong that one of its old functionaries, W.H. McLeod has gone to the extent of making what are considered blasphemous and unethical attacks against the Sikhs.

Oberoi claims to give a new understanding of Sikh history of the 19th century. His view is as correct or authentic as the view of the Amritsar group of British proteges like Raja Bikram Singh of Faridkot, Vihiria band and others, who represented only themselves and their three Singh Sabhas as against the Lahore group, which represented the entire community of 118 Sabhas all over the country - a glaring fact which Oberoi has knowingly concealed while highlighting their views. For, Oberoi is never able to explain the lofty contribution of the Sikh society to history during every period of its life.

## **‘Construction of Religious Boundaries’**

Surtej Singh

Thanks to the reputation of the group to which the author belongs and the sort of theme developed by his companions in the recent past, one had a fair idea of how the book would turn out even before one picked it up from the shelf. Added advantage was that one was aware of the articles written by the author which form the nucleus of this book. The work of his group can be understood in the context of India’s recent history, particularly since 1947. It was felt that since the Constitution of 1950 contravened all promises solemnly held out to the Sikhs and other nations comprising the Indian sub-continent, and that since its purpose was to establish and maintain a political dominance of the permanent cultural majority over all minorities, a revolt against the scheme could be expected. The Sikhs in particular could not be expected to go on kissing their chains for ever. It was to obviate such possibility that the theme so popular with Harjot Oberoi and the group to which he belongs, was evolved. It attained some sort of misplaced academic acceptance abroad with Dr Hew McLeod, and has since the early seventies been beamed back to us in the transparent wrapper of ‘Western scholarship’. Those interested in the indigenous variety, will find it in the pronouncements of certain leaders of the Congress party and in the political writings of the ultra-Hindu Rashtriya Sewak Sangh.

The burden of the song is that Sikh identity is inconvenient and hard to digest. It has to be subtly dissolved and permanently subsumed without in anyway jeopardizing secular and democratic pretensions. Lala Achint Ram MP and some of his colleagues invited their Sikh friend Professor Niranjjan Singh, a well known ‘nationalist Sikh’ and a brother of the fearless Master Tara Singh, at a place in Delhi, immediately ‘after independence. They praised his secular and nationalist credentials profusely, and ardently requested him to now strike a big blow for national integration. The plan was simple. Sikhs and Hindus were no different in any significant aspect, except in physical appearance. So he was requested to lead the Sikhs in shaving off and becoming truly integrated with others around him. He was only a first generation convert, and was expected to agree. But he was totally disgusted with his erstwhile colleagues whose true colours were revealed to him for the first time in many decades. His reply was,

that if that was all the difference between a Hindu and a Sikh, would they consider the other alternative of leading the Hindus in letting their hair and beard grow long for the sake of national integration?

The theme has been pursued ever since. Like his mentor Dr McLeod, Harjot Oberoi has also taken up the strings.

The main thesis of this work is built on the false premise that unlike in the Semitic religious sphere of influence, religious boundaries have never been clearly defined in India. Indians of all faiths are supposed to have borne their religious identities on their sleeves. This is a strange thesis to propound in a sub-continent which has seen great religious turmoils. Almost half the population of which stands converted to Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, Christianity and of course Sikhism. History of the violent reconversion of Buddhists to Hinduism, destruction of their Stupas and monasteries, burning of their libraries, and razing of their educational institutions to the ground, took place in this land a thousand years ago. In the eleventh century Alberuni could go to the extent of saying, "the Hindus believe that there is no country but theirs, no nation like theirs, no kings like theirs, no religion like theirs, no science like theirs". The story of the Buddhists has been an oft-repeated one. It was repeated in 1947: vivisection of the country on religious basis was performed leading to the violent death of at least a million people. In 1984 every Sikh in the country was clearly identified. The Babri Masjid was pulled down in December 1993. The diffusion and overlapping of religious boundaries, which Oberoi sees all around, in fact does not exist and has never existed in history, as is borne out by the recurring communal holocausts.

From such baseless abstractions, he comes straight to his main business of assailing Sikhs and Sikhism. He dwells at length on the alleged pluralistic nature of Sikhism and the existence of more than one Sikh identities. For pursuing the point he has to make two mis-statements in the Sikh doctrinal and historical field, and he makes them rather enthusiastically. It is the very basis of the Guru Granth Sahib that all Gurus are one, have the same spirit, and merge spiritually to form the Word, the Guru Granth Sahib, the eternal Guru and the only Sikh canon. There is no justification for claiming differing identities in Sikhism. It is pure ignorance and gross heresy to assert that Guru Nanak's religion was different from that of Guru Gobind Singh. Moghals were very well acquainted with the fact that the Order of the Khalsa was the direct result of Guru Nanak's preachings. In the general order of genocide, issued in the early eighteenth century, the Moghal Emperor

clearly asserted, 'those who follow Guru Nanak (*Nanakprastan*), be done to death wherever spotted'.

Historically, during the dark age of persecution, that is, from 1701 to 1760 CE, Hindus in the garb of Udasis became the custodians of Sikh shrines. During the Sikh rule they emphasized their Sikh appearance, and continued in office. During the British rule, we find these people aligning themselves with the rulers and treating the recently enriched shrines as their personal property. It is then that they tried to desecrate the Gurdwaras by admitting images and un-Sikh practices in their functioning. Harjot Oberoi builds his thesis mainly on his observations of this period. He conveniently forgets that the corruption of the Gurdwaras was universally resented, people rose in revolt, led a sustained agitation, made heavy sacrifices, and finally succeeded in liberating Sikh shrines from the corrupt usurpers. They completely rejected their jaundiced views of Sikhism. That all this is of no consequence to the author, shows his bias. He, for instance, notes that caste prejudice had crept into the Gurdwaras but withholds the fact that it was precisely this, which was the starting point of the Akali movement for liberation of the shrines.

His use of the census figures is also defective, because he does not note that they are often manipulated. Census figures in India are always sensitive to the whims of the recording authority, and at best have a formal relationship with reality. The categories under which figures were returned, were decided upon by the Imperial masters in accordance with their convenience. He very ably conjures up the figures upto 1941 to show the diffusion of religious identities, and yet in 1947 every Sikh, Muslim and Hindu was precisely identified. Blood soaked partition of the country on communal basis took place nevertheless. This is the concrete reality. So the communal situation continues in spite of the loudly proclaimed platitudes and swearing by secularism. In November 1984 a section of the population was recognized as Sikhs and killed most brutally. The murderers are equally well recognized and roam free because they are on the right side of the communal fence; the country's written constitution notwithstanding.

His argument that, 'there is no fixed Sikh identity in early Guru period' is an absolutely false statement. It is clear that the Sikh personality had taken shape at the time of Guru Nanak himself, who created Sikh Dharamshalas, and founded an urban centre to become focal point of spreading his mission. Most of the Sikh pilgrim centres had been established very early. By the time of the Third Guru, Sikh

religious identity was recognized by the Moghal emperor and tax collectors alike. Guru Arjun became a martyr in 1604 AD. Mohsin Fani, a contemporary of the Fifth Guru, saw Sikhs all over the Indian cities, also in Afghanistan and Persia. He talked of their distinct path, and could precisely define them. The Sixth and Tenth Gurus had fought all but one of the wars of their careers before the creation of the Khalsa. Evidence is that most people did not “move in and out of multiple identities”, but had, on the contrary, shown eagerness to fight and die for preserving their distinct path.

Professor Jagjit Singh has most convincingly demolished the Jat theory of Or McLeod, but Oberoi clings to it. As is typical of the group, he blacks out all the serious works which have recently appeared to challenge such formulations. He does not even hint that the contrary point of view exists.

It is preposterous to suggest that Guru Gobind Singh gave “new theology”. He formalized the Sikh canon, which now ends at the Bani of the Ninth Guru. He also formally invested it with the status of the living Guru of the Sikhs. The Khalsa *rahit* is itself firmly grounded in the Guru Granth Sahib. The nomenclature, too, has been borrowed from there. The Tenth Guru codified some of the simplest rules, and popularised them as the *rahit* or the code of conduct for the Khalsa Order.

Oberoi’s division of the Sikhs into the Sanatan and the Tat Khalsa is both ridiculous and mischievous. He believes that the so-called Sanatan Sikhism “had ancient origins” and dates it to “when the universe came into existence”. The reader may make whatever he can of it! He talks of its having the so called Dasam Granth as its devotional text. If we go along with him, we will end up believing that Sanatan Sikhism ruled supreme from the middle of the nineteenth century to its end, for the Dasam Granth came into existence only then. Completely forgetting the historical context, he makes much of the “Sanatan Sikh tradition” developed during the early British period. Hinduized custodians of the Sikh shrines were eager to maintain their hold. They were backed by the Hindu population of the state. Hindus had always been at least suspicious of Sikh identity. Both were tacitly supported by the British administration which was trying to tame the volatile Sikhs and attempting to take them back to the apolitical Hindu past. To take the depraved *mahants* to be proponents of the ‘Sanatan tradition’ is preposterous. Similarly it is strange that he is able to call every non-

Sikh a Sahijdhari. He even defines the term negatively. It is excusable that such a person does not know that Sahij connotes a state of mind and cannot be a nomenclature for a sect.

The so-called Sanatan Sikhs, come out extremely intolerant and rigid in their beliefs as compared to the 'Tat Khalsa' he disap-proves of. They refuse to let Singh Sabha activists address the Sikhs from Gurdwaras, they resort to the extreme measure of excommunicating them, arrange to beat them up physically, forcibly remove Kirpans from their persons and refuse offerings made by their rivals at Sikh shrines. He does not mention it, but reformist Sikhs also had to Court martyrdom in large numbers in the bid to liberate their shrines. In short, "Sanatan Sikhs behave as the worst enemies of the neo-Sikhs". How deeply convinced the reformists must have been to have persisted in the face of all this!

Their strategy is also something worth singing about. They never gave up the path of reason, education of masses, dependence on the common man and the scripture. It is apparent also from this book that they built schools and colleges; took pains to establish printing presses, publish magazines, newspapers, books and pamphlets. What they turned out is remarkable for clarity, authenticity and sincerity. The sheer volume is mind-boggling. They worked like a people convinced of the truth of their undertaking. One is at a loss to understand why the so-called Sanatan Sikhs made no such effort. Why did they not hit back with the same tools? Why were they content to pass docilely into history? It is a sure sign that the construction placed upon the struggle by the present author is grossly faulty.

One really does not know what to say of his uninformed belief in 'popular religion', for he does not define the term. He is exceedingly harsh to a people who tried to retain enthusiasm for life at a time when there were no doctors, no scientifically prepared reliable medicines, no proper rules of hygiene, and epidemics dated the births and deaths in the family. In such circumstances Europe succumbed to witchcraft, black magic, belief in miracle-making saints and efficacy of shrouds and images in spite of fifteth hundred years of Christianity. At such times pagan beliefs made permanent niches into the Christian and even Islamic traditions. By contrast, the Sikhs periodically purged themselves of the burden of the dark past. The pace of such purifications became fast with the higher frequency of conversions. Neophytes are required to undertake the exercise ever so often. There is enough evidence to

show that even in the darkest period, the Sarvarias, the Devi worshippers and those of their ilk, had difficulty in finding recruits amongst the Sikhs.

Oberoi has had to misquote to make his view seem plausible. Had he tried to correlate his observations to the rapid growth rate of Sikhs in that period, he would have admired the people. It is remarkable how rude and untutored masses steeped in poverty, tried to lift themselves by the boot strings into better spiritual life with the aid of nothing else but their unflinching faith in the remarkable Sikh Gurus. What a glorious struggle it was! That the self-helping new converts took time to cast off their old beliefs, is entirely understandable. How can their effort be construed to support the non-existent notions of parallel religion?

His views about the activity of the Singh Sabha workers are equally untenable. He conveniently forgets that they had received unanimous support from the Sikh people. That would not have been possible, unless they were perceived to be honestly striving for restoring the pristine message of the Gurus. It is difficult to imagine that the entire Sikh world would conspire to subvert its own true faith.

Employment of the term “Tat Khalsa” for the real and the only Sikh identity, is a value-loaded use. The aim is to project it as something distinct, extraneous and, therefore, undesirable. This identity has been dreaded by rulers of all ages. They have unanimously resented its tendency to ostensibly support what Oberoi calls “the powerful separatist symbolism”. Since its very birth the current empire has been in perpetual political confrontation with the “surfacing of these sentiments of Sikh separation”. The aim of the state-inspired academic activity has been to isolate it, to establish it as a dispensable superstructure on Sikhism, to deride it as the source of all public ills and then to finally make a determined bid to dissolve it. Harjot Oberoi and his companions led by McLeod, fit neatly into the larger scheme, and have consistently tailored their formulations to suit the design of the ruling classes of India. This is the end they are all serving. They can judge for themselves how laudable their aim is. Obviously they can’t be objective, when they plan to conform to such a pre-conceived sinister design.

It is interesting that in the context of the Khalsa *rahit*, Harjot Oberoi argues that, “the body was made a principal focus of symbolic concern and central means of projecting ideological preoccupations”. (One is tempted to ask in what period of time and in which society it

was not so!). Very recently a high profile seminar was held by a body of Sikhs close to government thinking on *rahit*. Primarily it projected similar ideas. Preoccupation, likewise, was to prepare ground for assailing the Sikh *Rahit Maryada*. A single topic for discussion given to more than a hundred scholars from all the North Indian universities was, 'Concept of Body in Sikhism'.

As for the rest of it, this book inflicts upon readers a Super-fluous discussion on the obvious process by which certain social classes which had become irrelevant, vanished from the scene. The fillers commonly used by Oberoi's group are all there, too. You will come across the view that the Britishers recognized only the Khalsa Sikhs, (that they bent head over heels to maintain the *mahants* in possession of *gurdwaras* is glossed over), and that Sikhs felt greatly inimical to Muslims (how they could rule over the numerically superior Muslim population without committing any excess is not mentioned). The concept of "*evolvingrahit*" is sought to be popularised. The worship of Durga (complete with the story which has an altogether different connotation) is not omitted. Stress is laid on Guru Nanak's religion being that of interiority, although there is not an iota of evidence to support the proposition. Much attention is paid to dissentors and schismatic sects within Sikhism, and in the true tradition of McLeod they are held to be representing the ultimate truth about Sikhism.

Harjot Oberoi comes out as some sort of an expert in part reading of the historical evidence before him. His perspective is awry, as it is bound to be, since he has to drum up support for pre-conceived notions and a sinister undeclared design, otherwise unsustainable.



## **An Unpardonable Excess**

Dr Jodh Singh

When famous satirist Pope in his 'Rape of the Lock' said that little knowledge is a dangerous thing, he was anticipating scholars like H. Oberoi and others of his ilk. While going through the book by Harjot Oberoi one is easily convinced that by just picking up from a particular period (19th century in this case) a few particular cases Dr Oberoi has unjustifiably drawn his conclusions about the whole Sikh Community to the effect that the Sikhs are a mixed traditional community having nothing specific and distinct of their own. He refers to two examples, one of a woman Dani and the other of two palanquin (doli) bearers appearing to be Sikhs and yet smoking tobacco. Well, these isolated cases only hint that a few people, as is common to all communities, are lax in observing Sikh practice. How does it mean that the Sikh doctrines are ambiguous or unworthy of adherence? Could Oberoi quote from the Guru Granth Sahib or the Rahit Marayada that smoking is not a taboo in Sikhism? Can one say that since Muslims drink, they are not forbidden by the holy injunctions to do so? Many social ceremonies are solemnised under the religious umbrella among different communities of the world, and still the vows are frequently broken, commandments disobeyed and divorces obtained. But could the whole community on the basis of few stray cases be given another brand name? For such Sikhs the term 'Sanatani Sikh' has been used by Oberoi which is not only ludicrous but misnomer too. In fact, in his anxiety to invent a new term, perhaps, Dr Oberoi forgot that 'Sanatani' means eternal, primaeval which has nothing to do with time and space. Thus the use of this term for his new Sikh category only betrays the confusion of the author of the book.

No doubt, a reformatory current in the Sikh community started in the 19th century which tried to affirm the faith of the Sikhs in the Guru Granth Sahib and its doctrines. The criticism was directed against the un-Sikh practices and corruption of the self-styled demi-Gurus, and not the doctrine laid down by the, Gurus. This criticism of corruption in holy places is still going on and will continue so long a neat and clean administration is not provided by the people at the helm of affairs. But this does not mean that religious belief of the whole Sikh Community should be tarnished, and the Sikhs presented as a community practising magic, sorcery and superstitions. On the part of a Sikh it is not only an unpardonable excess perpetrated upon

the community, it is height of ungratefulness as well.

From the word ‘boundaries’, one expected that the learned another would define the core principles of Sikhism such as belief in the unity of God, the doctrines of spirituality and temporality in one’s personality, Sabad as the Guru etc., as in the case of Buddhism in which Anitya, (niomentariness), Anatma (no self), Dukhha (suffering), and Nirvana (final liberation) are the four boundaries which have to be included in the doctrines of Buddhism. Without these forms, no sect of Buddhism will be considered genuinely Buddhistic. And there are scores of sects of Buddhism. From a scholar occupying a Sikh Chair the community expected only this much, and perhaps it was not too much. Instead Dr Oberoi has struggled in vain to suggest that without study of its scripture the doctrines of a religion could be constructed from a few case histories carefully picked up to suit the convenienc’: of the author.

Dr Oberoi, on the basis of a superficial study of the Dasam Granth suggests that Sikhism accepts the theory of incarnations of God, and hence Sikhs believe in avtarvad of Hinduism. He has obvious-ly missed the real message of the Gurus, made abundantly clear in the whole body of Sikh literature that Akal Purakh, Nirankar is supreme of Japuji (stanza). In Chaubis Avtar also it is unambiguously stated that Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh are subservient to Him and that in the cosmic body of the Akalpurakh, dwell crores of Vishnus, Maheshas, Indras, Brahmas, Suns, Moons and the water deities. I am afraid that let alone the constructing of the boundaries of religion, he has not even understood the meaning of the ‘boundaries’.

## **Harjot Oberoi - Scholar or Saboteur?**

Dr Manjeet Singh Sidhu

Breaking the serene midnight stillness an enchanted maker of music plays aloud upon his drums. His neighbours, all ardent advocates of the freedom of expression, file a joint complaint against the music-maker charging him with public nuisance and invasion of their privacy. Authorities summon the music-maker and order him to stop his mid-night passion or else face punitive action. The advocates of the freedom of expression are jubilant for putting an end to the unwelcome flow of musical numbers into their ear-drums. They are the same people who felt appalled and outraged when Khomeni decreed a death sentence against Salman Rushdie, author of the Satanic Verses.

Khomeni's decree has been denounced as a judgment that lacked judicial procedure and stretched beyond his jurisdiction and power. However, denunciation of Khomeni's decree does not absolve Rushdie of the serious offence of hurting the religious faith and feelings of millions of Muslims all over the world. Therefore, Rushdie must also be held accountable for his potentially explosive transgression. Freedom of expression has its own implicit and explicit code which has to be scrupulously adhered to. Absolute freedom is inconsistent with a harmonious social order which demands restraint, responsibility, discipline and discretion and forbids adumbral adventurism into the sensitive terrain of religious beliefs.

Portraying a revered prophet as an idiot is far graver and provocative an act than playing drums loudly at midnight. Yet the advocates of the freedom of expression idolize Rushdie and denounce his critics by branding them as bigoted fundamentalists. Drums hurt a handful of protesting diehards and were instantly silenced. Rushdie grievously hurt millions of believers in Prophet Mohammad and was grandiloquently elevated to the stature of Lincoln and Gandhi.

Somehow the logic of it all is beyond me. To me it is double standards. More often than not a deliberate and sacrilegious assault is quietly condoned but a simple unintentional act is blown out of all proportions and vehemently denounced. The prevalence of such equivocation has provided to some pseudo-scholars a strategic base to distort and destroy historically established beliefs, traditions and practices.

Under the deceptive disguise of research, scholarship and creativity piles of malicious materials has of late been excreted first to dilute and then to erode the essentials of the Sikh religion. Harjot Oberoi and Pashaura Singh belong to a group that owes its allegiance to W. H. McLeod, the Christian missionary masquerading as a commentator and historian. This group is engaged in the pernicious program of making convenient but untenable formulations that attempt to negate the overwhelming facts of history with the sole intent of under-mining the revelatory character, distinct identity and historical pre-eminence of the Sikh religion.

The trouble with Mr. Oberoi is that he is a mendacious gleaner and not an objective researcher. He picks up only such material as can be twisted to suit his perverted politico-nihilist agenda. To accomplish his mission of denigrating Sikh religion he has carefully ignored the authentic historical documents and records as well as dispassionately researched books by reputed scholars. The central argument in his book 'The Construction of Religious Boundaries' is that during the Guru-period and the post Guru-period, the landscape in the Punjab presented an indistinguishably integrated terrain without any noticeable undulating religious divisions like Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. This argument is so farfetched and far removed from the facts of history that in academic evaluation it will be dismissed as either the dream projection of a drugged mind or a calculated concoction with insidious intent. As a natural corollary of his argument it would follow that the elaborate accounts of religious persecutions, forcible conversions, communal holocausts, discriminatory taxes (Jazia) and martyrdoms of Guru Arjun Dev, Guru Tegh Bahadur and thousands of other Sikhs were nothing but figments of a fertile imagination, and in Oberoi's logic it would be proper to characterize them as pure myths. His weird logic will have us believe that there were no religious boundaries during the Mughal period simply because Hindu Rajputs helped imperial Mughal forces to subdue independent Hindu Kingdoms. How could there be distinct religious boundaries if Hindus were fighting Hindus to promote a Muslim empire? Such is the nature of Oberoi's logic. Nothing can be more pathetic than his arbitrarily stretched and violently applied process of reasoning. According to him these boundaries developed later as a consequence of the British rulers' political compulsions.

The reading of Mr. Oberoi's book makes it abundantly clear that

he has purposely ignored the genesis and growth of Sikh religion, and has resorted to self-constructed formulations to adulterate the crystal clear message of the Gurus and its consequential blossoming into a valiant and highly successful Sikh community. The homage of the term Sanatan Sikhs and its application to Sahejdhari Sikhs is transparent enough to show that Mr. Oberoi has an ulterior motive. His motive is to project Sikh religion as just another tradition in the jungle of Hindu conglomerate in which contradictory dogmas, deities, myths, miracles, rituals, fasts, worships, jantras, mantras and a host of other beliefs co-exist and often overlap one another. Contrary to this amorphous and incongruous collectivity, a follower of the Sikh religion stands distinct as one who has an unflinching faith in the Guru Granth Sahib, and who unreservedly follows the teachings of the ten Gurus, and accepts no other tradition, belief or practice.

Sahejdhari word is loosely used for clean-shaven Sikhs who in every other way are as committed to the Sikh tenets as Kesadhari or Amritdhari Sikhs. They neither smoke nor subscribe to a different school of thought. In fact there is no such category as Sanatan Sikhs in the Sikh religion. Plurality is foreign to Sikhism. The distinctiveness of Sikh religion lies in its uniformity which flows as a natural consequence of the uniformity in the teachings of the Sikh Gurus. Since the teachings of the Gurus emanated from the divine fount of revelation, the uniformity is inherent and preordained. It is unlikely that Mr. Oberoi is unaware of the centrality of the message and the meaning of the Bani enshrined in the Guru Granth Sahib, but in his anxiety to push his personal point of view he refuses to open his eyes to the overpowering and self-illuminating reality of the Bani and instead takes refuge in conjectural and contrived myths, and tries to disguise them under an elaborate paraphernalia of academic accoutrements.

The proper study of the Bani can dispel the darkness in which scholars of Mr. Oberoi's genre are groping. Their misguided attempt to portray Sikhism as a reformist movement aimed at cleansing the prevailing religious orders are rooted in dishonest motives. Though reform is fundamental to the mission of every Prophet, yet, Guru Nanak's message was not limited to effecting reform in the religio-social fabric of the times. Guru Nanak was deeply concerned with the empirical reality and yet transcended the mundane areas of human activity, opening new vistas of spiritual awareness. The word Hinduism, no doubt, has a wide implication but it is altogether incorrect to include Sikhism in it because of the fact that Guru Nanak's teachings assumed a critical attitude

towards the three cardinal pillars of Hinduism i. e. the priesthood, the caste system and the Vedas. He rejected the very fundamentals on which the whole structure of Hinduism rests. A reading of the Guru Granth Sahib strongly suggests that Sikhism should be regarded as a new and separate religion. Guru Nanak tackled the ethical problem in a singularly fruitful way. He justly rejected the earth-bound utilitarianism of the sensate man, and also steered clear of the self-negating pathways of asceticism.

A healthy participation in the process of individual and social life was held up as an ideal. The ritualistic framework of the current Hinduism was abandoned, and the conventional social code governed by caste was rejected with vehemence. He made a radical departure from considering this world as illusion (Maya), and forcefully asserted that the world is the abode of the True One and hence it is a reality, though the creation as compared to the Creator is only a subordinate reality.

Therefore, the term Sanatan Sikhs can at best be used to describe that section of the Hindus which never came within the formal fold of Sikhism but held deep respect for the Sikh Gurus and regularly read and recited selected hymns like Sukhmani Sahib, Japji, Asa di var', etc. A large number of Sindhi Hindus worship Guru Nanak and keep Guru Granth Sahib in their homes. In every other way these Hindus remained rooted in the Hindu tradition and never observed the basic Sikh tenets. They smoke, observe all kinds of fasts, worship idols and believe in holymen like Sakhi Sarvar and Guga Pir. Mr. Oberoi erroneously calls such Hindus as Sanatan Sikhs. In the introduction to the 'Construction of Religious Boundaries,' he mentions at page 11 that "during the 1891 census in Punjab 1,344,862 Sikhs declared themselves as Hindus." And to further his argument of plurality in Sikhism he arbitrarily characterizes these Hindus as Sikhs and invents a fallacious term "Sanatan Sikhs" to disguise his real design of projecting Sikhism as only a reformist movement within the general Hindu tradition.

He further compounds this error when he projects the Anrit-sar Singh Sabha as the bona-fide representative body of the entire Sikh Panth and makes a clever detour to avoid mentioning the authentic Lahore Singh Sabha with as many as 118 branches that were operating to disseminate the teachings of the Gurus. He also avoids mentioning the negative role of the masands and the disgruntled Bedi, Bhalla, Tehan and Sodhi relatives of the Gurus who had established their private centres (shops) and were dispensing libertine potions to attract

maximum crowds. These establishments were the decadent aberrations, and stood apart and outside the vigorously vibrant Sikh mainstream. These were the aberrations that in Mr. Oberoi's words "Created a cultural reference system akin to that of the carnival", and the perusal of his books and articles strongly suggests that his ardent advocacy of these aberrations is designed to inject a carnivalesque character into the solemn Sikh mainstream as a process of slow poison-ing to destroy and dissolve its distinct identity and values.

In his anxiety to provide an apparently concrete premise to his insubstantial fairy tale constructions, Mr. Oberoi builds a complex platform of what he calls popular culture, which, according to him, obliterated the religious boundaries. In his reckoning the so called popular culture was so all pervasive and all powerful as to create a harmonious social order in which Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs as separate entities of different denominations became irrelevant. A lay student of history will characterize such a conclusion as an Utopian dream of some deluded idealist, but to a more perceptive and penetrat-ing eye the entire exercise unmistakably points to a singular objective of undermining the distinct Sikh identity. Mr. Oberoi knows full well that nothing, least of all his conjectural concept of popular culture, can diminish the ideological dichotomy obtaining between Hinduism and Islam; that is why at no point of time in history were these two reconciled in any part of India. Clearly this concept of popular culture has been created by him like the term Sanatan Sikhs to submerge Sikh identity into the sea of Hindu polytheism.

To prove his point about the prevalence of popular culture, he mentions that Maharaha Ranjit Singh and the Sikh rulers of cis-Sut-lej State paptronized Hindu temples and made generous contributions to their funds and also participated in their religious ceremonies and rituals. But he fails to mention that rulers generally resort to such exercises as part of their public relations programs in order to show themselves as impartial and just rulers. For the Sikh rulers such a stance was all the more necessary because they were ruling over overwhelmingly non-Sikh population. In Maharaja Ranjit Singh's kingdom Sikh Population was hardly 13%. It was partly political expediency and Partly Sikh religion's ethos that prompted Ranjit Singh and other Sikh rulers to extend patronage to Hindu and Muslim institutions as well.

Akbar's visit to Goindwal to meet with Guru Amar Das and his

joining the common langar was also a public relations exercise. Similarly the rulers in Delhi from the British period to the present time have been paying visits to various gurdwaras for the same reason. To give a different construction to such visits would mean weaving fictional yarn for a devious personal agenda and to conclude that these visits point to the absence of religious boundaries would mean stretching the argument even beyond the ludicrous. This is precisely what Mr. Oberoi is trying to do when he argues that since some Sikhs also joined Hindus and Muslims in visiting shrines like that of Sakhi Sarvar and Guga pir, it proves that there were no clear cut religious boundaries in the Punjab, Given the population complexion in which Sikhs constituted a very very small minority it was difficult to determine with reasonable degree of certainty whether some stray Sikhs supposedly sighted among the visitors to the shrines of the Pirs were real Sikhs or just fake fair weather Sikhs who had stopped shaving their beards for material gains and also whether they were actually devotees or merely curious tourists who had come with their Hindu or Muslim friends or neighbours in a spirit of comradeship. I have never felt any reluctance in going to Temple, Mosques and Churches along with my Hindu, Muslim and Christian friends and neither have they felt any reluctance in going with me to the gurdwara. Does it mean we have ceased to be Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs or Christians? Does it mean our respect for one another's religion has dismantled the religious boundaries and created what Oberoi calls a popular culture? Far from it, such a puerile inference deserves to be pitied rather than ridiculed. In fact it is Mr. Oberoi who is inventing "pseudo-synthetic historiography" to cloud the clear vision of the world as enunciated and established by the founders of the Sikh religion and its uninterrupted continuation to the present day despite many conspiracies to adulterate its purity. It was to effectively counter these misconceived conspiracies that Singh Sabha organized and formalized the Sikh ethos and practices strictly in accordance with the preaching of the Gurus. These conspiracies were hatched by Hindu saboteurs who had put on the garb of Sikhs. Mr. Oberoi identifies them as Sanatan Sikhs. These saboteurs were operating in complicity with the Arya Samaj. Singh Sabha movement exposed their true character leading to their unceremonious dismissal by the mainstream Sikhs.

Mr. Oberoi makes yet another baseless assertion that the peasantry resisted the Singh Sabha manifesto of distinguishing Sikhs from members of other religious traditions but fails to explain why Singh Sabha movement became a glorious success and emerged as



the unquestioned nucleus of the Sikh Panth. How is it that Singh Sabha had its largest constituency among the peasantry or why did the con-spiratorial and peripheral Sanatan Sikhs vanish into oblivion? Singh Sabha did not enjoy State or any other patronage, rather it was constantly clashing with the rulers. Still, more and more common Sikhs enthusiastically embraced and adopted its manifesto. How does Mr. Oberoi explain this development? Obviously, he will not like to answer questions that point to the hollowness of his make-believe formulations and unmask his real design of undermining the distinct Sikh identity. All through his book he has made wild statements without a shred of evidence or historical document or proof. Mr. Oberoi ought to realize that history is not a puppet that can be made to dance to the prurient whims of pervert scholars, nor is it a slave to abstract theorizing.

## **Mountain on a Molehill Foundation**

Dr Sarjit Singh

The concept of history, like beauty seems to reside in the mind of the writer. Sir Winston Churchill allegedly wrote his autobiography in the guise of history. Among equals, history is an on-going saga of conflicting ideas. Among unequals, it is an account of the Vanquished by the victorious. In the West, most historians, solely relying on the secondary Sources for their research on the East, continue to insist their version to be 'accurate' notwithstanding their lack of expertise in the languages of the original Sources. Colonialists may have gone but not the associated mentality.

Nevertheless, students from the developing world are still attracted to the West. Their intent is not as much to learn about their own history and culture as to get a lucrative job in the West after they graduate and bypass the long lines of, unemployment in their own countries. In almost all cases they successfully accomplish their mission.

In search of a parchment in Sikh history, Professor Harjot Oberoi, an Indian of Punjab origin, went all the way to Australia, in preference to his home state where Sikhism was born, nurtured, became a religion and is burgeoning with three reputable universities. Australia, once a penal colony, has a checkered history and has shied away from dealing with the third world countries. Its universities, seldom known for excellence in any way, not even the core subjects like science and technologies, are by no means a Mecca for learning history of Indian religions. Ironically, they show much resourcefulness in bestowing terminal degrees on students from the developing world. Mr. Harjot Oberoi received one in the history of Sikh religion. There he also received 'guidance' from a New Zealander, Dr W.H. McLeod, Professor of History. Once a missionary in Punjab and now a self proclaimed atheist, he "has a reputation, high in the Western world and inversely proportional among Sikh scholars, for his writings on Sikhs.

With encouragement from his mentors Prof. Oberoi has now crafted this long book. In it he says that the Indian peoples, set of religious beliefs could not be neatly parcelled out into Hindu, Sikh or Muslim categories as these did not mutually exhaust the whole population of believers. Instead, he maintains that there were only sacred traditions as the people crisscrossed the bounds of each others'

category and acquired multiple identities. For unexplained reasons, he is silent about Christianity. Were its followers in India marching to a different tune?

Focusing his arguments on the 'Sikh traditions' the author repeats Prof. W.H. McLeod's assertion that 'there were several Sikh identities available during the period immediately following the 1849 annexation of Punjab and concludes that by the end of the first decade of the 20th century, the Tat Khalsa purged the prevailing pluralistic Sikh traditions and enunciated an orderly, pure, singular form of sikhism.

As far as the story goes it reads like a fiction for its background plots. To make it interesting, secondary material in the form of private memoirs, an observation by a foreigner, and remotely related un-published Ph. D. dissertations from distant lands where Sikhs probably have been heard of only in the newspapers account for their valor in World Wars, are relied upon. But the plots remain more flawed than interesting. The author succeeds in constructing a mountain of a book on a molehill foundation. Its deficiencies are too many to be enumerated. Space limitations allow only an inking into them.

The very start of the book is based on a false premise. Its justification is grounded in what could at best be called aberrations. (The author himself seems unsure of its justification. He repeats its purpose at least five times on pages 4, 23,25,30,47.) His initial claim (p. 30) that there are 'rich data' available for the book, is belied when he switches (p. 144) to improvised proxies as a substitute. He draws on 'facts' of convenience, ignores the relative magnitude of those with multiple identities at the macro level, superficially mentions the nature of the role of the non-Sikh organizations, and fails to discuss the impact of the distribution of economic resources among communities on the development of religious identities. His chapter conclusions do not always follow the narrative and his main conclusion is overdrawn for wrong reasons. Besides, the theoretical concepts interjected here and there stay un-hinged.

He expects the religious classification such as Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam to have "one-to-one correspondence" between the followers and their specific categories. Since they do not, he [rods these categories inappropriately classified. He cites many examples - a Sikh smoking tobacco (forbidden under Sikhism) a Hindu worshipping Idols as well as reciting from Sikh scriptures, a Muslim following Hindu rituals, and all three categories undertaking pilgrimages to Muslim shrines.

In social sciences 101, every aspiring college freshman knows that human behaviour cannot be mathematically formulated and that there is no one-to-one relationship. Even the most commonly observed human behaviour when conceptually formulated and empirically tested is contingent upon stringent qualifications. An infringement of these formulations does not refute their validity. Religious behaviour is no exception. There is hardly a religion whose followers follow its tenets religiously. To varying degrees most of them succumb to practices, 'enchanted' as well as not so 'enchanted', sometimes intermittently, other times for prolonged periods of time.

Muslims forbidden from consuming alcohol are not all abstainers. About fifty percent of adult Christians who get married in churches, break their vows and get divorced. Ten Commandments are disobeyed even by the preachers with large followings. By the author's standards, these religions are not demarcated either, and their followers practising popular religion.

The British come in for criticism for short-changing the classification of Indian religions in their Censuses. The author implies that the Punjab population being of hybrid beliefs got arbitrarily divided at the time of the partition in 1947! If this were the case, why did these categories practising 'popular religion' slaughter each other? How could the 'traditions' built over 100 years become devoid of their influence so quickly? Either the 'popular religion' was too sterile to generate enough goodwill and contain the fury, or the people with 'multiple identity' were too few to have any restraining influence. The answer, either way, goes against the main theme of the book.

Where evidence is not forthcoming, the author invokes the 'modesty-is-an-over-rated-virtue' maxim. Rhetorically he asks why the principles of silence, and of negation 'have come to exercise such a powerful influence on Sikh historiography' (regarding the existence of multiple identities). In other words he asks why did the Sikh or the European writers not recognize that there was a wide variety of religious practices within the Sikh 'tradition'? Unable to provide any evidence, he resorts to conjectures (pp. 31-35).

No information is provided on the number of the Sahajdhari Sikhs (Nanak Panthis, Udasis, Nirmala and the like) beyond asserting it was 'not insignificant' and that a few of them were very knowledgeable of Sikh scriptures. Without any supporting evidence

his assertion remains only a hypothesis. The fact that a number of these sects were led by those denied succession to become Guru, or wanted to cash in on family lineage (as the Bedis had done) is not mentioned, much less underlined. Their number was most likely small since the Sikh Gurus did not have many such relatives. The others - ascetics - just wanted to extend their circle by including rural Sikhs for collecting alms after the political situation turned in favour of Sikhs. Banda Singh Bahadur, once an Udasi, had led the Sikh forces as a Khalsa Sikh.

He cites the census figures relating to Sikh followers of Sakhi Sarwar. They were no more than 2.7 percent of the Sikh population. Not content with such a small percentage, the author once again conjectures their numbers to be larger, thus blurring the distinction between hypothesis and hallucination. In any case, the era preceding the study had witnessed religious intolerance the world over. The territory now labelled India- Pakistan-Bangladesh had been ravaged by the ruling clans in the name of religion. Wherever marauding armies could not reach, the local majority terrorized the minority. The British had come to India for commerce, but religious conversions also were not far away from their mind. (The ruling elite in the third world countries still continue to play with greater finesse the insidious game of keeping the cauldron of sectarian strife boiling).

In a political environment where prices were specified on their head, and echoes of their total annihilation filled the air, the Khalsa (those with genuine conviction in the Sikh religion and baptized in the tradition introduced by their tenth Guru), were hunted like wild beasts for their principled stand to fight oppression. As late as February 5, 1762, the Afghan invaders led by their king Ahmed Shah Durani had suddenly attacked Punjab and killed more than 30,000 Sikh men, women and children in Ludhiana. They blew up the Sikhs most revered gurdwara popularly known as Golden Temple, and claimed that they had broken the back-bone of the Sikhs.

Under these conditions facing the invaders was nothing short of committing 'harakiri'. But the Khalsa did fight, not in frontal assaults but as guerrillas between 1716 and 1765 and bore the entire brunt of the predatory onslaughts. They defended themselves, and the op-pressed where they could, against the prevailing politically directed religious tyranny. More often than not did they end up laying their life. In death they inspired others to take their place. During this period the

Khalsa had trusted their important religious infrastructures to their 'sympathizers' for upkeep, for which they had to pay heavy price much later. Who were these Khalsa? Most of them were the tillers of the land - the peasants, not the Udasis or Nirmalas. They were not around as Sikhs and there was no room for another version of the Sikh identity to emerge. Khalsa was the only identity the Sikhs carried.

The Hindus (who had been ruled by a minority community for more than a thousand years, and frequently persecuted particularly during the rule of Aurangzeb, a Muslim ruler of the seventeenth century), looked up to the Khalsa as their shield and, therefore, held them in great respect in the days of physical insecurity. A few of them supported the Khalsa. The others substituted discretion for the better part of valor. They were not averse to changing their tune in line with the prevailing political and/or economic winds.

In 1765 the Khalsa-Sikhs were able to throw all the oppressors out of Punjab and establish a bridgehead for their own government. The days of religious persecution were over. It was during this period that a large number of Hindus of high caste Sanatan Sikhs as the author calls them, were attracted to the Sikh faith. The author does not specify their origin except to say, without any evidence, that they were the offshoot of the rapprochement between the Sahajdhari and the Khalsa tradition and that the Sanatan Sikh tradition had displaced the Khalsa tradition. He would have the reader believe that the Sikhs, as a matter of choice, now could practise Hindu philosophy as well. Why could they not practise the Muslim religious code, whose adherents were numerically dominant, remains a mystery. Would not the devotion to Sakhi Sarvar have made the transition much easier?

It is the role of the Sahajdhari Sikhs and the Sanatan Sikhs which Prof. Oberoi inflates beyond recognition, and tries to create reality out of hallucination. He uses the Sahajdhari Sikh label as an umbrella for assorted tiny groups of ascetics scattered in the Hindu majority areas. Being Hindus they diametrically differed from the Khalsa in their philosophy, code, and way of living. The author produces an oblique letter from an obscure place as evidence, and marshals every bit of scrap to make his characterization of their importance stick. Otherwise the whole edifice of his "construction" would come crumbling down.

This brings us to a central question. How does one acquire a particular identity? Could a believer in Guru Nanak's philosophy contravene it in practice as a matter of principle? Could the Muslims

not claim to be Sikhs since many of them regard Sikh Gurus as their Pirs? Of course there were no Sikhs of any identity before Guru Nanak, the founder of sikhism. They came into being as followers of the line of GurUS following the same religious message. If the Sahajdhari selectively set up their own set of philosophy and rules, they could not be considered Sikhs. The Udasis were celibates, did not work for a living, emphasized a different mode for salvation, and stressed the need to serve the sadhus, saints and priests.

At best they may have been Sikh sympathizers but were not Sikhs. According to the author, the so called Sanatan tradition could worship idols, practise caste system or subscribe to the ancient Hindu philosophy, and still be called Sikhs! If this tradition had displaced the Khalsa's how could its own 'tradition' vanish so quickly in a period which was more favourable to its growth? It is more logical to believe that their influence was too weak to take the ground. Scattered instance here and there do not constitute credentials for making a 'tradition'.

To construct the historical bounds, it is imperative to define, mathematically speaking, which element in domain (the population) belongs to which element in the range, and by what rule. The author refrains from facing this task and does not define criteria which could sort out Sikhs into a category or a tradition. Employing this yardstick, the incongruities underlying the author's argument become clear and the '*raison-d'etre*' for the book ceases to exist.

In practice, the new entrants followed neither the Sikh code nor their basic philosophy. They had engaged in a familiar kind of intellectual deception, practised about two thousand years ago, to successfully eradicate Buddhism, a religion born in India. They set in motion again. This time the methodology was to equate a doctored manuscript called Oasam Granth (containing about 98 percent of the ancient Hindu philosophy and a small portion of writings by the tenth Guru) with the Sikh scriptures. It worked in a very limited way. A large number of Khalsas were not familiar with their own scriptures. But it is a far cry from the claim that they all fell for it.

The 1848 defeat of the Lahore Ourbar had removed all their pretenses and showed that the converts were there not so much out of conviction in the religion as an opportunity to exploit the new situation. Their past experience had made them adept at it. And they wasted no time. When the British annexed Punjab in 1849, they changed back to their ariginal calar. "When Khalsa was in the ascendant, large number af Hindus had begun to' grow their hair and beards and pay lip-warship

to' the Sikh Gurus. After annexation, these time servers returned to the Hindu fold".

Soon these 'time servers' became a part of the Arya Samaj formed in the late 1870s whose slogan was 'back to' Vedic era. They denigrated every religion including that of the Sikhs, their Gurus and the Granth Sahib. They began converting Sikhs back to' the Hindu fold. Christian missionaries were not far behind in playing this 'game' with help from the British officials. Their zest had continued unabated. (If an index of the Hindu fervor was needed, they provided themselves in the post-Partition era when they declared that Punjabi was not their mother tongue although they had spoken it for more than a thousand years. They had come to' associate the Punjabi language with the Sikhs).

In fact the author makes a lavish use of Professor Ruchi Ram Sahni's memoirs without informing the reader that Mr. Sahni was, in the early 1930s, the President of a branch (the Swatantrata party) of the Indian National Congress in Punjab, and this organization was essentially made up from urban Hindus and was dominated by the Arya Samajis. The Singh Sabha was born after experiencing the belittling of the Khalsa for four years.

The role of the print media, which according to' the author played a 'vital' role in purging the Sikh plurality, is a sheer exaggeration. Hindus in towns and cities, perhaps ten times more numerous than the Sikhs, owned almost everything called urban. They used it to' the hilt unmindful of the consequences. 'For a long time there has been a school of opinion in Punjab that had it not been for the vernacular press then based in Lahore, Partition may have never happened'. The Sikhs being ruralists and the least educated in Punjab lacked ability to' read or write. Only a minuscule number of them could. The Arya Samajis pulled all the stops. If they did not succeed in proportion to the resources they owned, it was not for the lack of trying.

Khalsa philosophy propounded by their Gurus was 'to' uphold the dignity of humanity, to' free the mind of man from every type of bondage and to' uproot the oppression and tyranny, social as well as political'. Being easily comprehensible, and humane, the Singh Sabha had a greater success at least in holding their turf. Critical to' their success was not as much the number of schools, books, nor the print media, important though they were, as the nature of the religious message with which the rural Sikhs could easily identify.

Yet the Singh Sabha did not penetrate all villages of the Punjab



and were not as successful as the author claims. The villagers are still found practising the 'popular religion' although on a considerably diminished scale. The problem has all along been, and still is, the ill-assive ignorance of the Sikhs which has prevented them from knowing the meaning of their scriptures. Only a very small percentage of them have such knowledge. It would take more than Brain Stack's textual analogy to effectively convey the message. The Sikhs remain still the least educated in Punjab as reported in *India Today* in 1983. But if the Sikhs do not live up to their ideals, that does not make them non-Sikh.

Religions do not develop in vacuum. People do not live by religion alone. They need bread too. The political and economic factors exercise strong pulls and deterrents. Did the exercise of political power strengthen or weaken the religious identities before and during the British period? Why were the Hindus and their allies in the Indian National Congress apposed to Land Alienation Act of 1901 when the peasantry was rapidly falling in debt and consequently in the clutches of Hindu money lenders? Did this opposition sharpen or blur the religious boundaries? Did they feel inundated by other religious communities? These are some of the issues far more important than the role of Nais, Sakhi Sarvarias or the 'enchanted' witches.

The vocabulary used in the book is very impressive. The cosmetic treatment alone, however, cannot add charm unless the 'body' is fully developed and proportionally distributed. A few mistakes, mostly 'typos' did creep in (pages 48,97,221.). Footnotes, too, did not always follow the standard pattern with consistency and were loaded with partisan allusions. Finally, there is something very peculiar to this author's academic approach. Professor McLead's works when cited are showered with a glowing tribute usually reserved for the Gospel, and the glow gets a bit dimmer for S.S. Hans's. On a trivial point which has no bearing on the main theme of the book, he introduces Pashaura Singh's Ph.D. thesis written directly under Dr McLead's advice. The works of other authors who offer different versions are cavalierly dismissed, or ignored.

It may be that popular history takes precedence over academic history. It is also a well kept secret in the academic world that academic integrity often takes a back seat to the author's economic interests. The economic hazards of daily life almost overpower the

virtues associated with the research. If the reality becomes too

transparent, 'academic freedom' is invoked as a shield. They always come out ahead!

### **A Critical Review**

Dr Amar Singh Dhaliwal

At the very outset, it needs to be underlined, conspicuously,

that this critical review of Dr Oberoi's book titled "The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition" has been prepared in the light of the following five-pronged criterion; and that its purpose is purely academic:

### **THE FIVE-PRONGED CRITERION**

- (i) That whenever and wherever one happens to conduct a critical review of a research-based thesis, then and there it becomes, automatically, obligatory, necessary and essential for the critic to avoid criticism for the sake of criticism.
- (ii) That the sole purpose of a rational and genuine criticism of a research-based thesis must be to forestall and obstruct those false and unscientific trends of "research" which are intended, or likely to destroy the very image of the goddess of truth itself; in fact, by definition, research means "seeking after truth"
- (iii) That if any scientist or researcher happens to feel affected on becoming cognizant about the untruthful findings being presented as valid discoveries, and in spite of that kind of stimulation he or she fails to forestall such falsehoods, then that type of silence, on the part of such a scientist, is indicative of not only "intellectual dishonesty" but also of "unpardonable cowardice".
- (iv) That the ultimate goal of research, in all the duly recognized academic disciplines is to seek truth, nay, "Perfectly Pure Truth".
- (v) That because "history" (like all other disciplines, such as, political-science, sociology, psychology, archaeology, etc., covered under the common canopy: "faculty of social sciences" having the fixed interest in understanding the intentions and extension of man's behavior) aspires to acquire a sound-footing in the galaxy of the duly recognized academic-disciplines, it becomes, automatically obligatory, necessary and essential for all the historians, as researchers, to bring to light "Truths", and nothing less than "Perfectly Pure Truths", hidden in the debris of the past.

A bit of concentration on the norms implied in the criterion underlying the critical review embodied in the paper in hand, will reveal that the former three standards are directly concerned with the "Be-havior of The Critic Himself"; whereas the fourth and the fifth expectations are applicable to the "Behaviour of the Researcher" whose

research work is “going to be evaluated.

Agreed that after having submitted to the self-imposed norms, implied in the above mentioned Criteria, there was hardly any need to further assure that the critic would be neutral and above board in his criticism. Nevertheless, the critic is immensely pleased to put on record that before venturing to write a critical review, it was considered imperative to have a thorough, sincere, honest and diligent reading of the book covering 426 pages plus the “Preface”, “Appendices”, “Maps and Tables”, “Glossary” and “Epigrams” used to introduce all the different chapters and sections of the thesis.

### **CRITICAL REVIEW**

The precise “critical-review”, contained in the paper in hand, forms, broadly speaking, two parts: (i) that carries “the overall impression” of Dr Oberoi’s book, which a sincere and honest reader is bound to form and (ii) that gives a detailed account of those basic and fundamental weaknesses regarding theoretical formulations which did not permit the author to take his thesis to that expected philosophical level, from where he could enlighten the reader with regard to futurism of Sikhism, as a unique and scientifically systematized way of educating the masses groping in the dark.

### **THE OVER-ALL IMPRESSION**

Historically, even the man in the street knows that Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh Tradition or the Sikh Religion, had become so popular, during his short span of time, that both Muslims and Hindus of those days, took him as their “Pir” and Guru, respectively (Khuswant Singh’s History Of Sikhs, 1984, Vol. I). Guru was the symbol of unity.

In fact, it was for the first time, in the history of the civilized world, that the Adi Granth, the sacred scripture, welcomed all those hymns, which took the eternal message of bringing the people, from all the traditionally popular Indian-creeds, to a common forum and platform. For example, Kabir—a Muslim saint whose message stands incorporated in the Adi Granth, the Holy scripture of the Sikh Gurus—says:

First, God created His light: and from its power were all men made: From God’s Light came the whole universe: so, whom shall we call good, whom bad? O men! be not misled by doubt, For, the Creator is in the Creation and the creation in the Creator, who pervades everything. The clay is the same, but is fashioned in myriad patterns.

So it avails not to find fault either with the clay-vessels, or with the Potter who moulds them, each in a different way.

The one true God is within all, and it's He alone who creates all.

And, whosoever realizes His Will, knows the sole one.

And he alone is the servant of God.

I am wholly rid of doubt, now that I have seen the impeccable God in all". (Adi Granth, P 1349)

As mentioned explicitly in the Preface to the book under review, Dr Oberoi claims that he took sixteen years (that is, from 1978 to 1994) in preparation of the book. But perusal of his thesis leaves the impression that he does not even know the technicalities related to the concept of "Sikh-tradition" itself. However, after the publication of the book, he, in his own right, may be justified to claim that he is an "Authority" on the "Sikh-tradition" and the Sikh way of life emanating from the Gurbani revealed in the Adi Granth. But our evaluation of his book is that all his efforts remained abortive and infructified and the book, though voluminous enough, fails to add anything new to the previously existing knowledge in the limited areas (both in History and Religion) traversed by him as a researcher. It will become clear in the subsequent pages of this review paper as to why and in what way Dr Oberoi failed in his efforts as a researcher; and as to how the publication of his book has come to cause obstruction in the way leading to universal-recognition of the "Sikh Way of Life". But here it seems advisable to say a few words about the basic differences in the mental processes involved in the compilation of the empirical-data and the Mental-Processes needed in deriving from the empirical-data those philosophically meaningful inferences which may be helpful for guiding man's destiny, on this planet, for centuries.

No doubt, the book under review embodies an enormously big heap of the empirical-data. But the over-all impression, which one appears to gather from its sincere perusal, is that he has failed to rise above the sensational and the journalistic levels of human-thinking. In fact, there is nowhere any hint for stimulation for thinking of the philosophical-level, throughout the content-coverage spread over 426 pages of the book.

Psychologically speaking, the mental processes, namely, Industriousness, Diligence, Persistence, Dogmatic-insistence, etc., which are involved in collecting, arranging, piling up the empirical-data and

in citing of the so-called relevant literature, are so much primitive that even a Neophyte, having the knowledge of only three R's - that is, reading, writing and arithmetic - is fit for these jobs which are purely mechanical. Whereas in the case of philosophically meaningful re-search, the mental processes of very high level, such as Creativity, Originality, Novelty, Deviance, and Uniqueness in ideas are involved. Since, according to our evaluation, the purpose of Dr Oberoi's research was very shallow and shortsighted, in the sense that he was interested in collecting of provocative and sensational empirical-data fit for publication in the News-papers, he could do his research work with the help of primitive mental-process. Our verdict is that it is the purpose of research which either makes or mars one's thesis. We will see in the subsequent pages of this paper that Dr Oberoi remained confused about the real purpose of his research and made the things in his area of research worse confounded.

Now we give a detailed account of those fundamental weaknesses regarding theoretical formulations underlying his thesis and of those technical errors related to Research Methodology which happened to eclipse and cripple his research-work, abridged in the book under review.

This portion of the critical review stands trifurcated as follows:

First, efforts have been made to explain as to what is implied in their respective places, in the uses of the terms "History", "Religion" and "Researcher's Undesirable-or-Desirable Theoretical-notions" and, then, to see how the intentions and the extensions of the processes of conceiving a proposal of research, earmarking the time-perspective in history, for collection of the needed empirical data, of interpretation of the empirical data and of drawing inferences from the empirical data.

Secondly, seeking guidance from the disciplines of Philosophy - Science and Methodology of Research, it has been explained as to what is the relative importance of the pivotal questions, raised by the researcher, of the empirical data collected in accordance with the purpose of the study and of the final inferences to be drawn from the data.

Thirdly, it has been detailed as to what are the basic requirements, fulfilment of which is not only necessary but also essential for the researcher, whose intention is to add something new

and original to the existing human knowledge in the prospective area of researcher's specialization.

In our further discussion, these trifurcated portions have been designated, respectively, as Sections A, B, and C.

## **SECTION A**

According to the dictionary meaning (cf. Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Vol. 2, 1986, P.1073) the term "History" stands for a systematic written account comprising a chronological record of events, as affecting a city, state, nation, institution, science or art, and usually, including a philosophical explanation of the cause and origin of the events. The sole purpose of giving the precise definition of the concept "History" is to demonstrate that Dr Oberoi was expected to put up a philosophically sound explanation of the cause and origin of the events, mentioned in his historical treatise, under review; and that at the time of giving the "over-all impression" if we happened to point out that his thesis failed to transcend the levels of sensational- and journalistic-thinking and that it lacked in philosophical footing, then our demand for maintaining high standards was not irrational from any point of view. This standard falls in the orbit of the intentions and extension of the concept of "History" itself.

By definition, religion is a kind of belief system and its purpose is to provide a world-view, so that "man" may determine his position in the total perspective of the universe and may feel adjusted throughout his span of life. In order to have a broad-based and objective understanding of the concept "Sikhism"(or the Sikh Tradition), we use two authoritative sources; (i) a foreign observer and (ii) an Indian scholar, who retired as Professor and Head, Department of Guru Nanak Studies, Punjab University, Chandigarh.

As far back as 1909, Max Arther Macauliffe, in his universally known six-volume treatise entitled "The Sikh Religion, its Gurus. Sacred Writings and Authors," summed the distinctive principles of Sikh religion as follows:

"It prohibits idolatry, hypocrisy, caste exclusiveness, the cremation of widows, the immurement of women, the use of wine and other intoxicants, tobacco-smoking, infanticide, slander, pilgrimage to sacred rivers and tanks of Hindus; and it inculcates loyalty, gratitude for all favors received, philanthropy, justice, impartiality, truth, honesty and all the moral and domestic virtues known to the holiest citizens of any country."

In his article entitled “Sikhism: an Original, Distinct, Revealed And Complete Religion”, Shan, H.S. (1992) professes that:

“The word “Sikh”, as we know, is the Punjabised form of the Sanskrit, word “Shishya” meaning a disciple or a learner, especially a seeker of truth. It came to be used for the disciples of Guru Nanak and his nine spiritual successors who graced humanity from 1469 to 1708 A.D. in the Indian subcontinent. Thus their religion called Sikhism literally means the path of discipleship and the new way of life taught by them. Their faith is the youngest and the most modern of the world’s religions.”

Here, it needs to be underlined conspicuously that religion, as a belief system, is subject to refinement with the passage of time and its goal is to make man civilized, by becoming a well established system of education. Being the youngest and the most modern among religions all over the world, Sikhism seems to have become a well-established Behavioral Science, and, therefore, there are very, very rare chances for its disappearance from this global earth, the path of discipleship and civilization are co-twins.

### **OBEROI’S WRONG THEORETICAL ORIENTATION**

Or Oberoi, as a research scholar, from the very beginning of his career, failed in picking up a genuine and scientifically sound theoretical orientation, and due to this single weakness in his mental equipment as researcher, his research efforts remained abortive. By making the “Sikh Tradition”, and that too for a short span of time (1850-1950), the focus of his historical study, he dared to pose a challenge to the latest theoretical trends in the field of ‘History’ itself. As recorded in a ludic manner in Compton’s Encyclopedia, Vol. 23, P.238, Arnold Toynbee and Oswald Spengler, who are considered to be the two major interpreters of Human-history and Human-civilization, in the 20th century, are of the view that:

“The starting point in “A Study Of History” is that proper unit of the Historical Focus is a civilization, not a Nation-state”.

Why did he make the Sikh Tradition as the focus of his historical study, in spite of that kind of warning is the question which will remain an enigma for the critics of his book under review. If he was interested in knowing the contribution of Sikhism in the development of Human Civilization, he was bound to focus on the total perspective created by



the religions, all over the world.

Another downright misleading theoretical orientation of Dr Oberoi lies in seeing the point that he, like all the western social scientists, preferred to focus on differences or discrepancies between the personality characteristics of the Sikh as an Ideal Man, on the one hand, and the Sikh as a Neophyte (or novice) on the other. Since an Ideal Man is the symbol of "Idealism" that tends to remain inaccessible empirically, discrepancies or differences are bound to be there. This wrong theoretical orientation made Dr Oberoi prone and susceptible to focus on such differences and discrepancies as had already been condemned, discredited and declared discarded, by the time, he started his research reported in the book. In this context, the observation made by Marvin Bram in his essay entitled "In the Course of Human Affairs" which stands incorporated in Funk and Wagnalls New Encyclopedia, Vol I, pp. 14-31 is very pertinent. He professes that:

"By stretching our imagination, we may see how different everything we see is from everything else; and think of these objects either as being "Distinct" from one another or as being the same as one another. We either differentiate the objects in the world or, in spite of the world's being full of, separate objects, Fuse, that world." And continuing further, he points out: That the idea of "fusion" is foreign to us and is difficult to imagine. Indeed, making distinctions among objects is easy. Modern schooling and the media teach almost nothing else. But we are seldom instructed in dissolving distinctions. Fusion, the dissolving of distinctions, was not foreign to our forebears some ten, twenty, forty thousand years ago; however, understanding this millennia-old process of dissolving distinctions is at the heart of explaining "Human Affairs"

Like Marvin Bram, a universally known Historian, the critic is also fully aware of the tentative Truth that there is ample scope for observing Similarities in the Well Grounded, Scientifically Sound and properly Nurtured Religions, the world over, as the Sikh Gurus endeavoured to perceive at the time of establishing the "Sikh Tradition" and preparing the Holy Scriptures, which welcomed revealed banis from all possible directions. But Oberoi ignored both of these latest "theoretical trends" in the field of history, where he aspired to be an authority; and, consequent upon that he happened to destroy the whole game of his research efforts, meaning thereby that neither historically speaking he was justified to single out "The Sikh Tradition" nor to delimit "The

Time Perspective” to a century or so. Technically, such vision is known as “Narrow Mindedness”. Not only that, but it is also true that Dr Oberoi was not well-equipped from the side of Research Methodology, being used in “Social Science”. Some of the basic guidelines, borrowed from the disciplines of “Philosophy of Science” and of “Methodology of Research” which, somehow or the other remained brushed aside, in the design of research followed by Dr Oberoi, are mentioned below in Section B.

In scientifically sound researches, especially in Social Science, there must be some pin-pointed purpose in the mind of the researcher and the researcher should not forget the following fundamental truths:

- (i) That the empirical data - how so ever glamorous and provocative they may appear- are having sheerly an instrumental value, in the sense that they serve the purpose of only a foot-hold to hail that something which has never been hailed by other scientists working in the specific area selected for research;
- (ii) That it is only the final inference (or inferences), derived from analysis of the empirical data and supported with the help of philosophically sound arguments, which is of Intrinsic value, as a universally meaningful Truth, and
- (iii) That the empirical findings are as Valid, Original, Novel, Unique, and Deviant, in relation to the existing Human-Knowledge in the specific area, as are the Basic-Questions put to research, by the scientist himself.

In the above seriation, comprising three fundamental truths, the former two observations solve the problem about the relative importances of the empirical data and the ultimate inference to be derived from the empirical-data used as evidence. Obviously, in science, and in history (which falls in the category of Social Science) specifically, it is the final inference that is to carry a kernel of truth, encapsulated in a sentence or at the most two sentences - which is

weightier than the cart-load of empirical data used to work out such-like inferences. So, logically, it is plausible to say that if any researcher is not dear about the true nature of the final inference to be reached from the research being planned by him, then whole of the empirical data are likely to go waste; and in such a peculiar case, the entire process of the research, howsoever expensive, time-consuming and sacred it may appear in the eyes of the researcher, is bound to become

an exercise in futility. Here the truth is that it actually, happened with Dr Oberoi's research efforts. Because, we shall see, he was not clear about the basic purpose of his research.

The third fundamental truth is much more crucial and decisive, in the sense that it provides true answers to the questions: Why are his research findings not only meaningless but also injurious to the Sikh psyche and downright misleading with regard to their contributions to the existing human knowledge about the Sikh tradition and "Sikhism". Where did he fail as a researcher? Why did his research fail to attain philosophically meaningful levels? Why did his research efforts remain abortive and fruitless from the view of their contribution to the existing human knowledge in the areas of both history and religion? For the time being our combined answer to all such questions is that the basic questions raised by him in his own research were illconceived, irrelevant, absurd, irrational, and baseless, although very cunningly designed. Whether the purpose of doing so was to destroy the image of "Sikhism", as a unique and socio-culturally meaningful way of human life or it happened unconsciously and due to ignorance, nothing can be said with confidence. We have thoroughly thrashed out inadequacy, irrelevance and non-sensical nature of the basic and the so-called pivotal questions put to research evidence, Here, it is appropriate to say a few words about the basic requirements which a researcher is supposed, by way of necessity, to fulfil before embarking upon a research project and starting the work of collecting empirical data for his research.

## **BASIC REQUIREMENTS TO BE FULFILLED BY A RESEARCHER**

The first and foremost requirement, which a new researcher ought to fulfil is that he must conduct a thorough review of the relevant literature available in the area of research earmarked by him. There are, broadly speaking, four pin-pointed purposes of conducting review of the relevant literature:

Firstly, the researcher is supposed to get familiarity with the latest theoretical trends of research in his prospective area of specialization.

Secondly, the researcher is expected to follow honestly – in the scheme of his research - all the guidelines bound up with the new theoretical formulations, or, with the help of logically and rationally meaningful arguments, he may reject, discredit and discard the

new theoretically meaningful guidelines; and establish superiority of the old, hackneyed theory he intends to use as the foot-hold in research.

Thirdly, the researcher is supposed to prove that the questions going to be raised by him are chaste and barren, .in the sense that nobody has ever tried, prior to him, to seek answers to the questions haunting his mind., and Fourthly, if thorough scanning of the previous, relevant literature happens to demonstrate that the seemingly new questions, haunting the mind of the researcher has already been answered, there are two ways open to the neophyte scholar: (i) that the “seemingly new questions” may be dropped, and some other new area of research may be taken up, or (ii) that the researcher should have the courage to prove that the answers to the questions, haunting his mind (as discovered by his predecessors) are invalid, distorted and discreditable and, then, he may adopt a new method of research and try to reach different findings.

Now, we are in a position to see what were the pivotal questions which Dr Oberoi had planned to answer through the research reported in the book, and as to how these questions were repetitive, sterile, baseless, irrelevant, absurd and theoretically irrational, hence invalid.

### **THE STERILE AND IMPOTENT PIVOTAL QUESTIONS RAISED**

As underlined conspicuously, in the opening paragraph of the Preface to the book under review, the real purpose of Dr Oberoi’s research efforts, spreading over sixteen years, was to seek answers to two closely related questions:

- (i) How are Indian religions to be conceptualized?
- (ii) What did it mean to be a Sikh in the nineteenth century? (CF. P. XI)

Though the author asserts that both these pivotal questions closely related, yet it is reasonable to discuss as to in what way these are closely related, yet it is reasonable to discuss as to in what way these two questions were, in their respective places, non-researchable, sterile, impotent, repetitive, hence invalid

With regard to our critical reaction to the former question, it may be said without fear of contradiction that: Indian religions are to

conceptualized and perceived as the social scientists have conceptualized and perceived the “other-than-Indian-religions”. Obviously, this condition is not only necessary but also essential. This is so because unless and until the processes of concept-formation of perceiving the phenomena implied in the concepts of like nature are identical, the final result will never be comparable and objective.

Here, the truth is that by using the word “Indian” as an adjective for qualifying the concept of “Religion”, Dr Oberoi has posed a challenge to both Arnold Toynbee and Oswald Spengler who profess that: the starting point in a study of history is that the proper unit of historical focus is a civilization, not a nation-state. In fact, the theory which enjoins upon the researchers, working in the area of history, to see, conceive and perceive the relative importance of any “religious institution” (or the Sikh Tradition, in the present context) by placing it in the total perspective emanating from contributions of all sister institutions, constituting our contemporary civilization, as a whole, is not only psychologically, socio-culturally, democratically meaningful but also humanistically purposeful for ensuring universal peace.

Similarly, when Marvin Bram, as cited above, condemns that theoretical notion which permits researchers to hail discrepancies or differences in different objects or religions; and dares to suggest to adopt the attitude of seeing “Similarities” in different objects of interest, or religions as cultural heritages of the Human Species, as a whole then, in fact, the purpose of that novel theoretical approach also happens to be the same as that of propounded by Arnold Toynbee and Oswald Spengler.

