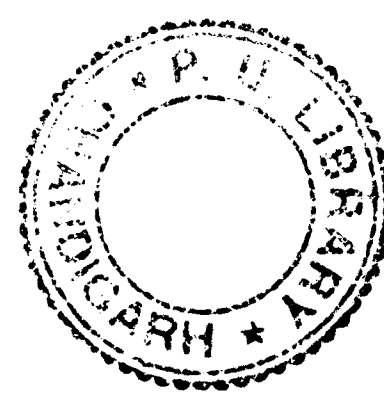


**SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE OF THE SIKHS  
IN THE PUNJAB  
DURING THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY**

**A THESIS**

Submitted to the  
FACULTY OF ARTS  
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## PREFACE

For the Master's degree in History at the Panjab University, Chandigarh, I thought of Medieval India as a specialized area for study. One of the compulsory courses was history of the Punjab from the late sixteenth to the eighteenth century. I came upon Professor J.S. Grewal's *Sikhs of the Punjab* as one of the books recommended for this course. I was struck by his treatment of social dimensions of Sikh history which I found more interesting than past politics. A vague idea of doing research in social history crossed my mind. Professor Indu Banga, my teacher in the Department, used to hammer the point that linguistic competence is absolutely necessary for doing research. That turned my thoughts more and more to Sikh history because of my knowledge of Punjabi.

After the MA examination, I started reading more books and articles on the early centuries of Sikh history and thought of working on the *Rahitnamas* which had been studied by scholars of Sikh ethics and Sikh social history. Further reading suggested the possibility of studying the social and cultural life of the Sikhs during the eighteenth century which had not been studied. The scope of the subject expanded further with more and more work on contemporary sources. The thesis now covers doctrinal and institutional developments, religious beliefs and practices, rites and rituals, ethics, identities and differentiation in the Sikh social order, gender relations, literary articulation, painting and architecture, apart from political activity and organization.

I located the relevant sources and books in various libraries, repositories and personal collections: Bhai Kahn Singh Library, Punjabi University, Patiala where I saw 37 special collections; Punjab Languages Department Library, and Central Public Library, both at Patiala; Bhai Gurdas Library, Guru Nanak Dev University, and Sikh History Research Department Library, Khalsa College at Amritsar; Dr Balbir Singh Sahitya Kendra, Dehradun; A.C. Joshi Library, Panjab

University, and Dwarka Das Library at Chandigarh; and the National Archives of India, New Delhi. I found some manuscripts in the personal collection of the late Professor Pritam Singh. I acknowledge my debt to him and to these institutions and their keepers. I wish to particularly thank Mrs. Mohinder Kaur Ji, Director, Dr Balbir Singh Sahitya Kendra, Dehradun; Dr H.S. Chopra, Librarian of Bhai Gurdas Library, Amritsar; and Dr Devinder Kaur and Dr Shashi Bala, Librarians of Bhai Kahn Singh Library, Patiala.

For pursuing this research I received a Junior Research Fellowship from the Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi. I am grateful for their financial support.

I thank to Professor Gurinder Singh Mann, Kapany Professor, Centre for Sikh and Punjab Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara for allowing me to participate in the Summer Program of the UCSB at Chandigarh. I benefited greatly also from my interactions with him.

This work in its present form could not have been completed without the constant guidance, meticulous care and kind support of my Supervisor, Professor Indu Banga. I owe a deep sense of gratitude to her. I have received valuable advice and support from time to time from my teachers in the Department of History: Professor Kiran Pawar, Professor Surinder Singh, Dr Veena Sachdeva who is presently also the Chairperson, Dr Rajiv Lochan, Dr Reeta Grewal, Dr Sukhmani Bal Riar, Dr Anju Suri and Dr Devi Sirohi. I am grateful to them all. In the final stages of this work I was supported in various ways by my colleagues and former teachers – Mrs. Shobha Chopra, Mrs. Poonam Davesar, and Mrs. Mini Grewal – at the MCM DAV College and our Principal, Dr Puneet Bedi. I gratefully acknowledge their support.

I received considerable help from Dr Sheena Pall and Dr Kuldeep Kaur Grewal, my seniors and fellow researchers. My friends Tina Garg and Khursheed helped me in several ways. Ms Parneet Minhas has typed out the manuscript with great care. I thank them all.

On a personal plane, I wish to acknowledge the moral and material support received from my parents, S. Dalip Singh Malhotra and Mrs. Sheetal K. Malhotra. My brother Kamal and his wife Shikha were always there whenever I needed them. I cannot thank them enough. Nor can I ever repay the affection and care of my grandmother.

I have had the great privilege of discussing my work with Professor J.S. Grewal and of having access to his library. He has always been generous with his time and unsparing with his criticism. He made me think and rethink about several aspects of the history of the period. This work could not have been completed in its present form without his encouragement and advice. This modest endeavour is dedicated to Professor J.S. Grewal.

*Kmalhotra*  
11.12.2009  
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Dated: 11.12.2009

## INTRODUCTORY

Modern historical writing on the Sikhs, with its rational outlook and humanistic assumptions, began in the late eighteenth century with the work of European writers on the contemporary Sikhs and their past. This was a compliment that the East India Company paid to the rising power of the Khalsa. The primary interest of the European writers was political, though the religious faith of the Khalsa was seen as closely linked up with their politics. They looked upon the Khalsa Commonwealth simply as a confederacy or 'theocratic confederate feudalism'. Another term used for the polity of the Khalsa was Misaldari politics and polity formed the core of what the Europeans wrote on the eighteenth century Sikhs, though they refer to some other aspects of their life.

The early British interest in the Sikhs reached its culmination in J.D. Cunningham's *History of the Sikhs* in 1849, the year of the annexation of the Punjab to the British Indian empire. After the annexation, the British administrators were no longer interested in the past politics of the Sikhs. They showed more interest either in the earlier Sikh tradition of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries or in the position of the Sikhs as the subjects of the empire. The legacy of the early British writers was carried forward by Indian historians in the twentieth century. Historians like N.K. Sinha and H.R. Gupta produced monographs on the eighteenth century, dwelling very largely on the political history of the Khalsa and their polity. As a part of this interest a few biographical studies were also produced as on Banda Singh Bahadur, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Ahmad Shah Abdali, a determined adversary of the Sikhs. A few other historians have also discussed the eighteenth century Sikh polity, either to elaborate the concept of Misaldari system or to question its validity and to underline the increasing importance of monarchical tendencies even before the rise of Ranjit Singh as the only sovereign ruler of the Punjab.

Nevertheless, the scope of the study of the eighteenth century did not remain confined to the grooves created by the early British historians which were widened by the 'nationalist historians'. The *Agrarian System of the Sikhs* by Professor Indu Banga breaks new ground though it is concerned more with the early nineteenth than the late eighteenth century. Dr. Veena Sachdeva's *Polity and Economy of the Punjab During the Late Eighteenth Century* relates as much to the Sikhs as to the non-Sikhs of the region. While focusing on politico-administrative change, both these works introduce economic and social dimensions to the study of the Sikhs during the eighteenth century.

Interest in Sikh literature of the eighteenth century has increased in the recent decades. Apart from the notice taken by the historians of Punjabi literature, a number of literary works of the eighteenth century have been published with scholarly 'Introductions'. Some of the historians too have written on the literature of this period, notably Professor W.H. McLeod and Professor J.S. Grewal. The two most important *Janamsakhis* of the eighteenth century have been published and studied. Two other works in the *sakhi* genre have been published with commentaries. Five works in the *Gurbilas* form have been published, commented upon, and analysed. Eight *Rahitnamas* of the eighteenth century have been published, translated, and studied. Two *Vars* of the period and a few works on the Sikh sacred space in Ramdaspur (later Amritsar) have been analysed. Thus, there is considerable scholarly work on Sikh literature of the eighteenth century. It is not necessary to go into further detail here because the main approaches to Sikh literature of the eighteenth century have been given in Appendix 6 of the present study.

Similarly, the treatment of Sikh social order with reference to caste and gender has been given in Appendix 4 and Appendix 5 of this thesis. There are three other areas of recent scholarly interest: the *Guru Granth Sahib*, the art of painting, and Sikh architecture. For the first, apart from the production of scriptural manuscripts, the doctrines of Guru-Granth and Guru-Panth have been debated upon. In this

connection, the position of the recension called the *Damdami Bir* has been discussed in Appendix 1 of this thesis. The evidence on and treatment of 'Sikh' painting and architecture has been noticed in the relevant chapters.

On the whole, thus not only the political history of the Sikhs, and their polity, but also their social and cultural life during the eighteenth century have drawn the attention of a number of scholars belonging to different disciplines. However, no historian or scholar has addressed himself or herself directly or entirely to the subject of their social and cultural life. The work published by these scholars clearly shows the possibility of research in this area and it is extremely helpful as the starting point. Equally helpful is the evidence on the eighteenth century Sikhs published by scholars working in various disciplines.

The major sources used by historians for the study of the history of the Sikhs during the eighteenth century are literary, mostly in Persian, English and Gurmukhi. This evidence has been enriched in the past three or four decades and it is still the most useful. Recent research clearly shows that the evidence of literature in Gurmukhi is far more comprehensive and detailed than what we find in Persian and English sources, both of which relate largely to political history. Furthermore, whereas literature in Gurmukhi provides ample evidence on the norms evolved and disseminated, the Persian and English sources provide evidence largely on the situation on the ground. Therefore, it is necessary to look at both these forms of evidence together on all aspects of social and cultural life of the Sikhs. For the study as a whole, evidence from archival records, numismatics, art and architecture has been added to literary sources.

The aspects of the social and cultural life of the Sikhs during the eighteenth century taken up for this thesis have emerged from the study of both the secondary works and the contemporary sources. The political activity and organization studied in different phases provide the context and also have a close bearing on certain features of the social and cultural life of the eighteenth century Sikhs.



The doctrines of Guru-Granth and Guru-Panth crystallized during the eighteenth century to become the most fundamental doctrines of the majority of the Sikhs. The Gurdwara emerged conspicuously as the most important institution of the Sikhs by the end of the eighteenth century, with the Harmandir (later the Golden Temple) as the primary place of Sikh pilgrimage, apart from other places where important Gurdwaras were built. Furthermore, the Sikhs continued with many of their old beliefs and practices, and adopted new ones. There is more information on the norms than on the praxis, but the available evidence suggests a certain degree of correlation. In connection with the beliefs of the Sikhs, the appearance of the Goddess in Sikh literature of the eighteenth century is discussed in Appendix 2 of this thesis.

An important development of the eighteenth century was the propagation of Sikh rites and rituals in which the Brahman had no role to play and in which the *Guru Granth Sahib* occupied a central position. The evidence on actual practices in quantitative terms is not available. Though it is difficult to imagine that the majority of the Sikhs who accepted the Sikh faith would immediately shift to new rites and rituals, it is extremely important that the norms are upheld throughout the eighteenth century in much of the Sikh literature of the period.

With the institution of the Khalsa the Sikh social order witnessed important changes. The Khalsa, or rather the Singh, identity became dominant by the end of the eighteenth century. Among the other categories of Sikhs it is not easy to identify all the groups. The Sahajdhari category in particular has to be clearly defined and the relationship of the Udasis with the Sikh social order has to be clearly determined. The caste background of the Sikhs remains relevant because of the ideal norm of equality to which the Khalsa subscribed more emphatically even than the earliest Sikhs. Similarly, the issue of gender relations, on which different views have been expressed by modern scholars, needs careful examination.



The literature of the period has been studied largely for its evidence on Sikh history. However, it has to be seen also as a mode of cultural expression in all its forms. The *Var* and the *Sakhi* forms were inherited from the past and put to new uses; the new forms known as the *Rahitnama* and the *Gurbilas* were evolved in the eighteenth century. The purpose and function of this literature indicates the basic concerns of the authors. The major works of Sikh literature need to be analysed for this reason. Cultural expressions in painting and architecture are also embedded in the beliefs and practices of the period. The purpose of those who sought patronage and the purpose of those who gave patronage become relevant in this context.

All these considerations explain the scope of the thesis as indicated in its nine chapters. There is some repetition made deliberately to keep the argument clear. For the same reason, the views expressed by other scholars on some of the aspects of the social and cultural life of the Sikhs have been given mostly in appendices. It may be emphasized that the thesis is based on contemporary evidence: literature in Gurmukhi, Persian and English, archival records, coins, paintings and extant structures. Later evidence is used only occasionally and that too from the early nineteenth century. To remain close to the idiom of the contemporaries, wherever possible, the relevant Punjabi and Persian words have been used in the text, with a Glossary given at the end. No attempt is made to conjecture or to theorize. The thesis remains entirely an interpretation of the eighteenth century evidence on the social and cultural life of the Sikhs during the eighteenth century.

## **Chapter I**

### **POLITICAL ACTIVITY AND ORGANIZATION**

The eighteenth century was marked by the declining authority of the Mughal emperor at the court, and the assertion of power by the provincial governors in relation to the centre and its various functionaries in the province. The increasing tension between the court and the individuals aspiring to hold power in the province brought Ahmad Shah Abdali on the scene as the successor of Nadir Shah who had invaded India in 1739 and wrested the trans-Indus territories from the Mughal emperor.

Mughal rule in the Punjab virtually ended in 1752 when the provinces of Lahore and Multan were ceded to the Abdali. By this time, leaders of the Khalsa had begun to occupy pockets of territory in the province, steadily to extend the area under their effective control.

Ahmad Shah's preoccupation with the Marathas around 1760 enabled the Khalsa to establish their hold over a large part of the province of Lahore. Ahmad Shah tried hard to suppress them but failed. Sure of their strength, the Khalsa declared their sovereign rule in 1765 by striking a coin at Lahore. From this point of time till the unification of the province of Lahore in the early nineteenth century by Ranjit Singh, a number of Sikh chiefs ruled over the Punjab. For want of a better concept, their polity is called Misaldari.

The eighteenth century politics, on the whole, can be divided into six phases: the background of politicization of the Sikh Panth; the first sovereign rule of the Sikhs, the struggle for survival as a political entity, their re-emergence as a political factor before the end of Mughal rule in the Punjab, their contest for power with the Afghans; and the establishment of Khalsa Raj in the late eighteenth century. We may take up these six phases one by one.

### **The Background of Politicization**

Sikh confrontation with the Mughal state began with the execution of Guru Arjan in 1606. His son and successor, Guru Hargobind (1606-44), took to martial activity, built the Akal Takht opposite the Harmandir in Ramdaspur, and encouraged his followers to adopt soldierly habits. He was detained in the fort of Gwalior as a political prisoner in the time of Jahangir, but he was released after a few years and remained on good terms with the emperor even though continuing his martial activities. During the reign of Shah Jahan, he fought a few battles with the Mughal *faujdars* in which he was victorious. However, he left the province of Lahore and settled at Kiratpur in the principality of a hill chief. Till his death Guru Hargobind maintained a considerable number of horses and matchlockmen.<sup>1</sup>

In a situation of confrontation with the Mughals, split within the Sikh Panth became increasingly conspicuous. The first to leave Guru Hargobind was his uncle Prithi Chand, the elder brother of Guru Arjan. Reluctant to acknowledge even Guru Arjan, he openly declared himself to be the Guru after Guru Arjan's death. Bhai Gurdas denounces Prithi Chand and his followers as Minas. With the help of the Mughal officials, his son Miharban occupied Ramdaspur after Guru Hargobind's departure from the province. The second person to defect was Guru Hargobind's grandson, Dhir Mal, the elder son of Baba Gurditta who was no longer alive. Dhir Mal did not recognize Guru Har Rai and declared himself to be the seventh Guru at Kartarpur in the Jalandhar Doab. He received a large piece of revenue-free land from Shah Jahan. Guru Har Rai went to the aid of Dara Shikoh in 1658 in his flight before Aurangzeb, and Aurangzeb called Guru Har Rai to Delhi. He sent his son Ram Rai who adopted a compromising attitude. Guru Har Rai appointed his younger son, Har Krishan, as the Guru. Ram Rai did not acknowledge him and eventually established his own centre at Dehra Dun under the patronage of Aurangzeb. Thus, whereas the

dissidents were getting aligned with the political authorities, Guru Hargobind and his successors remained dissociated from the state.<sup>2</sup>

Aurangzeb called Guru Har Krishan to Delhi, probably on a representation from Ram Rai. While in Delhi, Guru Har Krishan died of small pox after announcing that his successor was his grand uncle (Baba) Tegh Bahadur who was living in Bakala, not very far from Kartarpur or Ramdaspur. When the Sikhs approached him, he accepted the office of Guruship. His decision could offend several parties: Ram Rai and his patron Aurangzeb, Dhir Mal at Kartarpur, and Harji at Ramdaspur. Guru Tegh Bahadur did not stay at Bakala, nor at Kiratpur, and founded a new centre at Makhawal in the hill principality of Kahlur (Bilaspur). In the late 1660s he consolidated his hold over the *sangats* of the Gangetic plains and returned to the Punjab when Aurangzeb was mounting his measures of repression against non-Muslims and even non-Sunni Muslims. The Guru tried to encourage the common people against repression, questioning the emperor's right or authority to interfere in religious matters. He was called to Delhi in 1675, tried, and condemned to death. He died as a martyr for the freedom of conscience. Among other things, the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur was symbolic of serious confrontation between the Mughal state and the majority of the Sikhs.<sup>3</sup>

Guru Tegh Bahadur's son and successor, Guru Gobind Singh, was in his early teens in 1675.<sup>4</sup> For ten years he prepared himself and his followers for martial activity. The young chief of Kahlur, Bhim Chand, became increasingly anxious that the Guru should recognize his political authority. But Guru Gobind Singh was not willing to compromise the autonomy of Makhawal. Tension was mounting. In 1685, Guru Gobind Singh received an invitation from the chief of Sirmur (Nahan) to settle in his territory and the Guru accepted his invitation as a politic measure. Bhim Chand left the people of Makhawal in peace.

In the Sirmur state Guru Gobind Singh established his centre at Paonta which was close to the border of Sirmur with the state of

Garhwal. In fact, there was a background of feud between the chiefs of Sirmur and Garhwal, and Paonta served as a kind of buffer between the two. This could be the reason for the aggressive posture of the chief of Garhwal towards the tenth Guru. All of a sudden the Garhwal chief advanced against Paonta. Guru Gobind Singh moved out to give him battle at a place called Bhangani. The Guru's victory at Bhangani proclaimed the fact that he was more powerful than any single chief in the hills. He had good resources in men, bows and arrows, javelins, swords, maces and horses. But he had no intention of embroiling himself any further in the affairs of a chief who had tricked him into unreciprocated support. He left Paonta and returned to Makhwal in 1689 to found Anandpur.

Meanwhile, as a gesture of defiance against the Mughal authorities, Bhim Chand refused to pay tribute. The Mughal *faujdar* of Jammu sent a force against him. The commandant of this force was supported by the loyal vassals of the Mughal emperor. On an invitation from Bhim Chand, Guru Gobind Singh personally participated in the battle at Nadaun to ensure Bhim Chand's victory. But, soon after the battle, Bhim Chand agreed to pay tribute to the Mughal *faujdar*. The experience of Nadaun disillusioned Guru Gobind Singh. Moreover, he expressed his disapproval of Bhim Chand's submission by plundering a village in his territory. He returned to Anandpur and resumed his usual activities.

From 1693 to 1696 three expeditions were sent by the Mughal *faujdar* of Jammu against Guru Gobind Singh. The first was sent against Anandpur under a young commander who was disheartened to find the Guru ready for battle and left without a fight. Another expedition was sent against the Guru, but its commander was killed by some of the hill chiefs who were the Guru's supporters. Guru Gobind Singh did not participate personally in this battle but sent a small contingent of men who died fighting. Another force was sent under a Rajput commandant, Jujhar Singh, who was defeated and killed by the rebel chiefs. Thus, the expeditions against the Guru were diverted into

a campaign against the rebel hill chiefs. When Aurangzeb sent his son to the Punjab in 1696, he chastised the rebel chiefs and their supporters. Guru Gobind Singh remained safe at Anandpur.

The autobiographical *Bachittar Natak*, which is believed to have been compiled at the court of the tenth Guru, acquires a special relevance in this context. It presents a world-view in which God is believed to intervene in the affairs of his creation from time to time to establish true worship. The agencies chosen for the purpose make use of physical force to overwhelm the forces of evil. In this work Guru Gobind Singh himself is said to have been ordained by God to spread true religion among men and to bring them to their sense of duty towards God. Thus, he had come to fulfil God's purpose, without personal enmity towards anyone. This composition can be seen as a justification and an enunciation of Guru Gobind Singh's mission. Its primary emphasis was on the justness of his cause and the necessity of espousing it.<sup>5</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh was conscious that he could not fulfil the mission of Guru Nanak without meeting obstruction and opposition. To defend the claims of conscience against external interference he had first to set his own house in order. He decided to put his plan into operation on the Baisakhi day of 1699. The gathering addressed by the Guru at Anandpur was unusually large, and he asked the Sikhs at some stage to offer their lives for the sake of *dharma*. Offers did come one by one but with some hesitation. Guru Gobind Singh stopped the demand at five. The chastening baptism (*khande ki pahul*) was given to these five beloved Sikhs (*panj pyare*) who deliberately decided to dedicate their lives to the cause of righteousness. The distinguishing mark of *khande ki pahul*, as the name suggests, was the use of a double-edged sword in its preparation. The baptized Sikhs became 'Singhs' and they were asked to bear arms. Thus, not only in their inner convictions but also in their personal appearance the baptized Singhs stood distinguished from the majority of their contemporaries.<sup>6</sup>



For a year or two Guru Gobind Singh consolidated his new position. Bhim Chand took serious notice of the armed Sikhs of the Guru as a threat to the integrity of his dominions. He asked Guru Gobind Singh to pay tribute, but the Guru was not prepared to acknowledge the authority of the chief of Bilaspur. Bhim Chand formed an alliance with some of the hill chiefs to attack Anandpur. Unable to dislodge the Guru, the allied chiefs approached the Mughal *faujdars*. The combined forces of the Mughal *faujdars* and the hill chiefs used force and fraud to oblige Guru Gobind Singh to cross the river Sutlej into the territory of a friendly chief, and the Mughal troops went back. Without their support, Bhim Chand could not stop Guru Gobind Singh from recovering Anandpur.<sup>7</sup>

Back at Anandpur, Guru Gobind Singh was left free to strengthen his position for two years. The fortifications of Anandpur were improved and the Sikhs were probably trained in the use of cannon. The Khalsa started visiting Anandpur in larger numbers, which created the problem of supplies. Their need, combined with their new temper, resulted in the 'conquest' of the villages in the neighbourhood of Anandpur.<sup>11</sup>

Alarmed by this new development, the hill chiefs approached Aurangzeb for protection as his vassals. Thus, an apparently petty and local conflict was transformed into a trial of strength between the Khalsa under the leadership of Guru Gobind Singh and the Mughal empire under Aurangzeb. A long blockade and promise of safe conduct induced the Khalsa to agree to evacuate the fortresses, and Guru Gobind Singh left Anandpur towards the end of 1704 against his own better judgement. While crossing the flooded stream called Sarsa near Ropar, Guru Gobind Singh was attacked by the Mughal troops. Another battle was fought at Chamkaur on the day following in which Guru Gobind Singh's two elder sons died fighting. His two younger sons, and the Guru's mother, fell into the hands of the *faujdar* of Sirhind. On their refusal to accept Islam, the sons of the Guru were executed. The Guru's mother, Mata Gujri, died on the same day. Wazir

Khan, the *faujdar* of Sirhind attacked a group of the Khalsa at a place called Khidrana (Muktsar). They died fighting but Wazir Khan returned to Sirhind. This was the last campaign undertaken by a Mughal official against Guru Gobind Singh.<sup>9</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh wrote a spirited letter called the *Zafarnama* to Aurangzeb, justifying his own position on moral grounds and accusing the Mughal state of betrayal. Essentially, the *Zafarnama* conveyed that the Guru had no quarrel with the Mughal government as such, but he had to defend his cause with the force of arms when the quarrel was forced on him on account of his faith. The use of arms was his last resort in the situation. Indeed, it was lawful to resort to arms when all other alternatives had failed.<sup>10</sup> He was thus appealing to the emperor's sense of moral justice without relinquishing his own inalienable right to defend the claims of conscience. Aurangzeb was affected by the moral force and determination reflected in the *Zafarnama*. He sent special messengers to conciliate Guru Gobind Singh who decided to meet Aurangzeb. On his way to the Deccan he heard the news of the emperor's death, and met his successor, Bahadur Shah, at Agra. The Guru was well received and encouraged to hope that he would get Anandpur back. He remained close to the imperial camp for nearly half a year, hoping that the issue could be resolved any time. Not yet in a position to offend either the Guru or the hill chiefs, Bahadur Shah went on postponing the decision to restore the *status quo ante*.<sup>11</sup>

Towards the end of September 1708, the imperial army halted near Nander. Guru Gobind Singh decided not to accompany them any further. There he met an aggressive Vaishnavite renunciate (*bairagi*), later known as Banda, who accepted the *pahul* and the *rahit* of the Khalsa. Banda Singh, later nicknamed 'Bahadur', was commissioned by Guru Gobind Singh to lead the Khalsa against their oppressors in the Punjab.<sup>12</sup> A few days later, Guru Gobind Singh was stabbed and badly wounded by an Afghan connected with either Wazir Khan or an imperial officer. Before the Guru breathed his last on 7 October 1708,



he vested Guruship in the *Granth Sahib* and the Khalsa as a political community.<sup>13</sup>

A manuscript of Sammat 1775 (AD 1718-19), clarifies the goal of the Khalsa. There is nothing in the contents of this manuscript to indicate that this work was initially composed after the death of Guru Gobind Singh. It contains the well known couplet:

*Raj karega Khalsa aki rahe na koi*

*Khuar hou sab milenge bache saran jo hoe*

‘The *Khalsa* shall rule and none would withstand them; shorn of honour, all shall submit, and only they who take refuge with the *Khalsa* shall be saved’. This prophesy about the rule of the Khalsa provides the clue to the purpose of creating the Khalsa which essentially was to establish sovereign rule at the cost of the Mughals.<sup>14</sup>

## 2

### **Bid for Sovereignty (1708-1716)**

From the Mughal point of view, the uprising of the Khalsa under the leadership of Banda Bahadur was a ‘revolt’. It remained a political problem for three emperors successively: Bahadur Shah, Jahandar Shah and Farrukh Siyar. From the viewpoint of the Khalsa, a single thread ran through their activity from the death of Guru Gobind Singh in 1708 to the death of Banda Singh Bahadur in 1716: the aspiration to establish sovereign rule. The attempt failed but the ideal of Khalsa rule survived.

It may be underlined that the general assumption that Banda’s primary objective was to avenge the atrocities suffered by Guru Gobind Singh does not take into account all the known facts.<sup>15</sup>

At the time of leaving Nander, Banda had with him a small number of the Khalsa, but he was armed by the *hukamnamas* of Guru Gobind Singh addressed to the eminent Khalsa *sangats* and individuals in different parts of the country, notably the Punjab. He moved quietly and cautiously towards Delhi. Reaching the *pargana* of Kharkhauda (in Haryana) he dispatched messengers with the Guru’s *hukamnamas*. The response was good. Before the end of 1709, Banda

Singh decided upon action to increase his resources in men and materials. Among other things, he attacked the prosperous town of Samana and after its conquest appointed Fateh Singh as its *thanadar*. Banda then attacked Sadhaura and occupied the town. Moving towards Sirhind, he occupied Chhat and Banur. He was now ready to attack Sirhind, the headquarters of Wazir Khan as the *faujdar* of the Sarkar of Sirhind. Wazir Khan came out of the city to give battle on 22 May 1710 near Chappar Jhiri; he was killed in the battle and his troops were defeated. The city and the fort of Sirhind were occupied on 24 May. The city was sacked and plundered. Suchcha Nand, the *peshkar* of Wazir Khan, was killed and all his property was taken over. The conquest of Sirhind added immensely to the resources of Banda Singh; he was able to occupy nearly the whole of the Sarkar of Sirhind from Panipat to Ludhiana.<sup>16</sup>

After the conquest of Sirhind, Banda Singh got a coin struck presumably from the mint at Sirhind. The striking of the coin by itself was a declaration of sovereignty. It bore the following inscription in Persian:

*Sikka zad bar har do 'alam tegh-i Nanak wahib ast,*

*Fateh Gobind Singh Shah-i Shahan fazl-i sachcha sahib ast.*

The coin refers to the victory of Guru Gobind Singh, the king of kings, as the grace of the True Lord, and to the coin struck in both the worlds with the aid of the sword of Guru Nanak. The victory of the Khalsa is seen as the victory of Guru Gobind Singh and the sword that made it possible is the spiritual sword of Guru Nanak. The coin struck by the Khalsa claimed universal sovereignty. The authority for this is derived from the Gurus and God.<sup>17</sup>

Apart from striking the coin, a seal was prepared for use on orders (*hukamnamas*) to be issued by Banda. His *hukamnama* of December 1710 bears the impression of this seal with the Persian inscription:

*Degh-o tegh-o fateh-o nusrat bedirang,*

*Yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh.*

Here, the gifts of the cauldron to cook food for the hungry, the sword as the symbol of power and protection, and unlimited victory are ascribed to the Gurus Nanak and Gobind, or Guru Gobind Singh is seen as receiving these gifts from Guru Nanak. In either case, the import of this inscription is the same as that of the inscription on the coin: the authority of the Khalsa is derived from the Gurus. There is no reference to Banda Singh Bahadur, or any other individual, in this *hukamnama*. However, it contains '*fateh darshan*' as the form of greetings, and an injunction on vegetarian diet. At the same time, there is a great emphasis on following 'the *rahit* of the Khalsa'.<sup>18</sup>

Even before the occupation of Sirhind, the Khalsa had occupied Ramdaspur (Amritsar) and formed groups (*jathas*) to paralyse the Mughal administration. A few battles were fought in the Bari Doab with Bhagwant Rai's fortress on the Ravi as the headquarters of the Khalsa. In the Jalandhar Doab, a battle was fought near Rahon between the Khalsa and Shams Khan, the *faujdar* of the Doab. By October 1710, while the Mughal administration of the province of Lahore was challenged by the Khalsa, Banda Singh Bahadur had occupied the Sutlej-Jamuna Divide. The contemporary Mirza Muhammad makes the statement that places like Saharanpur, Buriya, Sadhaura, Chhat, Ambala, Shahabad, Thanesar, Sirhind, Pail, Ropar, Bahlolpur, Machhiwara and Ludhiana were occupied by the Khalsa under the leadership of Banda. All the territory from Thanesar to the bank of the Sutlej came under their control. Half of the circle (*chakla*) of Saharanpur was annexed to their dominions. Many villages in the province of the Punjab too came into their hands.<sup>19</sup>

A new administration was established in the conquered territories. Baj Singh, who was one of the Singhs to accompany Banda from Nander, was made the governor of Sirhind, with Ali Singh (who was earlier in the service of Wazir Khan), as his deputy (*naib*). Baj Singh's brother, Ram Singh, was made the governor of Thanesar, jointly with Binod Singh who too had accompanied Banda Singh from Nander. Fateh Singh was confirmed in the governorship of Samana.

Banda Singh repaired the fort of Mukhlispur in the hills near Sadhaura and renamed it Lohgarh. He adopted this relatively inaccessible place as his own headquarters.<sup>20</sup>

An important feature of the new administration is said to be that many of the large land-holders (*zamindars*) were replaced by the peasants as land-owners.<sup>21</sup> However, the equation of *zamindars* with large proprietors or landlords is misleading. The *zamindars* of the Mughal terminology did not necessarily possess any proprietary rights over agricultural land from which they collected revenues for the state.<sup>22</sup> In fact, Tiloka and Rama, the ancestors of the rulers of Nabha, Jind, and Patiala, who supported Banda Singh, were themselves *zamindars* in the sense of intermediaries for the collection of revenues on behalf of the Mughal authorities.<sup>23</sup>

The Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah had heard of the fall of Sirhind on 30 May near Ajmer and left the place on 27 June to march towards the Punjab. He was near Shahabad on 27 November 1710 when he heard the news that 3,000 Sikh horsemen and 2,000 foot soldiers were entrenched on his side of the town and a large number of them had gone to the fort of Sirhind. The emperor marched towards Sadhaura and ordered one of his eminent nobles, Muhammad Amin Khan, to move upon Sirhind by forced marches. Before the arrival of Muhammad Amin Khan, Sirhind was captured by Shams Khan. The emperor reached Sadhaura on 4 December. On the day following, Rustan Dil Khan, the Quarter-Master General (Bakhshi) of the Mughal army, who had been ordered to go forward to select a suitable place for the imperial camp, was attacked by the Khalsa with arrows, rockets and musket balls. However, the Khalsa were outnumbered when the imperial troops under Prince Rafi us-Shan joined Rustam Dil Khan. After a hard fight till sunset, the Khalsa fell back upon the fort of Lohgarh. On 9 December the emperor encamped on the bank of the stream called Som within sight of Lohgarh on a high summit surrounded by craggy rocks and a deep ravine. On 10 December the imperial troops under the Prince reached the foot of the hill and the fort

of Lohgarh was closely invested by more than 60,000 Mughal troops. But Banda Singh escaped safely into the higher hills after a brave defense.<sup>24</sup>

The emperor was sorely disappointed with Banda Singh's escape from the fort of Lohgarh into the territories of Nahan. He remained encamped near Lohgarh till 24 March 1711 in the vain hope of the news of Banda Singh's capture. Now he ordered that the chief of Nahan, Raja Bhup Prakash, should be put in an iron cage that had been made for Banda Singh, taken to Delhi, and imprisoned in the fort of Salimgarh. The imperial camp moved towards Lahore. On 10 June 1711, it was near Hoshiarpur when the emperor heard the news that the Khalsa under the leadership of Banda Singh had killed the former *faujdar* of Jalandhar, Shams Khan, in a battle in the Bari Doab. The Khalsa established their *thanas* in the *parganas* of Batala and Kalanaur and crossed the river Ravi to sack the places like Aurangabad and Pasrur. The emperor deputed Muhammad Amin Khan for the suppression of Banda Singh Bahadur. On 15 June 1711, it was reported to the emperor that Muhammad Amin Khan and Rustam Dil Khan had overtaken Banda near Pasrur and inflicted a heavy defeat on him but he fled into the hills. On 31 August 1711, it was reported that Rustam Dil Khan had abandoned the campaign against Banda without the emperor's orders and gone to Lahore. The imperial camp at this time was pitched near Lahore. The emperor ordered that Rustam Dil Khan should be imprisoned in the fort with fetters on his feet. His huge property was confiscated. Muhammad Amin Khan was reported to have won a battle against the Khalsa in January 1712. When the emperor died on 28 February, the Khalsa were still in the field.<sup>25</sup>

Bahadur Shah's death, followed by a struggle for succession, gave the Khalsa an opportunity to re-establish their power. Banda Singh was quick to re-occupy Sadhaura and Lohgarh. The coins of the second and the third years of the sovereignty of the Khalsa were issued. During the short reign of Jahandar Shah, Muhammad Amin Khan was sent against the Khalsa. The *faujdar* of Sirhind, Zainuddin



Ahmad, was placed under his command. They kept Sadhaura and Lohgarh under siege for several months but without much effect. In December 1712 Muhammad Amin Khan was recalled to the imperial camp. In the meantime, Jahandar Shah was defeated by Farrukh Siyar in January and killed in February 1713. Abd-us-Samad Khan was made the governor of Lahore by the new emperor and ordered to destroy Banda. Abd-us-Samad Khan succeeded in recovering Sadhaura in July 1713 and laid siege to Lohgarh. Banda Singh put up strong fortifications for defence but then evacuated the fort early in October to escape into the hills.<sup>26</sup>

While Banda Singh Bahadur remained politically inactive in the Jammu hills, the local leaders of the Khalsa put up resistance to Mughal power wherever they could. In March 1714, the Khalsa of *pargana* Kahnuwan reportedly under the leadership of Jagat Singh attacked the Afghans of Kiri Pathan and sacked and plundered their fortress. Abd-us-Samad Khan and his son Zakariya Khan were in Rajasthan at this time on an imperial campaign. They were recalled and ordered to chastise the Khalsa. In August 1714, a body of the Khalsa numbering about 7,000 attacked Ropar. They fought a battle with the deputy of the *faujdar* of Sirhind but they were obliged to retreat. In the beginning of 1715 Banda Singh and the Khalsa appeared in the plains from the direction of Jammu and established their control again over the *parganas* of Kalanaur and Batala. The emperor administered a sharp reproof to Abd-us-Samad Khan and sent imperial troops to reinforce the provincial resources for an effective campaign against the Khalsa. After the first engagement with the Mughal troops, Banda Singh Bahadur took up a defensive position at Gurdas Nangal in an enclosure with a strong massive wall. In April, Abd-us-Samad laid siege to Gurdas Nangal which lasted for more than eight months. The Khalsa put up a strong resistance before they were starved to surrender on 17 December 1715. The emperor Farrukh Siyar received the happy news of the capture of Banda and his companions on 22 December when he was celebrating the anniversary of his victory over Jahandar Shah.<sup>27</sup>

Abd-us-Samad Khan entered the city of Lahore with Banda Singh and over 700 of his companions as prisoners. Banda Singh had fetters on his feet, a ring round his neck, and a chain round his back; he was placed in a cage, and chained to it at four points. Two Mughal officers were tied to him on each side on the same elephant. His companions were mounted on donkeys and camels, with paper caps over their heads. A huge crowd of spectators gathered in bazaars, streets and on tops of buildings. Sometime later, they were escorted to Delhi by Zakariya Khan, the son of Abd-us-Samad Khan, and Qamruddin Khan, the son of Muhammad Amin Khan. The procession reached Delhi towards the end of February 1716.<sup>28</sup> There too, Banda Bahadur and his companions in procession provided an attractive spectacle for the people of Delhi.