Here, our question of questions is as to why Dr Oberoi did not try to seek guidance from these two new theories hailed by the historians, as philosopher-thinkers of the twentieth century; and as to why he did not make efforts to pursue the former question: How are Indian religions to be conceptualized? In fact, Dr Oberoi was not having the acumen needed to deal with the concept of religion; and, secondly, if he had dared to confront the problems and the issues bound up with the above-mentioned two new theoretical orientations, then, it would have become, invariably, necessary, nay essential to redesign his former question to read as: How are world religions to be conceptualized? So, he thought it proper to let the sleeping dogs lie, even in the area of history, where he claims to have become an authority after Publication of the book under review.

Not only that, but “the question regarding conceptualization of

religions” had been so nicely thrashed out, at the national, as well as at the international level, that if Or Oberoi had ventured to conduct a thorough review of the findings reached in very well designed hundreds of studies, in this specific area, then he would have come to know in what way his former pivotal question was sterile, impotent, repetitive, non-sensical, empty, and hence irrelevant.

The findings reached in relation to the question: How are Indian (rather, world) Religions to be conceptualized? Tend to fall into, broadly speaking, four categories:

- (i) Marx and his followers hailed the observations which made “Religion” as “Opium for the Masses” of a “Mental Disease” known as “Organized Hallucination”.
- (ii) As far back as 1940, a psychologist of the calibre of Brown dared to pronounce that man’s cognitive development: (a) has its roots and origin in: “Magic”; (b) it got its nourishment from “Religion”, and (c) presently, it has been becoming more and more scientific in its orientation, with the passage of time. According to him, the influence of “Magic”, “Witchcraft”, “Sorcery” and of “religious beliefs” are so strong that even the thinking-processes, ideologies and behavioural-patterns of highly qualified scientists tend to remain tinged by the influences of such irrational-forces, throughout their lives, and he claims that the rope of man’s thinking process comprises the fabrics of black, red and white colours, representing, respectively, magic, religion and science; and that how-soever hard we may try, the influences of magic, witchcraft and sorcery cannot be completely eradicated from man’s behaviour.
- (iii) Krishna, murti is the supporter of that philosophical view-point, according to which the contents of religious literature, as the carriers of “World-Views”, go on changing and getting refined with the passage of time; according to him, the “Vedantas” were indicative of “The End of Vedas” and he also is brave enough to pronounce that God as a concept is referring to a hypothetical entity.
- iv) Erich Fromm.(1~91, p. 233) is of the view that the religious- (humanistic principles were also the basis for proposals for a ‘better society.

Here, it may just be imagined that if all the four answers to the

former pivotal question would have been rejected and proved erroneous before designing his research, and then, and only then, he could say something new, novel and unique in the area circumscribed by the first question raised by him. Virtually, when Or Oberoi set his feet in this area in 1978, as a researcher, the knowledge about his first pivotal question had already entered into the text-books used in schools, colleges and Universities. However, to prove the known and the obvious is an exercise in futility. In this context, Wolman (1965, P.3) professes that:

“Sciences do not deal with the “Known” and the “Obvious”. No one builds telescopes to check the contents of a Show-Window in a department store. Science seeks to produce new knowledge and endeavours to discover precise and valid information hitherto unknown.”

The truth is that whatever Brown, cited above, had included in the text-book entitled: “Psycho-dynamics of Abnormal Behaviour”, as far back as 1940, has been repeated by Or Oberoi in his book, and fails to give anything new. It may be pointed out, conspicuously, that scientists and researchers, as well as supervisors of research works, like ordinary human beings, have tendencies to fall into ruts, to enjoy stagnations and to develop the abnormalities of compulsion in their actions and attitudes of obsessions in their thinking-processes; and that it is only the courageous, risk-taking, deviant and original thinkers who would seek pleasure in adopting new and thorny paths. Because in a repetitive research, one is sure about the final results, even a failure-threatened individual will like to join the class of researchers and of academicians. There is only a very, very subtle difference between repetition, and memorization of others’ works, on the one hand, and plagiarism on the other. Last year, when one professor in the department of technology, at the Concordia University, shot dead three other professor colleagues, then, as reported in the media, the attacker’s allegations were that his research findings were being stolen within the department. Since Brown’s work had become dusty enough, it was easier for Or Oberoi to indulge in Plagiarism. As an honest researcher, if he had conducted a thorough review of the relevant literature, he would never have raised the first, the so-called pivotal question in his research.

Now, let us see as to in what way the second question: “What did it mean to be a *Sikh* in the nineteenth century?” fails to pass the Test Of Adequacy, Genuineness, Suitability, Validity, Potency, and

Legitimacy for being a tool *in* research.

The fundamental weakness of this question, as the tool for research, lies in seeing the point that it remains tied up with that theoretical assumption, which stresses that the concept “Sikh” refers to something which is transient, mercurial, subject to change, like the moods of joy and sorrow. But, contrarily, the concept of “Sikh” refers to a particular type of “Conditioning-of Man’s Mind”. Psychologically, it is true that the processes of “Conditioning” and of “Deconditioning” of Human-Mind both are very, very time-consuming; meaning thereby that man neither abandons his previous conditioning-of-mind, with the touch of a magic-rod, nor man happens to adopt a new conditioning of mind, so easily.

As cited above, Brown is perfectly right when he claims that man’s cognitive-development is such that his behavior can never be perfectly free even from the irrational influences of Magic, Sorcery, Witch-craft, Idolatry, myths and delusions and hallucinations, etc., even during the age of enlightenment. With regard to the religious (or spiritual) conditioning-of-man’s-mind, three more psychologically- well-established, truths need to be kept in mind:

- (i) That nearly 10% to 15% individuals, out of the normal human-population, are very, very slow in adopting the religiously meaningful “New Ways of Life”, howsoever socio-culturally purposeful, such ways of life may be.
- (ii) That about 10 to 15% individuals, among the normal human population, are very quick, and also zealot for adopting the new ways of life.
- (iii) That nearly 70% individuals are normal and average in adopting the new ways of human life; in the sense that they feel comfortable in retaining some aspects of the old social habits, whereas they also happen to adopt some of the new ways of human life.

More technically speaking, these three types of groups of people are known as: abnormal, normal and super-normal and they are qualitatively different in adopting or learning of the new ways of life. Because of such natural, but qualitative differences in adoption of changes in mental orientations, a researcher may report differences even if the total population is a perfectly homogeneous community, with regard to its religious affiliation.

Since, as referred to above, under the influence of the old,



hackneyed theory condemned by Marvin Bram, Dr Oberoi intended to see discrepancies in the religious-orientations of the individuals identified as Sikhs in the Panjab of the nineteenth-century, he picked up individuals from among the above said three types of groups and happened to prove the obvious and something which was already known. For example, at page 150-151, he writes:

“The text of one of the miracle stories, which according to its collector became current in the early nineteenth century, represents Sikh devotion to the saint. Dani, the wife of a Sidhu peasant, lived in Landeke in the Moga tahsil of Ferozepur district. When after twelve years of childless marriage she prayed to Sakhi Sarvar, he blessed her with a son. Her wish having been granted, Dani undertook a pilgrimage to the shrine of the saint at Nagaha. In the course of the pilgrimage she broke her original vow and suffered retribution, her newly born son died. Then, she pleaded for forgiveness; and Sakhi Sarvar took pity on her state and revived the child.”

Again at page 3, an episode recorded by Henry Martyn Clark reads as follows:

“The doli (palanquin)-bearers on the Dalhousie road, though they seemed to be Sikhs, yet used Tabacco freely; when I asked the reason they told me they found it very hard work to carry dolis without refreshing themselves with the huqqa, so when they left their homes to come up to the summer work, they had their hair cut, and so gave up Sikhism. On their return home for the winter they paid a few annas and were reinitiated.”

Both these examples, cited by Dr Oberoi, represented the above mentioned groups of abnormal individuals, who are, invariably, present in all civilized societies and religious sects. In research, however, no importance is given to such cases, unless and until our purpose is to blame and to tarnish the image of a particular religious sect.

By the way, what is the statistical significance of Dani's case as representative of the Sikh tradition? As a solitary individual she, in fact, belonged to the abnormal group, referred to above. Obviously, if the total population of the followers of the Sikh tradition in that particular village, went up to one thousand, as Dani's contemporaries, then what is the statistical significance of such an abnormal behaviour? No significance at all.

The text-books available in the fields of social and abnormal psychology and those pertaining to ‘Psychology Of Religion’ stand

testimony to the irrefutable truth that individuals, as human beings, differ with regard to that mental-capacity (or, more technically speak-ing, social-intelligence) which is needed in understanding, learning and adopting that type of world-view, which the Holy Scriptures, pertaining to different religions, happen to offer. Here, it needs to be stressed that that kind of evidence confirms that it is not only that the followers of a particular religion (in present context, Sikhism) have quantitative individual differences in the said mental-capacity, but they also have qualitative individual-differences, meaning thereby, that if Dani and professor Sahni's father were having the same levels of the quantifiable mental-ability needed in grasping the religious instructions, then these two individuals could be quantitatively different from the view of catching or skipping over the contents (or subjects matters) of religious education. If both recite Gur Bani, whole heartedly, both are Sikhs. But if one of them always tells the truth in social interactions and also smokes, whereas the other is always untruthful and deceptive and uses his overtly perceivable symbols as the "Persona" then both are non- Sikhs. So keeping this single most truthful evidence in view, it may be judged as to in what way the definitions of the concepts of "Sikh", Sikhi" and "Sikhya" happen to change from person to person, from individual to individual and turn out to be mercurial and transient. Actually, the methodology of research employed by Dr Oberoi, in answering the latter pivotal question, is absolutely invalid and irrational; and therefore, it is not surprising that the so-called empirical discoveries reported in the book are downright misleading and false.

Not only that, the empirical findings reported in his book could be predicted in a perfectly valid manner without conducting any kind of research. Even today, not to speak of the nineteenth century, it may be said with confidence that nobody is a perfect Christian, a perfect Hindu, a perfect Muslim and a perfect Sikh. Psychology of religion says that the gap between one's "Ideal-Self" and one's "Real- Self" is bound to remain unbridgeable. Because by definition, one's "Ideal-Self" is the image of God Himself and one's "Real-self" is just an empirical-self, that is "Self" put into practice in every day life.

Nevertheless, Dr Oberoi's, started his research with the postulate that Sikhism, as a unique way of life had lost all sorts of graces, charms and magnetic-attractions. and by the advent of the nineteenth century, the Sikh traditions was on the run-way. As already underlined elsewhere in the paper in hand, the basic difficulty with history and the other academic disciplines covered in the Faculty of Social Science, is that a

researcher may see what he intends to see. Dr Oberoi's intention was to see the negative and dark sides in the behavioral-patterns of the disciples (or followers) of the Sikh Gurus. With good intentions, he could obtain Ph. D. by writing a biographical sketch of Sant Attar Singh the total Population of the followers of the Sikh tradition, in that particular village, went up to one thousand, as Dam's contemporaries then what is the statistical significance of such an abnormal behaviour? No significance at all. Inspiration from the theoretical assumption which is bound up the Postulate that the Sikh Gurus' intended to set up that type of well-designed and universally and humanistically oriented system of education, which on its honest and faithful implementation, would be highly capable of chiselling out those promising personalities, who would be competent and bold enough to face the exigencies of bad weather during the times to come.

Mastuana, who, as the Sikh educationist, was identified to lay the foundation-stone of Hindu University, Benares, in 1919. The negative sides in the behaviours of the individuals belonging to the extreme-group named abnormal and supernormal groups - in relation to those falling in the normal group - are naturally, very much exaggerated inflated and hence conspicuous, The wrong method of research, he used, was helpful to present these distorted images of the Sikhs.

In contravention to Dr Oberoi's postulate, we are of the view that the 'Historical Truth is that Sikhism' as the systematic way of educating the masses, has never been tried honestly and wholeheartedly; otherwise, it has that full, inexhaustible potential which may change the whole of the world for the betterment of man, as a rational, biped animal. Had Dr Oberoi been sensitive enough about this kind of unfortunate historical truth about the vacuum caused through non-implementation of the Sikh philosophy of education, and had adopted the hypothesis pertaining to the inexhaustible potential of Sikhism as the well designed system of education, he would have, invariably, reached those very highly positive, commendable observations, about Sikhism, which some foreign, but unbiased, researchers had already arrived at before he embarked on his research-project. For examples Mansukhani (1993, pp 20-21) refers to two foreign observers of world fame: (i) According to him Professor Arnold Toynbee, the great historian of the present age, observed that:

The Guru Granth Sahib is a part of Mankind's spiritual treasure.

It is important that it should be brought within the direct reach of as many people as possible. In the coming religious debate, Guru Nanak's Sikh religion and its scripture - Guru Granth Sahib - will have something of special value, to say to the rest of the world"

Similarly, Pearl Buck, the Nobel prize-winner, who wrote in introduction to an English translation of Guru Granth Sahib, expressed her appreciation in the following terms:

"The hymns in Sri Guru Granth are an expression of man's loneliness, his aspirations, his longings, his cry to God and his hunger for Communication with that Being. I have studied the scripture of other great religions, but I do not find elsewhere the same power of appeal to the heart and mind, as I find in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. It speaks to me of life and death; of time and eternity, of the temporal human-body and its needs, of the mystic human soul and its longings, of God and the indissoluble bond between them".

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## **Towards Reconsideration of CRB**

Dr Sulakhan Singh Mann

Since 1947, interpretations of the Sikh past by the historians of indigenous and foreign background have witnessed a considerable qualitative and quantitative change in the areas of Punjab studies as well as the modern Indian historiography. Harjot Oberoi's 'The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition' (1994) is a latest addition in the field of modern Indian studies in general and the Sikh studies in particular. The author claims it to be work in 'the social history of modern India', which is a revised version of his doctoral thesis.

The focus of the study is on the Sikh experience in the 19th century with much of the emphasis on the problem of a single Sikh identity and homogenization of the Sikh Community over the past years. Obviously, it seems to be, more or less, an attempt in the direction of W.H. McLeod's 'Who is a Sikh?' 'The problem of Sikh Identity' (1989). Hence, it may be better understood in the light of the existing interpretations of the modern Sikh identity and the historiography of the late 19th and early 20th century Sikh history and religion. However, the author does not claim his monopoly over the earlier interpretations of the Sikh part as he is quite aware of the fact that one interpretation is expected, rather desired, to be superseded by another time and again, because there is no finality in history.

In the view of an eminent British philosopher historian, E. H. Carr, 'the modern historian has the dual task of discovering the few significant facts and turning them into facts of history and of discarding the many insignificant facts as unhistorical'. How far Oberoi has succeeded in performing this dual task in the compilation of his work under review is a question of particular interest. Similarly, there are some other important questions which need to be looked into for purposes of better understanding of any historical work and its author. The same British scholar has rightly stated: 'before you study the historian, study his historical and social environments'. Furthermore, he writes, 'you cannot understand or appreciate the work of the historian unless you have first grasped the standpoint from which he himself approached it; secondly, that standpoint is itself rooted social and historical background.' Hence, it may also be helpful, to look into the question of social and historical background of Oberoi and his

standpoint which he has applied in his understanding of the 19th century history of Identity, culture and diversity in the Sikh traditions.

In his work, Oberoi has made an attempt to give an alternative interpretation of the Sikh experience in the 19th century Indian social context. Existing interpretations of the Sikh's past during the period, in his view, are based on two principles, one of silence and other of negation. By the principle of silence he means to say that 'historical texts are virtually silent about religious diversity, sectarian conflicts, nature worship, witchcraft, sorcery, spirits, magical healing, omens, wizard miracle saints, goddesses, ancestral spirits, festivals, exorcism, astrology, divination and village deities'. Thus according to him con-temporary scholarship either tends to ignore vast terrain of Sikh life in the 19th century or views it as a superfluous addition which has to be negated. Thus, he suggests that it is time to give up the ideological blinkers imposed by the complex changes in economy, society and politics under the Raj.

On the whole, Oberoi attempts to study the problems of conceptualization of religion, religious community and a single religious identity in the 19th century Indian social context in general and the problem of a single modern Sikh identity and its formation and transformation in specific historical epochs in particular. In his view, the broad classification of the Indian people in terms of their religions or single religious identities as 'Hindu', 'Muslim' and 'Sikh' are not self-evident, rather they are "specific constructions rooted in particular historical epochs". Moreover, he writes, that universal religious communities are not a key to the understanding of a pre-British society. Because, the values and cultural equipment were determined not so much by the religious loyalties but by the clan rules i.e. the kinship, patron-client relationship and asymmetrical reciprocity.

In general, Oberoi has understood religion as a social and Cultural process. For him, religion in Indian society was 'never a well demarcated and self-conscious unit'. His analysis of the 19th century Sikh history and religion with undue emphasis on the phenomena of religious diversity and the simultaneous existence of multiple religious identities within the Sikh tradition is very largely based on his views a Out heterogeneous nature of a religion or a religious community as a combination of "disparate sacred traditions". Therefore, to him, the question of religions affiliation or attachment of a person to a particular sacred tradition was more relevant than the question of his identity as a 'Sikh' or a 'Hindu' or a 'Muslim'.

Within this framework, he has explained the phenomenon 'immense diversity' within the Sikh society for much of the 19th century. The Sikh society, in his opinion, consisted of over a dozen 'great' and 'little' sacred traditions with which the Khalsa and the non-Khalsa Sikhs were found attached primarily due to the pluralist framework of the Sikh faith and the absence of a centralized church and an attendant religious hierarchy. Moreover, this was also due to the fact that the religious boundaries between the 'Sikh Great' and 'Little traditions' were highly blurred.

In support of his thesis of religious diversity and the simul-taneous existence of multiple religious identities within the Sikh panth, Oberoi has identified various sub-traditions with which the Sikhs were found affiliated. Surprisingly enough, for him, the Nanak Panthis and the Khalsa Sikhs constitute a separate sacred tradition (*sampardaya*) within the Sikh faith like that of the tradition of the Udasis and the Nirmalas and the Kukas and the Nirankaris. Not only this, he has understood the Sahajdharis and Sarvarias besides the followers of Ram Rai, Baba Gurditta, Baba Jawahar Singh and Guru Bhag Singh, as independent or separate traditions of the Sikhs. I fail to understand how does he differentiate between the Nanak Panthi Sikhs 'and the Sahajdharis on the one hand and the Sahajdhari Sikhs and the men of several other non- Khalsa traditions including the Udasis on the other? In what sense do the Sarvarias constitute a separate tradition of the Sikhs like that of the Udasis and the Nirmalas? On the whole, in his classification of the Sikhs into various traditions or sub-traditions, Oberoi seems to have followed the colonial model of religious diversity emphasised by many a British administrators and ethnographers of the Sikhs in their works during the late 19th century. Moreover, it is somewhat difficult to substantiate Oberoi's claims regarding the existence of the Nanak Panthis, the Sahajdharis and the Sarvarias as separate categories of the Sikh traditions. So far, they have been studied as such by the historians of the Sikhs.

The main purpose of Oberoi's work seems to have been to pose counter-view to the Smgh Sabha's standard definitions and their drive for a homogeneous Sikh community. The major concerns of the reformist Sikhs, in his view, were to purge the Sikh faith of religious diversity, Hindu accretions and Brahmlcal stranglehold. This resulted into a radical change in the Sikh traditions from "an amorphous" entity in the mid 19th century into a "homogeneous community i.e. the "Khalsa Sampardaya". Thus, in this way, of all the



competing entities that went into constituting the long history of the Sikh movement, it was the Khalsa Sampardaya that succeeded in imprinting its image on the 'new community', to which Oberoi refers as an 'episteme'. The 'Sanatan Sikhs' of the various sub-Sikh traditions were either displaced or became subordinate to the 'new Sikh Identity' i.e. the Tat Khalsa. This historical process in the constitution and re-constitution of the modern Sikh identity and its crystallization during the first decade of the 20th century seems to have compelled Oberoi to give an alternative interpretation of the Sikh past in the 19th century with much of its emphasis on the problem of singularity of Sikh identity.

In Oberoi's view, the question of standard definition of a Sikh or his single religious identity in the history of the Sikh movement in the mid-19th century does not arise. This problem of a single Sikh identity for him was mainly due to the pluralist nature of the Sikh faith which caused immense religious diversity in the Sikh society for much of the 19th century. Thus, he writes, that there were "several competing definitions of a Sikh and most of the Sikhs moved in and out of 'multiple identities'". He explains this with reference to the lack of a single source of authority within the Sikh tradition and the extremely blurred nature of the religious boundaries between the centre and the periphery. Thus, he fails to acknowledge that the social and ideological bases of the religious formation generally lie at the centre.

Oberoi's understanding of the Sikh identity in the pre- and post-Khalsa period during the 18th century has its limitations. He generally refers to the nature of an early Sikh tradition in the pre- and post-Khalsa period as 'ambiguous' and 'fluid' without having a proper understanding of the nature and character of the Sikh identity in its specific historical perspective since the days of the Sikh Gurus. Formation of the 'Khalsa Sikh' identity in the 18th century with a distinct code of conduct and Khande- Ke- Pahul was, in fact, a culmination of the early Sikh historical developments. Surprisingly enough, for Oberoi, the Sikh identity even in the mid-19th century was 'an amorphous entity which got a concrete or definite shape in the colonial period as a result of the political, economic and cultural changes under the Raj.' If on the one hand, Oberoi has tried to impose the late 19th century colonial model of Sikh society on its history of the early period, on the other, he has made an attempt to build up a counter argument to the late 19th century Sikh elites thesis of the Sikh identity. Thus, it seems Denzil Ibbetson has found a true disciple in the scholarship of Harjot Oberoi.

Although Harjot has used a very wide variety of contemporary source materials for his analysis of the culture, identity and diversity; the Sikh tradition in the 19th century, yet his over-dependence on the late 19th century British official records and the Sikh literature of and on the Singh Sabha Movements is quite obvious. Hence, he has rarely made use of the contemporaneous Persian and Sikh historical literature for his understanding of the nature of Sikh tradition and the resultant formation of the Sikh identity in the pre-and post-Khalsa period till the annexation of the Punjab by the British in the mid-19th century.

Oberoi's understanding of the Sikh tradition and his interpretation of the Sikh identity in its historical perspective suffers from some methodological shortcomings. For instance, he does not question the authenticity of the testimony of Ruchi Ram Sahni's father which he has used in support of his thesis of religious diversity and fluidity in the Sikh tradition. Similarly, he has taken up the observational evidence of a Christian traveller at its face value without understanding the limitations of such testimonies. Moreover, he has failed to make clear distinction between the real historical facts and the several insignificant facts to be discarded as material of no historical value. His very choice of historical facts clearly reflects that his view of Sikh history and religion is highly subjective although he has made an attempt to use the insights of an anthropologist and a sociologist for his understanding of the Sikh past. His approach and method to the study of Sikh identity and diversity in the Sikh tradition has not been guided by the principle of historical specificity. Had Oberoi comprehended the 18th century historical processes in the making of the Khalsa Sikh identity, vis-a-vis the Mughal state, he would not have overemphasised its crystallization vis-a-vis the colonial state. The Singh Sabhaites only made best use of the contemporary institutions.

## **A Critical Analysis**

Dr D. S. Chahal

The book entitled, “The Construction of Religious Boundaries” written by Dr Harjot Oberoi and published by Oxford university Press, Delhi has become the second most controversial work after that of Dr Pashaura Singh’s Ph.D Thesis. Oberoi has tried to portray Sikhism, the most modern and scientific religion, parallel to a mythological religion by digging out old, unreliable, unauthenticated, illogical, and unscientific information. Oberoi first tried to build a basic skeleton of his theory of indistinguishable identity of Sikh practices during the nineteenth century from those of other religions, especially Hinduism. Then he tried to fill in the mass of unauthentic information in that created skeleton to prove that Sikhism is not a distinct religion and that those who (Singh Sabha) tried to put Sikhism in its teal perspective, have done the greatest damage to the beliefs of the people. In a nutshell, Oberoi has misconstrued the data, collected by him, to prove the diffused boundaries of Sikhism as well as to degrade Sikhism, And Granth, and Guru Nanak. Evidently, either Oberoi was unable to comprehend the Sikh philosophy enshrined in the Aad Granth or he has produced this work intentionally to degrade Sikhism to the level of Hinduism under some influence. This paper exposes his efforts of misrepresentation of the data he used to declare indistinguishable identity of Sikhism.

### **CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF OBEROI’S DATA**

Oberoi starts to build his theory of indistinguishable identity of a Sikh and Sikhism under the title of “Construction of Religions Boundaries” by saying that his book seeks to answer two closely related questions:

1. How are Indian religions to be conceptualized? and
2. What did it mean to be a Sikh in the nineteenth-century?

(Preface).

He further writes that he first began to grapple with the latter question in 1978 when he wrote a Master’s seminar paper, “Sikhs and the Singh Sabha Movement” for the Center of Historical Studies at the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi. He says that he ended up with far more questions than he had answers for. The prominent questions he raised were:

1. Why did an influential set of Sikh leaders seeks to purge established practices and establish a homogenous community?
2. Why was religious plurality looked at with disdain? (Preface)

He had also admitted in the Preface of his book that it would have achieved its purpose if it leads to other, richer, alternative interpretation. My critical analysis of Oberoi's work indicated that there is a much better, richer and correct alternative interpretation of the data he collected than that presented by him in his book. The new interpretation of his data is given along with that of his in this paper.

## INTRODUCTION

Oberoi starts "Construction of Religious Boundaries" with the following two statements:

1. "Ruchi Ram Sahni's father worshipped idols and also recited Rehras and Sukhmani with equal warmth and regularity." (p 2)
2. "In order to cure sick cattle, face the vagaries of the weather, or obtain fecundity, the peasantry was willing to bargain with the most powerful sacred resource without bothering with religious labels." (p 15-16).

With these two examples he tried to show the diffused boundaries between Sikhism and Hinduism. If one bases the foundation of religious boundaries on the practices of such ignorant people like the father of Ruchi Ram Sahni, one cannot differentiate the fundamentals of Sikhism from Hinduism. In Sikhism worshipping of idol is useless to attain salvation. For example:

The Almighty cannot be structured (into idols of stone or metal).

He is created by himself. (AGGS, Jap, p 2)

Those who call a stone as their god, their services are wasted.

Those who fall at the feet of an idol, their endeavors (for salvation) go in vain. (AGGS, M5 p 1160)

When a person is aware of these facts of Sikhism then that person under no circumstances will perform idol worship. He would read the Gurbani and will practise its principles.

Similarly, if a person is aware of the fact that the only one powerful sacred resource is the Almighty according to the Gurbani then one

would not bother to find out their powerful sacred then resource of any other religion or sect of a religion. The Almighty, the only powerful sacred resource, will be explained in details later in this paper.

One more thing about Ruchi Ram Sahni's father is that had he understood the following verse from Rehras he would not have worshipped the idols. Rather he would have only recited Rehras and sukhmani.

The Shiva, Brahma, and Devi created by You (the Almighty), are contemplating on You. "Similarly Indra sitting beside other devtas are meditating on You". (Then why would one meditate on the idols of these devtas, why not contemplate the Almighty directly). (AGGS, M1, P8)

It is quite clear from the above verse of Gurbani how malicious and unacademic was the act of Oberoi to justify his notion of indistinguishability between Sikhism and Hinduism by quoting the ignorance of Ruchi Ram Sahni's father who gave equal importance to idol worship and reciting of Rehras and Sukhmani.

Oberoi reports that "Religion as a systematized sociological unit claiming unbridled loyalty from its adherents and opposing an amorphous religious imagination, is a relatively recent development in the history of Indian peoples. Once such a tidy cultural construct surface, probably sometime in the nineteenth century, it rapidly evolved, gained wide support and became reified in history. Out of this reification it easily turned into something separate, distinct and concrete: what we now recognize as Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism. It is often overlooked that the naming of religious communities - Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Sikhism - only took place in the nineteenth century. As Smith notes, "This process normally took the form of adding the Greek suffix "-ism" to a word used to designate the persons who are the persons who are the members of the religious community or followers of a given tradition" (p 17-18)

Oberoi should understand that it is not necessary that suffix "-ism" is essential to designate a religion, e.g., Christianity and Islam. These religions were not modified into "-ism" form either during the nineteenth or during the twentieth century. They remained to be called Christianity and Islam then and now. On the other hand Sikhism, is a literal translation of the Punjabi word, Sikby, the religion founded by Guru Nanak in the fifteenth century:

Sikhism is a contemplation on the advice of the Guru. (AGGS

M1, p.465)

There are very derogatory remarks about the AGGS by Oberoi as follows:

“Religious texts like the Adi Granth are so amorphous that those in favor of the status quo, reformists, and insurrectionists, could all with ease quote chapter and verse in favor of their cause. This often happened during the colonial period, when one social group wanting to collaborate with the empire would read the scriptures in one way; their Opponents would interpret the same verse in another mode. We need to know the reasons and mechanisms, through which widely divergent religious views and identities can be supported by the same religious sources. A consideration of these issues is germane for Our understanding of universal religious communities” p 22).

The above observation of Oberoi may be partially correct in respect of different interpretations of Gurbani from the AGGS to serve the specific motives of the interpreters. This has been going on since the time of Sikh Gurus that is why Guru Nanak” in his third form (Mahla 3) explains in the following verse that it is so due to the limited knowledge of the interpreter about Gurbani:

“The word (sabd) is true.

The verse (bani) is true.

The rare follower (Gurmukh) could recognize it.

The one who integrates oneself with the true word (sabd) gets salvation \* .11.

(\*Salvation = Liberation from ignorance or illusion)

The above verse was correct then and it is correct now that there are very few followers of Sikhism who could interpret the Gurbani and the Sikh philosophy correctly. There are many Sikhs and non-Sikh scholars who are still not interpreting Gurbani in its real perspective.

Now I would like to comment on the following remarks of Oberoi:

“Religious texts like the Adi Granth are so amorphous... We need to know the reasons and mechanism, through which widely

divergent religious views and identities can be supported by the same religious sources.”

My study of AGGS reveals to me that the philosophy of Guru

Nanak enshrined in the AGGS is the most scientific and logical ever recorded in any religious text. I have tried to explain this briefly in some of my articles (1-4). My study also indicates that the Gurbani of the Sikh Gurus in the AGGS is in the most crystalline form rather than in an amorphous form as remarked by Oberoi, and that there is one and only one real interpretation of each and every verse of Gurbani which is consistent with the whole philosophy of Sikhism incorporated into the AGGS. There cannot be more than one interpretation whatsoever the circumstances may be if the interpreter keeps in his mind the scientific information about the origin of universe; origin of life; origin of man; and modern Sciences while interpreting Gurbani. Thus the Gurbani enshrined in the AGGS does not give any divergent views and identities. It is only the intentional distortion of the Gurbani by certain persons, by particular organizations or by particular schools of thought to give the divergent views and identities to serve their own motives.

“Early-period Sikh tradition did not show much concern for establishing distinct religious boundaries. However, a dramatic change came about with the rise of the Khalsa in the eighteenth century; sections of the Sikh population now consciously began to push for a distinct and separate religious culture. The most concrete expression of this transformation was the creation of a distinct code of conduct for Khalsa Sikhs which established an unprecedented rite of initiation” (p 24).

The distinct and separate identity of Sikhism was not done at the time of initiation of the Khalsa in 1699 by Guru Gobind Singh. The distinctiveness was already declared by Guru Nanak during the fifteenth century, i.e., right from the time when the foundation of Sikhism was laid. Oberoi has also pointed out (at pages 56&57) that those who argue for the existence of a distinct Sikh world view from the initial Guru period often quote the following verse of Guru Arjun: AGGS, MS, p. 1136

Oberoi has given an English interpretation of the above verse and has stopped at the stanza of “Na hum Hindu na Muslman.”, but there are three more stanzas after this.

Let us interpret the above verse of Guru Arjun in its real perspective:

Neither I keep the fast (of Hindus) nor observe the month of Ramdan (of Muslim).

But I Serve the One Who emancipate all. 1

There is Gosain (for Hindus) and Allah (for Muslims)

But for me there is the One.

Thus I have released myself from both Hindus and Muslims. 1.

Pause.

Neither I go to Kaaba to perform the Hajj

Nor I go to bathing pilgrimages to meditate.

(Because) I contemplate the One, not any other. 2.

Neither I worship the Hindu way nor i pray like Muslims.

(Because) I realize in my mind the only One, the Formless. I am neither a Hindu nor a Muslim.

(Because) my body belongs to the One to Whom you call Allah or Ram.4

As this verse was written to advise Kabir also on his verse incorporated in the AGGS at page 1159, thus the last stanzas are interpreted as:

Hey Kabir! say what is there in showing or practising (the above mentioned rituals).

Because the Almighty can be recognized by yourself on meeting the Guru/Pir.

In. this verse Guru Arjun has reiterated the already laid out philosophy of Sikhism by Guru Nanak. Here Guru Arjun rejects the old religious practices in first part of each stanza of this verse then emphasizes on the new way of life, i.e., life of theism (believing in only One, the Almighty, described by Guru Nanak in the beginning of the AGGS). Thus Guru Arjun has emphasized at least four times in this verse the new way of life. Then he declared that he' is neither Hindu nor Muslim. Thus it is clear that Guru Nanak's mission was to develop a new way of life - theism (new religion) different from those already established. The details of this new way of life (new religion) are given step by step throughout the Gurbani. While criticizing the above verse, Oberoi brings out another point: "It is over simplistic to suggest that they are discounting one set of categories to embrace new set of labels (page 58).

The above verse clearly indicates that Guru Arjun is explained with examples that he is neither Hindu nor Muslim and that he follows none of their religious practices but a new way of life of theism, i.e.



contemplation on the Only One, explained by Guru Nanak in the beginning of the AGGS. The definition of the Only One has been explained at later stage. In the above verse no new set of labels (i.e., taboos and rituals), mentioned by Oberoi, is employed, or anywhere else in the Gurbani for the new way of life.

Nevertheless, it can be admitted that some taboos and rituals have been introduced into Sikhism by the self-styled custodians of Sikhism because of their incomplete understanding of the Gurbani. There is no doubt that eventually such taboos and rituals will be eliminated to portray Sikhism as it is described in the Gurbani.

“By the closing decades of the nineteenth century the Singh Sabha, wide-ranging religious movement, began to view the multiplicity in Sikh identity with great suspicion and hostility” (p 25).

There is no multiplicity in the Sikh identity according to Gurbani. However, multiplicity of Sikh identity was introduced into Sikhism by the so-called Sanatan Sikhs.

## **I. BOUNDARIES AND TRANSGRESSIONS: THE KHALSA NORMATIVE TRADITION**

Early Sikh Traditions: “For much of its early history the Sikh movement, in line with indigenous religious thinking and practices -with the exception of understandable emphasis on soteriological teaching of Guru Nanak - had shown little enthusiasm for establishing a pan-Indian community” (p 47).

“Guru Nanak’s fundamental teaching was that those who wished to transcend the constant cycle of birth and death, should live in accordance with the will of the Creator which meant spending life on earth immersed in *nam simeran* or remembrance of the Divine Words. In Nanak’s paradigm of interior religiosity there was no place for austerities, penances, pilgrimages or necessary formal worship at established religious centers such as mosques and temples. His successors, faced with a rapidly expanding constituency and changing social forces, found it hard to sustain his minimalist teaching” (p 48).

Oberoi, like many other scholars, has formed such opinion without looking into the Gurbani and the totality of Guru Nanak’s philosophy. Guru Nanak has not only written about *nam simeran* philosophy. Guru Nanak has not only written about *nam simeran* but he has extensively written about mischievous politics as well as social and cultural behavior of the state and the subjects. Besides, he

perspicuously mentions the clear identity of the Sikhs as previously explained. To keep the identity consequently, an establishment of benign raj, sovereignty of the Sikh for the Sikhs and by the Sikhs, was emphasized by the Firth Nanak, Guru Arjun, as follows:

Now the Gracious Lord (the Alimghy) has promulgated an ordinance.

None shall cause any harm to others.

The whole humankind shall abide in peace.

This is the benign sovereignty.

(AGGS, M 5, P 74).

Oberoi has quoted a paragraph from a Janam Sakhi that followers of Nanak were called “Nanak Panthis”. On this basis he concluded that the term “Sikh” was still not crystallized during the seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. He writes: “The category “Sikh” was flexible, problematic, and substantially empty: a long historical intervention was needed before it became saturated with signifiers, icons and narratives, and thus lost its early fluidity. The label “Sikh” had not become hegemonic. Various categories were used to express association with the Sikh movement: Nanak-panthy, Gurmukh-panth, Nirmala-panth, Gursikh, and Gurmukh-marg” (p 53).

Oberoi has emphasized that separation of Sikhism from other religions was not achieved even after the writing of the Aad Granth: “While propogandists of modern Sikhism see in the collation of the Adi Granth in 1603-4 under Guru Arjun a powerful public declaration of the separation of the Sikh panth from other religious tradition, histori-cally it is difficult to admit such an interpretation” (p 54). He further says that, “It (Adi Granth) was certainly neither the first nor the last such collection. Because Fatehpur manuscript, virtually unknown in Sikh studies, is most instructive. This anthology of devotional poetry was compiled in Rajasthan twenty-one years before the Adi Grnath” (p 54). (Oberoi has spelt the title as “Adi Granth” whereas the right spellings are “Aad Granth”. When it is spelt as “Adi Granth” it is Oberoi’s spellings)

It is highly objectionable from any norms to draw such con-clusions from an unauthentic story from Janam Sakhi that the category “Sikh” was flexible, problematic and substantially empty. Because the separation of Sikh path was already declared by Guru Nanak and Guru Arjun before the compilation of Aad Granth as

explained earlier. It was due to the ignorance of this fact which made it difficult for Oberoi and the writer of the Janam Sakhi to see the separate identity of Sikhs.

It is not understood what the Fatehpur manuscript has to do with Aad Granth or Sikh identity. Its authorship is unknown, and it has mostly compositions of Kabir, Namdev, Ravidas, Parmanand and Kanha. It does not contain even a single composition of any Sikh Guru according to Oberoi himself. Thus its compilation, its existence and even mentioning it here is irrelevant and does not prove anything.

Oberoi has further criticized the Aad Granth saying that it failed to bring out the Sikh identity: "While there is no denying the fact that the Adi Granth has become a key cultural marker of the Sikh ethnicity, it would be a gross misinterpretation to view it in the same vein for early seventeenth century. Its heterodox textuality and diversity contributors were for more the manifestation of a fluid Sikh identity than a signifier of exclusivity" (p 55).

It is really a lamentable situation that many scholars have failed to understand the role of Bhagat bani in the Aad Granth. The Bhagat bani was added in the AGGS as the contemporary literature which raised the voice against the malpractices in Hinduism and Islam.

Most scholars believe that Bhagat bani was added in the AGGS because of its agreement (affinity) with Gurbani. However, it was not the case because it (Bhagat bani) varies from Gurbani at many places, and the Sikh Gurus have also given their own comments thereupon (2,8,9.). Therefore, it is very important for the scholars, if they want to make any statement about the Sikh and Sikhism, to consult and interpret only the Gurbani of the Sikh Gurus that has been enshrined in the AGGS by Guru Arjun and Guru Gobind Singh. Had Oberoi realized the above fact he would not have made such incorrect statement alleging a fluid Sikh identity in the AGGS because of its diverse contributors and the heterodox textuality.

Oberoi mentioned the heterodox textuality of AGGS. According to Webster Dictionary (10) "heterodox" means: contrary to or different from an acknowledged standard or traditional form. It is a pity that Oberoi could not understand that it is due to the heterodox textuality of the AGGS which gives Sikhism, a distinct and different identity

"As a consequence there is no fixity to Nanak's image in the Janam Sakthi stories: much like Puranic gods and goddesses, he is always transforming and wandering. In one myth he is represented as

an ascetic who lives on sand, in another he becomes a householder who toils for a living. One set of stories transport him to Mecca, another set takes him to Hardwar. The Nanak of Janam Sakhi is a saint who delights in mixing up as his own the sartorial styles of Muslim pirs and Hindu ascetics; chooses companions and disciples whose castes and religions do not match; pays no heed in his social transactions to spatial and dietary religious taboos. It is perhaps to keep pace with this kaleido-scopic persona that mythologists, besides calling him guru, shower his identity with religious titles: pir, sadh, bhagat, faqir and derves. The underlying logic of these varied terms of address is to convey the ever-transforming personality of Nanak” (p 55&56).

The above observations about the ever-transforming per-sonality of Guru Nanak have been taken by Oberoi from the work of McLeod and Hans on Janam Sakhis. Then Oberoi draws very derogatory remarks about the personality of Guru Nanak and Sikh identity as follows: “Just as there is no fixed Guru Nanak in Janam Sakhi, there is no fixed Sikh identity in the early-Guru period” (p 56).

If Oberoi wanted to carve out the personality of Guru Nanak, the most logical and scientific approach for him would have been to consult his authenticated bani incorporated in the AGGS by Guru Arjun. It was the most unacademic act of Oberoi to construct the personality<sup>8</sup> of Guru Nanak merely from Janam Sakhi’s. Moreover, travelling by Guru Nanak to Mecca and Hardwar was taken to explain the Sikh philosophy to the Muslims and the Hindus, respectively. How on earth could Oberoi adversely relate these episodes to build the personality of Guru Nanak?

Deviation: “But as the initial Guru period comes to a sudden end with execution of Guru Arjan in 1606, the Sikh movement begins to show signs of moving, at least in part, beyond existing cultural traditions. A continuous Jat influx into the Sikh movement throughout the seventeenth century alongside a protracted conflict with an increas-ingly hostile Mughal state gradually gave rise to new Sikh cultural pattern” (p 58).

“Given the paucity of written records it is hard to specify why the Khalsa order was established and it is even harder to specify the exact nature of the Khalsa under Gobind Singh” (p 59).

Most historians like Oberoi, McLeod and others write about the deviation of pacific Sikhism to militant Sikhism after the martyrdom of

Guru Arjun and due to influx of Jats in Sikhism. It is a pity that these scholars do not look into the authenticated information about Sikhism in the Gurbani. The Gurbani systematically leads the people towards becoming the Sikhs, and to create a benign Sikh kingdom. These scholars should also be aware of the fact that the whole Sikh philosophy was formulated by Guru Nanak in his first five Mahlas. No new philosophy was formulated by other Mahlas. The succeeding Gurus only preached whatsoever was already formulated except that bani of Guru Teg Bahadur was added by Guru Gobind Singh in the AGGS. The bani of Guru Teg Bahadur does not differ from those of the first five Gurus. Moreover, the Tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, did not add any of his own bani in the AGGS and reiterated that the AGGS is the only Guru of the Sikhs after him.

There is no paucity of record in the AGGS to specify why the Sikh order was established. Consequently, specification of Sikhism/Khalsa order merely from Janam Sakhi and Rahit Namas, as done by Oberoi and others, is a blunder (5).

Sahajdhari and Khalsa: "In the apocalyptic vision of Kesar Singh Chibber, a Brahmin Sikh, the political power of the Khalsa only spelt doom for the Sikh tradition. Writing in 1769 he prophesied that in ten years all would be chaos in Punjab. Even the Adi Granth would disappear from circulation" (p 75).

"Paradoxically, as the Khalsa mode attained hegemony within Sikh tradition, it simultaneously came to be accepted that there were alternative ways of being a Sikh: the Sikh Panth was not coterminous with the Khalsa and it was possible to be a Sikh without being a Khalsa" (p 75&76).

Oberoi took the above information from "Bansavalinama Dasan Patsahian da" written in 1769 by a Brahmin Sikh, Kesar Singh Chibber. Every Sikh is aware of the damaging activities of Brahmins to the spread of real Sikhism right from the beginning and they did it directly as Brahmins as well as indirectly in the garb of a Sikh, like Kesar Singh Chibber. The pity is that Oberoi used this information without evaluating it in the light of the other information available in the AGGS. Oberoi is also well aware of the progress of Sikhism and increase in the circulation of the AGGS since the prophesy of Chibbar. In spite of the above facts Oberoi still preferred to quote Chibber to degrade Sikhism.

On page 76 Oberoi describes Sahajdhari and Khalsa Sikhs as

follows: “All those Sikhs who did not turn into Khalsa Sikhs - and they certainly do not seem to have been numerically insignificant since the days of Gobind Singh were often referred to in the mid eighteenth century as Sahajdhari... In many ways the Sahajdhari Sikhs totally inverted Khalsa categories of thought and religious boundaries.”

Oberoi further quoted McLeod as follows: “The word Sahaj in the writings of Guru Nanak refers to the state of ineffable bliss that could be attained by following the path of *nam simeran*. Therefore, the compound word Sahajdhari refers to those who accept the *nam simeran* teachings of Guru Nanak and do not enter the fold of the Khalsa or recognize its code of conduct.” (p 76).

First of all I would like to say that there is no such term as Sahajdhari Sikh in Gurbani. It is always a “Sikh” whenever it has been used in the AGGS (AGGS, M3, P 601; M 4, P 305, 667; M 5, P 79). Moreover, McLeod is totally wrong to interpret “Sahaj”. Because according to Gurbani every Sikh is supposed to attain this state of “Sahaj”. Thus Sahaj, the “state of mind” or “ineffable bliss”, attained through *nam simeran*, can not be applied to make a new sect like Sahajdhari Sikhs.

Again Oberoi quotes a document dated back to 1783 and according to him it has been recently discovered. This was written by Bawa Mansha Ram faqir for guidance of Ramgarela Ram, head of an Udasi establishment in Bihar. He has described Udasi as, “The word Udasi is described from Sanskrit *Udasin*, meaning to be detached, and can signify renunciation or indifference to worldly concern” (p 78). If it is so then *Udasis*, so called Sahajdhari Sikhs by Oberoi, are quite contrary to the Sikh philosophy as detachment or renunciation of worldly concern is totally banned for a Sikh (7).

Oberoi continues comparing *Udasis* and the Khalsa Sikhs. All the characteristics given by Oberoi for the Udasi on pages 77-80 are in direct conflict with the fundamentals of Sikhism (7). How could any scholar draw a conclusion that an Udasi practising renunciation, cutting hair or keeping them as matted, wearing a chain around the waist, smearing ash on his body, keeping a vessel made of dried pumpkin, a cap and rosary of flowers, and a deer skin upon which hatha yoga is performed, can call himself a Sikh or a Sahajdhari Sikh. Oberoi is out of his mind to compare such *Udasis* or so called Sahajdhari Sikhs with Sikhs of *Guru Nanak*, as none of the above practices are approved in the Gurbani for a Sikh. Then how on earth can an *Udasi*

head, Bawa Mansha Ram faqir, write to another head, Ramgarela Ram, "... not to forget true teachings of the Sikh Gurus, daily recite Gurbani (the Guru's word), unfold the pages of the Granth...", when they are not going to follow its fundamentals. Because, if they want to practise the teachings of Guru Nanak they they have to drop other illogical and unscientific practices of *Udasis*.

From the whole discussion of Oberoi on *Udasis* and Khalsa Sikhs one could easily conclude that according to Oberoi *Udasi* is a Sahajdhari Sikh who will give great importance to recite the Gurbani of Sikh Gurus but will not practice the fundamentals of Gurbani. Instead they will continue to follow their own old religious practices. It is a most irresponsible act of a historian, like Oberoi, to use un-authentic, illogical and unscientific historical literature to prove that *Udasis* were Sahajdhari Sikhs.

On page 80 after discussing the *Udasis* and Khalsa Sikhs he raised a fictitious question, "The description of radical differences between Khalsa and Sahajdhari modes of identity raises the question: why, after the Khalsa transformation, was there a duality in Sikh identity?" The rest of his book is to justify the duality in Sikhism. Oberoi first tried to explain that people, so called *Udasis*, Sahajdharis and Nanak Panthis, continued to practise old religious beliefs as well as those of Guru Nanak. Then he declared that there was no clear cut identity of Sikhs or Khalsa Sikhs. Oberoi should have consulted Gurbani before making the statement on "duality" in Sikhism:

Don't fall in doubt of duality; Don't worship any other than the Almighty; --

Don't visit any tombs or cremation yards. (AGGS, M1, p 634)  
Those involved in duality in suffering are caught:

Unattuned to the holy word, is their life a waste. (AGGS, M3, p 362)

Being a simple historian, Oberoi lacks the ability to evaluate the available information in its real perspective. There was a clear cut logical explanation that most of the Sikhs, belonging to the categories named by Oberoi, failed to get out of the web of superstitions and old mythological practices, e.g., the father of Ruchi Ram Sahni who practiced both ways of life in the hope that one of them would work for him. However, those who succeeded to transform themselves into the new mode of Sikhism became Sikhs while others remained stuck in the

web of the mythology and old religious practices. Because of this action of theirs to drop the old practices and to take up the new ones of Guru Nanak, one may call them 'as Sahajdhari Sikhs, because they are trying to adopt Sikhism step by step. But they should never be called Sahajdhari Sikhs because they practise modes of Sikhism and Hinduism at par.

Oberoi has forgotten the natural phenomenon of human behavior to break the old habits and to pick up new ones. I want to quote my personal experience. I have been driving for about 10 years from my home to my office four times a day, i.e., every morning, noon and evening. I cross many traffic lights and stop signs on my way. One of the stop signs, considered unimportant, was removed by the municipality. After removal of the stop sign when I approach the place of the old stop sign I inadvertently put my foot on the brakes to stop as if the stop sign was still there. Since, my brain was programmed to stop at that place every time I crossed it, it took almost a year for me to delete that program from my brain. Similar is the situation with every person adopting a new way of life. He inadvertently continues a part of the old way of life till he has completely switched over to the new one. It is a common phenomenon with the new immigrants in UK, Canada, USA and other countries that they cannot drop their old habits all of a sudden and pick up new style of living overnight. It takes sometimes generations to switch over to new systems.

Keeping in view the fact of slow adoption of new religious practices or a new living style by people a producer of a new product continuously bombards the brains of the consumers through advertisement on TV and radio many times a day, and through newspapers, weeklies and monthlies to persuade the consumers to try the new product.

Therefore, it needs continuous coaching to prepare the people to take up new religious practices of Sikhism and to drop the old and deep-rooted religious norms that they have been practicing for generations. That was the reason that Guru Nanak took 239 years (from Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh, 1469-1708) to impart the complete philosophy of Sikhism. Sikhism was preached by the Sikh Gurus by logic and also by practising the new norms themselves. After 239-year of preaching Sikhism reached the Khalsa stage. Guru Gobind Singh ordained the AGGS as the spiritual Guru of the Sikhs. Then he entrusted leadership of the Panth to selected Sikhs for dissemination of Sikhism



through propaganda, publications, communications, etc. This system of preaching continued starting with Bhai Mani Singh, Banda Bahadur and others. Finally a Sikh Raj (benign Kingdom) was established under the capable leadership of Maharaja Ranjt Singh.

Oberoi should have taken into account the psychology of people in adapting Sikhism before making any of the above statements.

## **II. SANATAN TRADITION AND ITS TRANSMISSION: GURU, SAINTS, ASCETICS, AND SCHOLARS**

Now in the second chapter Oberoi has forgotten everything he had said before, and has started with another approach of Sanatan Tradition to denigrate Sikhism. According to him, Sanatan Sikhs are, "In their eyes, all that they stood for was created at the beginning of time, when the universe came into existence. As a result custom was in their eyes a norm that needed to be respected, followed and enforced. How is one to broach on world-view so rooted in eternity?" (p 93).

While making the above statement Oberoi has really shown the bankruptcy of his knowledge and common sense. At the beginning of the time (when "big bang" occurred about 15 billion years ago) only physical laws (laws of Nature or Hukm of the Almighty according to Guru Nanak) were created. Thus there is no possibility of formation of religious norms for human beings at that time when there were no human beings. Our solar system with its planet, earth, was formed about 4.7 billion years ago. Life started on the earth only about 3.5 billion years ago. Although the man (*Homo sapiens*) originated about 250, 000 years ago after a long journey of evolution, the creation of modern man (*Homo sapiens*) is the most recent event in the history of the universe, i.e., a little more than 35 000 years ago. Thus the earliest religious norms could be formulated around 5,000 years ago, the time of the beginning of civilization, according to latest available data about the origin of Man (6). Thus religious norms, supposed to be Sanatan, cannot be said to have been created at the time of creation of the universe as claimed by Oberoi or Sanatan Sikh. Therefore, there is no characteristic of eternity to such norms made by man about 5,000 years ago. Almost all such so called norms have been challenged by Guru Nanak as well as science.

It is a well-established fact that Dasam Granth was not written by Guru Gobind Singh. Instead he reiterated that only the AGGS is the "Guru" for Sikhs. Moreover it is also a fact that Guru Gobind Singh did not include his own bani in the AGGS though he added the bani of the

Ninth Nanak, Guru Tegh Bahadur. In spite of the above facts Oberoi is trying to portray that Sanatan tradition of Sikhs is influenced by the Dasam Granth (p 96-99).

To convince the readers of his book, however, Oberoi emphasizes that Dasam Granth was composed by Bhai Mani Singh and was equally venerated by the Sikhs as the Adi Granth; and no writing was removed from Dasam Granth on the success of killing of Masa Rangar by Sukha Singh. Then he introduces step by step the old mythological work from Dasam Granth in Sikhism as follows:

“He reports that great goddess, known as Devi, Chandi, Durga, Bhavani and Kalka helped the gods, waged battle against powerful demons - Mahishasur, Sumbha and Nisumbha - and eventually emerged victorious. These stories are from Devi - Mahatmya (500-600 CE) or Markandeya Purana and Devi-Bhagavata Purana. He says in Sikhism God has always been portrayed as masculine term. The goddess myth in Dasam Granth transposes the early tradition and add a new maternal dimension to Sikh understandings of Ultimate Reality” (p 96&97).

Oberoi is not aware of the fact that there is no proof that Dasam Granth was compiled by Bhai Mani Singh. Most probably the authorship of Bhai Mani Singh has been assigned by Sanatan Sikhs or Brahmins to introduce Brahminism in Sikhism through the Dasam Granth. **In** Gurbani the Almighty has been referred to as father, mother, brother, friend, *sandhi* (relatives) (AGGS, MS, P 103) and even as *yar* (very close friend, male or female) (AGGS, MS, P 703&704). Doesn't it include femininity of God in the AGGS which Oberoi failed to find out?

Then Oberoi tries to introduce *avatar wad* (incarnation of God into human being) in Sanatan Sikhs in spite of the fact reported by himself on page 96 from Guru Gobind Singh's *savaiya* that GurU Gobind Singh doesn't believe in *avatar wad*. Oberoi puts much emphasis on *chaubis avatars*, included in Dasam Granth. There are 24 incarnations of Lord Vishnu which range from a tortoise to man-lion and deities like Buddha, Krishna and Rama. Then Oberoi quotes various unauthenticated and illogical stories from Koer Singh's writing to include Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh in the line of *avatars* to give authenticity to *avatar wad* for the Sikhs (p 97-103). Thus Oberoi declared that “The Dasam Granth became paradigm for the entire religious culture of Sanatan Sikhs. While Sanatan Sikhs considered the Adi Granth and Dasam Granth their texts, they also began to accord

an almost analogous status to Puranas” (P 98).

Oberoi quotes another early nineteenth century work of Anandghan where “*sat nam karta purkh*” has been portrayed in two Vedantic doctrines as a *nirguna* (being without form and manifesta-tion) and *saguna* (manifested in the form of avatars) (p 101). This interpretation is absolutely wrong. Became the Almighty in Gurbani has always been expressed as *nirguna*. Whenever it is mentioned as *saguna*, it means that the existence of the Almighty can be visualized and realized by proper understanding of Gurbani and practising its philosophy. The *saguna* aspect (incarnation in human being) of the Almighty described by Anandghan and Oberoi is totally absent in the fundamentals of Sikhism. It is the work of Anandghan, Kesar Singh Chibber, Santokh Singh, Koer Singh, Giani Gian Singh, etc., who emphasized the *saguna* form of the Almighty to support the idea of incarnation of the Almighty into human form.

Further Oberoi derives four conclusions from Anandghan’s long commentary on “*sat nam karta purkh*” from Jap as follows: “First, he relies heavily on Puranic and Sanskritic literature to back his interpretation of Japji. Second, as in the Dasam Granth, the *avatar* paradigm seems to be his major presumption. Third, for him - and in this he was hardly an exception for his time - the writings of the Sikh Gurus were not authoritative enough to expound on Sikh theology. Fourth, and this follows from previous points, Anandghan is reversing an earlier Sikh doctrine that Gurbani, or the Word of Guru, is central to the attainment of liberation and there is no need for reliance on *avatars* who themselves are creatures of God. But all these are not solely his inversions, they were the product of what was enunciated in the “great code” and picked up by tens of thousands of people besides Anandghan” (p 101).

Neither Anandghan nor Oberoi has given any sound, logical or scientific proof of incarnation of the Almighty into the form of human being, or any good reason for acceptance of Vedantic, Puranic or other mythological philosophy. Similarly, without giving any reason both have tried to degrade the philosophy of Sikh theology. On the, other hand I would like to explain to these scholars that the Almighty described by Guru Nanak cannot be structured into any form with stone or metal.

Now let us examine the definition of the Almighty given by Guru Nanak as the genesis (the Origin/beginning) of the AGGS.

The only one; His Name is the Truth (exists for ever);  
 He is the Creator; He is without fear (not governed by any other);  
 He is without any revenge; He is timeless in existence;  
 He neither takes birth nor dies; With His grace (has been defined)\*.

\*see Chahal (2,4) for detailed discussion on “has been defined”.

It is such a concise and precise description of the Almighty that it is scientifically and logically true to its characteristics. Under no circumstance the Almighty described by Guru Nanak can incarnate in the form of human being as *avatar* to save the world from peril of evil. Scientifically and logically, if He, being the Almighty, can not save the world from the peril of evil, then He will not be able to save the world from the peril of evil by incarnation into human being.

The Fifth Guru Nanak (Guru Arjun) again has emphasized very strongly against the incarnation of the Almighty as follows:

That mouth be burnt which says that the Almighty takes birth (incarnates). (AGGS, M 5, P 1136)

Guru Nanak has also clearly mentioned that the Almighty cannot be structured:

The Almighty cannot be structured (into idols of stone or metal).

He is created by Himself. (AGGS, Top, p 2)

It seems to me funny and irrelevant in the Space Age, when Oberoi quotes unrealistic information from Anandghan, Koer Singh, Kesar Singh Chibber, Santokh Singh, Giani Gian Singh, Gulab Singh, Janam sakhis etc., to prove incarnation of God, and that practices of Sanatan traditions were part of Sikhism during nineteenth century.

With the support of the work of the historians mentioned above, and *pujaris* in Gurdwaras, the next step of those so called Sanatan Sikhs was to install Idols in the Golden Temple premises. According to Oberoi (p 103& 104) the first large image in metal casting of Guru Hargobind presented by Raja of Chamba was installed in the precincts of the Golden Temple and was followed by another gold image of the sixth Master below the Akal Takhat, and a minor idol of Guru Nanak in the inner sanctum of the main shrine. Large images were also housed at Baba Atal. In 1880, the management of the Golden Temple mooted the idea of installing the idols of the ten Sikhs Gurus at the main entrance of the Sikh shrine. Already within the precincts of the Golden Temple *pujaris* sat with stone images instructing pilgrims to

worship before them. Similarly at Akal Takhat, the supreme seat of Sikh ecclesiastical authority some *pujaris* publicly worshipped images. Along the worshipping of idol the philosophy of living guru also continued with these people and considering of Adi Granth as Guru was far from being fully accepted (p 104).

It has already been discussed that there is no place of idol worship in Gurbani and Sikhism. The irony is that the removal of these images from Golden Temple by the Singh Sabha has been taken as a very serious setback to Sanatan Sikhs by Oberoi.

Defining a Sikh: The concise, simple and ready-made definition of Sikh was provided by a Sanatan Sikh, Avtar Singh Vahiria, as follows:

“Any person who accepts the teachings of Guru Nanak is qualified to be a Sikh” (p 104 & 105). But according to Oberoi two distinct kinds of Sikhs, Sahajdhari and Khalsa, were recognized (p105). It was recognized by Sodhi Ram Narain Singh in “Khalsa Dharm Sastar” written in 1914 that was based on the writings of Avtar Singh Vahiria. According to the above *sastar* and the *pustak* of Giani Gian Singh, the low castes who embraced Sikhism were not allowed to mix with the high class of Sikhs and they were also not allowed to proceed beyond the fourth step in the Golden Temple (p 106). So much so that once a low caste Sikh was barred from entering the Golden Temple and Was got arrested. Another Sikh who reacted against this unlawful arrest of low caste Sikh, was beaten by the Sanatan Sikhs (p 107).

In the fundamentals of Sikhism there is no casteism whether a person previously was a low caste or a Brahmin before adopting Sikhism:

Call everyone high, none appears to be low;

As the Almighty has molded everyone alike;

And His same light shines in all of them. (AGGS, M 1, P 62)

Once a person becomes a Sikh then that person is a Sikh consequently there should not be any discrimination. It is very surprising that writers like Sodhi Ram Narain Singh, Avtar Singh Vahiria Giani Gian Singh, etc., holding good positions in the hierarchy of Sikhism could write such *sastars* against the principles of Sikhism, that would create casteism in Sikhism. It is still more surprising that persons like Oberoi would accept such *sastars* that are based on the philosophy contrary to that of the Sikh Gurus, to classify the Sikhs into Sahajdhari Sikhs, Khalsa Sikhs and Mazhabi (low caste) Sikhs.

“The religious establishments were made up of Guru lineage, holy men, ascetic and traditional intellectuals, who helped the ordinary mortals seek worldly fortune, overcome sorrow, and those who were ready for it were given instructions in moral and religious precept” (p.138).

These religious establishments were controlled mostly by Nir-malas and Udasis. Besides the teaching of Aad Granth, the Nirmalas and Udasis regularly taught the Vedas, the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, the Puranas and Sastras. In fact they never broke their linkages from Vedantic and Puranic philosophy, although they were controlling the Sikh institutions. If they were following the wrong paths, it is not the fault of the philosophy of Sikhism. In fact Oberoi failed to recognize the role of such persons who had their roots in Nirmalas, Udasis, etc., to amalgamate Sikhism into Hinduism. He being in a chair for Sikh Studies at the University of British Columbia should have disseminated the teachings of Sikh Gurus rather than supporting the people (Nirmalas, U dasis and so called Sanatan Sikhs or Sahajdhari Sikhs) who in the garb of a Sikh were trying to destroy the identity of Sikhism.

### **III. AN ENCHANTED UNIVERSE: SIKH PARTICIPATION IN POPULAR RELIGION**

In this chapter Oberoi discusses the enchanted universe where he has dug out literature dealing with the strong belief of people in miracle saints, malevolent goddesses and gods (Durga, Kali, Kalka, Maheshri, Bhiwani, Sitla Devi, Mansa Devi, Naina Devi, Suraj Devta, Mother Earfu, etc.), Village sacred sites (tombs, graves, pipal tree (*Ficus religiosa*), land tree (*Prosopis spicigera*), tulsī, cow and even bull) evil spirits and witchcrafts as their right religion. Then general conclusions are drawn on the connections between popular religion and its relationship with Sanatan “Great Tradition”:

- 1 “For much of the nineteenth century Sikhs were deeply involved in the worship of miracle saints and undertook regular pilgrimage to their shrines. Among these saints Sakhi Sarvar, also known as He of the Rubies, Rohinwala or He of the Hills, was widely worshipped by Sikhs” (p 147).
2. “For average Sikhs living in rural tracts, the local god (like Bhoomia) was far more important than the distant universal God acknowledged by Sikh sacred text” (p166).

3. Oberoi has blamed the Singh Sabha for dissuading the Sikhs from miracle saints, goddesses and gods, evil spirits and witchcraft (p 190).

Anonymously written “Gurbilas Chhevin Patsahi,” a biography of the sixth Guru, Hargobind, was the first attempt by the so-called Sanatan Sikhs to keep the Hindu mythology and Sikh philosophy at par. Gurbilas is conscious of Sikhs visiting non-Sikh shrines in search of cures and other boons. It retained the theory of reincarnation of God and portrayed Guru Hargobind as the twenty-fourth reincarnation of Vishnu (p 190 & 191). Similarly in “Sau Sakhi” (also anonymous, a book of prophecy, mythology, hagiography and narrative tradition) there is great insistence that Sikhs maintain unshorn hairs, undertake the *pahul*, stay away from images worship, refrain from tobacco, and not worship Sitla Devi. But it introduces that reciting specific verses from Japji could cure specific ailments and problems. The Sau Sakhi also insists that no break should be made with what is prescribed in the Vedas: the references to Brahminical rituals. It also reiterates the *avatar* paradigm and the mythical narratives of the Devi to maintain the Sanatan Sikh tradition. To put a seal of authenticity to Sau Sakhi by the Sanatan tradition its authorship was assigned to the Tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh (p 191-193).

In this chapter Oberoi then discusses the rise of Nirankaris and Kukas, although they followed the Sikh scripture but maintained new codes of conduct that were un-Sikh-like.

In this chapter Oberoi has written 64 pages on the enchanted universe where stories and examples given are all wrong and illogical according to the present knowledge of science.

Let us examine the history of Sakhi Sarvar as described by Oberoi (p 48-162). Sayyid Zainulabidin, a resident of Baghdad migrated to India in 1126 CE and settled at Shakot in the district Jhang. He married the daughter of a village headman from Khokhar tribe. From this marriage he had a son, Sayyid Ahmed, later known as Sakhi Sarvar. He was killed by his kinsmen in 1174 CE and was buried in Nagaha in Dera Ghazi Khan district. Then Oberoi describes his miracle work and his popularity amongst Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus.

Oberoi failed to notice that as his mother comes from the Khokhar tribe, who are Muslims as well as Sikhs, thus both innocent Muslims and Sikhs were attracted to Sarvar’s so called miracle power, although both religions (Islam and Sikhism) reject to idolize pirs.

Similarly Oberoi used another example of Gugga Pir for proving the diffused boundaries. Gugga Pir was originally from Hindu Rajput lineage and then embraced Islam. He was expert in snake bites and other ailments (p 160). Because of his background of Hinduism and embracement of Islam, both Hindus (including so-called Sahajdhari Sikhs) and Muslims were attracted to him. Here Oberoi could not discern the fact that people visited his shrines for snake bites and other ailments, but not as part of their religious practices.

According to M. Macauliffe at the Sarvar shrine, the spirit possession represented an effort on the part of a powerless sector of society (mostly women) to voice its dissent and articulate needs normally suppressed by communicating their needs through the medium of an intrusive spirit. According to I.M. Lewis spirit possession continues to be widespread strategy to alleviate the conditions of female subordination among women in much of the South and South East Asia, Hong Kong, Japan, North Africa and middle East (p 159).

Thus such desperate women, may belong to any religion, would seek the help of anybody, may belong to Islam, Hinduism or even to Sikhism (nowadays we find many Sikhs practising in so called enchanted universe, they are not practising it because they want to keep Sanatan tradition but to extract money from innocent Sikhs), through whom they could press men to agree to their demands without altering basis of the patriarchal domination. Oberoi has failed to see the reasons behind such spirit possession and going to such persons to get their demand fulfilled. Such practices are common with peasantry and innocent peoples of all religions in the world including the advanced countries like Canada, Europe, UK, and USA.

Moreover, according to the above observations of Macauliffe and Lewis such practices are not related to any religion and should not be confused with characteristics that would be necessary to create the boundaries of religions. Oberoi has used a major portion of his book on such unauthentic, unscientific and illogical practices to create a diffused boundary of Sikhism in the nineteenth century.

However, Oberoi admits himself that Ditt Singh, the leading ideologue of the Singh Sabha, took great pains at the turn of the century to write a lengthy vernacular tract denouncing those who worshipped the miracle saints, Sakhi Sarvar, Gugga pir or any other such pirs (p162).

Philosophy of Sikhism described in the Gurbani incorporated in



the AGGS dissuades people from believing in spirit possession, miracle saints, and provides equal rights for women. The same philosophy was taught by Ditt Singh as admitted by Oberoi. If the Sikhs of the nineteenth century followed the philosophy of Sikhism in its real perspective they would not have become prey to miracle saints like Sakhi Sarvar, Gugga Pir or gods and goddesses.

## **VI. CONSERVING SANATAN SIKH TRADITION: THE FOUNDATION OF THE SRI GURU SINGH SABHA**

In this chapter Oberoi describes the high speed with which Christianity was spreading in the Punjab and conversion of some well-known Sikhs into Christianity. To check the conversion of Sikhs into Christianity a new movement originated under the name of Singh Sabha, Oberoi gave the backgrounds of the early leaders of Singh Sabha like Dyal Singh Majitha, a millionaire, and Avtar Singh Vahiria, a learned Sikh, who were once the members of the Brahmo Samaj. Although their main objective was to save the Sikhs from conversion, instead they introduced Sanatan tradition in Sikhism.

Oberoi has already discussed the definition of Sikh in Chapter n. However, he has taken up this topic again with more emphasis on Sanatan traditions. In 1886 Avtar Singh Vahiria, Editor of *Gurumat Prakasak*, appealed to the Sikh scholars to find out authentic writings to answer the questions being raised about Sikhism. Oberoi wrote that the answer to the first question, Who is a Sikh?, was unequivocally as follows:

“All those who believed in the sanctity of the Sikh Gurus and the Adi Granth were Sikhs. Both Sahajdhari and Khalsa were equally qualified to be Sikhs and no one had the right to insult the former by calling them *monas*. Only Sikhs who had taken the *pahul* and then cut their hair could be carried *monas*; the word was most inappropriate if used for Sahajdhari Sikhs” (p 242). This definition appeared in the May 1887 issue of the *Gurumat Prakasak*, a magazine of Singh Sabha.

Oberoi also emphasized that the Sahajdhari Sikhs were following Sikh practices as well as those of Hindus, while Khalsa Sikhs were following strict code of conduct prescribed for them.

Finally Oberoi interpreted from all the above information “that Amritsar Singh Sabha kept the Sanatan episteme intact. Its activities did not move beyond routine activities and intentional action, thus largely keeping older cultural and religious patterns

going on” (p257)

The logical interpretation of the above information quoted by Oberoi could be that the thoughts of the early leaders of Singh Sabha were still being dominated by the Brahminical philosophy and that it was very difficult for them to get rid of them. It is a pity that any scholar like Vahiria who tries to write on Sikh and Sikhism depends more on the secondary literature written by biased historians rather than on the primary and authenticated source, Gurbani incorporated in the AGGS. That is the reason why all the definitions on Sikh and Sikhism I found in old and contemporary literature and encyclopedias are quite different from the real one. The only good definition of a Sikh is given in the Rahit Maryada written by the SGPC, Amritsar but that too needs modifications (1,3)

### **THE INTERPRETATIVE PROCESS: EXPANSION OF THE SINGH SABHA**

In this chapter Oberoi traces the history of introduction of English and vernacular education system in the Punjab and the emergence of elite group amongst the Sikhs. Then he conceptualizes the origin of Arya Samaj and Singh Sabha. This chapter is worth reading to discover the origin of Singh Sabha and its achievements - publication of various dailly newspapers, weekly and monthly magazines in Punjabi and English; publication of books in Punjabi; recognition of Punjabi language in Gurmukhi script; and teaching of Punjabi courses - Giani (highest proficiency), Vidwani (high proficiency), and Budhimani himani (proficiency). Oberoi has mentioned the following activities of Arya Samaj and Singh Sabha in this chapter that would be very important documents to interpret the further discourse on the boundaries of religions:

1. The original Arya Samaj envisioned a Hinduism. frer of polytheism, superstition, tdoлаты, child marnage, evil priests and social decadence (p 280). Thus some prominent Singh Sabha members were attracted to Arya Samaj, because there was no conflict with Sikhism. But soon Arya Samaj, was taken over by the fundamental Hindus and they turned agaisnt Sikhism. Thus the Sikhs started to withdraw their membership from Arya Samaj (p 287).
2. Ditt Singh (1853-1901) became a leading ideologue of the Singh Sabha. He was author, publisher, journalist, public speaker,

- preacher, consultant, teacher and polemicist par excellence (p 289).
3. Ditt Singh and Jawahir Singh were the first to bring to the notice of other members of Singh Sabha in their meeting of February 1887 that the Sikhs of the countryside are losing the Sikh traditions and that the first responsibility of Singh Sabha ought to be the reform and correction of folk Sikhism (p 294).
  4. Basant Singh, another Singh Sabha member reported that “Due to the establishment of the Singh Sabhas in cities, all those who violated the teachings of Sikhism are now under great pressure. Consequently, many of these people have now started to shift to villages where they find it easy to cheat and mislead innocent Sikhs” (p 296).
  5. The other important point to be noted in this chapter is the conditions to become the member of Singh Sabha “The Karachi Singh Sabha opened its membership to both Sahajdhari and Khalsa Sikhs as long as they were ready to declare that they adhere to the tenets of the Gurus, do not belong to any other religious sect, and pay a subscription of at least annas four per menses” (p 298). This condition clearly indicated that there was no room for practising the so called Sanatan tradition in Sikhism.

## **A NEW SOCIAL IMAGINATION: THE MAKING OF THE TAT KHALSA**

Oberoi has given very good account of the onerous task of Sikhizing the Sikhs by the Singh Sabha and the Tat Khalsa.

It was really a tough job to dissuade the Sikhs from Sakhi Sarvar and Gugga Pir. The job done by the Singh Sabha is commendable. For example, writing of novels by Bhai Vir Singh, tracts by Ditt Singh, publication of articles covering the Sikh practices in Khalsa Akhbar, Bhai Kahn Singh’s work, “Hum Hindu Nahin” (We are not Hindus), helped to wean the Sikhs from Pirs, Brahmins, superstition, evil spirits, faith healing, visiting of non-Sikh shrines, etc.

Three core doctrines - Guru, Granth and Gurdwara (the three Gs) - became the foci of the Tat Khalsa praxis for Sikhization of the Sikhs (p 316).

In Tat Khalsa view of the world the Granth was the rightful heir of the ten Sikh Gurus, it took precedence over all other sacred texts:

the Vedas, the Gita, the Puranas, and even Dasam Granth. It surpassed divines and their skills to work miracles, saints, *bhais* and members of Guru lineage (p 319).

While under Sanatan Sikhism the Adi Granth and the Dasam Granth were deemed at par, Tat Khalsa leadership was to radically alter this equilibrium. The Dasam Granth, which enshrined the “Great Code” of Sanatan tradition, was gradually eased out of the Sikh rituals, by the early twentieth century it no longer enjoyed the textual

hegemony it once enjoyed (p 319). Thus the metaphysical and cultural assumptions of Sanatan Sikh tradition as sanctioned by the Dasam Granth, such as the strong beliefs in the role of *avatars* and conceptions of the divine in feminine terms were no longer permissible (p 320).

The Dasam Granth is again being introduced in Sikhism by the Sanatan Sikhs in these days by preaching from Dasam Granth in Gurdwaras and publishing books and articles in dailies, weeklies and monthlies in these days. The Sikhs should be aware of this trap and should refute such preachings and publications. There is a long story how the Tat Khalsa was able to remove the idols from the precincts of Golden Temple and other Gurdwaras. The plan of Arya Samajists and Sanatan Sikhs of installing the idols of 10 Sikh Gurus on the entrance of Golden Temple was averted by the strong action of Arur Singh (p 324-325).

Then the *rite de passage* was formulated by the Tat Khalsa. The Sikhs were transformed into an independent religion by rigid enforcing of external symbols (5 Ks), initiation to Khalsa, birth, death, marriage and other social functions. In 1910 and 1931, respectively, the Chief Khalsa Diwan and the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee set up a commission to formulate a new Rahitnama. The changes introduced by the latest Rahitnama, title Sikhs Rahit Maryada, and published in 1950, were a tribute to the far-reaching implications of Tat Khalsa thinking on the construction of personhood within the Sikh community during the present century (p 343).

Oberoi argues that between 1880 and 1909 the body was made a principal force of symbolic concern (5 Ks) and a central means of projecting ideological preoccupation . . . Although Guru Gobind Singh may be said to have been the first within Sikh tradition to recognize the semiotic potential of the body to manifest the power of a corporate imagination, it took an interval of almost three centuries and decisive

intervention by Singh Sabha activists before this sign-vehicle (5 Ks) was fully harnessed (p 344).

It is a very unfortunate affair that before making the above statement Oberoi has forgotten the fact that immediately after the first initiation of the Panj Pyara (Five Beloved Once) by Guru Gobind Singh, thousands of Sikhs accepted the sign-vehicle (5 Ks) on the Baisakhi of 1699 CE. Later within a short spell of time all the Sikhs under the leadership of Banda Singh Bahadur who established Sikh Raj for a short time, were wearing the 5Ks. Banda Singh Bahadur minted his own coin and circulated his own currency and introduced a new reform of its own kind not known before -land to the tillers. After the arrest of Banda Singh Bahadur, slaughtering of Sikhs en mass was started by the Mughal rulers. A very few Sikhs were left. Then again there was a rise in Sikh misls and ultimately Maharaja Ranjit Singh established the great 5 Ks and was wearing 5Ks and was regularly meeting at Golden Temple and Akal Takhat for the Sarbat Khalsa.

Oberoi was worried about: what prompted the radical changes in the lexicon, grammar and syntax of the Sikh tradition, and what factor made this unprecedented change possible (p 351).

He admits that the new elites' unceasing efforts to formulate and create a sub-culture for themselves was a major force behind the Tat Khalsa's construction of modern Sikh identity (p 351). But he puts this success on the British that the necessary structure for such a transformation was provided by the far-reaching impact of the British rule on the urban and rural society in Punjab (p 351).

Oberoi again quotes that, "In a recent work of the social anthropologist R.G. Fox, influenced by the work of British Marxist scholars such as Raymond Williams and E.P. Thompson, has rigorously argued that Sikh identity, as we know it today, was a creation of colonial state (p 371).

The answer to all the above questions of Oberoi is that the success of putting Sikhism in right direction was due to the consistent efforts of dedicated Sikhs of Singh Sabha.

## **RESISTANCE AND COUNTER-RESISTANCE: THE TRIUMPH OF PRAXIS**

In spite of the success of Tat Khalsa explained in earlier Oberoi still writes in this chapter that "The Tat Khalsa's monotheism, iconoclastic sentiments, egalitarian social values and notion of a

standardized Sikh identity did not blend well with the polytheism, idol worship, caste distinctions and diversity espoused by Sanatan Sikhism” (p 382).

To justify the above statement of non-blending of Tat Khalsa's Sikhism with Sanatan Sikhism Oberoi has quoted some incidents. The incidents given by him are directly related to either Khem Singh Bedi or Avtar Singh Vahiria, both active members of Singh Sabha and Khalsa Diwan but having their roots in Sanatan traditions. Khem Singh Bedi wanted to revive the guru lineage as he claimed Guru Nanak's lineage. Avtar Singh Vahiria in collaboration with Arya Samajists tried to torpedo the work of Tat Khalsa by publishing articles, books, tracts and lecturing in public. What Avtar Singh Vahiria and Khem Singh Bedi did while being the member of Singh Sabha and Khalsa Diwan, Oberoi is doing today to tarnish Sikhism while holding the Sikh Chair at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. This Chair is to propagate Sikhism in its true perspective but he is introducing the Sanatan tradition in Sikhism and this latest book of his is serving the purpose.

## **GENERAL COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS**

The Sikh philosophy has such an appeal that everybody who comes across any verse of Gurbani wants to adopt the path of Guru Nanak, explained in the Gurbani. Unfortunately the person who starts to follow Guru Nanak's path keeps on clinging to the old philosophy that was being practised by him for generations together. It is not easy for a human being to cut off the old ties and to switch over to the new philosophy as explained previously. Moreover, most of the old religious practices are based on superstitions that if this or that ritual is not done one would end up in hell or suffer bad fortune in the future. Thus for most of the people who are weak-hearted and lack decision making power, like the father of Ruchi Ram Sahni, start practising both the norms, i.e., old ones and that of Guru Nanak in a hope that at least one of the two would work for them.

Therefore, there is a dire need to specify the Sikhism/Khalsa order by a group of specialists in the fields of Gurbani, languages, history, science, medicine and law. They should specify Sikhism/Khalsa order by consulting the Gurbani incorporated in the AGGS and the information available from history after screening their authenticity with present day knowledge of various sciences. This would answer the above question raised by Oberoi and to be raised by other Sikhs and non Sikhs in the future.

After reading very carefully the recent works of Dr Piar Singh and Pashaura Singh and nliw that of Or Harjot Oberoi, “The Construc-tion of Religious Boundaries” it appeared to me that there would be many such surprises for the Sikhs before the 1999 CE, the 300th anniversary of Completion of Sikhism. I would regard all these works as a blessing in disguise because these works have awakened the consciousness of scrupulous Sikhs once again to dissuade the Sikhs from falling into the trap of so called Sanatan Sikh traditions and losing the distinct identity of Sikhism. If the Sikh institutions and scrupulous Sikhs fail to bring out the truth about Sikhism before 1999, the damage done by such publications would be colossal and it may take many decades to bring back Sikhism in its pristine purity.

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Abbreviations: AGGS = Aad Guru Granth Sahib; M = Mohla; p = page.

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## **A Work of Scholarly Indulgence**

Dr Sukhmander Singh

At the very outset it must be understood that in recent years, attempts have consistently been made to misinterpret, distort, or even to denigrate Sikhism and to destroy Sikh identity. Most modern attempts have been made in a very clever way to first thoroughly confuse the masses by selective use of historical or anthropological material in order to construct a thesis to blur or dilute the Sikh identity. One of the most significant omissions of such attempts, of which Dr Oberoi's book, 'The Construction of Religious Boundaries' is a good example, is the lack of reference to Guru Granth Sahib and history of the Gurus. Scholars like Oberoi choose to downplay the Sikh Doctrines as enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib. These scholars, however, go to great lengths and spend great amounts of time and space in their writings to talk about insignificant matters which they dig out in their research. They make vague or irrelevant observations to redefine Sikh identity or Sikhism. Dr Oberoi cleverly does this for a specific period of 19th century, and tries to draw sweeping conclusions stretching beyond the period in question. He does this by attempting to malign or redefine Sikh identity and Sikhism by introducing such words as, "religious pluralism in Sikhism", and its, "Amorphous growth", etc. Hence, the reason for this review is to alert fellow Sikhs and other sincere re-searchers. Here are a few additional points relating to Oberoi's book which should be kept in mind when studying such works of scholarly indulgence, voluminously gathered and somehow published through prestigious university presses.

The methods and materials applied by these scholars are characteristically Eurocentric. Methodologies relevant to Christian ideology where scriptures developed as a result of history and culture, mapplicable to Sikhism where scripture is revelatory and authenticated by the prophet himself. Dr Oberoi admits that he is only a student of history and not of religion. But he does not hesitate to apply his historical techniques to Sikh religion and Khalsa.

The most fundamental flaw in the works of Dr Oberoi and for that matter, also in the works of his mentor Dr McLeod, is that they try to understand Sikhism on the basis of Sociology and Anthropology. That is what Dr Oberoi has demonstrated in his book all along. Dr McLeod and Dr Oberoi rarely quote from Guru Granth Sahib, the fountain of

Sikhism and the history of the Guru period. How can a study on Sikhism or Sikhs be considered objective without adequate reference to Guru Granth Sahib and without acknowledging its pivotal role ?

In order to prove his theory that in the 19th century the prevailing Sikh practices were purged to establish a homogeneous religious community, Dr Oberoi creates an imaginary conflict between 'Tat Khalsa' and 'Sanatan Sikhs'. He is extremely concerned for Sanatan Sikhs and downplays the works of Singh Sabha which promoted Sikh doctrines as embodied in Guru Granth Sahib. It is suggested by Dr Obreoi, through statements attributed to Sanatan Sikhs, that the Gurus did not envisage Sikhs as a distinct group. Similarly, Dr Oberoi's references to worship of Sakhi Sarvar, Guga and others by Sikhs are intended to paint an extremely biased picture of Sikhs and to strike at the distinctive identity and religion of the Sikhs. It is quite disturbing to note that Dr Oberoi chooses to ignore the martyrdom of thousands of Sikhs to uphold their identity, following their Gurus, who defended the identity and the distinctive characters of other religions, besides their own.

In the 19th century study of the Sikhs, Oberoi also chooses to ignore the fact that real Sikhs were driven underground due to atrocities and suppression of the British. Sikhs were not allowed to wear Kirpan and the British would charge heavy revenue (ap-proximately 75% of their crops) from them. Granted there were ninety thousand Sikhs in the British army at the turn of the century, but not even a single one of them was an officer. They were not the privileged class then, as observed by Dr Oberoi. The British did not give the Sikh *rahit* or separate identity to Sikhs, which had been prescribed by the Gurus. The British, however, did not discourage it, because they saw that the Khalsa discipline made excellent soldiers, and had a tradition of glory and valour. Refusal to see this plain fact of history is deplorable. So is the publication of literature like the book under review, which is full of such distortions and inconsistencies.

## Mischievous Propaganda is not Research

Dr H. S. Dilgeer

It is not possible for a scholar to call this book a piece of research. It is an aggressive work of mischievous propaganda, written with disdain and malice. A rigorous analysis of the text and motif of this book reveal the intentions of the writer.

Harjot Oberoi begins his book with a statement that no religion can be categorised in a proper manner. It is his “thesis” that Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam have never existed, at least in the Sikh Homeland. He further states that the inhabitants of the Sikh Homeland never wished to be classified as followers of a particular religion. He goes to the extent of saying that these people did not believe in. ideology of any religion. Harjot declares that there was no religion in the real sense. He evaluates this phenomenon as a sort of confusion about religion with an amalgam of superstition, witchcraft, idolatry, occult power worship and irreligious mentality; and, Harjot grants these attributes to all the religions i.e., Sikhism, Hinduism and Islam (p.1). To prove his point, he presents one example from the memoirs of a Hindu teacher (p.2). This Hindu teacher remembers the routine of his father who used to worship idols and also recite from Sikh scripture (both these forms of worship or faith are in complete contradiction to each other). Here, Harjot stresses the point that the Hindu teacher believed that millions of people never knew what their religious boundary was. The statement by the Hindu teacher, mentioning the word ‘millions’, has been taken by Harjot as final proof of the ignorance of the majority of the residents of the Punjab. For Harjot, a minor stray statement by one person is a decisive criterion of a particular issue. Harjot quotes this phenomenon as ‘tradition’ in worship in the nineteenth century. The Hindu teacher quoted by Harjot was born in 1863 and memories about his father must have been from the year 1875 or after. It Was the time when the Arya Samaj and the Singh Sabhas were founded.

Harjot quotes another “episode” from the travelogue of an Evangelist. This Evangelist missionary narrates an incident (not in the Punjab) about some palanquin bearers smoking *hukka* (tobacco). According to the author, (a) they seemed to be Sikhs (author is not sure), (b) they had cut their hair and had given up Sikhism. The author asserts that the palanquin bearers had renounced Sikhism and after giving up Sikhism, they could smoke tobacco. It, by no means, proves

that a person having faith in Sikhism used to smoke tobacco. From this “evidence”, Harjot decides that smoking was a Sikh tradition. Great research indeed!

Further, Harjot makes a bold statement that hundreds of thousands of (why not millions?) Hindus regularly undertook pilgrimage to Muslim shrines in the early nineteenth century. Harjot does not give any evidence for this bold statement. Secondly, it is sheer ignorance to state so, as the early nineteenth century was a period of Ranjit Singh’s rule in the Sikh homeland where the Muslims (at least at that juncture) were not their particular favourites. The Sufi tradition virtually did not exist in the Sikh homeland after the fourteenth century. Thus, Harjot begins with a wrong premise based on false information and makes bold statements, which are not only unacademic but also mischievous. Harjot’s lies go to the limit of saying that the Sikh initiation (in Harjot’s words “unprecedented rite of initiation”) was begun (by some Sikhs?) in the eighteenth century (p. 24). There is not a single source which states this except Harjot’s own book. Hundreds of the sources, including several from the first decade of the eighteenth century, and even a few diaries of the dates when Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Guru of the Sikhs, revealed Khalsa (on March 30, 1699), mention that the Guru Sahib made the initiation mandatory for the Sikhs.

Seriousness of Harjot’s work can be measured from his usage of particular names and terms. He uses the term Golden Temple instead of Darbar Sahib. Golden Temple may be used by an ignorant tourist or journalist; but an academician must know the real name of the Sikh shrine (Darbar Sahib) at Amritsar. Harjot has used the name ‘Golden Temple’ throughout the book. Similarly, he uses the term “baptism” for Sikh initiation. I hope he was not ignorant about the meaning of the specific Christian ceremony of baptism. One can smell his ulterior motives and seriousness of his work in using these and several other terms which are confusing and/ or mischievous.

Harjot (p.25) alleges that the British regime collaborated with the Singh Sabha movement to Sikhise the Sikhs. At several places in his book he contradicts himself. The evidence, from different sources, establishes that the British regime was, rather opposed to the Sikh revival movement. Harjot himself agrees that the birth of the Singh Sabha was a result of fear of the Sikh leadership that the Sikh youth was being induced to adopt Christianity. How could the authorities

Collaborate, co-operate, assist, help or otherwise facilitate such a movement which would go against the religion of the rulers.

Harjot relies more on gossip and guess work without any evidence. If there is any evidence which does not suit his propaganda he will ignore it or brand it as untrustworthy.

Harjot has coined a novel term, “principle of silence” in this book. He says (p. 30) “historical texts are virtually silent about religious diversity, sectarian conflicts, nature worship, witchcraft, sorcery, magi-cal healing, omens, wizards, miracle saints, goddesses, ancestral spirits, festivals, exorcism, astrology, deviation, and village deities”. He confesses there is no evidence to establish this (propaganda). So, he coins a new term to establish at there might have been “a lot of anti-Sikhism in an ordinary Sikh.” Secondly, he seems to be angry as to why Sikhism rejects every type of superstition and its products. Thirdly, Harjot does not use this principle of silence in the case of other world religions, especially Islam. He does not conclude with the same premise that the Muslims worshipped idols, pictures and statues of Mohammed, that they had been eating pork or that they worshipped Hindu gods, and so on. The principle of silence does not apply to Hindus eating beef, practising incest, stealing from temples, worshipping Ravana, and so on. Harjot’s principle of silence denies all the existing authentic sources in order to make bold statements and mischievous propaganda against doctrines and the history of the Sikhs.

Harjot (p. 31) blames the British writers for honestly recording the ideals of the Sikh faith. When, however, some writers mention minor instance of corruption aberration, Harjot accepts it as a tradition among the Sikhs. If Harjot were to write history of Scandinavian religious life, he would certainly say that incest, adultery, hatred, robbery were accepted principles of Christianity (or traditions in Christianity) as these traditions were very popular in Norway, Denmark, Sweden, during the hey days of Christianity and that even now-a-days this type of “ethical” practice(s) are accepted among the Christians of these countries.

On the one hand, Harjot rejects even Trumpp for not mentioning what Harjot wants to propagate (in spite of the fact that Trumpp had a strong anti-Sikh bias). But, on the other hand, Harjot accepts the account of ignorant travellers, who, without any knowledge of language, philosophy and even proper terms for the local phenomena mention some incidents based on hearsay. This pattern has been adopted by Harjot throughout this book.

On page 33, Harjot says that the Punjabis, or at least the non-Sikhs, did not consider Sikhs as “hermetically sealed off” from the rest of the people in the Punjab or elsewhere. As Harjot is expected to ignore (or conceal) all the evidence, he does not want to talk about the Hindus of Delhi refusing to have trade links with Sikhs simply because the Sikhs had got initiation (Sainapat : Gur Sobha). Harjot rejects the evidence of the Persian writers mentioning that a soldier of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur’s army rejected the claims of his mother that he (the boy) was a Hindu and not a Sikh (the boy-refused to save his life by renouncing Sikh faith). Harjot does not bother about the order by Parrukh Siyar declaring it a crime to be a Sikh. The history (per chance these are the Persian sources and not the Sikh sources) records that all the Hindus shaved their beards so that none should consider them as Sikhs. Harjot does not mention Lakhpat Raits (a Hindu minister of the Moguls in the Punjab in 1740s) crusade against the Sikhs with a declaration that he will eliminate the Sikhs from the earth. Still, Harjot tries to assert that the Sikhs had no separate identity.

Harjot’s dishonesty as an academician (I shall present convincing evidence that Harjot’s work is mischief, lies, propaganda, ignorance and hence un-academic trash in the forthcoming paragraphs too) leads him to make another un-academic statement. I use the term statement as he never presents any argument, logic or evidence to corroborate or prove even a part of his statement. His usual rhetoric is “it seems”, “it may be”, “it is likely”, “it is silent”,... and so on. He (P. 33) rejects the thesis of Dr Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon, because this precious piece of research exposes all the propaganda launched by him (Harjot) in this book. He rejects the scholarly work of Dr Gurdarshan Singh by saying “It fails to pursue any implication of the fact that the Sikhs were not a homogenous social group”. Harjot is angry as to why Gurdarshan Singh did not begin with gossip or anti-Sikh guesswork. Second objection by Harjot is that Dr Gurdarshan Singh assumes the Singh Sabha as ‘greatest reform movement’ among the Sikhs. Dr Gurdarshan Singh has most diligently established the achievements of the Singh Sabha movement (Harjot, elsewhere, accepts the role of the Singh Sabha movement which proves the conclusion made by Dr Gurdarshan Singh). Harjot is angry as to why the scholar has been successful in presenting the performance of the movement. Similar are the other objections levelled by Harjot against Gurdarshan Singh (P. 34 laments that research has evaluated Kukas as deviants). Harjot does not prove that the Kukas were not deviants). Harjot wanted that the deviants should not be evaluated on the basis of the principle of the

philosophy. He wants that deviations and aberrations should be accepted as “tradition.” If we apply his logic to the Christian world then Pope John Paul II will be considered as fundamentalist, and the cult leader David Koresh (who committed suicide) and the other cults will become “traditions” and “norms”. The criticism (or envy) of Harjot against scholarship of Gurdarshan Singh’s work is un-academic and biased.

His prejudice against Sikhs takes another form. He says that Punjab is not the “homeland” of the Sikhs (p. 42). The argument he presents is that some Sikhs had been living outside the Punjab. He says that the Sikhs were only 6.5% in the British politically administered unit under the name of the Punjab. He then, refutes himself in the very next sentence. He agrees that the bulk of the Sikhs was concentrated in the central Punjab. He, however, wishes to call this area “two Doabs” (between river Chenab and Sutlej). In the following sentences, he creates other new terms as Majha Sikhs, Doaba Sikhs and Malwa Sikhs. There never existed any such categories. Applying his logic to England, one shall have to say London Christians, Sussex Christians, Wessex Christians, Middlesex Christians, Midland Christians, etc. In fact, any Sikh, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Aardharmi, belonging to Doaba will be a Doabia, from Malwa a Malwaee and from Majha a Majhail, from Rajasthan a Rajasthani, from Haryana a Haryanvi. He says that the Sikhs of the Majha area considered themselves as superior to the Sikhs from the other zones because Lahore was the capital of the Punjab and Darbar Sahib was at Amritsar. May be he does not know that the other major Sikh shrines are outside Majha (Anandpur Sahib, Kiratpur Sahib, etc.) and these were the capitals of five Gurus (Guru Hargobind Sahib to Guru Gobind Singh Sahib). No other place has been the residence or capital of so many Gurus. Thus, this argument too, is invalid and mischievous. His quotations from some travellers and officers do not support distinctions among Sikhs living in different areas.

Harjot’s whole writing about “early Sikh tradition” (P. 47-48) presents another big lie by saying that the Sikh notions of time, space, holiness, mythology, kinship, social distinction, purity and pollution, gender, sexuality, etc. were firmly rooted in Indic cultural thinking. This is shocking. I don’t think Harjot is so naive that he does not know even the basic philosophic postulates of Sikhism. Sikh philosophy is altogether different from the Indic thought. Not a single scholar has found anything common between Sikhism and extremist Indian as

Hindu cultural thinking.

Harjot says that Guru Nanak's basic teaching was *Naam Simran* (meditation) only. This too is ignorance. Guru Nanak Sahib taught honest earning, sharing with others, as essentials for becoming a self-realised person (*Sachiara*). Plain meditation may be Hindu thought. Sikhism turns a man into a social and spiritual superman. Attacking the successors of Guru Nanak Sahib, Harjot says "(the successors of Guru Nanak Sahib) found it hard to sustain his minimalist teaching". This again is ignorance or malice of Harjot. It is strange that he writes about Sikhism even without reading or/and understanding the message of Guru Nanak Sahib.

Commenting upon *Adi Granth* (he uses the term "commonly known as *Adi Granth*", is there any other name for the *Adi Granth/Guru Granth Sahib*?) he says that "it is hard to specify the factors that prompted the fifth Guru of the Sikhs to collate an anthology of devotional literature, it is easier to discuss its impact." Here, he quotes Pashaura's dissertation. Pashaura himself has accepted it in writing that his dissertation is a bundle of lies and misleading statements. Here, Harjot uses an alien term "textual community" for Sikhs worship of *Guru Granth Sahib*. On one hand, he says that the Sikhs started adherence to and leadership of *Guru Granth Sahib* as a result of so-called *Tat Khalsa*, on the other hand, (p. 49) he says that Sikhs became in 1603-4, a so-called textual community. Vagueness, ambiguity, confusion, uncertainty, gossip, disdain, aggression dominate Harjot's book throughout.

Commenting upon *Bhai Gurdas's* verse, mentioning some of the qualities of a good Sikh, Harjot says "(In *Bhai Gurdas*) there are no explicit statements on an independent Sikh identity". May be Harjot wished *Bhai Gurdas* should have written for school boys. Harjot himself accepts (p. 51) that *Bhai Gurdas* distinguishes between a god Muslim, a good Hindu and a good Sikh. The third path suggested by *Bhai Gurdas* explains, in unequivocal terms, the separate, distinct and superior identity of Sikh religion; and Harjot mentions the same in the sentence with which he attaches a foot note simply to promote *Surjit Hans's* poor work "Reconstruction of Sikh History from Sikh Literature" by calling it brilliant work. All the scholars of Sikh studies have rated *Surjit Hans's* work as one of the poorest works on Sikh studies. *Surjit Hans*, however, in the book referred to by Harjot, does not debate distinctness of Sikh Literature and Sikh History.



Further, Harjot calls Janamsakhis as mythical literature and in hagiographic tradition. Several scholars have proved that the propagandist W.H. McLeod, who used this mischievous term for Janamsakhis, was not only ignorant of geographical, political and the other details of the said literature, but also was dishonest and deceitful. (If we apply the McLeod's method to the Hindu book Ramayana, Ram becomes unreal and Hinduism becomes fiction). Harjot, to confuse the readers, quotes one story. This story, like that of the revelation of The Ten Commandments to Moses and Quran to Mohammed, depicts as to the phenomenon when God made revelation to Guru Nanak Sahib. Harjot deliberately tries to present this incident as an anecdote. This is how Harjot moves with stray stories and unimportant and meaningless issues and draws conclusions from such baseless material. From such material, Harjot makes a statement that "it needs to be categorically stated" that Sikhs were still in the process of evolution and growth. This pattern, apparently illogical and childish and hence un-academic, is the most prominent feature of Harjot's book. Harjot, now takes it for granted that the Sikhs were not a separate identity and further states that there were several categories associated with the Sikh tradition (p. 53). He reckons the categories as Nanak-Panth, Gurmukh-Panth, Nirmal-Panth, Gursikh, Gurmukh-Marg. A scholar shall laugh at the ignorance of Harjot who considers synonyms as names of different categories. There was no Gurmukh-Panth or the other Panths as stated by Harjot. All these synonyms are like calling a person nice, good, noble, fine, etc. For Harjot, these are different categories; he lists still some other "categories" in the following chapters and forgets that he had said something else in the preceding pages.

Harjot resents that the Adi Granth became a declaration of separate Sikh identity in 1604. He does not want to accept the historicity of this fact. His only argument is that there might have been some more such compilations. Even if there were a couple of other compilations of some poets (not Sikhs) in Hindustan, how does it annul the historicity of the Sikh identity? Harjot is silent about it. He wants that his propaganda should be accepted without any logic and/or evidence. On the very next page (p. 55), Harjot agrees that 'there is no denying the fact that the Adi Granth has become a key cultural marker of Sikh ethnicity, it would be a gross misinterpretation to view it in the same vein for the early seventeenth century. "Harjot, here too, does not offer any argument or evidence. The history, the tradition and the sources are crystal clear about the facts which Harjot wants to ignore

in order to push his academic sabotage, which seems to be the motive of Harjot's book.

Harjot, as he presents his funny 'theory of silence' or 'theory of guess', makes another strange statement. He says "just as there is no fixed Guru Nanak in the Janamsakhis, there is no fixed Sikh identity in the early Guru period. A simple student of Sikh history knows about the personality of Guru Nanak Sahib in the Janamsakhis; and there is nothing that is confusing, ambiguous, or uncertain. The person (char-acter) of Guru Nanak Sahib in these sources (Janamsakhis) is exactly according to Sikh philosophy and this uniformity exists in all the Janamsakhis. Still, Harjot presents his funny tautology "no fixed Guru Nanak, so no fixed Sikh identity." Strange logic.

As a true member of "Anti-Sikh school", Harjot supports McLeod's propaganda that the Jat influx into the Sikh movement gave rise to new Sikh cultural patterns. Firstly, Harjot, here, accepts the separate Sikh identity. Secondly, the malicious propaganda of Jat influx is untrue and baseless. Harjot has not questioned the authenticity of the writings of Bhai Gurdas. Bhai Gurdas has recorded the names of the followers of the Sikh Gurus in his Vaar 11. In this Vaar, Bhai Gurdas has given the names of the Sikhs who joined Sikh faith during the time of the first Six Gurus. In Pauris 29 to 31, the names of the Sikhs who embraced Sikh religion at the time of Guru Hargobind Sahib are also available. A reading of the names of the Sikhs and their castes will show that most of these Sikhs were non-Jats. Several scholars had already refuted the blatant lies of McLeod much before Harjot wrote this book (See Jagjit Singh : The Sikh Revolution, and also writings of Sardar Daljeet Singh, Dr K.S. Mann, Dr Tarlochan Singh, Dr Noel Q. King, etc.), but Harjot does not want to bother about logic or truth (I do not want to believe that Harjot had not read rejection of McLeod's propaganda). Harjot quotes only from Anti-Sikh school i.e. W.H. McLeod, J.S. Grewal, Surjit Hans, Indu Banga, Pashaura Singh, Joyce Pettigrew, etc., or communists like Chetan Singh, etc.

Harjot does not hide his disdain for everything that is specifically Sikh. For Sikh initiation, he uses the term "unusual initiation rite" (p. 61). Are there any standard or usual initiation rites in the other religions? Quoting an incident from Sainapat's book *Gur Sobha*, Harjot mentions that the Brahmin and Khatri Sikhs opposed and hated initiated Sikhs. On page 46 of Sainapat's book, there is no mention of Brahmin and Khatri Sikhs. Sainapat mentions the boycott of the in-initiated Sikhs by non-Sikhs. Such lies are common throughout Harjot's

book which point to the conspiring nature of Harjot's work.

Under the heading "Boundaries and Transgressions", Harjot refers to Sikh culture and says that the Sikhs did not have a distinct set of life-cycle rituals. Harjot's ignorance of Sikh philosophy is apparent. Obviously, he has not read the Sikh scriptures. Further, when he propagates that the Sikh code of conduct was "innovation" of the eighteenth century, he quotes only from Chaupa Singh's Rehitnama. He does not talk about Bhai Daya Singh's Rehitnama and Bhai Nand Lal's Rehitnama and fankhahnama, because a perusal of these two works would reject everything said by him. Harjot has adopted this design throughout his book. He presents un-authentic, vague and partial works and ignores authentic, genuine and proper sources. Further (p. 65), Harjot calls these Rehitnamas as "newly instituted", whereas the Rehitnamas date from CE 1700. Bhai Daya Singh and Bhai Nand Lal were contemporaries of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib. Thus, these sources are neither un-authentic nor new. These are treatises about the religious culture, as prevalent at or before the period of writing of a particular Rehitnama. If one Rehitnama does not give every detail, how does it mean "chaos" as Harjot puts it. In fact, Harjot is sad as to why these fine source books are available. Harjot's conspiracy stands thoroughly exposed. While talking about Guru Granth Sahib, he says (p. 69), "Fortunately for them, there emerged from the time of Guru Nanak the doctrine of an eternal Guru." Harjot's aggressive and prejudiced mode exposes him. He uses the word "fortunately". He is angry as to why this evidence or ideology is available. He talks in prejudiced manner and expresses his jealousy. He wants to confuse the reader with vague, stray points and issues with his euphuistic language which may have rhetoric but no logic. Thus, the chapter "Boundaries and Transgressions" is superficial, and is more than an exercise in confusion. Harjot offers nothing beyond guesses and baseless assumptions.

"Paradox: The Khalsa Sehajdhari duality" is another section which exposes the designs of Harjot. The very first point he presents is propaganda. He says thousands of the Sikhs took to Khalsa identity, some in pursuit of worldly power and the others out of deep religious conviction. (p. 71). Firstly, Harjot does not present, throughout the next 20 pages, any evidence or argument to prove that the people joined Khalsa brotherhood for worldly power. It was the time when joining Sikh brotherhood meant sacrificing one's life. The regime had

announced that anyone calling himself a Sikh was to be eliminated. Prizes on the heads of the Sikhs were offered. Prof. Hari Ram Gupta, much before Harjot could dream of writing, had dealt with this point. According to Prof. Hari Ram Gupta, people joined the Sikh army because of faith. But, still there were persons who joined for plunder and worldly power. They were only Hindus and they did not embrace Sikhism. Perhaps Prof. Hari Ram is a Hindu and not a Sikh. The story of the time of (Maharaja) Ranjit Singh is a different one. The Hindus from Jammu, Hindustan (U.P., etc.) and the hill areas “became” Sikhs and as soon as the British annexed the Sikh homeland these Hindus renounced their faith. They did not call themselves even Sehajdharis.

Harjot, here, does not talk of Sehajdharis but presents the point that Khalsa was capturing power in the Sikh homeland and in this process attainment of power had made some Sikhs as men of political aspirations. Kesar Singh Chhiber refers to this situation. Harjot calls Kesar Singh as “detractor”, because he talks of ideology and rejects power-capturing as an un-Sikh approach. Harjot resents as to why Kesar Singh talks of ideology. From here, Harjot moves to make another “statement” : “It simultaneously came to be accepted that there were alternative ways of being a Sikh: the Sikh Panth was not coterminous with Khalsa and it was possible to be a Sikh without being a Khalsa.” When Kesar Singh condemns un-Sikh like style of some Sikhs, it does not, in any way, mean that a man not living Sikhism could be another form of a Sikh. It is like saying that one can still be a kind of Christian without having faith in Christ, that a Muslim without having faith in Mohammed was still a type of Muslim. Harjot picks up vague and meaningless points and draws sweet conclusions to prove (which he does not) his statements and propaganda. He chooses sentences, gives them his own meanings and then declares that his point stands proved. This is neither research nor scholarship nor academics.

Now, a word as to who is Sehajdhari? Sehajdhari is a person who adopts Sikhism in stages or in a bit slow manner. For a Sehajdhari, it is a must that he should adhere to Rehat Maryada (code of conduct), he must not cut his hair and have faith in Khande da Pahul (Sikh initiation). When a Sehajdhari lives his life according to Sikh ideology he is supposed to adopt Sikh culture. Hence, social ceremonies, including those relating to birth, marriage, death, etc. must be performed in accordance with the Sikh ideology. The children of a Sehajdhari, too, with the Sikh ideology. The children of a Sehajdhari, too, will be Sikhs. There were several Sehajdhari families up to nineteen-fifties. The children of these

Sehajdhans got initiation. The major examples of these case are : Master Tara Singh, Sadhu Singh Hamdard, Harbans Singh Manchanda and several others. Bhai Harbans Lal (USA) is the most recent example of a Sehajdhari family. A Sehaidhari is not a Hindu. On the other hand, there are instances when children of Sehajdhari families renounced Sikhism and joined Hindu religion. Lala Lajpat Rai was one of such persons. Lala's mother Gulab Devi was a Sehajdhari Sikh. She brought up her son as a Sehajdhari. Lala Lajpat Rai had unshorn hair and beard till the age of thirty. He used to tie his beard and had a turban even when he had been practicing as a lawyer in Hissar. After that, he renounced Sikhism and became a Hindu. Sehajdhari is a Sikh who plans to get initiation in near future but, still before initiation, he lives his life like an initiated Sikh. Harjot refers to anti-Sikh writer McLeod's meaning of Sehajdhari. McLeod wants to propagate that "those who attain the state of ineffable bliss" are Sehajdharis. If we accept this meaning then all the initiated Sikhs too are Sehajdharis; and also all the non-Sikhs who attain such a stage are Sehajdharis. McLeod and his associates of Anti-Sikhism school have presented several such funny but notorious statements of this type.

Harjot presents a letter to prove his point. It is a letter dating back to 1783, from Bihar. It was the period when the Udasis (Udasis have nothing in common with Sikhism) and the other groups had been approaching the Sikh rulers for donations. The Sikh rulers, as a matter of generosity, which is a part of the Sikh culture, used to grant money or other forms of financial assistance to anyone who approached them. The Hindu ministers and the other officials used to induce the Sikh rulers to donate a lot to them. In return these sects exhibited their interest in Sikhism too. The details of such donations can be seen in the records of the Sikh rulers. Sohan Lal Suri's *Umdat-ut-Twarikh* is full of such boring details. It was this attitude of the Sikh kingdoms which brought the Sikh scriptures in the *deras* of the Udasis. Otherwise, there is nothing in common between Udasi-ism and Sikhism. Sikhism rejects the basic postulate of Udasis, i.e. renunciation of this world. Rejection of Yoga, too, is basic in Guru Nanak Sahib's teachings. A Sikh has to live a life of detachment within this world. It is not the dress code or hair or any thing else that creates distinction between Sikhs Udasis. Both faiths are the opposite poles without any meeting point. Udasis never considered themselves a part of the Guru Nanak tradition. The Udasis had their own *dera* even at Amritsar by the side of the building of the Akal Takht. Udasis, however, had occupied the Sikh shrines during the period of the persecution of the Sikhs by the state during the eighteenth

century. The Moguls did not harass the Udasis, as they asserted that they were not Sikhs. It was until the Sikh misls established their rule in the Sikh homeland that the Sikh shrines remained occupied by these elements. Some of these (Udasis etc.), chose to be considered Sikhs, With an intention of continuing their livelihood from the income of the Sikh shrines, occupied by them.

During the rule of (Maharaja) Ranjit Singh also, the Hindu ministers were so powerful that it was virtually a Hindu state with a Sikh as a king. Details of daily diaries show that Ranjit Singh was under vast influence of the Hindu ministers. Reference to Sikhism are minor and un-important (Sohan Lal Suri : Umdat-ut-Twarikh). One thing, however, to the sadness of Harjot, is clear that Ranjit Singh's diaries don't mention anything of Sehajdhari, Nanakpanthi or the like. The reference to Sikhs is unequivocal and same is about Hinduism and Islam. But, Harjot who puts this blame on the British will not consider this evidence (daily diaries of Ranjit Singh), inspite of the fact the diarist was a Hindu, because these diaries don't mention any "traditions" in Sikhism.

Harjot quotes a paragraph from Malcolm (p. 88) mentioning un-Sikh like practices of the "new converts to Sikhism. Malcolm con-firms that the Sikhs and the Hindus were two different identities (see quote by Harjot). Secondly, Malcolm refers to adoption of a "new religion". Thirdly, Malcolm points out that these Hindus were not true to Sikhism (they embraced Sikhism for special benefits from the Sikh rulers). How could this make a different tradition within Sikhism? So, this chapter of Boundaries and Transgression, Sehajdharis and different traditions in Sikhism is based upon false information, irrelevant points and misstatements. This pattern continues throughout the book. I have dealt one chapter of Harjot with extra details; the rest of the book, as it has the same motives an patterns is being dealt with briefly.

In the chapter "Sanatan Tradition and Transmission", Harjot has not been able to present any evidence to prove that there should have been something un-Sikh among the Sikhs. His desire to present Guru Granth Sahib and Dasam Granth as two traditions, does not hold water. A minor reference from Malcolm that the Sikhs respected Dasam Granth, does not reject hundreds of sources, history, traditions and faith of the Sikh nation with regard to Eternal Guru Guru Granth Sahib. similarly, the activities and conspiracies of the Hindu occupants of the Sikh shrines do not legitimise their anti-Sikh functions, nor does it

become a tradition. Harjot's presentation of Anandghan's anti-Sikh writings, further proves that Harjot wants to present all anti-Sikh material as Sikh literature. Some fanatic Muslim writers, Anandghan or Arya Samaj or Christian missionaries had been propagating from time to time such literature to promote vested interests. All the propaganda has been presented by Harjot as "Sanatan Sikh tradition". It is highly un-academic

Harjot presents stray references of Hindu slant of the writer of Gur Bilas Patshahi Chhevin (1718) as Sanatan Sikhism. For Harjot such misrepresentation and/or subjective presentation of the personality of the writer need not be corroborated by basic Sikh philosophy or any other source. Installation of Hindu idols in the Sikh shrines by the Hindu managers does not legitimise them as Sikh tradition. This "business" of Hindu priests is not a phenomenon of Ranjit Singh period only. Even recently, a priest Narain Singh of Manikaran, who became Narayan Hari later on, installed Guru Granth Sahib and put a large number of pictures of so-called gods and god-desses in the same hall in order to get donations from all sections. One can find the statues of Christ and Guru Nanak Sahib at Rishikesh's Hindu temple. All this is the business manouvering of the (Hindu) priests. The same happened to the Sikh shrines as the greedy priests would do everything to earn money. These Hindu priests had monopolised the Sikh shrines to the extent that the so-called outcastes were not allowed to enter major Sikh shrines. Harjot wants to establish it as a tradition. The occupants of the Sikh shrines had become debauches and even criminal, and all they practised was like that of a Bohemian cult or a sort of Mafia; Harjot wants that the activities and practices of these gangs should be accepted as a norm and tradition in Sikhism.

Harjot refers to the descendants and relatives of the Sikh Gurus as traditions. The Sikh history is unambiguous on this point that their was. no approval of a descendant of the Gurus as a representative of the faith. The succession of Guru-ship was never in doubt. Guru Nanak Sahib never approved of Sri Chand or Lakhmi Das as successors. Similar was the verdict about Datu and Dasu, Mohan and Mohri, Prithi Chand and Mahadev, Ram Rai and Dhir Mal and other children of the Gurus. The succession was never confusing. These ascetics tried to earn in the name of their ancestors. Such tactics can be, and have been, adopted by the families of all the prominent religious, political and the other personalities. This, however, does not make it a tradition. The Bedis, Sodhis and Bhallas etc., were not much successful before Ranjit Singh. It is possible that the Hindu advisors of Ranjit Singh

were responsible for “commercialization” of these families for various reasons.

Harjot’s reference to Bhais and Gianis too is misleading. The respectable members of the Sikh nation were not a class in themselves as Harjot wishes to establish. The respect of a soical worker does not grant him the status of a sub-guru. Harjot wished to establish such a class, though he fails to convince anybody.

In the chapter “An Enchanted Universe: Sikh participation in Popular religion” Harjot again picks up the acts of some aberrants and makes a statement that it was the so-called “popular religion” that had been accepted by some people. Harjot, referring to reports from the journals of the Singh Sabha, claims that these were the accepted norms. He says that the Singh Sabha tried to bring an end to the deviations (in Harjotian terms, the popular religion). He had already referred to Kesar Singh Chhibber’s criticism of the un-Sikh approach of some Mislleaders with regard to power politics (an un-Sikh pattern). Thus, a few deviants have always been there and the intelligentsia has always tried to correct the aberration. Harjot’s reference to Sakhi Sarvar worship too is based on false/ mischievous information. Harjot ignores H.A. Rose (whom he quotes elsewhere) who recorded that there was enmity among the Hindus who worshipped Sakhi Sarvar and the Sikhs who rejected him (Sakhi Sarvar). The Sufi tradition (Harjot p. 155) was at its apex during the period of Sheikh Farid but it disappeared after fourteenth century. Similar is the presentation of Harjot with regard to Gugga, Sitla, astrologers and the other Hindu cultural religious patterns in practise by a few deviants. Harjot wants the reader to accept it as tradition.

This is an angry book written with contempt for Sikh ideology. This is proved by the vituperative addresses, sentences, statements and aggressive tone. While referring to the criticism by the Sikh intellectuals, writers and elites, Harjot uses the term primitive protest. Even under this heading he displays his confusion. While referring to the criticism of the Sikh writers with regard to adoption of un-Sikh like activities by Sikhs, he calls Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha as the beginner. Here, he refers to Gurbilas Patshahi Chhevin. Earlier, he had referred to Kesar Singh Chhiber too. He stands no were. Though this is a proven fact that the Sikh writers have never ignored the lapses of aberrants or the new entrants in the Sikh faith, these deviants or ignorant people always needed help to know the concept till they became fully conversant with the ideology.



The chapter “Conserving Sanatan Sikh Tradition: The Foun-dation of the Singh Sabha” too, is full of misrepresentations, false information and distortion of facts. Harjot presents stray acts as authentic tradition as portrays the deviants as representatives. Harjot’s quotations from the Census prove nothing but a confused state of mind or lack of information with the officials who recorded the census. This, however, proves that the British were not classifying religious boundaries. If the :British were doing so, then there would not have been confused entries with regard to faith (Harjot p. 212). In the chapter “A New Social Imagination: The making of Tat Khalsa”, Harjot does not conceal his dislike and hatred for the intellectual leadership of the Singh Sabha movement. For the Sikhs who dared check the onslaught of the anti-Sikh forces, Harjot coins a new term ‘Tat Khalsa’. His approach for the Sikh intelligentsia is aggressive and cruel. He despises their act of sifting chaff from grain. He laments why Sikh intelligentsia was successful in bringing an end to most of the un-Sikh interference in the Sikh world. Harjotain contempt for the Singh Sabha leadership reaches its height when he writes about Giani Ditt Singh. “It is ironic that Ditt Singh, an untouchable himself, took to censoring inter-caste commensality”. Harjot accepts, on the one hand, that Giani Ditt Singh, inspite of his family of birth, was respected by the whole of the Sikh nation (Harjot must be feeling perturbed over this). Secondly, Harjot wants to present Giani Ditt Singh as an untouch-able writer. The use of the word “ironic” further exposes the mind of Harjot.

Further, he is grieved that Singh Sabha was successful in revival (in his words Sikhising). He attributes this success to the mass scale campaign by the Sikh intelligentsia. He, however, ignores the fact that the anti-Sikh propaganda by the Hindus, the Arya Samaj, the Christian organisations was more powerful. All the Sikh shrines were occupied by the Hindu managers, Udasis and the henchmen of the regime. The financial sources of the Sikh leadership were so meager that their Journals and the other organs could not survive for a long time. The Sikh aristocracy, the rulers, etc. had turned their back to the Singh Sabha, and still the Sikh masses accepted the Singh Sabha’s lead. The journals of the Singh Sabha were in English language which could be understood by 1% of the Sikhs. The Hindu occupants of the Gurdwaras issued a Hukamnama against Professor Gurmukh Singh excommunicating him. All these tactics, activities and attacks were such as no ordinary organisation could have survived, much less played an effective role. In spite of this, the Sikh nation, as a whole,

rejected most of the un-Sikh culture.

A study of this book leaves no doubt about the ulterior motives of Harjot. He sympathises the debauch Hindu Mahants (managers), he dislikes Sikh opposition to immoral practices, he laments end to the celebrations of the fairs where eve-teasing, drunkenness and vulgarity were prevalent, he sympathises with the fortune-tellers whom the Sikhs rejected, he does not like that the Sikhs don't observe fasts like Hindus, he feels sorry for the Sikhs learning Gurmukhi and he hates all reforms. Above all, he dislikes the Sikhs accepting the command of the Tenth Guru, installing Guru Granth Sahib as Guru Eternal.

Harjot ignores all genuine sources and chooses minor stray irrelevant references that suit formulations. He does not consider (may be he has not read them) Gurbilas Patshahi Dasvin (Koer Singh), Mahima Parkash, Bhatt Vahis, Rehitnamas, the writings of Bhai Gur-das, Bhai Mani Singh, Bhai Nand Lal, the Persian sources like Dabis-tan-e-Mazahib, Ibrat Namah, Jang Namah, Twarikh-e-Hind; Tarikh-e-Sikhan, Umdat-ut-Twarikh, etc., the works of Bhai Jodh Singh, Karam Singh Historian, Hari Ram Gupta, Prem Singh Hoti, etc. Harjot has ignored hundreds of the sources in favour of petty, ir-relevant references and the works of aberrants and anti-Sikh writers. As a result, his book is no more than an addition to literature of vile propaganda.

Why did he do so? It is not easy to answer this question. But one can analyse his background, life style, career and association. Harjot was a Student of Marxist teachers (i.e." Romila Thapar, Bipin Chander, K. N. Pannikar, etc.) at the J.L.N.University, Delhi. After this, he joined Australian University for his Ph.D. studies. It seems that he was awarded Ph. D. degree because he joined Eurocentric racist group and wrote his thesis according to the wishes of this school. Immediately after getting Ph.D. degree, like Pashaura and other members of this Anti-Sikh Eurocentric Racist School, he was appointed to the Chair of Sikh Studies at Vancouver. Since then, he along with the other leaders of the Anti-Sikh school, led by W. H. Mcleod, no wonder is busy in production of Anti-Sikh literature.

A word about the Oxford University Press. Why is this prestigious publishing house some anti-Sikh propagation? It seems some anti-Sikh organisation is influencing some of the editors. I hope the managers of this reputed house shall look into the matter and bring an end to this sad state of affairs.

To sum up, Harjot's book is no academic work. Vagueness,

ambiguity, uncertainty, confusion are its main features. It is an angry work written with prejudice, hatred, disdain, malice and ill will, and is full of mischievous propaganda based on misinformation. It seems to be a part of some international conspiracy.

## **‘Construction of Religious Boundaries’**

Dr Anurupita Kaur

Since the time Oberoi was openly accused of the academic offence of suppressing Rose’s evidence about Sikh approach to Sakhi Sarvar, he has been a very controversial figure in the field of Sikh studies. Unfortunately his present writing does not in any way enhance his reputation as an objective student of Sikhism. Oberoi’s garrulous pouring of words about irrelevant matters and events, which brings out little evidence to support his pet nostrum that Sikhism is no religion, only leads to a sense of boredom in the reader. Oberoi never quotes the Guru Granth Sahib to support his view except the well known hymn of the Fifth Master:

“I do not keep the Hindu fast, nor the Muslim Ramadan;  
I serve Him alone who is my refuge,  
I serve the one Master who is also Allah,  
I have broken with the Hindu and the Muslim,  
I will not worship with the Hindu, nor like the Muslim go to Mecca,  
I shall serve Him and no other,  
I will not pray to idols nor say the Muslim Prayer;  
I shall put my heart at the feet of the One Supreme Being;  
For, we are neither Hindus nor Mussalmans”

Strangely enough, even this categoric statement of the Guru about the independence of the Sikh religion, is disregarded by Oberoi. For, like the three proverbial wise beings, his mind is made up, and he is disinclined to hear, say or see anything different from what he believes in.

The main failure of Oberoi is his lack of method in organising his study. He does not take the line of a scholar of religion, and thus fails to identify that Sikhism is a societal and whole-life religion, which discards and disowns all major elements of Hinduism or any other salvation religion, namely, faith in Vedas, caste system, the doctrine of Avtarhood, pantheism, monism, or henotheism, values of asceticism, monasticism, Sanyasa, celibacy, Ahimsa and the like.

He does not take up the role of a historian either to explain why it is that the Sikhs alone successfully turned back a thousand year wave of invaders from the North West, why they were the first to raise

the Ghadder rebellion against the British, while Gandhi and other Indian leaders were readily co-operating with them, why it is that in the Independence Movement, they sent 92 persons to the gallows, and 1,557 to suffer life-imprisonment out of a total of 127 and 2175, respectively, and why it is that they were the only ethnic group to organise a protest movement and send 40,000 volunteers to prison when Indira Gandhi imposed the Emergency in India in 1975 abrogating all civil liberties in the country. One does not understand why Oberoi is fond of suppressing facts, for, he could not be unaware of the wellknown statement of Vijaylakshmi, the Former Indian Ambassador: "Punjab which had always been in the forefront of resistance to oppression, kept its colours flying, during the Emergency also. It was in Punjab and Punjab alone that a large scale resistance was organised against it. The worst thing that happened during the Emergency was that a brave nation was frightened into submission, and nobody spoke except in hushed tones. In Dehra Dun, where I was, I hung my head in shame, and wondered if this was the Bharat for which we, the freedom fighters, had suffered. Even those, not actually in prison, were no less than in jail. Only in Punjab the Akalis organised a Morcha against this. Punjab's lead in such matters should continue."

Historical events like those mentioned above are numerous, but Oberoi not only fails to explain them on the basis of his view, but is evidently inclined to avoid the very mention of them.

Nor is Oberoi very serious about his role as a scholar of cultural history. For, on the basis of his study, he is again unable to explain the distinguishing Sikh cultural ethos as noted by Kazi Nur Muhammad, the chronicler of General Abdali. The Sikhs had suffered the worst persecution at the hands of the Mughals. Their Gurus were martyred, and price was put on every Sikh head. But, the Sikhs during their rule, treated members of all religions, including Muslims, liberally gave them fun and equal participation both in the army and the civil administration. The highest posts in the Artillery and the Mini-stries of the Khalsa Sarkar, were manned by Muslims. Their confidence had been won, and none of them betrayed the Khalsa Sarkar during the Anglo-Sikh Wars. This is what Gardner wrote about the Khalsa Sarkar: "The Maharaja was indeed one of those masterminds, which only require opportunity to change the face of the Punjab. The Punjab Was not the same, semi-starving, terrified, looted by the rulers, and poorly clothed during his reign. It was a prosperous, homogeneous and peaceful state with all the communities, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, fully satisfied partners

in the government, in military and civil administration, and it was the happiest state communally in Asia. The Maharaja visited the Hindu, Sikh and Muslim places of pilgrimage. It was the only state in India, which was the most prosperous, the most flourishing and most contented." It was a time when Europe and Russia were maintaining Ghettos and carrying out pogroms against the Jews and at Pune low untouchable castes could appear on the public roads only during fixed hours lest their shadows should defile the higher castes.

Religious and ethnic differences and distinctions have deep roots, and are social realities that just cannot be wishfully ignored, as Oberoi has done; nor can they be artificially created by external agencies or forces. These realities are based on new spiritual ideologies, centuries of sufferings and blood of martyrs. It is easy to say that Christ said nothing new, or what was already not there in the Jewish thought or theology, or that the stories of redemption and resurrection are a myth. But his crucifixion, thousands of Christian martyrs, and centuries of Christian sufferings have made them a reality, which no historian or social scientist can ignore or erase. So is it with the Sikh identity, which Oberoi attempts to demolish with his laboured use of pointless verbiage.

In his entire book, Oberoi paints only one-time pictures without understanding them in their long-term historical perspective and growth. For, just taking a snap-shot of a crowd consisting of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians, cannot lead to the inference that relations between the communities have always been cordial, or have developed homogenously. Making a black-out of important historical events and conflicts, and ignoring evidently known realities are the major flaws of Oberoi's book. For example, the present reality is that Punjab is the only riparian state in the country, 75% available waters of which stand diverted to the non-riparian states. The suggested reasons for this unprecedented discrimination are ethnic differences between the communities. Thus, sidetracking socio-political and religious realities, and instead rushing to superficial conclusions, cannot be perceptive understanding of history, much less can it be considered scholarly appraisal. Oberoi's book gives us just a journalistic picture, though even a knowledgeable journalistic assessment would not normally ignore contemporary realities as has been done by the author. Even in its style Oberoi's writing would have been more readable and useful if it had been precise.

## **Construction of Religious Boundaries**

Kuldeep Singh

Harjot Oberoi is doing his best to throw the Khalsa Panth into black hole under the guise of education. His newbook "Construction of Religious Boundaries" should actually be titled An Attempt at the Destruction of Sikh Religious Boundaries. The author presents a false picture of Sikhism. This, however, should not be surprising. The finer details of Sikhism are lost on a man who does not believe in searching for the truth. Oberoi should realize, no matter how hard he tries to mislead individualis from the true essence of Sikhism, Gurmat will prevail, and the truth will always surface. The Khalsa Panth may suffer a temporary setback at the hands of pseudo-scholars like Oberoi, but in the end the Panth will rebound and expose their evil intentions. Oberoi is determined to psychologically harm the Sikhs. His written words cut deep into every Sikh. He will be remembered in history as a man who tried desperately to hide the truth.

The book, 'The Construction of Religious Boundaries', is part of Oberoi's Ph.D. thesis, a thesis applauded by Dr. McLeod, a man who led an active campaign to destroy the very foundations of the Sikh value system. In the preface of his book, Oberoi goes out of his way to praise Dr. McLeod: "The field of modern Sikh Studies has for long been nurtured by the writings of professor W. H. McLeod. I have been fortunate in having his association with this book almost from its inception. My debt to him is enormous and my gratitude is in equal measure."

Oberoi has referred to some sources of original material. However analysis of the material is extremely weak and un-academic. A lack of understanding of the fundamental Sikh principles makes the work illogical and vague. Perhaps it would be to Oberoi's advantage to reacquaint himself with Sikh doctrine.

To begin, the author is not aware of the true goals of the Singh Sabha movement. The purpose of the Singh Sabha movement was not to create new boundaries for the followers of the Sikh faith, but to remind the Sikh of the boundaries within which they should exist. Oberoi should understand, practising Sikhs do not set the rules for themselves. They follow the directions and instructions of their Guru. Obviously, for various reasons, some deviate from the established practices. This can be attributed to human nature. Many of these

Sikhs found it easier to adopt some of the Hindu Lifestyle to maintain social harmony. Some Sikhs chose the path of least resistance and assimilate into the predominant Hindu society. Deviation by a few weak minded Sikhs does not prove that the boundaries of Sikhism have shifted.

Moreover, there is hardly any religion, whose followers follow the tenets by the book. Another reason for the deviation can be blamed On the constant hospitality towards the Sikhs by the most elite section of the Hindus-the Brahmins. Mr. D. Petri, the Assistant Director of Criminal Intelligence for the government of India, has very rightly made the following important observation in his confidential report on the Development of Sikh Politics (1900- 1911), dated Simla, August 11,1911:

“Hinduism has always been hostile to Sikhism, whose Gurus powerfully and successfully attacked the principle of the caste system, which is the foundation on which the whole fabric of Brahminism has been reared. The activities of Hindus have therefore been constantly directed to the undermining of Sikhism both by preventing the children of Sikh fathers from taking Pahul and by reducing professed Sikhs from their allegiance to their faith. Hinduism has strangled Buddhism, once a formidable rival to it and it has already made serious inroads into the domain of Sikhism.”

Oberoi continues on his misguided path with a completely perverted definition of Sanatan Sikhs. When the Arya Samaj was created by Swami Daya Nand, the Hindus who did not believe in his ideology, started calling themselves Sanatan Dharmi Hindus or the “Original Hindus.”

Oberoi mistakenly makes the same claim in relation to the Sikhs, who deviated from the Guru’s path. His claim that Sikhs who follow the caste system, worship idols and believe in Pirs (Like Gugga Pir or Sakhi Sarvar), are Sanatan Sikhs, is offensive to any Gursikh. Only a person who searches for the truth and believes in the inspired words of the Gurus and the Guru Granth Sahib, are true followers. How can Oberoi assert that Sikhs who do not believe in Khanday de Pahul, are Sanatan Sikhs? In fact, it might be more appropriate to call these so called Sanatan Sikhs of Oberoi’s conception as Hindu Infiltrators. These Hindu infiltrators came into the Sikh fold to dilute and pollute Sikh doctrine. There is every possibility that these infiltrators may have created a new set of religious boundaries in order to confuse and dilute the Sikh Value System. But these newly created boundaries



no relationship, whatsoever, with Sikhism. Therefore, Oberoi's have Sikh definition of a Sanatan Sikh is misdirected false and out of place.

However, the author does not stop here. He again pathetically attempts to explain the Tat Khalsa. The term Tat Khalsa came into use then a few Sikhs started referring to Banda Bahadur as their Guru. They came to be known as the Bandai Khalsa. In so doing, these Sikhs could no longer be considered part of the Sikh fold. Because of this turn of events, the main body of the Sikh community started calling itself the Tat Khalsa or the real Khalsa. This insured a clear distinction between the ideologies of the Tat Khalsa and the Bandai Khalsa. Obviously during the times of Banda Bahadur the boundaries of the Sikh religion were crystal clear to the majority of Sikhs. Even though

Banda Bahadur made extraordinary sacrifices for the Sikh cause, the Sikhs did not spare him when he deviated from the Sikh path. How can Oberoi say that the boundaries were not clear. It defined during those days. Boundaries were clear even to the enemy rulers of eighteenth century India. Here is their way of addressing the Sikhs in their official orders:

ਨਾਨਕ ਪ੍ਰਸਤਾਂ ਰਾ ਹਰਕੁਜਾ ਕਿ ਬਿਆਬੰਦ ਬਕਤੌਲ ਰਸਾਨਦ

(*"Nanak prastan ra harkuja ki biya-band bakatal rasanad"*)

which mean, "To kill at sight all the followers of Guru Nanak wherever they are found."