The execution of the political prisoners began in the first week of March 1716. John Surman and Edward Stephenson reported from Delhi to the President of the Fort William Council in Bengal that each day a hundred of them were beheaded, but none 'apostatized from this new formed religion'.<sup>29</sup> Mirza Muhammad saw on 17 March that the corpses of the executed prisoners were suspended from trees around the city.<sup>30</sup> Khafi Khan describes the response of a young prisoner who refused to be saved from the executioner's sword.<sup>31</sup> Seventeen companions of Banda Singh were executed later, in the third week of June. Banda Singh was executed in the cruelest possible manner. His eyes were taken out, his hands and feet were cut off, his flesh was torn with red-hot pincers, and his body was hacked to piece.<sup>32</sup> The rise of the Khalsa under Banda Singh Bahadur and their steadfastness in the face of death have been attributed to 'an inspiring ideology' which could also 'compensate for the initial lack of political organization and military apparatus'.<sup>33</sup>

### 3

#### **Survival as a Political Entity (1716-1739)**

The phase from the execution of Banda Bahadur in 1716 to the invasion of Nadir Shah in 1739 is generally called the dark period of

Sikh history, primarily because very little is known about this phase.<sup>34</sup> Our present purpose is to make some sense of the few contemporary sources in Persian and Gurmukhi which have come to light so that we may appreciate the later history better in the light of this background.

The Persian sources like the contemporary news reports and chronicles provide some information on the Mughal administration of the province of Lahore in addition to a few points of chronology which are helpful in the reconstruction of some important events. Abd-us-Samad Khan continued to be the governor of Lahore till 1726 when he was transferred to Multan. His son, Zakariya Khan, was made the governor of Lahore and Kashmir. In 1731, however, Kashmir was placed under another governor. When Abd-us-Samad Khan died in 1738, the governorship of Multan was entrusted to Zakariya Khan in addition to the charge of Lahore. Paradoxically, with the declining power of the Mughal emperor at the centre, Zakariya Khan's power was increasing within the province. At the time of Nadir Shah's invasion, Zakariya Khan received no support from Delhi, and his own resources were inadequate to oppose the Persian invader. He saved his power and interests by submission to Nadir Shah who appreciated his attitude and raised his rank (*mansab*) to 8000 *zat* and 8000 *sawar*. Subsequently, Nadir Shah obliged the Mughal emperor to cede all the trans-Indus territories of the Mughal empire to Persia, along with the revenues of four *parganas* of the province of Lahore, that is Gujrat, Sialkot, Pasrur and Aurangabad, and a few *parganas* of the province of Multan, with a total revenue of Rs. 20,00,000 a year.<sup>35</sup>

The anonymous author of the *Asrar-i Samadi*, completed in 1728-29 for Abd-us-Samad Khan as the governor of Multan by his *munshi* from Kalanaur in the upper Bari Doab, mentions only the last campaign of Abd-us-Samad Khan against Banda Bahadur who is referred to as the self-styled leader of the Nanak-Panthis, called Singhs, who kept their *kesh* unshorn. As a panegyrist of Abd-us-Samad Khan he tends to assume that the Singhs presented no problem to Abd-us-Samad Khan after Banda's execution: he is totally



silent about them. However, Abdus Samad Khan's campaigns against Isa Khan, Husain Khan Khweshgi of Qasur, Sharfuddin in Kashmir and Raja Dhruv Dev of Jammu indicate that he had to assert himself against the *zamindars* of the plains and a vassal chief of the hills.<sup>36</sup>

There is some contemporary evidence of Sikh presence in the time of Abd-us-Samad Khan as rebels or, according to the Mughal sources, as outlaws. In 1717, the Mughal *amils* failed to protect traders and travellers reported to have been plundered in the suburbs of Lahore. Sometime later, merchants were reportedly plundered at Aurangpur on the highway from Lahore to Delhi and six of them were killed. The terms used for the plunderers are *mufsid* and *maqahir* which were generally used for the Sikhs as rebels. In 1721, they attacked a Mughal detachment in the *pargana* of Pasrur and in 1726 they plundered an imperial caravan and killed some Mughal officials between Lahore and Sirhind.<sup>37</sup> These examples show that, despite strong measures, Abd-us-Samad Khan was not able to suppress the Sikhs, which would explain his replacement by his more energetic son.

Turning to Sikh sources, we find that a copy of the *Nasihatnama* which contains the '*Raj karega khalsa*' couplet was made in 1718-19. The *Nasihatnama* also exhorts the Khalsa to fight in the front and kill Khans, implying Mughal officials. The Khalsa should bear arms and fight every day. There is also the injunction that a Sikh should never submit to the 'Turks'. All this acquires great significance in combination with the evidence of the Mughal sources which indicate that the Sikh 'outlaws' were very much active in the time of Abd-us-Samad Khan.<sup>38</sup>

Another form of evidence on this phase consists of the *hukamnamas* of Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devi. Most of these *hukamnamas* were issued from 1717 to 1734. Some of them are addressed to the *sangats* in Patna and Benares; others are addressed to the *sangats* of Pattan Farid (Pakpattan) and Naushehra Pannuan in the Bari Doab. Even when the addressees are not Singhs they are called '*Sri Akal Purkh ji ka Khalsa*' or '*Vaheguruji ka Khalsa*'. Most of the *hukamnamas* refer to offerings, ranging from Rs. 5 to Rs. 200,

received or asked for on account of *kar*, *bhet*, *mannat*, *golak*, *chaliha* or *dasvand* for the *langar*. A few other matters mentioned are quite significant: contribution for the marriage of a girl, construction of a new well, and the settling of a dispute by the local *sangat* as *dharm ka niaon* (righteous justice). The Khalsa are generally referred to as sons (*put*, *farzand*) by both Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devi. Among the addressees are the sons of Rama, the younger son of Chaudhari Phul. They were all increasing their resources and power by now, especially Ala Singh. Another individual addressed is Bhai Alam Singh who is a *jama'atdar*, or the leader of a group. Significantly, in the *hukamnama* addressed to him there is a blessing for *deg*, *teg* and *fateh*, the three terms used in Banda's seal. This *hukamnama* was written in 1726.<sup>39</sup> These *hukamnamas* suggest that Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devi continued to take interest in the Khalsa *sangats* of the Punjab which were far from being inactive.

According to Kesar Singh Chhibber, who wrote his *Bansavalinama Dasan Patshahian Ka* in 1769 but had lived in Ramdaspur as a young person in the late 1720s, new arrangements were made for the management of the affairs of the Harmandar Sahib in 1727 on the suggestion of Mata Sahib Devi. His father, Gurbakhsh Singh, was made the superintendent (*darogha*) of the treasury and the *gao-khana* (cowshed). Bhai Mani Singh was already there. The works of both Chhibber and Bhangu refer to the conflict between the Akal Purkhia Khalsa and the followers of Banda Bahadur over the control of Harmandar and the conflict of the Khalsa with the Mughal administration over the control of Ramdaspur.<sup>40</sup>

Significantly, Sewa Singh refers to the ascendancy of the Khalsa in Ramdaspur soon after the institution of the Khalsa.<sup>41</sup> A report from Bahadur Shah's court, dated 24 May 1710 refers to a fight in Ramdaspur in which the 'Sikhs of the Khalsa came out victorious'. The force sent against them from Lahore 'failed to control matters'.<sup>42</sup> Muhammad Qasim, who was at Lahore at that time, writes that the Singhs occupied Ramdaspur and went on a rampage in the

countryside.<sup>43</sup> Bhangu says that the places like Amritsar and Patna had been placed by Guru Gobind Singh under the charge of the Khalsa. He also says that Baba Kahn Singh (a descendant of Guru Angad) started organizing fairs at Amritsar after Banda's death, and Sikhs began to come to Amritsar in large number. It was in this situation that the followers of Banda Bahadur demanded equal share in the offerings.

Initially, the Khalsa tried to accommodate them in order to ensure that the fair was not disturbed. After the fair they told the followers of Banda that they had no right to any share in the offerings. Both sides agreed, however, that the issue could be resolved through a divine verdict. Two pieces of paper, one with '*Vaheguruji ka Khalsa*' and the other with '*fateh darshan*' (the salutation used by Banda's followers) written on it, were thrown into the tank to see which one would remain afloat. At first both the papers sank but then the one with '*Vaheguruji ka Khalsa*' came to the surface. The followers of Banda refused to accept this verdict in favour of the Khalsa. Another suggestion was tried: a wrestling match at the Akal Bunga between the nominee of each side. Miri Singh, the son of Baba Kahn Singh, won the bout. The followers of Banda were asked to leave the place, but they refused again. The Khalsa attacked them and their leader, Mahant Singh of Khem Karan, was removed from his *gaddi*. While some of the Bandais were either killed or forced to flee, many of them joined the Khalsa. Ramdaspur remained under the control of the Khalsa and served as their rallying centre in the later decades.

Interestingly, in this context, Bhangu refers to the truce between the Khalsa and the Mughal authorities in the time of Banda Bahadur who had alienated the Khalsa after his success against the Mughals. Abd-us-Samad Khan apparently had no objection to the occupation of Ramdaspur by the Khalsa and to their increasing numbers.<sup>44</sup>

After the elimination of Banda Bahadur, however, Abd-us-Samad Khan is said to have started persecuting the Khalsa Singhs. They were hard put to defend themselves against renewed persecution, but they remained active. Even Zakariya Khan failed to suppress them. He

thought of a stratagem. He suggested to the emperor that a *jagir* could be given to the Khalsa to put them off their guard so that they were settled at one place as an easy target. He selected Subeg Singh to approach the Khalsa with the offer of a *jagir*, a robe of honour, and the title of Nawab for their leader. Subeg Singh greeted the Khalsa with 'Vaheguruji ki fateh' and requested to be forgiven (presumably for accepting service with the Mughals). Five Singhs pronounced penance for him and allowed him to make his submission before the Sarbat Khalsa. They distributed the money brought by Subeg Singh among themselves, and asked Darbara Singh, presumably their leader, to accept the robe and the title. Darbara Singh said that the Khalsa never wanted Nawabi: the True Guru had prophesied *patshahi* (sovereign rule) for them. The Khalsa could not accept a position of dependence upon someone else. Every Khalsa horseman was to become a sovereign and to establish a seat of authority (*takht*) wherever he occupied some land. There could be no real reconciliation between the Khalsa Panth and the Turks (Mughals). This robe and title could be given to a Singh who served the Khalsa well. Kapur Singh was seen serving the Khalsa with a large fan. He was asked to put on the robe of honour. Kapur Singh asked in turn that the robe may be sanctified by the touch of the feet of five Singhs and placed over his head. This was done. The revenues of 12 villages close to Ramdaspur were assigned to the Khalsa and they established their camp in Ramdaspur.<sup>45</sup>

The number of the Khalsa began to increase. The money received from the revenues was regularly distributed among the Khalsa by Nawab Kapur Singh. Besides bathing in the tank (*amritsar*) early in the morning, they used to hold a *diwan* at the Akal Bunga. Kapur Singh is reported to have served the Panth with great humility and great zeal and taken no decision without consultation. There was a common kitchen, a common treasury, a common store-house for items of dress, and a common armoury. The Panth increased so much that it became difficult to maintain a single unit. Nawab Kapur Sahib invited the Khalsa to a meeting at the Akal Bunga. Present among them was Bhai Mani

Singh, the Granthi of the Harmandar, Kahn Singh and Binod Singh, Trehan and Bhalla Bawas. Kapur Singh put his proposal before the Sarbat Khalsa that the entire body may be divided into smaller Jathas. Five *deras* were formed, each with its own banner, and five standards were hoisted on the Akal Bunga: the first Jatha of Shahids and Nihangs was placed under Deep Singh and Karam Singh; the second under Karam Singh and Dharam Singh, both Khatri of Amritsar; the third under the Trehan and Bhalla descendants of Guru Angad and Guru Amar Das; the fourth under Dasaundha Singh, a Gill Jatt of Kot Buddha; and the fifth under Bir Singh Ranghreta. Thus, the *jagir* gave not only respite to the Khalsa but also some resources as well as the experience of organization in view of the increasing numbers.<sup>46</sup>

Strictly speaking, however, it was not a *jagir* because the Khalsa performed no service for the state. The location of the villages given to the Khalsa recognized the importance of Ramdaspur. With the increasing importance of Ramdaspur, the Akal Bunga came into sharper focus as the place where the Khalsa conducted their temporal affairs. If Zakariya Khan had thought of curbing the Khalsa through the '*jagir*', it did not serve that purpose. In any case, he saw no point in continuing with the arrangement. The villages were resumed and the Khalsa were again put on the defensive.<sup>47</sup>

Bhai Mani Singh, a *huzuri* Sikh of Guru Gobind Singh who was well versed in Gurmat, used to instruct the Sikhs in the Singh way of life. He made proper arrangements for the Harmandar. He used to sit at the Akal Bunga and pronounce penance for the defaulters. Many years earlier, he had thought of unbinding the *Granth Sahib* (to rearrange its contents). A Sikh, who did not approve of what he had done, is believed to have said that his body would be cut into pieces. Bhai Mani Singh believed that whatever was said by the Sikh was bound to happen (just as what was said by the Guru was bound to happen). He sought blessings from the *sangat* that he may retain *sikhkhi* (meaning *kesh*) in the face of death. Five Sikhs then prayed that his *sikhkhi* may remain intact whenever his time came. In the



1730s, Bhai Mani Singh agreed to pay Rs. 10,000 to the Mughal authorities for holding the Diwali festival in Amritsar. Zakariya Khan posted a *darogha* for collection of the stipulated sum. The Khalsa were invited to come to Amritsar and to encamp there. Zakariya Khan sent troops under Lakhpat Rai, the Diwan, to ensure peace. He encamped at Ram Tirath. The Singhs thought that the Mughal troops had been brought to attack them. Some of them had a quick bathe and others returned without bathing. The *darogha* could not collect the sum stipulated and Bhai Mani Singh was arrested along with some eminent Singhs. Zakariya Khan demanded money but Bhai Mani Singh said that the Khan could take his life. The *qazis* and *mullas* suggested that his limbs should be cut off one by one. He was taken to the crossing of the Nakhas and, at his own suggestion, the executioner began to cut off each of his limbs. A Sayyid saw this and was frightened to imagine the effect of Bhai Mani Singh's curse. He drew his sword and cut off Bhai Mani Singh's head. Reciting the *Sukhmani*, Bhai Mani Singh felt no pain. His *sikhkhi* (meaning *kesh*) remained intact when his head was cut off as one piece.<sup>48</sup> Bhai Mani Singh was the best known among the Sikh martyrs.

An insight into the psyche of the Khalsa may be had from the account of another well-known martyr of this phase, Bhai Tara Singh. Kesar Singh Chhibber merely mentions his name as if he was well known among the Sikhs.<sup>49</sup> Bhangu narrates his story. A Buttar Jatt of village Van, Tara Singh was a staunch Khalsa of Guru Gobind, ready to fight in a righteous cause and unwilling to submit to the Turks. In his view, armed struggle was necessary for achieving sovereignty. It so happened that Chaudhari Sahib Rai of Naushera used to let his mare feed on the crop of others. Two Singhs asked him to keep his mare tied but he threatened to remove their *kesh*. They retaliated by getting his mare stolen. The proceeds from its sale were offered to the *langar* maintained by Tara Singh. Sahib Rai approached Tara Singh to get hold of the thief. Tara Singh told him that Sahib Rai himself was a thief who stole the crop of others. Sahib Rai went to the Mughal *faujdar* at

Patti and reported that Singhs had extorted money from him; he could not pay revenue to two authorities. The *faujdar* came to Van to deal with Tara Singh but he was defeated, and the *faujdar's* nephew was killed. The *faujdar* went to Lahore to report to Zakariya Khan who decided upon immediate action. Some of the Singhs suggested that Tara Singh should escape. Tara Singh told them that he was not afraid of dying. He asked all his companions to leave if they were not prepared to fight unto death. Some of them did leave, but 22 Singhs remained with him. Among them were two barbers, one Brahman, one carpenter, two Singhs from Multan and Peshawar, and the rest of them mostly Jatts from the Majha. The governor sent Momin Khan, the *faujdar*, with 2,200 horseman, 40 light guns and 5 elephants. Some Singhs of Lahore came to know of this and informed Tara Singh so that he could escape in time, but he told them that he was determined to fight till he was dead. The guide of Momin Khan, who was sympathetic towards the Singhs, informed Tara Singh of the expedition and suggested escape. But he was determined upon martyrdom (*shahidi*). Eventually, Tara Singh and all his companions died fighting. As presented by Bhangu, Tara Singh never submitted to the Mughal authority; he did whatever he thought was right; he defended his position to the point of sacrificing his life with the conviction that sovereignty of the Khalsa was bound to be established sooner or later. The image of Tara Singh may be seen as an ideal-type created by Ratan Singh Bhangu, but he remains close to the ideal Singh of the *Nasihatnama*.<sup>50</sup>

Nadir Shah's invasion created an opportunity for the Khalsa to increase their resources. They plundered cash, horses and other goods, believing that the destruction of the Mughal prestige and power by Nadir Shah was the result of the Guru's prophecy. Nawab Kapur Singh told the Singhs to make the best of this opportunity. Nadir Shah was returning with the fabulous wealth and articles plundered from Delhi. He was shorn of some of this plunder by the Singhs on his way from Delhi to Lahore. Nadir Shah asked Zakariya Khan about the home

of the plunderers. He was told that they had no home: they remained constantly on the move. They were not afraid of death. Nadir Shah warned Zakariya Khan that he would not be able to suppress such people. The invasion of Nadir Shah brought the Sikhs into sharper focus as a serious threat to the governor of Lahore who became all the more keen now to destroy the Singhs.<sup>51</sup>

In retrospect, we can see that the Khalsa believed in their ultimate triumph, and they were prepared to suffer and make sacrifices for their cause. The individuals like Bhai Tara Singh and Bhai Mani Singh became the source of inspiration for others in their life and through their death. In addition to the ideal of '*raj karega Khalsa*', the legacy of Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjan and and Guru Hargobind proved to be a great asset. The sacred tank, the Harmandar and the Akal Bunga became the tangible symbols of the unity of the Khalsa and the focus of their religious and political life. The idea of the collective authority of the Panth and the complete equality of its members enabled them to organize themselves for effective action.

#### 4

##### **Re-Emergence as a Political Factor (1739-1752)**

Thirteen years after the invasion of Nadir Shah, Mughal rule in the Punjab came to a formal end in 1752. During these thirteen years the Khalsa re-emerged as a political factor in the wake of some important changes. Zakariya Khan died on 1 July 1745. Both his sons, Yahiya Khan and Shah Nawaz Khan, aspired to succeed to his position. The Mughal emperor, Muhammad Shah, was reluctant to appoint any of them as governor. The Wazir, Qamruddin Khan, suggested that the governorship of Lahore and Multan could be given to him, with Yahiya Khan as his deputy at Lahore and Shah Nawaz Khan as his deputy at Multan. This arrangement was formalized at the beginning of 1746. Yahiya Khan went to Delhi for the release of Zakariya Khan's property and returned to Lahore in July to appropriate all the property. Shah Nawaz arrived at Lahore in November to ask for a formal division. Eventually, Shah Nawaz overpowered Yahiya Khan in a battle in March



1747. Yahiya Khan went to Delhi to seek redress through his father-in-law, the Wazir, Qamruddin Khan.<sup>52</sup>

In June 1747, Nadir Shah was assassinated and his death opened a new chapter in the history of Afghanistan, which came to have a direct bearing on the history of India. Ahmad Khan, a Saddozai and an Abdali Afghan, who was a trusted General of Nadir Shah, was elected as their king by both the Saddozai and the Ghalzai Afghans who declared their independence under a ruler of their own. Ahmad Khan was crowned at Kandhar in July 1747 with the titles of 'Shah' and 'Durr-i Durran'. The coins struck in the name of 'Ahmad Badshah' explicitly declared that he derived his authority from God. The first concern of Ahmad Shah Durrani was to occupy Kabul and Peshwar. He was in Kabul when the envoy of Shah Nawaz Khan presented himself to invite the Durrani to take possession of the country with the support of Shah Nawaz Khan. The invitation was welcome to Ahmad Shah.<sup>53</sup>

In December 1747, Ahmad Shah Durrani marched towards India. At Attock he met the envoy whom he had sent to Shah Nawaz Khan and who now told him that Shah Nawaz Khan had changed his mind. The reason for this reversal was that the court at Delhi had come to know of his envoy to Ahmad Shah and Qamruddin Khan sent an imperial *farman* to Shah Nawaz Khan, appointing him to the governorship of Lahore and Multan. The Wazir also sent a personal letter to him to appeal to his sense of family honour. Ahmad Shah Durrani marched on and encamped at Shahdara early in January 1748. When the Afghan army forded the river Ravi, Shah Nawaz fled to Delhi. Ahmad Shah struck his coin at Lahore, acquired an enormous booty, and after five weeks marched towards Delhi. The Mughal army under Qamruddin Khan gave battle to the Afghans at Manupur, about 15 km from Sirhind, in March 1748. The Wazir was fatally wounded in this battle, but his son, Muin ul-Mulk, popularly called Mir Mannu, obliged Ahmad Shah Durrani to retrace his steps to Kabul. Mir Mannu was

appointed as the governor of Lahore and he took charge of the province in April 1748.<sup>54</sup>

In December 1749, Ahmad Shah Durrani crossed the Indus again and Mir Mannu moved his troops to Sodhara to check the Afghan advance. The Durrani sent a section of his army under the command of his general, Sardar Jahan Khan, towards Lahore to ravage the country. No Mughal reinforcements came from Delhi where the new Mughal emperor, Ahmad Shah, with Safdar Jang as the Wazir, was not well disposed towards Mir Mannu. In this hopeless situation, Mir Mannu accepted the terms of peace offered by Ahmad Shah Durrani. His claim to the territories ceded to Nadir Shah by the Mughal emperor in 1739, that is, the trans-Indus territories and the four *parganas* of the province of Lahore, was formally recognized. Satisfied for the present with the affairs in India, Ahmad Shah turned his attention to the annexation of Herat and the conquest of Khurasan. His dominions were expanding fast. Meanwhile, Mir Mannu removed the Afghan nominee, Nasir Khan, as the administrator of the four *parganas* in July 1750. Two months later, he sent Diwan Kaura Mal against Shah Nawaz Khan who had revolted as the governor of Multan. Shah Nawaz was defeated and killed.<sup>55</sup>

In October 1751, Ahmad Shah Durrani sent an envoy to collect arrears of the revenues of the four *parganas* ceded to the Shah in 1749. Mir Mannu prolonged negotiations with the envoy eventually to tell him that no revenues could be paid. Ahmad Shah Durrani was already on his way to Lahore. Mir Mannu moved out of Lahore to oppose the Afghans. Ahmad Shah avoided confrontation and crossed the Ravi at another place to reach the Shalamar Garden. Mir Mannu rushed back to the city. There was no action for a month and a half. Mir Mannu was expecting reinforcements from Delhi but Safdar Jang did not wish to help him. On 6 March 1752, Mir Mannu ordered attack on the Afghans. At a critical point in the battle Kaura Mal was killed by a musket-ball shot by Bayazid Khan of Qasur on the instigation of Adina Beg Khan. Ahmad Shah now suggested that terms of peace could be

settled in a conference. Mir Mannu decided to meet the Shah who was pleased with his fearless and frank attitude and gave him the title of 'Farzand Khan Bahadur'. Mir Mannu was prepared to pay 30 lacs of rupees. More important to the Shah was a permanent settlement with the Mughal emperor. He stipulated that the provinces of Lahore and Multan should be considered annexed to the growing Durrani empire; Muin ul-Mulk was to remain the governor of these provinces on his behalf and send the surplus revenues to him. The Mughal emperor felt obliged to ratify these terms in April 1752. Kashmir was added to the Durrani empire by conquest. Thus, in 1752, the river Sutlej rather than the Indus became the boundary between the Mughal and the Afghan empire.<sup>56</sup>

The events of Sikh history during the thirteen years from 1739 to 1752 can be better appreciated in the context of the politics outlined above.

After Nadir Shah's departure from Lahore in May 1739, Zakariya Khan adopted a policy of systematic persecution of the Sikhs. He occupied Ramdaspur and enlisted the support of both Hindu and Muslim *chaudharis* in the countryside. A Rajput Muslim of Mandiali, known as Massa Ranghar, was given charge of the Harmandar Sahib in Ramdaspur. He used the premises for his entertainment by professional dancers. The news of this desecration was given by a Sikh to Mehtab Singh, the grandfather of our author, Ratan Singh Bhangu, who was at Jaipur. Mehtab Singh asked him if there was no Sikh in the Punjab to do something about Massa Ranghar. The Sikh replied that most of the Sikhs had left their homes out of fear, like Mehtab Singh himself. This taunt resulted in Mehtab Singh's decision to assassinate Massa Ranghar. He was joined in this mission by Sukha Singh and they reached the shrine in the disguise of peasants who wanted to pay land-revenue to the *chaudhari*. Mehtab Singh cut off Massa Ranghar's head and both the Singhs rode their horses to escape. Later on, Mehtab Singh was arrested and broken on the wheel.<sup>57</sup>

The assassination of Massa Ranghar did not mean that Ramdaspur was no longer under the direct control of the Mughal administrators. In fact, in the face of strict watch it became difficult for the Singhs to bathe in the sacred tank. One Bota Singh, a Sandhu Jatt of Padhana, used to bathe in the tank at night under the cover of darkness and remain concealed in bushes during the day. He heard someone referring to him as not a genuine Singh. Cut to the quick by this taunt, Bota Singh decided to reveal himself in his true colours. He started collecting duty on the highway to Lahore and wrote to the governor at Lahore that he was exercising this authority (as a Khalsa). Zakariya Khan sent a detachment of 100 horsemen to arrest him but Bota Singh died fighting, along with Garja Singh Ranghreta who had joined this fatal enterprise.<sup>58</sup>

It was reported to Zakariya Khan that a Sikh named Taru Singh in the village Poola used to offer food to Singh outlaws. Bhai Taru Singh was arrested. Bhangu says that the Sikhs of Padhana offered to get him released from official custody but Bhai Taru Singh refused the offer, saying that the Gurus had shown him the way to martyrdom for a right cause. At Lahore, Bhai Taru Singh was asked to cut off his hair and accept Islam. He insisted that his hair was inseparable from his body. Zakariya ordered that his scalp should be scraped off. Bhai Taru Singh died a few days later on the day of Zakariya Khan's death.<sup>59</sup>

The delay in the appointment of a new governor encouraged the Khalsa to start their political activity again. One year, one month and twenty-three days after Zakariya Khan's death, it was observed by Anand Ram Mukhlis who was then present in the Punjab, that the peace and prosperity given by the effective rule of Zakariya Khan was destroyed. 'Lawless men, plunderers and adventures now peeped out of their holes and began to desolate the realm, plundering the cities and villages and ruining families'.<sup>60</sup> Yahiya Khan confirmed Lakhpat Rai as his Diwan. His brother, Jaspat Rai, was the *faujdar* of Eminabad. He attacked a band of Sikhs in the neighborhood of Eminabad. The Sikhs fought back and a Ranghreta named Nibahu

Singh got on to the elephant of Jaspat Rai and cut off his head. Then the Sikhs plundered Eminabad. Diwan Lakhpat Rai vowed vengeance upon the Sikhs. Despite representation from some of the eminent residents of Lahore, the Sikhs of the city were arrested and executed. A huge army was collected to march against the Sikhs who had taken refuge in the marshes of Kahnuwan in the upper Bari Doab. Pressed hard, the Sikhs tried to escape into the hills. The main body under the leadership of Sukha Singh fought against the Mughal troops in the Rachna Doab, many Sikhs died fighting, and some of them were taken prisoner. The remaining Sikhs, about 2,000, crossed the rivers Ravi, Beas and Sutlej to take shelter in the Malwa region. Several thousand Sikhs were killed in this sustained campaign and several thousand were taken to Lahore as prisoners and executed. This bloody episode, known as the 'small carnage' (in contradistinction to the later 'great carnage'), is suggestive of the increasing number of the Khalsa in 1746.<sup>61</sup>

Shah Nawaz Khan replaced Lakhpat Rai by Kaura Mal as the Diwan of Lahore who was sympathetic towards the Khalsa and gave them some respite. When Ahmad Shah Durrani invaded India in 1747-48, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia led a band of Singhs to Ramdaspur and ousted Salabat Khan, the Mughal officer in charge of the town, to recover it for the Khalsa. On the Baisakhi of 1748, they selected a piece of land near Ramsar to build a small enclosure (*rauni*) of mud walls, with watch towers at the four corners and a moat all around, to accommodate about 500 men. Like Ramdaspur, it was called Ram Rauni after the name of Guru Ram Das, and even the leaders worked with their hands to construct the fortress.<sup>62</sup>

At the time of Diwali in 1748, Mir Mannu laid siege to Ram Rauni which lasted for about three months from October to December and about 200 Sikhs died fighting. Jai Singh Kanhiya decided to go out of Ram Rauni and to die fighting. The shouts of 'Sal Sri Akal' after the prayer (*ardas*) were heard by Jassa Singh, generally referred to as Thoka (carpenter), who was with the troops of Adina Beg Khan. He



decided to join the besieged and sent in a message requesting forgiveness. His request was accepted and he joined the Khalsa with a hundred followers. The news of Ahmad Shah Durrani's invasion obliged Mir Mannu to raise the siege.<sup>63</sup>

Diwan Kaura Mal favoured the policy of reconciliation with the Khalsa. Despite some repressive measures during his time, the Khalsa increased their resources and power to assert their political authority. On Kaura Mal's advice, Mir Mannu is said to have given 12 villages worth Rs 1,25,000 a year in *jagir* to the Khalsa. They cleaned the holy tank, which had been filled up in the time of Lakhpat Rai, and celebrated the Diwali of 1749 with great enthusiasm. In 1750, when Mir Mannu sent Diwan Kaura Mal against the rebel Shah Nawaz Khan, the Diwan was accompanied by a contingent of Sikhs under Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. Before the Durrani invasion of 1751-52, Mir Mannu allowed Kaura Mal to enlist 20,000 Sikhs under the leadership of Sangat Singh and Sukha Singh, both of whom eventually died fighting against the Afghans. For a year and a half, thus, there was no persecution of the Sikhs. In fact, they cooperated with the Mughal authorities in their own interest and on their own terms.<sup>64</sup>

The later Persian sources, like Sohan Lal Suri's *Umdat ut-Tawarikh* and Bakht Mal's *Khalsa Namah*, refer to occupation of territories in the Jalandhar, Bari and Rachna Doabs in the 1750s by the Sikh leaders like Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Hari Singh, Karora Singh, Jhanda Singh, Jassa Singh Thoka, and Charhat Singh Sukarchakia. It is interesting to note that the seal of Jai Singh Kanhiya on his extant orders bears the date 1750. Significantly, on 17 April 1752, one Hukumat Singh was ordering the *amils* and *zamindars* of Kahnuwan to ensure that there was no interference with the concessions given by the former Mughal rulers to the Mahants of Pindori. The seal of Hukumat Singh, with his name prefixed by 'Akal Sahai', and the date 1752, suggests the possibility of similar *parwanas* having been issued by a large number of Sikh leaders over considerable parts of the Punjab.<sup>65</sup> At any rate, the available evidence points to the Singhs



running a parallel government at places even before the formal end of Mughal rule in the Punjab in 1752.

## 5

### **Success against Ahmad Shah Durrani (1752-1765)**

The governorship of Mir Mannu from April 1752 to November 1753 was marked by a sustained campaign against the Sikhs who had begun to issue orders on their own authority in different parts of the province of Lahore. Tahmas Khan, who was a slave of Mir Mannu at this time, recalled later that the Punjab had undergone some kind of revolution on account of the tumult caused by Ahmad Shah Durrani in 1751-52. After this, Mir Mannu marched in the direction of Batala where a large number of Sikhs had raised disturbance, plundering the population and obstructing the passage of travellers. Pursued by Mir Mannu's commandants, 900 Sikhs went into the fort of Ram Rauni in Ramdapur. They were besieged. Finally, however, they came out to give close battle and died fighting. Mir Mannu personally marched to Ramdaspur and encamped there for many days. Among the general measures against the Sikhs, Tahmas Khan mentions special guns prepared for the use of the cavalry, reward of ten rupees for each Sikh head, and replacement of the mount lost in battle against the Sikhs. In September 1753, Mir Mannu set up his camp outside the city to take prompt action on receiving information from any quarter about the political activity of the Sikhs. The Sikhs brought to Mir Mannu as captives were put under the nail-press (*mekhchu*) to die a most painful death. Adina Beg Khan, the *faujdar* of Jalandhar, sent forty to fifty Sikh prisoners from time to time. They too were executed by crushing them under the nail-press.<sup>66</sup> The later Sikh sources refer to several other ways of torture and execution of even women and children by Mir Mannu.<sup>67</sup> He came to be seen by the Sikhs as their fiercest persecutor. It must be pointed out, however, that this image relates more to his governorship on behalf of Ahmad Shah Durrani than to his tenure as the Mughal governor of Lahore. He had to secure his own interests to which the Sikhs presented the most serious threat with their claims to political power.

Professor Hari Ram Gupta refers to the 'rapid rise' of the Sikhs between the death of Mir Mannu in November 1753 and the appointment of the Durrani's son Taimur Shah as viceroy of the Afghan territories in India in April 1757.<sup>68</sup> Jassa Singh Thoka rebuilt the fort of Ram Raumi which had been demolished by Mir Mannu. It was renamed Ramgarh and Jassa Singh came to be known as Ramgarhia. The Khalsa adopted the Ramgarh fort as the base of their operations. In the early months of 1754, they did not allow Qasim Khan to take up the *faujdari* of Patti. He was forced to take 8,000 of them in service but they deserted him after getting matchlocks, bows and arrows, and other war materials and costly gifts.<sup>69</sup> There are other known examples of Sikh activity against the Mughal-Afghan authorities which reflect the increasing resources and power of the Sikhs during this short phase.