These were the times way past the period of Guru- Nanak and just after the death of Guru Gobind Singh. All these followers were Amritdhari Sikhs. Yet they were addressed as followers of Guru Nanak. This Shows that the rulers of the time were convinced about the identity of the message of the Sikh Gurus. They saw no distinction between Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. The term Tat Khalsa is no longer in Use and is obsolete for all practical purposes. There is only one type of Khalsa - The Khalsa. Sanatan Sikhs and the Tat Khalsa are the most ridiculous divisions of the Sikh brotherhood that anyone has ever attempted to create.

Perhaps, Oberoi should sit and take copious notes in a class On Sikh terminology to understand the etymology of words he presumptuously uses. He needs this orientation to be considered a scholar of Sikhism. Another term that he has either failed to understand or intentionally misinterpreted is "Sahajdhari Sikh". He has no conception of what Sahajdhari Sikh means. Sahajdhari Sikh is a term used for those, who have accepted, in principle, the value system of

Sikhism. This includes: the belief in the ten Sikh Guru's the present Guru-Sri Guru Granth Sahib and the Khanday da Pahul ceremony for initiation into the Khalsa Panth. These individuals have decided to

slowly march towards a more comprehensive religious experience and strive to fully adopt all the principles of Sikh doctrine. The term *sahaj* as applied here, definitely means the slow adoption, and should not be confused with Sahaj Avastha, which means a stage of bliss.

Oberoi makes the following ridiculous and distorted state-ments about Sahajdhari Sikhs without providing substantial evidence to the reader:

“Sahajdhari Sikh totally inverted Khalsa categories of thought and religious boundaries”

“Shajdhari Sikhs smoked,” based on the sole evidence of Sukhbasi Ram Bedi's book, Guru Nanak Bans Prakas,

“Sahajdhari Sikhs often had a radically different version of the line of succession”

“Sahajdhari Sikhs favored a living human guru”

These irresponsible and out of context statements and mis-leading assertions without any supporting evidence may fall into the category of a hypothesis of someone's imagination and cannot be considered an academic work. Such a behavior is deplorable particularly when it comes from a scholar who occupies the Sikh Chair at the University of British Columbia in Canada.

History, on the other hand, witnesses a very important role played by the Sahajdhari Sikhs. During war times, it was these Sikhs, who gave shelter and protection to the Khalsa families, besides vital intelligence to the Khalsa. The highly commendable role, played by Diwan Kaura Mal (Kaura means Bitter) during the most difficult times of the Sikhs, is remembered with gratitude and earned him the title of Mitha Mal (mitha means sweet). The sacrifice of the young Haqiqat Rai for the principles of Sikhism is still fresh in our memory. The leadership role played by Master Tara Singh, who was once a Sahajdhari Sikh is still remembered by the Sikhs. The Sikhs will also never forget Professor Sahib Singh. He dedicated his life for the panth in providing us with the most authentic translation and interpretation of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib. If Oberoi intends to maintain his credibility, he should stay away from quoting McLeod, whose reason-ing is without any substance. In particular, the quotation in which McLeod himself presents the definition of a Sahajdhari as one,

“who accepts the Naam Simran teaching of Guru Nanak.” Oberoi, if he calls accept himself a Sikh, should know a state of bliss is not something which can be adopted, but must be earned, achieved or attained.

The religious boundaries for Sikhism have been clear. In the Sri Guru Granth Sahib there are indisputable guidelines. Here is just one quick example. Any knowledgeable person, well-versed in Sikh doctrine, would not have any problems locating this example or others like it:

Guru Ram Das has pointed out some of the basic requirements for being a Sikh in the following hymn:

gur siqgur kw jo isKu AKwey su Blky auiT hir nwmu iDAwvY ]  
 audmu kry Blky prBwqI iesnwnu kry AMimRq sir nwvY ]  
 aupdyis gurU hir hir jpu jwpY siB iklivK pwp doK lih jwvY ]  
 iPir cVY idvsu gurbwxI gwvY bhidAw auTidAw hir nwmu iDAwvY ]  
 jo swis igrwis iDAwey myrw hir hir so gurisKu gurU min BwvY ]  
 ijs no dieAwlu hovY myrw suAwml iqsu gurisK gurU aupdysu suxwvY  
 ]  
 jnu nwnku DUiV mMgY iqsu gurisK kI jo Awip jpY Avrh nwmu  
 jpwvY ]

Gauri Var M.4, GGS, p. 305

English translation of the Shabad is as follows:

“One known as disciple of the holy Preceptor  
 Must, rising at dawn, on the Name Divine meditate.  
 At dawn must he no way fail to rise,  
 Should cleanse himself and in God’s Name,  
 the Pool of Amrita take bath.  
 Then, as by the Master instructed, must he the  
 Name Divine repeatedly utter-  
 Thereby shall all his sins, evil and foul doings be shed.  
 Then with rise of day must he chant the Master’s Word-  
 In rest and movement on the Name Divine must he meditate.  
 The disciple that with each breath and morsel on the Lord  
 meditates,  
 Shall the Master’s pleasure win.  
 The Master to such of the disciples his teaching imparts,  
 As the Lord’s grace have received.

Nanak, servant of God, seeks dust of feet of such a disciple  
As contemplating the holy Name, to it inspires others.”

## The Owl Critic

Inderjit Singh

“Who stuffed that white owl?”  
“Don’t you see, Mr Brown,”  
Cried the youth with a frown,  
“How wrong the whole thing is,  
How preposterous each wing is!  
I make no apology;  
I’ve studied owl-ology.  
And I tell you  
What I know to be true.  
Anatomy teaches,  
Ornithology preaches,  
An owl has a toe  
That can’t be turned so!  
Mr. Brown, I’m amazed  
You should be so crazed  
As to put up a bird  
In that posture absurd.”  
Just then, with a wink, and a sly little lurch,  
The owl very gravely, got down from his perch,  
And looked at his fault-finding critic  
With a glance both deep and analytic.  
And then fairly hooted as if he should say:  
“Your learning’s at fault this time anyway;  
Don’t waste it again on a live bird, I pray.”

Godfrey Saxe

The bird expert, seeing what he assumes to be a stuffed owl, parades his learning, expertise and wisdom to show the ignorance of anyone who sees the bird as realistic and lifelike. At the end of the poem, the owl looks at its critic and moves and winks to show that it is not only realistic but alive and well - despite the impressive learning of its critic.

Dr Oberoi, in his academic work, “The Construction of Religious Boundaries,” flaunts similar learning to show that Sikhism founded by Guru Nanak, with a holy scripture written and compiled by the Gurus themselves, a faith recognised as one of the major religions of the world, with millions of followers, does not really exist as an independent

entity! Having read Or Oberoi's ramblings through the history and culture of Punjab before the advent of Guru Nanak practices criticised by the Guru, my first reaction was probably similar to that of the owl; astonishment at Or Oberoi's erudition and a nod of disbelief at his inability to detach irrelevant past practices from the uniqueness of the Guru's message. As the Guru reminds us:

One may read cart-loads of books,  
 With caravan-loads of books to follow; One may study ship-  
 loads of volumes,  
 And heap them pile on pile in his cellars; One may read for years  
 and years,  
 Right up to one's last breath.  
 Of all things, it is a contemplative mind That really matters;  
 All else is the fret and fever of egoistic minds.

Guru Granth Sahib, *Rag Asa*

Sadly, Dr Oberoi's voluminous research shows no evidence of a contemplative mind. While many thousands of words are devoted to pre-Nanak social and religious practices in Punjab, little attempt is made to look at the Guru's teachings. It was the Gurus themselves that mapped out the nature and extent of Sikh belief. It was the Gurus themselves who gave us the Sikh path through life. It was a path through the jungle of ritual, superstition and bigotry that passed for religion in India before the advent of Guru Nanak.

Dr Oberoi describes some of these superstitious and socially cruel practices in great detail. Inexplicably and paradoxically, however, he regrets their passing and the emergence of a distinct, egalitarian and enlightened approach to life based on the teachings of Guru Nanak.

If Dr Oberoi was simply ill-informed, the best response would be to ignore him; to wink owl-like at his professed learning. But Dr Oberoi holds the Chair of a reputable university. It is a Chair resourced in part by donations from the Sikh community. He was appointed to promote a wider understanding of Sikhism in the Western world. He has singularly failed to do so and as such, should go, or be asked to go to enable someone more loyal to the terms of appointment to do what he was appointed to do.

This criticism of Dr Oberoi has nothing to do with freedom of speech. No public or private company would look benignly on an employee who having been appointed to promote a particular product,

misuses his position to denigrate It.

Having said that, it is right to recognise that Or Oberoi has done a lot of work in his research. His thesis provides us with a fascinating insight into the background, culture, rituals and practices in Punjab before the birth of Guru Nanak. We learn of the prevalence of witchcraft, idol worship, the worship of humans with supposedly godly powers. We read of widespread infanticide and the cruel subjugation of women.

If Or Oberoi had restricted his thesis to an academic account of this background there would be little cause for complaint. In its way it gives us a better understanding of the measure of Guru Nanak's achievement in freeing the people of Punjab from the morass of superstitious practices. Instead, ignoring his own research, the author sees Sikhism as an unwelcome intruder into an idyllic scene of what he lumps together as "*Sanatan Dhanna*."

Or Oberoi devotes many pages of his thesis to describe periodic Sikh lapses from the teachings of Guru Nanak. Yet he sees this blurring of the Guru's teachings as a good thing - a move back to the bliss of *Sanatan Dhanna*. Surprisingly, for someone who claims to be a practising Sikh, Or Oberoi is critical of the Tat Khalsa and Singh Sabha revival movements for their work of reminding us of the purity and high ideals of Sikh teachings.

Where, when and how did Dr Oberoi get things so wrong? We can speculate on outside influences, particularly from those in India, who would like to see Sikhism disappear into *Sanatan Dhanna*, Hinduism or whatever. A more charitable explanation is, that like the owl-critic at the commencement of this review, Or Oberoi is mesmerised by his learning and intellectual ability to the exclusion of common sense and a recognition of the obvious. Even when the author makes an excursion to Sri Guru Granth Sahib, it is in a superior, academic and slighting way. For example, he refers to Guru Arjun Dev's *shabad* commencing with the line; "I keep neither the Hindu fast nor the Muslim Ramadan," and says that a similar sentiment was expressed by *sant* Kabir. Precisely Dr Oberoi! Guru Arjun Dev, as the compiler of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, could easily have excluded Kabir's contribution, but he wanted to show that people from different faith backgrounds could share similar understandings. While Sikhism delineates its own beliefs, the Gurus emphasized that religious truth is not exclusive to Sikhism. Dr Oberoi uses the word "boundaries," in the title of his thesis, as a synonym for "barriers." A moment's reflection would show that the

Gurus removed barriers to dialogue by including compositions from Hindu and Muslim saints in Sri Guru Granth Sahib

Sikhism is critical of the principle of exclusivity found in many faiths that teach that theirs is the only path to God. If Dr Oberoi were to study Sri Guru Granth Sahib, he would see different faiths as mountain paths to the summit of an understanding of the meaning and purpose of life. We can start from different points and still meet as we approach the summit. This does not mean that all paths are equally viable. Nor does it mean that they are mutually exclusive. Some are more tortuous than others, and there are also “short cuts” that can set us back on our journey. Some would also see pointless academic research as an unrewarding diversion on our journey.

The Guru’s path is concerned with practicalities. It stresses tolerance and respect for other faiths. It teaches the oneness of the human race; the dignity and full equality of women; to earn by our own efforts and share what we have with others. It teaches us responsibility for the less fortunate in society. This is the Sikh path to an understanding of God and the wonder of His creation. It is the clarity of these teachings that Dr Oberoi wishes to lose in the vague morass of subcontinent practices that he describes as *Sanatan Dhanna*.



## Much Ado About Nothing

Dr Hakam Singh

“One may read cart loads of books or pack caravans with them. One may read boat loads of books or fill cellars with them. One may read in every breath through months, years and all one’s, life. But says Nanak, there is only one factor (the love of God) that counts, the rest is all useless prattle of ego”. (Guru Nanak, Adi Granth p. 467)

After going through Harjot Oberoi’s book, “The Construction of Religious Boundaries”, one is immensely impressed by the amount of work put in its preparation and the time he must have devoted to this task.

He must have read “cart loads” of books and read them for many years (fourteen years according to his own statement) which is quite evident from the number of references listed in the book. He seems to have taken great pains to go to some totally obscure sources like Ruchi Ram’s autobiography to prove some insignificant points which, he feels, would substantiate his thesis that towards the end of the nineteenth century the Singh Sabha movement created the so called “Tat Khalsa” which, by formulating new doctrines on what Sikhism ought to represent, challenged all existing definitions of belief and being within a pluralistic Sikh tradition (p. 416). This essentially leads to conclude that according to Oberoi the Singh Sabha movement was a reform movement which changed the very basic definition of “Sikh”.

To support his thesis Oberoi gives some categorical statements without any historical substantiation, which is in discard with the fundamental definition of good research work. For example, on page 76: “Khalsa Sikhs accepted a line of nine successors of Guru Nanak. *Sahjdhari* Sikh often had a radically different version of the line of succession”. He further goes on to say that, “Khalsa Sikhs began to recognize Adi Granth as Guru, *Sahjdhari* Sikhs were not given to accept a text as a Guru and favored living human Gurus”. By saying that Khalsa Sikhs “began to recognize Adi Granth as Guru” Oberoi seems to imply that immediately after the death of Guru Gobind Singh the Khalsa Sikhs did not start recognizing the Adi Granth as their Guru. He thus seems to deny the historical evidence offered by *Rahat Namas* written by authors who were contemporary to the tenth Guru, that before his death he gave the *Gurnship* to the Adi Granth.

Before going into a detailed appraisal of the contributions of

this book it would be appropriate to review briefly the relevant historical background. Since this book deals mainly with the Sikhs and the Sikh movements in the nineteenth century (although in the preface of the book the author claims that, “this book seeks to answer two closely related questions. How Indian religions are to be conceptualized? What did it mean to be a Sikh in the nineteenth century?”), a brief account of evolution of the Sikh religion up to the second half of the nineteenth century will be useful.

Sikh religion, as everyone knows, is a relatively young religion, and it is not impossible to find historical documentary evidence for its most significant events.

From Guru Nanak through Guru Arjun (the fifth Guru) ideals and basic tenets of the new religious order were laid down. These included strict monotheism, forbidding of the idol worship and meaningless form and rituals. On the social side, the main attributes were equality of all human beings irrespective of caste, color, and geographical origin. The householder's life with all its responsibilities was preferred over monastic or ascetic life. As a practical step towards the equality of humankind, the institution of *langar* (common kitchen) was established, where high as well as low would sit together and eat. Sikh temples (*Dharamsalas*) were established, that were open to everyone. The most important event of this period was the compilation of the *Adi Granth*, including hymns of the five Gurus together with those of many contemporary and earlier *sants* and *bhagats*.

The theocratic monarchy of the time considered this new movement to be a challenge and a “state within a state”.<sup>1</sup> For this the fifth Guru had to sacrifice his life.

From Guru Har Gobind (the sixth Guru) onward a new phase started. The use of force to uphold righteousness, to defend the oppressed, and for self-defence was justified. The ninth Guru (Tegh Bahadur) sacrificed his life for protecting the religious freedom of Hindus. The tenth and the last living Guru (Gobind Singh) started the *amrit* ceremony, and through this he initiated the Sikhs into the Khalsa order. He gave them a dress code, changed their names (to Singhs), and enjoined them to keep unshorn hair. The most unusual aspect of ‘this ceremony was that after initiating the first five (the *Piyaras* – the beloved ones) he himself requested them and was initiated by them thus bringing equality to an ultimate level. It is important to note that four out of the five *piyaras* belonged to the untouchable castes. He thus

in practicality finished the distinction of caste system which the earlier Gurus had professed to be the worst malady of the society. A summary of Guru Gobind Singh's address at that time, based on the report of a news writer, sent to the Mughal court and vouched by the Persian historian, Ghulam Muhiuddin, goes as follows:

“I wish you all to embrace one creed and follow one path. Let the four Hindu castes, who have different rules laid down for them in the *Sastras*, abandon them altogether, and adopting the way of co-operation, mix freely with one another. Let no one deem himself superior to another. Do not follow the old scriptures. Let none pay heed to the Ganges, and other places of pilgrimage which are considered holy in the Hindu religion, or adore the Hindu deities such as Rama, Krishna, Brahma and Durga, but all should believe in Guru Nanak and his successors. Let men of the four castes receive *amrit*, eat out of the same vessel and feel no disgust or contempt for one another”.

After the death of Guru Gobind Singh in 1708, came Banda Bahadur. He came like a whirlwind and toppled the Mughal empire in Punjab. He stayed for a very short period - was captured in 1715 and tortured to death. However, he gave the taste of freedom to Sikhs and proved that dreams could be realized with unity and resolve. After the death of Banda the number of Khalsa Sikhs could not be more than a few thousands. The next few decades were even more testing for the Sikhs. They were persecuted, were put to death whenever caught, and there was a price on the head of a Sikh. A couple of times they were even thought to have been exterminated. In spite of all these adversities the Khalsa did not lose courage and stayed steadfast on the path fighting against the tyrants with an unshakable faith in the Guru.

Punjab at that time was in great political turmoil. Afghan invaders from the Northwest swooped over the country year after year and plundered the land with impunity. The only resistance was offered by Sikhs who, with their *gorilla* tactics, harassed the invaders. They rattled like a thorn in their side and time and again their efforts to destroy the Sikhs were frustrated. Finally they got their chance in 1762 when in a direct confrontational battle the Sikhs, who were badly outnumbered, took heavy losses. Out of about thirty thousand Sikhs, which included a majority of old men, women, and children, more than half were killed. The episode is appropriately known as *Vada Ghalughara* or the great holocaust.

Even this great setback did not diminish the confidence of Sikhs, because they all believed in “*charhdi kala*”, as taught to them by Guru Gobind Singh.

After the ninth and last invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1769, the Sikh *Misls* that were active for the past three decades, found a power vacuum in Punjab and filled it immediately. However, instead of joining together each *Misl* started its own territory which resulted in frequent internecine skirmishes. This continued until the end of the eighteenth century, when Ranjit Singh established a unified Sikh commonwealth in Punjab. Although no definite figures are available, it will be hard to put the total number of Sikhs at that time to be over one hundred thousand.

Soon after the establishment of the Khalsa Commonwealth a large number of Hindus and a relatively small number of Muslims started converting to Sikhism. So much so that within a couple of decades the number of Sikhs is estimated to have risen to over one million. This seems to be a reasonably correct figure because the reports of first census in 1881 indicate the number of Sikhs to be 1.7 million.

With this historical background and statistical data let us examine the view point of Oberoi regarding the culture, identity, and diversity in the Sikh tradition in the nineteenth century, specially prior to the Singh Sabha movement. Later on we will examine his views on the work and achievements of this movement more critically.

According to Oberoi, towards the second half of the nineteenth century the Sikhs, by and large, believed in, and practiced rituals and rites and customs akin to those practised by the Hindus of Punjab. For some unknown reason he has coined the term “Sanatan Sikhs”, which he has given to this presumed majority. The reason for this title is explained as follows:

“The word Sanatan derives from Sanskrit and has connotation of something that is ancient, almost as if out of secular time” (p. 92). He further explains, “The Sanatan Sikhs came in the course of the nineteenth century to quite literally believe that their theology, rites, and practices had ancient origins and were beyond the pale of diachronic time”. He goes on to say that “the Sanatan Sikhs, in addition to considering Adi Granth and Dasam Granth as their sacred was, also began to accord an almost analogous status to the Puranas” (P. 99) The reason for inclusion of Puranas into the category of sacred text is “that much of the Dasam Granth materials had been called from the

puranas” (p. 100).

To substantiate his arguments Oberoi quotes Anandghan as “one of the best known Sikh exegets” and gives in extenso his exposition of the words “*Satnam Karta Purkh*”, the first line of the first stanza of Japu ji to prove the pervasiveness of the impact of what Dasam Granth represented. After carefully going through this exposition of Anandghan the only conclusion that one could draw is that it was unimaginative and that even with the stretch of one’s imagination one could not draw the conclusion that Oberoi has been able to extract.

In addition to the Sanatan Sikh religion Oberoi also invokes the idea of a popular religion in Punjab in the nineteenth century. At some places he has intermingled the two while at other places, as it suits him, he has made efforts to keep the two separate. Anyway, the main attributes of these followers of Sanatan and/or popular Sikhism are the worship of Sakhi Sarvar, Guga Pir, Seetla Devi, and the village ancestors. Of these only in the case of Sakhi Sarvar worship he has presented some statistics. But the conclusion he has drawn from these figures are just short of fantasy. According to him about 3% of the total population of Sikhs in 1911 reported that they were the followers of Sakhi Sarvar. On the basis of this measly figure he has the temerity to conclude that the Sanatan Sikhism was the prevalent faith during the nineteenth century. He must have soon realized the weakness of his argument because he tries to hedge by saying that is a result of the efforts of the Singh Sabha movement a sharp decline in the number of followers of Sakhi Sarvar must have taken place between 1880 and 1911. Thus he seems to believe that there was a sharp rise in the number of Sanatan Sikhs between the beginning of the nineteenth century and 1880, and an equally sudden fall in their numbers after 1880, as if by the waving of a magic wand.

At another point in this book Oberoi has inadvertently given a rather different thought on who these so called Sanatan Sikhs were. During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, “the Khalsa principles were watered down by the Lahore state, in part it sanctioned the rituals and life cycle ceremonies associated with Brahmanical Hinduism and its accompanying social system encapsulated in the *varna* hierarchy”. This explanation seems more plausible, because a sudden opportunistic influx of Hindus into the folds of Sikhism resulted in a number of such people getting close to the Maharaja, e.g. Dogra brothers, who were never Sikhs at heart. Such people manipulated the Maharaja, who himself, to start

with, was not too enthusiastic and staunch a follower of the Khalsa tradition.

It will also be incorrect to say that all of the new converts were opportunists, because even after the Khalsa Raj was gone, a fairly large number stayed within the folds of Sikhism. However, it will be reasonably correct to assume that a fairly large number of the new initiates could not and did not give up their age old traditions, and break blood relations and thus observed only the most significant rules of a new religion as is reported by Ibbetson;<sup>2</sup> "With the exception of the Akali, who still adhered to the ordinances of the Khalsa, many of the original observances of the Sikhs had fallen in disuse, but for the five external signs and abstinence from tobacco." As a matter of semantics Oberoi has the liberty to give this group of Sikhs any romantic name. They came from the so called Sanatan Dharam and, therefore, he could justify this name, but not for the reason given by Oberoi.

Another major point of discrepancy in Oberoi's book is his appraisal of the Singh Sabha movement, its *modus operandi*, and its contributions, if any, to the Sikh religion.

The role of British Raj in helping the inception of this movement, as perceived by Oberoi, is at best naive. According to him "British administrators were disappointed that the contemporary state of Sikhism did not measure to their standards". The historical facts are that immediately after the annexation of Punjab arrangements were made by some high British officials to open missions in order to convert Sikhs into Christianity. They should have been overjoyed rather than disappointed to see the Sikhs going astray because it would be far easier to convert such people than those who are steadfast in their religion.

Another example of Oberoi's strange logic - on page 235 he writes, "the dynamics of two forces - the changes injected into Punjab society by British rule and the drive of the Kuka Sikhs to defend traditional cultural values - led to the formation of Singh Sabha". This needs to be given serious thought. On the same page he says, "when in 1872 the Kuka Sikhs staged their march to Maler Kotla, many within the community were quick to perceive that this would sour the Sikh romance with the *Raj*". If the motivation behind the formation of Singh Sabha was to sweeten the romance with the *Raj*, then the second reason given by Oberoi negates it. He states (p. 235) that "in 1873 four Sikh students at a Christian mission school in Amritsar declared their intention to convert to the new faith. This latest announcement to convert, stirred Thakur

Singh Sandhanwalia”. Singh Sabha formation took place soon afterwards. Also every student of history knows what kind of sweet romance existed between the British *Raj* and the Singh Sabha.

A lot more can be said about what Oberoi has written on the Singh Sabha movement. Those interested should refer to the excellent article by Gurdashan Singh Dhillon.<sup>3</sup> (Chapter 2)

This book is padded up with a large body of irrelevant and superfluous information which may be useful to some research workers - a silverlining to the cloud. Other than that the book contains many glaring inconsistencies some of which are pointed out below:

On page 22, he writes, “Religious books like Adi Granth are so amorphous that those in favour of status quo, reformists and resurrectionists, could all quote chapter and verse in favour of their cause”. The dictionary meaning of the word “amorphous” is without definite form, lacking organization, uncrystallized. On page 50, however, he writes about the Adi Granth, “A voiceless sector of Punjabi society could now both interpret and express its life experience through a highly structured and written body of religious thought”. Again on page 54 he writes, “while the Adi Granth is the most voluminous and structured of the early seventeenth century devotional anthologies”. These self contradictory statements indicate that he has not cared to study the Adi Granth. It is amazing that someone writing on the construction of boundaries of Sikh Religion has hardly given any reference from the Adi Granth where the teachings of the founders of the faith have been compiled. and authenticated by one of the founders himself.

Even when looking for “what constituted Sikh identity during the early Guru period” Oberoi has quoted Bhai Gurdas Bhalla (p. 50) and not the famous hymn of Guru Ram Das from the Adi Granth which has similar meaning (Adi Granth p. 305-6).<sup>4</sup>

His statement on page 56, “just as there is no fixed Guru Nanak in the *Janam Sakhis*, there is no fixed Sikh identity in the early Guru period” is in bad taste and indicates that Oberoi is toeing the line of his mentor, Dr McLeod who in his book “Guru Nanak and Sikh Religion has left no stone unturned to prove by hook or crook that almost all the *sakhis* written in the *Janam Sakhis* and the writings of Bhai Gurdas On the life of Guru Nanak are myths and without any truth in them.

His arguments (p. 57) regarding the hymn of Guru Arj'n (Adi Granth, Bhairau, p. 1136), whose last stanza as quoted by Oberoi is:

“To the formless one I bow in my heart, I am neither Hindu nor Muslim,” are just fantastic. He invokes Prof. Sahib Singh that “Guru Arjun wrote this hymn in a definite context: He was responding to an older verse by Kabir included in the *Adi Granth*”. Normally one responds to a statement if one differs from its content. The two aforesaid hymns are synonymous in spirit, therefore, Guru Arjun is substantiating Kabir’s idea, affirming “I am neither Hindu nor Muslim”.

Oberoi’s skewed arguments to try to prove one of his precon-cieved ideas by twisting the facts reminds me of that Biologist who was conducting research on the “hearing power of fleas”. He was giving a lecture on this subject when he took out a flea, set it on his right hand and addressed the audience as follows:

“Ladies and gentlemen, I have trained this flea to listen to my command and obey it”. So saying he said to the flea, “On to my left hand”. The flea immediately flew and sat on his left hand. “On to my right hand”, he said again and the flea immediately obeyed. He repeated this another couple of times and the flea obeyed correctly every time. Now he took hold of the flea and pulled out its wings. After this operation he set the flea on his right hand and gave it the command to go to his left hand. The flea did not obey even when he repeated it a few times. “Ladies and gentlemen,” the biologist said triumphantly, “I have conclusively proved that the hearing power of a flea is in its wings”.

Some of Oberoi’s statements are confusing, for example, on page 59: “Given the paucity of written records it is hard to specify why the Khalsa order was established and it is even harder to specify the exact nature of the Khalsa under Gobind Singh”. Thus he does not seem to think of any historical record that could shed light on this subject. At the same time, however, he quotes (p. 61-62), probably from the *var* of Bhai Gurdas Singh, “Similarly, only those who choose to identify with the Khalsa are *gunnukhs*, the rest are all *manmukhs*”. Actually the meaning should be - those who were *gunnukhs* (who follow the advice of the Guru) identified with the Khalsa, the *manmukhs* went astray.

The statement on page 64 regarding the Khalsa ceremony of ‘*Khande di Pahul*’ is wrong when he says, “All this done to the recitation of five quatrains from the writings of Guru Gobind Singh. Every Sikh knows that Japu ji and Anand Sahib, which are an integral part of this ceremony are not Guru Gobind Singh’s *banis*”.

On pp. 69-70 Oberoi, by a rather convoluted argument tries to



say that Guru Gobind Singh may not have given the edict that after him, the *Shabad* Guru, will be the eternal Guru of Sikhs. He goes on to say that it was the absence of any clear leadership within the Sikh ranks after the death of Guru Gobind Singh that prompted Khalsa Sikhs to fill this vacuum by putting Guru Granth, the Scriptural Guru into service and thus, “the doctrine of Guru Granth served as a useful substitute for the line of Sikh Gurus by providing much needed cohesion to a *Panth* faced with political turmoil and serious internal dissension”.

This shows total disregard to the historical facts. After the death of Guru Gobind Singh, Banda Bahadur remained an absolutely undisputed leader of Sikhs for several years. Under his leadership Sikhs were united, and conquered a good portion of Punjab. However, he was never, even for a moment, accepted as a Guru by the Khalsa. The reason is clear, and is substantiated by several historical writings by some of Guru Gobind Singh’s contemporary writers, that the tenth Guru did formally declare the *Adi Granth* to be the eternal Guru after him.<sup>5</sup>

The statement on page 88, “While the Sikh Gurus and sub-sequently, their disciples tried to redefine the norms of the society in which they lived particularly under Khalsa, eventually they were unable to create an absolutely new mode of social organization”, seems to be off the mark when examined in the light of his earlier description of the set of rituals appropriated by Khalsa Sikhs as set out in *Rahit Namas* (pp. 64-66).

Let us come again to the so called “Sanatan Sikhs” who according to him “came in the course of the nineteenth century to quite literally believe that their theology, rites and practices had ancient origin and were beyond the pale of dichronic time (p. 93)”. How this so called Sanatan Sikh tradition appeared from the blue and rejected all the norms set by the ten Sikh Gurus in favour of those from ancient tunes is a mystery for which Oberoi does not have any clue. Furthermore if these so called Sanatan Sikhs believed in theology, rites and practices of ancient origin that were condemned by the Sikh Gurus, how could they be labelled ‘Sikhs’ of any kind or shade?

Oberoi’s explanation of *Guru-Sikhi* (p. 112) is a bit too over stretched. The descendents of Guru Nanak (*Bedis*) and those of Sodhi Gurus, though commanded great respect among the Sikh masses, were never given the status of any of the ten Sikh Gurus, or for that matter *Guru Granth Sahib*. Although they used a pillow and people bowed to

them out of respect, their seat in the congregation was always lower than that of Guru Granth Sahib. They bowed to Guru Granth Sahib like any other Sikh when they came to the congregation. Similarly *sants* and *sadhs* were given due respect as told by the Sikh scriptures, but they were never given the status of a Guru.

Oberoi seems to have a rather turbid view of *Udasis* and *Nirmalas* and their role in the spread of Sikhism among the masses. For example, on page 128, "It was *Nirmalas* who championed the cause of Sikhism and became custodians of the faith". But at the same time he is asking the reason for the flourishing of *Udasi akharas*.

The *Udasi* lineage was started by Sri Chand, the son of Guru Nanak. They never came into the fold of Khalsa in that they are ascetic and do not observe the Khalsa code of five *K's*. During most of the eighteenth century when Sikhs were being persecuted and were hiding most of the time, the *Udasis* took care of the Sikh shrines because the *Mughal* and *Afghan* rulers did not consider them to be Sikhs and, therefore, ignored them. *Nirmalas*, on the other hand, come from the five Khalsa (Celibate) Sikhs sent by Guru Gobind Singh to Kashi for higher studies in Sanskrit. They are *amritdhari* Sikhs and spend their life in learning Sikh scripture and expounding them.

The number of *Udasi* and *Nirmalas* has never been large enough to be a significant factor in any statistical consideration of Sikh population.

Talking of popular religion in Punjab and its links with Sanatan Sikhism in the nineteenth century Oberoi admits that the sources are scarce and he has "used mainly three (not too reliable) sources; the court chronicles, the records of the British *Raj*, and the diatribes of Sikh intelligentsia from the last quarter of the nineteenth century". He goes on to admit that, "undoubtedly these sources reek with personal biases, but once subjected to what Paul Ricoeur aptly calls, 'hermeneutics of suspicion', i.e., an iconoclastic textual reading grounded in disbelief and always on the look out for filters, they begin to yield rich dividends". The only problem arises when the applicator of hermeneutics of suspicion uses colored filters. In that case, to him they may be yielding rich dividends but in actuality his conclusions may be even more biased. This seems to be the case with Oberoi's book.

For example, on page 147 he gives a sweeping and categorical

statement, “for much of the nineteenth century Sikhs were deeply involved in the worship of miracle saints and undertook regular pilgrimages to their shrines”. The basis of this statement seems to be the figures he quotes for the 1911 census in which a mere 3% of Sikhs were followers of Sakhi Sarvar. Now readers can judge for themselves what kind of hermeneutics of suspicion he has applied.

Even when historical proofs to the contrary do exist, Oberoi insists that *Gurbilas Chhevin Patshahi* was written in the latter decades of the first half of the nineteenth century because it seem to serve his purpose. On page 190-91 he discusses *Gurbilas Chhevin Patshahi* and *Sau Sakhi* and lables them anonymous writings. However, he then presumes that they were written by Sanatan Sikhs. One wonders what makes him think so. These texts could as well have been written by some clever and manipulative Hindu *Brahmin* whose purpose was to in-filtrate Sanatan traditions into the Khalsa tradition as was done earlier with Buddhism. As a researcher it would have been more appropriate to hold his comments until an unequivocal proof of their authorships was established.

Does Oberoi consider narration of *avtaras* and bloody battles of *Devi* with demons in Dasam Granth to be just poetical rendering of Hindu mythology into Punjabi and *Brj Bhasha* (the vernaculars of the time) or a proof that the tenth Guru was a believer of these myths? (considering that was all written by him). If the answer is affirmative then how can he explain the other writings of the tenth Guru in Dasam Granth which clearly state that he believes in only the one timeless God?

Page 208: Oberoi writes, “there are all kinds of problems with notions such as ‘quality of faith’. Quality according to whom? Nineteenth century reformers, indigenou practitioners, or twentieth century historians? Second, quality according to which standards? Scriptural, ethical, theological, or historical? Third, even if we were to accept assumption that ruling elites under Ranjit Singh were more licentious than at other periods of history, its connection with a decline in Sikhism remains nebulous. Quality in matters of religion is a very relative concept which we may do well not try quantifying”.

The question immediately arises as to what yardstick has Oberoi used to draw a line of demarkation between the Khalsa Sikhs and the so called Sanatan Sikhs? Has he not done so on the basis of quality of faith? Has he not by doing so ventured to quantify this concept?

Page 314: “In the Khalsa view of the World the Granth was the rightful heir to the ten Sikh Gurus”. This sentence smells of insinuation that it is Tat Khalsa who gave the Guruship to Guru Granth Sahib and not the tenth Guru.

Page 319: “All this was possible at the expense of the other Sikh text, the Dasam Granth”. This is a totally incorrect statement. Dasam Granth was neither compiled nor authenticated by any of the ten Sikh Gurus. As a matter of fact even today discussions are going on regarding the writings of Guru Gobind Singh and those of his court poets in this volume. Although the Sikhs gave respect to Dasam Granth, it was never given the status of Shabad Guru which was given to Adi Granth by Guru Gobind Singh himself.

Page 330: “Sikh heroic figures from the eighteenth century were shown to have been punished, tortured, and killed for desiring to retain cultural markers”. The so called cultural markers that Oberoi is referring to are the five *Ks*. I wonder if he has ever thought seriously about their being religious markers.

Page 348: “Sikh claims over Punjabi rested on the fact that the Adi Granth was written in the *gurmukhi* script, one of the several scripts in which Punjabi can be written”. This indicates Oberoi’s ignorance about the fact that Punjabi as spoken cannot be written in any other script. The *gurmukhi* script was tailor made to write Punjabi. For example, even the Devnagri script which is the closest to Punjabi does not have the letter equivalent to V. Most other scripts do not have consonants like “C” or ‘R.

Page 416: “The Tat Khalsa by formulating new doctrines of what Sikhism ought to represent challenged all existing definitions of belief and being within a pluralistic Sikh tradition”.

It is hard to believe that a person holding a Sikh and Punjabi chair at a university could give this kind of opinion which reeks of either a total disregard for all historical evidences or lack of understanding of basic doctrines of Sikhism.

Looking at the enormous amount of superfluous material that this book contains and what a scholar of Sikh studies can get out of it, a more appropriate title of the book should be: “Much ado about nothing”.

## REFERENCES

1. Hari Ram Gupta, "History of the Sikhs" V 01. 1.
2. D. Ibbetson, "Punjab Castes," reprinted, Patiala, 1970, p. 228.
3. Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon, 'Singh Sabha Movement – A Revival,' "Advanced Studies in Sikhism" Eds. J.S. Mann and H.S. Saraon, 1989, p. 234.
4. "Gur Satgur ka jo Sikh akhai ".
5. Madanjit Kaur, 'Guru Granth Sahib Sanctified as Guru', "Advanced Studies in Sikhism" Eds. J.S. Mann and H.S. Saraon, 1989, p. 121.

# **U.B.C. Sikh Chair: Building or Destroying the Sikh Identity?**

Dr Jasbir Singh Mann

More than 500 years ago, Guru Nanak established Sikhism with its independent identity and doctrines in contradiction to all earlier Indian traditions. Initial Canadian exposure of the Sikhs was generated by Sikh troops or by Sikh companies from friends and relatives. During Queen Victoria Diamond Jubilee in 1897, Sikh regiments passed through Canada which probably initiated the Sikh migration. Six thousand Sikh pioneers entered Canada between 1903 and 1908 in a comparatively unregulated immigration. 3,000 Sikhs crossed the border of the United States at that time.

“Sikhs worked hard in their fight against racial discrimination and immigration ban for their existence and carried out a liberation struggle for India from Canada and the United States under the serious threat of political surveillance by the Britishers across North America. The pioneer Sikhs in Canada went through the political climate with racial conflicts in British Columbia and also underwent Asiatic riots during a major depression which hit North America in 1907 and 1908. Pioneer Sikhs underwent isolated pattern of living conditions and did rough outdoor work in sawmills and shinglemills particularly in the lower Fraser Valley - Vancouver region on Vancouver Island. Pioneer Sikhs went through the difficulties of solidarity, but continued to have strong faith in Waheguru and the independent identity of the Sikhs. The Sikhs established the Khalsa Diwan Society in 1907. By 1920 gurdwaras had been erected in Vancouver, New Westminster, Victoria, Nanaimo, Golden, Abbotsford, Fraser Mills, and Paldi. The Sikh migration continued during the First, Second World War, and later on.”<sup>1</sup>

In order to promote better understanding of Sikhism in Canada, the Sikh Community, under the Federation of Sikh Societies, established a Sikh Chair at UBC with the General Objective: “to initiate, maintain and promote instruction and research undergraduate and graduate levels in the areas of Punjabi Language, Punjabi Literature, Sikhism {doctrine, religious practice and philosophy}, Sikh History and other aspects of Sikh Studies such as Sikhs in Canada.”<sup>2</sup> The money for this chair was paid by the Sikhs as well as by the multicultural department from their taxes. UBC in 1987 selected Dr. Harjot Oberoi

for this chair. The Sikh community did not have any say on this appointment.

It is very interesting to note that the Sikhs paid the money and signed the contract with UBC in 1985, but the chair was not started until 1987. Sardar Mohinder Singh Gosal, the President of Federation of Sikh Societies of Canada and the signatory to the contract, made a statement on July 22, 1994 “that there is evidence to prove that the 2 year delay to start this chair was intentional under the pressures from anti-Sikh political forces.”<sup>3</sup> It seems very clear from his statement that UBC became a part of the plan to defuse the Sikh identity from the inception of this chair. It is possible that UBC waited for 2 years to hire an applicant which was being groomed for anti-Sikh propaganda. As is evident from the objectives of the Sikh chair, the applicant must be qualified for Punjabi language, Literature, and Sikhism (doctrine, religious practice, and philosophy). Dr Oberoi has admitted himself that he is only a student of history, has nothing to do with religion, and his qualifications for Punjabi language and literature remain questionable. Many other applicants with appropriate qualifications were rejected. How the selection process was held to fulfill the special objectives, as outlined in the contract, is a serious matter and needs thorough investigation.

Anyhow, Dr. Oberoi took this assignment with special objectives, but his seven years of published work and various presentations at different universities has clearly shown that he has violated the objectives of the chair. A group of visiting scholars from India, in the month of July 1994, were approached by the Sikh community of North America to review Dr. Oberoi’s academic work in reference to the Endowment Trust Fund Contract between UBC, Government of Canada and the Sikhs. The following material was reviewed by them.

- 1) The momerandum of agreement between the Federation of Sikh Societies (representing the Sikh Community of Canada), University of British Columbia, and the Government of Canada, dated March 16, 1985 and February 25, 1987.
- 2) “Construction of Religious Boundaries” by Dr. Harjot Oberoi, published by Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1994.
- 3) Article, “Popular Saints, Goddesses and Village Sacred Sites: Re-reading Sikh Experience in the Nineteenth Century”, read at UC Berkeley, February 1987.
- 4) Article, “From Ritual to Counter-Ritual: Rethinking the Hindu-

- Sikh Question”, Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century, University of Toronto, 1988.
- 5) Article, “Sikh Fundamentalism: Ways of Turning Things Over?”, Presented at the Annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Anaheim, November 1989.
  - 6) Article, “Sikh Fundamentalism: Translating History into Theory”, Fundamentalisms and the State, University of Chicago Press 1993. Dr Oberoi has made different presentations on the subject of fundamentalism in relation to Sikhism at various universities.
  - 7) Article, “The Wordship of Pir Sakhi Sarvar: Illness, Healing and Poplular Culture in the Punjab,” Studies in History, special number on popular Culture, vol.2, 1987.
  - 8) Article, “Popular Saints, Goddesses and Village Sacred Sites”, University of Chicago Press, vol. 31, 1992, pg. 340-78.
  - 9) UBC Report of Activities of Chair in Punjabi Language, Literature, and Sikh Studies, covering the period 1987-1992..
  - 10) UBC Report on Administrative and technical matters relating to activities of the Sikh Studies Chair, with a forewording letter dated February 7, 1992, signed by A.J. McClean, Associate Vice President (Academic).

The following senior scholars of Sikh Studies participated in this review:

1. Dr Balkar Singh, Professor & Head; Dept. of Guru Granth Sahib Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala, India
2. Dr Darshan Singh, Professor & Head; Dept. of Guru Nanak Studies, Punjab University, Chandigarh, India
3. Dr. Kehar Singh, Professor; Dept. of Political Science, Punjabi University, Patiala, India
4. Dr. Gurnam Kaur Reader, Dept. of Guru Granth Sahib Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala, India.

“They were of the unanimous opinion that the incumbent, Dr. Harjot Oberoi, did not contribute to the fulfillment of the objectives laid down in the agreement concerning the Sikh Chair at UBC.”<sup>4</sup> (For more details, see appendix III)

The pertinent findings of the work done by Dr. Oberoi can be summarized as follows:



1. Western methodology suffers from two serious handicaps: a) No settled scriptures 300 years after Christ. b) Christ Ministry, lasted only 2.5 years. But, the Sikh scripture was interpreted and demonstrated by the Gurus for 2.5 centuries. It is ridiculous to apply methodologies relevant to Christian ideology where scripture developed as a result of history and culture to Sikhism, where scripture is revelatory and authenticated by the prophet. Validity of Oberoi's application in this background by using terms like 'plurality', 'ambiguity', and 'fluidity' becomes meaningless and irrelevant.
2. It is a motivated attempt to dissolve the Sikh identity and ideology which is new and in contradiction to all earlier Indian traditions. Guru Granth Sahib is a new scripture with new ideology and new religious experience. Sikhism completely denies the authority of Vedas and Upanishads. Guru Nanak even calls some of their injunctions to be wrong. The Sikh Gurus were so clear and particular about the independent and separate identity of their religious system, they took very significant steps by compiling and authenticating the Sikh scripture in 1604 AD with complete repository and final authority on the Sikh ideology. The *Shabad* has been given the sanction of God. The Tenth Master took two important steps: 1) Nash Doctrine and 2) made the Sikh scripture, not only an exclusive vehicle of the Gurus message, but also gave it the status of Guru, Guide, and Teacher of the Sikhs.
3. Most of Dr. Oberoi's formulations are based on Dr. McLeod's work, which has already been challenged, exposed, and found to be inadequate. The reader is advised to study the following books on this issue:
  - i) Perspectives in Sikh Traditions.
  - ii) Advanced Studies in Sikhism.
  - iii) Recent Researches in Sikhism.
  - iv) Fundamental Issues in Sikh Studies.
  - v) Ernest Trumpp and Hew McLeod as Scholars of Sikh Religion, History and Culture
  - vi) Planned Attack on Aad Sri Guru Granth Sahib
4. Dr Oberoi does not study Sikh religion as a spiritual experience.

He tries to give materialistic interpretation to a non-material phenomena. His understanding of Sikhism is based Upon Sociol-ogy and Anthropology. In order to understand Sikhism, one must understand that history and sociology of Sikhism flow out of Guru Granth Sahib. Any study which does not include Guru Granth Sahib and the history of the Guru period as references will be inadequate and will bring wrong results.

5. He totally ignores ample historical evidence which gives a distinctive character to Sikhism including Sikh scripture, martyrdom of the Gurus and thousands of Sikhs. If it were not a distinctive religion, then what was the need to defend it by courting martyr-dom? Dr. Oberoi has quoted that “Sikh Study needs to be fully open to the gauge of history” on page 35; but on the contrary, he has knowingly and willfully suppressed the following academic facts:

- History of Guru Period (Sri Chand, Mohan, Prithi, and Ram Rai transgressed Sikh beliefs in early Sikh history and were isolated)
- Sikh Scripture delineating independent Sikh identity
- Martyrdom of the 5th and 9th Guru to uphold religious freedom
- Testimony of Mohsan Fani (Muslim Chronicle, 1645)
- Execution of Banda and 740 Sikhs in New Delhi (not even one desereted while given the choice to do so, 1715-16)
- Kazi Nur Mohammed (Historian of 18th Century)
- Why prices on Sikh heads were fixed by Mughals? - Misal Raj
- History of Maharaha Ranjit Singh period(His government was know as Sarkar-i-Khalsa; he issued coins in the name of the Guru and all his princes were adressed as Khalsa. He was made to appear at Akal Takhat and was granted Tankhah. )
- Work of Bute Shah is suppressed
- Sikh Theologians like Kavi Santokh Singh, Giani Gian Singh, Khushwakat Rai, Sohan Lal Suri, and Ahmad Shah, were completely ignored

- 6 His use of concepts like ‘multiple identities in Sikhism’, ‘several competing definitions of a Sikh’ ‘religious diversity in Sikhism’, ‘religious fluidity in Sikh traditions’, ‘religious pluralism in Sikhism’, ‘amorphous growth of religion’, etc., are not sustainable in the face of 18th century Sikh History of persecution. Ample Mogul State identification of Sikhs is ignored. “The Mughals, the Afghans, and many Hindu scribes of Mughal courts called Guru Nanak and all his successors, Nanak Panthis. Historical Mughal court records and writings of Non-Sikh scholars clearly prove that the appellation Nanak Panthi was attached not only to Guru Nanak and his immediate successors, but even to Guru Hargobind, Guru Gobind Singh, and Banda.”<sup>5</sup>
7. He makes vague and irrelevant observations regarding Sakhi Sarvar, Guga, Settela, and Ancestor worship among the Sikhs. “He clearly suppresses H.A. Rose’s clear observation (whom he otherwise quotes) that in the Sikh villages, there was known enmity between the Sikhs who did not worship Sakhi Sarvar and the Hindus who believed in Sakhi Sarvar.”<sup>6</sup>
8. Oberoi suppresses the details of the mainstream Singh Sabha movement and totally ignores the great role played by them with the strength of Sikh ideology. Every student of Sikh history knows that the Singh Sabha movement was wholly a revivalist movement “working strictly within the parameters of the Sikh religion and its tradition. In fact, the very reasons that it invoked the authority of the Gurus and the Guru Granth Sahib and public examples of Sikh martyrs who suffered and sacrificed themselves for the principle of the Sikh religion, account for the Success of the Singh Sabha leaders in safely steering the Sikh community towards its goal in the lean period of Sikh history after the fall of the Sikh kingdom. Dr. Oberoi is only promoting Singh Sabhas with vested interest (Rawalpindi, Faridkot, Amritsar) which stressed the need for human Gurus and wanted to promote that Bedis, Bhallas, Trehans and Sodhis deserve special patronage due to their descent from families of Sikh Gurus; which is contrary to the Sikh ideology. He is promoting Raja of Faridkot; Baba Khem Singh Bedi; and Bhai Avtar Singh Vahiria, whose books ‘Khalsa Dharam Shastar,’ ‘Sikh Dharam Tat Darshan,’ and ‘Gurdarshan Shastar’ clearly promoted anti-Sikh ideologies e.g.,
  - Sikh Gurus didn’t prohibit the worship of Gods and Godesses

- It was wrong to remove caste distinctions

The real Singh Sabhas which promoted Sikh doctrines as enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib have been downplayed by Dr. Oberoi. The Lahore Group, which represented the entire community of 118 Singh Sabhas, were in fact successful to project the correct image of Sikhism. The Lahore Group writers and their published work is listed below:

WRITERS: Prof. Gurmukh Singh, Giani Ditt Singh, Mayya Singh, Bhai Jawahar Singh, Bhai Kahan Singh, Giani Gian Singh, Naurang Singh, and Jodh Singh.

BOOKS: 'Ham Hindu Nahin,' 'Panth Prakash,' 'Sacha Dharmi,' 'Gurmat Prabhakar,' 'Gurmat Sudhakar' and 'Durga Parbodh.'

9. He talks of undefined religious boundaries in India, although nearly 900 million of its population have concentrated itself to Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and Sikhism. He writes on page 1 that "It is very well for the historians of religion to think, speak, and write about Islam, Hinduism, and Sikhism; but they rarely pause to consider if such clear cut categories actually found expression in the consciousness, actions and cultural performances of the human actors they describe. There simply wasn't any one-to-one correspondence between the categories that were supposed to govern social and religious behavior on the one hand, and the way people actually experienced their everyday lives on the other hand." It seems to be a concocted story that before 19th century there were no religious boundaries like Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and Sikhism. He has clearly suppressed the scholarly narratives which show defined boundaries before the 19th century.
10. Dr. Oberoi has suppressed the work of Sikh academicians the last decade, for example, Drs. Hari Ram Gupta, Ganda Singh, Harbans Singh, Madanjit Kaur, Darshan Singh, Balkar Singh, Gurnam Kaur, Nirbhai Singh, Sardar Daljeet Singh, Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon, Tarlochan Singh, and Dr. Avtar Singh. It is very interesting to note that Dr. Oberoi is quoting the unpublished thesis of Dr. Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon and is completely silent about his published work, which was sub-mitted to him as well as to UBC. Thorough investigation is needed to why UBC failed to ask Dr. Oberoi to comment on such work.

11. He has suppressed the great historical evidence of succession of Guru Granth as the living Guru, as recorded in Sikh, Persian, Muslim, Hindu, and European sources. "Historical Sources of Sanctification of Guru Granth Sahib are as follows :” 7&8

#### A. SIKH SOURCES

- \* Sainapat, Gur Sobha (1711AD) Bhai Nandlal, Bhai Prahlad, Bhai Chaupa Singh, Rehat Namas
- \* Koer Singh, Gurlas Patshahi 10 (17S1AD)
- \* Kesar Singh Chibbar, Bansavalinama (1770 AD)
- \* Mahima Prakash (1808 AD)
- \* Munshi Sant Singh, account of Bedi family of the Una
- \* Unpublished records, Bhatt Vahis

#### B. PERSIAN SOURCES

- \* Mirza Muhammed, Harisi-Ibrat Nameh (170S-19AD)
- \* Sayad Muhammed Qasirt, Ibrat Nama (1722AD)
- \* Hussain Lahauri, Ibrat Maqal (1731AD)
- \* Royal Court News of Mughals, Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mualla (1708)

#### C. INDIAN HISTORIANS OF 19TH CENTURY

- \* Khushwant Rai, Tarikh-i-Sikhan (1811)
- \* Sohan Lal Suri
- \* Ghulam Muhy-ud-din
- \* Mufti Ali-ud-din
- \* Kanhaiya Lal  
(Historian of Ranjit Singh Period)

#### D. EUROPEAN HISTORIANS OF 19TH CENTURY

- \* John MalcoIm
- \* WG Osborne
- \* WLM Greger

\* Joseph David Cunningham

\* and even Ernest Trumpp

- E. Dr McLeod, who is Dr Oberoi's mentor, has confessed in his personal communication in May 1989 by saying: "On the sanctification of GGS, I am accused of attributing the Succession of GGS as Guru to a later need for cohesion rather than to an explicit pronouncement of Guru Gobind Singh. It was another question and not a positive statement. I am bound to acknowledge that I have received no support for raising this issue. The result is that other scholars are apparently unanimous in their decision that there is no question of concern with this particular pointing
- F. Dr Oberoi, in his book "Construction of Religious Boundaries" (1994), completely ignores the above historical evidence of the sanctification of *Guru Manyo Granth*, when he quoted, "When in 1708, at the death of Gobind Singh, there was no one to succeed him as Guru, the Panth turned into his collective successor. This was to be an abiding belief of Khalsa Sikhs, one that came in handy when waging battles for collective survival and political sovereignty over the course of the 18th century". On personal questioning, Dr Oberoi says that he meant that the concept of Guru Panth came in the 18th century, which is again another misrepresentation, as the concept of Guru Panth came during the earlier Guru period.
12. In 1988, Dr Oberoi quoted and blamed Or Kahn Singh Nabha for bringing almost four centuries of Indian tradition to an end, by writing his book, "We Are Not Hindus". In June 1994 (VOICE), Dr Oberoi himself writes that "CRB does not suggest that do not have an independent identity. He is suggesting that in the 19th, there was a decline which does not mean that there were other periods when Sikh identity peaked (e.g. 16th, 17th, 18th Centuries)." What new sources has he found about established Sikh identity in this period of 5 years? Dr Oberoi has clearly suppressed the remarks made by Dr Kahn Singh Nabha that the primary purpose of his book was to clear the misinterpretation of Sikhism by few ignorant people, which he quoted in the preface of his book: "these days there are many among us who inspite of being Singhs consider themselves to

be of Hindu Dharma. The reason for this is that they never study and discuss their scriptures and neither study the history. They spend their life on reading the books of other religions and listen to the advice of the self-interested people, who go about in various garbs.”<sup>10</sup>

13. Vancouver Sun, July 8, 1994- Oberoi says, “A silent majority of the BC Sikhs do not have trouble with his scholarship, including his argument that Sikhism is a blend of Hinduism and Islam.” What material methods has he used to base this argument?
14. Oberoi’s research is based on Eurocentric methodology, which is inapplicable to Sikh Studies. Please see Dr. Sodhi’s article for details.
15. On page 49, Or. Oberoi feels, “although in the present state of research, it is hard to specify the factors that prompted the fifth Guru of the Sikhs to collate an anthology of devotional literature.” If Dr. Oberoi studies the Sikh literature and history thoroughly, he would clearly understand the preparation of Adi Granth by the fifth Guru as follows:
  - a) The Bani in the Adi Granth is the only true Bani of the Gurus (Concept of Kachi vs. Paki Bani)
  - b) No Bani of the Gurus has been left outside the Adi Granth, by him
  - c) Any claimed existence of Bani could not be true, since the same would have been scrutinized and tested by the fifth Guru himself.
  - d) To preserve the revealed compositions of the Gurus from adulteration
  - e) To establish new scripture, distinct Sikh religion and its independent identity
16. The motives of Dr. Oberoi becomes clear that he has joined the Christian missionary conspiracy and anti-Sikh propaganda when, in the preface (pg. xii) of the book, he writes his gratitude. “The field of modern Sikh studies has for long been nurtured by the writings of Prof. McLeod: the numerous citations from his work will attest to that. I have been fortunate in having his association of this book, almost from its inception and read several early drafts, unfailingly responded with extensive Comments and saved me from many errors.” Sikh scholars from different Universities throughout the world have exposed the

conspiracy as headed by Dr. McLeod and many books have been published and are available for scrutiny. It is now high time for Dr. Oberoi to answer those discussions, otherwise he will continue to make more errors in the future.

17. Anybody who even tries to discuss the philosophy of the Sikh religion, is being dubbed as fundamentalist. Dr. Oberoi writes about Sikh fundamentalism as, "While ideologies of the Sikh fundamentalism are still in the process of formulating Sikh 'fundamentals', their firm advocacy of spiritual innerrancy makes them quickly attack anyone who proposes a critical textual analysis of Sikh sacred writings."<sup>11</sup> He is also promoting "The Text and Meaning of Adi Granth" on page 49. Thirty international Sikh scholars have reviewed this study and have compiled their observations in the book "Planned Attack on Aad Sri Guru Granth Sahib: Academics or Blasphemy." Justice Ram Singh Bindra has praised this book on the back cover by saying that "this book has exposed the ugly and sinister design of the group ending in the PhD thesis aimed at eroding the authenticity of the Guru Granth Sahib. It is intriguing to know how an unreliable manuscript (No history beyond 1987, No date of compilation, No author, and internal consistency proves to be a Minas literature) was suddenly adopted to form the shaky basis of a University thesis. Equally intriguing is the unexplained fact how a dead scholar was resurrected to contribute a new article to the Sikh Review which has been used as a justification for the choice of the subject of the thesis."<sup>12</sup> As Dr. Oberoi is being the head of a chair, funded by the Sikhs, it now becomes his moral responsibility to comment on this international conspiracy which is trying to diffuse the independent Sikh identity.
  18. Dr. Oberoi feels that his book, "Construction of Religious Boundaries," is a post-structural theory of Sikhism and in the following pages, 49, 50, 51, 59, 61, 64, 66, 190, and 422. He has tried to clarify about early Sikh identity. Sikh scholars are of the opinion that ideologically and historically, post-structural theory of Sikhism as proposed by Dr. Oberoi is a clear distortion, misinterpretation, misrepresentation and only an anti-Sikh propaganda.
- \* On page 49, Oberoi states that "the death of Guru Nanak provided significant access to embryonic Sikh panth, which is followed



by other narrations.” The entire statement is a deliberate distortion. The 10 Gurus did not create an embryonic Sikh Panth. After a period of about two and a half centuries, including over a hundred years of militancy and martyrdoms in confrontation with the mighty state, they created a mature Panth, powerful enough to once and for all, throw back a thousand year wave of invaders, who had trampled under their heels. The so-called Sanatanist society is certainly not a Sikh Guru tradition, but was a post-Sikh tradition. It was not without reason that the Gurus wielded the sword for more than a hundred years and gave that sword as an essential *rehat* to every Sikh who bowed before the scripture and its defined ideology. But Oberoi scrupulously avoids quoting it in order to define the Sikh religion. It was not an embryonic, but an ideologically mature Sikh Panth which the Gurus left, despite the repeated orders of the Mughal state that every Nanak Panthi should be destroyed. The Sanatan Sikhs were only fair weather friends who crept into the Sikh fold during Khalsa Raj.

- \* Dr Oberoi, on pages 50, 51, 59, “tries to grapple with implicit and explicit nature of Sikh identity” which is again a simple distortion of contrary established data. Sikhism is defined and has to be understood, not by any (ancillary) sources like the Janamsakhis or Sausakhis. It is defined in the Guru Granth. It is Guru Nanak who says that a Gurmukh is he who follows the will of God. It is he who again says that God is the destroyer of evil. It is this definition of the Sikh which the 10 Gurus demonstrated by their sword and martyrdom. Evil is a fact of life and the Sikh system being a whole-life system, it is the duty of the Gurmukh to oppose the oppression and injustice. Again, it is Guru Nanak who says that life is a game of love and to practice it, you have to lay down your life for it. Oberoi has wrongly defined Gurmukh. It is not ritualistic practices that define a Sikh, but it is his deeds that do it. Oberoi fails to quote the first Var and Pauri 37 of Bhai Gurdas, where he clearly records that Guru Nanak, by his system, demonstrated the other two systems to be of a lower category; hence, even Bhai Gurdas leaves no room for confusion of an amorphous Sikhism. It is wrong to state that Bhai Gurdas’ Sikhism was implicit. The Janamsakhis made it explicit. There are only two facts that define Sikhism and demonstrate its thesis or make it explicit. The definition is

in Guru Granth and 240 years of Sikh history of Guru Period with the final outcome of the Panth of Guru Nanak. Bhai Gurdas in Var 42 clearly defines the Sikh Panth as the one which denies all allegiance to other scriptures, including the Vedas. But, Oberoi has deherberately avoided quoting the above sources which clearly indicate creation of the Sikh Panth and no plural or sanatanist Panth.

- \* On page 61, Oberoi makes a misstatement as Sainapat (was not a biographer but a chronicler) to that it was the wish of the Tenth Master that all Sikhs turn Khalsa. The Guru only laid down the test as to who was a good Sikh so that the waverers are eliminated and this is Sainapat who says that Delli Sikhs, could not abide by his criteria and drifted apart. Hence, the Tenth Guru created the famous Nash Doctrine of Sikhism (Dharam Nash, Bharam Nash, Karam Nash, Kul Nash and Krit Nash).
- \* In tracing distinctive Khalsa, Dr. Oberoi is misleading when he talks about externals, taboos, and life-cycle rituals. Sikh identity is ideologically always to be tested by the deed of the Sikh because the Gurus clearly emphasized that it is the deed that is dear to Him and not the form alone. Merely externals or out-ward look does not make a person Gurmukh or Khalsa. At-tempts are being made to confuse these terms by partisan observers and critics, the ideal of the Gurmukh, the true Khalsa is very clear in hundreds of hymns in the Guru Granth .
- \* On page 64 and 66, Dr. Oberoi constructs an autonomous identity with his post structural theory which is inadequate. There is only a single construction of the Sikh autonomus identity which was produced by Guru Nanak. No new step or stage was developed thereafter. It was only his thesis which was demonstrated and a mature Panth was created by Guru Gobind Singh. The system of Pahul was there. The prescription of fighting evil with force if necessary, was also laid down by Guru Nanak being in accordance with the will of God. The Ten Master gave the symbol of Kirpan to the Sikhs so that they should not forget the essential doctrine of Guru Nanak that evil has to be confronted. Externals alone or sociology cannot define Sikhism as ideologically defined in Sikh scripture. Hence, rituals as defined by Oberoi has no place to define Sikh identity.

- \* On page 190, Oberoi has given too much emphasis on Sanatan Sikhs by his post structural theory which has nothing to do with Sikhism, as those Sanatani Sikhs were a fair wheather develop-ment who had no place or identity in the earlier 400 years of Sikhism, Sausakhi nor in doctrinal literature. Like the Messianic literature of the Jews and the Christians, it only appeared in the 19th century.
- \* On page 422, Dr. Oberoi's motive of diffusing Sikh identity becomes clear when he suggests that Rehat Namas or the Gurblases could be used for the creation of Sikh doctrinal identity. He forgets that Sikh identity is strictly defined in Guru Granth Sahib and two and a half centuries of Guru Period including the martyrdom of the 5th and 9th Guru and not by mundane writings. It is very clear that neither later Sikh litera-ture nor Tat Khalsa could create a new identity which was already clearly defined by the Gurus and the sanctification of Guru Granth Sahib as the living Guru of the Sikhs.

The published work of Dr. Oberoi and his presentations at different universities, have shown that he has failed to fulfill the objectives of the chair for which he was hired. It is recommended that independent investigation is needed to find out the real truth. The questions that arise are spelt out in Appendix VIII. The Sikh community of North America and the Government of Canada must obtain the answers from UBC.

In conclusion, Dr Oberoi as the occupant of the Sikh Chair, did not follow the objectives, his work is incompatible to the objectives, and only a simple exercise of historiography to suit his personal ego or the reward to pay the master who got him qualified for this chair. As the discussion done by his writings is on the alien subjects are associated with Sikhism and Sikh subjects, their real impact constitutes anti-Sik-hism propaganda. The Sikh academicians who have reviewed the work of Dr Oberoi are of the unanimous opinion that the conclusions are preconceived and his data is concoted to comply with the desired results. The materials and methods applied by Dr Oberoi to construct his post-structural theory are wrong and that is why he was unable to find the independent Sikh identity in the early Sikh tradition. His post-structural theory seems to be a planned design to conceal crucial historical records and unethical study to diffuse the Sikh identity. Dr. Oberoi should not forget the history of the Sikhs of British Columbia who worked very hard to promote the Sikh identity and concept of

freedom as defined in Guru Granth Sahib. “The list of such names is not hidden from any Canadian Sikhs e.g. Bhais Mewa Singh, Bhag Singh, Balwant Singh, Kapur Singh, Kartar Singh, Piara Singh, Rattan Singh, Uttam Singh, Harnam Singh, Udham Singh, Hardit Singh, Ram Singh, and Karam Singh. Equally the Canadian Sikhs also do not forget the names of the villains of the Sikh community e.g. Bela Singh, Baboo Singh, and Partap Singh Tajoke.”<sup>13</sup> Nobody is immortal and in that sense, in the history of the Sikhs of British Columbia, Dr. Oberoi has a choice to fall into one of the above two categories.

The North American Sikhs have to understand that they are not living in a Colonial Raj anymore. We are living in a democratic society and are paying our taxes regularly. Every Sikh institution, university, or any government who takes your money must be held responsible and accountable. Seven years is enough time for Dr. Oberoi to prove his responsibility and accountability; which he completely failed. In the above context, it is for the readers to judge whether the UBC Sikh chair is building or destroying the Sikh identity.

The real issue is that Dr. Oberoi failed to fulfill the objectives of the Sikh Chair as outlined in the agreement between UBC and the Sikh Community. But, he is conveniently sidetracking it by making it an issue of Academic Freedom, which is not true. “Academic freedom is never unlimited and the general social law, including that of libel, applies equally well to it. Under Academic freedom, individuals and groups have the right to protest against research which can produce psychological pain, suffering and misinterpretation of doctrines.” Academic Freedom always demands Academic humility, honesty, integrity, and ethics. The height of Dr. Oberoi’s ignorance about Sikhism becomes very clear when he writes about Amrit ceremony on page 64, “All this was done to the recitation of five quatrains from the writing of Guru Gobind Singh.” While every Sikh knows that the five banis recited during the preparation of Amrit are: Jap Ji (Guru Nanak): Anand Sahib (Guru Amar Das), Jaap Sahib, Swayas, and Chopai (Guru Gobind Singh).

Hope Waheguru will give strength to Dr. Oberoi to propagate Sikh doctrines, religious practice, and philosophy in an accurate manner as written in the requirement in the General Objectives of the Agreement under which he has been contracted.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Singh, Narinder. ‘Canadian Sikhs’; 1993

2. Memorandum of understanding between UBC and Sikh Community (see appendix I)
3. Remarks made by Sardar Mohinder Singh Gosal at a special meeting held at UBC on July 22, 1994
4. A special deputation of Sikh scholars accompanied Jathedar Akal Takhat, Amritsar, Bhai Prof. Manjit Singh during his visit to North America in July/ August of 1994. Accompanied Sikh Academicans were requested by Sikh Community to submit their report on UBC Sikh Chair activities. (see report in detail in appendix III)
5. Singh, Trilochan. 'Ernest Trumpp & W.H. McLeod: As Scholars of Sikh History, Religion, and Culture'; 1994
6. Dhillon, Gurdarshan Singh (Chapter 14) 'Advanced Studies in Sikhism'; 1988
7. Singh, Dr. Ganda. (Chapter 9) 'Perspectives on the Sikh Tradition'; 1986
8. Kaur, Dr. Madanjit. (Chapter 8) 'Advanced Studies in Sikhism'; 1988
9. Personal written communication between Dr. Jasbir Singh Mann and Dr McLeod
10. Nabha, Kahn Singh. 'Sikh... We are Not Hindu', Nanakshahi 429, translated in English by Dr. Jarnail Singh; 1984
11. Oberoi, Harjot (Chapter 12) 'Fundamentalisms and the State'; 1993
12. Bindra, Justice Ram Singh. (back cover) 'Planned Attack on Aad Sri Guru Granth Sahib'; 1994
13. Singh, Kesar. 'Canadian Sikhs and Komagata Maru Massacre'; 1989
14. Collier's Encyclopedia. See "Academic Freedom"

## **The V.B.C. Sikh Chair - A Review**

S. Iqbal Singh Sara

After three attempts earlier, at the Nehru University, New Delhi, and at Canberra, through Master's seminar papers and doctoral dissertation, respectively, and 14 years later, HARJOT OBEROI, has just finished yet another tirade against the success of the Sikh people and the Sikh religion, in all its socio-political aspects, in emerging since the Sikh Raj, as a redoubtable world community and a stateless nation.

“The Construction of Religious Boundaries, (Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition)” is an eminent and impressive exercise in destructive scholarship published by the Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994.

Not content with the earlier “Ritual to Counter-Ritual, Re-thinking of Hindu Sikh Relations”, the Canberra dissertation, and a subsequent assault executed at Berkeley, California, in 1987, “Popular Saints, Goddesses and Village Sacred Sites: Re-Reading Sikh Experience in the Nineteenth Century”, the author has displayed remarkable perseverance in furthering his favourite pursuit, of un-making the Sikhs.

As the author confides in the Preface, his object in bringing forth his new book focuses on taking a thriving Sikh nation back to its beginnings. The book is devoted to the premise, “What did it mean to be a Sikh in the nineteenth-century?” as the Preface declares. And again, he contests, “Why did an influential set of Sikh leaders seek to purge established practices and establish a homogeneous religious community?”

Obviously, the author does not approve of the prevailing status of the Sikh people and their faith. Why, else, would he then, with all the literary and institutional resources at his disposal, through the governments in India and universities in America, expend 14 years to keep battering at the existing composition of the Sikhs and their institutions?

He seems also to have exclusive and secret proprietary rights to some mythological and mysterious attacking tool, he continuously employs. This is his elusive weapon, “Sikh Tradition”. For, whatever cannot be substantiated in fact or reality of the matter, he frequently falls back upon this illusory argument. This, in fact, is the strength of

the caluminous propositions ludicrously advanced in the essays couched in scholastic pomposity. The characterizations and terminology and vocabulary are awesome, if not intimidating. But that is about all there is no substance or usefulness in any sense whatsoever. The grain of Sikh reality is left untouched under the chaff.

The author persists in reviving and continuing an imaginary conflict supposed to prevail between two segments amongst Sikhs, which he identifies as “Tat Khalsa” and “Sanatan Sikhs”. His thesis aims at resurrecting the evolutionary and natural episodes that culminated, way back, in formalising and structuring the present Sikh nation. He fights it, again and again. At page 396, he ascribes to the “Sanatan Sikhs” (read, Un-Khalsa), what he calls, the “Sikh Tradition” (read, anti-Khalsa). His Sanatan Sikhs are mouthing the argument, “If the Sikh Gurus had been keen on making Sikhs a separate religious community, they would have endowed its adherents with beliefs, life-cycle rituals, festivals and symbols radically different from those of Hinduism. Since they had not, it seemed logical that their only intention in initiating Sikh tradition was to remove the social and moral evils which had seeped into the fabric of Hindu society... This was a position diametrically opposed to Tat Khalsa thinking. It further polarized Sikhs into two hostile camps, and this estrangement was to work itself out fully during the Akali movement in the 1920s. In denying the original and distinctive nature of the Sikh faith, Sanatan Sikhs became the worst enemies of the neo-Sikhs. They also came to be viewed as a part of the Arya Samaj and other Hindu bodies that refused to accept Sikhs as an autonomous religious community.” Author Oberoi then argues that the Sikh peasantry (he calls them ‘non-elites’) also resisted the newly evolved Sikh norms of the Khalsa quality. He acknowledges, however, that the village or rural population (the non-elites), the peasants, were unlettered. But the point he misses is that it was the Singh Sabha Movement and the Chief Khalsa Diwan, as its corollary, that initiated and carried on a steady campaign of educating the Sikh masses. They started innumerable Sikh schools, Colleges and other literary institutions, which all helped to make the ‘non-elite’ literate and amenable to the enlightened Sikhism in the current 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Sikh movements were all dynamic, and yielded positive results over many decades.

Then, in his conclusion, on page 416, while he concedes that religion is a ‘cohesive social force’, he still somehow makes a lame

argument that the Sikh peasantry were not responsive to the Khalsa spirit instilled by Sikhism. He forgets that a large body of all protagonists in the struggle for Sikh pre-eminence, in the modern sense, was contributed by the peasantry. He admits finally, however that the Sikh endeavours in social and educational reform, spurred by the spirit of the Khalsa, matured into a cultural identity, which both the formal and non-formal Sikhs visualized and identified with, and made Sikhs a distinct group. This cultural reality had now come to be articulated at the level of everyday life.

Finally, he laments, that when the spirit of the Khalsa achieved aggrandisement, and “When this process finally reached a climax, it resulted in either the subordination of all other identities within the Sikh tradition or their complete estrangement from it”.

About the suggestion of “Sanatan Sikhism” there are obvious omissions and lapses in the argument. Author Oberoi puts the words in the mouth of the ‘Sanatan Sikhs’ about Sanatan Sikhism. It is suggested that the Gurus did not set the Sikhs apart as a distinct group. It is stated that the only purpose of Sikh propagation must have been social reform and liberation of Hinduism from archaic practices. All this, of course, is utter non-sense.

The Sikh Gurus, even prior to the visible transformation of Sikhism into the Khalsa Panth, evinced every purpose and intention of consolidating the adherents into a distinct social, cultural and religious body. The regimens of daily life were illustrative. The “*pangat*” and “*sangat*” traditions were propitious and suggestive of what was coming. The missionary adventures into far flung places - quite untypical of the Hindu passivity - were forebodings of the impending upheaval. The first four Gurus gave every evidence of the organizational program for the Sikhs. The Fifth Guru, of course, carried the process a great deal further. At the same time, a large body of Punjab peasantry, the foreign-blood from Central Asia, the Jats and other invaders, embraced Sikhism. This is the main mass of the neo-Sikh Khalsa today. The process did not distinguish, however, between them and the Kshatrya or other castes who came into the Sikh fold. Great and chivalrous martial heroes sprang from non-Jat classes, for the edifica-tion of the Sikh’ nation. Again, in the 20th century, non-Jat leaders of the Sikh movements and historical episodes, such as Nankana Sahib saga, (won by Kartar Singh Jhabbar), made history. They are part of the “Constructed Religion” that so occupies author Oberoi.



The 6th, 9th and the 10th Gurus have made what Sikhism is finally today, in the context of author Oberoi's contrariness, and his publications assailing the fact.

If the author must still maintain an argument for "Sanatan Sikhism" of which he seems uniquely conscious, then it must be some-thing quite against the grain of the Sikh polity.

The author concludes that the reality of the Sikh Khalsa today is the result of history. This is the Sikh Khalsa people. The term "Tat" (Khalsa) is a misnomer, denoting only an episode in past history, and inapplicable to the modern Sikh nation. The Sahajdharis (clean shaven) are still within this fold and part of it, on the merit of religious, social, cultural and political identification. "They also serve who only stand and wait". Sikhs and Sikhism are dynamic forces.

No amount of nihilism and undermining of Sikhs, evident from the publication of "The Construction of Religious Boundaries", authored by Harjot Oberoi, is going to make any difference to the resurgence of Sikhism and Sikhs.

The professed objectives of the Sikh Chair, at UBC, as covenanted in the Chair-formation Agreements starting from 16 March, 1985, are dealt a nasty blow, by the "research" of Oberoi as exemplified in his new thesis: "The Construction of Religious Boundaries".

One clear objective for which the University acquired some \$700,000.00 of public and private funds, donated by Sikhs and Multi-culture Canada, was:

"... and research shall be in keeping with the established academic standards and every possible effort shall be made to present the teachings and practices of Sikhism in an accurate manner."

(emphasis supplied)

But, Oberoi, hired by the University, for the carriage of these objectives presumably, has an entirely different agenda of his own. What is it? Turn to page 47 of his nefarious book. Enscorced in his UBC Sikh Chair comfortably, Oberoi chants the death Mantra on the Sikhs and the Sikh community, as it is today, by this declaration:

"As a point of departure, this book in general and this chapter in particular dispute this oversimplified linear growth model. I argue for a series of highly complex ruptures, rapprochements and

transitions which eventually resulted in what we recognize as the modern Sikh Community.”

This extraordinary assignment occurs following the contents preceding it, on the same page, which are as follows:

#### EARLY SIKH TRADITION

In conventional histories of the evolution of Sikh tradition it is common to treat the rise, spread and consolidation of Sikhism as a single unitary whole.

Such a narration, like much else in academic discourse, seeks to dispel disturbing contradictions and synthesise Sikh experience in order to give it coherence.

By this means the Sikh past, to use Nietzsche's illuminating term, is made 'painless' for the minds of those who seek to live by it.

A pseudo-synthetic historiography comforts contemporary practitioners of the faith that their present vision of the world and their religious practices simply continue all that was enunciated and established by the founders of the Sikh tradition.”

(emphasis supplied)

Paraphrased in simple terms, Oberoi is challenging the Sikh community, “Look, I do not care what your history and strengths are, you Sikhs and Sikh community, I will unravel all you believe in, I will destroy your belief systems (as part of my academic research, of course). I will show that you, almost 20 million Sikhs, are nothing but an off-shoot of Hinduism, that you are shreds of the enveloping vast ‘Indic cultural thinking’ of the predominant Hindu culture and Hinduism. You will not be recognized as a ‘pan-Indian community’. You do not exist in the international community. I am going to carry on what Swami Dayanand at the turn of the century had undertaken to do - to assail Sikhism, its Gurus, its beliefs, Granth and the Sikhs themselves. It is not yet over. The Sikh Chair, well, I am the academic who knows what to do with Sikhs and Sikhism. All of you there, go to hell:”

Oberoi then faces the *fact* of vast “Sikh Empire” first, to begin his demolition. This is what he says:-

“The dramatic political triumph of the Sikh movement in the second half of the eighteenth century gave the Sikhs a vast empire,

but ironically the attainment of power and the process of state formation stalled the crystallization of a uniform Sikh identity.<sup>1</sup>

For much of its early history the Sikh movement, in line with indigenous religious thinking and practices - with the exception of an understandable emphasis on the soteriological<sup>2</sup> teachings of Guru Nanak - had shown little enthusiasm for distinguishing its constituents from members of other religious traditions, or for establishing a pan-Indian community.”

Oberoi, then, as in his previous dissertations, revels in repeating the inane assertions that “Sikh notions of time, space, corporeality, etc. etc., were firmly rooted in Indic cultural thinking”. He also discovers, and tells his audience, that “The territories in which the Sikhs lived, the languages they spoke, etc., were shared by numerous other communities in Punjab.”

To what purpose are these absurd statements? So what, if the Sikhs developed in a land that is the cradle of Western or Central Asian foreign invasions of “India, that is, Bharat”? The Muslims are as much a part of the Indian landscape as any other so called “Indian” community. Sikhs, in particular, emerged from the racial and spiritual synthesis that was always ongoing for centuries, from the earliest Buddhist times, 4th and 5th century B.C. How do all these events and history detract from the supreme fact of the ascendance of Sikhs as a people, and Sikhism as a religion?

Oberoi, of course, does not seem to believe, as do Sikhs, “who seek to live by it”. Even so, his specious and contrary exegesis falls far short of veracity. The arguments are misleading and un-factual. The thesis against Sikhism, as it exists and as it was, is a blend of prejudice and scorn. The urge to dismember Sikhism is the driving impulse of the entire anti-Sikhism “research”. Irrelevance is the only relevance.

Q. One has to ask, what then was the “Sikh Chair” at *U.B.C.* contracted for?

The antecedents of the occupant of the Chair, his training and associations, are overwhelmingly suggestive of the probability that it is, in fact, not a SIKH CHAIR at all. The works, the products, coming out of it in the past 6 years, since its inception in September, 1987, are indicative of this inference. There is a manifest ongoing agenda to undo the Sikhs and Sikhism, as best as can be achieved.

To advance his argument, Oberoi, attempts to differentiate between the alleged definitive ‘demarcations’ of Christianity from the very start of it, and the “early Sikh tradition”. He reasons that while Christian “church leaders”, soon after Christ, started “excommunicating” those “within the church who transgressed its systematized beliefs”, publicizing the boundaries of belief and practice “were quit alien to early Sikh tradition”.

What “early Sikh tradition”? If Oberoi is controverting the essential fact that, starting with the very first Guru, Guru Nanak, the teaching of Sikhism remained constant and logical, and its followers constantly sure-footed about their beliefs from the very start, then Oberoi is misstating or obfuscating the truths. Any analytical research would have confirmed that the “Khalsa Sikhs” (as Oberoi, labels them) were, in their beliefs as Sikhs, no different from the “Sikh tradition” Sikhs, (presumably meant to be pre- 10th Guru period Sikhs).

The suppositions of author Oberoi, about the “early Sikh tradition” are his whole hypothesis. This hypothesis is arbitrary. The “early Sikh tradition” phraseology is perfectly vague. Yet he uses it as his authority for all the abrasive and “non-traditional” formulations of the Sikh history and the Sikh past. This is not only academically unfair, but also inflammatory to a mass of people.

Author Oberoi has to be reminded what he has obscured from the readers’ view.

He forgets the fact that Jesus was the only prophet after whom Christianity is founded. Sikhism had ten prophets. That is why his argument about Christianity and Sikhism is invalid. That is why it took Sikhism over 200 years, from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Sikh Guru, to reach its visible culmination. The Sikh Chair ignores the fact that there never, at any time, was any divergence from the core precepts and beliefs of Sikhism. Guru Nanak preached exactly what Guru Gobind Singh, the last and Tenth prophet idolized. The founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak - and his period, confusingly characterized by Oberoi as “early Sikh tradition” - reverberated the later verbalizations of the Tenth Guru Gobind Singh.

You just have to refer to the text of the Guru Granth, wherein Guru Nanak’s ‘Babarvani’ is included. Nanak was the first classic heralded, as a Sikh Guru, of protection of human rights. Provoke by the carnage of Punjab by the Moghal invader, Babar, in early sixteenth

century, it was Nariak, who proclaimed:

*je jeevay, pat lathi jae,*

*Sabh haraam, jeta kich khai:*

If a man can compromise his honourable living, all sustenance to keep him alive ought to be “*haraam*”- illicit. Nanak was, therefore, preaching the necessity for upkeeping the human dignity; to have the will and strength to resist aggression, and to be able to repel it. This is exactly what the last Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh, institutionalized as an article of faith for the followers of Sikhism. It is easy to see, thus, how the “*Khalsa*” or what Oberoi distinguishes as “*Khalsa Sikhs*”, became a visible and corporeal reality. The fundamental precepts and principles of Sikhism, thus, were carried on. They had never changed. Sikhs are what they always were. Notwithstanding the highly damaging and subversive mission of Oberoi’s “research”, the -reality is totally different from Oberoi’s mischievous propositions about Sikhism, belaboured in his publications.

Oberoi also does a disservice to what he calls the “*Sahajdhari*” Sikhs, as he distinguishes them from whom he calls, “*Khalsa Sikhs*”. His drive for “diversity” amongst Sikhs and Sikhism, seems to be intense as well as blind. For one thing, he accuses “*Sehajdhari*” Sikhs, as follows:

“*Khalsa Sikhs were prohibited the use of tobacco, Sahajdhari Sikhs smoked. Khalsa Sikhs accepted a line of nine successors of Guru Nanak, Sahajdhari Sikhs often had a radically different version of the line of succession;*

“*Khalsa Sikhs began to recognize the Adi Granth as guru, Sahajdhari Sikhs were not given to accept a text as a guru and favoured living human gurus.*”<sup>3</sup>

It would be hard to imagine a more callous mis-statement of facts. Yet Oberoi, as the occupant of the Sikh Chair, at the University of British Columbia, seems to be immune from ensure by the employ-ing university. The accusations are intolerable, and are a gross insult to, and defamation of thousands of Canadian Sahajdhari Sikhs – some of whom even operate Sikh temples, with Guru Granth Sahib as the presiding deity as usual. Where is the ministry of state, responsible for Multiculturalism, Canada? Is this why the Canadian government provided Endowment assistance funds to the University? To hire a man, as destructive of the Sikh organization and social structure, as

Oberoi's writings illustrate him to be? Is this the "research" in Sikh Studies, that the Sikh masses in Canada envisioned?

Oberoi does not seem to have accepted the reality that being a "KHALSA SIKH" is not merely the outward form of "initiated Sikhs, who are thus baptized to appear as Khalsa Sikhs. Being a Khalsa Sikh, is also a state of mind and consciousness. The Sahajdhari Sikhs are, in point of fact, as Khalsa Sikh as Oberoi could imagine. The activity of the Sahajdhari (so-called) Sikhs is indeed eloquent in what has been taking place over the past few decades, all over the world. In many instances they are the spearhead of Sikh progress and achievement. It is utterly miserable for Oberoi to conceive, as an academic and an author, and describe Sahajdhari Sikhs in the manner that he has done. It demonstrates the sole motivation of propagating divisions and dissension amongst the Sikh community. But it is being done through a public institution, the University. It must stop.

Author Oberoi has abundantly established that what we have at the U.B.C. is not a "Sikh Chair" in Sikh Studies, at all. What the Chair is achieving is the dissemination of propaganda against the unity and cohesion and viability of the thriving world Sikh community. What the Chair is after, appears to be the tendentious literature calculated to disparage and malign Sikhs and their future; to shake and jolt their belief pattern, and to subvert their programs for future development and progress. It is a planned part of the promotion of the "Indic culture" by repression of the Sikh religion and history.

What a difference it could have made, if in pursuit of the intended objectives and the hopes of Multiculturalism, Canada, the Chair had undertaken appropriate studies to highlight the uniqueness of Sikhs and Sikhism in the protection and safeguarding of human rights. Some one in this Sikh Chair could have emphasized, through research, for instance, that the martyrdom of the 9th Sikh Guru, Tegh Bahadur, was the direct consequence of the Sikh Panth extending protection to Kashmiri Brahmins from forcible conversion to Islam. Sikhs have always laid down their lives, so that the oppressed, and the weak could have a chance to live. But that will have to be for the research of somebody other than Oberoi.

Oberoi has not spared from indignity and trivialization the Sikh sacred scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib, either. In his cocoon of "research", he attempts to scandalize the Guru Granth, the God-Inspired scripture, believed in by the Sikhs, as follows:

“Although in the present state of research it is hard to specify the factors that prompted the Fifth Guru of the Sikhs to collate an anthology of devotional literature, it is easier to discuss its impact.”

(Page 49, ‘The Construction of Religious Boundaries,’)<sup>4</sup>

Which other world religion has been made to suffer mutely such vile attack upon its divine scripture? Its gospel, universally so acknowledged? Is the Sikh Chair so ideal a spot to choose to mount an “open season” on Sikhs and Sikhism?

Then again<sup>5</sup>, Oberoi, continues his treatment of the Sikh Sacred scripture, as follows:

“While propagandists of modern Sikhism see in the collation of the Adi Granth in 1603-4 under Guru Arjan a powerful public declaration of the separation of the Sikh Panth from other religious traditions, historically it is difficult to admit such an interpretation.

“It was scarcely uncommon, in medieval India, to compile anthologies of devotional literature called gutkas or pothis. Their compilers and readers did not perceive these texts as essentially state-ments of sectarian intent.

“While the Adi Granth is the most voluminous and structured of the early seventeenth-century devotional anthologies - features that can be explained by the institutional successes of the Sikh move-ment and its growing secular resources - it was certainly neither the first nor the last such collection.” (emphasis supplied)

There may be a thousand Gutkas, but there is only one Adi Granth. At this point, Oberoi resorts to some mysterious “manuscripts” and mentions Gopal Narayan Bahura’s “Surdas Ka Pada”, and says this anthology was compiled in Rajasthan 21 years before the Adi Granth. He acknowledges that bulk of it occupies the compositions of the “saint-poet Surdas”, and other poets, and it is identified as “the Fatehpur manuscript of 1639 V.S. (1582 AD.)” There may be a host of Hindu subcultures and sects, but only one Sikhism. Oberoi draws a distinction. He says while the Adi Granth may have now become “a key cultural marker of Sikh ethnicity, it would be a gross misinterpretation to view it in the same vein for the early seveenth century”. Why?, one may ask him. The Adi Granth was always the same to Sikhs. He charges that:

“Its heterodox textuality and diverse contributors were far more

the manifestation of a fluid Sikh identity than a signifier exclusivity”<sup>6</sup>

His slander and calumny attacking the Sikh belief in their sacred scripture, draws upon almost surgical dexterity to achieve attempted expose of the facies underlying the research “object” (the Granth). Because, he says about his technique:

“If our object is to understand the complex nature of modern Sikh identity, it will not do to mix modern Sikh understandings and practices with past patterns: it is critically important to disaggregate the two and locate the precise period of their origins.” (p. 55).

What, one may ask, is the Sikh Chair trying or hoping to achieve by Granth’, as one volume, is equally unknown. As we said in the beginning, if the foundation becomes questionable, the superstructure built upon it automatically loses its validity.

There is no historical evidence for linking the Dasam Granth in its present form, either with the Tenth Master, or with the literature thrown or lost, or with the name of Bhai Mani Singh, or with any known or tangible material existing for over a century before it. The recent story of a *granth* presented by the Tenth Master and its existence is also of the same brand. For, it has been now introduced three centuries after the alleged event.

**In** any case, is this the kind of “research” and work that the objectives of the Sikh Chair Agreements had intended? The Sikh community never contracted for beings subjects to such abuse of the Sikh Chair’s activity. Nor could the Ministry of Multiculturalism have bargained for such strong-arming of a monority ethnic community, with state funds.

Is the Endowment Trust fund at U.B.C. now a perennial disinformation resource for the victimization of Sikhs in Canada and elsewhere?

**In** defies credulity that the University of British Columbia could choose to become a privy to the commission of such outrage against Sikhs and Sikhism. The stock argument of “academic freedom would not go anywhere, in this instance. Academic freedom can never be unlimited and abusive of facts and reality. No research chair could ever be conceived as the centre of dehumanization of a faith. Yet this is exactly, what the Sikh Chair at UBC is engaged in accomplishing.



The Sikhs in North America have their task all cut out for them. The activity of Oberoi as the Sikh chair, nor or the other “researchers” of the MacLeod agenda, can be stomacted. The University campuses must decline to become the breeding grounds for the planned agenda of disinformation against the Sikh community here and abroad.

## The Sikh Chair at U.B.C., Vancouver

Dr G. S. Gill

The first shock delivered to the Sikh community by Or Oberoi after occupying the Sikh Chair, was his paper, "From Ritual to Counter-Ritual - Rethinking the Hindu-Sikh Question." read at the University of Toronto in 1988. Its very first para stated, "In 1897 when Kahn Singh Nabha, the erudite Sikh scholar, proclaimed through a Vernacular tract that Ham Hindu Nahin (We are not Hindus) he brought almost four centuries of Sikh tradition to an end... Also the two shared the same territory...and key theological doctrines."

Such incorrect statements not accepting Sikhism as an independent, sovereign faith had already been made by some ignorant writers who saw Sikhs and Sikh faith from a distance. The Sikhs would have taken no notice of it and considered it as another expression of ignorance by an individual who is a stranger to Sikhism. However, the person, chosen by "competent" authority to occupy the Sikh Chair, was expected to have studied the Sikh holy scripture, the Guru Granth.

The scripture specifically states that it rejects both Hindu and Muslim theologies.

ਏਕ ਗੁਸਾਈ ਅਲਹੁ ਮੇਰਾ ॥ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਤੁਰਕ ਦੁਹਾਂ ਨੇਬੇਰਾ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

ਨਾ ਹਮ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਨਾ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ॥ ਅਲਹ ਰਾਮ ਕੇ ਪਿੰਡ ਪਰਾਨ ॥ p. 1136

ਪੰਡਿਤ ਮੁਲਾਂ ਜੋ ਲਿਖਿ ਦੀਆ ॥ ਛਾਡਿ ਚਲੇ ਹਮ ਕੁਛ ਨ ਲੀਆ ॥ p. 1159

Gurbani clearly says that Sikhs have nothing to do with the rituals or beliefs of Hindus & Muslims. They keep away from both of them.

ਏਤੂੰ ਸਾਂਝਾ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਬਾਪੂ ਹਮਾਰਾ ॥ p. 97 Guru Granth Sahib

ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਰਵਿ ਰਹਿਮਾ ਪ੍ਰਭੂ ਏਕੇ ਪੇਖਿ ਨਾਨਕ ਬਿਗਸਾਈ ॥ p. 1299

Rejecting the Hindu philosophy, Gurbani states that the mission of human life is not to qualify for admission to a mythical place called 'heaven', but to realize the Lord vibrating in every human being by loving people and accepting them all as equal, whatever their colour or creed.

The statement that Sikhs shared the same theological doctrine with Hindus is a proof of total ignorance about the Sikh theology or is an attempt to deny the existence of the Sikh scripture, the Sikh faith

and the contributions of the Sikh Gurus made over a period of two centuries.

Later writings of Dr Oberoi convinced that while sitting on the Sikh Chair, he is misusing it to distort and damage the image of the Sikh faith and the Sikh Community. They found that Oberoi and the Sikh Chair form an odd couple.

The Sikhs, therefore, organised seminars to expose all this injustice being done to them and their faith. Unfortunately, instead of taking this criticism positively and improving his knowledge of the Sikh faith, Oberoi and his friends considered it a personal attack on him. The University authorities, to save their integrity, as naturally expected of them, sided with the professor. To protect his writings they put forward the shield of academic freedom, something totally irrelevant to the issue. The Sikhs objected not to the freedom of his expression but to baseless lies, factually wrong observations, and misrepresentations of their faith by a person holding the Sikh Chair. Tomorrow, the University may have to face greater embarrassment when the people come to know the truth.

To win the sympathy of the general public, particularly the scholars, it is alleged that Sikhs want the professor to preach the Sikh faith which according to the university teaching code obviously cannot be done. It again is a crude attempt to distract the people from the real issue - unsuitability of the professor for holding the Sikh Chair. The professor agrees that he is simply a historian by training. He agrees that he is not qualified as a Sikh theologian and it means that he is not competent to teach Sikh theology or the language of the Sikh scripture, Gurmukhi (Punjabi). It has been proved by his writings. That is what the Sikh community and critics of his writings have been trying to put across to the University administration.

Many eyebrows were raised when the UBC gave the Sikh Chair to Dr Oberoi. Normally such a Chair should be offered with a specific assignment for a limited period of time. An experienced teacher is chosen for the job. Here is a historian (Anthropologist) sitting on the Sikh Chair, having little knowledge of Sikh faith. It appears the University took no time to find a suitable professor because they knew who was the person to be nominated. Probably this was the reason that the professor was named so quickly after the last date for the receipt of the applications. The purpose of the Sikh Chair was to tell the world the truth about the unique principles of the faith about which

Pearl Buck wrote.”

“I have studied the scriptures of the great religions, but I do not find elsewhere the same power of appeal to the heart and mind as I find here in these volumes... They speak for the human heart and the searching mind.”

However the chair was given to an individual who writes to damage and distort the image of the faith and its followers.

It was but natural that many scholars and practising Sikhs, were up to challenge the writings of the professor. This present book attempts to expose the same deplorable situation generated by Prof. Oberoi's penmanship, to the woe of Sikhism.

## Eurocentrism Vs Khalsacentrism

Dr S.S. Sodhi

The purpose of this article is to introduce to Sikh researchers the concepts of Eurocentrism and compare it with Khalsacentrism.

Eurocentrism first raised its ugly head in Sikh research, when E. Trumpp was invited by the India Office authorities in 1869, to produce a translation of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. This ignorant and arrogant, “historian in a hurry” is a good example of Eurocentric research. On many pages of his translation of the Adi Granth (1877, 1970), Dr E. Trumpp was as insulting as any European could ever be to the Sikh heritage and Sikh scripture. Here are some examples:

1. The Sikh Granth is a very big volume, and couched at the same time in dark and perplexing language, in order to cover these ‘defects. It is for us Occidentals a most painful and almost stupefying task, to read only a single *raga*.
2. Sikhism is a waning religion, that will soon belong to history.
3. Guru Nanak’s words as preserved in the Sikh Granth were so often dark and unintelligible to me.
4. Guru Nanak’s travel to Mecca is an invention from the beginning to the end.
5. The way in which Nanak used the disciples who attached themselves to his person, was not very conducive to impart to them any considerable knowledge. They were little more than his menial servants. The mass of Nanak’s disciples were ignorant Jats, who on an average could neither read nor write.
6. What Nanak looked chiefly for in his successor, were not scientific accomplishments, or a cultivated mind, but blind obedience to the commands of the Guru. The stories, which are told in *Janamsakhis* of the total “sacrificism intellects” of Lahana are, therefore, very significant.
7. Angad was altogether unlettered and could himself neither read nor write. The tradition, which makes him inventor of the Gurmukhi letters is without any foundation.
8. The few verses of Angad, which are contained in the Granth, are but a poor repetition of the words of Nanak and shallow in

the extreme.

9. Guru Amar Das performed all sorts of menial services to Angad, as Angad had done to Nanak.
10. Guru Amar Das was unlettered like his master Angad.
11. Sikh Gurus strictly observed the caste system of India.
12. Guru Ram Das was without any scientific education. His Compositions were not original show miracles or embrace Musalman faith.
13. Guru Arjun was the first Guru who meddled in politics.
14. Guru Arjun collected verses of the preceding Gurus, to which he added his own very numerous but carelessly written verses.
15. To these verses he added the verses of the *bhagats* to prove that the tenets of the Sikh Gurus were already entertained and proclaimed by the earlier popular saints.
16. Guru Arjun called this miscellaneous collection Granth (i.e., the book). It was given the authority of Vedas and Puranas, which the unlettered people had never been able to read, whereas the Granth was composed in their mother tongue and intelligible to the vulgar.
17. Guru Arjun was the first Sikh Guru who laid aside the garb of a *fakir*, and kept an establishment like a grandee; he engaged also in trades in a grand style.
18. Guru Hargobind was addicted to hunting, and entered the services of the Emperor Jahangir. After Jahangir's death, he entered the services of Shah Jahan. When Shah Jahan sent troops against him, he fled to Kartarpur and later to Kiratpur.
19. Guru Hargobind had no time nor taste for meditation and composition of religious poetry.
20. Har Rai seemed to have neither inclination nor calling for poetry.
21. Guru Tegh Bahadur, like a mad man, was given to deep silence.
22. Guru Tegh Bahadur, while feeling unsafe in Punjab, moved to Patna under the garb of a Hindu pilgrim.
23. Guru Tegh Bahadur, who was not a learned man nor conversant with disputations, was thrown into prison because he refused to

show miracles or embrace Musalman faith.

24. Guru Tegh Bahadur ordered his Sikhs to cut off his head because he could not tolerate the pain inflicted on him in Delhi.
25. Moral views of Sikhs of Guru Tegh Bahadur's time were confusing. Guru Tegh Bahadur was outlawed by Delhi government and captured as a criminal at Agra.
26. Guru Gobind Singh was surrounded on all sides by dangers, so he retreated to the mountains (Paonta Sahib). There he kept himself concealed.
27. Guru Gobind Singh never studied Sanskrit but tried to imitate it in his compositions, which on the whole are very difficult and intricate.
28. Guru Gobind Singh's mind was deeply tinged with superstitious notions of Hindus. So he wanted to secure the aid of goddess Durga, who was the special object of his worship.
29. Guru Gobind Singh made a human head sacrifice to Naina-devi who then blessed him.
30. "As Guru Gobind Singh offended the high caste people by abolishing caste system, they left him. Hence Khalsa consisted of lower caste people such as Jats.
31. According to Guru Gobind Singh, Guru Granth Sahib in its present form produced a spirit of meekness and humbleness. So the Guru set to work and composed a big, heavy Granth. He completed it in 1696 A.D. and called it Granth of the Tenth Reign.
32. Guru Gobind Singh exaggerated the importance of his fights with Hill Rajas in Vichittar Natak.
33. When Guru Gobind Singh's children were put under the foundation of a wall, the weeping of these children was heard for many days.
34. Guru Gobind Singh was again defeated at Muktsar by Imperial forces.
35. After leaving Damdama, Guru Gobind Singh went to Sirhind, where his sons had been buried alive. From Sirhind the Guru went back to Anandpur and settled there again, unmolested.

36. Guru Gobind Singh joined Imperial army of Emperor Bahadur Shah.
37. Guru Gobind Singh went to Deccan, because he was appointed the commander of five thousand horses.
38. Even though the Guru's wounds were stitched, and healed, but it seemed that the Guru was bent on dying. After appointing Guru Granth Sahib the Guru, he became senseless.
39. Guru Gobind Singh died broken hearted, weary of life far from the scenes of his exploits.

For more detailed arrogance of E. Trumpp readers are advised to read Preface, Introductory essays of his translation of Adi Granth (1877 & 1970). pp. I - XCVI

After heaping Eurocentric insults on the Sikh Gurus and Sikh scripture, E. Trumpp, in Chapter III of his book, says the following insulting things about Sikh religion.

1. Nanak himself was not a speculative philosopher, who built up a concise system on scientific principles. He had not received a regular school-training, and uttered, therefore, his thoughts in a loose way, which are now scattered through the Granth, and must first be patiently searched out and collected into a whole, before we can form an idea of his tenets.
2. Nanak himself was by no means an independent thinker, neither had he any idea of starting a new religious sect. He followed all essential points, the common Hindu philosophy of those days, especially the system laid down in Bhagavad Gita. He also followed Kabir who was already a popular man in India.
3. Kabir's writings which were composed in the Vulgar tongue, were accessible to the unlearned masses.
4. The tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, relapsed in many points again into Hinduism. He was a special votary of Durga.
5. Nanak remained a thorough Hindu according to all his views. We should be wrong in assuming that Nanak forbade the worship of other gods on the ground of the unity of the Supreme. He took over the whole Pantheon, with all the mythological background, and subordinated it to the supreme *Brahm*.



6. Guru Granth denies the *libemm arbitrium* in man (Free will).
7. Buddhism like Sikhism is nothing but unrestricted pessimism unable to hold out any solace except that of annihilation.
8. Guru gives salvation to the elect using principle of “*Decretum aeternum.*” Those elects are chosen according to the pleasure of the Hari. It is Hari’s sport.
9. Sikhism is not moralizing Deism.
10. Earlier Gurus deified man into supreme himself.
11. Guru Gobind Singh took rude and ignorant Jats, kept them subservient by kindling in them the hatred against Muslims.
12. The sayings of Bhattas were composed for the occasion of abject flatteries, without any intrinsic value, and were added to Guru Granth by Guru Arjun himself.
13. The verses of the different Gurus have been distributed into 31 *ragas*, apparently without any leading principle, as hardly any verse is internally connected with another.
14. By thus jumbling together whatever came to hand without any judicious selection, the Granth has become an extremely incoherent and wearisome book, the few thoughts and ideas, that it contains, being repeated in endless variation, which are for the greatest part nothing but a jingling of words.
15. As Guru Arjun and Guru Nanak did not understand Sanskrit, they were incapable of writing *shlokas*.
16. Though the Granth, as regards its content, is perhaps the most shallow and empty book that exists in proportion to its size, it is on the other hand, in linguistic point of view, of the greatest interest to us, as it is a real treasury of the “old Hindu” dialects.
17. Nanak and his successors employed in their writings purposely, the Hindui idiom, following the examples of Kabir and other *bhagats*.

It must be pointed out that E. Trumpp has been source of hidden inspiration to many “Occidental” historians such as Dr Mc-Lead, Oberoi, Pashaura Singh, J.S. Grewal, and S.S. Hans. But the leader of the pack is Dr McLeod, the rest of them are his role-dancing followers. Here are some examples of what McLeod has to say about

Sikhism and Sikh Gurus while using his Western reality and his right to use Social Science methods developed in Europe to understand an Eastern religion, Also his determined effort to convert somebody's subjective faith to bring to it objectivity, is arrogantly evident. These examples are from his books such as "Evolution of The Sikh Community" (1975), "The Sikh History, Religion, and Society" (1989), "Who is a Sikh? The Problem of Sikh Identity" (1989), the readers will notice that the Trumpian themes run in McLeod's writings,

1. Guru Nanak was the founder of Sikh religion in the organizational sense, and not in the religious sense.
2. Nath tradition was worked by Kabir; Guru Nanak provided the extension.
3. Guru Nanak in a way is a *Sant* Nanak.
4. Guru Nanak never went abroad.
5. Guru Gobind Singh lost all his battles.
6. Regression from Sikhism to Hindu religion took place at the time of Guru Amar Das.
7. Jat influence got guruship to Guru Arjun Dev.
8. Guru Arjun corrected the *bani* written by Guru Nanak (Pashaura Singh, 1991).
9. Compilation of the *Adi Granth* was a process, it was not *Dhur Ki Bani* (Pashaura Singh, 1991).
10. *Bhagat Bani* was included in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* to please the minorities (Pashaura Singh, 1991).
11. Guru Arjun was murdered and not martyred in 1606 A.D. (Pashaura Singh, 1991).
12. *Guru Granth* is an anthology which is very amorphous (H. Oberoi, 1994).

Dr James R. Lewis, Professor of Philosophy and Religion, Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina, while writing for "Advanced Studies in Sikhism" (1989), has exposed the behaviour of Eurocentric historians in his famous article "Misrepresentation of Sikh Tradition in World Religious Text Books" (1989).

Dr Lewis feels that as India was under a colonial rule, the

Eurocentric Historians such as W.L. McGregor (1846), H.H. Wilson (1848) and E. Trumpp were reinforcing and legitimizing British imperialism by downgrading the religion of the Sikhs (it must be noted that J.D. Cunningham and Evans Bell did support Sikh aspirations in this period, for which they were punished).

Mystified by the colonial and imperialistic scholars, some Sikh historians such as J.S. Grewal, S.S. Hans, Pashaura Singh, and Harjot Oberoi, have also committed errors of fact and interpretation in Sikh history. Many Western scholars have joined this pack.

For example, following misstatements were made by Eurocentric Sikh scholars in the recent past about Sikh history. They have been collected from various books used in the Departments of Religious Studies in North America.

1. Sikhism is the outcome of the impact of Islam on Hinduism (Ellwood, "Many People Many Faiths", 1987).
2. Guru Gobind Singh was killed in a battle (Robert Ellwood, 1987).
3. The Tenth Master slew a chicken rather than a goat on the occasion of the formation of the Khalsa (Robert Ellwood, "Many People Many Faiths", 1987, pp. 101-102).
4. Guru Gobind Singh introduced into Sikhism the worship of the terrible Hindu Goddess of Death, Durga. (Lewis M. Hopfe "Religions of the World", 1987).
5. Guru Nanak was the disciple of Kabir (Ward J. Fellows "Religions East and West", 1979).
6. Guru Nanak accepted gods of Hindu pantheon (K.W. Morgan "The Religion of the Hindus", 1953, p. 41).
7. Guru Granth Sahib is not comprehensible to most Sikhs, despite the fact, they hold it sacred (David G. Bradley "A Guide to World Religions" 1963, p. 128).
8. The Sikhs, in their fight for survival against Islam, became instead a symbol of religious intransigence and hatred (Hyla S. Converse "The Religious World", 1988, p. 98).
9. Sikhism is more of a reformed Hindu religion (Wing-tsit cham, *et. al*, "The Great Asian Religions. An Anthology", 1969, p. 5).

10. There is little doubt that in Sikhism, Muslim Sources predominate (John Hutchison “Path of Faith”, 1969, p. 200).
11. Guru Nanak leaned rather more to Islam than to Hinduism (Ninian Smart: “The Religious Experience of Mankind” 1976 p. 150).
12. Sikhism is an equal admixture of Islam and Hinduism (D.L. Carnody: “The Story of World Religion”, 1988, p. 253).
13. Sikh religion is not in any absolute sense new (J.B. Noss & David Noss: “Man’s Religion”, 1984, p. 221).
14. Sikhism was grafted (syncretized) on foreign elements (Paul B. Courtright and Harbans Singh: “Punjab Past and Present”, 1976, p.417).
15. Sikhs are the most militant of warriors (L.M. Hopfe: “Religions of the World”, 1987, p. 184).
16. Sikhs started believing in combativeness and even militarism (H. Stroup: “The Founders of Living Religion”, 1975, p. 104).
17. Sikhs, like Muslims, started believing that death in battle was a passport to paradise. (R. Cavendish: “The Great Religions”, 1980, p. 49).

The present author firmly believes that the “sloppy scholar-ship” of these Eurocentric, Colonial, Racist and Imperial Scholars is due to their hidden desire to show the superiority of Christianity, and justification of colonization. These scholars represent the elite and elect behaviour of Calvinistic males.

## **EUROCENTRISM AND SIKH RESEARCH**

After giving the above examples, a brief introduction to ‘Eurocentrism’ is in order at this time. ‘Eurocentric’ Sikh researchers are self-appointed Sikh historians who want to bring “correctness” to Sikh history. Their linear, collective mind treats the Sikhs, Sikh Gurus, and Sikh scripture the same way as Marx treated various European religions. These empiricists and logical-positivists use social science methods developed in Europe to understand and evaluate the mystic writings of the East. They operate using object-subject duality. They are committed to hard-headed no-nonsense interpretation of mystical realities and lives of cosmocentric Sikh Gurus. Their logical-positivism wants to verify the Sikh traditions by recorded documentations. They

get their inspirations from such European thinkers as Calvin, Wilden, Habermas, Sartre, Marcuse, Freud, Marx, and Hegel (see Sirdar Kapur Singh's "Sikhism", Institute of Sikh Studies, 1993).

The motivations of Eurocentric scholars are repression-projection mechanisms. The Eurocentric scholar is uncomfortable with contradiction between the theory and practice in his own religious traditions. By repressing, they project the contradiction to Sikhism. McLeod's articles in the *Sikh Review*, January & April 1994, are very good examples of this phenomenon.

This psycho-dynamic interpretation explains why faithless scholars, graduate students in a hurry, the Western and some mystified Eastern role-dancing followers, have given such a differential treatment to Sikhism. The present writer is not aware of any article of Dr McLeod where he has taken Christianity to task for being a very oppressive and colonizing religion.

By this 'repression', projection mechanism of motivation, these Eurocentric scholars want to bring structure to Sikhism and make it 'sociologically respectable' (Oberoi, 1994). Calvinistic elect and elitist thought has brought the dehumanizing structural "necessity" rational efficiency, concentration on self, selfishness and ability to "denature the supernatural", in Eurocentric scholarship. Eurocentric

scholars want "to see" the invisible in the visible or "essential in the appearing. "

A Eurocentric researcher believes, or is mystified in believing, in the inferiority of Asian religions. The readers are recommended to read W.L. McGregor (1848); H.H. Wilson (1848); E. Trumpp 1877; R.S. Ellwood 1987; Hopfe 1987; Ward J. Fellows 1979; Geoffrey Parrinder 1965; K.W. Morgan 1953; D.G. Bradley 1963; J.B. Noss 1984; and writings of McLeod, J.S. Grewal, S.S. Hans, Gurinder Mann, Pashaura Singh, and H. Oberoi for understanding the "Culture of the Fitters" of Sikh Religion.

It is a known fact that Darwin's origin of the species (1859) gave freedom to the imperialists, colonizers, and fitters to create the culture of the Fitters. Using their linear and colonized mind, these Eurocentric historians are trying to fit Sikh religion to the "Social Science, European, no-nonsense paradigm." They also operate on the assumption that the researcher is separate from the object of study, and in fact seeks to gain as much distance as possible from the object of the study.

## **KHALSACENTRISM AND SIKH RESEARCH**

Khalsacentric research believes in essence, wholism, intro-spection and retrospection. It rejects the hypothetical - statistical -interventionist model of research and the use of European social science methods. A Khalsacentric researcher does not approach the subject of study with a prestored paradigm in her/his psyche.

Through retrospection, a Khalsacentric researcher questions to ascertain if the interpretations of his findings are causing psychic or spiritual discomfort to the people who belong to the culture under study.

Khalsacentric researcher looks for the wholistic reality rather than a detached reality. He looks for the essence of the culture rooted in a particularistic view of reality. False propositions of one culture are not applied to study other cultures to produce distorted and hurtful knowledge.

Khalsacentric researcher seeks total immersion in the culture before rushing to study it. A researcher cannot stay separate from the object of the study. The distance distorts the view. A Khalsacentric researcher “cleanses the doors of his/her perception, through intro-spection of any pre-existing paradigms.”

Khalsacentric researcher uses retrospection to see if the in-terpretation is not intentionally made convergent to provide a “good fit to the existing paradigms of knowledge.”

Khalsacentric researcher does not use “Freedom of Expression as a Crutch.” His personality is very important and his knowledge of ethno-methodology of research is very crucial for the research outcome.

It must be pointed out that a Khalsacentric scholar assumes the right and responsibility of describing Sikh realities from a subjective faith point of view of the Khalsa values and ideals. He centers himself and the Sikh community in his research activity.

Khalsacentric researcher recognizes the pivotal role of his-tory, especially the history of Sikhs vs Muslims, Hindus and Christians, and uses ideological, humanistic and emancipatory anti-racist aware-ness to formulate his hypotheses. Colonial, Calvinistic, elitistic; and arrogantly elect behaviour is not accepted in Khalsacentrism. Part of the mandate of Khalsacentric research is to screen out oppressive

assumptions.

Khalsacentric researcher stresses the importance of centring Sikh ideals, codes, and symbols in Punjab as a place and the struggle that was put up to oppose the oppressive assumptions.

Khalsacentric researcher self-consciously obliterates the sub-ject/object duality and enthrones Khalsa wholism in his research.

The perceptive which a Khalsacentric researcher brings to the research exercise, depends upon his experiences, both within and outside the Sikh culture. When centring Khalsa values, the researcher must centre his own ideals. It is, therefore, important that Khal-sacentric scholars declare who they are and what has motivated them to study Sikhism (If Sikhs had known what McLeod was going to write in his recent articles in *The Sikh Review*, January and April 1994, stating his own contradictions about Christianity and his repression -projection of those contradictions to Sikhism, their reaction to his indulging in Sikh research since 1968, would have been different). Same argument could be applied to the recent research produced by Oberoi, Gurinder Mann, and Pashaura Singh. While McLeod was running away from Christianity, using the missionary money of New Zealand; Oberoi, Pashaura, and Gurinder Mann were busy selling the Sikh soul for landing a University position.

Even though Sikhism has become a living, assertive way of life, a Khalsacentric researcher can extract the following specific Sikh values and apply them to “discover himself.” These values are easily traceable in the Sikh scripture and ethos.

1. Khalsacentrism is an assertive way of life which rejects the dichotomy between spiritual and empirical life of a person. It has successfully challenged the initial structure of existing religions through “structured inversion and negation of the negation.
2. In Khalsacentric living, Sikhs reject the unreality of life, withdrawal from life, indulgence in asceticism or *sanyasa*, *var-nas* or caste, pollution, ritualism and *avtarhood*.
3. All ten Sikh Gurus developed a life-affirming system and asked Sikhs to model life as a game of love, and truthful and assertive living.

4. Khalsacentrism believes in universal consciousness and deep mystical saintliness. Sikhs' concept of God is "the sole One, self-existent, creator-person, without fear: without enmity, timeless, unincarnated, self-created, gracious, enlightener benevolent, ocean of virtues and ineffable." The Sikhs are urged to internalize these attributes by repeating them in their prayers.
5. In Khalsacentric living, a householder's life is a must. Khalsa has no use for recluses, ascetics and other-worldliness.
6. Rejection of celibacy made the status of woman equal to man.
7. Khalsacentrism believes in the importance of work and production. Work should not be divided through castes. A Sikh breaks free of the convoluted cycle of higher vs lower castes.
8. Khalsacentrism recommends work and sharing of incomes. Sikhism, like socialism, deprecates the amassing of wealth. In Sikhism a wealthy man has a social responsibility of sharing.
9. Khalsacentrism fully accepts the concept of social responsibility. An oppressor who dehumanizes and hinders the honest and righteous discharge of a householder's life, has to be tackled. A Khalsa becomes the protector or *rakha*, whether they are *Brahmins* from Kashmir or the powerless women being taken to Ghazni for slave trade.
10. A Khalsa undergoes constantly what psychologists call positive disintegration and cognitive dissonance, because of his truthful living and believing in the principles of *adde so jhadde*. His reality is formed through his internalizing of the remarkably powerful Sikh *Ardas* and *gurbani*. He becomes a *gurmukh* by killing his ego, and then is expected to re-enter the *fannah* phase of his life to fulfil his social responsibilities. Guru Arjun Dev, Guru Tegh Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh and his children, and many of his followers up to the present time, have followed this path of social responsibility, producing a compulsion of re-entry into the oppressed world and enjoying martyrdom.
11. In Khalsacentrism, the oppressive *status quo* has to be challenged. Sikhism teaches politeness to friends and defiance to oppressors.
12. Through social participation and resistance against wrong doings a Khalsa becomes "the instrument of His Attributive



Will, and wants to bring *Haleemi-Raj* or Kingdom of God on Earth for everybody. He wants *Sarbat da Bhala*.

13. By repeating and internalizing *Naam*, the Khalsa stops seeing lines of duality in his reality. He becomes cosmocentric, and the pain of the universe becomes his own pain. *Haumen* (Egoism), the neurosis of the soul, dies through this awakening.
14. In Khalsacentrism, remembering *Karta Purakh* in the company of *Sadh Sangat* is the means to evolve. A Khalsa develops a sense of cosmocentric awareness and power of “discrimination.”

*Naam* repetition is a psychological method of removing ‘I-am--ness,’ the greatest malady of human beings. It also awakens in “Khalsa,” His Will through love, contentment, truth, humanity, other-orientedness, and unconditional positive regard for the oppressed. *Naam* removes lust, anger, greed, attachment, and vanity. The Khalsa emerges to defend the claims of conscious-ness against oppression. The Khalsa becomes the vanguard of righteousness by defining himself in the image of the Guru.

15. Idalsacentrism believes in egalitarian society and joins the cosmocentric universal culture, where only “the pure will be allowed to rule.”
16. Through Khalsa, Guru Gobind Singh took Sikhism to the Phoenix Principle” of the Khalsacentric life-affirming system, and brought revolutionary liberation.

The Khalsacentric researcher rejects subject/object separation, encourages collectivism rather than individualism, grounds himself in complementarity, leaves false consciousness of Eurocentric thinking, looks at struggles as a way of transferring human conscious-ness, makes research centred in its base community (Punjab), and gets grounded in Punjab experience of 500 years, and familiarizes himself in the language, philosophy and myths of the Sikhs through cultural Immersion.

The Khalsacentric researcher must examine himself or herself in the process of examining any subject. The introspection and retrospection are an integral part of Khalsacentric research. Introspection means that the researcher questions herself or himself in regard to the subject under study. In retrospection the researcher questions himself or herself after the project is completed to ascertain if any personal biases have entered, or are hindering the fair interpretation

of the results. He attempts to know how the community being studied will feel about his research findings.

The first question that a Khalsacentric researcher asks is “who am I?” In defining himself he defines his place and the perspective he brings to the research exercise. The data collected must include the personal knowledge of the subjective faith of the researcher, his personality, functioning, experiences, motivation (repression, projection, spiritual, mystical) in order to provide some source of validation for the result of his inquiry.

## **FINAL WORD**

The purpose of this article was to show that the theme of Eurocentrism runs through the writings of McLeod, Pashaura Singh, and Oberoi. It is very clear that they got their “research inspirations” from E. Trumpp, who came to India in 1869 to write a book about Sikhs for the benefit of the colonizers. I feel that E. Trumpp colonial mentality and “accidental” reality were picked up consciously or unconsciously by these historians in a hurry - rapidly trained in social science methodology with European traditions. “The other kind of seeing” of Khalsacentric research where the place, time, the nature of the community being studied, the role and the role models played, does not fit into their egocentric - repression - projection paradigms.

When some of these scholars write about Sikh Gurus as “political personalities,” they open windows for others to see the pathology they are suffering from. The mystification of producing and “impressing” people with their writings without introspection and retrospection, has caused the Sikh community a great deal of hurt and stress. Their zeal to bring “sociological respectability” to Sikhism has made them arrogant and dehumanizing.

If they could have read the reactions of First Nations of North America, Women and Blacks about the Eurocentric research done on them by the “well meaning researchers of the 60’s,” they would not have gone the direction they have taken. The cover of academic freedom will not shelter them for a long time. Their instrumental, non-believing personalities that take sadist pleasure in trampling over the subjective faith of a troubled minority, have to be challenged and exposed. May Sat Guru forgive them for the hurt they are causing. Perhaps “they do not know what they are doing,” because of the acute academic neurosis which has made them linear, non-intuitive, convergent, and myopically pathological.

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## ਡਾ ਹਰਜੋਤ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਅਤੇ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਵੱਲ ਪਿੱਠ

ਡਾਕਟਰ ਬਲਕਾਰ ਸਿੰਘ

ਡਾਕਟਰ ਹਰਜੋਤ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੰਘ ਲਿਖਣ ਦੀ ਕਦੇ ਲੋੜ ਨਹੀਂ ਪਈ, ਇਹ ਉਸਦਾ ਨਿਜੀ ਮਾਮਲਾ ਹੈ ਪਰ ਇਸ ਤੋਂ ਇਹ ਅੰਦਾਜ਼ਾ ਲਾਉਣਾ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਿਲ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਮਾਪਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਅਕਾਂਖਿਆਵਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਵਿਰਸੇ ਦੀਆਂ ਹਦਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਰਹਿਣ ਨੂੰ ਤਿਆਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ। ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕਤਾ ਦਾ ਨਿਰਸੰਦੇਹ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਹੋਣ ਜਾ ਨਾ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਹੋਣ ਨਾਲ ਕੋਈ ਸਿੱਧਾ ਸੰਬੰਧ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ ਪਰ ਜਿਹੜਾ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕਤਾ ਦਾ ਆਧਾਰ ਹੀ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਹੋਵੇ, ਉਸ ਵੱਲ ਪਿੱਠ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ। ਯੂ ਬੀ ਸੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਚੇਅਰ ਨਾਲ ਜੁੜੀ ਹੋਈ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕਤਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਇਸ ਚੇਅਰ ਲਈ ਫੰਡ ਦੇਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਭਾਵਨਾਵਾਂ ਸ਼ਾਮਲ ਹਨ। ਡਾਕਟਰ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦੀਆਂ ਲਿਖਤਾਂ ਤੇ ਆਧਾਰਤ ਇਸ ਟਿੱਪਣੀ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕਾਂ ਦਾ ਧਿਆਨ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਨੈਤਿਕਤਾ ਵੱਲ ਦੁਆਏ ਜਾਣ ਦੀ ਕੋਸ਼ਿਸ਼ ਵਿੱਚ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੋਈ ਹੈ।

ਇਸ ਵਿੱਚ ਕੋਈ ਸ਼ੱਕ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਵੇਖਣ ਨੂੰ ਡਾਕਟਰ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਨੇ ਖੋਜ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਬਾਰੇ ਕਰਨ ਦੀ ਕੋਸ਼ਿਸ਼ ਕੀਤੀ ਹੈ। ਜਿਸ ਚੇਅਰ ਤੇ ਉਹ ਕੰਮ ਕਰ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ, ਉਥੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਅਧਿਐਨ ਤੀਜੇ ਨੰਬਰ ਤੇ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਪਹਿਲੇ ਤੇ ਦੂਜੇ ਨੰਬਰ ਤੇ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਅਤੇ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਸਭਿਆਚਾਰ ਹੈ। ਇਹਨਾਂ ਦੋਹਾਂ ਬਾਰੇ ਡਾਕਟਰ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦਾ ਕੋਈ ਕੰਮ ਸਾਹਮਣੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਆਇਆ। ਇਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਪੁੱਛੇ ਜਾਣ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਸਖੀ ਸਰਵਰ, ਗੁੱਗਾ ਪੀਰ ਅਤੇ ਮੂਲਵਾਦ ਦੀ ਆੜ ਵਿੱਚ ਜੋ ਉਸਨੇ ਸਭਿਆਚਾਰਕ ਘਾਣ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੈ, ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਉਸਨੇ ਸਭਿਆਚਾਰਕ ਗਿਣ ਜਾਂ ਗਿਣਵਾ ਲੈਣਾ ਹੈ। ਉਸ ਨੇ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਰੂਪ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਮਾਜ ਵਿਗਿਆਨੀ ਪਹੁੰਚ ਅਧੀਨ ਕੰਮ ਕਰਨ ਦਾ ਦਾਅਵਾ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਨੇ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਰੂਪ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਮਾਜ ਵਿਗਿਆਨੀ ਪਹੁੰਚ ਅਧੀਨ ਕੰਮ ਕਰਨ ਦਾ ਦਾਅਵਾ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਨਾਲ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਚਿੰਤਨ ਦਾ ਮੂਲ ਪ੍ਰਸੰਗ, ਸਿੱਖ ਅਧਿਆਤਮਿਕਤਾ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਅਧਿਐਨ ਖੇਤਰ ਤੇ ਬਾਹਰ ਹੀ ਹੋ ਗਈ ਹੈ। ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਬਾਰੇ ਉਸ ਨੇ ਕੁਝ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਲਗਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਦੇ ਇਹ ਤਿੰਨੋਂ ਕੋਰਸ ਕਰਵਾਉਣ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਉਸ ਕੋਲ ਸਮਰੱਥਾ ਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ। ਜੇ ਚਾਰ ਕੋਰਸ ਮੈਂ ਵੇਖੇ ਹਨ, ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਅਧਿਆਤਮਿਕਤਾ ਵੈਸੇ ਹੀ ਗੁੰਮ ਜਾਪਦੀ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਚੇਅਰ ਨੂੰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਅਤੇ ਧਿਆਤਮਿਕਤਾ ਤੋਂ ਮਹਿਰੂਪ ਕਰ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ। ਜੇ ਕੁਝ ਸਾਹਮਣੇ ਆਇਆ ਹੈ, ਉਸ ਨਾਲ ਵੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਿਧਾਂਤ, ਸਿੱਖ ਅਧਿਆਤਮਿਕਤਾ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਥੀਓਲੋਜੀ ਦੇ ਮੂਲ ਆਧਾਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਘੇਰਾ ਹੀ ਲਾਇਆ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ। ਚੇਅਰ ਨੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕਤਾ ਦੇ ਗਲੋਬਲ ਸਰੋਕਾਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਾਹਮਣੇ ਲਿਆਉਣਾ ਸੀ ਪਰ ਚੇਅਰ ਨੇ ਹੁਣ ਤੱਕ ਅਸਿੱਖ ਕੀਮਤਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ ਵਿਰੋਧ ਵਿੱਚ ਕੰਮ ਕਰ ਰਹੀਆਂ ਸੰਸਥਾਵਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਸ਼ਕਤੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਾਬਤ ਕਰਨ ਦੀ ਕੋਸ਼ਿਸ਼ ਹੀ ਕੀਤੀ ਹੈ। ਯੂ ਬੀ ਸੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਚੇਅਰ ਦਾ ਇਹ ਟੀਚਾ ਤਾਂ ਕਦੇ ਵੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ। ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਅਖੌਤੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਪ੍ਰਸੰਗਾਂ ਦਾ ਸਮਾਜ ਸ਼ਾਸਤ੍ਰੀ ਅਧਿਐਨ ਡਾਕਟਰ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਨੇ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੈ, ਉਹ ਸਿੱਖ ਚਿੰਤਨ, ਸਿੱਖ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਕੀਮਤਾਂ ਤੇ ਅਧਾਰਤ ਕਰਕੇ ਪ੍ਰਸਤੁਤ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੀਤਾ ਗਿਆ। ਇਸ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦਾ ਨਿੰਦਨੀਯ ਪ੍ਰਸ਼ਨ ਹੀ ਕਹਿਣਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਇਹ ਆਪਣੇ ਪ੍ਰਗਟਾਵੇ ਅਤੇ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਵ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਿਹਤਮੰਦ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕਤਾ ਤੇ ਬਿਲਕੁਲ ਪਾਸੇ ਚਲਾ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ। ਕਿਸੇ ਵੀ ਕੌਮ ਦੇ ਸਿਧਾਂਤਕ ਸਰੋਕਾਰਾਂ ਬਾਰੇ ਅਜਿਹੀ ਅਸਿਹਤਮੰਦ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕਤਾ ਦੀ ਆਗਿਆ, ਘੱਟੋ ਘੱਟ ਉਸੇ ਹੀ ਕੌਮ ਵਲੋਂ ਚਲਾਈ ਜਾ ਰਹੀ ਚੇਅਰ ਤੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਦਿੱਧਤੀ ਜਾਣੀ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ। ਯੂ ਬੀ ਸੀ ਚੇਅਰ ਵਲੋਂ ਜੋ ਕੁਝ ਹੋ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ, ਉਹ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ ਹੱਕ ਵਿੱਚ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ।

ਡਾਕਟਰ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦੀਆਂ ਲਿਖਤਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਪੁਸਤਕਾਂ ਦੇ ਹਵਾਲੇ ੮੦ ਫੀਸਦੀ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਧ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਹਨ, ਉਹਨਾਂ ਪੁਸਤਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਸੰਗ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਾਨਤਾ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਅਤੇ ਕਿੰਤੂਮੁਕਤਪੁਸਤਕਦਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਿਹਾ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ। ਵਾਧਾ ਇਹ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਇਹ ਲੇਖਕ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਤੇ ਨਾਵਾਕਫ ਹੋਣ ਕਰਕੇ, ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਸ੍ਰੋਤ ਸਾਹਿਤ ਅਤੇ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਤਕ ਸਿਧੇ ਪਹੁੰਚ ਵੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਸਕਦੇ। ਸੁਣੀਆਂ ਸੁਣਾਈਆਂ ਦੇ ਆਧਾਰ ਤੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਨਿੱਜੀ ਤਸੱਲੀ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਅਤੇ ਆਪਦੇ ਸਿਆਸੀ ਹਿਤਾਂ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਲਿਖੀਆਂ ਗਈਆਂ ਲਿਖਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਪ੍ਰਮਾਣਿਕ ਪੁਸਤਕਾਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਆਖਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ। ਇਹਨਾਂ ਪੁਸਤਕਾਂ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਵੀ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਹਵਾਲਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਹੀ ਚੋਣ ਕੀਤੀ ਹੈ, ਜਿਸ ਨਾਲ ਲੇਖਕ ਨੂੰ ਮਨਮਰਜ਼ੀ ਦੇ ਸਿੱਟੇ ਕੱਢਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਹੂਲਤ ਮਿਲਦੀ ਹੋਵੇ। ਇਸ ਪਹੁੰਚ ਵਿਧੀ ਨੇ ਖੋਖਕ ਦੀਆਂ ਲਿਖਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਉਲਾਰ, ਦਲੀਲ ਵਿਰੁਧ ਅਤੇ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਨੈਤਿਕਤਾ ਦੇ ਉਲਟ ਸਾਬਤ ਹੋ ਜਾਣ ਦਾ ਰਾਹ ਪੱਧਰਾ ਕਰ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਹੈ। ਖੋਜ ਦੀ ਦ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟੀ ਤੋਂ ਜੇ ਆਧਾਰ ਗ਼ਲਤ ਹੋਣ, ਹਵਾਲੇ ਅਪ੍ਰਸੰਗਕ ਹੋਣ ਅਤੇ ਨੀਅਤ ਵੀ ਠੀਕ ਨਾ ਹੋਵੇ ਤਾਂ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਉਪੜਧੀਮੀ ਦਾ ਅੰਦਾਜ਼ਾ ਲਾਉਣਾ ਕੋਈ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਿਲ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ।

ਇਸ ਦ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟੀ ਤੋਂ ਡਾਕਟਰ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦੀਆਂ ਲਿਖਤਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਗੈਰ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਵਿਰੋਧੀ ਧਾਰਨਾਵਾਂ ਵੱਲ ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀ ਅਧਿਕਾਰੀਆਂ ਦਾ ਧਿਆਨ ਦੁਆਉਣ ਦਾ ਯਤਨ ਹੀ ਲੇਖ ਦੇ ਅਗਲੇ ਪੈਰਿਆਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ।