Professor Gupta refers to the *rakhi* system established by the Sikhs during this phase, which led to 'the final stage of their becoming a political power'. The villagers were to place themselves under the protection of the Khalsa on the promise to pay one-fifth of the produce from the *rabi (hari)* and *kharif (sauni)* crops in return for full protection against others. The territories brought under *rakhi*, according to Professor Gupta, served as the base for the later Sikh principalities. 'Thus, this step supplied them with the idea of raising themselves into territorial chieftains'.<sup>70</sup> It must be pointed out that when Professor Gupta made this observation neither the idea of '*raj karega Khalsa*' nor the documentary evidence of the *parwanas* issued by the Sikh leaders was known to the historians. A reference has already been made to Hukumat Singh, who had issued an order to the *amils* and *zamindars* of Kahnuwan in April 1752; he addressed an order (*parwana*) to 'the present and future' *amils* of the *pargana* in January 1755 to the effect that they should ensure undisturbed continuation of concessions given to the Mahants of Pindori in earlier times.<sup>71</sup> Such orders could be issued only on the assumption that the local administrators would recognize the authority of the individual issuing the order. Thus, what is called *rakhi* was simply the continued assertion of political authority

over a particular area accompanied by a large reduction in the revenue. The ability of the Sikh leaders to make good their claim to power made them increasingly acceptable to the peasantry. Since no distinction was made on the basis of religion, the Sikh leaders could hope to gain support from the peasantry as a whole.

During the short tenure of Taimur Shah as the governor of Lahore, Wazir Jahan Khan had the strict orders to suppress the Sikhs. But he succeeded only partially. An event described by Tahmas Khan as an eye witness is indicative of the efforts made by the Afghans to deal with the Sikhs. One day Jahan Khan was informed that a large army of Sikhs had assembled at Ramdaspur for bathing and it was raising 'disturbance and rebellion', which referred actually to the political activity of the Khalsa. At this time, Sardar Ata Khan was engaged in bringing another area under control. Jahan Khan wrote to him to reach Ramdaspur on a particular day. Sardar Ata Khan did not reach the place in time and the Sikhs surrounded the Afghan army from all sides. Many of the soldiers got frightened and chose the path of flight. But the Sikhs did not make way for them, and the fleeing Afghans felt obliged to rejoin the army. Only with the arrival of Ata Khan could the situation be saved. The Afghans now pursued the Sikhs to the gate of the town guarded by five Sikhs who died fighting. The Afghan army remained encamped there. Wazir Jahan Khan then marched off 'to gain control of the country and establish his administration'.<sup>72</sup> It is obvious that prior to this engagement, the Afghans had lost control and the Sikhs had established their own administration in certain areas.

Another incident narrated by Tahmas Khan is equally telling. Two Afghan horsemen coming from Sirhind were murdered near Kartarpur in Jalandhar Doab. Wazir Jahan Khan sent the special horsemen called *sazawals* to Sodhi Ramdas (Wadbhag Singh) for finding the murderers. They treated the Sodhi harshly and he went into hiding. The *sazawals* returned empty-handed. They had actually sacked Kartarpur. From every side tumult and rebellion began to be raised by the Sikhs. Wherever the Afghan army went it came back

defeated. Even the environs of Lahore were affected. Thousands of Sikhs attacked the city every night and sacked the quarters outside the city wall. The administration of the country was thrown into disorder.<sup>73</sup>

Significantly, by this time, Adina Beg Khan was alienated by the Afghans. He defeated the Afghans in the Jalandhar Doab with the support of the Sikh leaders. For fear of Wazir Jahan Khan, however, he took refuge in the hills. From there he sent repeated requests to the Maratha commander Raghunath Rao to extend the Maratha dominions upto the Indus, offering to pay Rs. 1,00,000 for every day of march and Rs. 50,000 for halting. Early in March 1758, Raghunath Rao besieged Sirhind. He was soon joined by the Sikhs and they both plundered the inhabitants of Sirhind. Jahan Khan decided to vacate Lahore. Raghunath Rao reached Lahore on 11 April 1758, but he was not inclined to stay on. The Marathas conferred the title of Nawab on Adina Beg Khan and leased out the province to him for Rs. 75, 00, 000 a year. Adina Beg Khan did not wish to stay in Lahore. He went to Batala with Mughlani Begam, the widow of Mir Mannu, and died in September. The Peshwa sent Dattaji Sindhia with a strong force to the Punjab. He found that in and around Lahore the Sikhs were predominant and they commanded a vast force. Dattaji went back to Delhi.<sup>74</sup> The Marathas realized that they could not hold the Punjab without Sikh support. When the Afghan troops began to march towards India in October 1759, the Maratha commandants began to retreat. From October 1758 to October 1759, the Sikhs appear to have extended the area of their influence and strengthened their control over the territories occupied earlier.

Ahmad Shah Durrani's presence in India but away from the Punjab in 1760 enabled the Sikhs to further consolidate their power. An incident mentioned by Tahmas Khan is interesting in this connection. Rustam Khan Bangash, who had been appointed by Ahmad Shah as the commandant of Four Parganas (*chahar mahal*), came out of the city of Sialkot to fight with the Sikhs. He had only 150 horse and foot. Tahmas Khan also joined him. Instead of chastising the Sikhs they

were themselves captured. Tahmas Khan was released for a small sum but Rustam Khan had to pay Rs. 22, 000 as ransom.<sup>75</sup> Tahmas Khan states later that the Afridi Afghans Sa'adat Khan and Sadiq Khan, who had been appointed by Ahmad Shah as commandants of the Jalandhar Doab in April 1761, were defeated and thrown out like flies out of milk. From the Indus to the Sutlej the Sikhs had acquired 'dominance and possession'.<sup>76</sup> These terms refer to their political ascendancy and their territorial dominions.

The increasing power of the Sikhs obliged Ahmad Shah Durrani to vanquish them decisively. He came to Lahore early in 1762. He was informed that the Sikhs were encamped near the village Kup, with their women and children. According to Ratan Singh Bhangu, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Charhat Singh Sukarchakia were the top leaders at this time.<sup>77</sup> They decided to adopt a defensive strategy, with their baggage, women and children moving towards Barnala under their protection. The Durrani pursued the Sikhs over 40 kms from early morning till sunset, killing thousands of them in a single day. The event is called the 'great carnage' (*vaddha ghallughara*) with reference to the small carnage of 1746. Tahmas Khan, who participated in the action, put the number of Sikhs slain on that day at 25, 000.<sup>78</sup>

Tahmas Khan felt instinctively that disorders would arise again and all routes would be closed. The terror of the Sikhs was increasing day by day even in the central parts of the province. Soon after Ahmad Shah's departure from Lahore, disorders arose in the entire country.<sup>79</sup> A news report of 14 April 1763 refers to the mutual deliberations of the 'Sikh Chiefs' and the 'division and distribution of the country among themselves'. They proposed to march into the territories around Saharanpur and other areas. No one dared or had the power to oppose them. They wrote to the Mughal court that the money collected for the Durrani should be paid to the Khalsa and that in case of delay, they would be obliged to attack Delhi.<sup>80</sup> In August 1763 it was reported that the Sikhs had established their control over the Sindh Sagar Doab, and they would oppose Ahmad Shah Durrani on the river Indus if he



marched towards the Punjab. Ahmad Shah crossed the Indus after the Sikh chiefs had returned to Ramdaspur for the Dusehra.<sup>81</sup> He was attacked by the Sikhs after he crossed the river Chenab. The Afghan army was routed. Ahmad Shah Durrani put his horse into the river. After 'the great battle and the defeat suffered by him there at the hands of the Sikhs, the Shah reached the river Jhelum, and his troops fled hither and thither in disorder'. The Shah exhorted them to stand up but no one listened to him. 'Travelling thirty *kurohs* in one day-and-night, out of the terror of the Sikhs, they reached Hasan Abdal'. They crossed the Indus on 25 February 1764.<sup>82</sup>

Already in January 1764, Sirhind had been attacked and occupied by the Khalsa under the leadership of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. Zain Khan, the Afghan governor, was shot dead in an attempt to escape. The entire Sarkar of Sirhind worth about Rs. 60, 00, 000 a year came into the possession of the Sikhs. They dispersed as soon as the battle was over and rode by day and night, each horseman would throw his belt or scabbard, his articles of dress and accoutrement, into successive villages to mark them as his. According to Ratan Singh Bhangu, a *gurmata* had been passed that no one would be dislodged by a stronger individual from a place first occupied; anyone dislodging another would be ejected by the Khalsa. The Sikhs were now keen to identify the place where the younger Sahibzadas of Guru Gobind Singh had been executed. When it was identified, a Gurdwara was constructed in memorium and an adequate *jagir* was assigned for its upkeep and daily *kirtan* and *langar*.<sup>83</sup>

Ahmad Shah Durrani realized the gravity of the situation and made an all out effort to re-assert his authority in the Punjab. According to Qazi Nur Muhammad, who accompanied the Durrani on this expedition, he invited Mir Nasir Khan, the Baloch chief of Kalat, to join him in *jihad* against the Sikhs. Mir Nasir Khan dropped the idea of going to Mecca, for pilgrimage and joined the Shah at Eminabad with 12,000 Baluchis. There was a hard resistance from the Sikhs. The Shah decided to destroy Ramdaspur as he had done several times



before. He reached Ramdaspur on 1 December 1764 when there were only a few Sikhs in charge of the Akal Takht. Qazi Nur Muhammad says that they were only thirty but they did not have 'a grain of fear about them'.<sup>84</sup> Bhangu tells us that their leader was Gurbakhsh Singh Nihang who used to lead the Khalsa standards in battle. Each one of them died fighting as a martyr. They were cremated together and a memorial (*shahidganj*) in their honour was later built near the Akal Takht.<sup>85</sup>

Ahmad Shah Durrani marched towards Delhi by slow marches. At Kunjpura he decided to return. Before he crossed the Sutlej, the Afghan army was attacked by the Khalsa. The battle continued for two days, more to inflict losses on the Shah than to win a decisive victory.<sup>86</sup> A similar battle took place before the Shah crossed the Beas. After his departure from the Punjab in March 1765, the Sikhs met at Amritsar for the Baisakhi. They resolved to take possession of Lahore. It was taken over by Gujjar Singh, Lehna Singh, and Sobha Singh. They struck a coin as the formal declaration of Sikh sovereignty. The inscription on this coin was the same as on the seal used in the time of Banda Singh Bahadur:

*Degh-o teg-o fateh-o nusrat bi-dirang*

*Yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh*

Evidently, the sovereignty declared in 1710 was never forgotten by the Khalsa.<sup>87</sup>

## 6

### **The Khalsa Raj (1765-1799)**

The declaration of sovereignty in 1765 gave a fillip to the political activity of the Khalsa. They tried to expand their territories, particularly towards the Jamuna-Ganga Doab and the plain beyond.<sup>88</sup> On a few occasions, they fought among themselves or on opposite sides.<sup>89</sup> Multan was lost to Taimur Shah, the successor of Ahmad Shah Abdali at Kabul.<sup>90</sup> When the Durrani's grandson, Shah Zaman tried to recover the province of Lahore in the late 1790s, the Khalsa chiefs tried to build a common plank for resistance. The young Ranjit Singh emerged as a

leader in 1798, and occupied Lahore in 1799.<sup>91</sup> This was his first important action against fellow Sikh rulers. Therefore, it is regarded as a significant step towards unification of the province of Lahore, still equated with the Punjab. The late eighteenth century was thus marked by a considerable political activity. Gradually, however, the emergent Sikh rulers began to pay increasing attention to the government and administration of their own territories.

Historians generally use the term '*misaldari*' for the Sikh political system in the late eighteenth century. Their basic assumption is that all the territories under Sikh rule were divided into twelve units. The chiefs of all these units were equal in status and independent of one another. Furthermore, the twelve chiefs collectively represented the authority of the Khalsa Panth which was akin to a confederacy. Within each unit the chief was supposed to be above everyone else.<sup>92</sup>

In recent years, however, a few historians have rejected this concept of '*misaldari*'. They argue that the inscriptions on the Sikh coins derive authority from the Gurus and God, which made all the Sikh rulers independent of one another as well as of the non-Sikh powers.<sup>93</sup> The rulers of Patiala and Jind did not even use any of the two inscriptions: they acknowledged Ahmad Shah Abdali's suzerainty by striking a coin in his name.<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, on the orders of Sikh chiefs, their name in the seal impressions is prefixed with 'Akal Sahai' (God the Helper), which reinforces the impression that they exercised power individually from the very beginning.<sup>95</sup> Also relevant in this connection is the prophecy attributed to Guru Gobind Singh and widely believed in that every Khalsa horseman would become a ruler (*hanne hanne patshahi*).<sup>96</sup>

In the case of the Phulkian states of Nabha, Jind and Patiala, it is clear that their rulers rose into power individually as *chaudharis* in the Mughal politico-administrative framework. The coin made current in Nabha by its founder, Hamir Singh, bore the same inscription as the Sikh coin of Lahore but the founders of Patiala and Jind, as noted earlier, used the coin of Ahmad Shah Abdali.<sup>97</sup> As vassals of the Abdali

they could not have political relations with other powers. In their government and administration they were totally independent of one another. That the case of Phulkian chiefs is not exceptional is evident from a study of the so-called Bhangi Misal which shows that each ruler called 'Bhangi' exercised political power independently of others.<sup>98</sup>

This does not mean, however, that a unit called *misal* never existed in Sikh history. Though the use of the term *misal* was unknown or at least uncommon in the eighteenth century, there is credible evidence that a few leaders combined their fighting bands (*jathas*) for a common action which led to the occupation of territories. After conquest, the territory was divided among the leaders of the combination.<sup>99</sup>

All available information on the Sikh rulers of the late eighteenth century demonstrates that every one of the leaders of a conjoint conquest appointed officers and the other personnel in the army and civil administration, like commandants, *thanadars*, *kardars*, *qanungos*, *chaudharis* or *muqaddams*, without reference to any other ruler or authority. These functionaries were generally paid for their services through *jagirs*, and each ruler conferred *jagirs* in the territory under his jurisdiction without reference to others. The state patronage was given to individuals and institutions of a religious and charitable nature through grants of revenue-free land or revenues. In matters of grants too the individual ruler took his own decision.<sup>100</sup> Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, the best known leader of the Khalsa in the second half of the eighteenth century, presents the most telling example of the case.<sup>101</sup> His chronicler, Ram Sukh Rao, provides detailed information on Jassa Singh's military and civil affairs, leaving no doubt that he was his own master in all matters of government and administration.<sup>102</sup>

There are three other features of Sikh polity of the late eighteenth century which affirm that the system was essentially monarchical, that is, a system in which all political power was exercised virtually by one individual. Hereditary succession was the rule, without a single known exception. Sons succeeded to the position of fathers as

a matter of course. In the absence of a son, the ruler nominated his successor. In their relations with one another, the Sikh rulers were guided by their own interests or inclination rather than by an outside authority. When Ranjit Singh signed treaty (*ahd-nama*) with Fateh Singh Ahluwalia in 1802, it was a treaty between two sovereign rulers. This is the most tangible example of a general practice. We find Sikh rulers entering into alliances with non-Sikh rulers. This could create situations in which one Sikh ruler was pitched against another.<sup>103</sup> Finally, a number of Sikh rulers are known to have taken tribute from non-Sikh rulers within the framework of suzerain-vassal polity. By its very definition, one independent ruler asserted his superior authority over another independent ruler in this form of polity.<sup>104</sup> According to Ram Sukh Rao, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia took tribute from some Sikh rulers too, a practice which was to be followed by Ranjit Singh so much so that even Fateh Singh Ahluwalia would be treated later as a tributary chief.<sup>105</sup>

The *gurmatas* in the sense of resolutions 'endorsed by the Guru' played a very important role in Sikh history during the eighteenth century, but primarily before the declaration of sovereign rule in 1765. We hear of no later *gurmata* which was important in political terms.<sup>106</sup> The Akalis as custodians of the Akal Takht did not interfere with the government and administration of a Sikh ruler.<sup>107</sup> Some historians blame Ranjit Singh for abolishing the *gurmata*, but *gurmatas* had become virtually dysfunctional before the birth of Ranjit Singh. He was a ruler of the third generation. In all important aspects of his government and administration he was akin to the late eighteenth century Sikh rulers.<sup>108</sup>

The broad framework of Sikh principalities was similar to that of the Mughal empire. The revenue administration of the Sikh rulers was almost a continuation of the older arrangements. The *jagirdari* system and the system of *dharmarth* grants were even more so. The suzerain-vassal polity was yet another common feature. Many of the Sikh rulers patronized art and literature, just as they patronized religious

institutions and individuals of known sanctity.<sup>108</sup> The policies and measures of the Sikh rulers had a direct or indirect bearing on religious, social and cultural life of the Sikhs during the period under study.

## 7

### **Relevance for Social and Cultural Life**

The period covered in this chapter falls into three broad phases. The first phase started with the martial activity of Guru Hargobind in the early seventeenth century and ended with the death of Guru Gobind Singh in 1708. This background to the eighteenth century was first marked by increasing confrontation between the Mughal state and the mainstream Sikhs, reaching its culmination in the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1675. Guru Gobind Singh's creative response to the new situation then was more systematic, sustained and fundamental. His political activity was accompanied by a supportive literary resurgence for sustained inspiration. The ideal of political ascendancy was deliberately and carefully cultivated and propagated. The followers of Guru Gobind Singh were transformed into a political community that derived its inspiration from religious ideology for pursuing political power. He transferred his authority to the Khalsa, with the *Granth Sahib* as their guide in all situations. Their operative slogan was '*raj karega Khalsa*'. The stage was set for a long struggle.

The second phase started soon after the death of Guru Gobind Singh with the establishment of a sovereign state by the Khalsa in the Sutlej-Jamuna Divide which was maintained for a few years with ups and downs. The Khalsa lost the first round but created an example, which reinforced the ideal of Khalsa Raj. They suffered persecution and suppression but survived as a political entity. By the time of the transfer of the province of Lahore to the empire of Ahmad Shah Durrani in 1752, the Khalsa had re-established themselves in pockets of territory in the central Punjab. They were steadily gaining power and resources while Ahmad Shah was preoccupied with apparently more important matters in northern India and Afghanistan. Around 1760,



when he was trying hard to strike down the Marathas, the Khalsa established their hold over much of the Punjab. In the early 1760s, Ahmad Shah failed to dislodge them and they were aware of their power and strength when they declared their sovereignty by striking a coin at Lahore. What sustained them in the successful pursuit of their ideal was their religious ideology, the institutions built on its basis, and revival of Ramdaspur as the centre of their religious and political activity.

The third phase started with Khalsa Raj in the late eighteenth century and merged into the political ascendancy of Ranjit Singh early in the nineteenth. The Khalsa tried to establish a viable polity and regular government and administration, promoting Sikh institutions but extending patronage to others as well, reviving agriculture and trade which resulted in re-urbanization. Amritsar, the Sikh city par excellence, became more important even than Lahore. A new kind of architecture began to take shape and the Khalsa rulers patronized the art of painting.

The literature produced during this period by the outsiders was in a sense an acknowledgment of the increasing importance of the Khalsa. The Persian writers began to take notice of the Sikhs largely due to the political activity of the Khalsa under the leadership of Banda Bahadur. The attention given to Banda by the historians of the Mughal emperors is a reflection of the significance they attached to the success of the Khalsa even though temporary. The Persian writers paid attention also to the political struggle of the Khalsa during the third quarter of the eighteenth century. However, by the time the Khalsa Raj was established, they had little interest. The British writers, on the other hand, began to take interest in the Sikhs due to the political ascendancy of the Khalsa. The British diplomats and administrators began also to commission works on the Sikhs in the Persian language. The Persian and European literature produced during the eighteenth century, which serves as contemporary evidence on the Sikhs, is in its



origin a compliment to the emergence of the Sikhs as a political entity and political power during the eighteenth century.

The Sikh literature produced in this period, which offers more important evidence on Sikh history of the period, has its own significance. The time of Guru Gobind Singh witnessed a remarkable literary resurgence. The phase of political struggle from 1708 to 1765 was not much conducive to literary production. We have only a few Sikh works of the phase. In the third phase, again, we notice a good deal of literary activity. Partly due to political stability and partly due to state patronage, there was a new kind of resurgence in literature and the arts.

It is evident that the social and cultural life of the Sikhs during the eighteenth century was not divorced from political activity and organization. Doctrinal developments become the source of faith and the basis of organization; institutions develop to serve as vehicles for the on-going activity; ethical codes are evolved to consolidate beliefs and practices; and political power is used partly for promoting art and architecture as much as religious institutions. Much of the political, social and cultural life of the Khalsa appears to be more or less integrated as a single whole.

### NOTES

1. For an account of the pontificate of Guru Hargobind, see J.S. Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab* (The New Cambridge History of India, II.3), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, rev. edn., pp. 61-98. See also, Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, *A Short History of the Sikhs (1465-1765)*, vol. I, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1999 rpt. pp. 35-46.
2. For a masterly analysis of these dissident groups, see J.S. Grewal, 'Cleavage in the Panth', *Sikh Ideology, Polity and Social Order. From Guru Nanak to Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2007, rev. and enlarged edn., pp.79-83.
3. Harbans Singh, *Guru Tegh Bahadur*, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1982. See also, J.S. Grewal, 'In Defence of the

- Freedom of Conscience', *Sikh Ideology, Polity and Social Order*, pp. 89-91.
4. For biographical studies of Guru Gobind Singh, see, Harbans Singh, *Guru Gobind Singh*, Chandigarh: Guru Gobind Singh Foundation, 1966; J.S.Grewal and S. S. Bal, *Guru Gobind Singh: A Biographical Study*, Chandigarh: Panjab University, 1987, rpt. Also see, J.S. Grewal, 'Guru Gobind Singh: Life and Mission', *Journal of Punjab Studies* (Special Issue on Guru Gobind Singh), vol.15, nos. 1-2 (Spring-Fall 2008), pp.6-11.
  5. *Bachittar Natak*, in *Sri Dasam Granth Sahib*, ed., Ratan Singh Jaggi and Gursharan Kaur Jaggi, New Delhi: Gobind Sadan, vol.I, pp. 104-71. Also see, J.S. Grewal, '*Bachittar Natak*: Proclamation of Mission', *Sikh Ideology, Polity and Social Order*, pp.92-95.
  6. This comes out clearly in Sainapat, *Sri Gur Sobha* (Punjabi), ed. Ganda Singh, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1967, pp. 20-32.
  7. Grewal, 'Guru Gobind Singh: Life and Mission', pp.17-18.
  8. Grewal and Bal, *Guru Gobind Singh*, pp. 135-6.
  9. Ibid., pp. 140-1.
  10. For the transliteration and Punjabi translation of the *Zafarnama* which was in Persian see *Sri Dasam Granth Sahib*, ed., Ratan Singh Jaggi and Gursharan Kaur Jaggi, New Delhi: Gobind Sadan, 1999, vol 5, pp. 676-90.
  11. J.S. Grewal, '*Zafarnama*: Declaration of Moral Victory', and 'Insistence on Justice', in *Sikh Ideology, Polity and Social Order*, pp. 96-99, 103-4, respectively.
  12. For a contemporary bardic account of Banda Bahadur's meeting with the tenth Guru, see Nathmal, *Amarnama* (Persian), tr.and ed. Ganda Singh, Amritsar: Sikh History Society, 1953, pp. 26, 46. For further detail, Ganda Singh, *Life of Banda Singh Bahadur*, Patiala: Punjabi University 1990, rpt. pp.10-22.

13. Sainapat, *Sri Gur Sobha*, pp. 123-31. See also, Grewal, 'Gursobha- In Praise of Khalsa', in *Sikh Ideology, Polity and Social Order*, p. 109.
14. It needs to be underlined that the '*Raj karega Khalsa*' couplet occurs in the *Rahitnama* called the *Nasihatnama* included in manuscript MS 770, available in Bhai Gurdas Library of Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, which is dated 1718-19 and is clearly a copy. For a study of the *Nasihatnama*, called *Tankhahnama* in MS 770 manuscript, see Karamjit K. Malhotra, 'The Earliest Manual on the Sikh Way of Life', in *Five Centuries of Sikh Tradition: Ideology, Society, Politics and Culture*, (Essays in Honour of Indu Banga), ed., Reeta Grewal and Sheena Pall, New Delhi: Manohar, 2005, pp. 55-81.
15. This idea has been given currency, among others, by Khushwant Singh, *History of the Sikhs*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999 (first published in 1963), pp.101-19.
16. For Banda Bahadur's conquests in Persian sources: 'Reports from Bahadur Shah's Court 1707-8'; Muhammad Qasim, '*Ibratnama*'; Mirza Muhammad, '*Ibratnama*'; Muhammad Hadi Kamwar Khan, *Tazkiratu's Salatin Chaghata*; and Muhammad Shafi, *Mir'at-i Waridat*', in *Sikh History from Persian Sources: Translations of Major Texts*, ed. J.S. Grewal and Irfan Habib, New Delhi: Tulika/Indian History Congress, 2001, pp. 108, 115-17, 133-4, 143, 160-1. For a description of the battle of Chappar Jhiri, see Ganda Singh, *Life of Banda Singh Bahadur*, pp. 42-5.
17. For the inscription on the coin, see Surinder Singh, *Sikh Coinage: Symbol of Sikh Sovereignty*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2004, p.41.
18. For a facsimile of the *hukamnama*, see Ganda Singh, *Hukamname: Guru Sahiban, Mata Sahiban, Banda Singh ate Khalsa Ji De* (Punjabi), Patiala: Punjabi University, 1967, p.195.
19. Mirza Muhammad, *Ibratnama*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, p.135.

20. Muhammad Qasim, *Ibratnama*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, p.117.
21. Ganda Singh, *Baba Banda Singh Bahadur: His Life and Achievements and the Place of Execution*, Sirhind: Sirhind Historical Research Society, 1976, p.5.
22. For zamindari system in Mughal India, see Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System of Mughal India (1566-1707)*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999, rev. edn., pp.169-229.
23. Kirpal Singh, *Baba Ala Singh: Founder of Patiala Kingdom*, Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 2005, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., pp. 1-11.
24. For a description of the siege by the eye-witness Muhammad Hadi Kamwar Khan, *Tazkiratu's Salatin Chaghata*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, pp.147-50.
25. Ibid., pp.150-1.
26. Mirza Muhammad, *Ibratnama*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, pp.137-8.
27. For an eye witness account of the siege of Gurdas Nangal, see Muhammad Qasim, *Ibratnama*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, pp.124-6.
28. Mirza Muhammad, *Ibratnama*; and Kamwar Khan, '*Tazkiratu's Salatin Chaghata*', in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, pp. 139,140,153.
29. Muhammad Qasim, '*Ibratnama*', and 'The English Report of Banda Bahahdur's Arrival as captive at Delhi', in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, p.127. See also, Ganda Singh, ed., *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, Calcutta: Indian Studies Past & Present, 1962, pp. 49-51.
30. Mirza Muhammad, *Ibratnama*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, p.141.
31. Khafi Khan, *Muntakhabu'l Lubab*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, pp.158-9.

32. *Asrar-i Samadi*, Punjabi tr. Janak Singh, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1972, pp.14-15. See also, Khafi Khan, *Muntakhabu'l Lubab*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, p.158.
33. Indu Banga, 'Raj-Khalsa: Ideology and Praxis', *Journal of Punjab Studies*, vol. 15, nos, 1&2 (Spring-Fall, 2008), p. 36.
34. For example, Professor Hari Ram Gupta justified the choice of 1739 as the starting point for his doctoral study on the grounds that there was no contemporary evidence on the history of the Sikhs from 1716 to 1738. *History of the Sikhs, 1739-1768 (Evolution of the Sikh Confederacies)*, Calcutta: np, 1939, pp. viii-ix.
35. Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab 1707-1748*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986 (paperback), pp. 288-98.
36. *Asrar-i Samadi*, pp. vii, 6-15, 16-22 et passim.
37. Dr Muzaffar Alam's understanding here is based mainly on the newsreports and chronicles of the period in Persian. *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India*, pp. 176-7.
38. Malhotra, 'The Earliest Manual on the Sikh Way of Life', pp. 55-81.
39. *Hukamname*, pp. 196-231.
40. Kesar Singh Chhibber, *Bansavalinama Dasan Patshahian Ka* (Punjabi), ed. Ratan Singh Jaggi in (*Parkh*, vol. II), Chandigarh: Panjab University, 1972, pp.182-6. See also, Ratan Singh Bhangu, *Sri Guru Panth Prakash* (Punjabi), ed. Balwant Singh Dhillon, Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 2004, pp. 158-65.
41. Sewa Singh, *Shahid Bilas: Bhai Mani Singh* (Punjabi), ed. Giani Garja Singh, Ludhiana: Punjabi Sahit Academi, 1961, pp.81-5.
42. *Akhbarat-i Darbar-i Mu'alla*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, pp. 107-8.
43. *Ibratnama*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, p. 118.
44. Bhangu, *Sri Guru Panth Prakash*, pp. 158-65.
45. *Ibid.*, pp. 204-8.

46. Ibid., pp. 208-11.
47. Ibid., pp. 208-9.
48. Ibid., pp. 215-20.
49. Chhibber, *Bansavalinama*, pp.164,196.
50. Bhangu, *Sri Guru Panth Prakash*, pp. 183-93.
51. Ibid., pp. 220-23. Gupta quotes the dialogue between Nadir Shah and Zakariya Khan as recorded by Ahmad Shah of Batala in the early nineteenth century:  

Nadir: 'Have you got any troublesome characters in the country?'

Zakariya: 'None, except the sect of Hindu *faqirs* who assemble twice to bathe in a tank which they regard as a place of pilgrimage'.

Nadir: 'Where are their places of abode?'

Zakariya: 'Their homes are the saddles on their horses'.

Nadir: 'It seems probable these rebels will raise their head'.
- Hari Ram Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, p.6. See also, Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, *A Short History*, p. 118.
52. Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, pp. 17-18. See also, Ganda Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani: Father of Modern Afghanistan*, Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1959, p. 41.
53. Ibid., pp. 41-44.
54. Ibid., pp. 44-70.
55. Ibid., pp. 72-80. Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, pp. 67-69.
56. Ganda Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, pp. 101-25.
57. Bhangu, *Sri Guru Panth Prakash*, pp. 227-29. See also, Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, *A Short History*, pp. 121-22. The latter also cite Giani Gian Singh's *Panth Prakash*.
58. Bhangu, *Sri Guru Panth Prakash*, pp. 234-7.
59. Ibid., pp. 255-9, 272-6.
60. Quoted in, Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, p. 20.
61. Ibid., pp. 26-33.
62. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, *A Short History*, pp. 130-31.
63. Ibid., pp. 133-4.
64. Ibid., pp. 135-7.



65. For the seal of Jai Singh Kanhiya and orders of Hukumat Singh, B.N. Goswamy and J.S. Grewal, tr. and ed., *The Mughal and Sikh Rulers and the Vaishnavas of Pindori: A Historical Interpretation of 52 Persian Documents*, Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1969, documents XVIII, XXIV, XXV. Such documents are known to be in the possession of a large number of religious establishments in different parts of the Punjab.
66. *Tahmas Nama*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, pp. 171-2.
67. These women and children are remembered in the Sikh prayer (*Ardas*) recited every day on various occasions by Sikhs all over the world.
68. Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, pp. 94-7.
69. *Tahmas Nama*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, pp. 173-4.
70. Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, pp. 97-105. Cf. Indu Banga, *Agrarian System of the Sikhs*, pp. 27-8.
71. Goswamy and Grewal, *The Mughal and Sikh Rulers and the Vaishnavas of Pindori*, document XIX.
72. *Tahmas Nama*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, pp. 174-6.
73. *Ibid.*, pp. 176-7.
74. During the year of Maratha rule in the Punjab there was no mutual trust or cordial cooperation between the Sikhs and the Marathas. Their political interests could not easily be reconciled. For an account of this phase, see Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, pp.126-8.
75. *Tahmas Nama*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, pp. 177-80.
76. *Ibid.*, pp. 180-1.
77. For an account of the *ghallughara* in the Sikh tradition, see Bhangu, *Sri Guru Panth Prakash*, pp. 337-52.
78. *Tahmas Nama*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, p. 182.
79. Newsreports, quoted in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, pp. 182-3.
80. *Ibid.*, pp. 190-1.

81. Ibid., p. 193.
82. Ibid., pp. 196-7.
83. For an account of the occupation of Sirhind, see Bhangu, *Sri Guru Panth Prakash*, pp. 377-85.
84. *Jangnama*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, p. 207.
85. Bhangu, *Sri Guru Panth Prakash*, pp. 386-94.
86. Qazi Nur Muhammad gives a detailed account of this campaign. *Jangnama*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, p. 207. See also, Banga, *Agrarian Systems of the Sikhs*, p. 19.
87. Significantly, ten years later, a coin was struck at Amritsar with the same inscription as Banda's coins of 1711 and 1712. For some detail, see Surinder Singh, *Sikh Coinage*, p. 64.
88. Joseph Davey Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs*, Delhi: S. Chand & Co., 1955 (first published in 1849), pp. 101-6. See also, N.K.Sinha, *Rise of the Sikh Power*, Calcutta: A Mukherjee & Co., 1960, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, pp.56, 60, 63, 80, 81, 84-6. Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, p. 269.
89. For detail, see Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs*, p.103. See also, Veena Sachdeva, *Polity and Economy of the Punjab: During the Late Eighteenth Century*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1993, pp.18,20. Banga, *Agrarian System of the Sikhs*, pp. 21-2.
90. Taimur Shah recovered Multan in 1780. Sachdeva, *Polity and Economy of the Punjab*, p.19.
91. Banga, *Agrarian System of the Sikhs*, p.22. Sachdeva, *Polity and Economy of the Punjab*, p.20.
92. See, for example: Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs*, pp.96-7. Sinha, *Rise of the Sikh Power*, pp.57-61. Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, vol. II, New Delhi: Munshiram Manohar Lal, 1978, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. pp.91-2. Bhagat Singh, *Sikh Polity in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, New Delhi: Oriental Publishers and Distributors, 1978, pp.92-3.
93. J.S. Grewal, 'Eighteenth-Century Sikh Polity', *Sikh Ideology, Polity and Social Order*, p.168. Banga, *Agrarian System of the*

- Sikhs*, pp.32& n 91, 33 n 92. Sachdeva, *Polity and Economy of the Punjab*, pp. 86, 94-7.
94. Indu Banga, 'Ahmad Shah Abdali's Designs over the Punjab', *Proceedings Indian History Congress*, Patiala: 1968, pp. 85-90.  
J.S. Grewal, 'The Sikh State', *The Sikhs: Ideology, Institutions, and Identity*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp.84-5.  
Though not concerned directly with their antecedents, Lepel Griffin gives enough information on the founders of Nabha, Jind and Patiala to underline their initial position as *zamindars*. *The Rajas of the Punjab*, 2 vols., Patiala: Punjab Languages Department 1970 (first published in 1870).
  95. Goswamy and Grewal, *The Mughal and Sikh Rulers and the Vaishnavas of Pindori*, pp. 213-18, 227-53.
  96. A reference has already been made to this phrase which was used by Ratan Singh Bhangu. *Sri Guru Panth Prakash* pp. 194, 196.
  97. Lepel Griffin, *The Rajas of the Punjab*, vol. I, pp. 285- 87 n 2.  
The inscription on the Patiala and Jind coins reads:  
*Hukm shud az qadir-i- bechun b' Ahmad Padshah*  
*Sikka zan bar sim-o- zar az ouj-i-mahi ta b' mah.*  
A free translation would be as follows: 'The Eternal Lord ordered Ahmad Padshah to strike a coin in silver and gold from the Pisces to the Moon'.
  98. Veena Sachdeva, 'The Rule of the Bhangis (1765-1810)', M.Phil. Dissertation, Amritsar, Guru Nanak Dev University, 1981.
  99. Grewal, 'Eighteenth-Century Sikh Polity', and 'Ahmad Shah of Batala on the Misl', in *Sikh Ideology Polity and Social Order*, pp.149-53, 168. Banga, *Agrarian System of the Sikhs*, pp.31-5. Sachdeva, *Polity and Economy of the Punjab*, pp.94-7.
  100. Banga, *Agrarian System of the Sikhs*, pp. 34n. 96,148-67. Sachdeva, *Polity and Economy of the Punjab*, pp. 70-4, 110, 113-14, 119-29.