- ੧। ਡਾਕਟਰ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਨੇ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਕੱਢ ਲਏ ਨਤੀਜਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਪੁਸ਼ਟ ਅਤੇ ਪ੍ਰਮਾਣਤ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ, ਦਲੀਲਾਂ ਲੱਭਣ ਨੂੰ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕਤਾ ਪਰਵਾਨ ਕਰ ਲਿਆ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਨੂੰ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕਤਾ ਨਹੀਂ, ਧੜੇਬੰਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਵੱਧ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਧ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਸਿਆਸਤ ਆਖਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਡਾਕਟਰ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਕੋਲੋਂ ਆਪਣੀ ਹੀ ਚੇਅਰ ਦੇ ਟੀਚਿਆਂ ਵਿਰੁੱਧ ਕੰਮ ਕਰਨ ਦੀ ਵਧੀਕੀ ਹੋ ਗਈ ਹੈ।
- ੨। ਡਾਕਟਰ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦੀਆਂ ਲਿਖਤਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਪੱਛਮ ਵਿੱਚ ਵਿਕਤਸਤ ਹੋਏ ਮਾਡਲ ਦੀ ਵਰਤੋਂ ਤਾਂ ਕੀਤੀ ਗਈ ਪਰ ਇਹ ਧਿਆਨ ਵਿੱਚ ਨਹੀਂ ਰੱਖਿਆ ਗਿਆ ਕਿ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਮੂਲਕ ਧਰਮਾਂ (Semetic) ਨਾਲ ਸੰਬੰਧਤ ਮਾਡਲ ਬਾਣੀ ਮੂਲਕ (revelatory) ਧਰਮ ਉੱਤੇ ਹੁਬਹੂ ਲਾਗੂ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੀਤੇ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੇ। ਮਾਡਲ ਨੂੰ ਸਿਧਾਂਤ ਦਾ ਬਦਲ ਵੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਮੰਨਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਸਿਧਾਂਤ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਮਾਡਲ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਨਾ ਕਿ ਮਾਡਲ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਸਿਧਾਂਤ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਸੌਖਿਆਂ ਸਿੱਟੇ ਕੱਢਣ ਦੇ ਲਾਲਚ ਵਿੱਚ ਲੇਖਕ ਨੇ ਇਕ ਪਾਸੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਸ੍ਰੋਤਾਂ ਦੀ ਥਾਂ ਗੈਰ ਸਿੱਖ ਸ੍ਰੋਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ, ਸਗੋਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਵਿਰੋਧੀ ਸ੍ਰੋਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਆਸਰਾ ਬਣਾ ਲਿਆ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਦੂਜੇ ਪਾਸੇ ਅਸਿੱਖ ਸਰੋਕਾਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਰੋਕਾਰ ਸਮਝਣ ਦੀ ਗਲਤੀ ਕਰ ਲਈ ਹੈ। ਸਿੱਟਿਆਂ ਦਾ ਗਲਤ ਸੇਧ ਵਿਚ ਨਿਕਲਣਾ, ਇਸ ਹਾਲਤ ਵਿੱਚ ਕੁਦਰਤੀ ਸੀ। ਸਿੱਖ ਅਧਿਐਨ ਨਾਲ ਜੁੜੀ ਹੋਈ ਚੇਅਰ ਤੋਂ ਇਸ ਦੀ ਆਸ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ।
- ੩। ਧਰਮ ਚਿੰਤਨ ਦੇ ਖੇਤਰ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਿਧਾਂਤ ਅਤੇ ਰਹਿਤ ਵਿੱਚ ਖੱਪਾ ਕੋਈ ਨਹੀਂ ਗੱਲ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ। ਸਿਧਾਂਤ ਦੀ ਰਹਿਤ ਉੱਤੇ ਸਰਦਾਰੀ ਦਾ ਮਾਡਲ ਆਸਾ ਦੀ ਵਾਰ ਵਿੱਚ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ ਨੇ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਹੈ, ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਵਰਤ ਕੇ ਸਿੱਟੇ ਕੱਢਣ ਦੀ ਥਾਂ, ਲੇਖਕ ਨੇ ਇਸ ਪੱਖੇ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ ਵਿਰੋਧ ਵਿੱਚ ਵਰਤਣ ਦੀ ਵਧੀਕੀ ਕੀਤੀ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਦੇ ਨਾਲ ਹੀ ਲੇਖਕ ਨੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਵਿਰੋਧੀ ਸਿੱਟੇ ਕੱਢਣ ਦੇ ਉਲਾਰ ਵਿੱਚ, ਅਪ੍ਰਮਾਣਿਕ ਲਿਖਤਾਂ ਦੇ ਆਧਾਰ ਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਵਿਰੁਧ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਹੀ ਛਿੜੀ ਹੋਈ ਮੁਹਿੰਮ ਨੂੰ ਤਕੜਿਆਂ ਕਰ ਕੇ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ

ਚਲਾਕੀ ਅਤੇ ਸਿਧਾਂਤਹੀਣ ਵਿਰੋਧਤਾ ਕੀਤੀ ਹੈ। ਅਗਿਆਨ ਅਤੇ ਇਨਸਾਨੀ ਕਮਜ਼ੋਰੀਆਂ ਤੇ ਆਧਾਰ ਟੁਟੀ ਹੋਈ ਜਾ ਖਿੰਡੀ ਹੋਈ ਮਾਨਸਿਕਤਾ ਨਾਲ ਜੁੜੀਆਂ ਹੋਈਆਂ ਕੁਰੀਤੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਆਸਰੇ ਨਾਲ, ਕਿਸੇ ਵੀ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ ਸਿਧਾਂਤ ਦੀ ਨਿੰਦਿਆ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਨਹੀਂ ਅਖਵਾ ਸਕਦੀ। ਡਾਕਟਰ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਸਖੀ ਸਰਵਰੀਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਗੁੱਗੇ ਦੇ ਭਰਤਾਂ ਆਦਿ ਦੀ ਗੱਲ ਕਰਕੇ, ਸਿੱਖ ਸਿਧਾਂਤ ਦੇ ਵਿਰੁੱਧ ਸਿੱਟੇ ਕੱਢਣ ਦੀ ਸਿਰਤੋੜ ਯਤਨ ਕਰ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ, ਉਹਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਵੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਦੇ ਅੰਤਰਗਤ ਪਰਵਾਨ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ। ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਤਾ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਕੁਰੀਤੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਖਿਲਾਫ ਜਹਾਦ ਛੇੜਦਾ ਹੈ। ਸੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਦੇ ਘਰ ਜੰਮ ਪੈਣ ਨਾਲ ਅਤੇ ਕੇਸ ਰੱਖ ਕੇ ਪੱਗ ਬੰਨ ਲੈਣ ਨਾਲ ਤਾਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਅਖਵਾਉਣ ਦਾ ਅਧਿਕਾਰੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੋਇਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ। ਨਿਸੰਗ ਹੋ ਕੇ ਕਹਿਣਾ ਹੋਵੇ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਹਾ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਜਿਹੌ ਜਿਹਾ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕਾ ਡਾਕਟਰ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦੀਆਂ ਲਿਖਤਾਂ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਨਜ਼ਰ ਆਉਂਦੀ ਹੈ, ਇਸ ਨੂੰ ਹੀਣ ਭਾਵਨਾ ਦਾ ਸ਼ਿਕਾਰ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕਤਾ ਆਖਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਦੱਲਗਿਰੀ ਦੇ ਘੇਰੇ 'ਚ ਰਹਿ ਕੇ ਵਰਤੀ ਗਈ ਕੂਟ-ਬੌਧਿਕਤਾ ਵੀ ਗਰਦਾਨਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ। ਅਜਿਹੀ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕਤਾ ਦੀ ਆਗਿਆ ਦੇਣ ਦਾ ਅਰਥ ਇਹ ਹੋਵੇਗਾ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖ ਸੋਮਿਆਂ ਨਾਲ ਚਲਾਈ ਜਾ ਰਹੀ ਯੂ ਬੀ ਸੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਚੇਅਰ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਵਿਰੁੱਧ ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰ-ਕੇਂਦਰ ਜੋ ਰਤੇ ਜਾਣ ਦੀ ਆਗਿਆ ਦਿੱਤੀ ਜਾ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ।

4. ਸਖੀ ਸਰਵਰ, ਗੁੱਗਾ ਪੀਰ, ਮਾਤਾ ਰਾਣੀਆਂ ਜਾ ਪੀਰਾਂ ਮਜ਼ੋਰਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਜੁੜੇ ਹੋਏ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਸੋਸ਼ਣ ਕੇਂਦਰ ਦਾ ਸਿੱਖ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕਤਾ ਨਾਲ ਦੂਰ ਦਾ ਵੀ ਵਾਸਤਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ। ਡਾਕਟਰ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਨੇ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੇ ਅਧਿਐਨ ਦਾ ਕੇਂਦਰ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਬਣਾਇਆ ਅਤੇ ਇਹ ਸਿੱਖ ਚੇ ਅਰ ਵਲੋਂ ਵਿਚਾਰੇ ਅਤੇ ਸੰਭਾਲੇ ਜਾਣ ਲਈ ਜ਼ਰੂਰੀ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਹੋਵੇ, ਇਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਨਿਰਣਾ ਕੀਤੇ ਜਾਣ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ। ਸਖੀ ਸਰਵਰੀਆਂ ਵਰਗੇ ਉਲਝਣ ਕੇਂਦਰਾਂ ਨਾਲੋਂ ਟੁੱਟ ਕੇ, ਲੋਕ ਸਿੱਖ ਤਾਂ ਸਜੇ ਹਨ ਪਰ ਜੇ ਕੋਈ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਵੱਲ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਦੇ ਘੇਰੇ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਬਾਹਰ ਹੋ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ। ਅਜਿਹਾ ਸਿਹਤਮੰਦ ਪ੍ਰਸੰਗ ਤਾਂ ਡਾਕਟਰ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦੀਆਂ ਲਿਖਤਾਂ ਦਾ ਭਾਗ ਨਹੀਂ ਬਣਿਆਂ? ਇਸ ਤੋਂ ਨਤੀਜਾ ਕੱਢਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਡਾਕ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਨੇ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਸੋਸ਼ਣ ਦਾ ਸ਼ਿਕਾਰ ਬੀਮਾਰ ਅਤੇ ਅਸਿਹਤਮੰਦ ਸਰੋਕਾਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਿਧਾਂਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਢਾਹ ਲਾਉਣ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਵਰਤਿਆ ਹੈ। ਸਿੱਖ ਚੇਅਰ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਸਾਹਮਣੇ ਲਿਆਂਦੀ ਗਈ ਇਹੋ ਜਿਹੀ ਲਿਖਤ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕਤਾ ਦੇ ਘੇਰੇ ਵਿੱਚ ਤਾਂ ਬਿਲਕੁਲ ਨਹੀਂ ਰੱਖਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ।
5. ਡਾਕਟਰ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦੀਆਂ ਲਿਖਤਾਂ, ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੀ ਸੁੰਤੜ ਸਥਾਪਨਾ ਨੂੰ ਵਿਗਾੜ ਕੇ ਪੇ ਸ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਛੇੜੀ ਗਈ ਯੋਜਨਾਬੰਦ ਮਹਿੰਮਾਂ ਦਾ ਹਿੱਸਾ ਸਾਹਬਤ ਹੋ ਗਈਆਂ ਹਨ। ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਨੂੰ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਧਰਮਾਂ ਦੀ ਨਿਰੰਤਰਤਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਜਾਂ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਧਰਮਾਂ ਦੇ ਰਲੇ ਵੇਂ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੋਇਆਂ ਮੱਤ ਸਾਬਤ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਲੇਖਕ ਵਧੇਰੇ ਉਤਸੁਕ ਲੱਗ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਲੇਖਕ ਦੀਆਂ ਲਿਖਤਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਧਾਰਨਾਵਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਰੱਦ ਕਰਦੇ ਖੋਜ ਸਾਹਿਤ (ਡਾਕਟਰ ਅਵਤਾਰ ਸਿੰਘ, ਡਾਕਟਰ ਦਰਸ਼ਨ ਸਿੰਘ, ਡਾਕਟਰ ਨਿਰਭੈ ਸਿੰਘ, ਡਾਕਟਰ ਬਲਕਾਰ ਸਿੰਘ, ਡਾਕਟਰ ਮਦਨਜੀਤ ਕੌਰ ਅਤੇ ਡਾਕਟਰ ਗੁਰਨਾਮ ਕੌਰ ਦੀਆਂ ਛਾਪੀਆਂ ਪੁਸਤਕਾਂ ਆਦਿ) ਦਾ ਹਵਾਲਾ ਤੱਕ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ। ਜੇ ਕਿਤੇ ਭਾਈ ਕਾਹਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਆਦਿ ਨੂੰ ਹਵਾਲੇ ਲਈ ਵਰਤਿਆ ਵੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਉਸ ਦੀ ਵੀ ਸਹੀ ਪ੍ਰਸੰਗ ਵਿੱਚ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੀਤੀ ਗਈ।



6. ਡਾ. ਮੈਕਲਾਉਡ ਦੀਆਂ ਲਿਖਤਾਂ ਬਾਰੇ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਹੀ ਬਹੁਤਾ ਕੁਝ ਕਿਹਾ ਜਾ ਚੁੱਕਾ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਡਾ. ਮੈਕਲਾਉਡ ਨੇ ਬਹੁਤ ਸਾਰੀਆਂ ਆਪਣੀਆਂ ਲਿਖਤਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਲਿਆਂਦੀਆਂ ਗੈਰਜ਼ਿਮੇਵਾਰ ਗੱਲਾਂ ਪਰਵਾਨ ਵੀ ਕਰ ਲਈਆਂ ਹਨ। ਇਥੇ ਤਾਂ ਇੰਨਾਂ ਹੀ ਕਹਿਣਾ ਕਿ ਜਿਸ ਵਿਦਵਾਨ ਦੀ ਸੰਬੰਧਤ ਖੋਜ ਖੇਤਰ ਦੇ ਮੂਲ ਸੋਮਿਆਂ ਤੱਕ, ਭਾਸ਼ਾਂ ਕਰਕੇ ਜਾਂ ਸਿਧਾਂਤਕ ਮੁਹਾਵਰੇ ਤੋਂ ਨਾਵਾਕਫੀ ਕਰਕੇ, ਪਹੁੰਚ ਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ, ਉਸ ਦੀਆਂ ਲਿਖਤਾਂ ਦੇ ਆਧਾਰ ਤੇ ਪਰਮਾਣਕ ਨਤੀਜਿਆਂ ਤੱਕ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਪਹੁੰਚਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ। ਡਾ. ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦੀਆਂ ਲਿਖਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਡਾ. ਮੈਕਲਾਉਡ ਵਲੋਂ ਵਰਤੇ ਗਏ ਫੁੱਟ ਨੋਟਾਂ ਦੀ ਵਿਆਖਿਆ ਤੱਕ ਸੀਮਤ ਆਖਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ। ਡਾ. ਮੈਕਲਾਉਡ ਨੇ ਜਿਹੜੀਆਂ ਗੱਲਾਂ ਨਿੱਜੀ ਚਿੱਠੀਆਂ ਆਦਿ ਵਿੱਚ ਮੰਨ ਵੀ ਲਈਆਂ ਹਨ, ਡਾ. ਉਬਰਾਏ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਲਈ ਵੀ ਜੂਝਣ ਨੂੰ ਤਿਆਰ ਹੈ। ਸਿੱਖ ਚਿੰਤਨ ਮਾਨਸਿਕਤਾ ਦੇ ਅਧਿਆਤਮੀਕਰਣ ਦੀ ਗੱਲ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ ਪਰ ਡਾ. ਉਬਰਾਏ ਸਿੱਖ ਅਧਿਆਤਮੀਕਤਾ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਮਾਨਸਿਕਤਾ ਨਾਲ ਜੁੜੇ ਹੋਏ ਹੋਰ ਮਸਲਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਉਲਝਾਉਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਹੀ ਰੁਝਿਆ ਹੋਇਆ ਨਜ਼ਰ ਆਉਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਵਜੋਂ ਜ਼ੁੰਮੇਵਾਰੀ ਨਾਲ ਕਿਹਾ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਡਾ. ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦੀਆਂ ਲਿਖਤਾਂ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਅਧਿਆਤਮੀਕਤਾ ਗੁੰਮ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਇਹ ਲਿਖਤਾਂ ਸਮਾਜ ਵਿਗਿਆਨ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਬੰਧਤ ਪੱਛਮੀ ਮਾਡਲਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਚੇਪੀਆਂ ਹੋਣਾਂ, ਸਿੱਖ ਸਿਧਾਂਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਲੁਕਾਉਣ ਦਾ ਯਤਨ ਹੀ ਆਖੀਆਂ ਜਾਣੀਆਂ ਚਾਹੀਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ। ਕੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਚੇਅਰ ਤੋਂ ਇਹ ਸਭ ਕੁਝ ਜਾਇਜ਼ ਜਾਂ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਹੈ?
7. ਸਿਧਾਂਤ ਨਾਲੋਂ ਟੁੱਟੀਆਂ ਹੋਈਆਂ ਸਮਾਜ ਵਿਗਿਆਨਕ ਵਿਧੀਆਂ, ਉਭਰਵੇਂ ਤੱਤਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਕਸਕਾਂ ਦਾ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਹੋ ਜਾਂਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ। ਸਿੱਖ ਅਧਿਐਨ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਬਾਣੀ ਨਾਲੋਂ ਟੁੱਟਿਆ ਹੋਇਆ ਮਾਡਲ ਸਵੀਕਾਰ ਕਰਨਾ ਕਠਿਨ ਹੈ। ਕਵੀ ਸੰਤੋਖ ਸਿੰਘ, ਗਿਆਨੀ ਗਿਆਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਅਤੇ ਬਾਕੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਲੇਖਕਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਬਿਨਾਂ ਖੁਸ਼ਵਕਤ ਰਾਇ, ਸੋਚਣ ਲਾਲ ਸੂਰੀ, ਅਹਿਮਦ ਸਾਹ ਬਟਾਲੀਆ ਆਦਿ ਨੇ ਆਪਣੀਆਂ ਲਿਖਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖ ਭਾਵਨਾ ਨਾਲੋਂ ਟੁੱਟਣ ਤੋਂ ਬਚਾਇਆ ਹੋਇਆ ਹੈ। ਪਰ ਡਾ. ਉਬਰਾਏ ਇਹਨਾਂ ਸਭ ਨੂੰ ਛੱਡ ਕੇ ਅਵਤਾਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਬਾਹਰੀਆ ਵਰਗੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਵਿਰੋਧੀ ਲੇਖਕਾਂ ਦਾ ਸਹਾਰਾ ਲੈਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਬਾਣੀ ਨਾਲੋਂ ਟੁੱਟਿਆ ਮਾਡਲ, ਜਿਸ ਦੀ ਵਰਤੋਂ ਡਾ. ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦੀਆਂ ਲਿਖਤਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਹੋ ਚੁੱਕੀ ਹੈ, ਰਾਧਾ ਸੁਆਮੀਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਰਲਗੱਡ ਕਰ ਦੇਵੇਗਾ। ਜੇ ਇਹ ਮਾੜੀਆਂ ਪਿਰਤਾਂ ਸੁਚੇਤ ਤੌਰ ਤੇ ਪਾਈਆਂ ਜਾ ਰਹੀਆਂ ਹਨ ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਚੇਅਰ ਦੇ ਟੀਚਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਵਿਰੁੱਧ ਹਨ। ਜੇ ਇਹ ਸਭ ਕੁੱਝ ਅਚੇਤ ਹੀ ਹੋ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਤੁਰੰਤ ਸਿੱਖ ਚਿੰਤਨ ਦੇ ਖੇਤਰ ਵਿੱਚ ਕੰਮ ਕਰ ਰਹੇ ਅਕਾਦਮੀਜ਼ਨਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਬੈਠ ਕੇ, ਇਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਸੁਚੇਤ ਹੋਣਾ ਅਤੇ ਸਿਹਤਮੰਦ ਪਹੁੰਚ ਵਿਧੀ ਨੂੰ ਅਪਣਾਉਣਾ ਜ਼ਰੂਰੀ ਹੈ।
8. ਸਿੱਖੀ ਵਿਰੋਧੀ ਨਤੀਜੇ ਕੱਢਣ ਦਾ ਲਾਲਚ ਡਾ. ਉਬਰਾਏ ਉਤੇ ਏਨਾਂ ਹਾਵੀ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਸਖੀ ਸਰਵਰੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਮੈਕਾਲਫ ਦੇ ਹਵਾਲੇ ਨਾਲ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਮੰਨ ਕੇ ਵੀ ਅਤੇ ਬਾਕੀ ਹਵਾਲਿਆਂ ਨਾਲ ਪੂਜਕ ਸ਼ਰਧਾਲੂਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ਆਦਿ ਮੰਨ ਕੇ ਵੀ ਨਤੀਜੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ ਵਿਰੁੱਧ ਹੀ ਕੱਢਦਾ ਹੈ। ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਬਾਰੇ ਅਗਿਆਨ ਜਾਂ ਗਲਤ ਸੂਚਨਾ ਦੇ ਆਧਾਰ ਤੇ ਬੇਸੁਰੇ ਨਤੀਜੇ ਵੀ ਲੇਖਕ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਤੇ ਸੁੱਟ ਦਿੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਅਜਿਹੇ ਸੰਕਿਆਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਘਿਰਿਆ ਹੋਇਆ ਵਿਦਵਾਨ ਸਿੱਖ ਚੇਅਰ ਨਾਲ ਨਿਆਂ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਕਰ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ?
9. ਡਾ. ਉਬਰਾਏ ਨੇ ਜਿਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਸਨਾਤਨੀ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਕੋਟੀ ਦੀ ਆੜ ਵਿੱਚ ਦੁਨੀਆਂ ਭਰ ਦੀਆਂ ਕੂਰੀਤੀਆਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਨਾਲ ਜੋੜ ਕੇ ਮੰਤਵ-ਸਿਧੀ ਕਰ ਲਈ ਹੈ, ਉਸੇ ਕੋਲੋਂ ਅੱਗੇ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੇ ਵਰਗੇ ਆਧੁਨਿਕ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਆੜ ਵਿੱਚ

ਭਿਆਨਕ ਸਿੱਟੇ ਕੱਢ ਲੈਣ ਤੋਂ ਇਨਕਾਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ। ਕੀ ਜੇ ਕੁੱਝ ਗੋਰੇ ਲੋਕ ਮੰਡਲੀ ਬਣਾ ਕੇ ਸਮੇਕ ਪੀਂਦੇ ਹਨ ਤਾਂ ਸਮੇਕ ਦੀ ਵਰਤੋਂ ਨੂੰ ਈਸਾਈਅਤ ਦਾ ਭਾਗ ਮੰਨਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ? ਜੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਤਾਂ ਮੜੀਆਂ ਅੱਗੇ ਗੋਡੇ ਟੇਕੀ ਅੰਧ ਵਿਸ਼ਵਾਸੀ ਕਮਜ਼ੋਰ ਮਾਨਸਿਕਤਾ ਵਾਲੇ ਵਿਅਕਤੀ, ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪ ਹੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਦੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਹੋ ਗਏ? ਚੇਅਰ ਵਰਗੀ ਜ਼ੁੰਮੇਵਾਰ ਥਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਇਹੋ ਜਿਹੀਆਂ ਗੈਰ ਜ਼ੁੰਮੇਵਾਲੀ ਵਾਲੀਆਂ ਗੱਲਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਪਰਵਾਨ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ।

10. ਸਿੱਖ ਸਭਾ ਲਹਿਰ ਦੀ ਮੁਖਾਲਫਤ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਵਿੱਚ ਸ਼ੋਸ਼ਣੀ ਕਲਾਬਾਜ਼ੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਮਾਨਤਾ, ਡਾ. ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦੀਆਂ ਲਿਖਤਾਂ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰਧਾਨ ਸੂਰ ਹੈ। ਇੰਝ ਲਗਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਲੇਖਕ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਤੋਂ ਨਾਵਾਕਫ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਬਿਨਾਂ ਮਿਹਨਤ ਦੇ ਕੀਤਿਆਂ ਸੌਖਿਆਂ ਸਿੱਝੇ ਕੱਢਣ ਦੇ ਲਾਲਚ ਵਿਚ, ਸਿੱਖ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕਤਾ ਨੂੰ ਸ਼ੰਕਿਆ ਦੇ ਜੰਗਲ ਵੱਲ ਧੱਕੀ ਜਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਅਜਿਹੀ ਖੁੱਲ੍ਹ ਸਿੱਖ ਚੇਅਰ ਤੋਂ ਰਹਿੰਦਿਆਂ ਜ਼ਾਇਜ਼ ਕਰਾਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਦਿੱਤੀ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਇਹ ਚੇਅਰ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਖੂਨ ਪਸੀਨੇ ਦੀ ਕਮਾਈ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਬਣੀ ਹੋਈ ਹੈ। ਹੁਣ ਤੱਕ ਚੇਅਰ ਆਪਣਾ ਕਰਤੱਵ ਨਿਭਾਉਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਅਸਫਲ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਇਹ ਆਗਿਆ ਹੋਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਦੇਣੀ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ।
11. ਡਾ. ਉਬਰਾਏ ਨੇ “ਚੁੱਪ ਦੇ ਸਿਧਾਂਤ” ਨੂੰ ਮਨਮਰਜ਼ੀ ਦੇ ਸਿੱਟੇ ਕੱਢਣ ਲਈ ਵਰਤ ਲਿਆ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪ ਨੂੰ “ਅਲੋਚਨਾਤਮਕ ਵਿਦਵਤਾ” ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਤੀਨਿਧ ਮੰਨ ਲਿਆ ਹੈ। ਇਹੋ ਜਿਹੇ ਉਲਾਰ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਲੇਖਕ ਨੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕਤਾ ਨੂੰ ਮਾਰਕਸੀ ਵਿਧੀ ਅਤੇ ਪੱਛਮੀ ਮਾਡਲ ਦੇ ਦੋ ਪੁੜਾਂ ਵਿਚਕਾਰ ਦਰੜ-ਫਰੜ ਕਰਨ ਦਾ ਯਤਨ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਡਾ. ਉਬਰਾਏ ਹਉਮੈ ਅਤੇ ਵਿਦਵਤਾ ਦਾ ਜ਼ਰਾਬਖ਼ਤਰ ਪਹਿਨ ਕੇ ਜੋ ਜੀਅ ਆਵੇ, ਕਹਿਣ ਦੇ ਅਧਿਕਾਰ ਦਾ ਮਾਲਕ ਹੋ ਗਿਆ ਜਾਪਦਾ ਹੈ। ਸਿੱਖ ਚੇਅਰ ਤੋਂ ਨਾ ਇਹ ਉਲਾਰ ਸ਼ੋਭਾ ਦਿੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਨਾ ਹੀ ਚੇਅਰ ਤੋਂ ਇਸ ਦੀ ਆਗਿਆ ਦਿੱਤੀ ਜਾਣੀ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ।

ਇਹਨਾਂ ਨੁਕਤਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਆਧਾਰ ਤੇ ਸੌਖਿਆਂ ਹੀ ਇਸ ਨਤੀਜੇ ਤੇ ਪਹੁੰਚਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਡਾ. ਉਬਰਾਏ ਨੇ ਆਪਣੀਆਂ ਸਾਰੀਆਂ ਲਿਖਤਾਂ ਦਾ ਰੁਖ, ਸਿੱਖ ਮਾਨਸਿਕਤਾ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਿਧਾਂਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਵਲੰਦਰਣ ਵਾਲਾ ਹੀ ਰੱਖਿਆ ਹੋਇਆ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਵਿੱਚ ਕੋਈ ਸ਼ੱਕ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਿ ਕਿਸੇ ਵੀ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਸੰਸਥਾਂ ਜਾਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਚੇਅਰ ਦੇ ਮੁਢਲੇ ਸਰੋਕਾਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਅਵਹੇਲਨਾ, ਉਸੇ ਹੀ ਸੰਸਥਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਜੁੜੇ ਹੋਏ ਪਲੇਟਫਾਰਮ ਤੋਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾਣੀ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ। ਡਾ. ਉਬਰਾਏ ਲਗਾਤਾਰ ਇਹੀ ਅਵੱਗਿਆ ਕਰੀ ਜਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਜੇ ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਯਕੀਨ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਉਸਨੇ ਪੁਸਤਕਾਂ ਲਿਖ ਕੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਚਿੰਤਨ ਨੂੰ ਨਿਖਾਰਨ ਵਿੱਚ ਹਿੱਸਾ ਪਾਇਆ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਗੱਲ ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਬੰਧਤ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕਤਾ ਲਈ ਕੰਮ ਕਰ ਰਹੇ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਅਦਾਰਿਆਂ ਨਾਲ ਰਲ ਬੈਠ ਕੇ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਲੈਣੀ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ। ਜੇ ਉਹ ਅਜਿਹਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰ ਸਕਦਾ ਤਾਂ ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਨੈਤਿਕ ਹੋਸਲਾ ਵਿਖਾਉਂਦਿਆਂ ਇਸ ਸਿੱਖ ਅਦਾਰੇ ਨਾਲੋਂ ਵੱਖ ਹੋ ਕੇ ਕੰਮ ਕਰਨਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ।

ਪਿੱਛੇ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਨੁਕਤਿਆਂ ਦਾ ਵਿਸਥਾਰ ਹਵਾਲਿਆਂ ਸਹਿਤ ਵੀ ਪ੍ਰਸਤੁਰ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ। ਸੰਕੇਤ ਮਾਤਰ ਨੁਕਤਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਆਧਾਰ ਤੇ ਸਾਂਝੇ ਸਿੱਟਿਆਂ ਤੋਂ ਪਹੁੰਚਣ, ਚੇਅਰ ਨੂੰ ਵਾਦ ਵਿਵਾਦ ਦੇ ਘੇਰੇ ਤੋਂ ਬਚਾਉਣ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਚਿੰਤਨ ਨੂੰ ਖੋਰਾ ਲੱਗਣ ਤੋਂ ਮੁਕਤ ਰੱਖਣ ਲਈ ਤੁਰੰਤ ਕਾਰਵਾਈ ਕੀਤੇ ਜਾਣ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਸਾਹਮਣੇ ਹੈ।

## ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਬਾਰੇ ਖੋਜ, ਕਾਨਫਰੰਸਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਅਧਿਕਾਰ

### ਡਾ. ਗੁਰੁਮੇਲ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਿੱਧੂ

#### ਪਿਛੋਕੜ

ਪੱਛਮੀ ਦੇਸ਼ਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਜੋ ਖੋਜ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਬਾਰੇ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ, ਉਹ ਆਮ ਕਰਕੇ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰਾਂ ਵਲੋਂ ਜਾਂ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਨਿਗਰਾਨੀ ਹੇਠ ਹੋ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਡਾ. ਮਕਲਾਉਡ (W.H. McLeod) ਦਾ ਨਾਂ ਵਧੇਰੇ ਉੱਘਾ ਹੈ, ਜਿਸ ਦੇ ਦੋ ਕਾਰਨ ਹਨ। ਇੱਕ ਇਹ ਕਿ ਉਸਨੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਬਾਰੇ ਕਈ ਖੋਜ ਪੁਸਤਕਾਂ ਲਿਖੀਆਂ ਹਨ ਅਤੇ ਦੂਜੇ ਇਛਾ ਨੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਨਿਗਰਾਨੀ ਹੇਠ ਕਈ ਸਿੱਖ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਧੇ ਜਾਂ ਅਸਿੱਧੇ ਤੌਰ 'ਤੇ ਪੀ.ਐਚ.ਡੀ. ਕਰਾਈ ਹੈ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਡਾ. ਹਰਜੋਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਉਬਰਾਏ (ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰ ਸਿੱਖ ਚੇਅਰ ਯੂ.ਬੀ.ਸੀ., ਵੈਨਕੂਵਰ, ਕਨੇਡਾ), ਡਾ. ਪਸੋਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ (ਪ੍ਰੋ. ਸਿੱਖ ਚੇਅਰ ਯੂ.ਐਮ. ਐਨ. ਆਰਥਰ, ਅਮਰੀਕਾ), ਡਾ. ਗੁਰਿੰਦਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਮਾਨ (ਪ੍ਰੋ. ਸਿੱਖ ਚੇਅਰ ਕੋਲੰਬੀਆ ਯੂ., ਨਿਊਯਾਰਕ, ਅਮਰੀਕਾ ਅਤੇ ਸੁਰਜੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਹਾਂਸ (ਰੀਟਾਇਰਡ ਪ੍ਰੋ. ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ, ਪੰਜਾਬ, ਭਾਰਤ) ਦੇ ਨਾਂ ਮਸ਼ਹੂਰ ਹਨ। ਡਾ. ਮਕਲਾਉਡ ਅਤੇ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਬਾਰੇ ਪ੍ਰਗਟਾਏ ਗਏ ਵਿਚਾਰਾਂ 'ਤੇ ਕਾਫੀ ਚਰਚਾ ਹੋਈ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਹੋ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ। ਆਓ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਵੇਖੀਏ ਕਿ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਕਿਹੜੇ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਇਸ ਚਰਚਾ ਦਾ ਕਾਰਨ ਬਣੇ।

#### ਡਾ. ਮਕਲਾਉਡ ਦੇ ਵਿਚਾਰ

- (ੳ) ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ ਬਾਨੀ ਨਹੀਂ, ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਕੇਵਲ ਨਿਰਗੁਨ ਸੰਪਰਦਾਏ ਅਤੇ ਨਾਥ ਪੰਥ ਦੇ ਵਿਚਾਰਾਂ ਦਾ ਹੀ ਵਟਿਆ ਰੂਪ ਹਨ।
- (ਅ) ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ ਬਾਰੇ ਜਨਮ ਸਾਖੀਆਂ ਝੂਠੀਆਂ ਹਨ।
- (ੲ) ਗੁਰੂ ਅਰਜਨ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ ਨੇ ਕੋਈ ਸ਼ਹੀਦੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਦਿੱਤੀ। ਉਹ ਤਾਂ ਸਗੋਂ ਮੁਗਲਾਂ ਹੱਥੋਂ ਜੇਠੂ ਹੋਣ ਉਪਰੰਤ ਜੇਲ੍ਹ ਵਿਚ ਹੀ ਸਵਰਗਵਾਸ ਹੋ ਗਏ ਸਨ।
- (ਸ) ਗੁਰੂ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਤੋਂ ਬਾਅਦ ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੋਲ ਕੋਈ ਢੁਕਵਾਂ ਪੈਰੋਕਾਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ ਰਿਹਾ, ਇਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੇ 'ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ' ਨੂੰ 'ਗੁਰੂ' ਥਾਪ ਲਿਆ ਅਤੇ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਪੰਥ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰਥਾ ਚਲਾ ਲਈ। ਇਸ ਦਾ ਅਰਥ ਇਹ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਨੇ 'ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ' ਸਾਹਿਬ ਨੂੰ ਨਾ ਤਾਂ ਕੋਈ ਗੁਰਗੱਦੀ ਹੀ ਦਿੱਤੀ ਅਤੇ ਨਾ ਹੀ 'ਖਾਲਸਾ' ਥਾਪਿਆ।
- (ਹ) ਆਦਿ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਦੀ ਤਿਆਰੀ ਸਮੇਂ ਕਈ ਹੋਰ ਖਰੜਿਆ ਦਾ ਆਸਰਾ ਲਿਆ ਗਿਆ।
- (ਕ) ਕਰਤਾਰਪੁਰ ਵਾਲੀ ਬੀੜ ਅਸਲੀ ਨਹੀਂ, ਸਗੋਂ ਬੰਨੇ ਵਾਲੀ ਬੀੜ ਅਸਲੀ ਹੈ।
- (ਖ) ਪੰਜਵੇਂ ਗੁਰੂ ਦਾ ਸਲੋਕ ਹੈ ਜੋ ਆਪ ਨੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਪੁੱਤਰ ਦੇ ਮੁੰਡਨ ਸੰਸਕਾਰ ਸਮੇਂ ਕਿਹਾ ਸੀ। ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੇ ਸਿਰਫ 18ਵੀਂ ਸਦੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਵਾਲ ਰੱਖਣੇ ਸ਼ੁਰੂ ਕੀਤੇ।

#### ਡਾ. ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦੇ ਵਿਚਾਰ

- (ੳ) 1857 ਤੱਕ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਆਪਣੀ ਕੋਈ ਵੱਖਰੀ ਹੱਦ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ। ਇਹ ਹੋਂ 1897 ਵਿੱਚ ਭਾਈ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਭਾਈ ਕਾਨ੍ਹ ਸਿੰਘ ਨਾਭਾ ਦੁਆਰਾ ਲਿਖੇ ਗਏ ਕਿਤਾਬ 'ਹਮ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਨਹੀਂ' ਤੋਂ ਬਾਅਦ ਬਰਕਰਾਰ ਹੋਈ। ਇਸ ਤੋਂ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਸਿੱਖ,

ਹਿੰਦੂਆਂ ਤੋਂ ਕੋਈ ਵੱਖਰੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਸਨ।

- (ਅ) 19ਵੀਂ ਸਦੀ ਵਿਚ ਸਿੱਖ ਮੱਤ ਮੂਲ ਰੂਪ ਵਿੱਚ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਮੱਤ ਵਿਚ ਬਦਲ ਗਿਆ ਸੀ ਇਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਖੀ ਸਰਵਰ ਵਰਗੇ ਮੁਸਲਿਮ ਫਕੀਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਪੂਜਾ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਸੀ।

### ਡਾ. ਪਸ਼ੋਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਦੇ ਵਿਚਾਰ

- (ੳ) ਗੁਰੂ ਅਰਜਨ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ ਨੇ 'ਆਦਿ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ' ਦੀ ਸੰਪਾਦਨਾ ਸਮੇਂ ਕਈ ਹੋਰ ਖਰੜਿਆਂ ਦਾ ਆਸਰਾ ਲਿਆ।
- (ਅ) ਗੁਰੂ ਅਰਜਨ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ ਨੇ 'ਆਦਿ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ' ਦੀ ਸੰਪਾਦਨਾ ਸਮੇਂ ਬਾਣੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਕਈ ਅਦਲਾ-ਬਦਲੀਆਂ ਕੀਤੀਆਂ, ਖਾਸ ਕਰਕੇ 'ਮੂਲ ਮੰਤਰ' ਵਿਚ।
- (ੲ) ਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਨੇ ਬਾਣੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਅਦਲਾ-ਬਦਲੀਆਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਵਿਚਾਰਧਾਰਾ ਨੂੰ ਨਿਖਾਰਨ ਖਾਤਰ ਕੀਤੀਆਂ ਭਾਵ ਕਿ ਬਾਣੀ, 'ਪੁਰ ਦੀ ਬਾਣੀ' ਨਹੀਂ ਸਗੋਂ ਸਮੇਂ-ਸਮੇਂ ਸਿਰ ਬਦਲਦੀ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ।

ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਵਿਚਾਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ, ਸਿੱਖ ਵਿਚਾਰਧਾਰਾ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਫਿਲਾਸਫੀ ਪ੍ਰਤੀ ਵਿਰੋਧ ਭਾਵ ਹੈ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਵਿਚਾਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਇਕ ਗੱਲ ਖਾਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਦੇਖਣ ਵਾਲੀ ਇਹ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਕਮਲਾਊਡ ਨੇ ਜੋ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਬਾਰੇ ਪ੍ਰਗਟਾਏ ਹਨ, ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰੋੜਤਾ ਹੀ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਖੋਜ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਕਰਾਈ ਗਈ ਹੈ। ਮਿਸਾਲ ਦੇ ਤੌਰ 'ਤੇ ਮਕਲਾਊਡ ਨੇ ਕਿਹਾ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਗੁਰੂਆਂ ਤੋਂ ਨਹੀਂ, ਬਲਕਿ ਬਾਅਦ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਉੱਦਮ ਨਾਲ ਹੋਂਦ ਵਿਚ ਆਇਆ। ਇਸ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰੋੜਤਾ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਨੇ ਇਹ ਕਹਿ ਕੇ ਕੀਤੀ ਕਿ 1897 ਤੱਕ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਆਪਣੀ ਕੋਈ ਵੱਖਰੀ ਹੋਂਦ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ। ਮਕਲਾਊਡ ਨੇ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਕਿ 'ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ' ਦੀ ਸੰਪਾਦਨਾ ਸਮੇਂ ਹੋਰ ਖਰੜਿਆਂ ਦਾ ਆਸਰਾ ਲਿਆ ਗਿਆ ਸੀ ਤਾਂ ਪਸ਼ੋਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਨੇ ਉਹ ਖਰੜੇ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਕਰ ਦਿੱਤੇ (ਯਾਦ ਰਹੇ ਕਿ ਪਸ਼ੋਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਨੇ ਗੋਇੰਦਵਾਲ ਪੋਥੀਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਖਰੜਾ ਨੰਬਰ 1245 ਨੂੰ 'ਆਦਿ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ' ਦੀ ਸਥਾਪਨਾ ਦਾ ਮੂਲ ਦੱਸਿਆ ਹੈ)।

ਹੁਣ ਸਵਾਲ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਮਕਲਾਊਡ ਨੇ ਅਜਿਹੇ ਪ੍ਰਸ਼ਨ ਕਿਉਂ ਖੜੇ ਕੀਤੇ ਅਤੇ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਸਿਸ਼ਾਂ ਨੇ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਪ੍ਰਸ਼ਨਾਂ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰੋੜਤਾ ਕਿਉਂ ਕੀਤੀ? ਇਸ ਦਾ ਸੰਖੇਪ ਜਿਹਾ ਪਿਛੋਕੜ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ।

ਜਦ ਭਾਰਤ ਵਿਚ ਇਸਾਈ ਮਿਸ਼ਨਰੀ ਆਏ ਤਾਂ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦਾ ਮੁੱਖ ਆਸਾ ਈਸਾਈ ਮੱਤ ਨੂੰ ਫੈਲਾਉਣਾ ਸੀ। ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਉਹ ਭਾਰਤ ਦੇ ਦੱਖਣੀ ਤੱਟ ਤੇ ਉੱਤਰੇ ਅਤੇ ਆਪਣਾ ਕੰਮ ਸ਼ੁਰੂ ਕਰ ਦਿੱਤਾ। ਦੱਖਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਗਰੀਬੀ ਬਹੁਤ ਸੀ, ਖਾਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਨੀਵੀਆਂ ਜਾਤੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਦੋ ਵੇਲੇ ਰੋਟੀ ਵੀ ਦਰਕਾਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ ਹੁੰਦੀ। ਇਸ ਲਈ ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਪਹਿਲੇ ਈਸਾਈ ਅਜਿਹੇ ਲੋਕ ਬਣੇ ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਮਿਸ਼ਨਰੀਆਂ ਨੇ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਲਈ ਰੋਟੀ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧ ਵੀ ਕੀਤਾ ਅਤੇ ਰਹਿਣ ਦਾ ਵੀ। ਕਈ ਚਰਚ ਬਣਾਏ ਗਏ ਤਾਂ ਕਿ ਇਹ ਲੋਕ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਪਕੜ ਵਿਚ ਰਹਿਣ। ਚਰਚ-ਪ੍ਰਾਰਥਨਾ ਹਰ ਐਤਵਾਰ ਲਈ ਜ਼ਰੂਰੀ ਕਰ ਦਿੱਤੀ, ਜਿਥੇ ਈਸਾਈ ਮੱਤ ਬਾਰੇ ਦੱਸਿਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਸੀ ਅਤੇ ਲੋੜਮੰਦਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਲੋੜਾਂ ਪੂਰੀਆਂ ਕੀਤੀਆਂ ਜਾਂਦੀਆਂ ਸਨ। ਇਯ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੱਖਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਭਾਰੀ ਗਿਣਤੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਲੋਕ ਈਸਾਈ ਮੱਤ ਧਾਰਨ ਕਰ ਗਏ। ਇਸ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਮਾਣ ਦੱਖਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਅੱਜ ਦੀ ਭਾਰੀ ਈਸਾਈ ਵਸੋਂ ਵਿਚ ਦੇਖਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ।

ਜਿਦਾਂ-ਜਿਦਾਂ ਇਹ ਮਿਸ਼ਨਰੀ ਭਾਰਤ ਦੇ ਉੱਤਰ ਵੱਲ ਨੂੰ ਵਧਦੇ ਗਏ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦਾ ਕੰਮ ਔਖਾ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਗਿਆ। ਕਾਰਨ ਇਹ ਸੀ ਕਿ ਇਕ ਤਾਂ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਧਰਮ ਇਸ ਪਾਸੇ ਵਧ ਮਜ਼ਬੂਤ ਸੀ ਅਤੇ ਦੂਜੇ ਲੋਕ ਐਨੇ ਗਰੀਬ ਨਹੀਂ ਸਨ। ਖਾਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਵਿਚ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ

ਦਾ ਕੰਮ ਹੋਰ ਵੀ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਲ ਹੋ ਗਿਆ। ਪੰਜਾਬ ਦੇ ਲੋਕ ਖੁਸ਼ਹਾਲ ਸਨ ਅਤੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਧਰਮ ਵਿੱਚ ਪੱਕ ਸਨ, ਚਾਹੇ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਸਨ ਜਾਂ ਸਿੱਖ। ਪੰਜਾਬ ਵਿਚ ਛੋਟੀਆਂ ਜਾਤੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਵੀ ਰੁਜ਼ਗਾਰ ਦਾ ਕੋਈ ਖਾਸ ਘਾਟਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ। ਇਹ ਔਕੜ ਦੇਖ ਕੇ ਮਿਸ਼ਨਰੀ ਸੰਸਥਾ ਨੇ ਸਥਿਤੀ ਅਤੇ ਸਮੇਂ ਦੇ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਆਪਣਾ ਪੈਂਤੜਾ ਬਦਲਿਆ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੇ ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੀਆਂ ਵਿਧੀਆਂ ਤੇ ਜ਼ੋਰ ਦਿੱਤਾ :

- (1) ਪੰਜਾਬ ਵਿਚ ਬਥਾਨਕ ਮਿਸ਼ਨਰੀ ਸੈਂਟਰ ਖੋਲ੍ਹੇ ਜਾਣ, ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਈਸਾਈ ਮੱਤ ਦੀ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਸਥਾਨਕ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਦਿੱਤੀ ਜਾਵੇ।
- (2) ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਗ੍ਰੰਥਾਂ ਦਾ ਅਧਿਐਨ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾਵੇ ਅਤੇ ਇਸ ਨੂੰ ਈਸਾਈ ਮੱਤ ਦੇ ਮੁਕਾਬਲੇ ਦੇ ਮਿਸ਼ਨਰੀ ਸੈਂਟਰ ਵਿਚ ਵਿਚਾਰਿਆ ਜਾਵੇ।
- (3) ਈਸਾਈ ਮੱਤ ਦੀ ਉੱਤਮਤਾ ਦਿਖਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਸਹਿੰਦੀ-ਸਹਿੰਦੀ ਸੱਟ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੀ ਬੁਨਿਆਦ ਉੱਤੇ ਮਾਰੀ ਜਾਵੇ ਅਤੇ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਭੁਲੇਖੇ ਪਾਏ ਜਾਣ।

ਫਲਸਰੂਪ ਬਟਾਲੇ ਵਿਚ ਇਕ ਵੱਡਾ ਮਿਸ਼ਨਰੀ ਸੈਂਟਰ ਖੋਲ੍ਹਿਆ ਗਿਆ, ਜਿਸਦੇ ਪਾਦਰੀ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਬੋਲੀ, ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਅਤੇ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਸਭਿਆਚਾਰ ਤੋਂ ਜਾਣੂ ਸਨ। ਡਾ. ਮਕਲਾਉਡ ਇਸੇ ਸੈਂਟਰ ਦੀ ਪੈਦਾਵਾਰ ਹੈ।

ਡਾ. ਮਕਲਾਉਡ ਨੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਅਤੇ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਪਾਵਨ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ 'ਆਦਿ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ' ਦਾ ਅਧਿਐਨ ਕੀਤਾ। ਪਰ ਆਪਣੇ ਸਿੱਖੇ ਹੋਏ ਟੀਚੇ ਦੇ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਸਿੱਖ ਵਿਚਾਰਧਾਰਾ ਨੂੰ ਮੋੜ-ਤੋੜ ਕੇ ਪੇਸ਼ ਕੀਤਾ। ਇਹ ਕੁਦਰਤੀ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਜਿਸ ਧਰਮ ਬਾਰੇ ਭੁਲੇਖੇ ਪਾਉਣੇ ਹੋਣ, ਉਸ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ 'ਗ੍ਰੰਥ' ਉੱਤੇ ਕਿੰਤੂ ਕਰੇ। ਇਹੀ ਚਾਲ ਡਾ. ਮਕਲਾਉਡ ਨੇ ਚੱਲੀ ਅਤੇ ਇਥੋਂ ਤੱਕ ਕਹਿ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੀ ਸਥਾਪਨਾ ਵਿਚ ਗੁਰੂਆਂ ਦਾ ਕੋਈ ਹੱਥ ਨਹੀਂ। ਇਸ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਤੀਕਰਮ ਕੁਝ ਚਿਰ ਤਾਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਵਿਦਵਾਨਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਨਾ ਹੋਇਆ (ਸਿੱਖ ਸਿਰ ਪਈ ਤੇ ਹੀ ਜਾਗਦੇ ਹਨ) ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਕੁਝ ਵਿਸ਼ਵਾਸਘਾਤੀ ਸਿੱਖ, ਮਕਲਾਉਡ ਦਾ ਪੱਖ ਪੂਰਦੇ ਸਨ। ਪਰ ਜਦ ਮਕਲਾਉਡ ਦੀ ਖੋਜ ਦਾ ਨੇੜਿਓਂ ਜਾਇਜ਼ਾ ਲਿਆ ਗਿਆ ਤਾਂ ਪਤਾ ਲੱਗਾ ਕਿ ਉਸ ਦਾ ਮੰਤਵ ਸਿਰਫ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਨੂੰ ਢਾਹ ਲਾਉਣਾ ਹੀ ਹੈ ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਇਸ ਖੋਜ ਦਾ ਦੋਈ ਨੋਸ ਮਿਆਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਅਤੇ ਨਾ ਹੀ ਕੋਈ ਨਿੱਗਰ ਸਬੂਤ ਹੈ। ਜਦ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ ਵਿਦਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੇ ਸਬੂਤਾਂ ਸਮੇਤ ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੀ ਖੋਜ ਦੀਆਂ ਉਣਤਾਈਆਂ ਦਾ ਅਹਿਸਾਸ ਕਰਾਇਆ ਤਾਂ ਮਕਲਾਉਡ ਨੂੰ ਕਈ ਸੁਧਾਈਆਂ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਮਜਬੂਰ ਹੋਣਾ ਪਿਆ। (ਭਾਈ ਜੋਧ ਸਿੰਘ ਦੀਆਂ ਦਲੀਲਾਂ ਦੇ ਕਾਰਨ ਮਕਲਾਉਡ ਹੁਣ ਕਰਤਾਰਪੁਰ ਵਾਲੀ ਬੀੜ ਨੂੰ ਅਸਲੀ ਬੀੜ ਕਹਿੰਦਾ ਹੈ) ਆਪਣੀ ਚਾਲ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਵਿਚ ਨਾ ਲੱਗਦੀ ਦੇਖ ਕੇ ਮਕਲਾਉਡ ਨੇ ਪੱਛਮੀ ਵਿਸ਼ਵ-ਵਿਦਿਆਲਿਆ ਵਿਚ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦਾ ਅਧਿਐਨ ਅਤੇ ਖੋਜ ਜਾਰੀ ਰੱਖੀ ਅਤੇ ਕਈ ਹੋਰ ਭੁਲੇਖੇ ਪੈਦਾ ਕਰ ਦਿੱਤੇ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਭੁਲੇਖਿਆਂ ਦਾ ਜਦ ਕਾਨਫਰੰਸਾਂ ਨੇ ਉੱਤਰੀ ਅਮਰੀਕਾ ਵਿਚ ਅਤੇ ਸਥਾਨਕ ਤੌਰ 'ਤੇ ਕਾਨਫਰੰਸਾਂ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਵਿਰੋਧ ਕੀਤਾ ਤਾਂ ਮਕਲਾਉਡ ਨੂੰ ਕੋਈ ਹੋਰ ਰਾਹ ਲੱਭਣਾ ਪਿਆ। ਉਹ ਰਾਹ ਸੀ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਧਰਮ 'ਤੇ ਉਨਾਏ ਹੋਏ ਕਿੰਤੂਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਹੀ ਉਭਾਰਿਆ ਜਾਵੇ । ਫਲਸਰੂਪ ਉਸ ਨੇ ਉਬਰਾਏ, ਪਸ਼ੋਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਅਤੇ ਕਈ ਹੋਰ ਸਿੱਖ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣਾ ਹੱਥ ਠੋਕਾ ਬਣਾਇਆ।

ਸਵਾਲ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਨੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਧਰਮ, ਕਰਮ, ਈਮਾਨ ਅਤੇ ਖਾਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਸਭਿਆਚਾਰ ਨੂੰ ਕਿਉਂ ਦਾਅ 'ਤੇ ਲਾ ਦਿੱਤਾ? ਇਸ ਦਾ ਸੰਕੇਤ ਮੈਂ ਪਸ਼ੋਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਦੇ ਥੀਸਿਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਲਿਖੇ ਇਕ ਲੇਖ ਵਿਚ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਸੀ। (ਪਸ਼ੋਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਦੇ ਥੀਸਿਸ ਦਾ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਅਧਿਐਨ-ਇੰਡੋ ਕਨੇਡੀਅਨ ਟਾਇਮਜ਼ ਅਪ੍ਰੈਲ 8-14-1993)। ਸਵਾਲ ਕੀਤਾ ਸੀ ਕਿ 'ਇਸ ਦੁਨੀਆਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਕਿੰਨੇ ਕੁ ਵਿਅਕਤੀ ਐਸੇ ਹੋਣਗੇ ਜੋ ਧਰਮ ਖਾਤਰ ਆਪਣੀ ਰੋਜ਼ੀ ਦੇ ਸਾਧਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਲੱਤ ਮਾਰ ਦੇਣਗੇ? ਇਸ ਸਵਾਲ ਦਾ ਉੱਤਰ ਲੱਭਣ ਲਈ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੇ ਅੰਦਰ ਡੂੰਘੀ ਨਜ਼ਰ ਮਾਰਨੀ ਪਵੇਗੀ। ਪਰ ਗੁਰੂ+ ਦੇ ਅਸਲੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਸ਼ਾਇਦ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ ਅਸੂਲਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਹੀ ਮਹੱਤਤਾ ਦੇਣ।' ਮਕਲਾਉਡ ਦੇ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਪੀ.ਐਚ.ਡੀ. ਵਰਗੀ ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਉੱਤਮ ਉਪਾਧੀ ਦਾ ਲਾਲਚ ਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਗਿਆ ਸੀ, ਸਗੋਂ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਨੌਕਰੀਆਂ ਵੀ ਪੱਕੀਆਂ ਕਰ ਦਿੱਤੀਆਂ ਗਈਆਂ। ਅਜਿਹੀ ਹਾਲਤ ਵਿੱਚ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਵਫ਼ਾਦਾਰੀ ਤਾਂ ਕੀ ਇਕ (ਅਖਾਉਤੀ) ਸਿੱਖ ਈਮਾਨ ਵੀ ਡੋਲ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ। ਮੇਰੇ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਵਿੱਚ ਜੇ ਪਸ਼ੋਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ, ਉਬਰਾਏ ਅਤੇ ਮਾਨ ਵਰਗੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੇ ਅਜਿਹਾ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਦਾ ਘੱਟ ਅਤੇ ਮਜ਼ਬੂਰੀ ਦਾ ਵਧੇਰੇ ਖਿਆਲ ਰੱਖਣਾ ਪਵੇਗਾ।

### ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਅਧਿਕਾਰ (Academic Freedom)

ਪੱਛਮੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਖੋਜੀਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਸ਼ਿਸ਼ਾਂ ਨੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਬਾਰੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਖੋਜ ਨੂੰ 'ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਅਧਿਕਾਰ' ਦੇ ਓਹਲੇ ਛੁਪਾਉਣ ਦੀ ਕੋਸ਼ਿਸ਼ ਕੀਤੀ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਵਿੱਚ ਕੋਈ ਸ਼ੱਕ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਿ ਵਿਸ਼ਵ-ਵਿਦਿਆਲਾ ਵਿਚ ਇਕ ਖੋਜੀ ਨੂੰ ਹਰ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਖੋਜ ਕਰਨ ਦਾ ਪੂਰਾ ਹੱਕ ਹੈ, ਬਸ਼ਰਤੇ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਖੋਜ ਯੋਗ ਤਜਰਬਿਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਉਚਿਤ ਨਿਰੀਖਣਾ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਸੱਚ ਨੂੰ ਉਜਾਗਰ ਕਰੇ। ਉਹ ਸੱਚ ਜਿਸ ਦੀ ਪੁਸ਼ਟੀ (Confirmation) ਹੋ ਸਕੇ। ਸੱਚ ਹਮੇਸ਼ਾ ਸੱਚ ਹੀ ਰਹੇਗਾ, ਬਾਹਰੇ ਉਹ ਕਿਸੇ ਨੂੰ ਕੋੜਾ ਲੱਗੇ ਜਾਂ ਮਿੱਠਾ। ਅਜਿਹੇ ਸੱਚ ਨੂੰ ਕੋਈ ਅੱਚ ਨਹੀਂ ਆਉਂਦੀ, ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਉਹ ਸਮੇਂ, ਸਥਾਨ ਜਾਂ ਖਿਲਾਅ ਦੇ ਬੰਧਨਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਮੁਕਤ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਅਜਿਹੇ ਸੱਚ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤੀ ਤੁਹਾਡਾ 'ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਅਧਿਕਾਰ' ਹੈ।

ਪਰ ਸਵਾਲ ਉੱਠਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਜਿਸ ਸੱਚ ਨੂੰ ਇਕ ਖੋਜੀ 'ਸੱਚ' ਕਹਿੰਦਾ ਹੈ, ਕੀ ਉਹ ਸਹੀ ਸੱਚ ਹੈ? ਇਸ ਸਵਾਲ ਦਾ ਉੱਤਰ ਤਾਂ ਹੀ ਮਿਲ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ ਜੇ ਕੋਈ ਹੋਰ ਉਸੇ ਖੇਤਰ ਦਾ ਨਿਪੁੰਨ ਖੋਜੀ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਸੱਚ ਦੀ ਪੁਸ਼ਟੀ ਕਰੇ। ਚਾਹੇ ਉਹ ਪੁਸ਼ਟੀ ਆਪਣੇ ਤਜਰਬਿਆਂ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਕਰੇ ਜਾਂ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਹੋਏ ਖੋਜ ਤਰੀਕਿਆਂ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਕਰੇ। ਇੰਜ ਕੋਈ ਦੂਸਰਾ ਖੋਜੀ ਤਾਂ ਹੀ ਕਰ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਆਪਣੀ ਖੋਜ ਨੂੰ ਰਾਸ਼ਟਰੀ ਜਾਂ ਅੰਤਰਰਾਸ਼ਟਰੀ ਪੱਧਰ 'ਤੇ ਪਰਖਣ ਲਈ ਪ੍ਰਸਤੁਤ ਕੋ। ਇਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੀ ਪੀ.ਐਚ.ਡੀ. ਥੀਸਿਸ ਵਿਚ ਦਰਜ ਖੋਜ ਨੂੰ 'ਖੋਜ ਪੱਤਰਾਂ' (Research Papers) ਰਾਹੀਂ ਖੋਜ ਪਰਚਿਆਂ (Research Journals) ਵਿੱਚ ਛਾਪਿਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਜੋ ਖੋਜ ਕਰਨਾ 'ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਅਧਿਕਾਰ' ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਉਚਿੱਤ ਪਰਚਿਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਖਾਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਨਿਰਣਾਇਕ ਖੋਜ ਪਰਚਿਆਂ (referred research journals) ਵਿਚ ਛਾਪਣਾ ਵੀ 'ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਅਧਿਕਾਰ' ਵਿਚ ਆਉਂਦਾ ਹੈ।

ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਵਿਚਾਰ 'ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਅਧਿਕਾਰ' ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰੀਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਦੀ ਹੱਦ ਵਿਚ ਆਉਂਦੇ ਹਨ। ਪੁਸ਼ਟੀ ਲਈ Collier's Encyclopaedia ਵਿਚ Academic Freedom ਬਾਰੇ ਦਿੱਤੀ ਹੋਈ ਪ੍ਰੀਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਪ੍ਰਸਤੁਤ ਹੈ:

“Academic freedom, the ability to develop knowledge

and communicate it within an institute of learning without interference from administrative officials, political and ecclesiastical authorities or any others. The need for such freedom stems from the traditional function of a university to increase, preserve, evaluate and impart knowledge by reporting accurately and faithfully the results of his (her) investigations. He (She) may not falsify or twist these results to fit a pre-concerned pattern nor serve a special constituency... scholarship demands honest reporting; similarly, the claim to an academic freedom is founded and depends upon that honesty. Threats to academic freedom may arise when the scholar develops ideas that challenge those commonly held by certain groups. At such times, individual citizen, pressure groups or even the community at large may wish to interfere with teaching or research."

ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਪ੍ਰੀਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਦਾ ਸਾਰੰਸ਼ ਇਹ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਗਿਆਨ ਨੂੰ ਪਾਉਣਾ, ਵਧਾਉਣਾ ਅਤੇ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਰ ਕਰਨਾ, ਗਿਆਨ ਨੂੰ ਪਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਉੱਚਿਤ ਖੋਜ ਤਰੀਕੇ ਵਰਤਣੇ ਅਤੇ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਰਨ ਲਈ ਦਿਆਨਤਦਾਰੀ ਵਰਤਣਾ। ਗਿਆਨ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤੀ ਲਈ ਪ੍ਰਯੋਗੀ ਤੱਤਾਂ (data of facts) ਵਿਚ ਹੋਰ-ਫੇਰੀ ਕਰਨਾ ਇਕ ਘੋਰ ਬਦਦਿਆਨਤਦਾਰੀ ਹੈ। 'ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਅਧਿਕਾਰ' ਦੀ ਬੁਨਿਆਦ ਦਿਆਨਤਦਾਰੀ ਤੇ ਨਿਰਭਰ ਹੈ। ਪ੍ਰੀਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਇਹ ਵੀ ਕਿਹਾ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਜੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਖੋਜ ਕਾਰਨ ਆਮ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਦੇ ਹਾਵਾਂ-ਭਾਵਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸੱਟ ਵਜੇ ਤਾਂ ਉਸ ਭਾਈਚਾਰੇ ਦੇ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਵਿਅਕਤੀਗਤ ਤੌਰ 'ਤੇ ਜਾਂ ਸਮੂਹਿਕ ਤੌਰ 'ਤੇ ਦਖਲਅੰਦਾਜ਼ੀ ਕਰਨ ਦਾ ਹੱਕ ਹੈ।

ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਅਧਿਕਾਰ ਦੀ ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਪ੍ਰੀਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਦੀ ਲੋਅ ਵਿਚ ਜੇ ਅਸੀਂ ਮਕਲਾਊਡ ਦੇ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਖੋਜ ਨੂੰ ਪਰਖੀਏ ਤਾਂ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੀ ਵੀ ਪੀ.ਐਚ.ਡੀ. ਦੀ ਖੋਜ ਪੂਰੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਉਤਰਦੀ। ਕਾਰਨ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਹਨ :

- (1) ਉਬਰਾਏ, ਪਸ਼ੋਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਅਤੇ ਮਾਨ ਨੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਥੀਸਿਸਾਂ ਦੇ ਆਧਾਰ ਤੇ ਕੋਈ ਵੀ ਖੋਜ ਪੱਤਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਛਾਪਿਆ। (ਉਬਰਾਏ ਨੇ ਕੁਝ ਪੱਤਰ ਜੋ ਕਾਨਫਰੰਸਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਪੜ੍ਹੇ, ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਤੇ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਥੀਸਿਸ ਦੀ ਖੋਜ ਸਮਗਰੀ ਬਾਰੇ ਕੁਝ ਪਤਾ ਲੱਗਿਆ, ਜਿਸ ਦੇ ਆਧਾਰ 'ਤੇ ਥੀਸਿਸ ਦੀ ਖੋਜ ਸਮਗਰੀ ਬਾਰੇ ਕੁੱਝ ਕੁ ਵਿਚਾਰਾਂ ਦਾ ਵੀ ਪਤਾ ਲੱਗਾ)।
- (2) ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਖੋਜੀਆਂ ਨੇ ਖੋਜ-ਪੱਤਰ ਤਾਂ ਕੀ ਛਾਪਣੇ ਸਨ, ਸਗੋਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਥੀਸਿਸ ਲਾਇਬ੍ਰੇਰੀਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਬੰਦ ਕਰਾ ਰੱਖੇ ਹਨ। ਗੁਰਿੰਦਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਮਾਨ ਦੇ ਆਦੇਸ਼ 'ਤੇ ਉਸ ਦਾ ਥੀਸਿਸ ਦੋ ਸਾਲ ਲਈ ਕੋਲੰਬੀਆ ਵਿਸ਼ਵ-ਵਿਦਿਆਲਾ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਪਰਖ ਲਈ ਬਾਹਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਆ ਸਕਦਾ। ਇਸੇ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦੇ ਆਦੇਸ਼ 'ਤੇ ਉਸ ਦਾ ਥੀਸਿਸ ਅਸਟ੍ਰੇਲੀਅਨ ਨੈਸ਼ਨਲ ਵਿਸ਼ਵ-ਵਿਦਿਆਲਾ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਪਰਖ ਲਈ ਬਾਹਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਆ ਸਕਦਾ। ਕਿਸੇ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਪਸ਼ੋਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਦਾ ਥੀਸਿਸ ਟਰਾਂਟੋ ਵਿਸ਼ਵ-ਵਿਦਿਆਲਾ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਬਾਹਰ ਆ ਗਿਆ, ਜਿਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਸ ਦੀ ਪੂਰੀ ਖੋਜ ਦਾ ਪਤਾ ਲੱਗ ਗਿਆ। ਜੇ ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਵੀ ਪਤਾ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਤਾਂ ਪਸ਼ੋਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਦਾ ਥੀਸਿਸ ਵੀ ਵਿਸ਼ਵ-ਵਿਦਿਆਲਾ ਦੀ ਚਾਰ-ਦੀਵਾਰੀ ਦੀ ਮਲਕੀਅਤ ਬਣ ਕੇ ਰਹਿ ਜਾਣਾ ਸੀ।

ਪਸ਼ੋਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ, ਉਬਰਾਏ ਅਤੇ ਮਾਨ ਹੋਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਕੋਈ ਪੁੱਛੇ ਦਿ ਇਕ ਪਾਸੇ ਤਾਂ ਤੁਸੀਂ 'ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਅਧਿਕਾਰ' ਦੇ ਆਧਾਰ 'ਤੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਖੋਜ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਧ ਕਰਦੇ ਹੋ ਅਤੇ ਦੂਜੇ ਪਾਸੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਥੀਸਿਸਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਬੰਦ ਕਰਵਾ ਕੇ "ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਅਧਿਕਾਰ" ਦੇ ਮੁੱਢਲੇ ਤੱਤ ਦੀ ਉਲੰਘਣਾ ਕਰਦੇ ਹੋ। ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਪਤਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਖੋਜ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰਮਾਣਕਤਾ ਉਦੋਂ ਤੱਕ ਸਿੱਧ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੁੰਦੀ, ਜਦੋਂ ਤੱਕ ਉਸ ਖੋਜ ਨੂੰ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਸਮਕਾਲੀ ਖੋਜਕਾਰ ਨਿਰਖ-ਪਰਖ ਕੇ ਸਿੱਧ ਨਾ ਕਰਨ। ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਮਨ ਵਿਚ ਕਿਹੜਾ ਚੋਰ ਹੈ? ਪਸ਼ੋਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਦੀ ਚੋਰੀ ਤਾਂ ਫੜੀ ਗਈ, ਜਿਸਦੇ ਫਲਸਰੂਪ ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਅਕਾਲ ਤਖ਼ਤ ਵਿਚ ਹਾਜ਼ਰ ਹੋਣ ਲਈ ਕਿਹਾ ਗਿਆ ਅਤੇ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਚੋਰੀ ਸਾਹਮਣੇ ਆਈ ਤਾਂ ਮੇਰੇ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਵਿਚ ਤੁਹਾਡਾ ਵੀ ਸ਼ਾਇਦ ਇਹੋ ਹਸਰ ਹੋਵੇਗਾ।

ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਨੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਖੋਜ ਛਾਪੀ ਤਾਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਪਰ ਤਾਂ ਵੀ ਜਿਹੜੀ ਉੱਘ-ਸੁੱਘ ਦੇ ਆਧਾਰ 'ਤੇ ਜੋ ਕਿੰਤੂ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਖੋਜ ਬਾਰੇ ਉਠਾਏ ਗਏ ਹਨ, ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦਾ ਉਤਰ ਦੇਣੇ ਵੀ ਝਿਜਕਦੇ ਹਨ। ਕਾਇਦਾ ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਇਕ ਖੋਜੀ ਆਪਣੀ ਖੋਜ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰੋੜਤਾ ਲਈ ਉਸ ਥਾਂ ਪੁੱਜੇ ਜਿਥੇ ਉਸ ਦੀ ਖੋਜ ਤੇ ਕਿੰਤੂ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾਵੇ। ਖੋਜੀ ਆਮ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਕ ਕਾਨਫਰੰਸ ਦੀ ਸ਼ਕਲ ਵਿਚ ਸਾਂਝੇ ਪਲੈਟਫਾਰਮ ਤੇ ਇੱਕਠੇ ਹੋ ਕੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਖੋਜ ਦੀ ਨਿਰਖ-ਪਰਖ ਕਰਦੇ ਅਤੇ ਕਰਾਉਂਦੇ ਹਨ ਤਾਂ ਕਿ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦਾ ਵਕਾਰ ਵਧੇ ਅਤੇ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਖੇਤਰ ਵਿਚ ਮਾਣਤਾ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੋਵੇ। ਪਰ ਇਹ ਖੋਜੀ ਤਾਂ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਕਾਨਫਰੰਸਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਸੱਦੇ 'ਤੇ ਵੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਪੁੱਜੇ ਜਿਥੇ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਖੋਜ ਬਾਰੇ ਹੀ ਚਰਚਾ ਹੋਣੀ ਸੀ। ਮਿਸਾਲ ਦੇ ਤੌਰ 'ਤੇ 1989 ਵਿਚ ਲਾਸ ਏਂਜਲਿਸ ਅਤੇ 1992 ਵਿਚ ਵੈਨਕੂਵਰ ਵਿਚ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਬਾਰੇ ਹੋ ਰਹੀਆਂ ਕਾਨਫਰੰਸਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਮਕਲਾਉਡ ਅਤੇ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਚੋਲਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਖਾਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਸੱਦੇ ਪੱਤਰ ਭੇਜੇ ਗਏ ਕਿ ਆਓ ਅਤੇ ਆ ਕੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਹੋਰ ਸਿੱਖ ਵਿਦਵਾਨਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਸਾਂਝੇ ਕਰੋ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਆਉਣਾਂ ਤਾਂ ਕੀ ਸੀ, ਕਿਸੇ ਸੱਦੇ-ਪੱਤਰ ਜਾਂ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਦਾ ਉੱਤਰ ਵੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਦਿੱਤਾ। ਕੀ ਇਹ 'ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਅਧਿਕਾਰ' ਦੇ ਖਿਲਾਫ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਿ ਆਪਣੇ ਵਿਚਾਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਸੁਰੱਖਿਆ ਤੋਂ ਵੀ ਕੰਨੀ ਕਤਰਾਈ ਜਾਏ। ਮੇਰੇ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਵਿਚ ਇਹ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਬਦਦਿਆਨਤਦਾਰੀ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਦੇ ਉਲਟ ਇਹ ਖੋਜੀ ਆਪਣੀਆਂ ਕਾਨਫਰੰਸਾਂ ਕਰਾਉਂਦੇ ਹਨ, ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਆਮ ਸਿੱਖ ਵਿਦਵਾਨਾਂ ਜਾਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਸੰਗਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸੱਦਾ ਤਾਂ ਇਕ ਪਾਸੇ ਰਿਹਾ, ਕਾਨਫਰੰਸਾਂ ਦੀ ਸਾਰੀ ਕਾਰਵਾਈ ਵੀ ਗੁਪਤ ਰੱਖੀ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ। ਭਰੋਸੇਯੋਗ ਸਾਧਨਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਪਤਾ ਲੱਗਾ ਹੇ ਕਿ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਕਾਨਫਰੰਸਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਹੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਵਿਦਵਾਨ ਹਿੱਸਾ ਲੈਂਦੇ ਹਨ ਜਾਂ ਸੱਦੇ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਹਨ ਜੋ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਬਾਰੇ ਬੇਬੁਨਿਆਦ ਖੋਜ ਦੇ ਸੰਬੰਧ ਵਿਚ ਇੱਕੋ ਥੈਲੀ ਦੇ ਚੱਟੇ-ਵੱਟੇ ਹਨ। ਸਵਾਲ ਉੱਠਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਇਹ ਵਿਦਵਾਨ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਖੁਫੀਆਂ ਕਾਨਫਰੰਸਾਂ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਕਿਹੜੀ ਸੋਚ-ਵਿਚਾਰ ਕਰਨਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹਨ, ਜੋ ਸਾਰੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਵਿਦਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਖੁੱਲ੍ਹਾ-ਸੱਦਾ ਪੱਤਰ ਦੇ ਕੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੋ ਸਕਦੀ। ਉੱਤਰ ਸਿੱਧਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਮਨ ਵਿਚ ਕੋਈ ਖੋਟ ਹੈ ਜਾਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਦੇ ਹਨ ਕਿ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਖੋਜ ਵਿਚ ਕੋਈ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਬਦਦਿਆਨਤਦਾਰੀ ਹੈ। ਜੇ ਕੋਈ ਅਜਿਹੀ ਗੱਲ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਘੱਟ ਤੋਂ ਘੱਟ 'ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਅਧਿਕਾਰ' ਦੀ ਗੱਲ ਤਾਂ ਨਾ ਕਰਨ, ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਅਜਿਹਾ ਕਰਨ ਨਾਲ ਖੋਜ ਦੀ ਸੁਚੱਮਤਾ ਦੇ ਦਾਗ ਲੱਗਦਾ ਹੈ।

ਮਕਲਾਉਡ ਅਤੇ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਸ਼ਿਸ਼ਾਂ ਦੁਆਰਾ ਆਯੋਜਿਤ ਕੀਤੀਆਂ ਤਿੰਨ ਕਾਨਫਰੰਸਾਂ ਦੀ ਲੜੀ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਇਕ ਪਿੱਛੇ ਜਿਹੇ Nov 1993 MADISON (WISCONSIN) ਵਿਚ ਹੋਈ। ਦੂਸਰੀਆਂ ਦੋ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਇਕ 3, 4, 5 ਫਰਵਰੀ (1994) ਨੂੰ ANN ARBOR MICHIGAN ਵਿਸ਼ਵ-ਵਿਦਿਆਲਾ ਵਿਚ ਹੋਈ ਅਤੇ ਦੂਸਰੀ 10, 11, 12 ਫਰਵਰੀ ਨੂੰ ਟਰਾਂਟੋ ਵਿਸ਼ਵ-ਵਿਦਿਆਲਾ ਵਿਚ ਹੋਈ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਕਾਨਫਰੰਸਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਸਿਰਫ ਸੱਦੇ ਹੋਏ ਬੁਲਾਰੇ ਅਤੇ ਵਿਅਕਤੀ ਹੀ ਸ਼ਾਮਲ ਹੋ ਸਕੇ।



ਮਕਲਾਉਡ ਅਤੇ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਸ਼ਿਸ਼ਾਂ ਦੀ ਖੋਜ ਸੰਬੰਧੀ ਵਿਰੋਧੀ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਰੱਖਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਵਿਦਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸੱਦਾ ਤਾਂ ਇਕ ਪਾਸੇ ਰਿਹਾ ਸੂਚਿਤ ਵੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਿਤਾ ਗਿਆ। ਹਿਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਇਹ ਲੋਕ ਆਪਣੀ ਖੋਜ ਨੂੰ 'ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਅਧਿਕਾਰ' ਦੇ ਪਿਛਵਾੜੇ ਤਾੜ ਕੇ 'ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਅਧਿਕਾਰ' ਵਰਗੀ ਸੁੱਚੀ ਪ੍ਰਥਾ ਦੀਆਂ ਧੱਜੀਆਂ ਉਡਾਉਂਦੇ ਹਨ। ਕਾਨਫਰੰਸਾਂ ਦਾ ਕਾਇਦਾ ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਜਿਸ ਵਿਸ਼ੇ 'ਤੇ ਵਿਚਾਰ-ਵਟਾਂਦਰਾ ਹੋਣਾ ਹੋਵੇ ਉਸ ਵਿਸ਼ੇ ਦੇ ਸਮਰਥਕਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਵਿਰੋਧੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਇਕਸਾਰ ਸੱਦਾ-ਪੱਤਰ ਦੇ ਕੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਵਿਚਾਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਾਂਝੇ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਸੱਦਿਆ ਜਾਵੇ। ਜੇ ਕਾਨਫਰੰਸ ਦੇ ਹਾਲ ਵਿਚ ਸੀਟਾਂ ਨੀਯਤ ਹੋਣ ਤਾਂ ਬੁਲਾਰਿਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਸੀਟਾਂ ਰਾਖਵੀਆਂ ਕਰਕੇ ਬਾਕੀ ਦੀਆਂ ਸੀਟਾਂ ਦਿਲਚਸਪੀ ਰੱਖਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਸਰੋਤਿਆਂ ਲਈ ਖੁੱਲ੍ਹੀਆਂ ਰੱਖੀਆਂ ਜਾਂਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ। ਜੇ ਕਾਨਫਰੰਸ ਦੀ ਕੋਈ ਫੀਸ ਹੋਵੇ ਤਾਂ ਅਰਜ਼ੀ ਦੇ ਆਧਾਰ 'ਤੇ first come first serve ਦੀ ਵਿਧੀ ਨੂੰ ਅਪਣਾਇਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਪਰ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਕਾਨਫਰੰਸਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਤਾਂ ਬੁਲਾਰੇ ਵੀ ਅਤੇ ਸਰੋਤੇ ਵੀ ਸੱਦ ਕੇ ਬੁਲਾਏ ਗਏ ਸਨ। ਜ਼ਾਹਰ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਧਿਰ ਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਕਾਨਫਰੰਸ ਵਿਚ ਹਿੱਸਾ ਲੈਣ ਤੋਂ ਜਾਣ-ਬੁੱਝ ਕੇ ਵਿਰਵਾ ਰੱਖਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਸਨ। ਜੇ ਅਜਿਹੀ ਵਿਸ਼ਵ-ਵਿਦਿਆਲਾ ਦੇ ਅਧਿਕਾਰੀਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਬੁਲਾਰਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਨੀਅਤ 'ਤੇ ਵੀ ਸ਼ੱਕ ਕਰਨਾ ਸ਼ੁਰੂ ਕਰ ਦਿੰਦੇ, ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਬਾਰੇ ਕਾਨਫਰੰਸ ਵਿਚ ਸ਼ਾਇਦ ਹੀ ਮੀਡੀਆ ਜਾਂ ਵਿਸ਼ਵ-ਵਿਦਿਆਲਾ ਦੇ ਅਧਿਕਾਰੀ ਕੋਈ ਦਿਲਚਸਪੀ ਲੈਣ। ਆਮ ਸਿੱਖ ਸੰਗਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਕਾਨਫਰੰਸਾਂ ਦਾ ਨੋਟਿਸ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ। ਅਜਿਹਾ ਨੋਟਿਸ ਇਸ ਸੰਬੰਧ ਵਿਚ ਇਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਵੀ ਮਹਤਵਪੂਰਨ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਕਈ ਬੁਲਾਰੇ, ਸਿੱਖ ਸੰਗਤ ਦੇ ਉੱਦਮ ਨਾਲ ਸਥਾਪਤ ਕੀਤੀਆਂ ਹੋਈਆਂ ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰਸ਼ਿਪਾਂ ਤੇ ਬਿਰਾਜਮਾਨ ਹਨ। ਨਾਲ ਹੀ ਸੰਬੰਧਤ ਵਿਸ਼ਵ-ਵਿਦਿਆਲਾ ਦੇ ਅਧਿਕਾਰੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖ ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰਾਂ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਕੀਤੀ ਗਈ 'ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਅਧਿਕਾਰ' ਦੀ ਉਲੰਘਣਾ ਬਾਰੇ ਵੀ ਸੂਚਿਤ ਕਰਨਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ।

### ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰਸ਼ਿਪ ਅਤੇ ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰ ਦੀ ਨਿਯੁਕਤੀ

ਜਦ ਕੋਈ ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰਸ਼ਿਪ (chair) ਕਿਸੇ ਸੰਸਥਾ ਜਾਂ ਵਿਅਕਤੀ ਵਲੋਂ ਪੈਸੇ ਦਾਨ ਕਰਕੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਵਿਸ਼ਵ-ਵਿਦਿਆਲਾ ਵਿਚ ਸਥਾਪਤ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਆਸ਼ਾ ਇਹ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਇਸ ਦੀ ਮਰਜ਼ਾਦਾ ਨੂੰ ਕਾਇਮ ਰੱਖਣ ਲਈ ਕਿਸੇ ਯੋਗ ਵਿਦਵਾਨ ਨੂੰ ਉਸ ਲਈ ਨਿਯੁਕਤ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾਵੇ। ਅਜਿਹੇ ਵਿਅਕਤੀ ਦੀ ਭਾਲ ਅਤੇ ਚੋਣ ਲਈ ਵਿਸ਼ਵ-ਵਿਦਿਆਲਾ ਦੇ ਅਧਿਕਾਰੀ ਸੰਬੰਧਤ ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰਸ਼ਿਪ ਦੇ ਖੇਤਰ ਵਿਚ ਉੱਘੇ ਵਿਦਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸੱਦਾ-ਪੱਤਰ ਭੇਜਦੇ ਹਨ, ਜਿਸ ਵਿਚ ਇਹ ਆਖਿਆ ਗਿਆ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਾਡੀ ਵਿਸ਼ਵ-ਵਿਦਿਆਲਾ ਵਿਚ ਫਲਾਨੀ ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰਸ਼ਿਪ ਕਾਇਮ ਕੀਤੀ ਗਈ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਲਈ ਕਿਸੇ ਯੋਗ ਵਿਦਵਾਨ ਦੀ ਦੱਸ ਪਾਓ। ਜ਼ਾਹਰ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਜਿਹੜੇ ਵਿਅਕਤੀ ਦੀ ਦੱਸ ਪਾਈ ਜਾਵੇਗੀ, ਉਹ ਅੰਤਰਰਾਸ਼ਟਰੀ ਤੌਰ 'ਤੇ ਆਪਣੀਆਂ ਖੋਜ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਆਧਾਰ 'ਤੇ ਸਹਿਜੇ ਹੀ ਉੱਘਾ ਹੋਵੇਗਾ। ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਜਦ ਦੱਸੇ ਹੋਏ ਨਾਵਾਂ ਦੀ ਸੂਚੀ ਵਿਸ਼ਵ-ਵਿਦਿਆਲਾ ਦੇ ਅਧਿਕਾਰੀਆਂ ਪਾਸ ਆਉਂਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਉਹ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਯੋਗਤਾ ਅਤੇ ਸਲਾਹੁਤਾ-ਪੱਤਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਆਧਾਰ 'ਤੇ ਇਕ ਤੋਂ ਤਿੰਨ ਤੱਕ ਵਿਦਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਮੁਲਾਕਾਤ (interview) ਲਈ ਸੱਦੇ ਦਿੰਦੇ ਹਨ। ਆਖਰ ਵਿਚ ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਯੋਗ ਵਿਅਕਤੀ ਨੂੰ ਰੱਖ ਲਿਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਹੁਣ ਤੱਕ ਆਮ ਕਰਕੇ ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰਸ਼ਿਪਾਂ 'ਤੇ ਉਹੀ ਵਿਅਕਤੀ ਸੁਸ਼ੋਭਤ ਹਨ, ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਕਰਕੇ ਵਿਸ਼ਵ-ਵਿਦਿਆਲਾ ਦਾ ਨਾ ਵੀ ਉੱਘਾ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ।

ਹੁਣ ਸਵਾਲ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖ ਜਗਤ ਦੀ ਮਾਇਆ ਦੁਆਰਾ ਸਥਾਪਤ

ਕੀਤੀਆਂ ਗਈਆਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰਸ਼ਿਪਾਂ ਲਈ ਅਣਜਾਣੇ ਅਤੇ ਖੋਜਕਾਰੀ ਦੇ ਖੇਤਰ ਵਿਚ ਸਿਖਾਂਦਰੂ ਵਿਅਕਤੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਨਿਯੁਕਤੀਆਂ ਮਿਲ ਗਈਆਂ।

ਮੇਰਾ ਭਾਵ ਉਬਰਾਏ, ਪਸ਼ੋਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਤੇ ਮਾਨ ਤੋਂ ਹੈ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਤਿੰਨਾਂ ਵਿਅਕਤੀਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਹ ਕਿਹੜੀ ਉਤਕ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟ ਯੋਗਤਾ ਸੀ, ਜਿਸ ਦੇ ਆਧਾਰ 'ਤੇ ਸੰਬੰਧਤ ਵਿਸ਼ਵ-ਵਿਦਿਆਲਾ ਨੇ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖ ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰਸ਼ਿਪ ਦੇ ਯੋਗ ਸਮਝਿਆ। ਮੇਰੇ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਵਿਚ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਤਿੰਨਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੇ ਗੁਣ ਸਾਂਝੇ ਹਨ, ਸ਼ਾਇਦ ਇਹ ਗੁਣ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਨਿਯੁਕਤੀ ਦਾ ਸਾਧਨ ਬਣੇ ਹੋਣ:

- (1) ਉਬਰਾਏ ਅਤੇ ਪਸ਼ੋਰਾ ਸਿੰਘੋ ਤੋਰ 'ਤੇ ਅਤੇ ਮਾਨ ਅਸਿੰਘੋ ਤੋਰ 'ਤੇ ਮਕਲਾਊਡ ਦੇ ਸ਼ਿਸ਼ ਹਨ।
- (2) ਤਿੰਨਾਂ ਨੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਥੀਸਿਸ ਵਿਚ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਬਾਰੇ ਕਿੰਤੂ ਉਠਾਏ ਹਨ।
- (3) ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਥੀਸਿਸਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਛੁਪਾਉਣ (ਲੁਕੇ ਕੇ ਰੱਖਣ) ਦੀ ਕੋਸ਼ਿਸ਼ ਕੀਤੀ ਹੈ।
- (4) ਆਪਣੇ ਥੀਸਿਸ ਦੀ ਖੋਜ ਉੱਤੇ ਆਧਾਰਤ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੇ ਸ਼ਾਇਦ ਹੀ ਕੋਈ ਖੋਜ-ਪੱਤਰ ਛਾਪਿਆ ਹੋਵੇ, ਜੇ ਛਾਪਿਆ ਵੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਉਹ ਕਿਸੇ ਨਿਰਣਾਇਕ (refered) ਖੋਜ ਪਰਚੇ ਵਿਚ ਨਹੀਂ ਛਾਪਿਆ।
- (5) ਤਿੰਨੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਲਿਆਕਤ ਕਰਕੇ ਨਹੀਂ, ਸਗੋਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਬਾਰੇ ਉਲਾਰੂ ਖੋਜ ਕਰਕੇ ਪ੍ਰਸਿੱਧ ਹਨ।
- (6) ਤਿੰਨਾਂ ਦੀ ਨਿਯੁਕਤੀ ਲਈ ਡਾ. ਮਕਲਾਊਡ ਨੇ ਸਲਾਘਾ ਪੱਤਰ ਲਿਖੇ ਜਾਂ ਲਿਖਵਾਏ ਹੋਣਗੇ।
- (7) ਤਿੰਨੇ ਆਪਣੇ-ਆਪ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖ ਕਹਿੰਦੇ ਹਨ, ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਬਾਹਰੀ ਤੌਰ 'ਤੇ ਲੱਗਦੇ ਵੀ ਹਨ।

ਵਿਸ਼ਵ-ਵਿਦਿਆਲਾ ਨੂੰ ਪੁੱਛਿਆ ਜਾਵੇ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖ ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰਸ਼ਿਪਾਂ ਲਈ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਕਿਹੜਾ ਚੋਣ-ਮਿਆਰ ਰੱਖਿਆ ਸੀ। ਇਸ ਸਵਾਲ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਸੰਬੰਧਤ ਵਿਸ਼ਵ-ਵਿਦਿਆਲਾ ਦੀ ਚੋਣ ਵਿਧੀ ਦਾ ਭਾਂਡਾ ਵੀ ਭੱਜ ਜਾਵੇਗਾ ਅਤੇ 'ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਅਧਿਕਾਰ' ਦੀ ਹੱਦ ਦਾ ਥੋਥਾਪਨ ਵੀ ਸਾਹਮਣੇ ਆ ਜਾਵੇਗਾ। ਅਖੀਰ ਵਿਚ ਇਕ ਸਵਾਲ ਡਾ. ਮਕਲਾਊਡ (ਜੋ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ ਅਧਿਆਪਨ ਲਈ ਯੋਗ ਵਿਦਵਾਨ ਜਾਣੇ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਹਨ) ਨੂੰ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਮਾਪਤ ਕਰਦਾ ਹਾਂ। ਕੀ ਇਹ ਤਿੰਨੇ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰਸ਼ਿਪਾਂ ਦੇ ਯੋਗ ਹਨ?

## ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ, ਸਿੱਖ ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰਸ਼ਿਪ ਅਤੇ ਹਰਜੋਤ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਡਾ. ਗੁਰੁਮੇਲ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਿੰਧੂ

### ਪਿਛਲਾ ਝਾਤ

ਆਪਣੇ ਐਮ.ਏ. (ਨਹਿਰੂ ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀ, ਨਵੀਂ ਦਿੱਲੀ), ਅਤੇ ਪੀ.ਐਚ.ਡੀ. (ਨੈਸ਼ਨਲ ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀ, ਕੈਨਬਰਾ, ਆਸਟਰੇਲੀਆ) ਥੀਸਿਸ ਦੀ ਖੋਜ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਨੂੰ ਚੰਗਾ-ਮੰਦਾ ਲਿਖਣ ਤੋਂ ਬਾਅਦ, ਹੁਣ 14 ਸਾਲਾਂ ਦੇ ਸਮੇਂ ਪਿੱਛੋਂ ਹਰਜੋਤ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਨੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਅਤੇ ਧਰਮ ਬਾਰੇ ਮੁੜ ਕਿੰਤੂ ਉਠਾਏ ਹਨ। ਇਹ ਕਿੰਤੂ ਉਸ ਨੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਨਵੀਂ ਛਪੀ ਪੁਸਤਕ, *The construction of religious boundaries (culture, identity and diversity in the Sikh tradition)*, 1994, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, pp. 493 ਵਿਚ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ, ਸਿੱਖ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ, ਸਿੱਖ ਰਹਿਤਨਾਮਾ, ਸਿੱਖ ਭਾਈਚਾਰਾ, ਸਿੱਖ ਰਾਜਨੀਤੀ, ਸਿੱਖ ਰਾਜ ਆਦਿ ਦੀ ਉਤਪਤੀ, ਵਿਕਾਸ ਅਤੇ ਸਥਿਰਤਾ ਬਾਰੇ ਉਠਾਏ ਹਨ। ਏਥੋਂ ਤੱਕ ਕਿਹਾ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖ ਇੱਕ ਧਾੜਵੀਂ ਕੌਮ ਹੈ, ਜਿਸ ਦਾ ਨਾਂ ਕੋਈ ਨਾਂਅ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਨਾ ਥਾਂ ਹੈ। ਆਪਣੇ ਕੁੱਝ ਲੇਖਾਂ (e.g. Popular saints, Goodesses and village sacred sites: Re-reading Sikh experience in the nineteenth century and ritual to counter ritual, re-thinking of Hindu-Sikh relation, etc.) ਰਾਹੀਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਕੌਮ ਅਤੇ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ ਆਹੂ ਲਾਹੁਣ ਤੋਂ ਬਾਅਦ, ਹਰਜੋਤ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਨੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਸੱਜਰੀ ਪੁਸਤਕ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਮੁੜ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਜ਼ਖਮਾਂ 'ਤੇ ਨਮਕ ਛਿੜਕਿਆ ਹੈ। ਸਿੱਖ ਕੌਮ, ਸਿੱਖ ਮਤ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੀ ਮਾਣ-ਮਰਯਾਦਾ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੀ ਖੋਜ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਨਿੰਦਣਾ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦਾ ਮਨ-ਪ੍ਰਚਾਵਾ ਲਗਦਾ ਹੈ, ਜਿਸ ਨੂੰ ਉਹ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਖੋਜ ਕਹਿੰਦਾ ਹੈ।

ਉਬਰਾਏ, ਆਪਣੀ ਪੁਸਤਕ ਦੇ ਮੁਖਬੰਦ ਵਿਚ ਲਿਖਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਮੇਰਾ ਆਸ਼ਾ ਸਿੱਖ ਕੌਮ ਦੇ ਮੁੱਢ ਬੋਝਣ ਵੱਲ ਲਿਜਾਣ ਦਾ ਹੈ, ਅਰਥਾਤ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖ ਕੌਮ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਹੋਂਦ ਵਿਚ ਆਈ। ਨਾਲ ਹੀ ਉਹ ਇਹ ਵੀ ਪੁਸ਼ਨ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ 19ਵੀਂ ਸਦੀ ਵਿਚ ਇਕ ਸਿੱਖ ਦੇ ਕੀ ਅਰਥ ਸਨ ਅਰਥਾਤ ਇਕ ਸਿੱਖ ਦਾ ਰਹਿਣ, ਪਹਿਰਾਵਾ, ਕਕਾਰ, ਰਸਮੋ-ਰਿਵਾਜ ਅਤੇ ਸੰਸਕਾਰ ਕਿਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਸਨ। ਇਕ ਪੁਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਵੀ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ 'ਜਾਣੇ-ਪਹਿਚਾਣੇ (ਉੱਘੇ) ਸਿੱਖ ਲੀਡਰਾਂ ਨੇ 19ਵੀਂ ਸਦੀ ਵਿਚ ਸਥਾਪਤ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਅਤੇ ਮਸਯਾਦਾ ਦੀ ਭੰਨ-ਤੋੜ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਕ ਸਮਰੂਪ (HOMOGENEOUS) ਸਿੱਖ ਕੌਮ ਅਤੇ ਭਾਈਬਾਰੇ ਦੀ ਸਥਾਪਨਾ ਕਰਨ ਦੀ ਕਿਉਂ ਠਾਣੀ? ਇਸ ਪੁਸ਼ਨ ਤੋਂ ਸਿੱਧ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਸਥਾਪਤ ਸਿੱਖ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ ਅਤੇ ਧਰਮ ਉੱਤੇ ਕਿੰਤੂ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਉਸ ਨੇ 14 ਸਾਲ ਇਸੇ ਪੁਸ਼ਨ ਦਾ ਉੱਤਰ ਲੱਭਣ ਵਿਚ ਲਾ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਹਨ, ਜਦ ਕਿ ਭਾਰਤੀ ਅਤੇ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ੀ ਲਾਇਬਰੇਰੀਆਂ ਇਸ ਦੇ ਸਹੀ ਉੱਤਰ ਨਾਲ ਭਰੀਆਂ ਪਈਆਂ ਹਨ। ਢੇਰ ਸਾਰਾ ਸਾਹਿਤ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਅਤੇ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ ਬਾਰੇ ਪ੍ਰਮਾਣੀਕ ਸਾਹਿਤਕਾਰਾਂ, ਇਤਿਹਾਸਕਾਰਾਂ, ਧਰਮ ਵਿਆਖਿਆਕਾਰਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਰਾਜਨੀਤਕ ਲੀਡਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਗਵਾਹੀ ਨਾਲ ਭਰਿਆ ਪਿਆ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਸਾਹਿਤ ਵਿਚ ਸਿੱਖ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ, ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ ਮੁੱਢ ਜਾਂ ਸਥਾਪਤੀ ਬਾਰੇ ਕੋਈ ਕਿੰਤੂ ਨਹੀਂ ਮਿਲਦਾ। ਹੋ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਸਾਰੇ ਸਾਹਿਤਕਾਰਾਂ ਨਾਲੋਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪ ਨੂੰ ਅਨੋਖਾ ਗਿਆਨਵਾਨ ਸਮਝਦਾ ਹੋਵੇ। ਪਰ ਯਾਦ ਰਹੇ ਕਿ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ-ਅਨੋਖਪਨ ਮਨਘੜਤਾਂ ਦਾ ਮੁਖਾਜ਼ ਨਹੀਂ, ਬਲਕਿ ਇਕ ਪ੍ਰੋੜੁ ਸਬੂਤ ਮੰਗਦਾ ਹੈ, ਜਿਸ ਦੇ ਨਾਲ ਇਮਾਨਦਾਰੀ ਦੀ ਝਲਕ ਵੀ ਪੈਂਦੀ ਹੋਵੇ। ਪਰ ਇੰਝ ਜਾਪਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਪਾਸ ਕੋਈ ਅਨੋਖੇ ਅਤੇ ਗੁੱਝੇ ਮਾਲਕੀ ਹੱਕ ਹਨ; ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਉਹ ਆਪਣੀਆਂ ਮਿਥਿਹਾਸਕ (MYTHO-

LOGICAL) ਅਤੇ ਅਜੀਬ-ਗਰੀਬ ਖੋਜ ਵਿਧੀਆਂ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਥੀਸਿਸ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰੋੜਤਾ ਕਰਦਾ ਜਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਉਸ ਦਾ ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਡਾ ਹਥਿਆਰ ਹੈ ਸਿੱਖ ਪਰੰਪਰਾ ਦੀ ਛਾਣਬੀਣ। ਜੇ ਸਵਾਲ ਤੱਥ ਅਤੇ ਸੱਚ ਦੇ ਆਧਾਰ 'ਤੇ ਸਿੱਧ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੋ ਸਕਦਾ, ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਉਹ ਇੱਕ ਛਲਾਵੇ ਦੇ ਰੂਪ ਵਿੱਚ ਰੱਖ ਕੇ ਪੁਨਰ-ਸਿਰਜਦਾ ਅਤੇ ਪੁਨਰ-ਸਲਾਹੁੰਦਾ ਰਹਿੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇੰਝ ਕਰਦਾ-ਕਰਦਾ ਉਹ ਵਾਕਈ ਇਸ ਗੱਲ ਵਿਚ ਯਕੀਨ ਕਰਨ ਲੱਗ ਪੈਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖ ਪਰੰਪਰਾ ਇਕ ਛਲਾਵਾ ਹੀ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਗੱਲ ਚੀਨ ਦੇ ਅਖਾਣ ਨਾਲ ਬੜੀ ਢੁਕਦੀ ਹੈ। ਅਖਾਣ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਜੇ ਕੋਈ ਝੂਠ ਲਗਾਤਾਰ ਸੌ ਵਾਰੀ ਬੋਲੀ ਜਾਈਏ ਤਾਂ ਸੱਚ ਪ੍ਰਤੀਤ ਹੋਣ ਲੱਗ ਪੈਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਆਪਣੇ ਸਾਰੇ ਦੇ ਸਾਰੇ ਲੇਖਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਰਮਚੇਅਰ ਆਪਹੁਦਰੇਪਣ ਨੂੰ ਨਿੰਦਾਜਨਕ ਮਨਘੜਤਾਂ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਅਮਲੀ ਜਾਮਾ ਪਹਿਨਾਉਣ ਦਾ ਯਤਨ ਕਰਦਾ ਰਹਿੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਮਨਘੜਤ ਦਿਮਾਗੀ ਕਾਢਾਂ ਦਾ ਚਰਿੱਤਰ-ਚਿਤਰਣ, ਪ੍ਰੀਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਅਤੇ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਚੋਣ ਜੋ ਅਕਾਊ ਨਹੀਂ ਤਾਂ ਘਟੀਆ ਜ਼ਰੂਰ ਹੈ।

ਉਬਰਾਏ, ਆਪਣੀ ਪੁਸਤਕ ਵਿਚ 'ਤੱਤ ਖਾਲਸਾ' ਅਤੇ 'ਸਨਾਤਨ ਖਾਲਸਾ' ਬਾਰੇ ਮਨਘੜਤ ਟਿੱਪਣੀ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਇਕ ਥਾਂ ਲਿਖਦਾ ਹੈ, "ਜੇ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਹਿਬਾਨ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦਾ ਵੱਖਰਾ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਭਾਈਚਾਰਾ ਬਾਪਣ ਲਈ ਉਤਸੁਕ ਹੁੰਦੇ ਤਾਂ ਉਹ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਮੂਲ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਧਰਮ ਨਾਲੋਂ ਵੱਖਰੇ ਮੱਤ, ਜੀਵਨ-ਪੰਧ, ਧਰਮ, ਮਰਯਾਦਾ, ਤਿਉਹਾਰ ਅਤੇ ਨਿਸ਼ਾਨ ਆਦਿ ਦੀ ਬਖਸ਼ਿਸ਼ ਕਰਦੇ। ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੇ ਅਜਿਹਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੀਤਾ, ਇਸ ਲਈ ਇਹ ਆਖਣਾ ਉਚਿਤ ਲੱਗਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਪੰਪਰਾ ਦੀ ਸਥਾਪਨਾ ਲਈ ਸਿਰਫ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਸਮਾਜ ਦੀਆਂ ਸਮਾਜਕ ਅਤੇ ਸਦਾਚਾਰਕ ਕੁਰੀਤੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਤਿਲਾਂਜਲੀ ਹੀ ਦਿੱਤਾ। ਇਹ ਪੱਖ "ਤੱਤ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਦੀ ਸੋਚਣੀ ਤੇ ਬਿਲਕੁਲ ਉਲਟ ਸੀ। ਇਸ ਲਈ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਅਗਾਂਹ ਦੇ ਗਰਮ ਧੜੇ ਬਣ ਗਏ। ਇਸ ਵਖਰਾਓ ਨੇ 1920 ਵਿਚ ਅਕਾਲੀ ਲਹਿਰ ਸਮੇਂ ਆਪਣਾ ਰੰਗ ਦਿਖਾਇਆ। ਸਿੱਖ ਘਰਮ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ ਦੀ ਬੁਨਿਆਦੀ ਅਤੇ ਅਦੁੱਤੀ ਸਥਾਪਨਾ ਨੂੰ ਠੁਕਰਾਉਣ ਕਰਕੇ 'ਸਨਾਤਨ ਸਿੱਖ' ਆਧੁਨਿਕ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਦੁਸ਼ਮਣ ਬਣ ਗਏ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਆਰੀਆ ਸਮਾਜ, ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਸੰਸਥਾਵਾਂ, ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਖੁਦਮੁਖਤਿਆਰ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਭਾਈਚਾਰਾ ਮੰਨਣ ਤੋਂ ਨਾਂਹ ਕਰ ਦਿੱਤੀ, ਦਾ ਹੀ ਭਾਗ ਮੰਨਿਆ ਜਾਣ ਲੱਗਾ।" ਉਬਰਾਏ ਅਗਾਂਹ ਫਿਰ ਦਲੀਲ ਦਿੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਪੇਂਡੂ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੇ ਵੀ ਨਵੇਂ ਖਾਲਸੇ ਦੇ ਨਿਯਮਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਅਪਨਾਉਣ ਤੇ ਨਾਂਹ-ਨੁੱਕਰ ਕੀਤੀ, ਤਾਂ ਵੀ ਉਹ ਇਹ ਮੰਨਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਪੇਂਡੂ ਜਨਤਾ ਅਨਪੜ੍ਹ ਸੀ। ਪਰ ਉਹ ਇਹ ਭੁੱਲ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਭਾ ਲਹਿਰ ਅਤੇ ਚੀਫ਼ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਦੀਵਾਨ ਨੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਜਨਤਾ ਦੀ ਜਾਗ੍ਰਤੀ ਅਤੇ ਪੜ੍ਹਾਈ ਲਈ ਲਗਾਤਾਰ ਮੁਹਿੰਮ ਚਲਾਈ। ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੇ ਅਨੇਕਾਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਕੂਲ, ਕਾਲਜ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਸਿੱਖਿਆਦਾਇਕ ਸੰਸਥਾਵਾਂ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧ ਕੀਤਾ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਸਕੂਲਤਾਂ ਕਰਕੇ ਪੇਂਡੂ ਜਨਤਾ ਪੜ੍ਹ-ਲਿਖ ਗਈ, ਜਿਸ ਕਰਕੇ 20ਵੀਂ ਸਦੀ ਵਿਚ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਪ੍ਰਤੀ ਜਾਗ੍ਰਤੀ ਆਈ। ਸਿੱਖ ਲਹਿਰਾਂ ਨੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੀ ਪਰੰਪਰਾ ਨੂੰ ਪੁਖਤਾ ਹੀ ਲਹੀਂ ਕੀਤਾ, ਸਗੋਂ ਪ੍ਰਵਾਨ ਵੀ ਚੜ੍ਹਾਇਆ। ਇਸ ਤੱਥ ਨੂੰ ਭਾਵੇਂ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਸਵੀਕਾਰ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਵੀ ਉਹ ਇਹ ਗੱਲ 'ਤੇ ਰਜ਼ਮੰਦ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਕਿ ਪੇਂਡੂ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੇ ਖਾਲਸੇ ਦੀ ਧਰਮ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ ਦੀ ਸਥਾਪਨਾ ਵਿਚ ਯੋਗਦਾਨ ਪਾਇਆ। ਉਹ ਇਹ ਭੁੱਲ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖ ਮਤ ਦੇ ਨਿਕਾਸ ਵਿਚ ਮੁਢਲਾ ਹੱਥ ਪੇਂਡੂ ਜਨਤਾ ਦਾ ਹੀ ਸੀ। ਆਖਿਰ ਨੂੰ ਉਹ ਇਹ ਮੰਨਦਾ ਵੀ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਸਮਾਜਕ ਅਤੇ ਵਿਦਿਅਕ ਸੁਧਾਰ ਪਿੱਛੇ 'ਖਾਲਸੇ ਦੀ ਭਾਵਨਾ' ਹੀ ਕੰਮ ਕਰਦੀ ਸੀ, ਜਿਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਹ ਆਪਣੀ ਸਭਿਆਚਾਰਕ ਜਾਣ-ਪਹਿਚਾਣ ਸਥਾਪਤ ਕਰ ਸਕੇ। ਇਸ ਪਹਿਚਾਣ ਦੇ ਭਾਗੀ ਸਾਰੇ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਨ, ਜਿਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਮੱਤ ਇਕ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ ਬਣ ਸਕੀ। ਇਸ ਸਥਾਪਨਾ ਦੀ ਹੋਂਦ ਅੱਜ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਜੀਵਨ ਦੇ ਹਰ ਪਹਿਲੂ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਦਿਖਾਈ ਦਿੰਦੀ ਹੈ।

ਖਾਲਸਾ ਪੰਣ ਦੀ ਸਾਖਿਆਤ ਸਥਾਪਨਾ ਤੋਂ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ (ਜੋ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਨੇ ਕੀਤੀ) ਵੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੀ ਆਪਦੀ ਹੋਂਦ (ਸਮਾਜਿਕ, ਭਾਈਚਾਰਕ ਅਤੇ ਖਾਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਕ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ) ਭਲੀਭਾਂਤ ਸਥਾਪਤ ਹੋ ਚੁੱਕੀ ਸੀ। ਇਸ ਸਥਾਪਨਾ, ਵਿਚ ਪਹਿਲੇ ਸਾਰੇ ਗੁਰੂਆਂ ਦੀ ਮੋਹਰ ਲੱਗ ਚੁੱਕੀ ਸੀ। ਨਿਤਾ-ਪ੍ਰਤੀ ਜੀਵਨ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰੰਪਰਾ ਸਥਾਪਤ ਹੋ ਚੁੱਕੀ ਸੀ। ਧਰਮ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ ਹਰ ਜੀਵਨ ਦੇ ਪਹਿਲੂ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਗ੍ਰਿਤ ਹੋ ਚੁੱਕੀ ਸੀ ਅਤੇ ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਮਹੱਤਵਪੂਰਨ ਗੱਲ ਇਹ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸੰਗਤ ਅਤੇ ਪੰਗਤ ਦੀ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ ਇਸ ਤੱਥ ਵੱਲ ਭਲੀਭਾਂਤ ਸੰਕੇਤ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਭਵਿੱਖ ਵਿਚ ਖਾਲਸੇ ਦੇ ਨਿਯਮ, ਰਹੁਰੀਤ ਅਤੇ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਅਸੂਲ ਕਿਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਹੋਣਗੇ।

ਪਹਿਲੇ ਚਾਰ ਗੁਰੂਆਂ ਨੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੀ ਨੀਂਹ, ਇਸ ਦੇ ਅਸੂਲ ਦੀ ਵਿਉਂਤਬੰਦੀ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ ਦੀ ਸਥਾਪਨਾ ਕੀਤੀ। ਪੰਜਵੇਂ ਗੁਰੂ ਨੇ ਇਸ ਵਿਚ ਗੁਣਾਤਮਕ ਪੱਖੋਂ ਬੜਾ ਵਾਧਾ ਕੀਤਾ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਧਰਮ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਨੂੰ ਸਿਖ ਜਗਤ ਅਤੇ ਧਰਮ ਦਾ ਮੀਰੀ ਥੰਮ ਬਣਾ ਦਿੱਤਾ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਸਮਿਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੀ ਨੁਹਾਰ ਦੇਖ ਕੇ ਬਹੁਤ ਸਾਰੇ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਜੱਟ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਕਿੱਤਾਕਾਰੀ ਅਤੇ ਮੱਧ ਏਸੀਆਂ ਦਾ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ੀ ਖੂਨ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ ਘੇਰੇ ਵਿਚ ਆਇਆ। ਅੱਜ ਦੇ ਨਵ-ਸਿੱਖ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਦੀ ਹੋਂਦ ਇਸੇ ਸਮੇਂ ਬੱਝੀ। ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਵਿਚ ਜੱਟ, ਖੱਤਰੀ ਜਾ ਹੋਰ ਜਾਤੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਵਖਰਾ ਕੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਦੇਖਿਆ ਗਿਆ। ਬਹਾਦਰ ਸੂਰਮੇ ਸਾਰੀਆਂ ਜਾਤੀਆਂ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਖੁੰਭਾਂ ਵਾਂਗ ਉੱਠੇ, ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੀ ਨੀਂਹ ਨੂੰ ਪੁਖਤਾ ਕੀਤਾ। 20ਵੀਂ ਸਦੀ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਜੱਟਾਂ ਨਾਲੋਂ ਵੱਖਰੀਆਂ ਜਾਤੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਲੀਡਰਾਂ ਨੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ ਦੀ ਸਥਾਪਨਾ ਵਿਚ ਉੱਚੇ ਦਰਜੇ ਦਾ ਯੋਗਦਾਨ ਪਾਇਆ। ਨਨਕਾਣਾ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦਾ ਸਾਕਾ, ਜੋ ਸ. ਕਰਤਾਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਝੱਬਰ ਨੇ ਫਤਹਿ ਕੀਤਾ, ਇਸੇ ਲੜੀ ਦੀ ਇਕ ਅਹਿਮ ਮਿਸਾਲ ਹੈ।

ਛੇਵੇਂ, ਸੱਤਵੇਂ ਅਤੇ ਦਸਵੇਂ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਹਿਬਾਨ ਨੇ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਦੀ ਉਹ ਨੁਹਾਰ, ਜੋ ਅੱਜ ਸਾਰੇ ਜਗਤ ਦੇ ਸਾਹਮਣੇ ਹੈ, ਸਥਾਪਤ ਕੀਤੀ। ਇਹ ਤੱਥ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦੀ ਸਮਝ ਤੋਂ ਸ਼ਾਇਦ ਬਾਹਰ ਹੈ। ਇਸੇ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਸ ਦੀ ਪੁਸਤਕ ਇਸ ਅਟਲ ਸੱਚਾਈ ਨੂੰ ਅੱਖੋਂ ਪਰੋਖੇ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੈ। ਜੇ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਅਜੇ ਵੀ ਸਨਾਤਨ ਸਿੱਖ ਦੀ ਹੋਂਦ ਨੂੰ ਇਥੇ ਵੱਖਰੀ ਅਤੇ ਅਦੁੱਤੀ ਸਮਝਦਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਅਵੱਸ਼ਕ ਤੌਰ 'ਤੇ ਕੋਈ ਸਿੱਖ ਮੱਤ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਖਰੀ ਧਾਰਾ ਹੋਵੇਗੀ।

ਉਬਰਾਏ ਇਹ ਸਿੱਟਾ ਵੀ ਕੱਢਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਅਜੋਕੇ 'ਖਾਲਸਾ' ਦੀ ਹੋਂਦ ਅਤੇ ਤੱਥ ਤਵਾਰੀਖੀ ਘਟਨਾਵਾਂ ਦਾ ਮਿਲਗੋਭਾ ਹੈ। 'ਤੱਤ ਖਾਲਸਾ' ਵੀ ਸਰਬੱਤ ਖਾਲਸੇ ਦੀ ਇਕ ਕੜੀ ਹੈ। 'ਖਾਲਸਾ' ਨਾਲ 'ਤੱਤ' ਇਕ ਮਿਥਿਅਕ ਸੰਧੀ ਦਾ ਰੂਪ-ਮਾਤਰ ਹੀ ਹੈ, ਇਹ ਕੋਈ ਸੰਗਠਤ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਵੱਖਰੀ ਸਾਖ ਨਹੀਂ। ਇਹ ਸਿਰਫ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਵਿਚ ਇਕ ਆਮ ਜਿਹੀ ਘਟਨਾ ਦਾ ਸੰਕੇਤ ਮਾਤਰ ਹੀ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਮਿਥਿਅਕ ਘਟਨਾ ਦੀ ਅਜੋਕੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਮੱਤ ਜਾਂ 'ਖਾਲਸਾ' ਕੌਮ ਨਾਲ ਕੋਈ ਸਿਧਾਂਤਕ ਜਾਂ ਅਧਿਆਤਮਕ ਸਾਂਝ ਨਹੀਂ। ਸਹਿਜਧਾਰੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਵੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਜਾ ਸਿੱਖ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ ਨਾਲ, ਸਮਾਜਕ, ਭਾਈਚਾਰਕ, ਰਾਜਨੀਤਕ ਅਤੇ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਤੌਰ 'ਤੇ ਬੱਝੇ ਹੋਏ ਸਨ, ਅੱਜ ਵੀ ਬੱਝੇ ਹੋਏ ਹਨ। ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦੀ ਪੁਸਤਕ ਵਿਚਲਾ, ਜੋ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਜਾਂ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਬਾਰੇ ਨਿਖੇਧਵਾਦ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਫੰਚ ਰਚਾਇਆ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ, ਉਸ ਨਾਲ ਕੋਈ ਫਰਕ ਨਹੀਂ ਪੈਣ ਲੱਗਾ। ਧਰਮ ਕੋਈ ਬਰਫ ਦਾ ਤੇਦਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਜੋ ਸੇਕ ਦਿੱਤਿਆਂ ਖੁਰ ਜਾਵੇਗਾ ਜਾਂ ਕੋਈ ਕੱਕੜੀ ਦਾ ਫੰਬਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਜੋ ਫੂਕ ਮਾਰਿਆਂ ਉਡ ਜਾਏਗਾ।

ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦੀ ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਡੀ ਭੁੱਲ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਨੂੰ ਵੱਖਰੇ-ਵੱਖਰੇ ਅਧਿਐਨ ਦਾ ਵਿਸ਼ਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਬਣਾਉਂਦਾ, ਸਗੋਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਅਤੇ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਨੂੰ ਇਕੋ ਰੱਸੇ ਬੰਨ੍ਹਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਠੀਕ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਮੀਰੀ-ਪੀਰੀ ਦੇ ਅਸੂਲ ਦੇ ਮੁਤਾਬਕ ਇਹ ਦੋਵੇਂ ਵਿਸ਼ੇ ਇਕੋ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧ ਵਿਚ ਪਰਖੇ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਨ, ਪਰ ਇਹ ਗਲਤ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਦੋਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਅਧਿਐਨ ਜਾਂ ਵਿਚਾਰਨ ਲਈ ਇਕੋ ਕਾਰਜਵਿਧੀ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਯੋਗ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾਵੇ। ਉਬਰਾਏ ਇਹ ਪੁੱਲ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਆਪਦੀ ਕਾਰਜਵਿਧੀ ਦੇ ਹੋਰ-ਫੇਰ ਨਾਲ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਨੂੰ ਵੀ ਸਮਾਜਕ, ਇਤਿਹਾਸਕ, ਰਾਜਨੀਤਕ ਅਤੇ ਮਾਨਵ ਵਿਗਿਆਨ ਦੀਆਂ ਕਾਰਜਵਿਧੀਆਂ ਅਧੀਨ ਹੀ ਵਿਚਾਰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਧਰਮ ਦਾ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਅਤੇ ਧਰਮ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ ਦੋ ਵੱਖਰੇ-ਵੱਖਰੇ ਵਿਸ਼ੇ ਹਨ — ਪਹਿਲਾ ਪ੍ਰਤੱਖ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਦੂਜਾ ਆਦਿਕ ਹੈ। ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਖੋਜਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ, ਨਹੀਂ ਖੋਜਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ, ਧਰਮ ਸਿਰਫ਼ ਵਿਚਾਰਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਅਨੁਭਵੀ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਧਰਮ ਪਾਰ-ਅਨੁਭਵੀ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਲਈ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੋਹਾਂ ਦਾ ਅਧਿਐਨ ਇਕੋ ਕਾਰਜਵਿਧੀ ਦੇ ਮਾਪਦੰਡਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ। ਇਹ ਗੱਲ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਨੂੰ ਜੇ ਸਮਝ ਆ ਜਾਵੇ ਤਾਂ ਉਹ ਉਗੜ-ਦੁਗੜ ਦਲੀਲਾਂ ਦੇ ਕੇ ਪੁਸਤਕ ਲਿਖਣ ਲਈ ਨਾ ਤਾਂ ਆਪਣਾ ਸਮਾਂ ਖਰਾਬ ਕਰਦਾ ਅਤੇ ਲਾ ਹੀ ਪਾਠਕਾਂ ਦਾ। ਹੇਠਾਂ ਅਸੀਂ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦੀ ਪੁਸਤਕ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਉਦਾਹਰਣਾਂ ਦੇ ਕੇ ਇਹ ਸਿੱਖ ਕਰਾਂਗੇ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਨੂੰ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਇੱਕੋ ਨਜ਼ਰ ਨਾਲ ਦੇਖਦਾ ਹੈ। ਨਾਲ ਹੀ ਅਸੀਂ ਹਿਰ ਵੀ ਵਿਚਾਰਾਂਗੇ ਦਿ ਉਸ ਨੇ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਯੂ.ਬੀ.ਸੀ. ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰਸ਼ਿਪ ਦੇ ਲਿਖੇ ਹੋਏ ਉਦੇਸ਼ਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਖਿਲਵਾੜ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੈ।

### **ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰਸ਼ਿਪ ਦੇ ਉਦੇਸ਼, ਉਬਰਾਏ ਅਤੇ ਉਸ ਦੀ ਪੁਸਤਕ**

ਸਾਧ ਸੰਗਤ ਦੀ ਦਾਨ ਕੀਤੀ ਹੋਈ ਮਾਇਆ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਸਥਾਪਤ ਕੀਤੀ ਗਈ ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰਸ਼ਿਪ ਦਾ ਇੱਕ ਮੁੱਢਲਾ ਉਦੇਸ਼ ਇਸ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਰ ਹੈ:

“...ਖੋਜ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਮਿਆਰ 'ਤੇ ਪੂਰੀ ਉਤਰਦੀ ਹੋਵੇ ਅਤੇ ਇਸ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਅਤੇ ਰਹੁਰੀਤ ਨੂੰ ਸਹੀ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਪ੍ਰਸਤੁਤ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾਵੇ।” ਉਬਰਾਏ ਨੇ ਆਪਣੀਆਂ ਲਿਖਤਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਸਿੱਖ ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰਸ਼ਿਪ ਦੀ ਸਰਤ ਨੂੰ ਕਿਥੋਂ ਤੱਕ ਬਰਕਰਾਰ ਰੱਖਿਆ ਹੈ, ਇਸ ਗੱਲ ਦਾ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਜਾਇਜ਼ਾ ਲਿਆ ਜਾਵੇਗਾ। ਨਾਲ ਹੀ ਉਸ ਦੀਆਂ ਇਤਿਹਾਸਕ ਅਤੇ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਤੌਰ 'ਤੇ ਗਲਤ ਬਿਆਨੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਵੀ ਘੱਖਿਆ ਜਾਵੇਗਾ :

- (ੳ) In conventional histories of the evolution of Sikh traditions it is common to treat the rise, spread and consolidation of Sikhism as a single unitary whole. Such a narration, like much else in academic discourse, seeks to dispel disturbing contradictions and synthesizes Sikh experience in order to give it coherence. By this means the Sikh past, to use Nietzsche's illuminating term, is made 'Painless' for the minds of those who seek to live by it. A pseudosynthetic historiography comforts contemporary practitioners of his faith that their present vision of the world and their religious practices simply continue all

that was enunciated and established by the founder of the Sikh tradition.” (*The Construction of Religious Boundaries, culture identity and diversity in the Sikh Traditions*, p. 47).

ਸਿੱਖੋ-ਸਾਦੇ ਸ਼ਬਦਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਸਿੱਖ ਭਾਈਚਾਰੇ, ਧਰਮ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਸੱਭਿਆਚਾਰ ਨੂੰ ਚੁਣੌਤੀ ਦੇ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਉਸ ਦਾ ਭਾਰ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਸਿੱਖ ਪ੍ਰੰਪਰਾ, ਸਿੱਖ ਭਾਈਚਾਰੇ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਨੂੰ ਟਿੱਚ ਨਹੀਂ ਸਮਝਦਾ। ਉਬਰਾਏ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਿਰਫ ਹਿੰਦੂਵਾਦ ਦੀ ਇੱਕ ਸ਼ਾਖ ਹਨ। ਸਿੱਖ ਕੌਮਾਂਤਰੀ ਪੱਧਰ 'ਤੇ ਭਾਈਚਾਰੇ ਦੇ ਭਿਆਲ ਨਹੀਂ, ਮਹਿਜ਼ ਇਕ ਮਾਮੂਲੀ ਜਿਹੀ ਸ਼ਕਤੀ ਦੇ ਮਾਲਕ ਹਨ। ਸੁਆਮੀ ਠਾਸਾ ਨੰਦ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰਥਾ ਨੂੰ ਕਾਇਮ ਰੱਖਦਿਆਂ, ਉਬਰਾਏ ਸਿੱਖ ਗੁਰੂਆਂ, ਸਿੱਖਾਂ, ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਗ੍ਰੰਥਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ ਨੂੰ ਸੁਖਾਵੀਂ ਨਜ਼ਰੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਦੇਖਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਤੀਤ ਹੁੰਦਾ।

ਉਬਰਾਏ ਆਪਣੀ ਪੁਸਤਕ ਵਿਚ ਇਕ ਹੋਰ ਥਾਂ ਲਿਖਦਾ ਹੈ :

(ਅ) “The dramatic political triumph of the Sikh movement in the second half of the eighteenth century gave the Sikhs a vast empire, but ironically the attainment of power and the process of State formation stalled in the crystallization of the uniform Sikh Identity. For much of its early history the Sikh movement, in line with indigenous religious thinking and practices, with the exception of an understandable emphasis on the Soteriological teachings of Guru Nanak, had shown little enthusiasm for distinguishing its constituents from members of other religious traditions, or for establishing a pan-Indian community.”

Oberoi, then, as in his previous dissertations, reveals in repeating the inane assertion that, “Sikh notions of time, space corporeality... were firmly rooted in Indic cultural thinking.” He also discovers and tells his audience that, “the territories in which the Sikhs lived, the languages, they spoke... were shared by numerous other communities in Punjab.”

ਪਹਿਲੀ ਤਾਂ ਗੱਲ ਇਹ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖ ਰਾਜ ਦੇ ਬਣਨ ਨਾਲ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਆਪਣੀ ਨਿੱਜੀ ਪਹਿਚਾਣ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਰੁਕ ਗਈ। ਸਗੋਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਰਾਜ ਦੀ ਸਥਾਪਨਾ ਨਾਲ ਤਾਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਭਾਈਚਾਰਾ ਮਜ਼ਬੂਤ ਹੋਣਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ। ਦੂਜੀ ਗੱਲ ਇਹ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦਾ ਧਰਮ ਮੋਖਸ਼ਵਾਦੀ (Soteriological) ਨਹੀਂ ਜਿਵੇਂ ਕਿ ਮਸੀਹ ਦਾ ਧਰਮ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਦੀ ਦੁਰਵਰਤੋਂ ਕੀਤੀ ਗਈ ਹੈ। ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੁਨੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਰਾਹ ਦਿਖਾਉਣ ਆਏ ਸਨ, ਰਿਹਾਈ ਦਿਵਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਨਹੀਂ।

ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦੀ ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਤੁਕ ਵਿਚ ਕੋਈ ਗੱਲ ਵੀ ਸਾਖਿਆਤ ਨਹੀਂ ਜਿਵੇਂ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖ ਇੰਡਸਟਰੀ ਦੀ ਪੈਦਾਵਾਰ ਹਨ, ਭਾਵ ਕਿ ਹਿੰਦੂਤਵ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਵ ਹੇਠ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੋਏ । ਹੋਰ ਜਾਤੀਆਂ, ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨਾਂ ਸਮੇਤ, ਵੀ ਇੰਡਸਟਰੀ ਵਿਚ ਰਹਿੰਦੀਆਂ ਸਨ, ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ 'ਤੇ

ਹਿੰਦੂਵਾਦ ਦਾ ਅਸਰ ਕਿਉਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਪਿਆ? ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦਾ ਇਕੋ ਸਮੇਂ ਹਿੰਦੂਆਂ, ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਜਾਤੀਆਂ ਵਿਚਕਾਰ ਵਿਚਰਨ ਦਾ ਇਹ ਅਰਥ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦਾ ਭਾਈਚਾਰਾ ਅਤੇ ਧਰਮ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਜਾਤੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਧਰਮਾਂ ਦੀ ਪੈਦਾਵਾਰ ਹਨ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਗੱਲਾਂ ਕਰਕੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਆਪਣੀ ਹੋਂਦ ਅਤੇ ਧਰਮ ਨੂੰ ਝੁਠਲਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਸਕਦੇ। ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦੇ ਤੱਥ ਮਨਘੜਤ ਹਨ, ਅਕਲ ਵਿਹੂਣੇ ਹਨ ਅਤੇ ਸਚਾਈ ਤੋਂ ਹੀਣੇ ਹਨ। ਸਿੱਖ ਵਿਚਾਰਧਾਰਾ ਦੇ ਖਿਲਾਫ ਅਤੇ ਆਪਹੁਦਰੇ ਹਨ। ਇਹ ਖੋਜ ਦੇ ਨਾਂ ਹੇਠ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ ਖਿਲਾਫ ਇੱਕ ਗਿਣੀ-ਮਿਥੀ ਚਾਲ ਹੈ। ਇਹਦਾ ਅਰਥ ਇਹ ਹੋਇਆ ਕਿ "ਅਪ੍ਰਸੰਗਿਕਤਾ ਹੀ ਪ੍ਰਸੰਗਿਕਤਾ ਹੈ" (Irrelevancy is the relevancy), ਜਿਸ ਦੀ ਝਲਕ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦੀ ਪੁਸਤਕ ਵਿਚ ਥਾਂ-ਥਾਂ ਦੇਖੀ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ।

(ੳ) Khalsa Sikhs were prohibited the use of tobacco, Sahajdhari Sikhs smoked. Khalsa Sikhs accepted a line of nine successors of Guru Nanak, Sahajdhari Sikhs often had a radically different version of the line of succession; Khalsa Sikhs began to recognize the Adi Granth as Guru, Sahajdhari Sikhs were not given to accept a text as a Guru and favoured living human gurus (p. 76).

ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਟੂਕ 'ਖਾਲਸਾ ਸਿੱਖ' ਅਤੇ 'ਸਹਿਜਧਾਰੀ ਸਿੱਖ' ਦੇ ਮੂੰਹ ਤੇ ਸਿੱਧੀ ਚਪੇੜ ਹੈ। ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਧ ਹੀਣੀ ਗੱਲ ਇਹ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੀ ਨਿਰਪੱਖਤਾ ਅਤੇ ਸਹਿਨਸੀਲਤਾ 'ਤੇ ਧੱਬਾ ਹਨ। ਅਨੇਕ ਕਨੇਡੀਅਨ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਹਿਜਧਾਰੀ ਹਨ, ਉਹ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਨੂੰ ਪੂਜਦੇ ਵੀ ਹਨ, ਉਸ ਦੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰੋੜ੍ਹਤਾ ਵੀ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ ਅਤੇ ਨਿੱਤਨੇਮ ਵਾਂਗ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਿਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਸੇਵਾ ਵੀ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ। ਪਤਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਨੇਡੀਅਨ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਨੇ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਵਰਗਾ ਬੰਦਾ ਪੇਸ਼ੇ ਦੇ ਕੇ ਸੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀ ਵਿਚ ਕਿਉਂ ਲਗਾ ਰੱਖਿਆ ਹੈ, ਜੋ ਬਹੁਪੱਖੀ ਸਭਿਆਚਾਰਕ ਨੀਤੀ ਨੂੰ ਢਾਹੀ ਜਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ।

ਉਬਰਾਏ ਨਭੇ ਇਸ ਤੱਥ ਨੂੰ ਅੱਖੋਂ ਪਰੋਖੇ ਕਰ ਰੱਖਿਆ ਹੈ ਕਿ 'ਸਿੱਖ' ਦੀ ਹੋਂਦ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਬਾਹਰਮੁਖੀ ਪਹਿਰਾਵੇ ਵਿਚ ਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ, ਸਗੋਂ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਧੁਰ ਅੰਦਰ ਦੀ ਸਥਿਤੀ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਹੈ। ਦਰਅਸਲ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਸਿੱਖ ਇੱਕ ਮਨੋਵਿਰਤੀ ਹੈ, ਜਿਸ ਵਿੱਚ ਤਨ, ਮਨ ਅਤੇ ਧਨ ਸਾਰੇ ਪੱਖ ਇਕਮਿਕ ਹੋ ਕੇ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ ਹੁੰਦੇ ਹਨ। ਸਾਰੇ ਸੰਸਾਰ ਵਿਚ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਸਿੱਖ ਅਤੇ ਸਹਿਜਧਾਰੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਰਲ ਕੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰਗਤੀ ਵਿਚ ਹਿੱਸਾ ਪਾ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ। ਉਬਰਾਏ ਇਸ ਪ੍ਰਗਤੀ ਨੂੰ ਸ਼ਾਇਦ ਝੱਲ ਨਹੀਂ ਸਕਦਾ। ਇਸ ਲਈ ਆਪਣੀਆਂ ਉਲਾਰ ਲਿਖਤਾਂ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਪਾੜਾਂ ਪਾਉਣ ਦੀ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਵਿਉਂਤ ਬਣਾਈ ਬੈਠਾ ਹੈ। ਦਰਅਸਲ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਸਿੱਖ ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰਸ਼ਿਪ ਦੀ ਗੱਦੀ 'ਤੇ ਬੈਠ ਕੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਇਕਮੁੱਠਤਾ, ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਧਰਮ ਅਤੇ ਸੱਭਿਆਚਾਰ ਬਾਰੇ ਘਿਨਾਉਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਪੇਗੰਡਾ ਕਰ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਇੰਝ ਲਗਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਇਸ ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰਸ਼ਿਪ ਦਾ ਮਨੋਰਥ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਬਾਰੇ ਅਪਮਾਨਸੂਚਕ ਸਾਹਿਤ ਪੈਦਾ ਕਰਨ ਦਾ ਹੈ, ਜਿਸ ਨਾਲ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਨੀਵਾ ਵਿਆਖਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕੇ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ 'ਤੇ ਚਿੱਕੜ ਸੁੱਟਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕੇ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦਾ ਭਵਿੱਖ ਧੁੰਦਲਾ ਹੋ ਸਕੇ। ਇਹ ਸਾਰੀ ਦੀ ਸਾਰੀ ਯੋਜਨਾ 'ਇੰਡਸ ਸੱਭਿਆਚਾਰ' ਨੂੰ ਯਾਨੀ ਕਿ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਪ੍ਰਵਿਰਤੀ ਨੂੰ ਮੁੜ ਸੁਰਜੀਤ ਕਰਨ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ 'ਤੇ ਠੱਸਣ ਲਈ ਬਣਾਈ ਗਈ ਜਾਪਦੀ ਹੈ।

ਕਿੰਨਾ ਚੰਗਾ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਕਿ ਜੇ ਇਸ ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰਸ਼ਿਪ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਕਨੇਡਾ ਦੇ ਬਹੁਪੱਖੀ ਸਭਿਆਚਾਰ ਨੂੰ ਉਭਾਰਿਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ, ਜਿਸ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਇਹ ਸਿੱਧ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਕਿ ਕਿਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ



ਸਿੱਖ ਇਸ ਦੀ ਬੜ੍ਹੇਤਰੀ ਵਿਚ ਆਪਣਾ ਯੋਗਦਾਨ ਪਾ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ ਅਤੇ ਮਨੁੱਖਵਾਦ ਦੀ ਉਸਾਰੀ ਵਿਚ ਡਟੇ ਹੋਏ ਹਨ। ਕਿੰਨਾ ਚੰਗਾ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਕਿ ਜੇ ਇਸ ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰਸ਼ਿਪ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਗੁਰੂਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਮਰਜੀਵੜਿਆਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਮਾਨਵਤਾ ਲਈ ਨਿਤਾਣਿਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਦਬੇ ਹੋਏ ਇਨਸਾਨਾਂ ਲਈ ਆਪਣੀਆਂ ਜਾਨਾਂ ਵਾਰੀਆਂ ਹਨ। ਗੁਰੂ ਤੇਗ ਬਹਾਦਰ ਸ਼ਹੀਦ ਹੋਏ ਜਿਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਗੈਰ-ਮੁਸਲਿਮ ਇਸਲਾਮ ਦੀ ਸੱਟ ਤੋਂ ਬੱਚ ਸਕੇ।

- (ਸ) ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਪਾਵਨ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਬਾਰੇ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਲਿਖਦਾ ਹੈ -  
 “Although in the present state of research it is hard to specify the factors that prompted in fifth Guru of the Sikhs to collage an anthology of devotional literature, it is easier to discuss its impact. (ਉਬਰਾਏ ਆਪਣੀ ਇਸ ਟੁਕ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰੋਫ਼ੁਤਾ ਲਈ ਪਿਸ਼ੋਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਦੇ ਥੀਸਿਜ਼ ਦਾ ਹਵਾਲਾ ਦਿੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਯਾਦ ਰਹੇ ਕਿ ਪਿਸ਼ੋਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਨੇ ਜੋ ਖੋਜ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੀ ਸੰਪਾਦਨਾ ਬਾਰੇ ਕੀਤੀ ਹੈ, ਉਹ ਸਾਰੀ ਦੀ ਸਾਰੀ ਰੱਦ ਹੋ ਚੁੱਕੀ ਹੈ। ਪਿਸ਼ੋਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਨੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਖੋਜ ਦੇ ਗਲਤ ਹਿੱਸਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਅਕਾਲ ਤਖਤ 'ਤੇ ਪੇਸ਼ ਹੋ ਕੇ ਗਲਤ ਸਵੀਕਾਰ ਕਰ ਲਿਆ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਹੋਰ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਲਈ ਦੇਖੋ **Planned attack on Aad Sir Guru Granth Sahib : Academics or Blasphemy**, Editor Bachittar Singh Giani, 1994.