101. Grewal, "'Patshah of the Panth': Jassa Singh Ahluwalia', *Sikh Ideology, Polity and Social Order*, pp. 174-82.
102. *Ram Sukh Rao's Sri Fateh Singh Partap Prabhakar* (A History of Early Nineteenth Century Punjab), ed. Joginder Kaur, Patiala: Published by Editor, 1980.
103. Grewal, 'From Ruler to Vassal: Fateh Singh Ahluwalia', *Sikh Ideology, Polity and Social Order*, pp. 194-6. *Ram Sukh Rao's Sri Fateh Singh Partap Prabhakar*, pp. 117-19.
104. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat ut-Tawarikh* (Persian), Lahore: New Imperial Press, 1888-89, Daftar II, pp.50-1.
105. *Ram Sukh Rao, Sri Fateh Singh Partap Prabhakar*, pp. 27, 169, 171, 219, 220. See also, Suri, *Umdat ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar II, p.354. Grewal, "'Patshah of the Panth': Jassa Singh Ahluwalia', and 'From Ruler to Vassal: Fateh Singh Ahluwalia', in *Sikh Ideology, Polity and Social Order*, pp. 179, 195.
106. Grewal, 'Eighteenth-Century Sikh Polity', *Sikh Ideology, Polity and Social Order*, pp.167-9. Banga, *Agrarian System of the Sikhs*, pp. 29-31. Sachdeva, *Polity and Economy of the Punjab*, pp. 89-90.
107. John Malcolm, *A Sketch of the Sikhs*, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1986 (first published in 1812), pp.119-22. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs*, p.99. Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, p.327. Grewal, 'The Doctrine of Guru Panth and Guru Granth', and 'City of Sikh Pilgrimage', in *Sikh Ideology, Polity and Social Order*, pp. 227, 234.
108. For detailed studies see, Banga, *Agrarian System of the Sikhs*, pp. 39-167. Sachdeva, *Polity and Economy of the Punjab*, pp. 69-129. J.S. Grewal, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh: Polity, Economy and Society*, Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 2001, pp. 61-74.

## Chapter II

### DOCTRINAL AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

The two most important institutions of the majority of the Sikhs today are Guruship and Gurdwara. On Guruship, the basic belief is that, after the ten Gurus from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh, the *Granth* and the Panth became the Guru. It is highly important, therefore, to note that the doctrines of Guru-Granth and Guru-Panth crystallized during the eighteenth century to become widely current. The *dharamsal*, where congregational worship was held and *langar* was disbursed, was a well established institution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It acquired greater importance in the eighteenth century as the Gurdwara in which the Granth and the Khalsa were present as the Guru. The central *dharamsal* in the town of Ramdaspur emerged during the eighteenth century as the premier institution of the Sikhs, known as the Darbar Sahib in the town of Ramdaspur which itself developed into the city of Amritsar.

#### 1

#### The Doctrine of Guru-Granth

In Sainapat's *Sri Gur Sobha*, completed soon after the death of Guru Gobind Singh,<sup>1</sup> it is stated that a day before his death, the Singhs asked him about his successor. They were told that besides the Khalsa the eternal *shabad-bani* shall be the true Guru.<sup>2</sup> Significantly, in the *Rahitnama* known as the *Prashan-Uttar* which was composed by Bhai Nand Lal in 1694-95 Guru Gobind Singh states that a Sikh who wishes to see the Guru would have his *darshan* in the *Granth* as the form of the Guru.<sup>3</sup> In this context, a logical statement is made in the *Rahitnama* of Prahlad Singh which is placed before the *Sri Gur Sobha*: 'All the Sikhs are instructed to regard the *Granth* as the Guru'.<sup>4</sup>

It is not surprising therefore that in the *Sakhi Rahit Patshahi 10*,, which too appears to be earlier than Sainapat's work, *shabad* is equated with the *bani*, and the verse of Guru Ram Das 'Bani is the Guru and the Guru is Bani' is quoted.<sup>5</sup> The *Prem Sumarag*, which

apparently began to be composed during the lifetime of Guru Gobind Singh and was completed soon after his death, refers to *shabad-bani* as the Guru. 'He who wishes to hear the Guru should read the *shabad*.'<sup>6</sup>

Finally, it may be noted that in a manuscript completed at Nander in 1709, which is now known as *Parchian Patshahi Dasvin Kian*, the title used for the Sikh scripture is 'Guru Granth'.<sup>7</sup> Thus, in the evidence coming down from the years between 1694 and 1710 we have a clear equation of *shabad* with *bani*, of *shabad-bani* with the *Granth*, and of the *Granth* with the Guru. That the doctrine of Guru Granth was well recognized throughout the eighteenth century is confirmed by the contemporary texts like Koer Singh's *Gurbilas*, Kesar Singh Chhibber's *Bansavalinama* and Sarup Das Bhalla's *Mahima Prakash*.<sup>8</sup>

However, Professor W.H. McLeod has suggested that Guru Gobind Singh's declaration may perhaps be a retrospective interpretation of a tradition which owes its origin not to an actual pronouncement of the Guru but to an insistent need for maintaining the Panth's cohesion during the later period'. Furthermore, the corporate aspect of the doctrine possessed greater importance during the eighteenth century. It lapsed later to concede an undisputed primacy to the scriptural Guru. Professor McLeod thinks that though the Khalsa code of discipline continued to be observed after the rise of Ranjit Singh, 'the doctrine of the *Guru Panth* made way for the ascending doctrine of *Guru Granth*'.<sup>9</sup>

Professor J.S. Grewal, on the other hand, has underlined that the origins of the doctrine of Guru Granth can be traced to the earlier Sikh tradition. The equation of God with the Guru, the indispensability of the Guru for liberation, and identification of the Guru with the Shabad are emphasized in the compositions of Guru Nanak. In the eyes of his successors, the divinely inspired *bani* of Guru Nanak is equated with the Shabad. The *bani* of his successors also came to represent the Shabad-Guru. Thus, when Guru Arjan compiled the *Granth*, the ground



was prepared for the doctrine of Guru Granth. The equation of the Shabad with the Guru was well-entrenched before the declaration of Guru Gobind Singh.<sup>10</sup> Recently, Professor Grewal has given a more elaborate exposition of the doctrine of Guru-Granth, emphasizing that the doctrine held primacy for the Sikhs throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>11</sup>

In two of his recent publications, Professor McLeod concedes that the doctrine of Guru-Granth is present in the *Prashan-Uttar* and the *Rahitnama* of Prahlad Singh. But he continues to maintain that the *Sri Gur Sobha* recognizes only the doctrine of Guru Panth.<sup>12</sup> It is true that Sainapat talks of Shabad-Bani and not the *Granth*, but the term Shabad-Bani was used for the *Granth*. Professor McLeod also thinks that the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh stops short of declaring the *Granth* to be the Guru.<sup>13</sup> However, this *Rahitnama* does use the term 'Granth Sahib' at a few places,<sup>14</sup> it also makes the explicit statement that the Guru's Sikh 'should regard Granth Sahib ji as the Guru'.<sup>15</sup> It refers also to 'Guru Granth Sahib'.<sup>16</sup> Evidently, Professor McLeod has missed these statements. His translation of the *Desa Singh Rahitnama* too does not refer to the idea of *Granth* as the Guru.<sup>17</sup> Yet, the text of the *Rahitnama* given by Piara Singh Padam, which was admittedly seen by Professor McLeod, clearly states that 'between the Guru and the Granth there is no difference'.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the text of the *Daya Singh Rahitnama* in this collection explicitly enjoins that the *Granth* should be regarded as the Guru.<sup>19</sup> Professor McLeod concludes: 'Some of our sources support the doctrine; none seems to be actually opposed to it; and tradition firmly upholds it'.<sup>20</sup> The word 'some' can safely be replaced by 'most'. As we shall see later, the doctrine of Guru-Granth from the very beginning was a little more fundamental than the doctrine of Guru-Panth.

An important insight into the crystallization of the doctrine of Guru-Granth is provided by Koer Singh's *Gurbilas* in which we come upon the situation in which Guru Gobind Singh decided to remove the mediacy of the Masands. One of the charges against them was that

they did not pay due respect to the Granth and regarded themselves as the Guru's equal. Guru Gobind Singh then instructed the Sikhs to regard the 'Guru Granth' as God. Placing five *paisas* and a coconut before the *Granth*, he is reported to have said: 'Whoever wishes to speak to the Guru should read the *Granth*, and gain peace; there is no other equal to it'. Koer Singh reiterates that an essential part of the *rahit* of the Sikh is firm faith in the Guru-Granth, with no regard for any other scripture.<sup>21</sup>

Kesar Singh Chhibber makes a rather complex but very significant statement. He refers to the episode in which Bhai Mani Singh is said to have combined the *Adi Granth* and *Dasven Patshah da Granth* into one volume. It was believed by the Sikhs that due to this act, which was regarded as sacrilegious, Bhai Mani Singh's body was later on cut into pieces. Chhibber states that in 1698 the Sikhs had requested Guru Gobind Singh to combine the two *Granth*s into one volume, but the Guru made it clear that the *Adi Granth* was the Guru and the other *Granth* was 'our sport' (*khed*). Therefore, the two should remain separate.<sup>22</sup> Chhibber reports that when the time of Guru Gobind Singh's departure from this world came close, the Sikhs asked him with folded hands: 'What would happen to your *sangat*', and the Guru responded with the words, 'the *Granth* is the Guru and take refuge in Akal'.<sup>23</sup> Chhibber suggests on his own that the two *Granth*s being brothers should be regarded as the Guru. Yet, Chhibber's reference to the *Adi Granth* as 'the *Tikka*' (the heir-apparent) carries the implication that the *Adi Granth* was to be regarded as far more authoritative. Finally, in his own times, Chhibber unequivocally says: 'Today the *Granth Sahib* is our Guru'. We may be sure that here '*Granth Sahib*' in the singular is the *Adi Granth*. Chhibber says that, the rulers of the time may not listen to what he says but 'they must follow the *Granth*'. Chhibber explains that when Guru Gobind Singh was alive he could provide answers to all questions. Now the *Granth Sahib* performed that function. A true Sikh of the Guru is only he who regards the injunctions

of the *Granth* as true. He who follows the Guru's instructions becomes a member of the Guru's House.<sup>24</sup>

Sarup Das Bhalla relates that, when the Sikhs of Guru Gobind Singh asked him about his successor, he declared that the 'ten physical forms of the Guru have come to an end. In my place now regard the *Granth Sahib* as the Guru. He who wishes to speak to me should read the *Aad Granth Sahib*. This is the way to converse with me'. Soon afterwards the Guru expired and his body was cremated. Henceforth, '*Granth Ji* became the Guru in place of *Sri Guru Ji Sahib*'.<sup>25</sup>

On the whole, the Sikh literature of the period leaves the impression that the doctrine of Guru-Granth had become well established in the eighteenth century. The 'Granth' was equated with the *Adi Granth*. Kesar Singh Chhibber is the only Sikh writer of the eighteenth century to mention the book of the Tenth King (*Dasven Patshah da Granth*) as very close in status to *Adi Granth*. But even he seems to be advocating and not making a factual statement. Some modern historians of the Sikhs who are inclined to think that both the *Adi Granth* and the *Dasam Granth* had come to be regarded as the Guru by the beginning of the nineteenth century, if not earlier, have not seen all this evidence.<sup>26</sup>

A crucial importance is attached by these historians to the evidence of John Malcolm's *Sketch of the Sikhs*, originally published in 1812. John Malcolm was the first British writer to pay considerable attention to the religion of the Sikhs. The last section of his book is devoted to this subject. He talks of the *Adi Granth* and its message and states that the religious tenets and usages of the Sikhs continued as they had been established by Guru Nanak till the time of Guru Gobind Singh. Even the latter did not change the fundamental principles of the faith but he changed the sacred usages and civil habits of his followers to give them an entirely new character. In this context, Malcolm refers to the Book of the Tenth King (*Dasven Padshah ka Granth*) which was 'as Holy as the *Adi Granth*' in the eyes of the Sikhs. Malcolm also

noticed that verses from both the *Granth*s were recited at the time of preparing the sacred water for baptism (*pahul*). Also, verses from both the *Granth*s were read every morning and every evening. Malcolm goes on to add that when Guru Gobind Singh was at the point of death he exclaimed, 'wherever five Sikhs are assembled there I also shall be present'. Evidently, Malcolm does not make any reference to Guruship being vested either in the *Granth* or in the Khalsa. Nowhere in his work does he equate either the *Granth* or the Panth with the Guru.<sup>27</sup>

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The term *Adi Granth* was used by John Malcolm to distinguish it from the 'book of the Tenth King' attributed to Guru Gobind Singh. The latter was not limited to religious subjects, having been written to stir up a spirit of valour among his followers. The frequently cited statement of Malcolm refers to the *gurmata* which is erroneously equated by him with the general assembly of the Khalsa. The meeting was convened by the Akalis. When the chiefs and principal leaders were seated the *Adi Granth* and the *Dasven Padshah ka Granth* were placed before them. They all bent their heads before these scriptures, and exclaimed, 'Vaheguruji ka Khalsa, Vaheguruji ki fateh'. A large quantity of cake (actually *karha prasad*) was placed before the volumes. The Akalis then prayed aloud (that is, offered *ardas*) and the sacred food was distributed among all classes of the Sikhs present without any distinction of any kind. The matter for discussion was then brought up for deliberations. When the chiefs deliberated, they aimed at unanimity and they invoked the sacred *Granth* and swore by 'our scripture'.<sup>28</sup> It is almost certain that 'Granth' and 'scripture' refer here to the *Adi Granth*.

Contrary to the general impression, the much quoted statement about the *gurmata* as a whole was not based on Malcolm's personal observation. This account was provided by a Sikh priest who belonged to a high caste and, according to Malcolm, had retained some of his prejudices on the point of commensality. Thus, it is clear that Malcolm talks neither of Guru-Granth nor of Guru-Panth. Moreover, the information supplied by one of his informants suggests that possibly

the Khalsa who assembled for a *gurmata* looked upon the *Adi Granth* as the Guru by which they could swear. When Malcolm's observations (or that of his high-caste informer) are seen against the overwhelming evidence of the contemporary Sikh sources, the conceptual and empirical limitations of his work come out clearly. At any rate, his account seen as a whole does not discount the position of the *Adi Granth* as the Guru.

The eighteenth century *Rahitnamas* underline the importance of the *Granth Sahib* in the life of the Sikhs and attach great sanctity to the *Adi Granth*. In the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh, the *Granth Sahib* occupies a central place in Sikh religious life. A Sikh of the Guru should teach *Pothi Granth Sahib Ji* and perform *kirtan* of *sabad-bani* not as a *pir* or *masand* but as a fellow Sikh. Since God resides in the *Pothi*, a Sikh of the Guru should keep himself clean while performing its reading (*path*); he should wash his hands if he has touched his nose or any other part of his body. After complete reading of the *Granth Sahib*, including the '*siahi di bidh*', he should read *Japuji* and end the reading (*bhog*) with *keti chhutti na!*. This leaves no doubt that the reference is to the *Adi Granth*. A Sikh scribe should prepare copies of the *Granth Sahib* and give them to other Sikhs as an offering of love. A Sikh of the Guru should write and read the *Pothi* but should not sell it. He should offer it to others and receive in return whatever is voluntarily given. The sacred word is not to be sold. A Sikh of the Guru should respect the Gurmukhi script. The paper on which Gurmukhi script is written should not come under the feet and should not be used for making a packet. The *Granth Sahib* is installed in the *dharmsals*. It serves as the Guru for initiating a Sahajdhari Sikh through *charan-pahul*: the lectern of the *Granth Sahib* is used instead of the toe of the Guru. Some parts of the *Granth Sahib* are of special importance: the *Japuji*, the *Rahiras* and the *So-Dar*. Faced with a crisis, a Sikh of the Guru should read the entire *Japuji* five times early in the morning, request the Sikhs to pray for him and render service to them according to his means; God may bring relief. A Sikh of the Guru should live



strictly in accordance with the teachings of the *Granth Sahib*.<sup>29</sup> Daya Singh emphasizes the importance of the *Guru Granth* by stating that anyone who walks with the *Granth Sahib* over his head lives in paradise for years equal in number to the paces he takes. Wherever there is *Granth ji*, there is the door to liberation.<sup>30</sup>

## 2

### **The Doctrine of Guru-Panth**

The political activity of the Khalsa during the early eighteenth century was marked as much by their increasing numbers as by the growing cohesiveness among them. They collectively decided about matters of defence and offence as well as occupations and division of territories. As pointed out earlier, their periodic gatherings called the Sarbat Khalsa, and their collective decisions called *gurmata*s acquired sanctity in the eyes of believing Sikhs. Their underlying assumption that the collectivity represented the Guru is generally traced to Guru Gobind Singh. According to Sainapat, Guru Gobind Singh declared a day before his death that Guruship henceforth was vested in the Khalsa, that he was concerned only with the Khalsa, that he has bestowed his robe (*jama*) on the Khalsa. 'The Khalsa is my form and I am close to the Khalsa. In the Khalsa I abide from the beginning till the end'.<sup>31</sup> This equation between the Guru and the Khalsa came to be known as the doctrine of Guru-Panth.

Professor McLeod argued in 1975 that the doctrine of Guru-Panth arose from the need for maintaining the Panth's cohesion after Guru Gobind Singh. It assumed a position of primacy within the Panth during the middle years of the eighteenth century, finding a practical expression in the institution of the *gurmata*. After the establishment of Sikh rule in the last quarter of the century, the *gurmata* came to be regarded as a positive hindrance. Professor McLeod maintains that corporate decisions could hardly be welcomed by Ranjit Singh in his effort to bring all other leaders under his own control; he eventually imposed a ban upon all but strictly religious assemblies.<sup>32</sup> In his recent writings, however, Professor McLeod concedes the presence of the



doctrine of Guru-Panth in the early *Rahitnamas*, and admits that, the *Sri Gur Sobha* certainly recognizes the doctrine of Guru-Panth.<sup>33</sup>

Professor J.S. Grewal emphasizes that the ground began to be prepared fairly early for the impersonal doctrine of Guru-Panth in place of personal Guruship. In the *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas, the Guru is in the *sangat*. This idea gave a peculiar sanctity to the collective body of the Sikhs.<sup>34</sup> In fact, Guru Nanak's decision to install Guru Angad in his place during his lifetime involved the idea of interchangeability between the position of the Guru and that of the Sikh. Indeed, in the compositions of Guru Ram Das, 'The Guru is Sikh and the Sikh is Guru'.<sup>35</sup>

With this background, it is interesting to note that in the *Rahitnama* known as *Prashan-Uttar*, one of the three forms of the Guru is the Sikh who is absorbed in *Gurbani* and has daily *darshan* of the Guru. Some of the other qualities of the Sikh are then mentioned to emphasize that such a Sikh was the veritable form of the Guru.<sup>36</sup> The *Sakhi Rahit* underlines the exclusive importance of the Khalsa for the Sikh of the Guru. A similar importance is given to five Sikhs.<sup>37</sup> The statement attributed to the tenth Guru in the *Prahlad Singh Rahitnama* is quite emphatic: 'Regard the Khalsa as the Guru, a manifestation of the Guru's body. The Sikh who wants to meet me should search for me in the Khalsa'.<sup>38</sup> A similar statement occurs in the *Prem Sumarag*: 'the Sikh who wishes to have the Guru's *darshan* should go to the place where five or more Sikhs are gathered; he should go there and have the *darshan* with reverence and faith. There is no doubt that in this way the Sikh would have the Guru's *darshan*'.<sup>39</sup> In the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh a reference is made to the last days of Guru Gobind Singh when he says that 'the *sarbat sangat* is my Khalsa, and the Khalsa is the Guru'.<sup>40</sup> In the *Desa Singh Rahitnama*, the phrase '*Guru sarup Khalsa*' is used for the injunction that the Singh should perform services for the Khalsa whose *darshan* destroys all sins. In another injunction, the Singh is told to have love for another Singh and remove all feeling of enmity; he should not attack another

Sikh; he should regard the Khalsa as the Guru.<sup>41</sup> Bhai Daya Singh maintains in his *Rahitnama*, that the Panth was made manifest in accordance with the order of Sri Akal Purkh, and that the Sikhs should regard the Panth and the *Granth* as the Guru.<sup>42</sup>

That this idea became well-entrenched is evident also from Koer Singh's *Gurbilas Patshahi 10* in which we find Guru Gobind Singh proclaiming that a Sikh could have his sight (*darshan*) in the Panth by regarding the Khalsa as the Guru. It is emphasized further that the Sikhs should perform services for the Khalsa with total dedication and look upon them as the parents as well as the Guru. The Guru had made the Panth like himself; all sins vanished by seeing the wonderful Panth of Akal which was another (*sani*) form of the Guru himself.<sup>43</sup> It is extremely important to note that in a *hukamnama* of April 1759, the issuing authority is referred to as the '*Khalsa ji* under the protection of Akal'. The scribe refers to the Khalsa of '*Sat Sri Akal Purkh ji*' as 'Guru-Khalsa'.<sup>44</sup> While referring to the last days of Guru Gobind Singh when he was asked about his successor, Chhibber too mentions that a part of his answer was, 'the Guru is Khalsa, Khalsa is the Guru'.<sup>45</sup> Even when Sarup Das Bhalla does not explicitly equate the Khalsa with the Guru, he does refer to the entire *sangat* being transformed into the Khalsa by the perfect Guru through his grace.<sup>46</sup> Sukha Singh equates the *sangat* with the Guru and suggests that the Guru is always present in the Khalsa *sangat*.<sup>47</sup>

Like the Sikh writers of the eighteenth century, the historians of the twentieth century see a close link between the corporate and the scriptural Guruship, or the doctrines of Guru-Panth and Guru-Granth. Writing on the 'Panth' in the *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, Professor Fauja Singh states that after the line of living Gurus came to an end, 'the Guru Panth became its own leader under the guidance of the *Guru Granth Sahib*'. He gives great importance to the collective entity called the Panth which is stated to be 'a permanent reality, higher than any of its functional agencies which must justify their validity by serving the interests of the Panth as a whole'. If the agencies failed in their function

they could be replaced by 'the Guru Khalsa, the supreme repository of ultimate powers of *miri* and *piri*, i.e. secular and religious authority'.<sup>48</sup> Professor Harbans Singh also emphasizes that along with the *Guru Granth Sahib*, 'the Khalsa was now person visible of the Guru'.<sup>49</sup> In fact, he discerns a close relationship between Guru-Granth and Guru-Panth. 'The Sikh Panth as a whole', he says, 'will resort to the Guru Granth as will the individuals in moments of perplexity or crisis'.<sup>50</sup>

That the collectivity sought guidance from the *Granth Sahib* is underlined by Professor Taran Singh with reference to Ratan Singh Bhangu's account of the attack of the Khalsa on Kasur. The issue before the Khalsa was whether or not to attack Kasur, the stronghold of the Pathans who had abducted the wife of a helpless Brahman. Finally, as recorded in the *Prachin Panth Prakash*, it was decided to obtain the counsel of the *Guru Granth Sahib*.<sup>51</sup> Professor Taran Singh does not say so but it is narrated in the *Prachin Panth Prakash* that the *vak* (order) taken from the *Guru Granth Sahib* was interpreted as favouring an attack. The town of Kasur was sacked and the Brahman's wife was restored to him.<sup>52</sup>

Professor Grewal refers to this incident and adds that Ratan Singh Bhangu, who gives greater importance to Guru-Panth and *gurmatas* than any other Sikh writer, looks upon the superior authority of the *Guru Granth Sahib* as built into the practice of taking order (*vak*). Professor Grewal remarks that it was open to the Khalsa to interpret the *Granth* and to take collective decisions which were authoritative but their authority did not transcend the authority of the *Guru Granth Sahib*. The doctrines of Guru-Panth and Guru-Granth were, thus, the two sides of the same coin.<sup>53</sup> This appears to be an apt description of the close relationship between the doctrines and their bearing on the institution of the Gurdwara during the eighteenth century.

### 3

#### **Emergence of the Gurdwara as the Core Institution**

The Sikh sacred space referred to as the *dharamsal* has been central to the religious and social life of the Sikhs. However, scholarly interest

in the institution has developed only recently. Writing on the Gurdwara, probably in the 1970s for the *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, Professor Fauja Singh deals with the entire period of Sikh history in half a dozen paragraphs based on secondary sources. In early Sikhism the place used for congregational prayers was called the *dharamsal*. In the time of Guru Hargobind, when the *Granth Sahib* was placed in the *dharamsal*, it came to be known as Gurdwara. During the second half of the eighteenth century, Gurdwaras sprang up on sites connected with the lives of the Gurus and events in Sikh history. Most of these historical Gurdwaras were endowed by the new ruling chiefs and the nobility with liberal grants of land. A free community kitchen known as the *Guru ka langar* was closely associated with the Gurdwara. It encouraged commensality and the spirit of voluntary service (*seva*).<sup>54</sup>

Initially taking note of the Sikh sacred space in 1975, and reiterating his position recently, Professor McLeod broadly covers the same ground but adds some detail. With the attribution of the Guru's authority to the *Adi Granth*, the sacred scripture became the means of communication of the Guru's grace. With the installation of the copies of the sacred scripture in the *dharamsals*, the sacred space came to be known as the Gurdwara. He refers to the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh in which both the terms are used and at two places the presence of the *Adi Granth* within the *dharamsal* as the gathering place of the *sangat* is noted. In the *Rahitnama* of Desa Singh, the position is broadly similar to that of the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh.<sup>55</sup>

Professor Balwant Singh Dhillon briefly touches upon different aspects of the institution of Gurdwara: its genesis and growth, physical structure, administration and functionaries, financial resources and their collection and disbursement, religious activities, social and educational functions, pilgrimages, spiritual environment, and sanctity. While he refers specifically to Bhai Gurdas and the *B-40 Janamsakhi* and uses some other sources, Professor Dhillon does not give any specific references.<sup>56</sup>

Professor Dalbir Singh Dhillon looks upon Guruship, Gurdwara, *sangat* and *langar*, as separate institutions and treats each as a separate theme. He begins with Guru Nanak but uses the later Sikh sources for his treatment of the earliest period. A number of *dharamsals* are said to have been established during the lifetime of Guru Nanak, including the one at Kartarpur. Guru Arjan is then stated to have transformed the old *dharamsals* into Gurdwaras, and established Gurdwaras at Tarn Taran, Kartarpur, Goindval, Khadur, Amritsar and Lahore. Professor Dhillon thinks that the term Gurdwara in its technical sense occurs only once in the *Granth Sahib* and it generally means 'through the Guru' or 'through the help of the Guru'. The daily pattern of the *sangat* established at Kartarpur became the norm. Guru Arjan underlines the importance of *sadh-sangat* in his *Sukhmani*. Finally, like the *sangat*, *Guru ka langar* was strengthened by Guru Angad and Guru Amar Das. Evidently, Professor Dhillon is talking of the sixteenth century only.<sup>57</sup>

Critically evaluating the existing scholarly understanding on the subject, Professor Grewal suggests that for a comprehensive and nuanced study of Gurdwara in terms of its ideology, functions, management and control, it may be worthwhile to turn to the contemporary sources, especially the *Adi Granth*, the *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas, the *Janamsakhis*, the *Rahitnamas* and the *Gurbilas* literature. Though used by Guru Nanak, Guru Amar Das and Guru Arjan, often as a metaphor, the term *dharamsal* also came to be used for a working institution which was the locus of *sadh-sangat*, or the congregation of Sikhs, as the true association (*sat-sangat*). Referring to the use of the term *gurduar* by Guru Nanak, Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das, Guru Arjan and Bhai Gurdas, Professor Grewal suggests that the central *dharamsal* where the Guru was personally present came to be equated with 'Gurdwara'. He points out that Bhai Gurdas apparently uses the word Gurdwara literally for the place where the Guru was personally present, though he refers to the *dharamsal* far more frequently as the place where the Sikhs come together for worship. In his *Vars* the term



*sadh-sangat* is used synonymously with *dharamsal*: The Sikhs rise early in the morning and bathe; they meditate on the Guru; they go to the *sadh-sangat*, listen to the *bani* of the true Guru and sing Gurbani; they serve the Guru in awe and devotion; in the evening they sing the *So-Dar*; at night they recite the *Sohila* and the *Arati* and distribute *prasad*. Further, the spiritual and the socio-cultural aspects of the life of the Sikhs got enmeshed here: they meet in the *dharamsal*; serve the Guru; wash the feet of others; serve them water and wave the fan; grind corn for the *langar*; play musical instruments; write *pothis* of Gurbani; bring offerings from what they have honestly earned; and they learn to live in accordance with God's will. Evidently, the *dharamsal* here is central to the life of the Sikhs.

Writing in the middle of the seventeenth century, the author of the *Dabistan-i Mazahib* notices *ardas* as a common feature of the Sikh religious worship in the *dharamsal* and emphasizes that the Sikhs believed the prayer of the *sangat* to be more efficacious than that of any individual. Professor Grewal then points out that the centrality of the *dharamsal* to the life of the Sikhs is what the *Janamsakhis* essentially depict. The importance of the *dharamsal* was epitomized in the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur: according to Sainapat it was undertaken deliberately to protect the *dharamsal* that symbolized the Sikh faith as its most visible institution. This was the reason why Aurangzeb ordered demolition of 'Sikh Temples' in his zeal to suppress the movement. With this background, Professor Grewal meaningfully combines this evidence with some of the eighteenth century sources.<sup>58</sup>

As evident from the existing scholarly understanding about the Sikh sacred space, the *dharamsal* or the Gurdwara remained the centre of congregational worship throughout the eighteenth century as earlier. However, the religious life of a Sikh was not confined to congregational worship. His daily routine was marked by individual activity of a varied kind. We may take up both these forms of religious activities together on the basis of a close study of sources available.



First of all the *hukamnamas* of Guru Hargobind, Baba Gurditta, Guru Har Krishan, Guru Tegh Bahadur, Mata Gujri, Guru Gobind Singh, Banda Singh Bahadur, Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devi, which cover the period from the 1630s to the 1730s, provide some insights into the institution of *dharamsal*. These *hukamnamas* are addressed to the Sikh *sangats* of the east at the places like Patna, Alamganj, Bina, Benares, Mungher and Dhaka, and to Sikh *sangats* in the Punjab at places like Pakpattan and Naushehra Pannuan. The Sikhs are instructed to remember God and the Guru, recite '*kartar, kartar*', and '*guru, guru*'. They are instructed also to go to the *dharamsal* every day, to perform *kirtan* and *Arati Sohila* and to celebrate Gurpurabs. This basic function of the *dharamsal* continues throughout the period. It is most likely that a *hukamnama* was read out to the *sangat* in the *dharamsal* and it was treated with veneration and preserved as a sacred relic. The offerings made by the Sikhs in cash and kind on account of *golak, dasvandh, kar, bhet, sukh, manat* or *chaliha* were probably collected in the *dharamsal* and sent to the Gurus or the Matas through the Masands before the institution of Khalsa and through specially authorized individuals or the postal agents, called *mewaras*, after the removal of the Masands. The *dharamsals* came to be controlled and managed mostly by the Khalsa who were no longer the 'Guru's Khalsa' or 'my Khalsa' but '*Vaheguruji ka Khalsa*' or the 'Khalsa of Akal Purakh'. The local *sangats* functioned largely through the *dharamsal* for resolving disputes and undertaking welfare work. In short, the institution of *dharamsal* provided the link between the former Sikh *sangats* and the new Khalsa *sangats* of the early eighteenth century.<sup>59</sup>

As we noticed earlier, Sainapat regards the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur as a great act which was meant to save *dharamsal* as much as the sacred mark and the sacred thread, in fact all paths (*dharams*). The word '*gurdwar*' is used metaphorically for the Guru's faith: 'they who forget the Guru's door find no other place'. After the institution of the Khalsa when the baptized Singhs returned to Delhi to

tell the *sangat* gathered in the *dharamsal* what had happened at Anandpur, the Sikhs present in the *dharamsal* are said to have accepted the Guru's decision by taking *pahul* from five Singhs.<sup>60</sup> The *dharamsal* was the place where *pahul* was administered.

The *dharamsal* is the most important institution of the Sikhs in the *Rahitnamas* of the eighteenth century. Daily visits to the *dharamsal* are prescribed in the *Chaupa Singh Rahitnama*. After his morning prayers at home, a Sikh should go to the *dharamsal* and join the *sadh-sangat*. He should take some offering with him according to his means: flowers, fruit, grain or cash. Similarly, in the afternoon, if possible, and in the evening without fail, he should go to the *dharamsal* to sit in the congregation of Sikhs. He should perform *katha-kirtan* or listen to it. Going to the *sadh-sangat* is as important as the faith in Gurbani and the external symbols of *kesh*, *kirpan* and *kachh*. When a Sikh of the Guru returns after business in the country or abroad, he should first go to the *dharamsal* and then go home. Not necessarily but preferably, he should offer prayer (*ardas*) in the *dharamsal* before setting out on such a business. Sitting among the Sikhs in the presence of the *Granth Sahib* in the *dharamsal*, a Sikh of the Guru should not feel proud of his merit, wealth or youth. There is no greater source of merit than joining the *sadh-sangat*. To build a *dharamsal* was the foremost duty of the Sikhs. 'Wherever there are five, seven, ten or a hundred Sikh homes in a habitation, the Sikhs must build a place of the Guru, a *dharamsal*.'<sup>61</sup>

A suitable person was needed to look after the *dharamsal* and manage its affairs for the local community. A Sikh of the Guru in charge of 'the Guru's place' should be kind in disposition, and not irritable or greedy. He is called *dharamsalia*. He should remain celibate so that he has no greed and no pride. He should be a person of moral integrity (*jati, sati*) and look to the welfare of others (*parsuarthi*); he should have the qualities of patience, detachment, kindness and restraint. He should observe the *rahit*. He should overlook the faults of others. He should be mentally alert and physically clean. He should serve others and share food with them. He should ensure that anything belonging to

a visitor from outside was not stolen or misplaced. He should have genuine sympathy for others. The local Sikhs should be considerate and attentive to such a *dharamsalia*. On all occasions of some importance an *ardas* should be performed. There should be no women's quarters in the *dharamsal*. The Guru's house is meant for the poor Sikhs of the Guru who are in need of help, and who are devout and observe the *rahit*. At another place, the term *pujari* is used in the context of the *dharamsal*. He should not misappropriate or misuse any part of the offerings that come in the name of the Guru. Such an act results in destruction of intelligence and wisdom (*buddh*). A *pujari* should not be proud, ignorant or dishonest. He should not be lustful or prone to anger, a slanderer or a haughty person. A Sikh of the Guru should not allow himself to be called 'Bhai' or 'Mahant'. Haughtiness and dishonesty became the cause of the ruin of the Masands.<sup>62</sup>

Bhai Desa Singh recommends that a Singh should never think of appropriating anything from the *dharamsal*. Even as a *pujari*, he should never take much from the offerings. He should take only what he needs for subsistence. He should never use the offerings for his wife or son; he should use them for the open kitchen.<sup>63</sup>

The *Tankhahnama* at the beginning of the eighteenth century and the *Rahitnama* of Bhai Daya Singh towards its end emphasize the importance of the way in which the sacred food should be prepared for distribution in the *dharamsal*. The Sikh who prepared *karha prasad* was expected to be meticulous. All the three ingredients (flour, sugar and *ghee*) were to be taken in equal quantities. The spot where the *prasad* was to be prepared was swept and plastered; the utensils to be used were scrubbed and washed; the person to prepare the *prasad* was to bathe and recite 'Vaheguru, Vāheguru' all the time; a new pitcher was to be used for fresh water; when the *prasad* was ready it was to be placed on a four-legged low table and praises of God were to be sung. Prepared in this manner the *karha prasad* became the source of grace.<sup>64</sup> In the *Rahitnama* of Bhai Daya Singh, the three items for the *karha prasad* come from three different sources: sugar from Vishnu,

flour from Mahadev, and *ghee* from Brahma. Equal quantities of all these three were to be used for preparing *karha prasad*; otherwise it would not reach the Guru. At the time of administering *amrit*, jaggery (*gur*) should not be used in place of sugar for *karha prasad*. The term used for this *karha prasad* is *tribhag* (meaning three equal parts).<sup>65</sup> Bhai Desa Singh recommends that, while preparing *karha prasad* one should recite the *Japuji* and the *Jaap* and use equal quantities of *ghee* and flour.<sup>66</sup>

The *Rahitnama* of Bhai Desa Singh lays great emphasis on the importance of the way in which the food for the *langar* was to be prepared. Apart from the detail of procedure and items required, it is emphasized that any article of leather should not be brought into the kitchen, nor should a dog, a Muslim or a Chandal enter it. A *rahitwant* Singh is expected to know how to prepare the *langar* and its equal distribution (*sam-vartara*). No meat is to be cooked in the *langar*, and no alcoholic drink was to be used. They who cut their hair or who were outcaste were not to be allowed to cook food; nor were they who used *bhang* or tobacco. Before disbursing the *langar* an *ardas* should be performed. Every item of the food should be placed in a clean utensil and offered to the Gurus as *bhog* with their form lodged in the heart, or it should be offered to the *Granth* as the Guru. Everyone should sit on the floor to eat with no distinction made between one and another. The food should be distributed among men, women, and children. This was the right way to prepare and serve the *langar*.<sup>67</sup>

According to Koer Singh, Guru Gobind Singh declared *muktsar*, the pool (*dhab*) where forty Singhs had become martyrs (*mukte*), to be a great place of pilgrimage (*tirath*) equal in fact to Amritsar.<sup>68</sup> Some other places also acquired importance in the eyes of the Sikhs during the late eighteenth century. Sukha Singh refers to the Khalsa *sangat* of Sodhis in Anandpur where the people lived under the protection of seven standards (*dhuja*). The most important of all these was Sri Kesgarh. Sukha Singh composed his *Gurbilas* there. He highlights through a *sakhi* the importance of 'Abchalnagar Nanded' where the

tenth Guru could be seen in the *sangat*, there being no difference between the Guru and the *sangat*. According to Sukha Singh, the *darbar* at Abchnagar was constructed at the spot where Guru Gobind Singh had gone to the other world. By visiting this place a Sikh became pure like a base metal touched by the philosopher's stone. At this door of the Guru, Sikhs and *sadhs* received four gifts: *budh*, *bibek*, *suridhi* and *sidhi*. Here, the praises of God were sung day and night and *arati* was performed. Sukha Singh goes on to add that some of the Khalsa left Abchnagar after sometime to perform services at the Harmandar in Sri Patna. He makes it a point to mention that he too had visited the *darbar* at Patna before coming to Anandpur. Thus, writing in 1797, Sukha Singh refers to the sanctity of the three most important places associated with Guru Gobind Singh: Anandpur, Nander and Patna.<sup>69</sup>

By the end of the eighteenth century, a number of places in the Punjab associated with the Gurus had become the site of Gurdwaras supported largely by the Sikh rulers. The early British revenue records provide information on several such cases. Apart from the revenue-free land given to the Harmandar by a number of Sikh rulers and to the *granthis*, *ragis*, *rababis* and *dhadis* attached to this shrine, separate grants were given for the Akal Bunga and the Jhanda Bunga. The Darbar Sahib at Tarn Taran, the Gurdwara Shahid Ganj at Lahore, the Gurdwara in Nankana Sahib, and the Gurdwaras at Kartarpur and Goindval also received similar grants from both Sikh and non-Sikh chiefs.<sup>70</sup> It is interesting to note that Ahmad Khan Sial of Jhang in the lower Rachna Doab gave revenue-free land to one Bhai Darbari Singh for reading the *Granth Sahib*, apparently in a Gurdwara.<sup>71</sup>

#### 4

#### **Harmandar as the Premier Sikh Institution**

Kesar Singh Chhibber provides a clue to the emergence of Ramdaspur as the central *dharamsal* in the early eighteenth century. Mata Sahib Devi decided that the general gatherings at the time of Baisakhi and Diwali should be held not in Delhi but in Ramdaspur. For this purpose, Kirpal Singh came to Ramdaspur in 1727 to regularize the affairs of the



Harmandar Sahib. He consulted the *panchas* of the town who represented the Khattris, Brahmans, Bhabhras (Jain traders), cultivators of land, masons and carpenters, among others. They welcomed the idea of holding the bi-annual gatherings of the Khalsa at Ramdaspur. Kirpal Singh selected four persons for different functions. The task of collecting custom was entrusted to Sahaj Singh Trehan; the matters related to the affairs of the neighbouring villages were the responsibility of the Brahman Dianat Rai; the *mewara* Man Singh was appointed as the *ardasia*; Kesar Singh's father, Gurbakhsh Singh Chhibber, was made the *darogha* of the cowshed and given charge of the treasury and the *karkhana*. The offerings which came to the *darbar* (Harmandar) were sent to the shop of Shyam Bhabhra who kept a regular account of the quantities received. Chhibber goes on to add that the kitchen (*langar*) was kept open for *sadhs*, *sants*, *faqirs* and strangers. Four masons were employed to work every day. Daily subsistence was fixed for the blind, the lame, the old and the needy Sikhs. This help was extended also to the old *sikhnis*. After all these needs were met, those who worked for the establishment were paid from the remainder on monthly basis. Whatever was still left was sent to Delhi through a *hundi*. For this purpose, Kahn Singh Kalal was given the task of getting the *hundi* prepared in Lahore and taking it to Delhi. These arrangements were appreciated by all. Chhibber refers also to the contest between the Khalsa and the 'Bandais' over the control of 'the Guru's place and the Guru's town'. It came to armed fight between them over the offerings received at the time of Baisakhi and Diwali. Eventually, the Khalsa became supreme in Ramdaspur. Then they had to contend with the Mughal authorities for maintaining their control over of the institutions in Ramdaspur.<sup>72</sup>

During the late eighteenth century the Harmandar was well established as the most important Gurdwara of the Sikhs. A *hukamnama* of 1759 refers to the Harmandar being reconstructed (after its destruction by Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1757 when Baba Deep Singh and other Sikhs had become martyrs in its defence).<sup>73</sup> In April



1762, the Harmandar was blown up with gunpowder by Ahmad Shah Abdali, the *bungas* built around the sacred tank were destroyed, and the tank itself was filled up with the debris of the demolished buildings.<sup>74</sup> Reconstruction of the shrine was still going on at the time of the Diwali of 1763 when large number of Sikhs were reported to have assembled at Ramdaspur. It was also reported that Afghans wearing conical hats (*kulah*) were working there as labourers.<sup>75</sup> We noticed earlier that, according to Qazi Nur Muhammad, Ahmad Shah Abdali decided towards the end of 1764 to destroy once again the Harmandar which had been repaired by the Sikhs. When he arrived at Ramdaspur he found that some Sikhs had stayed back. 'Those Sikhs were thirty in number: they did not at all show any fear of being killed or dread of death'. All the thirty Sikhs died fighting.<sup>76</sup> According to Ratan Singh Bhangu, they had deliberately taken the decision to die fighting in defence of the Harmandar. Their bodies were cremated together at a spot near the Akal Bunga and a martyrs' memorial (*shahidganj*) was constructed over the place.<sup>77</sup> Significantly, Bhangu refers to the sacred space as 'the door of the Guru' (*gurdwara*): 'it was sacred, like the land of Kurukshetra; by dying at this Gurdwara as a true Sikh one acquired the merit of a thousand lives'.<sup>78</sup> The tank of nectar (*amritsar*), the Harmandar, and the Akal Bunga were becoming increasingly important in the eyes of the Sikhs.

Bhangu also refers to the resolutions (*gurmatas*) passed by the Khalsa at the Akal Bunga from time to time, especially on the occasions of Baisakhi and Diwali. We have contemporary reports about this activity during the early 1760s. At the time of the Baisakhi of 1763 the Sikh chiefs were reported to be encamped by the side of the tank at Chak Guru in large numbers so that the moment they were free from the ceremonies of ritual bathing (*ashnan*), they could raid the territories of Saharanpur and other areas. In August 1763, the Sikh chiefs reportedly met at the Chak Guru 'for mutual deliberation and consultation' and resolved to establish their control in the Jalandhar *doab*. When they received the news of Jahan Khan's march against

Charhat Singh, they decided to go to his support in October 1763. They had assembled at the Chak Guru for the *ashnan* of Dusehra and Kattaki. After meeting at Chak Guru in April 1764, the chiefs marched to the Jhelum river to establish their posts (*thanas*) at various places. In November 1764, they assembled at Chak Guru for *ashnan* and then dispersed in several directions to establish their control.<sup>79</sup> It was during these years that the Khalsa are believed to have passed a resolution (*gurmata*) in favour of action against the Afghans of Kasur who had abducted a Brahman's wife, and also in favour of occupying the entire Sarkar of Sirhind to which a reference was made earlier.<sup>80</sup> Thus, the importance of the Harmandar together with the Akal Bunga as the loci of the collective decisions of the Khalsa was growing through the eighteenth century, adding to their sanctity.

Apparently, the Khalsa *sardars* were in control of the two institutions. They took interest in the development of the place and many of them built *bungas* around the Harmandar. Their joint efforts went into the reconstruction of the tank, the Harmandar, the connecting bridge and the entrance (*darshani darwaza*) in the 1770s. The construction of other shrines around the tank was completed during the next decade. Much of the construction work was supervised by Des Raj. The Udasi *granthi* Gopal Das was replaced by a baptized Sikh named Chanchal Singh.<sup>81</sup>

Ram Sukh Rao, the author of *Sri Fateh Singh Partap Prabhakar*, mentions that in a *diwan* held some years later in front of the Akal Bunga in which several other chiefs were present, Bhai Chanchal Singh and Akali Darbara Singh revealed that when someone submitted to Jassa Singh Ahluwalia that the whole place had been mortgaged by Ahmad Shah Abdali to Sahib Rai of Naushera, the Ahluwalia chief paid up all the money that was due, and allotted pieces of land to the *sardars* for utilization. He himself constructed a *katra* behind the Akal Bunga, named it 'Guru ka Katra' (later known as Guru Bazar), and allocated its income for the maintenance of the Darbar Sahib. Jassa Singh appointed Bhai Des Raj as the *darogha* to supervise all construction

work. He also appointed *mutasaddis*, *ardasias*, *granthis* and *pujaris* for the Harmandar, the Akal Bunga and other places. Bhai Des Raj worked under the orders of Jassa Singh. The other *sardars* and the old residents of Amritsar confirmed the statement made by Bhai Chanchal Singh. It was also stated that Jassa Singh Ahluwalia used to send money for the construction work. Once, when accounts were taken, Bhai Des Raj stated that 14 lacs of rupees had been spent by Jassa Singh. This was in addition to the materials contributed towards construction. The successors of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia – Bhag Singh and Fateh Singh – too visited Amritsar city from time to time. When Sadhu Singh Akal Bungia administered *pahul* to Prince Fateh Singh, a village was granted to him and money was distributed among the poor. The third storey of the Akal Bunga was said to have been constructed by the Ahluwalia chief by way of *dasvandh* due to the Harmandar. He performed some other services also for the Harmandar. Apart from offering gold to the Harmandar, some of it was also given to those who were working for the shrine. Villages were granted to the *granthis*.<sup>82</sup> There is evidence also of the other Sikh rulers and *jagirdars* making offerings to the Harmandar in different ways.<sup>83</sup>

The increasing importance of the Harmandar and its sanctity during the eighteenth century is reflected in the observations of the contemporary writers. Writing in 1769, Kesar Singh Chhibber refers to ‘*sri amritsar*’ as the supreme place of Sikh worship.<sup>84</sup> Writing in 1776, Sarup Das Bhalla praises ‘*sri amritsar*’ as the Guru’s place which is the door to liberation; by seeing this place all sorrows vanish through God’s grace; by bathing in the *sarovar* all sins are washed through the grace of the destroyer of sins; by bowing at this place comes peace; the loving devotion of God is lodged in the heart at ‘*sri amritsar*’ as the door to liberation. In a whole *sakhi* in praise of ‘*sri amritsar*’ thousands of Gursikhs are stated to bathe in the *sarovar*, reciting *Gurbani*; ‘*sri amritsar*’ is said to have been created by the Guru for the redemption of the world. God is believed to reside in the Harmandar. For Sarup Das this place is unique in the three worlds.<sup>85</sup>

In fact, a new kind of literature began to be produced with the emergence of Ramdaspur as the spiritual and political centre of the Khalsa. Kavi Sant Das, writing his *Amrit Sarovar Ustat* around 1777, asserts that there is no place comparable to *amritsar* in the Kaliyuga; it is the supreme *tirath* of all the four cosmic ages (*yugas*). Any one who shows disrespect to *amritsar* is cursed by gods and never comes again to this place. Kavi Kankan praises the town of Ramdaspur and the contemporary rulers. The people in Ramdaspur live in peace; there is no poverty; there is no fear of the *raja*; the rich enjoy all comforts, it is supreme among all the places of pilgrimage. Writing his *Ustat Sri Amritsar Ji Ki* towards the end of the eighteenth century, Kavi Saunda says that no other pool of water in all the three worlds is like *amritsar*; in the midst of the pool is the beautiful Harmandar, the house of Ram. No one has been able to calculate the cost of its construction. The Pathan who showed disrespect to it received a mark on his face as the symbol of ignominy (the reference apparently is to the cancer of the nose suffered by Ahmad Shah Abdali). The power of the Afghans began to decline. Mir Mannu and Adina Beg Khan had been deprived of everything in the world. The Khalsa attained rulership by bathing in the *sarovar*. The poet goes on to say that the Khalsa come to Ramdaspur and bow their head before the Harmandar. Sitting in their *bungas*, they sing the praises of God. All men and women in the *nagri* of Guru Ram Das live in peace.<sup>86</sup>

## 5

### In Retrospect

The doctrinal and institutional developments of the eighteenth century had their roots in the earlier period of the Sikh history but they were nonetheless very important and significant. The idea of Shabad-Guru goes back to the compositions of Guru Nanak, and we can see the Shabad becoming equated with Gurbani in the compositions of his successors. The *Granth* compiled by Guru Arjan was copied during the seventeenth century as a sacred scripture for Sikh communities in different parts of the country and its importance began to increase in

the eyes of the Sikhs. Guru Tegh Bahadur added his own compositions to the corpus and Guru Gobind Singh prepared an authenticated recension. Before his death, he declared the *Granth* to be the Guru, and the idea became acceptable to a larger and larger number of the Khalsa. Copies of the *Granth* began to be made in larger numbers for the local Sikh communities. Belief in the ten Gurus from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh and in Guruship of the *Granth* became the foremost tenet of the Khalsa during the eighteenth century.

The doctrine of Guru-Panth can also be traced to the decision of Guru Nanak to install one of the disciples as the Guru in his lifetime. In the compositions of his successors, great importance is given to the Sikh, so much so that the Sikh is equated with the Guru by Guru Ram Das. The Sikh congregation acquired even greater importance: God was believed to be present in the *sangat*. Much before the institution of the Khalsa the Sikh *sangat* came to be equated with the Guru. The position of the Masands was given to local Khalsa *sangats* by Guru Gobind Singh, and before his death he declared the collective body of the Khalsa to be his successor. Thus, the *Granth* and the Khalsa represented two sides of the coin of authority for the Khalsa. The doctrine of Guru-Panth developed simultaneously with the doctrine of Guru-Granth. During the period of political struggle the doctrine of Guru-Panth acquired great importance as the operative principle of organization. However, it was not given an institutional form. It did not remain operative in the government and administration of the Khalsa rulers, and it did not play a significant role in the social and cultural life of the Khalsa: the equality built into the doctrine was not given any democratic forms. Therefore, it did not acquire the same kind of importance in the social and cultural life of the Khalsa as the doctrine of Guru-Granth.

The first *dharamsal* was established by Guru Nanak for congregational worship and community meal. The institution multiplied with the increasing number of Sikhs under his successors, and acquired great importance as the centre of Sikh religious life. The



maintenance and control of the *dharamsals* was entrusted to individuals authorized by the Guru. The representatives of Guru became increasingly important. When the Masands were removed by Guru Gobind Singh, the management and control of the *dharamsal* became the responsibility of the local Khalsa sangat. With the increasing importance of the doctrines of Guru-Granth and Guru-Panth, the *dharamsal* became all the more important because the *Granth* was installed in the *dharamsal* and the *sangat* was present there. It is not surprising, therefore, that the term 'Gurdwara' began to be used for the institution of *dharamsal*. The sacred space acquired a greater degree of sanctity.

From the very beginning, the *dharamsal* where the Guru was present was seen as more important than the others. Therefore, the *dharamsals* at Kartarpur, Kahdур, Goindwal, Ramdaspur, Kiratpur and Anandpur had a great importance in the eyes of contemporary Sikhs. In the eighteenth century, the Khalsa took control of the Harmandir Sahib at Ramdaspur and revived the institution of Akal Takht as a political community. The importance of Ramdaspur began to increase in the context of the political struggle of the Khalsa. It may be said to have played a more important role than any leader. Before the end of the eighteenth century, the town of Ramdaspur became the city of Amritsar with the *sarovar*, the Harmandir, and the Akal Takht, which made it the premier place of Sikh pilgrimage. It may be added that Gurdwaras were constructed at most other places associated with the Sikh Gurus and Sikh martyrs. The Gurdwaras at Patna, Anandpur, Nander, Damdama and Muktsar also became the places of Sikh pilgrimage.

#### NOTES

1. For the statement on the date of Sainapat's work, see Gurinder Singh Mann, 'Sources for the Study of Guru Gobind Singh's Life and Times', *Journal of Punjab Studies* (Special Issue on Guru Gobind Singh), vol.15 nos.1-2 (Spring-Fall, 2008), p.252.



2. Sainapat, *Sri Gur Sobha* (Punjabi), ed. Ganda Singh, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1967, p.128.
3. *Prashan-Uttar* in *Bhai Nand Lal Granthavali* (Punjabi), ed. Ganda Singh, Malacca (Malaysia): Sant Sohan Singh, 1968, p.192.
4. *Prahlad Singh Rahitnama*, in *Rahitname* (Punjabi), ed. Piara Singh Padam, Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 1995, 6<sup>th</sup> impression, p.67.
5. *Sakhi Rahit Patshahi 10* appended to *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*, tr. and ed. W.H. McLeod, Dunedin, New Zealand: University of Otago Press, 1987, pp. 133,135-7.
6. *Prem Sumarag Arthat Khalsai Jivan-Jach* (Punjabi), ed. Bhai Randhir Singh, Jalandhar: New Book Company, 1965, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., pp.6, 18.
7. Gurinder Singh Mann, 'Sources for the Study of Guru Gobind Singh's Life and Times', pp.252-3.
8. Ganda Singh, *Guru Gobind Singh's Death at Nanded: An Examination of Succession Theories*, Faridkot: Guru Nanak Foundation, Bathinda District, 1972, pp. 23, 26-7, 29.
9. W.H. McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1975, pp.17,45, 50, 56,58.
10. J.S. Grewal, 'The Doctrine of Guru Panth and Guru Granth', *Sikh Ideology, Polity and Social Order: From Guru Nanak to Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2007, rev. and enlarged edn., pp. 223-8.
11. J.S. Grewal, *A Study of Guru Granth Sahib: Doctrine, Social Content, History, Structure and Status*, Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 2009, pp.189-212.
12. W.H. McLeod, *Sikhs of the Khalsa: A History of Khalsa Rahit*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 233-4. Also, W.H. McLeod, *Discovering the Sikhs: Autobiography of a Historian*, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004, pp. 147-8.
13. McLeod, *Sikhs of the Khalsa*, p.234.

14. *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*, pp.60, 74, 75.
15. Ibid., pp.60, 74-6. The term *Granth Sahib* is used in the text of *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*.
16. Ibid., p.100.
17. W.H. McLeod, *Sikhs of the Khalsa*, p.306.
18. *Bhai Desa Singh Rahitnama*, in *Rahitname*, p.135.
19. *Bhai Daya Singh Rahitnama*, in *Rahitname*, p.71.
20. McLeod, *Sikhs of the Khalsa*, p. 234.
21. Koer Singh, *Gurbilas Patashahi 10* (Punjabi), ed. Shamsheer Singh Ashok, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1968, pp. 130, 283-4, 287.
22. Kesar Singh Chhibber, *Bansavalinama Dasan Patshahian Ka* (Punjabi), ed. Rattan Singh Jaggi in (*Parkh*, vol.II), Chandigarh: Panjab University, 1972, p.136.
23. Ibid., pp.163, 198, 215.
24. Ibid., pp.221-2.
25. Sarup Das Bhalla, *Mahima Prakash* (Punjabi), ed. Gobind Singh Lamba and Khazan Singh, Patiala: Punjab Languages Department, Punjab, 1971, p.892.
26. Professor W.H. McLeod, for example, approvingly quotes John Malcolm's statement on the procedure followed in the general assembly of the Khalsa (Sarbat Khalsa) in adopting resolutions (*gurmata*), when the *Adi Granth* and the *Dasam Granth* were reportedly placed before the chiefs and principal leaders and they all bent their heads before these scriptures. See, W.H. McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community*, pp.48-9. Elsewhere, Professor McLeod refers to the *Dasam Granth* as the 'second scripture' of the Sikhs and discusses it as 'the first of their supplementary scriptures'. Ibid., pp. 59, 79-81. Referring to Malcolm's quotation by McLeod, W. Owen Cole remarks that the assembly present acknowledged the Guruship of both the *Adi Granth* and the *Dasam Granth* as the scripture. See W. Owen Cole, *The Guru in Sikhism*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd,

1982, p.81. Professor McLeod reiterates in a later work that during the eighteenth century the same respect was given to the *Dasam Granth* as to the *Adi Granth*. Both were regarded as 'the visibly present Guru'. See, *The Sikhs: History, Religion, and Society*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1989, p.89. Professor Harjot Oberoi clearly brackets the *Adi Granth* and the *Dasam Granth* as the Sikh scriptures which purportedly were treated at par by the 'Sanatan Sikhs' following the older Khalsa conventions. See, Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 90, 93, 201. Dr. Doris R. Jakobsh also states that the Sikhs held the *Dasam Granth* at par with the *Adi Granth* and she too refers to the authority of John Malcolm. See, Doris R. Jakobsh, *Relocating Gender in Sikh History: Transformation, Meaning and Identity*, New Delhi: Oxford University press, 2003, p.45.

27. John Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs*, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1986 (first published in 1812), pp. 169-73, 182, 185-6.
28. Ibid., pp. 30n, 51-2, 120-22.
29. *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*, pp. 57, 60, 65-6, 76-8.
30. *Daya Singh Rahitnama*, in *Rahitname*, p.71.
31. Sainapat, *Sri Gur Sobha*, p.128.
32. McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community*, pp.17, 47, 48.
33. McLeod, *Sikhs of the Khalsa*, pp.233-4. Also see, McLeod, *Discovering the Sikhs*, pp. 147-8.
34. Grewal, 'The Doctrine of Guru Panth and Guru Granth', pp. 225-6.
35. Grewal, *A Study of Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 146.
36. *Prashan-Uttar*, in *Bhai Nand Lal Granthavali*, ed. Ganda Singh, pp.192-3.
37. *Sakhi Rahit Patshahi 10* in *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*, pp.133,135.

38. *Prahlad Singh Rahitnama*, in *Rahitname*, p.66.
39. *Prem Sumarag Granth*, p.18.
40. *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*, pp.98, 123. In another situation, two *hazuri* Sikhs attribute to the tenth Guru the statement that he is present in the *sarbat*, the Khalsa is his body, and that the Khalsa is the Guru.
41. *Bhai Desa Singh Rahitnama*, in *Rahitname*, pp.129-30.
42. *Bhai Daya Singh Rahitnama*, in *Rahitname* p.71.
43. Koer Singh, *Gurbilas Patashahi 10*, pp.138-9.
44. In *Hukamname Guru Sahibaan, Mata Sahiban, Banda Singh ate Khalsa Ji De* (Punjabi), ed. Ganda Singh, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1967, pp. 232-3. This *hukamnama* is addressed to the Sikhs of Pattan. For a discussion of the evidence of the *hukamnamas*, see the next section.
45. Chhibber, *Bansavalinama Dasan Patshahian Ka*, p.164.
46. Bhalla, *Mahima Prakash*, pp.806, 827-28.
47. Sukha Singh, *Gurbilas Patshahi 10* (Punjabi), ed. Gursharan Kaur Jaggi, Patiala: Punjab Languages Department, 1989, pp. 45, 177-8, 451.
48. Fauja Singh, 'Panth', in *The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, ed. Harbans Singh, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1997, vol. III, pp.288-9. It is likely that Professor Fauja Singh (d. 1982) had contributed this entry much before the date of its eventual publication.
49. Harbans Singh, 'The Guru Granth Sahib: Guru Eternal for the Sikhs', *Perspectives on Sikh Tradition*, ed. Gurdev Singh, Chandigarh: Siddharth Publications, 1986, pp. 217, 223. The ideas expressed by Professor Harbans Singh in this article were earlier published by him in his *Berkeley Lectures on Sikhism*, New Delhi: Guru Nanak Foundation, 1983, pp. 55-61. It may also be added that nearly the whole of this article is incorporated in *The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism* under the entry 'Sri Guru

Granth Sahib' which was initially contributed by Professor Taran Singh.

50. Harbans Singh, 'The Guru Granth Sahib: Guru Eternal for the Sikhs', pp.226-7.
51. Taran Singh, 'Sri Guru Granth Sahib', in *The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, ed. Harbans Singh, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1997, vol.IV, pp. 248-9.
52. Ratan Singh Bhangu, *Sri Gur Panth Prakash* (Punjabi), ed. Balwant Singh Dhillon, Amritsar: Singh Brothers, pp. 360-3. It may, however, be added that since Bhangu's work is generally placed in the 1840s, we have not used it to build the initial argument.
53. Grewal, *A Study of Guru Granth Sahib*, p.201.
54. Fauja Singh, 'Gurdwara', in *The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, vol.II, pp.146-8.
55. McLeod, *Sikhs of the Khalsa*, pp. 227-9.
56. Balwant Singh Dhillon, 'The Institution of Dharamsala: Origin and Development', *Guru Nanak: Ideals and Institutions*, ed. H.S. Soch and Madanjit Kaur, Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar: 1998, pp. 183-201.
57. Dalbir Singh Dhillon, 'The Institutions of Guru (Guruship), Gurdwara, Sangat and Langar', in *ibid.*, pp.202-25.
58. J.S. Grewal, 'The Gurdwara', in *Religious Movements and Institutions in Medieval India*, ed. J.S. Grewal, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp, 533-5.
59. For the text of the *hukamnamas*, see Ganda Singh, ed., *Hukamname*.
60. Sainapat, *Sri Guru Sobha*, pp.3, 26, 32-6.
61. *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*, pp.57-8, 70, 76-7.
62. *Ibid.*, pp. 61-3, 65-6, 76-7.
63. *Bhai Desa Singh Rahitnama*, in *Rahitname*, p.132.
64. Karamjit K. Malhotra, 'The Earliest Manual on the Sikh Way of Life', in *Five Centuries of Sikh Tradition: Ideology, Society,*

- Politics and Culture* (Essays for Indu Banga), ed. Reeta Grewal and Sheena Pall, Manohar: New Delhi, 2005, pp.68, 73.
65. *Daya Singh Rahitnama*, in *Rahitname*, p.68.
  66. *Desa Singh Rahitnama*, in *Rahitname*, p.135.
  67. *Ibid.*, pp. 133-4.
  68. Koer Singh, *Gurbilas Patashahi 10*, pp.130-31.
  69. Sukha Singh, *Gurbilas Patshahi 10*, pp.3, 444-51.
  70. N.A.I. (National Archives of India, New Delhi), Foreign/Political Consultation, 12 March 1852, No. 98; 22 April 1859, No. 45. Foreign/Political Proceedings, 23 August 1850, No. 35C; 14 November 1851, No.49; 16 April 1852, No. 49; 7 January 1853, No. 222; 14 January 1853, Nos. 226, 235, 238, 241; 10 June 1853, No. 218; 23 June 1854, No. 205; 4 July 1856, No. 151; 29 August 1856, No. 250; 28 November 1856, Nos. 112 & 152; 9 January 1857, Nos. 221, 235 & 298; 13 February 1857, No. 288; 31 December 1858, Nos. 1113 & 3315.
  71. Veena Sachdeva, *Polity and Economy of the Punjab During the Late Eighteenth Century*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1993, p.124.
  72. Chhibber, *Bansavalinama*, pp. 182-6.
  73. *Hukamname*, pp.232-3.
  74. Ganda Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani: Father of Modern Afghanistan*, Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1959, p.282.
  75. Newsreports from Delhi, 1759-65', in *Sikh History from Persian Sources, Translations of Major Texts*, ed. J.S. Grewal and Irfan Habib, New Delhi: Tulika/Indian History Congress, 2001, p.194.
  76. Qazi Nur Muhammad, *Jangnama*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, pp.206-7.
  77. Ratan Singh Bhangu, *Sri Guru Panth Prakash*, ed. Balwant Singh Dhillon, Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 2004, pp. 386-94.
  78. *Ibid.*, p. 305. See also, J.S. Grewal, 'Darbar Sahib and the Akal Takht', *The Sikhs: Ideology, Institutions, and Identity*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009, p.105.



79. 'Newsreports from Delhi, 1759-65', *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, pp.191, 193, 199.
80. Bhangu, *Sri Guru Panth Prakash*, pp. 360-5.
81. Madanjit Kaur, *The Golden Temple: Past and Present*, Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1983, pp.49-52.
82. Ram Sukh Rao, *Sri Fateh Singh Partap Prabhakar (A History of the Early Nineteenth Century Punjab)*, ed. Joginder Kaur, Patiala: Published by Editor, 1980, pp.66-9.
83. For detail, NAI, Foreign/Political Proceedings, 10 June 1853, No. 217. It is interesting to note that the Bhangi chiefs Hari Singh, Jhanda Singh and Ganda Singh appear to have been the earliest to give land grants to the Harmandar.
84. Chhibber, *Bansavalinama*, p.198.
85. Bhalla, *Mahima Prakash*, pp.293, 320-4.
86. For a discussion of these poetical works on Amritsar, see Sarwan Singh, 'Amritsar in Medieval Punjabi Literature: An Historical Analysis', Ph.D. Thesis, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 1994, pp.173-95, 196-211, 212-29, respectively.

### Chapter III

#### RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

As it may be expected *a priori*, the Rahitnamas of the eighteenth century provide the maximum information on the religious beliefs and practices of the Khalsa. This literature is mainly normative. The other Sikh literature of the period includes normative statements but also reflects Sikh beliefs and practices through description or narrative. These two categories of contemporary Sikh literature are analysed first. On the other hand, the Persian sources for Sikh history, which are extremely useful for the political history of the Sikhs during the eighteenth century, do not have much to say about the religious beliefs and practices of the Sikhs. Sometimes, their perceptions from a distance become misleading but, on the whole, their observations are important as coming from the outsiders who were likely to notice only the most obtrusive features of the religious life of the Sikhs.

The emergence of the Sikhs into political power during the third quarter of the eighteenth century attracted the attention of the East India Company which itself was becoming one of the political powers in the Indian sub-continent. A number of individuals connected with the East India Company directly or indirectly, tried to collect information on the Sikhs for publication. Their interest was inspired primarily by political purposes and, therefore, the information they collected related largely to past politics and the contemporary government and administration of the Sikhs. However, they noticed some other aspects of the life of the Sikhs, particularly those who were seen as the followers of Guru Gobind Singh; they were directly connected with the political activity and the government of the Sikhs. There is enough of repetition in their information, and even misinformation, not simply because they took notice of the most important features of the Sikh way of life but also because of their common sources.

### As Recommended in the *Rahitnamas*

We may examine the texts of the *Rahitnamas* first in order to see what was regarded as the ideal. Starting with the *Prashan-Uttar* of Bhai Nand Lal, we find that an essential part of the *rahit* of a Sikh of the Guru was to rise early in the morning, bathe, and read the *Japuji* and the *Jaap*. He should then go to have the Guru's *darshan* and sit in his presence with all attention. In the evening he should listen to the *Rahiras*, *kirtan*, and *katha*. The Sikh who follows this daily round of worship attains liberation.<sup>1</sup>

In the *Tankhahnama* of Bhai Nand Lal (also called *Nasihatinama*), several epithets are used for God: Har, Jagdis, Gobind, Vaheguru, Khalik (*khaliq*), and Akal. The epithets Vaheguru and Akal are characteristically Sikh; the others come from the Shaiva and Vaishnava traditions and Islam. However, all these epithets occur in the *Guru Granth Sahib*. The unity of God is assumed and, by implication, there is no belief in gods and goddesses of the Indian tradition. Worship is to be addressed only to Vaheguru.<sup>2</sup>

A good deal of importance is given to the Guru, though he is referred to only thrice. At the end of the *Nasihatinama* he is referred to as *Patshahi Dasvin* (the Tenth King). This carries the implication that he is coming after nine predecessors, and that he is just like them if not actually one with them. The Sikhs are instructed to look up to the Guru for everything and never to turn to anyone else. Any Sikh who is disrespectful to the Guru in any way is denounced as deceitful. An outsider who slanders the Guru in the presence of a Sikh deserves to be killed by the sword; a Sikh who hears such a slander should kill the slanderer. These references to the Guru are indicative of a situation in which he has opponents and slanderers. We know that the institution of the Khalsa had provoked opposition from within the community as well as from outside.<sup>3</sup>

The importance of *nam*, *dan* and *isnan* is underlined. A Sikh who does not go to *satsang* in the morning is a great defaulter. He who

goes to *satsang* but whose mind wanders away from the *shabad*, finds no honourable place in this world or the next. He who does not invite a poor Sikh to sit with him is a great defaulter. He who talks without an understanding of the *shabad* gains nothing. He who does not bow his head after the *kirtan* fails to meet God. All this appears to relate to congregational worship. There is hardly any doubt that *karha prasad* was distributed at the end of the performance of *kirtan* and *katha* in the *dharamsal* or the Gurdwara. In this context, it is stated that he who distributes *karha prasad* unequally among the Sikhs with the idea of saving it for himself remains in sorrow forever. The method of preparing the *karha prasad* indicates that a Sikh was expected to be very meticulous in its preparation. It is important to note that the way in which *karha prasad* was to be prepared is spelt out. The person distributing the *karha prasad* must cover his head. Before eating *prasad*, whether *karha prasad* or food (in the *langar* or elsewhere), a Sikh was expected to utter *Vaheguru*.<sup>4</sup>

There are some other aspects of true congregation (*sat-sangat*) mentioned in the *Rahitnama*. A Sikh who does not go to a gathering (*diwan*) of the Sikhs when he hears (the *kirtan*) is humiliated in the end. And so is a Sikh who distributes *prasad* without observing the *rahit*. He who goes to a *sangat* and looks at women present in the *sangat* with evil intention suffers humiliation in the end. He who sings anything other than the Guru's *shabad* goes to the realm of death (*jam*). He who undertakes anything important without performing an *ardas* receives no honour in the divine court. He who prays for anything to anyone other than the Guru is a great defaulter. It may be added that the religious activity of a Sikh is not limited to *sat-sang*. A Sikh of the Guru was expected to contribute *dasvandh* and to maintain *golak*. He was expected to rise early in the morning, take bath with cold water, and recite the *Japuji* before eating anything. In the evening he was expected to recite the *Rahiras*; the *Sohila* at night could be recited individually in the home. The injunction to stick to one's *dharma* in this

context appears to be a reference to the *dharam* of a Sikh.<sup>5</sup> The *Tankhahnama* is addressed to both the Sikhs and the Khalsa.