ਉਬਰਾਏ ਅਤੇ ਪਿਸ਼ੋਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਿੱਧੇ ਜਾਂ ਅਸਿੱਧੇ ਤੌਰ 'ਤੇ ਇੱਕ ਗੁਰੂ ਦੇ ਚੇਲੇ ਹਨ ਅਰਥਾਤ ਗੁਰਭਾਈ ਹਨ। ਭਾਵ ਦਿ ਡਾ. ਮਕਲਾਉਡ ਪਿਸ਼ੋਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਦੇ ਥੀਸਿਜ਼ ਵਿਚਲੀ ਗਲਤ ਖੋਜ ਬਾਰੇ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਤਿੰਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਭਲੀਭਾਂਤ ਗਿਆਨ ਸੀ। ਤਾਂ ਵੀ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਪਿਸ਼ੋਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਦਾ ਹਵਾਲਾ ਦਿੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਸਿੱਧ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਜਿਸ ਖੋਜ ਦਾ ਆਧਾਰ ਹੀ ਗਲਤ ਹੋਵੇ, ਉਹ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪ ਵਿਚ ਕਿੰਨੀ ਕੁ ਪ੍ਰਮਾਣਿਕ ਹੋਵੇਗੀ।

ਆਪਣੀ ਪੁਸਤਕ ਵਿਚ ਉਰਾਏ ਅੱਗੇ ਜਾ ਕੇ ਲਿਖਦਾ ਹੈ —

While propagandists of modern Sikhism see in the collation of the Adi Granth in 1603-04 under Guru Arjan a powerful public declaration of the separation of the Sikh Panth from other religious traditions, historically it is difficult to admit such an interpretation. It was scarcely uncommon, in medieval India, to compile anthologies of devotional literature called Gutkas or Pothis. Their compilers and readers did not perceive these texts as essentially statements of sectarian intent. While the Adi Granth is the most voluminous and structured of the early seventeenth century devotional anthologies-features that can be explained by the institutional success of the Sikh movement and its growing secular resources — it was

certainly neither the first nor the last such collection  
(pp. 54-55)

ਇਸ ਟੂਕ ਵਿਚ ਕਈ ਗ਼ਲਤ ਬਿਆਨੀਆਂ ਹਨ।

ਸਿੱਖ ਪੰਥ ਦੀ ਸਥਾਪਨਾ ਨੂੰ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਦੀ ਸੰਪਾਦਨਾ ਨਾਲ ਕਾਜਬੱਧ ਕਰਨਾ ਅਤੇ ਫਿਰ ਇਸ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਨੂੰ ਆਧੁਨਿਕ ਸਿੱਖ ਮੱਤ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰਕਾਂ ਦੇ ਨਾਂਅ ਲਾਉਣਾ ਇਕ ਘੋਰ ਅਨਿਆਂ ਹੈ। ਕਾਰਨ ਇਹ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਪੰਥ ਨਖੇੜੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੇ , ਦਰਅਸਲ ਕਿਸੇ ਵੀ ਧਰਮ ਨੂੰ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਪੰਥ (community) ਨਾਲੋਂ ਨਿਖੇੜ ਕੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਵਿਚਾਰਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ। ਜੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਧਰਮ ਦੀ ਹੱਦ ਦੇ ਨਾਲ-ਨਾਲ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਪੰਥ ਦੀ ਉਤਪਤੀ ਅਤੇ ਵਿਕਾਸ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਤਾਂ ਉਹ ਧਰਮ ਖੁਦ-ਬ-ਖੁਦ ਮਰ ਜਾਵੇਗਾ। ਸੱਚ ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਤੋਂ ਲੈ ਕੇ ਅੱਜ ਤੱਕ ਜਿਉਂਦਾ ਜਾਗਦਾ ਹੈ। ਵਿਗਿਆਨ ਵਿਚ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਵਿਸ਼ੇਸ਼ਤਾ ਬਾਰੇ ਇੱਕ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਹੈ ਕਿ **Establishment of a species is dependent on the existence of its members who portray unique features.** ਇਹ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਧਰਮਾਂ 'ਤੇ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਅਨੁਯਾਈਆਂ ਦੀ ਵਿਲੱਖਣਤਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਵੀ ਪੂਰਾ ਢੁਕਦਾ ਹੈ। ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਪੰਥ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਲ ਸ਼ੁਰੂ ਹੋਏ। ਪੰਥ ਦੀ ਹੱਦ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਮੰਨਣ ਵਾਲਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਗਿਣਤੀ ਉੱਤੇ ਹੀ ਨਿਰਭਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੁੰਦੀ, ਸਗੋਂ ਉਸ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ ਅਸੂਲਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਬਰਕਰਾਰ ਰੱਖਣ ਵਾਲਿਆਂ ਉੱਤੇ ਨਿਰਭਰ ਹੈ, ਭਾਵੇਂ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਗਿਣਤੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਸਮੇਂ ਬਹੁਬਤੀ ਨਾ ਹੋਵੇ।

ਇਸੇ ਟੂਕ ਵਿਚ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਨੇ ਇਕ ਹੋਰ ਬਹੁਤ ਬੜੀ ਭੁੱਲ ਕੀਤੀ ਹੈ। ਉਹ ਹੈ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੀ ਸੰਪਾਦਨਾ ਅਤੇ ਇਸ ਦੀ ਮਹੱਤਤਾ ਨੂੰ ਗੁਟਕੇ ਜਾਂ ਪੋਥੀ ਮਾਤਰ ਹੀ ਦੱਸਣਾ। ਇਸ ਸੰਬੰਧ ਵਿਚ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਇਕ ਗੁਟਕੇ ਜਾਂ ਪੋਥੀ ਦੀ ਉਦਾਹਰਣ ਦਿੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਜੋ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਤੋਂ 21 ਵਰ੍ਹੇ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਸੰਪਾਦਨ ਕੀਤਾ ਗਿਆ। ਇਸ ਵਿਚ ਖਾਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਸੂਰਦਾਸ ਦੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਕੁਝ ਹੋਰ ਸੰਤਾਂ-ਸਾਧਾਂ ਦੇ ਪਦ ਵੀ ਹਨ। ਅਜਿਹੇ ਗੁਟਕਿਆਂ ਜਾਂ ਪੋਥੀਆਂ ਨਾਲ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਵਰਗੀ ਵਿਸ਼ਾਲ ਰਚਨਾ ਦਾ ਮੁਕਾਬਲਾ ਕਰਨਾ ਇਹ ਦੱਸਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦੀ ਸੋਚ ਕਿੰਨੀ ਸੰਕੀਰਨ ਅਤੇ ਅਨਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਹੈ। ਸੰਕੀਰਨ ਇਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਮੂਲ ਤੌਰ 'ਤੇ ਇਕ ਪਾਤਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਗੁਟਕੇ ਨਾਲ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਵਰਗੇ ਬਹੁਪੱਖੀ ਅਤੇ ਵਿਸ਼ਾਲ ਗਿਆਨ ਸਾਗਰ ਦਾ ਮੁਕਾਬਲਾ ਕਰ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਬੂੰਦ ਨੂੰ ਹੀ ਸਾਗਰ ਕਹਿਣ ਦਾ ਇਹ ਯਤਨ ਜੋ ਸੰਕੀਰਨ ਸੋਚ ਦਾ ਧਾਰਨੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਤਾਂ ਹੋਰ ਕੀ ਹੈ? ਫੇਰ ਇੰਝ ਕਰਦਿਆਂ ਉਹ ਇਹ ਭੁੱਲ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੀ ਸੰਪਾਦਨਾ ਦੀ ਪਿਠਭੂਮੀ ਵਿਚ ਗੁਰੂ ਪ੍ਰਥਾ ਕੰਮ ਕਰ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ ਨਾ ਕਿ ਕਿਸੇ ਇੱਕ ਆਮ ਵਿਅਕਤੀ ਦੀ ਸੰਪਾਦਨ ਸੋਚ। ਜੇ ਉਸ ਨੇ ਮੁਕਾਬਲਾ ਕਰਨਾ ਹੀ ਸੀ ਤਾਂ ਗੁਰੂ ਪ੍ਰਥਾ ਵਿਚ ਮੋਹਨ ਪੋਥੀਆਂ ਜਾਂ ਗੋਇੰਦਵਾਲ ਪੋਥੀਆਂ ਦਾ ਜ਼ਿਕਰ ਤਾਂ ਕੁਝ ਹੱਦ ਤੱਕ ਸੋਭ ਸਕਦਾ ਸੀ, ਪਰ ਕਿਸੇ ਇਕ ਅਣਪਛਾਤੇ ਗੁਟਕੇ, ਜਿਸ ਦਾ ਸੰਪਾਦਕ ਕੋਈ ਆਮ ਵਿਅਕਤੀ ਸੀ, ਨਾਲ ਘੋਰ ਖੁਨਾਮੀ ਹੈ।

ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦੀ ਸੋਚ ਅਨਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਇਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਸਮਗਰੀਆਂ (MATERIALS) ਦਾ ਮੁਕਾਬਲਾ ਕਰਨ ਦੀ ਕੋਸ਼ਿਸ਼ ਕਰ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ, ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਇਕ ਧਰਾਤਲ ਤੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਰੱਖਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ। ਇਹ ਉਸੇ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਗੱਲ ਹੈ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਕੋਈ ਸੰਤਰਿਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਸੇਬਾਂ ਦਾ ਆਪਸੀ ਮੁਕਾਬਲਾ ਕਰ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੋਵੇ।

ਇਸੇ ਟੂਕ ਵਿਚ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਇਹ ਕਹਿੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਨਾਂ ਤਾਂ ਕੋਈ ਪਹਿਲੀ ਅਤੇ ਨਾ ਹੀ ਕੋਈ ਆਖਰੀ ਕਿਰਤ ਹੈ, ਭਾਵ ਕਿ ਅਜਿਹੇ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ, ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ

ਦੀ ਸੰਪਾਦਨਾ ਤੇ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਵੀ ਅਤੇ ਬਾਅਦ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਰਚੇ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ। ਸਵਾਲ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਕੀ ਸੱਚਮੁੱਚ ਕੋਈ ਐਸੀ ਪੋਥੀ, ਗੁਟਕਾ ਜਾਂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਹੈ ਜੋ ਗੁਰੂ ਕਾਲ ਤੇ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਜਾਂ ਬਾਅਦ ਵਿਚ ਕਿਸੇ ਗੁਰੂ ਜਾਂ ਪੀਰ ਪੈਰੰਬਰ ਦੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਦਸਤੇ ਮੁਬਾਰਕ ਨਾਲ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਗਿਆ ਹੋਵੇ ਅਤੇ ਦੁਨੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਇੱਕ ਪ੍ਰਮੁੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦਾ ਪਾਵਨ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਕਹਾਇਆ ਹੋਵੇ?

ਇਕ ਥਾਂ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਲਿਖਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੀ ਜੋ ਮਹੱਤਤਾ ਅੱਜ ਹੈ, ਉਹ 17ਵੀਂ ਸਦੀ ਵਿਚ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ। ਇਹ ਕਥਨ ਇਕ ਟਕਸਾਲੀ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਤੋਂ ਬਿਲਕੁਲ ਉਲਟ ਹੈ। ਜਦ ਵੀ ਕੋਈ ਧਰਮ ਜਨਮ ਲੈਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਪੈਰੋਕਾਰ ਆਰੰਭ ਵਿਚ ਜ਼ਿਆਦਾ ਕੱਟੜਵਾਦੀ ਹੁੰਦੇ ਹਨ, ਨਾ ਕਿ ਬਾਅਦ ਵਿਚ। ਅੱਗੇ ਜਾ ਕੇ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਇਕ ਥਾਂ ਤੇ ਫੇਰ ਲਿਖਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਵਿਚ ਨਿਹਿਤ ਭਿੰਨ ਭਿੰਨ ਮਤਾਂ ਦੇ ਮੂਲ ਪਾਠਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਇਸ ਵਿਚਲੇ ਵੱਖਰੇ-ਵੱਖਰੇ ਰਚਨਹਾਰਿਆਂ ਕਰਕੇ, ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦਾ ਕੋਈ ਭਰਵਾਂ ਪਭਾਵ ਨਹੀਂ ਪਿਆ। ਇਸੇ ਕਰਕੇ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ-ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਇਹ ਕਿਸੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਪਹਿਚਾਣ ਨੂੰ ਜਨਮ ਨਹੀਂ ਦੇ ਸਕਿਆ। ਇਕ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਜੋ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਹੀ ਇਸ ਲਈ ਜਾਵੇ ਕਿ ਉਸ ਧਰਤ ਦੀ ਪਹਿਚਾਣ ਹੋ ਸਕੇ ਤਾਂ ਫਿਰ ਇਹ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਸੱਚ ਹੋਇਆ ਕਿ ਅਜਿਹਾ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਉਸ ਧਰਮ ਦੀ ਪਹਿਚਾਣ ਹੀ ਨਾ ਕਰਾ ਸਕੇ। ਇਹ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦੀ ਇਕ ਹਾਸੇਹੀਣੀ ਦਲੀਲ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਮਹਿਜ਼ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕਤਾ ਦੀ ਛਿਦਰੀ ਛਾਂ ਦਾ ਪਰਛਾਵਾਂ ਹੈ।

ਸਵਾਲ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਕੀ ਯੂ.ਬੀ.ਸੀ. ਵਿਚ ਸਥਾਪਤ ਕੀਤੀ ਗਈ ਸਿੱਖ ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰਸ਼ਿਪ ਦਾ ਮੂਲ ਮਨੋਰਥ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਪੰਥ ਉੱਤੇ ਚਿੱਕੜ ਸੁਟਣਾ ਹੀ ਹੈ? ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਖੋਜ ਹੋਣੀ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ, ਪਰ ਵੁਹ ਕਿਸੇ ਤੱਥ ਅਤੇ ਦਲੀਲ 'ਤੇ ਆਧਾਰਿਤ ਹੋਵੇ। ਖਾਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਜੇ ਖੋਜ ਕਿਸੇ ਧਰਮ, ਪੰਥ ਅਤੇ ਸੱਭਿਆਚਾਰਕ ਮਸਲਿਆਂ ਬਾਰੇ ਹੋਵੇ ਤਾਂ ਇਕ ਖੋਜੀ ਦੀ ਹੋਰ ਵੀ ਜ਼ਿੰਮੇਵਾਰੀ ਹੋ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਅਜਿਹੇ ਮਸਲਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਰੜਕਵੀਂ ਸ਼ਬਦਾਵਲੀ ਅਤੇ ਕਾਣਸੂਤੇ ਸਿੱਟਿਆਂ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਪੇਸ਼ ਨਾ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾਵੇ। ਇਹ ਟੁਕ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੋਹਾਂ ਪੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਦਰਸਾਉਂਦੀ ਹੈ —

“Its (Adi Granth's) heterodox textuality and diverse contributors were for more the manifestation of a fluid Sikh identity than a signifier of exclusivity” (p. 55).

ਭਾਵ ਕਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਵਿਚਲੇ ਵਿਭਿੰਨ ਮਤਾਂ ਵਾਲੇ ਮੂਲ ਪਾਠ ਅਤੇ ਵੱਖ-ਵੱਖ ਰਚਨਹਾਰੇ, ਤਰਲ ਸਿੱਖ ਪਹਿਚਾਣ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਗਟਾਵਾ ਮਾਤਰ ਹਨ ਨਾ ਕਿ ਇਸ ਦੀ ਵੱਖਰੀ ਅਨੰਨਤਾ ਦੇ ਸੂਚਕ।

ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦੀ ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਟੁਕ ਵਿਚ ਸ਼ਬਦਾਵਲੀ ਅਤੇ ਸ਼ਬਦਾਰਥ ਦੋਵੇਂ ਖਰਵੇਂ ਅਤੇ ਬੇਬੁਨਿਆਦੇ ਹਨ। ਇੰਝ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਸ ਨੇ ਆਪਦੇ ਭਾਵ ਨੂੰ ਲੱਛੇਦਾਰ ਸ਼ਬਦਾਵਲੀ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਜਾਮਾ ਤਾਂ ਪਹਿਨਾ ਲਿਆ, ਪਰ ਜੋ ਠੇਸ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੀ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ ਅਤੇ ਉਸਦੇ ਮੰਨਣ ਵਾਲਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਹਾਵਭਾਵ ਨੂੰ ਪਹੁੰਚਾਈ ਹੈ, ਉਸ ਦਾ ਇਹ ਅੰਦਾਜ਼ਾ ਵੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਲਾ ਸਕਦਾ। ਹੋ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਇਸ ਨੂੰ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਅਧਿਕਾਰ ਦਾ ਨਾਂ ਦੇ ਲਵੇ, ਪਰ ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਵੀ ਪਤਾ ਹੋਣਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਅਧਿਕਾਰ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰੀਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਹਿਹ ਵੀ ਕਿਹਾ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਜੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਖੋਜ ਕਾਰਨ ਆਮ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਦੇ ਹਾਵਾਂ-ਭਾਵਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸੱਟ ਵੱਜੇ ਤਾਂ ਉਸ ਭਾਈਚਾਰੇ ਦੇ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਵਿਅਕਤੀਗਤ ਤੌਰ 'ਤੇ ਜਾਂ ਸਮੂਹਿਕ ਤੌਰ 'ਤੇ ਦਖਲਅੰਦਾਜ਼ੀ ਕਰਨ ਦਾ ਹੱਕ ਹੈ। ਜਿਸ ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰਸ਼ਿਪ ਦੀ ਕੁਰਸੀ 'ਤੇ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਬੈਠਾ ਹੈ, ਜੇ ਉਸ ਦੀ ਸਥਾਪਨਾ ਲਈ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਨੇ ਪੇਸ਼ੇ ਦਿਤੇ ਹੋਣ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਧਰਮ

ਦੀ ਇਹ ਬੇਪਤੀ ਕਰ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਦਖਲਅੰਦਾਜ਼ੀ ਹੋਰ ਵੀ ਸਾਰਥਕ ਅਤੇ ਭਾਵਪੂਰਤ ਬਣ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ।

ਆਉ ਹੁਣ ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਟੂਕ ਦੀ ਛਾਣਬੀਣ ਕਰੀਏ। ਉਬਰਾਏ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੀ ਪਾਵਨ ਪੁਸਤਕ ਅਰਥਾਤ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਵਿਚ ਭਿੰਨ-ਭਿੰਨ ਮੱਤਾਂ ਦੇ ਮੂਲ ਪਾਠ ਹਨ (Heterodox textuality) ਅਤੇ ਇਹ ਪਾਠ ਮੁਖਤਲਿਫ਼ ਰਚਨਹਾਰਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਹਨ (diverse contributors), ਜੋ ਸਿੱਖ ਪਹਿਚਾਣ ਦੀ ਵਿਲੱਖਣਤਾ ਦੇ (signifier of exclusivity)।

### ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਨਾਮ ਦਾ ਧਰਮ ਹੈ

ਨਾਮ ਜਪੋ ਨਾਮ ਤਪੋ ਇਸ ਦਾ ਧਰਮ ਹੈ। ਜਿਸ ਧਰਮ ਦਾ ਆਧਾਰ ਉਸ ਪ੍ਰਮਾਤਮਾ ਦੀ ਸਿਫ਼ਤ ਸਲਾਹ ਹੀ ਹੋਵੇ ਅਤੇ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਨਾਮ ਦਾ ਗਾਵਣ ਹੋਵੇ, ਉਸ ਵਿਚ ਭਿੰਨ-ਭਿੰਨ ਮੱਤ ਕਿਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਸਮਾਂ ਗਏ? ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਦੀ ਸੰਪਾਦਨਾ ਵੇਲੇ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਨੇ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਭਗਤਾਂ ਦੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਹੀ ਦਰਜ ਕੀਤੀ, ਜਿਸ ਦਾ ਧਰਮ ਨਾਮ ਜਪਣ ਦੁਆਲੇ ਘੁੰਮਦਾ ਸੀ। ਮੀਰਾਂ ਬਾਈ, ਸੂਰਦਾਸ ਆਦਿ ਦੇ ਸਲੋਕ ਇਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਅੰਕਿਤ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੀਤੇ ਗਏ ਸਨ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਅਵਤਾਰੀ ਪ੍ਰਮਾਤਮਾ ਦਾ ਗਾਇਨ ਕਰਦੇ ਸਨ। ਗੁਰੂਆਂ ਦੀ ਸਾਰੀ ਦੀ ਸਾਰੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਪ੍ਰਮਾਤਮਾ ਦੇ ਗੁਣ ਗਾਇਨ ਵੱਲ ਰੁਚਿਤ ਹੈ। ਉਸ ਦੇ ਨਾਂ ਦਾ ਹੀ ਜਾਪ ਹੈ। ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਵਿਚ ਘੱਟ ਤੋਂ ਘੱਟ 30,000 ਸ਼ਬਦ ਅਜਿਹੇ ਹਨ, ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਸਿਧੇ ਜਾਂ ਅਸਿੱਧੇ ਤੌਰ 'ਤੇ ਨਾਮ ਜਪਣ ਦਾ ਅਲਾਪ ਹੀ ਕੀਤਾ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ। ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦਾ ਇਹ ਕਥਨ ਕਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਵਿਚ ਮੁਖਤਲਿਫ਼ ਮੱਤਾਂ ਦਾ ਪਾਠ ਪਠਨ ਹੈ, ਇਕ ਮੂਲੋਂ ਹੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰਥਾ ਅਤੇ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ ਦੇ ਖਿਲਾਫ਼ ਹੈ। ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਉਸ ਨੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਅਖੌਤੀ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਖੋਜ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਮਿਥੇ ਹੋਏ ਥੀਸਿਜ਼ ਨੂੰ ਉਸਾਰਨਾ ਸੀ। ਇਸ ਲਈ ਉਸ ਨੇ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਬਾਰੇ ਇਹ ਮੱਤ ਘੜ ਲਿਆ। ਉਸ ਦੀ ਪੁਸਤਕ ਵਿਚਲੀ ਮਿੱਥ (HYPOTHESIS) ਇੱਕ ਗੱਲ 'ਤੇ ਨਿਰਭਰ ਹੈ। ਉਹ ਹੈ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ, ਸਿੱਖ ਪੰਥ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਭਾਈਚਾਰੇ ਦੀ ਪਹਿਚਾਣੀ ਦੀ ਤਰਜ ਦਾ ਇਤਿਹਾਸਕ ਪੱਖ। ਇਸ ਲਈ ਉਹ ਜਿਹੜੀ ਵੀ ਦਲੀਲ ਘੜਦਾ ਹੈ (ਚਾਹੇ ਉਹ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਦੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਬਾਰੇ ਵੀ ਕਿਉਂ ਨਾ ਹੋਵੇ) ਉਸ ਦਲੀਲ ਦੀ ਪੁਸ਼ਟੀ ਲਈ ਮਤਮਰਜ਼ੀ ਦੇ ਹਵਾਲੇ ਵਰਤਦਾ ਹੈ। ਵਿਗਿਆਨ ਵਿਚ ਜਦ ਕੋਈ ਖੋਜ ਆਰੰਭਦਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਉਸ ਦੀ ਮਿਥ ਜਾਂ ਪਰਿਕਲਪਨਾ (HYPOTHESIS) ਥਾਪ ਲਈ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ। ਫਿਰ ਉਚਿਤ ਸਮੱਗਰੀ (MATERIAL) ਅਤੇ ਢੁਕਵੇਂ ਤਰੀਕਿਆਂ (METHODOLOGY) ਰਾਹੀਂ ਆਧਾਰ-ਤੱਤ (DATA) ਇੱਕਤਰ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਆਧਾਰ-ਤੱਤ ਦੇ ਵਿਸ਼ਲੇਸ਼ਣ (ANALYSIS) ਤੋਂ ਜੋ ਪਰਿਣਾਮ ਜਾਂ ਨਤੀਜੇ ਨਿਕਲਦੇ ਹਨ, ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਆਧਾਰ 'ਤੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਮੁਢਲੀ ਮਿਥ ਜਾਂ ਜਹਿਕਲਪਨਾ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਧ ਜਾਂ ਅਸਿੱਧ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਗੁਲਾਮ ਸੋਚ ਪਰਿਕਲਪਨਾ (HYPOTHESIS) ਨੂੰ ਸਥਿਰ ਅਤੇ ਅੰਤਮ ਚਾਹੀ ਮੰਨ ਕੇ ਤੁਰਦੀ ਹੈ। ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਸੋਚ ਬਣਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਆਪਣੀ ਮਨਮਰਜ਼ੀ ਦੀ ਸਮੱਗਰੀ ਜਾਂ ਆਧਾਰ-ਤੱਤ ਇੱਕਠਾ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਖੋਜੀ ਮੁੜਮਤੀਏ ਤਾਂ ਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੀ ਹਨ, ਨਾਲ ਹੀ ਤਰਕ ਰਹਿਤ ਵੀ ਹੁੰਦੇ ਹਨ। ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਖੋਜੀਆਂ (RESEARCHERS) ਪਾਸ ਸੁਤੰਤਰ ਸੋਚ ਦੀ ਘਾਟ ਅਤੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਬੰਧਤ (CONDITIONAL) ਸੋਚ ਦੀ ਬਹੁਤਾਤ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਹੈ। ਬਹੁਤੇ ਅਜਿਹੇ ਖੋਜੀ ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਸੋਚ ਦੇ ਗੁਲਾਮ ਤਿੰਨ ਕਾਰਨਾਂ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੁੰਦੇ ਹਨ।

- (1) ਪੀ.ਐਚ.ਡੀ. ਦੇ ਨਿਗਰਾਨ ਦੀ ਅਧੀਨਤਾ, ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਪੀ.ਐਚ.ਡੀ. ਦੀ ਉਪਾਦੀ ਜੋ ਲੈਣੀ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਹੈ।
- (2) ਪੱਕੀ ਨੌਕਰੀ (TENURED) ਦੀ ਲਾਲਸਾ ! ਪੇਪਰ ਛਾਪਣ ਦੀ ਲਾਲਸਾ ਕਾਰਨ ਕਈ ਵਾਰੀ ਉਹ ਆਪਣੀ ਮਨਘੜਤ ਖੋਜ ਨੂੰ ਛਾਪਣ ਦੇ ਲਾਇਕ ਬਣਾ ਲੈਂਦੇ ਹਨ।
- (3) ਸ਼ੋਹਰਤ ਦੀ ਭੁੱਖ ਕਈ ਵਾਰੀ ਖੋਜੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਮਿਥ (HYPOTHESIS) ਅਤੇ ਸਿਧਾਂਤ (THEORY) ਵਿਚਲੇ ਫਰਕ ਨੂੰ ਨਿਖੇੜਨ ਨਹੀਂ ਦਿੰਦੀ। ਉਹ ਜੋ ਪਰਿਕਲਪਨਾ ਸਿੱਧ ਕਰਨਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹਨ, ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਅਗਾਊਂ ਕਲਪਿਤ ਖਿਆਲਾਂ ਦੇ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ (PRECONCEIVED IDEAS) ਸਿੱਧ (PROVED) ਕੀਤਾ ਗਿਆ ਕਿਆਸ ਕਰ ਲੈਂਦੇ ਹਨ। ਇਸ ਮੁੱਦੇ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤੀ ਲਈ ਉਹ ਮਨਘੜਤ ਆਧਾਰ-ਤੱਭ ਪੈਦਾ ਕਰ ਲੈਂਦੇ ਹਨ। ਏਥੇ ਇਕ ਜੀਵ ਵਿਗਿਆਨੀ ਦੀ ਉਦਾਹਰਣ ਖੂਬ ਰਹੇਗੀ। ਉਹ ਕਾਲੇ ਅਤੇ ਚਿੱਟੇ ਚੂਹਿਆਂ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਇਹ ਸਿੱਧ ਕਰਨ ਦੀ ਕੋਸ਼ਿਸ਼ ਕਰ ਰਿਹਾ ਸੀ ਕਿ ਕਾਲੇ ਚੂਹੇ ਦੀ ਚਮੜੀ ਚਿੱਟੇ ਚੂਹੇ ਉਤੇ ਪਿਉਂਦ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ, ਬਸ਼ਰਤੇ ਕਿ ਕੁਝ ਰਸਾਇਣਕ ਕਿਰਿਆਵਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਰੋਕ ਲਿਆ ਜਾਵੇ। ਇਹ ਉਸ ਦੀ ਮਿਥ (HYPOTHESIS) ਸੀ, ਪਰ ਜਦ ਉਹ ਇਸ ਮਿਥ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਧ ਨਾ ਕਰ ਸਕਿਆ ਤਾਂ ਉਸ ਨੇ ਚਿੱਟੇ ਚੂਹੇ ਦੀ ਚਮੜੀ ਤੇ ਕਾਲੇ ਪੇਟ ਨਾਲ ਇਕ ਟਾਕੀ ਲਾ ਦਿੱਤੀ ਅਤੇ ਖੂਬਸੂਰਤ ਤਸਵੀਰਾਂ ਖਿੱਚ ਕੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਖੋਜ ਉੱਘੇ ਸਾਇੰਸ ਦੇ ਪਰਚੇ ਵਿਚ ਛਾਪ ਦਿੱਤੀ। ਪਰ ਕੁਫ਼ਰ ਕਦੇ ਵੀ ਛੁਪਿਆ ਨਹੀਂ ਰਹਿੰਦਾ। ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਵਿਗਿਆਨੀ ਨੇ ਉਸ ਦੀ ਖੋਜ ਨੂੰ ਦੁਹਰਾਣਾ ਚਾਹਿਆ ਤਾਂ ਉਹ ਦੁਹਰਾ ਨਾ ਸਕਿਆ। ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਚੂਹਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਵਿਗਿਆਨੀ ਦਾ ਪੋਲ ਖੁਲ੍ਹ ਗਿਆ। ਅੱਜਕਲ੍ਹ ਉਹ ਬੇਕਾਰ ਹੈ।

ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦੀ ਪੁਸਤਕ ਵਿਚਲੀ ਖੋਜ ਦੇ ਬਹੁਤੇ ਪੱਖ ਮਨਘੜਤ ਦਲੀਲਾਂ ਦੇ ਕੇ ਉਸਾਰੇ ਗਏ ਹਨ ਅਤੇ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਪੁਸ਼ਟੀ ਲਈ ਉਹ ਹੀ ਹਵਾਲੇ (REFERENCES) ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਹਨ ਜੋ ਉਸ ਦੀ ਮਿਥ ਦਾ ਸਾਹ ਭਰਦੇ ਹਨ। ਵਿਰੋਧੀ ਹਵਾਲਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਅੱਖੋਂ ਪਰੋਖੇ ਕੀਤਾ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਖੋਜ ਨੂੰ ਇਕ-ਪਾਸੀ ਖੋਜ ਕਿਹਾ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ, ਜਦ ਕਿ ਖੋਜ ਦੇ ਸਿੱਟੇ ਸਾਰੇ ਪੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਕੇ ਕੱਢੇ ਜਾਣੇ ਚਾਹੀਦੇ ਹਨ।

ਇਸ ਵਿਚ ਕੋਈ ਸ਼ੱਕ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਿ ਉਬਰਾਏ ਦੀ ਪੁਸਤਕ (*The Constructions of Religious Boundries, Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition*) ਇੱਕ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਵਸ਼ਾਲੀ ਸੈਲੀ ਵਿਚ ਲਿਖੀ ਗਈ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਨੂੰ ਪੜ੍ਹਦਿਆਂ ਇਹ ਇਕ ਵਧੀਆ ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਖੋਜ ਦਾ ਝਾਉਲਾ ਪਾਉਂਦੀ ਹੈ, ਪਰ ਇਸ ਦੇ ਬਹੁਤੇ ਪੱਖ ਉਲਾਰਵਾਦੀ ਹਨ ਅਤੇ ਤੱਥਾਂ ਤੇ ਉੱਠੇ ਹਨ।

(ਨੋਟ — ਇਸ ਲੇਖ ਦੇ ਕੁਝ ਹਿੱਸਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਉਸਾਰਨ ਵਿਚ ਇਕਬਾਲ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਾਹਰਾ ਦੇ ਲੇਖ “The U.B.C. Sikh Chair” ਦਾ ਸਹਾਰਾ ਲਿਆ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ।)

**APPENDIX I**  
**MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN**

The Federation of Sikh Societies of Canada

and

The University of British Columbia

The federation of Sikh Societies of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario (referred to as “Federation” hereinafter) and the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B C. (referred to as “University” hereinafter) agree to the following:

1. The University shall establish a CHAIR IN PUNJABI LANGUAGE LITERATURE AND SIKH STUDIES, provided the Federation can make available to the University funds amounting to not less than Canadian \$ 800,000. It is understood that a part of these funds may come from the Endowment Assistance Program of the Multiculturalism Directorate of the Government of Canada.
2. The general objective of the Chair shall be:
  - to initiate, maintain and promote instruction and research on under-graduate and graduate levels in the areas of Punjabi language, Punjabi literature, Sikhism (doctrine, religious practice and philosophy), Sikh history and other aspects of Sikh studies such as Sikhs in Canada;
  - to establish a focal point towards a better understanding of Canada’s pluralistic and multicultural nature and of Sikhs and Sikhism in Canada;
  - to conduct research on the contribution of Sikhs to Canadian society and to encourage publication of such research;
  - as far as possible, the Chair shall be inter-disciplinary and its activities comparative;

All instruction and research shall be in keeping with the established academic standards and every possible effort shall be made to present the teachings and practices of Sikhism in an accurate manner.

3. The University shall contribute to the endeavour through its extensive library holdings in the areas mentioned above and other akin areas, by providing space and other usual facilities for the

operation of the Chair, by introducing appropriate courses, and by facilitating relevant research and publications. It is expected that the University would continue to enhance its relevant library holding as far as its resources permit.

4. The University shall establish an Endowment Trust Fund when the Federation is ready to deposit in it the funds that will be raised.
5. The Federation shall be entirely responsible for the monies it collects for the establishment of the Chair until the monies are deposited in the Endowment Trust Fund of the University.
6. The Endowment Fund, its income and all expenses charged there - to shall be audited once every year by the University's external auditors who shall provide a certified statement, a copy of which the University shall forward to the Government of Canada and to the Federation.
7. The University shall have full control of the Endowment Trust Fund and full autonomy for the deployment of the resources according to the stated objectives of the Chair.
8. The University shall retain the sole right for the selection of academic personnel according to the established academic search procedures.
9. The Endowment shall support the appointment of at least one qualified person in professional ranks. Additional persons may be appointed with full or partial financial support from the Endowment and/or the University, provided such additional appointments conform to the objectives of the Endowment.
10. The appointments, while made in the Faculty of Arts, shall not be viewed as exclusively belonging to that Faculty. Whenever permissible according to the University's rules, appropriate and practically possible, the personnel whose appointments are supported by the Endowment shall be allowed to teach courses in other faculties and educational institutions. Furthermore, the Chair shall not be subject to any reduction that may be carried out in the Faculty of Arts and the responsibility for its satisfactory operation shall ultimately be that of the University, not the Faculty. The appointments shall be University appointments.

11. As far as possible, the University shall support activities at other educational institutions that are in agreement with the objectives of the Chair.
12. The Endowment income may be used in combination with income provided by other sources to further the objectives of the Endowment.
13. The University shall continue to take whatever steps it would normally take to develop study of the academic fields mentioned in (2) above, it shall ensure that the establishment of the Endowment does not result in the deprivation of priority assignable to these fields in the normal course of University expansion or change.
14. The University shall enable the Federation to ascertain from time to time that the objectives of the Chair are pursued as far as possible and practical, and that no significant deviation from the objectives as accepted in this agreement is taking place. Towards that end, the University shall supply to the Federation, whenever requested to do so, an account of the activities (instruction, research, etc., supported by the Chair. It is understood that the Federation shall not request this information more frequently than once a year and that it may be supplied in the form of existing descriptions of courses, lists of publications, etc.
15. The President of the Federation may seek once a year an informal meeting with the Dean of the Faculty of Arts of his representative to gather information about the activities supported by the Endowment. The meeting shall be at convenience of both parties.
16. The federation and the University undertake to create a review committee composed of equal number of (not exceeding 3 from each institution) representatives of the two institutions. The committee shall meet periodically to review the activities of the Chair. It is understood that the advice and the suggestions of this committee shall not be such as will infringe upon the freedom of the University, particularly the freedom agreed upon in (7) and (8) above.
17. The Federation and the University agree to participate in a review committee that shall be created and shall function under the guidelines of the Endowment Assistance Program. It is under-



stood that the advice and the suggestions of this committee shall not be such as will infringe upon the freedom agreed upon in (7) and (8) above.

18. The University shall submit to the Government of Canada, with a copy to the Federation, a full evaluation report on the activities against the stated objectives for the Chair, based upon the first four (4) years of full activities. This evaluation will be submitted not later than the end of the fifth year of the activities.
19. In the event of the activities of the Chair being discontinued or likely to be altered significantly by the University, the University shall consult with the Federation or its successors and the Government of Canada in respect of an alternative use of the Endowment Fund: the recommendations made jointly by both the Federation and the Government shall be mandatory.
20. At no time shall the Federation or the University demand or expect from each other anything which conflicts (a) with the guidelines or requirements of the Endowment Assistance Program or (b) with the smooth running of the Chair. At all times academic standards and ethics shall be observed.

This agreement consists of twenty (20) clauses.

Signee \_\_\_\_\_

Signee \_\_\_\_\_

Robert M.T. Smith  
President pro tem  
University of British Columbia

Mohinder Singh Gosai  
President  
Federation of Sikh Societies  
of Canada

Place: Vancouver, RC.

Place: Vancouver, RC.

Date March 16, 1985

Date March 16, 1985

**APPENDIX II**

The Australian National University

The Library

GPO Box 4, Canberra, ACT 2601

Telegrams & cables NATUNIV

Canberra Telex AA 62694

NA TUNI

Telephone 062-493111

Reference

9th February, 1990

I Sara

Suite 6

6325 Fraser Street (at 47th)

VANCOUVER BC VSW 3A3

CANADA

Dear Sir,

With reference to your letter dated 7th Nov. 89, concerning the following AN.U. Ph.D. Thesis.

OBEROI, H.S.

A world reconstructed: religion, ritual and community among the Sikhs, 1850-1901.

AN.U. Ph.D. Thesis 1987.

I regret the author has denied us permission to make copies. Your order is, therefore, cancelled.

The published version should be released soon and wishes potential readers to consult it, when available.

Please find enclosed your open cheque.

Yours sincerely,  
Lending Services Librarian,  
User Services Division,  
R.G MEMZIES BUILDING

### APPENDIX III REPORT

(On Dr Harjot Oberoi's Academic work in reference to the objectives of the Endowment Trust Fund Contract between UBC, Government of Canada and the Federation of Sikh Societies on behalf of the Sikh Community)

A meeting of visiting Sikh scholars from India with Dr Harjot Oberoi, other professors from U.B.C., and Dr Hugh Johnston of Simon Fraser University, was held on July 22, 1994, 5:30 pm - 8:30 pm, in Room 604, Asian Studies Centre, 1871 West Mall, University of British Columbia, Vancouver. Attendees of the meeting included:

1. Dr Balkar Singh
2. Dr Darshan Singh
3. Dr Kehar Singh
4. Dr Gurnam Kaur
5. Dr Harjot Oberoi
6. Dr Hugh Johnston
7. Dr Kenneth Bryant

Also present were the members of the Sikh public.

The meeting's main agenda was to deliberate upon Dr Oberoi's work as UBC Sikh chair holder, in reference to the Objectives of the Endowment Trust Fund contract establishing the Chair.

The findings of the Sikh scholars visiting are stated on the following pages:

## FINDINGS:

1. It is *our* opinion that none *of* the publications submitted address the objectives laid down *for* the Sikh chair, including Sikhism's doctrines, religious practices, philosophy, and the subjects *of* Sikhism and Sikhs and Sikhism in Canada.
2. More specifically, the said publications, as to the content, tone and tenor, are visibly incompatible with the objectives *of* the Sikh chair in question.
3. These publications seem to us an irrelevant exercise in historiography.
4. In our opinion, the works *of* Dr Oberoi suppress the crucial historical record and, as such, are grossly unfair and harmful to Sikh sensibility.

IN VIEW *of* the hurt caused to the Sikh community by the writings *of* the present occupant *of* the UBC Sikh Chair, we are unanimously *of* the opinion that the incumbent, Dr Harjot Oberoi, is not contributing to the fulfilment *of* the objectives laid down in the agreement concerning the Sikh Chair at UBC.

**(Appendix)**

The following material was reviewed *for* this report.

- 1) The memorandum *of* agreement between the Federation *of* Sikh Societies (representing the Sikh community *of* Canada), University *of* British Columbia, and the Government *of* Canada, dated March 16, 1985 and February 25, 1987.
- 2) "Construction *of* Religious Boundaries" by Dr Harjot Oberoi, published by Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1994.
- 3) Article, "Popular Saints, Goddesses and Village Sacred Sites: Rereading Sikh Experience in the Nineteenth Century", read at UC Berkeley, February 1987.
- 4) Article, "From Ritual to Counter-Ritual: Rethinking the Hindu--Sikh Question", Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century, University *of* Toronto, 1988.

- 5) Article, "Sikh Fundamentalism: Ways of Turning Things Over", Presented at the Annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Anaheim, November 1989.
- 6) Article, "Sikh Fundamentalism: Translating History into Theory", Fundamentalisms and the State, University of Chicago Press 1993.
- 7) Article, "The Worship of Pir Sakhi Sarvar: Illness, Healing and Popular Culture in the Punjab," Studies in History, special number on Popular Culture, vol.2, 1987.
- 8) Article, "Popular Saints, Goddesses and Village Sacred Sites", University of Chicago Press, vol. 31, 1992, pp. 340-78.
- 9) UBC Report of Activities of Chair in Punjabi Language, Literature, and Sikh Studies, covering the period 1987-1992.
- 10) UBC Report on administrative and technical matters relating to activities of the Sikh Studies Chair, with a forwarding letter dated February 7, 1992, signed by Al. McClean, Associate Vice-President (Academic).

#### **ARTICLES BY DR OBEROI PRIOR TO 1994**

- 1) Article, "Popular Saints, Goddesses and Village Sacred Sites: Rereading Sikh Experience in the Nineteenth Century", read at UC Berkeley, February 1987.
- 2) Article, "From Ritual to Counter-Ritual: Rethinking the Hindu--Sikh Question", Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century, UOT 1988.
- 3) Article, "Sikh Fundamentalism: Ways of Turning Things Over", Presented at the Annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Anaheim, November 1989.
- 4) Article, "Sikh Fundamentalism: Translating History into Theory", University of Chicago Press 1993.
- 5) Article, "The Worship of Pir Sakhi Sarvar: Illness, Healing and Popular Culture in the Punjab", Studies in History, special number on Popular Culture, vol. 2, 1987.
- 6) Article, "Popular Saints, Goddesses and Village Sacred Sites", University of Chicago Press, vol. 31, 1992, pp. 340-78.

## **REPORT OF SIKH SCHOLARS ON OBEROI'S WORK**

The reported Work of the Chair has, from all known accounts, been below standard in quantity and quality and what is worse still, it suffers from lack of academic integrity. We briefly record below some salient points which need specifically to be gone into in order to bring the work of the Chair upto the mark.

1. The report which should have been an annual feature, gives account of five years, and the output of the Chair is extremely inadequate.
2. All papers, less than half a dozen, published over a period of five years, are nothing but a reproduction or rehash of the chapters of the thesis of the author for his Ph.D. In fact, the book being published is also virtually his thesis done before he came to the Chair. The plea that this is done by all young scholars is unacceptable. Even his published paper 'Fundamentalism and the State' is just a slightly expanded version of the earlier paper read at Anaheim. Thus, none of his papers are a product of any work done during the five years of the Chair.
3. Apart from quantity, the quality is even more inadequate, and displays clearly lack of knowledge of the subject by the author. Dr Oberoi is repeatedly writing about Sikh religion and its fundamentalism. In all his papers, there is not even a single quotation from the Sikh Scripture supporting his view. He writes that Kahn Singh created the Hindu-Sikh divide. His ignorance is so blatant that he does not even know that for 240 years, Ten Sikh Prophets lived and preached a separate religion, thousands made the supreme sacrifice for their faith including three Prophets, an authenticated Scripture was given, said that they were neither Hindu nor Muslims and organised a community with specific principles and world-view, the ethics of which, spiritual and moral, have yet to be surpassed in quality.

In the entire Sikh Scripture, there is nothing fundamentalist. In fact, the use of the word fundamentalism in the case of Sikhism is an ignorant misrepresentation, for, its embodied principles are eternally true and valid, and the only fundamentalism is that truthful living is the holiest truth.

The papers of Oberoi have been reviewed and called incorrect, superficial, mischievous, ignorant and lacking in academic conduct. A

copy of the reviews of his papers is enclosed. The quality of his papers has been so poor that Dr(s) Noel King (one paper), Kharak Singh (one paper), and G.S. Dhillon (three papers) have published papers specifically against his formulations being ignorant, incorrect and perhaps motivated. Against Oberoi's observations of Sikh Fundamentalism - a creation of the nineteenth century, Dr King said in his paper, ("Fundamentalism' 'modernity': Sikhism a Tertium Quid"):

“At base, it was the continued unfolding of the unseeded, encoded nature of Sikhism as originally propounded by the first *Mahala* and the other nine... The same spirit told forth the same truths as they applied to that stage of life. Let us give but one brief example. It was not one person, however brilliant, saying *Ham Hindu nain hai* late in the nineteenth century but the First Teacher coming up from the Three Day Waters saying *Hai nain Hindu, Hai nain Mussalman* which is basic”. All the five papers were analyzed and were found to be factually and rationally baseless, ignorant both about Sikhism and the Punjab Problem (copies enclosed).

4. The conduct of Oberoi has been equally unfortunate. Only two examples are given:
  - i) Since the writings of Oberoi, he has been repeatedly invited to conferences of Sikh Studies to defend his point of view. In December, 1988, Dr Oberoi was invited to respond to the opposite view of Dr G.S. Dhillon on the subject of his paper at Long Beach, University of California. He avoided it. Again, a conference was held on 2nd December, 1990, at his own University campus at Vancouver, and he was invited to defend his papers against the points of view of Dr King, Dr Kharak Singh and Dr Dhillon which were to be expressed at the conference. The conference was attended by Dr Johnston, and ministers from the government who sent their mes-sages and representatives to address the conference. Yet, Dr Oberoi failed to appear, much less defend his views or propositions. The following day, when our deputation met the Director of the Department, we were amazed to learn from him that on 2nd Decem-ber, Dr Oberoi had informed him that he was leaving the depart-ment to attend the Conference. Does not his conduct show that both his consciousness and his formulations are baseless, and his non-observance devoid of ethics?
  - ii) In his paper, Oberoi wrote that late in the nineteenth century Singh Sabha leaders were the first to object to the worship of

Sakhi Sarvar by the Sikhs. This is baseless. The Gurus in practice and in their hymns specially condemned the worship of Sakhi Sarvar and goddesses. His contrary view could be due to ignorance or motivation. In fact, motivation appears evident, because he indulged in deliberate suppression. Rose, a known authority on the subject, and Oberoi quotes him profusely, wrote that the Sikhs in the villages not only disregarded the worship of Sakhi Sarvar, but were hostile to those who worshipped him. He stated that comparatively few Sikhs were followers of Sakhi Sarvar, and there was in fact a sort of oppression in the Central Districts between the Sikhs and the Sarvarias, one party worshipping the Sikh Guru, and the other worshipping Sakhi Sarvar, i.e., one party were Sikhs, and the other were ordinary Hindus who followed Sakhi Sarvar. He added that the worship of Sarvar spread eastward in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and was the prevalent cult at the time of the development of Sikhism, and that most of the conversions to the Khalsa were from the erstwhile worshippers of Sakhi Sarvar. This, he explains, was the probable reason of opposition between the two forms of faith, i.e., between the Hindu Sarvarians and the Sikhs opposing their cult. He added that in the nineteenth century Sarvarians were looked upon as ordinary Hindus. And yet, while fully knowing all this, Oberoi, we believe, deliberately suppressed the above clear conclusion of an authority like Rose, and also Macauliffe, and made the distortion that Singh Sabha leaders were the first to object to Sakhi Sarvar worship among the Sikhs. Evidently, his entire article would be found to be baseless misrepresentation. Such a conduct would, we believe, be unpardonable of an ordinary person, but much less can it be glossed over in the case of an occupant of a Sikh Chair. Further, such conduct is unacademic, unethical and violative of the terms of the Agreement with the University. Clause (2) of the Agreement reads: "All instruction and research shall be in keeping with the established academic standards and every possible effort shall be made to present the teachings and practices of Sikhism in an accurate manner."

Undoubtedly, Dr Oberoi has violated the conditions of the Agreement by knowingly suppressing facts about accurate Sikh practices, established academic literature and Sikh Scriptures and



history by making conscious concealment of truth, and by expression of inaccuracies.

5. We have not detailed here all the inaccurate, misleading and malicious statements of Dr Oberoi. However, those misrepresentations are analyzed, discussed and exposed in the five papers referred to above. But, he continues and persists. The latest is his paper published in the book "Fundamentalism of the State". In that paper, he repeats his earlier formulations made at Anaheim and elsewhere, and which stand controverted in the earlier papers of the authors mentioned above, both in regard to Oberoi's facts and arguments. Yet, he remains completely silent about those papers published in the books and read at the conferences. A copy of the letter addressed to the Editors of the Fundamentalism project is enclosed.
6. Finally, it is our considered view that the matter about Oberoi's academic work and conduct is too serious to be brushed aside. Not only his conduct is unacademic, but he has been consistently work-ing in opposition to the objectives accepted in the Agreement. His violations have been specifically indicated above. We wonder if the conduct shown by Oberoi can, in any sense, merit his continued presence in an academic forum, much less as an occupant of a Chair. We, therefore, suggest that a way should be found to dis-pense with the services of Dr Oberoi. Another important fact is the publication of his thesis in the form of a book. We fear its publica-tion is vetted by some authority on Sikh religion, lest it should also be a problem for the author, the community and the University. Already, the publication of a thesis by the Toronto University 'has offended the entire community for its being considered blasphe-mous and incorrect. Over a score of papers have been published against the Toronto work, and the SGPC, the highest body of the Sikhs, has taken note of it for its libel and inaccuracies. In the interests of amity it is suggested that the publication of Oberoi's book should be properly checked, lest it should create a serious but an avoidable problem for the University and the Sikh community. Already the Sikhs who have been contributing towards the Chair at Toronto, have been seriously concerned about the work done there and have represented to the University accordingly. In all sincerity we wish, as citizens of Canada, that no controversy should arise concerning the work of the Chair in this university.

## APPENDIX IV

March 20, 1987

### **JOB ADVERTISEMENT FOR UBC SIKH CHAIR**

The Department of Asian Studies anticipates making a one-year visiting appointment in Punjabi language and literature and Sikh studies for the academic year 1987-88. We invite your application or nominations of others who may be qualified to teach courses in beginning and intermediate Punjabi language and at least one other field such as Sikh literature, religion, or history. Ph.D. degree required, as well as a very good command of spoken and written Punjabi.

Candidates should send a complete C.V., samples of research papers and publications, and the names and addresses of three referees to Professor Daniel L. Overmyer, Head, Department of Asian Studies, Asian Centre, 1871 West Mall, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C., Canada V6T 1W5. Candidates should request their referees to send confidential letters of recommendation directly to the same address. The deadline for completion of applications is May 15, 1987.

The Department expects to make a tenure-track appointment to an endowed position in Punjabi and Sikh studies beginning in July 1988, following the University's normal procedures. The person appointed to the one-year visiting position may be a candidate for the tenure-track appointment the following year.

Sincerely,

Daniel L. Overmyer,  
Professor and Head

## APPENDIX V

TO: U.B.C. SOUTHASIANISTS

FROM: FRITZ LEHMANN, HISTORY (x5748)

RE. HIGHLIGHTS OF SHASTRI INDO-CANADIAN INSTITUTE  
ANNUAL MEETING

1. India's Acting High Commissioner, Mr. K.P. Fabian wishes to visit U.B.C. in the very near future to meet South Asia specialists and administrators. He would likely address us on an aspect of Indian foreign policy (he prefers North-South dialogue) and wishes to discuss the proposed chair in Sikh studies, about which his government is concerned. He seemed to me to be a reasonable and sympathetic person.

## APPENDIX VI

March 10, 1995

Dr S. Sodhi,  
School of Education,  
Dalhousie University,  
Halifax, NS.  
B3H 3J5

Dear Dr Sodhi,

## APPENDIX VI

March 10, 1995

Dr S Sodhi  
School of Education  
Dalhousie University  
Halifax NS  
B3H 3J5

Dear Dr Sodhi

In reply to your letter received by the President on 21 February, 1995, let me assure you that research done at the University of Toronto must meet the standard of peer review. The University is also committed to its Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research which includes freedom of enquiry.

It is the University's intention to make public its research findings, including doctoral dissertations. In accordance with its announced policy in the Calendar of the School of Graduate Studies, however, the School of Graduate Studies may permit an author to postpone publication *for* a restricted period of time. Mr. Fennech's thesis has been restricted until 31 January, 1997, at which time it will be available through the normal channels. The abstract of the thesis is, again in accordance with standard policy, a matter of public record in the School of Graduate Studies.

To my knowledge, no researcher at the University of Toronto is aware of the conference you allude to. It is not the University's practice to send speakers to conferences uninvited, although its faculty members are free to respond to invitations as they deem appropriate.

Respected Dr Gillmartin,

Sincerely yours,  
Paul W. Gooch,  
Vice- Provost.

## APPENDIX VII

Centre of Sikh Studies

(at Sikh Center of Orange County)

2530 Warner Ave., Santa Ana, CA 92704 Tel:(714)641-9034

Dated: 26 March, 1995

To: Dr David Gillmartin  
Association *for* Asian Studies

Subject: To Set Up an Independent Review Committee by  
Association *for* Asian Studies to Study the Issue of Unethical  
Studies by Sikh Endowment Chairs subverting Sikh Ideology.

Respected Dr Gillmartin

Thanks very much *for* including a round table discussion on “Endowment Academic Chairs in South-Asian Studies: Prospects and Problems” on April 8th in your annual conference. The Sikh community has noted in past, that certain scholars are intentionally trying to subvert the Sikh ideology. Various seminars have been held on these issues and proceedings of such seminars have been published. The Sikh community would like to share their concerns with you.

Sikhs migrated to North America 100 years ago and worked hard against racial discrimination and immigration bans. But still, they maintained their independent identity by establishing different Sikh Gurdwaras since 1907. Even since the 1960s, as immigration policies in North America became more liberal, more educated Sikhs got the chance to migrate. Sikhs wanted to work with Westerners at academic levels in hope to get partnership which would secure best results at western universities and paid with open mind to *U.B.C.*, *U.O.T.*, Univ. of Michigan, and Columbia Univ. As the Sikhs have no political independent power to promote their own identity, the Punjab crisis in the early 1980s forced the western Sikh community to take the responsibility on themselves to project the authentic image of Sikhism in the West (which was being eroded politically by anti-Sikh forces). Sikhs

contributed generously so that a generation of promising young scholars would provide some long-term faculty appointments ending in long lasting results that would provide the future generations with a true Sikh identity and their roots as enshrined in Sikh scriptures and early 17th and 18th century historical process in the making of Khalsa Sikh identity well documented in Persian and Sikh historical literature. The Sikh community gave all their trust, understanding, commitment and respect to western university tradition of freedom of academic inquiry. They also thought that the western scholarship would also abide by the academic responsibility, honesty, humility, and integrity. They also hoped that the evidence and critical analysis would not mean hostility or insensitivity. But, all the dreams of the perspective donors were shattered at U.O.T by the planned attack on the authenticity of their Sikh scripture (original available in Kartarpuri Bir) by the use of unauthenticated MS # 1245 (with no date, no history before 1987, no authorship). Somebody published articles under the authorship of Dr Loehlin while he was invalid or dead. The same author, later on at Akal Takhat, accepted the charges for doing such irresponsible research (for details, read “Abstracts of Sikh Studies”, July ’94). At UBC there was a clear cut understanding of the memorandum agreement that the chairperson would present in accurate manner the Sikh doctrines, religious practice, and philosophy. In spite of this agreement, the chair- person academically suppressed the historical evidence by Dr Rose and the Sikh identity as established in Sikh scripture and early Persian and Sikh historical sources of 17th and 18th century.

Dr Oberoi has openly admitted that he is not a student of religion. Then why did he write about the “religious boundaries”? Sikhs feel that he simply did this to make his masters happy, who helped him to get his job. S. Mohinder Singh Gosal, President of the Sikh Societies of Canada, said “that there is sufficient evidence to prove that the two-year delay to start this chair was intentional under the pressures from anti-Sikh political forces.” It is possible that the two year wait was a design to hire a groomed applicant. Dr Oberoi did as Asad notes, “it is a notorious tactic of political power to deny a distinct unity to populations it seeks to govern, to treat them as contingent and indeter-minate...It is precisely the viewpoint of interventionist power that insists on the permeability of social groups, the unboundedness of cultural unities, and the instability of individual selves”

(Talal Asad “Multiculturalism and British Identity in the Wake of the Rushdie Affair,” *Politics and Society* 18(4) 1990).

The Sikh community is clearly aware of the implications of methodological atheism that characterized all rational empirical re-search today. We will give one example here that shows how these critical scholars manipulated the concept of rational empiricism.. Numerous examples can be found in different books related to this issue. Perspective donors felt cheated and humiliated when the famous doctrine of succession of Guru Granth as the living Guru of the Sikhs from October 6, 1708 was altered. There are enough historical sources (Sikh, Persian, Sanskrit, Indian and European historians as quoted by Dr Ganda Singh, Dr Harbans Singh, and Dr Mandanjit Kaur) available which indicate that Guru Gobind Singh, on October 6, 1708, sanctified Aad Guru Granth as the living spiritual Guru of the Sikhs. Now let us see how these critical scholars at western universities suppressed the above historical evidence.

- 1) In 1994, Dr Oberoi’s “Construction of Religious Boundaries” said “When in 1708, at the death of Guru Gobind Singh, there was no one to succeed him as Guru, the Panth turned into his collective successor. This was to be an abiding belief of Khalsa Sikhs, one that came in handy when waging battles for collective survival and political sovereignty over the course of the 18th century.”
- 2) In 1991 Dr Pashaura Singh’s unpublished thesis “Text and Meaning of the Adi Granth” on page 91 says “The Singh Sabha reformers sanctified this standard version and set aside all other versions used in earlier centuries.”
- 3) Dr Gurinder Mann’s “Studying the Sikhs” on page 147 says “The death of Guru Gobind Singh, in 1708, began a new chapter in the history of the Sikh community. With the limited sources at our disposal, it is hard to understand clearly how the community effectively filled the vacuum caused by the passing away of the Guru and the dissolution of this central Sikh institution. Why was the guruship discontinued?”

Why couldn’t the above western scholars find the historical evidence of such crucial Sikh doctrine, which has been cited by famous Sikh scholars like Drs Ganda Singh, Harbans Singh and Madanjit Kaur? Is this western rational empirical approach ethical? According

to Collier's Encyclopaedia, "academic freedom is never unlimited and the general social law including that of libel applies equally well to it. Underoacademic freedom, individuals have the right to protest against research which can produce psychological pain, suffering and misinterpretation of doctrines." After the candidate gets his degree, Ph.D. THESIS becomes a public property, then why is the Ph.D. thesis [MAKING OF THE SIKH SCRIPTURE] being locked at Columbia University since 1993? Why did Or Lou Fenech, another McLeodian student who finished his Ph.D. degree [PLAYING THE GAME OF LOVE, SIKH TRADITION OF MARTYRDOM] on December 16, 1994, have his thesis restricted until 31 January 31, 1997? [see appendix] that is there to hide? Is this a good example of methodological atheism? Good academics always have the ingredients of responsibility, honesty, humility, and integrity.

We appreciate the Association for Asian Studies, which is the largest organization of Asian scholars in North America, for issuing an "open letter of concern". But, unfortunately, it failed to clarify the concerns of the Sikh scholars. Sikh Studies in North America has been under seige under one group of scholarship whose motive seems to be more political than academic. Dr Tarlochan Singh in his book "Ernest Trumpp and W.H. McLeod: As Scholars of Sikh History, Religion and Culture" quotes on page 254: "A reading of 'Evolution of Sikh Community' (1975) reminded me of a white and physically attractive Bull who entered a China shop of rare curios and broke as many precious glassware as his first momentous attack could. Considering it a great and impressive feat, the Bull came out, started wagging his tail and became the leader of a whole group of White Bulls". Sometimes all alone, sometimes with a team of White Bulls, Hew McLeod entered his China shop of Sikh Studies again with the express motive of reducing all the precious possessions of this China shop of "Sikh Religious and Historical Studies" to rubble and rubbish in his four thin books having the same themes, the same chapters and repetitions of malicious attacks on Sikh history and religion. Senior scholars of Sikh study have refuted Or McLeod's formulations, but their work has been purposely suppressed.

Any honest clarification is being dubbed as fundamentalism and religious orthodoxy. Separate independent Sikh identity and authenticity of Sikh scripture is being attacked. Main stream Sikh



thought is being marginalized by these politically oriented scholarships. The acquisition of intimidation is being thrown at every scholar or institution who tries to give his opinion on the issues. Wrong statements are being made about the fact that people who object to this unethical scholarship are not qualified historians or academic scholars of Sikh studies. All issues have been discussed in detail at different academic conferences, and proceedings of such seminars are available to scrutiny. The issues have been clearly defined and must be taken up for dispassionate academic discussion. We request Association for Asian Studies to set up an immediate independent committee to review the issues. We will be more than happy to provide all books and articles published expressing such unethical and libelous issues of Sikh studies. We want co-operation from all concerned and feel that the Association for Asian Studies can take a lead on this and it is only then that academic freedom for the scholars and the rights of the Sikh community will not be in danger.

Sincerely,  
 Jasbir Singh Mann,  
 Secretary.

Copy to:           Dr Stephen Pollus, UC Berkeley  
                       Lee Schlesinger, University of Michigan  
                       Dr David Ludden, University of Pennsylvania  
                       Dr Ranbir Singh Sandhu, University of Ohio

Enclosed:         Planned Attack on Adi Granth  
                       Few reviews of Oberoi's Work (Book in Press)

**APPENDIX VIII**  
**NEED FOR AN INVESTIGATION AT UBC**

**SIKH COMMUNITY WAS UNFAIRLY TREATED AS FOLLOWS:**

- \* Why UBC made first year visiting appointment rather than tenure track for endowment chair from THE beginning as signed in the contract?
- \* Why UBC took 2 years to commence chair?
- \* Is Dr Oberoi full qualified to teach Punjabi language and literature?
- \* Are his publications consistent with objectives of chair?
- \* Why did he use unethical academic suppression of crucial historical evidence?
- \* Why weren't the objectives supervised by UBC?
- \* Why didn't UBC report per agreement?
- \* Why wasn't a review committee set up?
- \* Why UBC allowed violations of SSRHC?

**INVASION OF RELIGIOUS BOUNDARIES**

**- A Critique -  
of  
Harjot Oberoi's Work**

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