The *Sakhi Rahit* emphasizes that Akal Purkh or Vaheguru is the true Guru. One's life should be in harmony with his will (*hukam*). There is no liberation without the Guru. The terms Sant, Sikh, Khalsa and Gurmukh are used for the followers of Guru Gobind Singh. The *Rahitnama* is addressed to them as one and the same entity. His order (*hukam, bachan, vak*) is binding on his Sikhs. Not to obey his orders is to become a reprobate.<sup>6</sup>

The *Sakhi Rahit* underlines the importance of the *shabad*. The Sikh of the Guru worships through the *shabad* alone. He does not go to a sepulcher (*marhi* or a *masani*) and he does not listen to a Padha, a Mian or a Mahant. He listens only to Gurmat. A Sikh should rise in the last quarter of the night, bathe, and read the *Japuji* and the *Jaap*. He who is unable to read, should recite two *pauris* of the *Japuji* and the *Jaap*. Before attending to his work in the morning, the Sikh of the Guru should go to the *diwan*, bow down, and listen to the *shabad*. At mid-day he should wash his hands and feet and read the *Japuji* and the *Jaap*. In the evening, about an hour before sunset, he should read the *So-Dar* and the *Rahiras*. He should love the *shabad* throughout the day. 'Bani is Guru, and Guru is Bani'. He who observes the *rahit* lives in peace in this world and the next. The Guru's word possesses exclusive efficacy in the Kaliyuga. The Name is supreme in the Kaliyuga. The only efficacious *dharam* in the Kaliyuga is that of *guru-murid*. In other words, the dispensation of Guru Nanak and his successors was meant to replace all earlier or contemporary dispensations.

The *Sakhi Rahit* underlines the sanctity of *kesh*. The Sikh of the Guru should never use a razor. To cut one's beard or to use a razor amounts to incest with the daughter. Just as the sacred thread is the marker of a Hindu so the *kesh* are the marker of the Khalsa. With his uncut hair, the turban over his head and a flowing beard, a Sikh remains unconcealed in a crowd of lacs of Hindus and Musalmans. A Sikh of the Guru should never eat without covering his head. There is a

strong injunction against the use of tobacco in any form; whether smoking or inhaling snuff, it is as heinous as the eating of beef.

In the *Rahitnama* of Bhai Prahlad Singh, there is emphasis on the exclusive worship of the Supreme Being. He who worships any deity other than Akal Purkh wanders through birth after birth and never attains peace. He who worships idols of stones remains subject to death and rebirth. He who believes in *marhi*, grave or an idol of stone, or who thinks of any other Panth as better, is not a Sikh of the Guru. The Sikh who serves Akal Purkh serves his entire family. The *mantar* of 'Sri Vaheguru' covers all kinds of recitations; it is the beginning and the end. The Sikh who sings the *bani* of the Guru receives the gift of liberation in life. Every morning he should sing the Guru's song, and every evening he should recite the *Rahiras* before eating his meal. In the forenoon he should eat nothing before reciting the *Japuji* and the *Jaap*. He should not recite anything other than the *bani* of the true Guru. A Sikh of the Guru should keep *kar* and *golak* for him and should never covet *kar*, *bhet*, *sukh*, or *mannat*. A Sikh should respect the *kesh*; he should never eat without the turban; he should never put on a cap. He should never inhale snuff. All these injunctions are meant for the Khalsa who belong to the Panth started by Guru Nanak. The Sikh who observes the *rahit* is really the Guru and the Guru is his *chela*.<sup>7</sup>

According to the *Prem Sumarag*, the Sikh of the Khalsa of Sri Akal Purkh will not believe in any other Guru and will not worship anywhere except where there is the light of the *shabad*. This opening statement is followed by four sets of instructions. The first relates to the early morning worship: to wake up in the last quarter of the night, to bathe with fresh or warm water from head to foot, or wash hands and feet and face if for any reason enough water is not available or one is ill, and to recite the *Japu*, the *Jaap*, and the *Anand* five times. If there is any worldly business, one should recite the '*charan kamal arati*' and offer *ardas* and then proceed. If there is no such hurry one should read Gurbani from the *Pothi Granth* as much as possible. After



this one should attend to one's work, with one's heart in the *bani-shabad*.<sup>8</sup>

At mid-day, one should wash hands and feet all afresh and read both the *Japu* and the *Jaap*. If this were not possible, one should concentrate on Akal Purkh and recite the '*paki nai pak*' stanza (*pauri*), and utter seven times, 'Sri Vaheguru Akal Purkh Ji, I have taken refuge with you' and recite the first *Savvayya* of Guru Gobind Singh. This is as meritorious as the recitation of the *Japu* and the *Jaap*. One should not omit this in spite of all pressing business.<sup>9</sup>

Two *gharis* before sunset one should read the *So-Dar* and the *Rahiras*. At the time of *bhog*, one should bow one's head after reading the *Japu* and the *Jaap*. One should make a personal prayer: 'I am a sinner, your *birad*; keep me as you wish. May I relish your *bhana*, and think of the Name. I have taken refuge with you'.<sup>10</sup>

When one is free from all worldly business at the fall of night, one should read the *bani* of all the ten Gurus, the *Bachittar Natak* and the *Gurbani* in the *Granth*. One should perform *kirtan*. When overwhelmed by sleep, one should recite the *Sohila* before going to sleep.<sup>12</sup> The only giver of gifts is Akal Purkh: one should not look towards anyone else. One should concentrate one's mind on the feet of Sri Akal Purkh and shun *math*, *marhi*, *devi*, *devta*, *but*, *tirath*, *barat*, *puja-archa*, *mantar*, *jantar*, *pir*, *pursh*, *brahman*, *tarpan*, *gaytari*, and *sandhya*. One should love the fellow Sant Khalsa who have dedicated their body, mind and wealth to Sri Akal Purkh, and who keep their senses under control. In old age in particular one should meditate quietly on the Guru. One should think that Sri Akal Purkh is always present with one. Detached from the world, one should remain attached to the Creator.<sup>11</sup>

The last chapter of the *Prem Sumarag* is on *sahaj-jog*. The intoxication of the state of *sahaj* is superior to the intoxication of power, youth, wealth, and alcohol or opium. The state of *sahaj* is also called '*ek nam*' or '*hukam*'. It is devoid of fear and anxiety. Only a few attain this state. The total acceptance of God's will is the hallmark of this

state. *Sahaj-jog* is the antidote to *haumai* which induces people to make a special effort in hurry. In the state of *sahaj* one does everything at ease: sleeping and waking up, eating and drinking, sitting, speaking and keeping silent, *grihast* and *kirtan*. The state of *sahaj* comes when *haumai* departs. All fear and anxiety vanish and the light of the Name becomes manifest.<sup>12</sup>

The *sahaj-jog* is 'the fourth quality'. It is meant for the Kaliyuga. The *panths* of Hindus and the *mlechh* would deviate from their *dharma* and the whole world become oblivious of all social norms in matrimonial and sexual matters. *Dharma* would fly away like a bird. The '*parm marg*' would save the Sikhs, the Khalsa of Sri Akal Purkh, who all belong to the 'Chhatri (Kshatriya) Sodhi' caste. This path has been created through God's grace as the only efficacious path in the Kaliyuga. The Sikhs of the Guru worship only the one God and their '*ek ang*' *bhagti* is the means of liberation. The foundation of this *bhagti* is service (*seva*). To fulfil the wants of the hungry, the naked, and the needy is real service. Kindness is superior to everything else. The contents of the *Prem Sumarag Granth* are not meant for everyone. It is meant for those who have faith and not for the sceptics. The path enunciated in this *Granth* would be promulgated by '*mard ka chela*' (Guru Gobind Singh). They who follow this path would attain peace and liberation.<sup>13</sup> Thus, *sahaj-jog* is nothing but the path initiated by Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. The injunctions (*rahit*) of the *Prem Sumarag Granth*, like the Khalsa Panth, have divine sanction and they are meant for the Khalsa of Sri Akal Purkh.

No compromise is to be made with regard to the religious beliefs and practices of the Khalsa of Sri Akal Purkh. Their basic position is defined by belief in Akal Purkh to the strict exclusion of all gods and goddesses, and by worship of Akal Purkh through *shabad-bani* to the strict exclusion of all other forms of worship. The daily life of the Khalsa is marked by early morning worship after bathing, recitation of the *Japuji*, the *Jaap*, the *Anand*, the *So-Dar*, the *Rahiras* and the *Sohila*, reading of Gurbani from the *Granth*, and participation in the *kirtan*.

In the *rahit* component of the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh, all Gurus belong to the past. There is no personal Guru now and none should be accepted as Guru. There is no personal Guru, and none should set himself up as a Guru. Now there are Sikhs of the Guru, there is *rahit* of the Guru, there are places associated with the Guru and, above all, there is the *sabad-bani* of the Guru to be venerated. It is significant to note that the term used for all the Gurus here, as elsewhere, is 'the Guru' in the singular. They were all one, a symbol, an institution.<sup>14</sup>

The most important belief shared by all the Sikhs is belief in the *shabad* of the Guru, his *bani*. Since, a Sikh of the Guru is not to believe in any Guru (other than Guru Nanak and his successors), he should read the *bani* of the Guru and reflect on it. A Sikh of the Guru should not read or hear any *bani*, *shabad* or *sakhi* other than that of the Guru. He should talk about the Guru and his *bani*, commit the *bani* to memory, and disseminate *sabad-bani*. He who regards himself as a Sikh of the Guru should regard the *shabad* of the *Granth Sahib* as the Guru, and offer it the respect due to the Guru.

It may be pointed out that more than 70 verses are quoted from the *Granth Sahib* in support of the *rahit* prescribed. Among the authors of these verses are Kabir, Farid, Namdev and Bhikhan. However, the bulk of the verses come from Guru Nanak, Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan. There is hardly any doubt that the 'Granth Sahib' is the one that is now known as the *Adi Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. Four other verses are referred to as 'Guru ke bachan', 'sakhi Granth Sahib ji 10', 'sakhi Patshahi 10' and just 'sakhi'.<sup>15</sup>

Just as *dharmsal* was the place for daily worship and congregation, so the places associated with the Gurus were places of pilgrimage for the Sikhs. A Sikh of the Guru should visit the places of his Gurus. If there is a needy Sikh among those who depart from the village for visit to Gurdwaras, the others should take care of his needs. Those who are not accompanying them should contribute according to

their means. A village that does not do this is like a *simmal* [tree] which has no fruit.<sup>16</sup>

A Sikh of the Guru must bathe early in the morning and recite the *Japuji* five times and any other *bani* that he knows by heart. Before going to the *dharamsal* he should offer prayer (*ardas*). In the evening he should recite the *Rahiras* and the *So-Dar* at his place, or join the *sadh-sangat*. A Sikh of the Guru should never smoke tobacco, nor inhale snuff (*nasvar*). A Sikh of the Guru should follow no other Guru than his own. He should not be misled by the talk of others on this point. He is required to keep the hair unshorn and keep a comb (*kangha*) for keeping his hair clean. He should regard his *kesh* as the sacred symbol of *sikhkhi*. His salutation is 'Vaheguruji ka Khalsa, Vaheguruji ki fateh'. Equally important for him is to bear *kirpan* and to wear *kachh*. A Sahajdhari could use scissors to cut the hair of his body but not his whiskers.<sup>17</sup>

In the *Rahitnama* of Bhai Desa Singh, the very first article of *rahit* is *khande ki pahul* which is believed to make the Singh supreme. It is taken from five Singhs who also give instruction about the *rahit*. To love the *bani*, to lodge 'Vaheguru' in the heart and to utter 'Vaheguru', to rise early in the morning to bathe and to recite the *Japuji* and the *Jaap*, to appropriate *nam*, *dan* and *isnan*, and to contribute *dasvandh* for the Guru out of what is earned through personal labour are the essential features of the *rahit*. A baptized Sikh should utter *Vaheguruji ki fateh* on seeing the Khalsa who are the veritable form of the Guru. He should read the *Granth*, seeing no difference between the Guru and the *Granth*, and he should memorize selected *bani* from both the *Granth*s. He should be regular in reciting the *So-Dar* in the evening and the *Sohila* at the end of the first quarter of the night.<sup>18</sup>

There are strong injunctions against eating meat prepared in the Muslim fashion (*kuththa*), the use of tobacco in any form, and other intoxicants including alcohol. However, opium and *bhang* are allowed in moderate quantity. The only meat allowed is mutton prepared in the Sikh fashion (*jhatka*). A Singh should learn to read Gurmukhi letters

from a Singh (so that he is able to read the scripture). With complete faith in the Guru, he should dedicate himself to *bhagti* and live in accordance with the teachings of the Guru. He should not listen to anything derogatory to the Guru, and he should not say anything that is derogatory to the other *panths*. A Singh should not distribute *prasad* unequally. He should not eat food alone; he should share it with others. He should show due respect to weapons he bears; he should clean his *kesh* with the comb (*kangha*) twice a day and tie his turban afresh both the times. He should wash his *kesh* with yoghurt every fortnight and dry his hair in the sun: this is the mark of distinction bestowed on him by the Guru.<sup>19</sup>

A Singh should go to the holy places like Anandpur, Amritsar, Patna, and Abchnagar, circumambulate the holy space, offer something as *bhet* and bow his head, and he should meditate on the Guru and God. He should celebrate the *Gurpurab*, prepare *prasad*, and offer it to the Khalsa, giving them something by way of *ardas*.<sup>20</sup> There were many kinds of the Khalsa and it was necessary to identify the Singhs who followed the *rahit*. A Singh should go to the *diwan* where thousands of Singhs are gathered; he should serve *rahitwant* Singhs for five years. He should perform *bhagti* in firm faith so that he may know the true *rahit*. Only he who lives in accordance with the *rahit* is a true Sikh; he is the master and the Guru is his disciple. The true *rahit* was the one observed by the Singhs. There could be no liberation without the *rahit*.

The *Rahitnama* of Bhai Desa Singh, written in the late eighteenth century, underlines that the hair are a natural part of the human frame and it was in accordance with God's will to keep the hair uncut. Without the *kesh*, a man was like a bird without feathers and a woman without clothes. A man comes to have a perfect form only by keeping the hair unshorn. The *kesh* acquire meaning and merit if the *rahit* is properly observed.<sup>21</sup>

Written during the time of Sikh rule, the *Rahitnama* of Bhai Daya Singh prescribes *khande ki pahul*, the *kesh*, the sword, and the *kachh*



as essential for the Khalsa. A Singh should concentrate on *Vaheguru* and live in accordance with the *shabad*. The true Khalsa is he who dedicates his body, mind and wealth to the Guru and God. He should have firm faith in the Guru. He should give *dasvandh*, he should go to the Gurdwara and pray before undertaking anything important. He should not go to the *sangat* empty handed. He should participate in the *kirtan*. He should keep the *kesh* clean by using the comb twice a day and washing the *kesh* after every four days. He should keep *golak*.<sup>22</sup>

Daya Singh underlines the importance of the Guru by stating that a Singh should never hear the Guru being slandered: he should either cut off the head of the slanderer or leave the place. The author recommends pilgrimage to places like Abchnagar and Amritsar. A Singh who goes to a place like Jagannath should offer Rs. 25 as *tankhah* to the *takht* at Abchnagar. He should take *amrit* afresh and offer a rupee and a quarter. A Singh should never go to the Darbar Sahib without an offering. Not to bathe in *amritsar* is to remain impure. There can be no *sikhkhi* without the *darshan* of Kesgarh and Sri Anandpur.<sup>23</sup>

According to Daya Singh, there were five kinds of the Sikh faith or *sikhkhi*: as a profitable business, an imitation of the majority, due to greed of wealth, due to firm faith, and *sikhkhi* through love. He goes on to present the Akali form as the epitome of *sikhkhi*. It was marked by the remembrance of Akal, the wearing of blue dress, and the articles of iron, like the *chakkar* and the *karad*, in fact all the five weapons, including the *kirpan*. The Akali wears white *kachh*. He reads the *Japuji*, the *Jaap*, the *Akal Ustat*, and the *Chandi* literature. He should live in accordance with the teachings of the *Guru Granth* and discard all other *panths*. Another term used for the Akali is Nihang. He goes to Amritsar on the occasion of Baisakhi and Diwali, to Anandpur on the occasion of Hola, and to Abchnagar for the redemption of his family. He who keeps this *rahit* is the veritable form of the Guru. At the end of the *Rahitnama*, Daya Singh mentions the characteristics of a *bihangam* who runs away from women and wealth, uses articles of iron, visits



Gurdwaras but does not go to the cities. He does not touch meat or alcohol and eats food only for subsistence. He never wears red clothes. He is doubly keen to follow the *rahit* prescribed for all the four *ashrams* (stages of life). In this section Daya Singh also states that a Singh should not say anything derogatory to a Bedi, a Bhalla, a Trehan, a Sodhi, and an Udasi.<sup>24</sup>

Daya Singh emphasizes that the Khalsa should not follow any belief or practice of another *panth*. To be specifically mentioned in this connection are *matth*, *marhi*, *gor*, *barat*, *ikadasi barat*, *devi* or *devta*, *puja*, *archa*, *mantar*, *pir*, *purakh*, Brahman, *tarpan*, the *gayatri*, and the *sandhya*. A Singh should not drink water from the hands of a *kanpata* Jogi. Some of the items are mentioned again at another place and there is a strong injunction against *hukka* and the sacred thread. Apart from a Brahman, a Singh should avoid the worshippers of Sakhi Sarvar and the followers of *faqirs*. He should not trust a Jaini, a Mauni or a Turk. He should never inhale snuff. He should not remove his turban while eating, or keep his head uncovered.<sup>25</sup>

## 2

### As Reflected in other Sikh Literature

Writing his *Var Bhagauti*, presumably in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Gurdas dwells on three major themes: God, the Gurus, and the *sangat* or the Panth. In the *pauris* related to God he uses epithets depicting his essential attributes. God is *onkar* (one), *ad-purkh* (primal being), *anbhai* (fearless), *guru* (preceptor), *sat-nam* (true name), *abnasi* (indestructible), *aghnasi* (destroyer of sins), *sarab-biapi* (omnipresent), *alep* (detached), *nirankar* (formless), *nirvair* (devoid of enmity), *dukh-dalan* or *dukh-bhanjan* (destroyer of sorrow), *puran* (perfect) *parmashar* (supreme God), *patit-pawan* (remover of sins), *dana* (all wise), *bina* (all seeing), *bakhshind* (forgiver), *bhai-bhanjan* or *bhai-nashan* (destroyer of fear), *mukand* (bestower of liberation), *jogi*, *sanjogi* (leads to union), *rakhwala* (protector), *rahim* (merciful), *patshah* (king), *sada hajur* (ever present), and *sachcha sahib* (True Lord).<sup>26</sup> The epithets are coming from Gurbani, including the compositions of Guru

Gobind Singh. It is important to underline that Gurdas's conception of God is characteristically Sikh.

God is the only object of worship for Gurdas. By serving him in the present age all sorrows are removed; and all one's wishes are fulfilled. The true and priceless Name is bestowed by God. The Name is the name of God (Har-Nam). He is known through the *shabad* of the Guru, or Gurbani. Gurdas refers to the compilation of the *Granth* of authenticated *shabad* by Guru Arjan; the *shabad* is contained in the *Granth*. He who appropriates the Name is acceptable to God. The recipients of his grace are Gurmukhs. Meditation on the Name is the most efficacious path to liberation. It depends on God's grace (*kirpa*). The idea of grace is closely linked with God's *hukam*. Liberation (*mukti*) depends on three things: God's *hukam*, *kirpa* and worship.<sup>27</sup>

Gurdas makes no distinction between Guru Nanak and his nine successors. The unity of Guruship is reinforced by using *mahal*, *pargas* (*prakash*), and *avtar* as synonyms. Guru Nanak meditated on the Name and worshipped the Creator. A new dispensation (*dharam*) was made manifest by him so that the praises of God could be freely sung. The true congregation (*sat-sangat mela*) was established by God through Guru Nanak. The members of this congregation were invited by Guru Gobind Singh to taste the baptism of the double edged sword. In this way 'Gur-sangat' was made Khalsa. Gurdas does not see any disruption between the *sangat* of Guru Nanak and his successors and the Khalsa Panth of Guru Gobind Singh. Gurdas underlines the importance of the Guru and the *sangat*. They who turn to the Guru their foreheads shine when they reach the true court. They remember 'Har-Gur Gobind' in the ambrosial hours. The Gurmukh is found in the true congregation (*sat-sangat*) where the praises of God are sung and truth is disbursed. The Gurmukh meets God. The five adversaries (*kam*, *krodh*, *lobh*, *moh*, *hankar*) are subdued in the *sangat*. They who forget the master find no place in the *sangat*. The *manmukhs* remain in misery and sorrow.<sup>28</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh, the 'tenth *avtar*', started the Khalsa Panth. They who tasted the *pahul* kept their *kesh* uncut, wore the sword in accordance with the command of Guru Gobind Singh to establish the worship of Akal on secure footing. They adopted the name 'Singh' and they wore blue dress, with *kachh* as a symbol of sexual restraint. They adopted '*Vaheguruji ki fateh*' as a form of salutation. It is pertinent to note that Gurdas underlines the distinct identity of the Khalsa Panth. He emphatically states that 'the third religion' (*teesar majhab*) overshadowed Islam. This path was distinct from the Indic (*hindak*) tradition represented by the *Vedas*, *Puranas*, *Shastras*, temples and idols of stone, the *jagg* and the *hom* (fire sacrifice), the Brahman, the Pandit, and the Jotki (astrologer).<sup>29</sup>

The author of the *Sri Gur Sobha* provides ample information on the religious beliefs and practices of the Sikhs. The last chapter of the book relates exclusively to religious life. In the other nineteen chapters he makes statements which are relevant for his conception of God, his faith in the ten Gurus, his view of *nam*, *shabad* and the *dharamsal*, his concept of liberation, and his view of identity.

Sainapat refers to God as Parm Purkh and Kartar. He is one. Vishnu, Brahma, Mahadev and Chandi are his creation. Another epithet used for God is Akal Purkh which refers to his eternal existence. He was in the beginning, in all cosmic ages, and he will be in the end. His light is there all the time in everything and in everyone. He is referred to as *Vaheguru*. He is called Gobind, Par-Brahm, and Parmesar. His names are many but he is one. He is the only true creator and sustainer of the universe. His power is expressed through *hukam* and his kindness through his *kirpa*. His limits cannot be known and he cannot be adequately praised. He is the only lord who does everything, and no one else. He is manifest everywhere in all the four directions and there is no one else. The unity of God is emphasized through '*ek*' and '*ek onkar*'.<sup>30</sup>

At the outset of his work Sainapat invokes the aid of the true Guru who is no other than Guru Gobind Singh. Sainapat emphasizes

the unity of Guruship from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh. Furthermore, Guru Gobind Singh is commissioned by God to ensure propagation of the true faith through the Khalsa Panth. This Panth was the source of liberation and sovereignty. Guru Gobind Singh is king of kings. Redemption of the world was as much his purpose as that of his predecessors from Guru Nanak to Guru Tegh Bahadur. The epithets *prabhu* and *kartar* are used for the Guru as well as God. There is the explicit statement that Guru is Gobind and Gobind is Guru, the only doer who has come to redeem the world. It is followed later by the statement: 'Parbrahm Parmesar Guru Gobind *hai*'. The emphatic assertion that Gobind Singh is the only true Guru denies by implication the claim of any other person to Guruship. The Guru's *darshan* is the source of blessings, including liberation.<sup>31</sup>

The term *nam* figures frequently in the *Sri Gur Sobha*. Meditation on the purifying *nam* is also sung with love and devotion. Here *nam* is equated with Gurbani. In any case, there is no liberation without reflection on *nam*. The name of God (*Harnam*) cannot be found if one remains attached to the pleasures of the world. There is no alternative to *nam*. It is received through the grace of the Guru and God. They who receive *nam* live in accordance with the divine order (*hukam*). The unstained Name (*nam niranjan*) is the lord himself whose light shines in all the seven continents and all the nine regions of the earth. He who meditates on the Name day and night attains liberation. There is nothing so efficacious as the Name; it fills the life and it is there in whatever we see. The poet himself prays that he may meditate on the Name which is more helpful than kith and kin and all other earthly goods. There is a whole *savvayya* in the *Sri Gur Sobha* with the refrain, '*nam Gobind Gobind kaho*'. It refers to various aspects of the Name as the source of liberation. Thus, on the whole, *nam* is equated with God and the Name of God but much more so with *shabad-bani*.<sup>32</sup>

The term *shabad* occurs less frequently than *nam*. The *shabad* of the Guru for the Sikh is like water for the fish. He who hears the word of the Guru but does not care is a fool. He who concentrates on

the *shabad* and lives in accordance with it attains liberation. The word *shabad* is used in the context of *bhagti*. It is generally equated with Gurbani. At one place, however, there is a reference to the Guru assuming the form of *shabad* (*shabad rupi*). The term *bani* is used in connection with the vesting of Guruship and it is equated with the *shabad*. Thus, though *nam* has more than one connotation, it is often used for Gurbani.<sup>33</sup>

Sainapat refers to the Sikh sacred space as *dharamsal*. The term *gurdwar* is used for the Guru's door and not necessarily as the sacred space. The *sangat* meets in the *dharamsal*. The term *sangat* is used for the collective body of the local Sikhs. Though the term *dharamsal* is mentioned only thrice, references to congregational worship are quite frequent. The praises of God are sung in the true congregation (*sat-sangat*); this boon comes through good fortune. Another term used for congregational worship is *sant sabha*. The Sikhs are enjoined to appropriate *satsang*. A Sikh should join the *sangat* with love in his heart. There is no peace without the *sangat*. Matters religious but other than congregational worship could also be discussed in a congregation of the Sikhs. In the true congregation one meets the *sants* and suffers no sorrow (*dukh*). All one's desires are fulfilled through *ardas* in the congregation. There is also a reference to *ardas* being performed by an *ardasia*.<sup>34</sup>

The term *sangat* is used by Sainapat also in the sense of the collectivity of the Sikhs and a local congregation. It is clear that Sainapat is talking of the Khalsa *sangat* or *sangats*. The Khalsa *sangat* is now the true *sangat*. The Sikh who does not come to the true *sangat* is not a Khalsa. There is no difference between the Guru and the Khalsa *sangat*. The local Khalsa *sangats* have the authority to take decisions with regard to the defaulters. Sainapat makes the telling statement that the true Guru and the *sangat* are one; like the Guru, the *sangat* can forgive or punish, but no one else can. The Singhs meet as a true *sangat* to resolve issues faced by the Sikhs. From the equation



of the *sangat* with the Guru, the vesting of Guruship in the Khalsa was only a small step.<sup>35</sup>

Sainapat uses the terms Sikh, Khalsa, Khalsa Sikh, Khalsa Singh, and Singh in a manner that indicates an equation between the Sikh and the Singh.<sup>36</sup> The primary connotation of 'Khalsa' for Sainapat is clearly the direct link of the Sikh with the Guru. Consequently, he is aware of the presence of non-Singhs among the Khalsa but he is concerned almost exclusively with the Singh component.

The *rahit* depicted or prescribed in the *Sri Gur Sobha* is the *rahit* of the Khalsa Singhs. Direct affiliation with Guru Gobind Singh is the first step. On this criterion five categories of Sikhs were not included in the Khalsa, and the Khalsa were not to have any association with them. The second step is fresh initiation through baptism of the double edged sword. The Khalsa who took *khande ki pahul* were enjoined to keep their hair unshorn and to bear arms. The ceremony of *bhaddar* (*bhaddan*) was interdicted. Whatever was due to the Guru was to be sent directly to him, like *dasvandh*, *golak*, *bhet*, *kar* and *mannat*. The injunction against *hukka* (tobacco smoking) is as strong as the injunction in favour of *kesh*. Significantly, the religious practices recommended for the Khalsa are the older Sikh norms and practices. The purpose of life is liberation which comes through the faith of the Khalsa. Consequently, the Sikh *sangat* of yesterday becomes the Khalsa *sangat* of the present. The general idea of *tankhah* (penance) for defaulters of the prescribed *rahit* is also mentioned. The Khalsa are referred to as *Vaheguruji ka Khalsa*. For salutation, the words 'Vaheguruji ki fateh' are added.<sup>37</sup>

Sainapat refers to the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the protector of the whole creation. He performed a unique deed in the Kaliyuga by protecting the honour of '*karam dharam*', '*sarab dharam*', *tilak* and *janeu*, and the *dharamsal*. He gave his life for the sake of *dharam*. Sainapat reiterates that Guru Tegh Bahadur is the protector of the world (*jagg-chadar*). The younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh did not care for their life and preserved their *dharam*, following the example



of their grandfather, Guru Tegh Bahadur. The statement made about the eldest son of Guru Gobind Singh is more telling. He drank the cup of love and died fighting on the field of battle. Guru Gobind Singh said, 'He has today become the Khalsa in the court of the true Guru'. It seems that, for Sainapat, martyrdom was built into Khalsahood. Elsewhere, it is stated in connection with the death of Sahib Singh in the battle of Nirmoh that he who is perfectly fortunate gives his life to become 'Khalsa'.<sup>38</sup>

Sainapat talks of liberation, using terms like *gat* and *khalasi*. Another term used is 'to discard the fear of the ocean of life'; the liberated person becomes *khalas*. The mingling of light with light is yet another metaphor used for liberation. What is important to us is the association of liberation with the Khalsa. Just as in the earlier Sikh tradition, liberation-in-life is the supreme purpose of life, so it is for the Khalsa. If anything, the social commitment of the Khalsa, whose duty is to bear arms, to fight and, if necessary, to die fighting in the field of battle for the sake of *dharam*, is more pronounced.<sup>39</sup>

The last chapter of the *Sri Gur Sobha* is significant for various reasons. At its beginning Sainapat bows to Gurudev who is equated with God. There is great emphasis on the unity, power and grace of God. Many of God's attributes are mentioned throughout the chapter. Next in importance to God is the true Guru whose guidance is absolutely indispensable. There is great emphasis on *bhagti* through *nam simran* and *nam japna*, combined with the singing of God's praises. At one level, *nam* is equated with the *shabad*. Congregational worship is offered in the true *sangat*. God is present in the *sangat*. This *bhagti* leads to the state of liberation in which there is no fear of illusion. There can be no liberation without *bhagti* as defined in Sikh faith. The term used for the devotee of God is *sant*. Sainapat appears to equate the Khalsa with the *sant* whose primary concern is with religious beliefs and practices. Thus, in a sense one has to be a true Sikh before one can become a true Singh.<sup>40</sup>

Compiled in 1734, the *B40 Janamsakhi* reflects the view of Guru Nanak cherished by a local *sangat*, a view which was meant to be propagated among the Sikhs. The compiler of this *Janamsakhi* suggests the divinity of Guru Nanak by stating that on his birth, he was saluted by 33 crores of gods, the 24 Siddhs, the 9 Naths, the 64 Joginis, the 52 Birs and the 6 Jatis, who knew that the Formless One had come to redeem the world. The Guru in this work is no different from God. Guru Nanak came into the world to redeem human beings in the Kaliyuga and created a new Panth. His path was open to both men and women. The Nanak Panthis had their own *dharamsal* and their own scripture. They looked upon the *Vedas* and *Shastras* as irrelevant. Only the Name of God and his praises were the source of peace. Devotion to Guru Nanak and his path was the most efficacious means to liberation. But liberation depended on God's grace. Guru Nanak was the redeemer of sins. The purpose of his Panth is to spread God's *bhagti* and *dharam*. Guru Nanak's message was superior to that of the Brahmanical, the ascetical or the Islamic traditions. Three things were essential for the Panth: *nam*, *dan* and *isnan*. The daily life of the Sikh began with bathing and reading of the *Pothi* before eating anything, participating in the *kirtan* at night, and reciting the *Arati Sohila* before going to sleep. Apart from the individual worship, the Sikhs met for congregational worship in the *dharamsal*. The *rababis* used to perform *kirtan* and community meal (*langar*) was served to all and sundry. The Sikhs observe no fasts, offer no *puja* in the temple, do not believe in the ritual of bathing in the Ganga, or going to places of pilgrimage on the Ganga, Gomti and Godavari, or to Prayag, Benares, Ajudhya, Dwarka and Jagannath. The Sikhs did not conform to the practices of the Hindus, emphasizes the writer.<sup>41</sup>

At the outset of his *Gurbilas Patshahi 10*, Koer Singh Kalal invokes Ad Purkh Kartar, who can be found and known only by turning to the Guru. At the end of this *chaupai*, he refers to the line of ten Gurus to suggest the unity of Guruship. He dwells on Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom for the sake of *dharam*. He gives a broad outline

of the life of Guru Gobind Singh and the institution of the Khalsa, which he proposes to depict in detail in the body of his work. He takes the reader into confidence that he had heard much about Guru Gobind Singh from Bhai Mani Singh, a great martyr.<sup>42</sup>

According to Koer Singh, Guru Gobind Singh invoked the aid of the Goddess for the institution of the Panth he was commissioned by God to establish. A whole chapter is devoted to this episode. As for several other Sikh writers, martyrdom for Koer Singh is built into the institution of the Khalsa when Guru Gobind Singh asks the huge gathering of the Sikhs at Anandpur: 'Is there any perfect Sikh who is prepared to give his head as an offering to the Guru?' Koer Singh describes the way in which baptism was prepared and administered to the five volunteers. Their names are given as Daya Singh, a Sobti Khatri of Lahore; Nihchal Singh (Mohkam Singh), a *chhimba* of Dawarvati (Dwarka); Sahib Singh, a *nai* of Bidar; Dharam Singh, a Jat of Hastinapuri; Himmat Singh, a *jhiwar* of Jagannath. The social background of the volunteers is mentioned probably to indicate that most of them belonged to the lowest castes.<sup>43</sup>

After administering *amrit*, the five Singhs were instructed not to have any association with those who cut their hair, who killed their infant daughters, who followed the Mina gurus, or who followed the Masands. They were not to eat *kuththa* meat and they were not to shave their hair. They should read the *Pothi-Granth* everyday; they should recite the *Japuji* and the *Rahiras*, and listen to *kirtan*. They should bear arms, remain attached to the *shabad*, and keep *kachh*, *kesh* and *karad*. It was their duty to kill the Turks and protect the Sants. They should use *kangha* for their *kesh* twice a day. They should discard gambling, visiting prostitutes, sexual desire and greed, and the company of those who had not received *gur-mantar*. They should keep the *Guru Granth* in mind all the time and go to a *dharamsal* everyday. They should recite no other name but *Vaheguru*. Placed in the lap of Chandi, they would always be victorious and remove the Yamni (Turks) from power. They would establish their own rule in the world. Guru

Gobind Singh then requested the five Singhs to administer *amrit* to him. There was no longer any difference between the Guru and the Sikhs. All the baptized Khalsa should eat together irrespective of their Shudra, Vaishya, Khatri or Brahman background. They should discard all Hindu and Muslim beliefs and practices. The Guru was always present with those who followed the *rahit*; they would establish their own *raj*.<sup>44</sup>

In the last chapter of his *Gurbilas*, Koer Singh refers to the *Rahiras* and the performance of *bhog* in the Sikh congregation at Nander in which Guru Gobind Singh participates. In connection with Banda's initiation and commission Koer Singh underlines the inseparable link between sacrifice and sovereignty. The features of *rahit* mentioned in this context are not to have sexual intercourse with a Muslim woman, and not to trust a Turk. The defaulter in such cases becomes liable 'to penance' as a *tankhahia*. Koer Singh quotes the well known verse of Guru Ram Das on the daily routine of the Sikh for worship. He goes on to mention the presence of *rababis* and *dhadis* in the *sangat*.<sup>45</sup>

Kesar Singh Chhibber, a Brahman by social background, invokes Sat Gur Purkh, all gods, Mata Gauri, Mata Saraswati and Ganesh at the beginning of his work. He gives the most elaborate treatment to the episode of the Goddess in connection with the institution of the Khalsa. He ascribes the performance of Brahmanical rituals to Guru Gobind Singh and to other Gurus. He refers to their sacred thread and sacred mark. He advocates that the traditional norms of commensality and connubium should be observed by the Sikhs. He advocates that the *Dasam Granth* may be regarded as the Guru next in importance to the *Adi Granth*. He interprets the 'Khalsa Mahima' *savvayyas* in favour of the Brahmans rather than the Khalsa. On the whole, thus, he appears to Brahmanize the Sikh tradition. It should be interesting, therefore, to know the beliefs and practices which he ascribes to the Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh.<sup>46</sup>

At the time of performing *hom* to make the Goddess appear, the Sikh *sangat* was singing *shabads* in praise of God. Kesar Singh Chhibber quotes the well known verse of Guru Ram Das about the daily routine of a Sikh for worship. He quotes the lines from the *Bachittar Natak* in which Guru Gobind Singh says that they who regard him as God would go to hell; without the slightest doubt, he was a servant of God. The supreme God is detached from his creation and only they attain liberation who live in accordance with the Guru's *shabad*. With the intention of instituting a distinct Panth, Guru Gobind Singh declares that the Sikhs should not perform the rite of *bhaddan* on the death of a Sikh; instead they should bathe and distribute *prasad*. Along with *kirya* and *bhaddan*, the Sikhs should discard the sacred thread and the sacred mark. The symbol of Sikh identity was the *kesh*. Chhibber makes it clear that the Panth was to be made distinct from both Hindus and Muslims as the third Panth in order to fight against the Turks for the sake of *dharam*. Besides keeping the *kesh*, the Sikhs should bear arms, adopt the name 'Singh', and wear blue dress. The *hukamnamas* containing these injunctions with regard to the *rahit* were sent to the Masands. The other features of the Keshdhari *rahit* mentioned by Chhibber are *pahul* and the salutation of '*Vaheguruji ka Khalsa Vaheguruji ki fateh*'. The Keshdhari Singh should commit no evil deeds. He should not go to a prostitute. He should not drink alcohol, smoke tobacco, gamble, or steal. He should love *shabad-bani* and go to the *sat-sangat*. The Sikh of the Guru should love only his wife and no other woman. He should pursue the ideal of *nam, dan isnan* and follow an honest occupation. He should never compromise his faith and never adopt the way of renunciation. He should have complete trust in his Guru and should never serve any *sadh* or *sant*. The Sikh who follows this *rahit* attains liberation.<sup>47</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh sent *hukamnamas* to the sangats that they should not associate with the Masands, Minas, Dhir Malias and the Ram Raiyas. The *sangat* was the Guru's Khalsa and they should not give any *golak*, *dasvandh* or *chaliha* to any Masand. All sins were



washed by becoming '*Akal Purakh ka Khalsa*'. The Sikhs in the service of the government should help other Sikhs to the maximum extent possible. All the injunctions of the *rahit* were not obligatory for them but even they should observe four injunctions: not to smoke tobacco; not to observe *bhaddan*; not to kill an infant daughter and not to associate with any of the five groups which stood excommunicated. The purpose of creating a new Panth was to bestow sovereignty upon the Khalsa who belonged to the lowest castes. It is interesting to note that, despite his persistent effort to Brahmanize the Sikh tradition, Kesar Singh Chhibber in his own way mentions all the most important injunctions of the Khalsa *rahit*.<sup>48</sup>

Sarup Das Bhalla in his *Mahima Prakash* devotes a *sakhi* to Chandi Mata and the '*kharag jagg*' (fire sacrifice of the sword) for the institution of the Khalsa and the foundation of the Panth. Guru Gobind Singh did not wish to reveal his *siddhi*. Therefore, he thought of using the mediacy (*abahan*) of Chandi. The *dharam* of Chhatris (Kshatriyas) could be made manifest through her for destroying the *mlechh*. Sarup Das invokes God and the true Guru who is the treasure of grace. He praises the only one immortal and unknowable God who does not take birth, who is beyond comprehension and who has no limits. This is followed by an elaborate enunciation of the unity of the ten Gurus from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh. Baikunth is the place where the Guru resides and where the *sants*, *siddhs*, and *sadhs* speak the truth. This again is a reference to Anandpur. They who admire *gursikhkhi* are redeemed in both the worlds. Members of all the four castes from the Brahman to the Shudra join the *sangat* which is marked by equality and knowledge (*gian*).<sup>49</sup>

The *rahit* of the Khalsa baptized through the double edged sword obliged them to keep their hair unshorn, to adopt the epithet Singh with their names, and to wear blue dress. Guru Gobind Singh himself adopted the same form of the Singh warriors who were given the boon of *deg* and *teg*. They were not only distinct from Hindus and Turks but also a source of irritation for them like the mote in the eye.



Reciting the *bani* of the Gurus day and night and gifted with *deg* and *teg*, the wonderful Panth of the true Guru became sovereign even before possessing any territory.<sup>50</sup>

There are only a few other points related to Sikh beliefs and practices in the *Mahima Prakash*. Significantly, the author who is himself a Khatri is indifferent to the sacred thread. He quotes Guru Nanak's line: '*Nanak sachche nam bin kia tikka kia tagg*'. In the light of this, Guru Gobind Singh declares that whoever obliges a Sikh to wear the thread (*tagg*) would be liable to *tankhah*, and he who obliges the Sikh to remove the sacred thread would also be liable to *tankhah*. Sarup Das virtually quotes nearly the whole of the *Bachittar Natak* (*Apni Katha*) as Guru Gobind Singh's work. The Khalsa of the Guru should treat offerings as poison. Finally, Sarup Das refers to the memorials (*dehura*) raised for the younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh, Mata Sahib Devi and Mata Sundari.<sup>51</sup>

For Sukha Singh, none but Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh are the remover of misery and ignorance in the world. He invokes Ad Purkh Kartar and mentions his attributes as the creator of the universe who is present everywhere and in everything. Guru Gobind Singh invokes the aid of Goddess Kalika. For Sukha Singh, there is no difference between God and the sword (*kharag*). The ten Gurus from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh represent the same light. The *sangat* and Guru stand equated. When the family *purohit* brings the sacred thread for the young Guru Gobind Singh, he tells the *purohit* that, the sword is his *janju* (sacred thread); his God is not Brahma, Vishnu or Rudra (Shiva), but Mahakal who is his protector; the sword is received from him in lieu of the sacred thread. When the Khalsa Panth is instituted and *pahul* is administered, the sacred thread is removed. Sukha Singh goes on to add that Mahakal is the same entity as Akal. He is the creator of gods, men and demons, Krishan (Krishna) and Bishan (Vishnu), and the whole universe. Guru Gobind Singh is his devotee.<sup>52</sup>

Sukha Singh gives the episode of the Goddess in connection with the institution of the Khalsa with only slight variations. It is explicitly stated that the institution of the Khalsa Panth was the purpose for which the Guru had been sent into the world. The narrative closes with the statement that Guru Gobind Singh had the distinction of being alone in invoking the Goddess with success. That was why this story was being sung in the world. Sukha Singh remains rather close to Koer Singh in his description of the creation of the Khalsa as the third Panth, and his account of the Khalsa *rahit*. The Khalsa should believe only in the 'Wielder of the Sword' and take refuge in 'Sri Astuj'. They were to bear arms and to fight for the sake of *dharam* to establish everlasting *raj*. They should never associate with the *mlechh* Turks; instead, they should face them in the field of battle. The status given to the Khalsa was not enjoyed by other men. The light of *dharam* transformed men into gods. They were given the boon of all the four *padaraths* (*dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*). The term used by Sukha Singh for the position of the Khalsa is *raj-jog*, symbolic of the combination of spiritual and temporal activity. They should appropriate nothing but the *shabad*, and they should go to the *sadh-sangat* day and night. Their superiority over Hindus and Turks was made manifest to the world. The *kachh* and the *kesh* constituted the essential part of their *rahit*. The Khalsa were to eat together irrespective of their earlier castes. Through baptism of the double edged sword all the four castes became one. Anyone could join the Khalsa. The Brahman, the Khatri, the Vaish and the Shudar ate together as Sikhs. They discarded the common beliefs of the people, the Brahmanical scriptures, and the praises of Ram and Krishan. They did not observe *bhaddan*, *shradh* or *jathere*. The *sangats* everywhere became the Khalsa. Eventually everyone would take refuge with the Khalsa. The same *rahit* was meant for the entire body of the Khalsa. The Khalsa Panth was to triumph in the end.<sup>53</sup>

### In Persian and European Sources

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, Sujan Rai Bhandari observes that there were many mystics, discoursers, ascetics and prayerful men among the followers of Guru Nanak. The essence of their worship was the reading of Gurbani which they sang, using musical instruments. The faith which the Sikhs had in their Guru was seldom seen in other religious groups. They had the name of the Guru on their tongue and considered it meritorious to attend on travellers. 'If a person arrives at midnight and takes the name of Baba Nanak, though he be a stranger and unknown person, even a thief, robber, or a person of evil conduct, they treat him as a brother and friend and serve him in a manner proper to his needs'. Sujan Rai Bhandari looks upon the Udasis as the followers of Guru Nanak. They occupied themselves in praising and glorifying God. The essence of their worship consisted of reading and singing the Gurbani. In this description there is no difference between the religious beliefs and practices of the Sikhs in general and those of the Udasis.<sup>54</sup>

In the eighteenth-century Persian sources we seldom come upon a long statement on the beliefs and practices of the Sikhs. In a report from Bahadur Shah's court dated 24 May 1710 there is a telling statement on the institution of the Khalsa. 'Guru Gobind Singh dismissed the *masands* by one stroke of pen and established the Khalsa. It was settled by him that the Sikhs of the Khalsa would not cut the hair of the head, moustaches and beard and would be known as the Sikhs of the Khalsa'. The reporter takes notice of the conflict within the Sikh community, between the Khalsa Sikhs and others, notably the Khatris, affecting the old patterns of matrimony.<sup>55</sup> According to Muhammad Qasim Lahauri, the followers of Guru Gobind Singh gave up the sacred thread for the chain of iron and allowed the hair of the head, beard and moustaches to grow in imitation of what Guru Gobind Singh had started doing in a state of mourning. The term Khalsa is used for the followers of Guru Gobind Singh. The others are regarded

as servants (*chakar*). This may be a reference to the claim of the Khalsa to be sovereign. In any case, many low class people are said to have become the followers of Guru Gobind Singh for securing larger means of livelihood. At a big tank known as *amritsar* in Chak Guru, lacs of Sikhs gathered on the Baisakhi day for bathing. The festival was marked by illuminations and by dance and sports. This may be a reference to the secular entertainment at the time of the Baisakhi fair.<sup>56</sup>

According to Mirza Muhammad, who was an eye witness to the entry of Banda Singh Bahadur and his followers in Delhi as prisoners in 1716, the Sikhs riding on camels kept singing and reciting 'melodious verses', showing 'no sign of humility and submission on their faces'.<sup>57</sup> Khafi Khan refers to the slogans of '*fateh darshan*' and '*sachcha padshah*' raised by the followers of Banda Bahadur during the siege of Lohgarh.<sup>58</sup> Rai Chaturman Saksena, who completed his *Chahar Gulshan* in 1759-60, looked upon the Nanak-Panthis as opposed to the *Veda*, but thought of Guru Nanak as a Vaishnav who worshipped Ram. Their separate faith derived from the innovations of Guru Nanak's spiritual successors.<sup>59</sup>

Tahmas Khan refers to the *chaudhari* of Sodhi Ram Das who enjoyed the reputation of a spiritual guide of the Sikhs. This appears to be a reference to the Sodhi Guru at Kartarpur. Tahmus Khan also refers to the gathering of the Sikhs for bathing at Chak Guru (Ramdaspur) in 1757.<sup>60</sup> In the newsreports from Delhi during the years 1759-65 there are references to the Sikhs coming to the tank of *amritsar* in Chak Guru for the purpose of bathing at the time of Baisakhi, Dusehra, Diwali and Holi. The newsreports also refer to '*karahi Guru Sahib*' in a context that suggests that it was a collection made from non-Sikhs for maintaining the institution of *langar* (presumably at Chak Guru).<sup>61</sup>

Qazi Nur Muhammad, who accompanied Ahmed Shah Abdali in his campaign against the Sikhs in 1764-65, refers to the Sikhs following a separate path from that of the Hindus. They had 'a distinct religion of their own'.<sup>62</sup> Ghulam Ali states that if the *pir* (Guru) of the

Sikhs told them to cut off their heads they would do it immediately upon getting a hint of the order. They were hostile to *hukka* smokers but took pot after pot of *bhang* (hemp). Their salutation was *Vaheguruji di fateh*.<sup>63</sup>

Turning to the European observers, we find that Charles Wilkins visited Patna on his way to Benares in 1781 to see the activity of a Sikh 'college'. He observed the worship which, he was told, was performed five times daily. It consisted of reading of the *Granth Sahib*, singing of *shabads* to the accompaniment of a small drum and two or three cymbals. The congregation joined in chorus and then they stood up for a long prayer. This was followed by the distribution of *karha* prepared with flour and sugar mixed with clarified butter. In his conversations with two of the Sikhs present there Wilkins learnt that, apart from of the *Granth Sahib* in Punjabi and in Gurmukhi script, there was another Granth which was held in almost as much esteem, and it was composed in a language similar to the Hindwi.<sup>64</sup> This was presumably the *Granth* known as *Dasvin Patshahi da Granth*. We can see that the observations made by Wilkins refer to a Gurdwara in which both the *Granth*s were present and the *Adi Granth* was used for recitation and *kirtan*, followed by *ardas* and the distribution of *karha prasad*.

Travelling through the Punjab in the 1880s, George Forster notices the Sikhs as a 'new and extraordinary people'. The founder of the 'Sikh Nation', Guru Nanak, had forbidden the worship of images. The only object which they admitted into their place of worship was the *Granth*. Their prayer was addressed to one God. Forster observed that there were many essential differences between the religious code of the Hindus and that of the Sikhs. At the same time, however, there were strong features of similarity in their ground-work. The essential deviation from the Hindu system appeared to be the mode of initiation which removed the barriers of caste and occupation. However, there was no difference between Sikhs and Hindus in terms of the patterns of matrimony and commensality. The one item which was shared by all the Sikhs was the sacred food known as *prasad*. Forster refers to the



Khalsa as the 'military Sikhs' who kept unshorn hair, bore iron bracelets on the left hand, and prohibited the use of tobacco. These features form the essence of their creed and distinguish them from other 'Nations'.<sup>65</sup>

In James Browne's estimation, the Sikh system appears to bear the same kind of relation to the Hindu religion as the Protestant did to the Romish, 'retaining all the essential principles, but being abridged of most of its ceremonies, as well as of the subordinate objects of veneration'. In the beginning, the Sikhs are said to have formed merely a speculating, quiet and inoffensive sect. But persecution by the Mughal state eventually transformed the Sikhs into a political community. Browne refers to the dark blue dress of the followers of Guru Gobind Singh who began to hold their general meetings at the holy tank of Amritsar. They did not use tobacco but they drank spirits and *bhang*. Every distinction was abolished at the time of admitting a proselyte. The baptized Singh wore a steel ring round one of his wrists and allowed his hair and beard to grow to full length. The union of religion and politics by Guru Gobind Singh made the movement popular.<sup>66</sup>

John Griffiths refers to the claim of Guru Nanak to 'a divine revelation' which in Griffith's view was 'pretended'. It is interesting to note that Griffiths looks upon this claim as a way of divesting the Guru of obedience to all human authority. The tenets of Guru Nanak were collected in a book known as '*Granth ji*'. It was kept at a place called Amritsar where the Sikhs assembled in hundreds of thousands twice a year, in April and October. The Sikhs received converts from every caste, a point in which they differed most materially from the Hindus. They admitted Muslims also into their faith but on the condition that they ate pork. The use of *hukka* was absolutely forbidden for the Sikhs but they were liberal in the use of *bhang* and opium. They ate all kinds of animal food, except beef from which they abstained scrupulously. They never shaved their head or beard. The most common dress was of deep blue colour. They wore large turbans with a piece of iron chain.



From their belief in the worship of one supreme God, it could be safely inferred that they possessed many of the good qualities of humanity.<sup>67</sup>

In his *History of the Reign of Shah Aulum*, published in 1798, William Franklin refers to the *Granth* as the scripture of the Sikhs. Embodied in this book was a system of religion composed from 'the speculative and contemplative theories' of the Islamic conception of the divine. Guru Nanak delivered this system to his followers as of divine origin. The harmless and inoffensive devotees of Guru Nanak and his successors were transformed into a political entity by the aggressive actions of the officers of Aurangzeb who put Guru Tegh Bahadur to death. Franklin states that much information had not yet been acquired on the religion of the Sikhs. It was stated by a historian that for admitting proselytes they compelled them to perform an act equally abhorrent to both Hindu and Muslims. Nevertheless, they continued to gain numerous converts. Franklin is referring to the Khalsa when he states that an ample turban of blue cloth covered their head.<sup>68</sup>

The observations made by George Thomas on the Sikhs are a part of William Franklin's *Military Memoirs of George Thomas* published in 1803. Thomas was interested primarily in the military affairs of the Sikhs but he does refer to some other features of the Sikhs. They never smoked tobacco but they were not averse to drinking spirituous liquors even to an immoderate excess. They freely took opium, *bhang* and other intoxicating drugs. They did not allow their hair or beards to be cut. They wore bangles of gold, silver, brass or iron, according to the circumstances of the wearer.<sup>69</sup>

Captain Matthews in his tour of the Punjab in 1808, published in *The Asiatic Annual Register* for the year 1809, carried the impression that the Sikhs had a higher veneration for truth than the other peoples of Asia. He observes that the city of Amritsar derived its name from a pool of immortality known as *amritsar*. He had the wrong impression that the *Granth* installed in the Harmandir, which was in Gurmukhi script, was written by Guru Gobind Singh. He noticed that choirs assembled there at 3 o'clock in the morning and chanted their hymns

during the day, and till late at night. There were two or three other sacred spots in the complex where sacred singing was performed. A large number of women went to bathe in the tank early in the morning. He refers to the ceremony of initiation into the Singh fold performed by the Akalis at Amritsar. A significant feature of the ceremony was that the sacred thread of the proselyte was removed. He became distinct from the Hindus who considered him an apostate. There was no restriction on his food and drink. The Sikhs, as distinguished from the Singh, are said to have retained the institutions of the Hindu faith.<sup>70</sup>

Colonel John Malcolm, who was with the army of Lord Lake in the Punjab in 1805, published *A Sketch of the Sikhs* in the *Asiatic Researches* first and then in a book form in London. The third section of his book was devoted entirely to the religion of the Sikhs. However, his observations on the religion of the Sikhs were not confined to the third section. For example, he states elsewhere that Kartarpur (Dera Baba Nanak) continued to be a place of religious resort and worship, and a small piece of Guru Nanak's garment was exhibited to the pilgrims as a sacred relic. The title *Adi Granth* was given to the Sikh scripture to distinguish it from the *Dasven Padshah ka Granth* which in Malcolm's view was composed by Guru Gobind Singh. Converts to the Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh were admitted from all 'tribes'; the rules by which the Hindus had remained 'chained' for a long time were broken.<sup>71</sup>

Malcolm says that Guru Gobind Singh's objective was 'to make all Sikhs equals'. He gave to the Khalsa the name of 'Singh' which had been the exclusive prerogative of the Rajputs earlier. The disciples of Guru Gobind Singh were required to devote themselves to arms and to have steel about them in any shape. They were required to wear a blue dress and to allow their hair to grow. Their salutation was '*Vahigurji ka Khalsa, Vahiguruji ki fateh*'. The Guru sought to separate his followers from all other classes of India, both by their appearance and by their religion. The scope of his *Granth* was not limited to religious subjects; it was filled with accounts of his own battles and it was written with a

view to stirring up a spirit of valour among his followers. In Malcolm's view, the *Granth* of Guru Gobind Singh was as much revered among the Sikhs as the *Adi Granth*. The Akalis represented the original uniform of a true Sikh of Guru Gobind Singh. The followers of Guru Nanak, who did not conform to the institutions of Guru Gobind Singh, are described as 'non-conformist Sikhs'. They were called 'Khalasa'.<sup>72</sup>

In his account of the *gurmata*, Malcolm states that the Akalis had 'usurped the sole direction of the religious affairs at Amritsar'. Consequently, they were the leading men in the council held there. They initiated converts and had almost the sole direction of the religious ceremonies at Amritsar where they resided as its defenders. They had a *bunga* on the bank of the sacred tank, but they also held property. They imposed fines upon the principal chiefs, accusing them of crimes. If they refused to pay, they were prevented from performing their religious ceremonies at Amritsar. Even the most powerful of the Sikh chiefs desired to conciliate them. The use of tobacco was forbidden to all Sikhs but they were allowed to indulge in spirituous liquors which they drank to excess. The use of opium was common among them. They also took *bhang*.<sup>73</sup>

Malcolm thought of the religion of the Sikhs as 'a creed of pure deism'. This was meant to underline that the Sikh faith was strongly monotheistic. However, sublime truths are said to have been blended with the absurdities of Hindu mythology and the fables of Islam. Guru Nanak's purpose was not to destroy but to reform the religion of his forefathers. He wanted to reconcile both Hindus and Muslims to his own doctrine by persuading them that their beliefs and usages were unworthy of the God whom they adored. Guru Nanak made 'no material invasion' of either the civil or religious usages of the Hindus; he may therefore be considered 'more in the light of the reformer than of the subverter of Hindu religion'. Therefore, the Sikhs who adhered to his tenets, without adopting those of Guru Gobind Singh, were 'hardly to be distinguished from the great mass of Hindu population'.<sup>74</sup>

It was reserved for Guru Gobind Singh to give a new character to the religion of his followers; he established institutions and usages which separated them from other Hindus, and abolished the distinctions of caste. The abolition of caste was a necessary and indispensable prelude to arm the native population of India against 'their foreign tyrants'. His religious doctrine was meant to be popular and it promised equality. Every Khalsa Singh was equal and had equal title to the good things of this world and the blessings of the future life. In order to underline the distinction between the two, Malcolm states that wherever the religion of Guru Gobind Singh prevailed the Hindu institutions vanished. In his view, the admission of proselytes, the abolition of the distinction of caste, the eating of all kind of flesh except that of the cow, the form of religious worship, and the general devotion of the Singhs to arms were ordinances which could not be reconciled with Hindu mythology. This was the reason why the religion of the Sikhs was obnoxious to the Brahmans and the higher castes of the Hindus, and why it was popular with the lower orders.<sup>75</sup>

Malcolm mentions that the writings of Guru Nanak and his successors incorporated in the *Adi Granth* were read or recited upon every solemn occasion. They were all in praise of God, religion and virtue, and against impiety and immortality. Some extracts translated from it appeared to be worthy of that admiration which was bestowed upon it by the Sikhs. Malcolm gives English translation of verses from the *So- Dar*, which showed that Guru Nanak grounded his religion entirely on the unity of God. Malcolm reiterates that the religious tenets and usages introduced by Guru Nanak remained current till the time of Guru Gobind Singh who made 'so complete a change in the sacred usages and civil habits of his followers, that he gave them an entirely new character'. The two *Granth*s were considered as equally holy in every respect. Malcolm gives a long quotation from the *Bachittar Natak* to clarify Guru Gobind Singh's idea of his divine mission.<sup>76</sup>

For Malcolm, the principal religious institution of Guru Gobind Singh was the *pahul*, or the ceremony by which a convert was initiated

into the fold of Singhs. He was instructed to devote himself to arms for the defence of the Khalsa commonwealth and the destruction of its enemies, to wear his hair, and put on a blue dress. Malcolm believed that the mode of initiation introduced by Guru Gobind Singh was still current among the Sikhs. He gives a quotation from Bhai Gurdas (actually the *Var Bhagauti*) to illustrate the esteem in which Guru Gobind Singh was held by the Sikhs. Malcolm goes on to quote verses which express a spirit of hostility against Muslims and rejection of the sacred writings of the Hindus. He refers to the dying words of Guru Gobind Singh in which he delivered the Khalsa over to immortal God and told them that he would preserve them; they should read the *Granth* and attend to its tenets; whoever remained true to the commonwealth would be aided by the Guru.<sup>77</sup>

Though written in Persian, the *Tashrih al-Aqwam* was authored by James Skinner who was in the service of the East India Company. He equates the Sikhs with the followers of Guru Gobind Singh. The essence of their worship consisted of the reading of the verses of their Guru which they recited with song and music. They did not cut the hair of their head, arm-pits and pubes. It is interesting to note that he explains this custom with reference to the worship of the Goddess by Guru Gobind Singh at Naina Devi. The Sikhs did not believe in anyone except their Master whose *bani* they worshipped. Anyone from any caste, whether a Brahman or a sweeper, could join the order and no distinction was made among them in eating and drinking. They avoided the razor and smoking (*hukka*) completely. Unlike the Hindus, they did not purify the ground with water and mud for cooking their meal. They ate all kinds of meat except beef and they consumed alcoholic drinks. They avoided the *halal* and ate the *jhatka* meat. They did not wear red turbans. Most of them put on blue turbans and wore short breeches (*kachh*). They followed the profession of soldiery, and consisted of two groups: the Akalis and the other Singhs who were not so particular about their dress as the Akalis.<sup>78</sup>



### In Retrospect

The *Rahitnamas* lay down what the Khalsa should believe and practise as their faith. Besides the belief in ten Gurus, the Guru-Granth and the Guru-Panth, a great stress is laid on the unity of God. A number of epithets are used for him, besides Vaheguru and Akal Purkh. His will prevails everywhere. He alone should be the object of worship. The early *Rahitnamas* rule out the worship of a *marhi*, a grave, an idol of stone, a god, a goddess, or a *pir*. These injunctions are reiterated in the *Rahitnama* of Daya Singh with reference to gods and goddesses, *pirs*, *marhis*, and graves. The Khalsa should avoid the worshippers of Sakhi Sarwar and the followers of *faqirs*. It is explicitly stated that the only medium of worship for the Khalsa is the *shabad* of the Guru.

A Khalsa should observe a daily regimen of individual and congregational worship. At home early in the morning, after bathing and before eating, he should recite the *Japuji* and the *Jaap*. In the evening he must recite the *So-Dar* and the *Rahiras*, and before going to sleep he should recite the *Sohila*. This is the necessary minimum. He should read the *bani* of the Guru and reflect on it. In this connection, Daya Singh mentions also the *Akal Ustat* and *Chandi di Var*. A Khalsa should go to the *dharamsal* in the morning and listen to *kirtan*, participate in the *ardas* and receive *karha prasad*. He should conduct himself well in relation to men and women present in the *sangat* (also called *diwan*). He should make offerings to the Guru (*Granth Sahib*). The way in which *karha prasad* was to be prepared and distributed is mentioned, indicating the importance given to it. The ideal of religious life of the Khalsa is embodied in the familiar trio of 'nam, dan, isnan'. Among the practices explicitly prohibited are pilgrimage to places traditionally regarded sacred, ritual fasting, *puja-archa*, *jantar-mantar*, *tarpan*, *gayatri*, *sandhya*. All of these were Brahmanical practices.

Some of the other features of the religious life of the Khalsa, or what was regarded as religious, are to take *pahul*, keep the kesh



unshorn, adopt the name 'Singh', bear arms, wear *kachh*, keep the *kangha*, use the salutation of 'Vaheguruji ka Khalsa, Vaheguru ji ki fateh', never to use tobacco in any form and never eat the *halal* meat, to go on pilgrimage to places associated with the Gurus, like Amritsar, Anandpur, Patna and Abchnagar, and to celebrate Gurpurabs or important occasions in the lives of the Gurus.

In the other Sikh literature too the unity of God is emphasized. The doctrines of Guru-Granth and Guru-Panth are upheld, and the unity of the ten Gurus is emphasized or taken for granted. In some of the works, however, it is stated that Guru Gobind Singh worshipped the Goddess for instituting the Khalsa. Evidently, her role is limited and she is not the Supreme Deity to be worshipped. A few works tend to assimilate Guru Nanak with the earlier incarnations of Vishnu but is generally regarded as the incarnation of Janak, which signifies his equal interest in spiritual and temporal matters. Kesar Singh Chhibber tended to Brahmanize the Sikh tradition but even he mentions all the most important injunctions of the Khalsa *rahit*. A few works refer to the dress of the Khalsa. Some of the works refer to the construction of memorials (*dehrua*) at the places associated with the Gurus, and Sikh martyrs. On the whole, the common ground between the *Rahitnamas* and the other works is far larger than their differences.

The Persian writers refer to the reading of Gurbani and singing of the hymns of the *Granth Sahib* as the essence of Sikh worship. The 'Sikhs of the Khalsa' did not cut their hair; they wore a chain of iron in place of the sacred thread. They visited Amritsar at the time of Baisakhi in large numbers for bathing. They were separate from the Hindus and opposed to the *Vedas*. They were hostile to *hukka* smokers. Their salutation was 'Vaheguru ki fateh'. The Sikhs were monotheists who worshipped the Supreme God; they did not worship idols.

The European writers refer to the *dharamsal* as the centre of Sikh worship which consisted of the reading of the *Granth*, singing of hymns, offering of *ardas*, and distribution of *karha prasad*. The mode of initiation into the Khalsa removed all barriers of caste and occupation.

The Khalsa kept unshorn hair, bore iron bracelets, and wore a blue dress. Their salutation was ‘*Vaheguruji ka Khalsa, Vaheguru ji ki fateh*’. They never used tobacco. They visited Amritsar twice a year in large numbers. Choirs assembled there at the Harmandir, where the *Granth* was installed, and chanted hymns from 3 o’ clock in the morning till late at night. Women too bathed in the tank. Another place of religious resort was Kartarpur (Dera Baba Nanak) where a piece of Guru Nanak’s garment was shown as a sacred relic.

Thus, many of the religious beliefs and practices recommended for the Khalsa in the *Rahitnamas* figure in the other Sikh literature. The Persian writers do not have much to say about Sikh beliefs and practices. The European writers have more information than the Persian writers but both mention the basic features. In spite of some differences in the statements, the degree of consensus is pretty large. In other words, much that is stated in the Persian and European sources confirms the normative statements in the *Rahitnamas*. Understandably, the Sikh sources provide much more information than the non-Sikh sources.

#### NOTES

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3. *Tankhahnama*, in *Bhai Nand Lal Granthavali*, pp.195-6.
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*Rahitnama* is so short that there may not be much point giving specific reference to each statement.

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8. *Prem Sumarag Granth arthat Khalsai Jiwan Jach* (Punjabi), ed. Randhir Singh, Jalandhar: New Book Company, 1965, rpt., pp. 1-6.
9. Ibid., pp. 6-7.
10. Ibid., p. 7.
11. Ibid., pp.7-10
12. Ibid., p. 148.
13. Ibid., pp.148-51.
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15. Ibid., pp. 59, 63, 66, 72-4, 76-8.
16. Ibid., pp. 72,78.
17. Ibid., pp.58-60, 62, 65,
18. *Bhai Desa Singh Rahitnama*, in *Rahitname*, pp.128-30,135.
19. Ibid., pp.130-32.
20. Ibid., pp. 129,132-3.
21. Ibid., pp. 132-3.
22. *Daya Singh Rahitnama*, in *Rahitname*, pp.68-70.
23. Ibid., pp. 71-2.
24. Ibid., pp 74-6.
25. Ibid., pp. 69-74.
26. *Varan Bhai Gurdas* (Punjabi), ed. Giani Hazara Singh, Amritsar: Khalsa Samachar, 1962, 4<sup>th</sup> edn., Var 41, pp. 662-73.
27. Ibid., Var 41, pauris 8, 11-13, 19-21, 23-7. J.S. Grewal, 'Celebrating Freedom: The *Var* of Gurdas', *Sikh Ideology Polity and Social Order. From Guru Nanak to Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2007, rev. and enlarged edn., pp. 113-14,116,118.

28. *Varan Bhai Gurdas*, Var 41, pauris 1-6, 17-18, 21-4. See also, Grewal, 'Celebrating Freedom: The Var of Gurdas', pp.114-18.
29. *Varan Bhai Gurdas*, Var 41, pauris 15-17. See also, Grewal, 'Celebrating Freedom: The Var of Gurdas', pp.116-17.
30. Sainapat, *Shri Guru Sobha*, ed. Shamsheer Singh Ashok, Amritsar: Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, 1967, pp.10-13, 33, 35, 38-40, 49-50, 95, 117.
31. Ibid., pp. 9-15, 22-3, 30, 32, 35, 96, 101, 137.
32. Ibid., pp. 36-9, 48, 71, 132-4.
33. Ibid., pp. 48-9, 130-2.
34. Ibid., pp. 10-11, 35-7, 42-3, 46, 98, 101, 104.
35. Ibid., pp. 30-31, 33-34, 37, 43-5.
36. Usage of these terms are frequent but special interest in these terms occurs on pp.30, 32-3, 35-6, 39-41, 43, 64, 66, 76-8, 80-1, 84-5, 90, 105.
37. Much of the Khalsa Rahit is found in two chapters of the *Sri Gur Sobha*, pp. 29-41. See also, pp. 12-13, 42-3, 47, 51-4, 105, 131.
38. Ibid., pp. 10, 11, 15, 64, 90, 94.
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43. Ibid., pp. 110-29.
44. Ibid., pp. 130-1, 136, 138-9.
45. Ibid., pp. 277, 281-2, 284-5.

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48. Ibid., pp. 131-42.
49. Sarup Das Bhalla, *Guru Nanak Mahima arthat Mahima Prakash* (Punjabi), ed. Shamsheer Singh Ashok and Gobind Singh Lamba, Patiala: Language Department, 1970, vol. I, pp.1-4. Sarup Das Bhalla, *Mahima Prakash* (Punjabi), ed. Gobind Singh Lamba and Khazan Singh, Patiala: Languages Department, 1971, vol. II., pp. 751-2, 761, 766, 778, 785-6, 804-6, 820-4.
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57. Mirza Muhammad, '*Ibratnama*', in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, p.140.
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59. Rai Chaturman Saksena, *Chahar Gulshan*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, p.164.
60. Tahmas Khan, *Tahmasnama*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, pp.174, 176.
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76. Ibid., pp. 168-73, 179-87, 190-4.
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## Chapter IV

### RITES AND RITUALS

This discussion on Sikh rites and rituals proceeds on the premise that Guru Nanak and his successors not only commented on the futility of the existing Brahmanical rituals, but also recommended departure from these. While adapting elements from the prevalent practices, the Gurus appear to have meaningfully integrated these with their theological, ethical, social (and later, political) concerns. Consequently, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, there is evidence of the distinctly Sikh rites and rituals taking shape. The evidence of their evolution is contained in the *Guru Granth Sahib* itself which may be supplemented by the other Sikh and non-Sikh sources.

#### 1

#### Concern of the Gurus with Rites and Rituals

In *A Study of Guru Granth Sahib* published recently, Professor J.S. Grewal underlines the concern of the Sikh Gurus with the 'rites of passage' dealing with birth, initiation, marriage and death.<sup>1</sup> He suggests that the message of the Gurus not only presented a conscious departure from the existing religious beliefs and practices, but also tended to break out of the pattern of traditional ceremonies and customs which were not in consonance with their worldview. For example, Guru Nanak underlines the futility of wearing the sacred thread as a symbol of distinction between the higher and lower castes which had no relevance for realization of God, or for the daily life of those who were entitled to wear it. He discards the notion of pollution (*sutak*) which can be washed away by divine knowledge.<sup>2</sup> In his *Japuji*, which contains the essence of his theology and which is recited every morning, Guru Nanak rejects ritual purification and bathing as well as ritual charities.<sup>3</sup> His song of joy (*Sohila*) is relevant equally for wedding and death (which leads to union with God).<sup>4</sup> The *Alahnian* of Guru Nanak were meant to be sung in place of the traditional mourning songs.<sup>5</sup> The performance of *shraddh* to feed the dead ancestors, or the

practice of offering rice balls (*pind*) to the dead, through the mediacy of Brahmans is ridiculed. The popular practice of floating lamps in water as a part of obituary rites is depicted by Guru Nanak as meaningless.<sup>6</sup>

Guru Ram Das's compositions called the *Ghorian* and the *Lavan* become significant in view of the importance of the institution of marriage in Sikhism which enjoins upon the Sikhs to be householders. The first of these compositions replaces the folk songs sung by women before and at the time of the bridegroom mounting the mare (*ghori*) for departure with the wedding party.<sup>7</sup> The term *lavan* is used for the short composition referring to the four rounds (*lavan*) taken by the bridegroom, followed by the bride, which eventually became the core of the Sikh wedding ceremony.<sup>8</sup>

The *Anand* composed by Guru Amar Das, celebrating the experience of joy in liberation, began to be sung or recited on major occasions like birth, marriage and death, as well as on all important occasions in a Sikh's life.<sup>9</sup> Guru Ram Das says that this true song of joy is to be sung in the true house where truth is meditated upon. Guru Arjan invites the Sikhs to listen to the *Anand* so that all their wishes are fulfilled. It is also likely that this composition was sung to celebrate the birth of his son Hargobind.<sup>10</sup> Guru Gobind Singh included it among the five compositions to be recited at the time of the baptism of the double edged sword.<sup>11</sup>

Guru Amar Das disapproves of *sati* cherished by the Brahmans and practised by the upper classes; he also condemns the practice of female infanticide prevalent among them.<sup>12</sup> The *Sadd* composed by Baba Sunder,<sup>13</sup> refers to Guru Amar Das enjoining the Sikhs to perform *kirtan* or sing God's praises after his death in place of the traditional post-mortem rites including *kirya* and *pind-pattal*.<sup>14</sup> In other words, his last wish was that no Brahmanical rites should be performed after his death.

The relevance of the injunctions explicitly contained in the *Guru Granth Sahib* for a Sikh's life is self-evident. Some of the existing practices related to the rites of passage, whether popular or

Brahmanical, were to be discarded in favour of new practices which can be regarded as 'Sikh'. Essentially, the '*pandit*, the kingpin of the Brahmanical system', has no role to play in these procedures.<sup>15</sup>

Though there is no explicit statement in the *Guru Granth Sahib* about the place of collective supplication (*ardas*) in connection with the rites of passage, it is likely that no ceremony could be considered complete without this essential feature of the Sikh way of worship. A stanza in Guru Arjan's *Sukhmani* now serves as a prelude to the formal *ardas*. References to supplication occur frequently in the Gurus' compositions: Guru Nanak lays emphasis on offering *ardas* with a feeling of complete surrender; Guru Angad enjoins that it should be offered standing; and Guru Arjan underlines that it should be offered with folded hands.<sup>16</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that a mid-seventeenth century non-Sikh source like the *Dabistan-i Mazahib* comments on the distinctiveness of the 'custom' of praying 'together' among the followers of Guru Nanak.<sup>17</sup> Another contemporary and an insider, Bhai Gurdas, testifies that a Sikh's daily religious routine (*nit-kirya*) ended with the offering of prayer followed by the sharing of *prasad* by all.<sup>18</sup> The practice of praying collectively and partaking of *prasad* at the end was apparently well entrenched by the turn of the seventeenth century. The *Nasihatinama* (or *Tankahnama*), associated with Bhai Nand Lal, attaches great importance to the correct method of preparing the *karha prasad*:

Now listen to the way of preparing *prasad* in the cauldron: the three ingredients (wheat flour, sugar and *ghee*) must be in equal quantities; the floor must be swept before it is plastered; the utensils must be scrubbed and washed; the person to prepare the *prasad* must bathe before entering the cooking place; he must recite only *Vaheguru* all the time; a new pitcher should be filled with fresh water meant for use; when ready, (the *Prasad*) should be placed on a *chauki* (low stool); praises of God should be sung. The whole point (of this procedure), Nand Lal, is this: the *prasad* gets rightly prepared through God's grace.<sup>19</sup>

When Guru Gobind Singh instituted the Khalsa and introduced the baptism of the double edged sword (*khande ki pahul*), a method of initiation was already in existence among the Sikhs. The term often used for this is *charan amrit*. The question, however, is whether like 'most religious sects' in India, the Sikhs also followed the ritual of initiation in which 'the toe of a *guru* was dipped into water' and 'then given to the new initiate to drink'- as suggested by Professor Harjot Oberoi?<sup>20</sup> Dr Jodh Singh tends to support this assumption on the basis of his reading of Bhai Gurdas.<sup>21</sup> Bhai Kahn Singh of Nabha suggests that 'during the pontificate of the nine Gurus an initiate was given the *charan-amrit* to drink which was called *charan-pahul* or *pag-pahul*', but he does not explain it further.<sup>22</sup> Since the phrase 'dust of the feet' (*charan-dhur*) occurs frequently in the *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas, one may ask: the dust of whose feet was used for initiation?

Significantly, Bhai Gurdas seems to be referring to 'the dust of the feet of the Sikhs of the Guru'.<sup>23</sup> The compositions of Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan in particular dwell on the sanctity of the dust of the feet of the men of God (interchangeable, among others, with the Sikh, Sadh, Sant, and Har-jaan), which is said to be more efficacious than pilgrimage to all the sacred places.<sup>24</sup> It is unlikely that, given their stress on humility in these compositions, the Gurus would approve of an initiate taking the water touched by their toe. This assumption is also supported by the centrality of congregational worship in the Sikh religious practice, and the importance of *sadh-sangat* in the compositions of all the Gurus.<sup>25</sup> Even the mode of initiation described by the *Dabistan*,<sup>26</sup> though a variant on Bhai Gurdas, does underline that it could not possibly be the Guru's toe. In all probability, it was the 'dust of the feet' of the Sikhs, that is, those who had advanced on the path of the Gurus, which was used for preparing *charan amrit* for initiation.

The picture with regard to the normative aspects of Sikh rites and rituals for the eighteenth century, is much clearer, thanks to the *Rahitnamas* supported by the *Gurbilas* literature and generally

corroborated by the Persian and English sources of the period. We propose to take note of the evidence of each source separately first and then to look at the totality of evidence regarding Sikh rites and rituals by the end of the century.

## 2

### **Rites and Rituals in the *Rahitnamas***

There is consensus among historians and the scholars of Sikh literature that the *Rahitnama* genre of literature developed in the eighteenth century.<sup>27</sup> A compound of the Punjabi word *rahit* and the Persian word *nama*, a *Rahitnama* is a manual on the mode of living. By now, eight *Rahitnamas* of this period have been identified. In his systematic and detailed study of the published *Rahitnamas* brought out in 2003, Professor W.H. McLeod places six of these before the end of the eighteenth century: the *Prashan-Uttar* in 1695, the *Tankhahnama* soon after 1711, the *Sakhi Rahit Patshahi 10* in the mid-1730s, the *Prahlad Singh Rahitnama* in the 1730s, the *Chaupa Singh Rahitnama* in 1740-65 (with the 1740s as a strong probability), and the *Daya Singh Rahitnama* in the last quarter of the century. He is not sure whether to place the *Desa Singh Rahitnama* in the late eighteenth or the early nineteenth century. He places the *Prem Sumarag* in the 1820s, that is during the reign of Ranjit Singh, though in his latest publication Professor McLeod is inclined, albeit reluctantly, to place this work in the late eighteenth century.<sup>28</sup>

It is important to note that the recent researches have changed our understanding about the dating of the *Rahitnamas*. There is no debate so far on the date of the *Prashan-Uttar* and the *Daya Singh Rahitnama*, placed respectively towards the end of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The contents of the *Desa Singh Rahitnama* suggest to us that it should be placed in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. However, the *Prahlad Singh Rahitnama* is now placed in 1697 rather than the 1730s.<sup>29</sup> Likewise, the *Sakhi Rahit* and the *Tankhahnama* are now placed after the institution of the Khalsa but before the death of Guru Gobind Singh.<sup>30</sup> There is enough reason to



place the *rahit* portion of the *Chaupa Singh Rahitnama* along with its prologue in the period before the death of Guru Gobind Singh, whereas its narrative of his life and the account of the penance for transgressions (*tankhah*) appear to have been added in the 1740s.<sup>31</sup> Significantly, the compilation of the *Prem Sumarag* is now placed in the lifetime of the tenth Guru, resulting from 'a collective effort of many *gurmukhs/muktas*'.<sup>32</sup>

As suggested in the prologue of the *Chaupa Singh Rahitnama*, the Guru himself desired the code of conduct to be drafted collectively and disseminated among the Sikhs. While laying emphasis on consensus, he expressly wanted the *Guru Granth Sahib* to be the touchstone of the desirable conduct of a Sikh.<sup>33</sup> The six early *Rahitnamas* – four of these short and two long ones – appear to be the product of the circumstances preparatory to, and in consequence of, the institution of the Khalsa. Guru Gobind Singh wanted to weed out the followers of the rival claimants to Guruship, like the Minas, Dhir Malias and the Ram Raiyas, along with his deputies (Masands) and their followers. He wanted his followers to wield the sword as a legitimate source of power against the hill rulers and the Mughal officials. The baptism of the double edged sword (*khande ki pahul*) removed the differences of birth among the four *varnas*. The baptized Khalsa were required to keep the hair (*kesh*) unshorn, wear turban, wield weapons, ride horses and use the suffix 'Singh'. This was intertwined with the obligation to follow the message of the Gurus and the observances and conduct enjoined by them.<sup>34</sup> To ensure that these injunctions were well-understood, sustained and disseminated, the tenth Guru appears to have encouraged the compilation of *Rahitnamas*. He also enjoined that their copies should be made for distribution. The *Rahitnamas*, thus, reflect his general concern for the elaboration of the beliefs, conduct and practices appropriate for the Khalsa in a new socio-political context.<sup>35</sup>

Varying in size, content and points of emphasis, these *Rahitnamas* vary also in terms of their relevance for Sikh rites and

rituals. The *Prashan-Uttar* relates to Sikh doctrines. The *Tankhahnama* (*Nasihatnama*) dwells on sovereignty as well as religious life of the Sikhs. There is hardly any explicit statement regarding rites of passage in these works. The *Rahitnama* associated with Prahilad Singh refers to rites and rituals in passing. The works associated with Desa Singh and Daya Singh, especially the latter, are more explicit on Sikh rituals. Though comparatively more detailed, the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh gives a somewhat Brahmanized version. Of all the *Rahitnamas*, the *Prem Sumarag* is the most elaborate in its treatment of the rites of passage enjoined by Guru Gobind Singh. In Professor Gurinder Singh Mann's view, the *Prem Sumarag Granth* 'marked the peak among the *rahit* documents produced at Anandpur and it synchronizes well with Sikh religious, social, and political aspirations'. Its text reflects 'deep understanding of Sikh beliefs, a vision of the future of the Sikhs and a good knowledge of the beliefs of Hindu and Muslim community'.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, this is the only *Rahitnama* which shows concern for the rites of passage for both Sikh men and women.<sup>37</sup> The evidence of the *Prem Sumarag* may therefore be taken up first.

The second chapter of the *Prem Sumarag* dwells on initiation into the order of the Khalsa. The essential feature of initiation is *khande ki pahul* which should be sweetened before it is administered to the volunteer. He should put on a white dress, including a *kachh* (drawers), and should wear five arms. The number of the Khalsa present at the time of initiation should be at least five. Five stanzas (*pauris*) of the *Anand* should be recited, followed by the *ardas*: 'This Sikh has come to Sri Guru Akal Purkh and the Khalsa for refuge. He may be given the gift of the faith of the Khalsa of Sri Akal Purkh. His mind may remain steady and all his wishes may be fulfilled'.<sup>38</sup>

The Sikhs of the Khalsa praying on behalf of another Sikh should say: 'This Sikh has come for supplication. May Guru Baba Akal Purkh fulfill his wishes'. The Khalsa should treat one another with love and respect in all matters. They should all cherish *bani-shabad*, and

cultivate *jat*, *sat*, *santokh*, *daya*, *dharam* and *khima* (self-control, truthfulness, contentment, compassion, righteousness and forgiveness). Fasting for the Khalsa means no indulgence in sensuality. One should not look at another's woman or property, should not tell lies, should not slander, and should avoid all misdeeds.<sup>39</sup>

A married woman could take *pahul* from a Gurmukh. The *ardas* should be followed by the following instruction: 'She should have education in Gurmukhi, read and love *shabad-bani*'. The baptized Sikhnis should associate with one another and reflect on the *shabad*. They should serve their husbands and obey them. A widow could also take *pahul*. No *kesar* (saffron) was to be sprinkled in her case; she should wear an iron ring on her finger, and observe restraint and chastity. The injunctions given in the first and the second chapter are common for men and women.<sup>40</sup>

The ceremonies connected with the birth of a child start with the conception. The features to figure in these ceremonies are *pahul* for the mother, the sight of weapons like *khanda*, bow and arrow, and the sword, and at the time of delivery she should utter: 'Sri Vaheguru, Sri Guru, Sri Akal Purkh, I seek your protection'.<sup>41</sup>

If a son is born, he should first be made to bow to arms and the *Granth-Pothi*, and the first feeding (*gurhti*) to be given to him should be touched by a *khanda*. The following *ardas* should be offered: 'This living being, come as sent by you, is under your refuge. May he enjoy good health, have courage, and do service. He has come through a happy conjunction; we have no worldly relationship with him except that of *sikhkhi*'. Sanctified food (*prasad*) should be distributed among the Khalsa and among the kins on the same day.<sup>42</sup> Other ceremonies for the son relate to *pahul* administered to him by five Sikhs, piercing of his ears for rings made of gold or silver, keeping his *kesh* intact, naming him with epithet 'Singh', and feeding the Sikh men and women present on the occasion. The bard (*bhatt*) or the barber (*nai*) has a minor role in these ceremonies but there is no role for the Brahman.<sup>43</sup>

The same ceremonies are required to be performed on the birth of a daughter, with appropriate variation in detail. The daughter should also be administered *pahul* and bear the epithet '*devi*' in her name. Not only her ears but also her nose should be pierced.<sup>44</sup>

The chapter on marriage is much longer. At a young age the daughter should be married to a good Sikh even if he is poor. Wealth should not be the criterion for the choice of a groom.<sup>45</sup> The betrothal ceremony should precede marriage by one and a half months. The bride should pray to Sri Akal Purkh for a happy union; she should not invoke the blessing of any god or goddess. The marriage ceremony should be performed in the last quarter of the night. The bridegroom should put on arms while riding to the bride's home for wedding. The marriage ceremony should be performed by a Sikh of the Khalsa of Sri Akal Purkh. He should ask both the bride and the bridegroom for their consent to marry each other, and also for the consent of their elders. Fire was to be lighted as a witness to the wedlock, like Sri Bhagauti Ji and Sri Khalsa Ji. The invocation should be repeated six times, putting *ghee* into the fire each time. An *ardas* should be made to Sri Guru Akal Purkh for a happy and pious life for the couple married in accordance with His *hukam*. They should go round the fire clockwise, with the bridegroom leading the bride. Each time, a stanza of the *Lavan* should be sung and some *ghee* thrown into the fire. After the four rounds, *khande ki pahul* should be administered to the couple. Five *pauris* of the *Anand* should be sung and then *karha prasad* should be distributed. The couple should make supplication to Sri Vaheguru Akal Purkh alone and should not worship any god or goddess; they should not resort to any *jantar* or *mantar*, or magical device or formula.<sup>46</sup>

At the time of their first union, the newly wed should think of Guru Gobind and the Name. If the wife becomes pregnant by God's grace, she would give birth to a Gurmukh. The author now says that both the boy and the girl to be married should be grown up, in fact, 17 years old. The marriage should not inhibit the bride's parents from eating at the place of her Sikh in-laws, as they used to eat in all Sikh

homes before the marriage. Sri Guru Akal Purkh has sanctified commensality among the Khalsa.<sup>47</sup>

On the eve of death one should concentrate on God so that one may attain liberation. On the death of a Sikh there should be no beating of the breasts by women: all men and women present should sing the *Alahnian*. The men should not remove their turbans. A new pair of *kachh* should be put on the body of the deceased after it has been washed. After dressing it, a sword should be placed on its right. There should be no wailing: God's will should be accepted without any sign of grief. The widow should adopt simplicity and restraint, think of the deceased as present with her, and read the *Pothi* of *Shabad- Bani*.<sup>48</sup>

Cremation of the dead is essential. Even a child should be cremated. On the death anniversary, all kinds of food should be served to the hungry and the Khalsa, and *kirtan* should be performed. The essential procedure in all situations, with appropriate variation in detail, is said to be the same for men and women, for the young and the old, for the married and the unmarried, for the mothers and the childless widows. There should be no mourning. The ashes of the Khalsa could be consigned to a nearby stream or buried in the earth. For condolence, there should be no association with Masands and their followers, and with those who practised *bhaddan* (tonsure) after the death of their parents. All the three have turned away from the Guru.<sup>49</sup> It is important to underline that there is no role for a Brahman in the *Prem Sumarag*; everywhere there is Gurbani, the Khalsa, and *ardas*.

Though much shorter than the *Prem Sumarag*, the *Prahlad Singh Rahitnama* captures the essential idea of the rejection of Brahmanical practices symbolized in the sacred thread (*dhaga*). Also, the initiates should have nothing to do with the Minas and the Masandias and those who shave their heads or kill their daughters. A Sikh of the Guru becomes entitled to *prasad* only after offering daily worship. He should never partake of *prasad* with his head uncovered.<sup>50</sup>

In the *Sakhi Rahit Patshahi 10*, the services of the Brahman and the rites and ceremonies he performed are emphatically rejected.



There is no reference to the initiation ceremony, but the sanctity of the *kesh* is underlined. The use of the razor and the cutting of the hair or beard are equated with incest. The Brahman and his *kirya karam* are rejected because in the Kaliyuga the Brahamical dispensation has been replaced by the *shabad* of the Guru. All rites and rituals (*kirya karam*) of the Panth have been performed by the true Guru, the Akal Purkh. There is no specific reference to birth or marriage, but the recitation of the *Anand*, the performance of *ardas* and the offering of food to Sikhs of the *Guru* are recommended in connection with the ceremonies of death. By doing this not one but millions of *kirya* are performed. The Sikh of the Guru never performs the traditional rites of *shraddh*. In place of the traditional *shraddh*, a Sikh should prepare all kinds of delicacies, invite the Khalsa, recite the *Anand* and perform *ardas* before serving food to them. This is the way to serve the dead ancestors.<sup>51</sup>

Turning to the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh, we find that it makes a clear distinction between Sahajdhari Sikhs and Keshdhari Singhs. Different modes of initiation are recommended for them. The Sahajdhari Sikh was initiated through *charan pahul* for which a *charan* (foot) of the *manji* (low flat lectern) of the *Granth Sahib* was washed in water, and to this water were added *patashas* (dry soluble sweets), while five *pauris* of the *Japuji* and five *pauris* of the *Anand* were being recited. The new entrant was given this water to drink.<sup>52</sup>

A clear preference, however, is shown for baptism of the double edged sword. It may be pointed out that the detail of the ceremony given in this *Rahitnama* is not found in any other work of the eighteenth century, except that of Kesar Singh Chhibber who was Chaupa Singh's collateral in descent. It is important, therefore, to state the essential features of the baptism of the double edged sword as given in this work. Guru Gobind Singh is said to have prepared the *pahul* of the *kesh* (*kesan di pahul*) on the seventh of Sawan in 1697. Chaupa Singh was asked by the Guru to bring a bowl of water, and then to stir it with



a knife while reciting five of his *savvaiyas*. When Chaupa Singh started the recitation, Diwan Sahib Chand made the request that some *patashas* may be mixed with water to make it tasteful. The Guru then asked Dharam Chand to bring *patashas*. When this process was over Chaupa Singh took the bowl in his hand and stood before the Guru. Taking five palmfuls of water the Guru sprinkled it five times over Chaupa Singh's eyes and five palmfuls over his head. Guru Gobind Singh recited the famous *savvaiya* of the *Chandi Charitra* which starts with '*deh Siva bar mohe ihae*'. With his own hands he gave *pahul* (baptism) to Chaupa Singh. He was asked to utter '*Vaheguruji ka Khalsa, Vaheguru ji ki fateh*'. Four other poor Sikhs who were present there reportedly requested for *pahul*. Their names were Dhanna Singh, Hari Singh, Mewa Singh and Jodh Singh. Thus, on the first day, five Sikhs were made Keshdhari Singhs. The Guru instructed that in future five Sikhs should be present at the time of administering *pahul*. The initiated Singhs were to be instructed in the *rahit*: to keep arms, and to add the epithet 'Singh' to their names. Thirty-five Sikhs were initiated on the second day and sixty on the third. The Guru emphasized that the keeping of arms was absolutely obligatory for a Singh and the *kesh* were his distinctive mark. According to this *Rahitnama*, only the male Sikhs were to be administered the baptism of the double edged sword: anyone administering *khande ki pahul* to a Sikh woman would become liable to penance (*tankhah*). It is underlined that a Sikh of the Guru must take *pahul*. The one who administers *pahul* should follow the same procedure as that of Guru Gobind Singh. The *mantar* of *satnam* and instructions with regard to the Guru's teaching should be given to the initiated Singh. The Sikh who administers *pahul* should himself be a strict observer of the *rahit*, but he should not regard himself as a *guru*.<sup>53</sup>

The sanctity of the *kesh* is underlined in the *Rahitnama*. A Sikh of the Guru should take good care of the *kesh*. He should use the *kangha* (comb) twice a day to keep his *kesh* clean and he should wash them with curd. He should not touch the *kesh* with a dirty hand. The *kesh* are given to him as a mark of distinction by the Guru through his

grace. A Sikh who catches the hair or the beard of another Sikh becomes liable to penance. The sanctity attached to the *kesh* is extended to the turban.<sup>54</sup>

According to the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh, on the birth of a male child the father should give him the water in which the feet of five Sikhs have been washed to drink as *pahul*. If the child was to be brought up as Keshdhari, he should be given *khande ki pahul*. His hair should be kept uncut. His name should be chosen from the *Granth Sahib*. Then he should be bathed with curd.<sup>55</sup>

About the rites connected with marriage, there is only one sentence in a whole passage which states that the Sikh of the Guru should employ a Brahman in the ceremony of marriage. It is not clear whether the Brahman in this situation is a Sikh who could perform a Sikh ceremony or a Brahman priest who is supposed to perform the marriage ceremony according to the Brahmanical rites.<sup>56</sup> In all probability, the reference here is to a Brahman Sikh like Chaupa Singh himself who was likely to be well-versed in the *Gurbani* and the marriage ritual based on it.

It is important to note that in the rites connected with death, this *Rahitnama* gives no role to the Brahman. There should be no mourning on the death of a Sikh. Even if the deceased was a Sahajdhari, no tonsure (*bhaddan*) was to be performed. The Guru's *shabad* should be sung when the dead body is taken away for cremation. According to one's capacity, the *prasad* should be distributed among the persons present. Other rites may be performed as one likes. Ashes of the deceased should be taken to the Ganga for immersion. *Katha* and *kirtan* should be performed for eleven, thirteen, fifteen or seventeen days, according to the means of the family of the deceased. The *Granth Sahib* should be installed in the home for a complete reading. The practice of customary charity is recommended.<sup>57</sup>

The *Daya Singh Rahitnama* expresses a serious concern for the ceremony of initiation and rites of passage. Bhai Daya Singh requests Guru Gobind Singh to pronounce a *rahitnama* that may serve as the

source of liberation for the listener. Evidently, by the time of its composition in the later part of the century, there was a belief among at least certain sections of the Sikhs that listening to a *rahitnama* was meritorious in itself.<sup>58</sup>

In response to Daya Singh's request, Guru Gobind Singh is said to have referred to the items involved in the preparation and administering of the baptism of the double edged sword. Most of the requisite items are provided by the gods of Hindu mythology: the *mantar* of 'ek onkar satnam' given by Shakti to Guru Nanak; the *jantar* of *Vaheguru* given by Mohan (Krishna); the *tantar* of *amar-jal* provided by Varun; sweet provided by Indra; the vessel of iron provided by Yamraj; the knife of iron provided by Kal; the *kesh* given by Chandi; the *kachh* given by Hanuman; the four *padaraths* (*dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksh*) accruing from the *khande ki pahul* provided by Vishnu; *maida* (fine flour) provided by Mahadev; and *ghee* or clarified butter given by Brahma for the *karha prasad*. Continuing in this vein, Daya Singh writes that the path for *mukti* was provided by the *Japuji*; the *Anand* for peace was given by Guru Amar Das; and the *chaupai* and the *savvaiyas* were given by Guru Gobind Singh. The writer underscores that the *karha prasad* of unequal quantities of flour, ghee and sugar did not reach the Guru, nor should the *karha prasad* on the occasion of administering *amrit* be prepared with jaggery.<sup>59</sup>

The actual ceremony of initiation is then spelt out in the *Daya Singh Rahitnama*. Anyone of the four *varnas* could take *amrit*. By taking *amrit* even the lowest of the low would attain liberation. The person to whom *pahul* is given should wear *kachch*, bind his hair in a knot and tie a turban. He should stand up with an unsheathed sword in hand. The water of *amritsar* (presumably of the sacred tank at Ramdaspur) should be used for preparing *amrit*. First of all, the whole of the *Japuji Sahib* should be recited, followed by the *chaupai*, five *savvaiyas* and the five *pauris* of the *Anand*, while dagger (*kard*) was used for stirring the water to prepare *amrit*. A Singh should then take the permission of the assembly (*sarbat*) and take the bowl in his hands

to let the new entrant drink from it. He should place that dagger or knife in his turban. The person who takes the baptism should place his right hand over the left to drink the baptismal water; he should then exclaim ‘*Vaheguruji ka Khalsa, Vaheguruji ki fateh*’. In this way he should drink five palmfuls of *amrit*, and it should be sprinkled over his eyes and head. He should be given the *gur-mantar* of *satnam* and a new name. He should offer a rupee and a quarter. Then *ardas* should be performed and the *karha prasad* eaten by all together. It is emphasized that those who administer *amrit* should be devout Sikhs and men of exceptional qualities, because it was first administered by the Guru as the incarnation of Akal Purkh.<sup>60</sup>

Going through the rest of the *Rahitnama* we come upon both negative and positive injunctions for the novitiate. There is emphatic rejection of the ways of ‘other paths’: fasts, pilgrimages, objects and modes of worship, *mantras*, evening worship (*sandhya*), ritual offering of water (*tarpan*), and offerings to the dead (*shraddh* and *pind*). In fact, having recourse to the Brahman without *kesh* and *pahul* or even asking him about the auspicious days, is strongly disapproved of. Nor should a Sikh of the Guru perform any ceremony by putting thread (*dhaga*) over his body, or a mark on his forehead (*tilak*). After initiation he should have no association with those practising tonsure. Nor should he interact with the Masandias, Dhir Malias, Ram Raiyas, and those who kill their daughters or wear ochre coloured clothes. On the positive side, a Sikh of the Guru is instructed to conduct all ceremonies related to birth, marriage and death according to the injunctions of the Gurus (*Gur-maryada*), render prayer (*ardas*) and offer a rupee and a quarter. This *Rahitnama* requires marriage to be conducted with the *Anand*. A Sikh of the Guru who performs the rites of *shraddh* and the Brahmanical ceremony of marriage is a defaulter. It is recommended that the *Japuji* should be recited at death and when the deceased is being bathed, a new *kachh* is put on him, and a new turban is tied on his head. There should be no mourning after death. For a proper conduct of these observances, it is obligatory upon a Sikh to study

Gurbani rather than the *Shastras* and Arabic and Persian. Finally, the *Rahitnama* expressly requires a Sikh to prepare *prasad* in a purified enclosure (*chauka*), reciting *mantar* of *Vaheguru* all the time. Five Singhs should sing *shabads* and offer *ardas*. When the *prasad* is ready, the officiant should offer it first to Sri Guru ji, then to five *bhujangis* (sons of the baptized Singhs), and only then to the other Singhs. The *prasad* should be distributed equally among all.<sup>61</sup>

Written in all probability during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the *Desa Singh Rahitnama* gives primacy to baptism of the double edged sword to be conducted by five Singhs. The initiate is required to carry arms and wear turban and also have a comb (*kangha*) and a dagger on his person. He should not offer *ardas* without weapons (*shastra*). *Karha prasad* should first be touched by the *kard* before it is distributed equally among all present. As in other *Rahitnamas* the novitiate in this work is also required to shun the reprobate groups which included the killers of daughters as well. It may be mentioned that the writer dwells at some length on the proper method of preparing and serving *langar* and for preparing the *karha prasad*.<sup>62</sup>

### 3

#### In Contemporary Sikh Literature

The Gurmukhi works of the eighteenth century broadly covered under the rubric of *Gurbilas* literature dealing with the life of the Gurus, supplement the evidence of the *Rahitnamas* on Sikh rites and rituals. The first of these works is *Sri Gur Sobha* by Sainapat, a poet in Guru Gobind Singh's entourage, who completed it probably soon after his death.<sup>63</sup> Another work of this genre, Koer Singh Kalal's *Gurbilas Patshahi 10*, is placed in 1751.<sup>64</sup> the *Bansavalinama Dasan Patshahian Ka* by Kesar Singh, a Chhibber Brahman and a collateral descendant of Chaupa Singh, was written in 1769.<sup>65</sup> Sarup Das Bhalla, a descendant of Guru Amar Das, wrote his *Mahima Prakash* in 1776.<sup>66</sup> Another *Gurbilas Patshahi 10* was composed by Sukha Singh, a much travelled man and a *mahant* at Kesgarh in Anandpur.<sup>67</sup> As may be



expected, these works dwell at length on the institution of the Khalsa. The new mode of initiation figures in all these accounts which is followed by some information on the rites related to death, and some incidental references to other situations in the life of a Sikh. We may however begin with the evidence of the *Amarnama* which was composed in October 1708.

An interesting insight into the norm and practice in the rituals related to death is provided by the *Amarnama*, written by a minstrel (*dhadi*) who claims to have attended upon Guru Gobind Singh before his death. Originally composed in Persian, this work has been translated into Punjabi by Dr Ganda Singh. It contains a reference to a Singh who had died on the cot. Guru Gobind Singh was informed of the circumstance of his death and the Singhs wanted to know what was to be done. They were told not to worry; the life of this man was marked by humility, and his thoughts were on the Guru at the time of his death; he had certainly gone to heaven. They should perform *ardas* and consign the body to the river. There was no need to call a Brahman or to wait for the ancestors of the deceased. The Sikhs should take him to the river uttering 'Vaheguru'. A similar episode is mentioned in this work in connection with a Sikh of Guru Arjan.<sup>68</sup>

After this, Guru Gobind Singh is said to have told the Sikhs to take *amrit* and not to observe any Brahmanical rite. They should eat food in the *langar* with others and they should ensure that no one remained hungry. They should pay no heed to what the Brahmans say and they should not kill an animal in the Muslim fashion. A Sikh should take *amrit* to become a Singh and when a child is born *amrit* should be administered to him. Taking of *amrit* is helpful against the enemy and also at the end of one's life. It is underlined again that the Sikhs of the Guru should not perform any Brahmanical rites (*kirya karam*).<sup>69</sup>

In his *Sri Gur Sobha*, Sainapat does not refer to the ceremony of initiation at the time of the institution of the Khalsa but he does refer to *khande ki pahul* and underlines its importance. The baptized Khalsa adopt the epithet 'Singh'.<sup>70</sup> Sainapat gradually moves from the use of



the term 'Sikh' to that of 'Singh'. Sainapat is emphatic about the excommunication of the 'five reprobate groups'. The sanctity of the *kesh* is emphasized and the rites connected with tonsure (*bhaddan*) are rejected which, according to him, became the basic cause of dispute among the Sikhs of Delhi.<sup>71</sup> Sainapat refers to the wedding of Guru Gobind Singh before he left for the Deccan. This may not be factually correct but it is interesting to note that the '*Anand*' is mentioned in this context, and there is no reference to any Brahman. Similarly, there is no reference to any Brahmanical rite at the time of the cremation of Guru Gobind Singh.<sup>72</sup>

Koer Singh talks about the ceremony of initiation performed by Guru Gobind Singh at the time of instituting the Khalsa. The Guru poured clear water into a bowl of iron and started reciting *mantars*. Kirpa Ram informed his mother (Mataji) that the Guru was going to institute the Khalsa Panth and for this purpose he was preparing the water for initiation. She came and put *patashas* into the bowl. Having prepared the *amrit*, the Guru performed *ardas*. Then he administered *amrit* to five Sikhs. The first instruction given to the five on this occasion is not to associate with those who cut their hair or kill their infant daughters, as well as the Minas, the Masands and the 'Turks'. The initiates should discard every other means of worship and take refuge in the Wielder of the Sword. They should bear arms, keep their *kesh* unshorn, wear *kachh* and keep a dagger (*kard*). They should clean their *kesh* twice a day with a comb (*kangha*).<sup>73</sup>

Koer Singh does not refer to any ceremony of birth or marriage. On the death of Guru Gobind Singh too he has nothing to say in terms of rites or rituals, but just before his death, Mata Sahib Devi is presented as expressing her desire to burn herself on his funeral pyre. Guru Gobind Singh told her that this was not to be done. Mata Sahib Devi accepted this and prepared to go to Delhi.<sup>74</sup>

Kesar Singh Chhibber's account of the procedure adopted by Guru Gobind Singh for administering *pahul* to the Sikhs for instituting the Khalsa is broadly similar to that given in the *Rahitnama* associated

with Chaupa Singh.<sup>75</sup> The initiates are instructed to keep their *kesh* unshorn. The *kesh* are supposed to replace the sacred thread and the sacred mark as a distinct marker of the identity of the third (*teesar*) Panth. One important implication of the sanctity of the *kesh* is that no rite connected with tonsure was to be performed. The emphatic injunction in support of *kesh* is matched by the negative injunction against tobacco. The Keshdhari Singhs were to bear arms and to wear blue dress. They were not to associate with the Minas, Dhir Malias, and Ram Raiyas, nor deal with the Masands. The other category of people with whom the Khalsa were not to associate were those who killed their infant daughters.<sup>76</sup>

Chhibber, however, gives the impression that before the Khalsa *rahit* became current, the Brahmanical ceremonies were observed in matters related to death. When the ashes of Guru Tegh Bahadur were brought from Delhi to Anandpur, all the rites and ceremonies were observed in accordance with the *Shastras*, and then the ashes were sent to the Ganga for immersion. After the Brahmans had performed their services they were served food and given their fee (*dakshina*). In the case also of Guru Gobind Singh's wife, Mata Jito, who died in 1700, the ceremonies performed are said to be in accordance with the *Shastras*.<sup>77</sup>

Sarup Das Bhalla refers to initiation of the double-edged sword in connection with the institution of the Khalsa. Five Sikhs were given *pahul* by Guru Gobind Singh. The rest of the Sikhs were told to take *pahul* from them. The Khalsa were required to keep their hair uncut and wear blue dress. They were to add the epithet 'Singh' to their names. Guru Gobind Singh adopted the same appearance as that of the Khalsa. The attitude of the Khalsa towards the sacred thread is indicated by the statement that one of the *panj piaras*, Daya Singh, removed his sacred thread to tie the sword of Guru Gobind Singh. It is explicitly stated later that the sacred thread and the sacred mark had no meaning in comparison with the true Name. Nevertheless, the Guru tells his followers that the Khalsa should not be compelled either to

remove or to wear the sacred thread.<sup>78</sup> After the death of Guru Gobind Singh, Sarup Das simply refers to the cremation of his body. Significantly, however, with an implicit reference to the *Sadd* of Baba Sunder, Sarup Das Bhalla underlines that Brahmanical rites were forbidden. In fact, Guru Nanak himself is believed to have told his followers that no Brahmanical rites were to be performed after his death.<sup>79</sup>

Sukha Singh dramatically brings in the context in which the baptismal water was prepared for instituting the Khalsa. He refers to the call for volunteers at Kesgarh to sacrifice their head for the Guru. After the third call, a follower (*sewak*) stood up. He was taken into a tent, given a sword, and asked to slaughter a male goat with one stroke. Blood flowed from the tent. With the sword in his hand Guru Gobind Singh asked for another head. Another *sewak* stood up after the third call. He too was taken into the tent and asked to slaughter a goat. There was a strong adverse reaction among the Sikhs who thought that this was the evil effect of invoking the Goddess (Bhawani). The Guru came out of the tent with the *panj piyaras*. He began to prepare the *pahul* with fresh water brought from the stream into which Mata ji put *patashas*. The *pahul* was meant to rekindle the dead spirit. When it was ready, the Guru performed *ardas* and gave this *amrit* to the *panj piaras* asking them to exclaim 'Vaheguru'. After administering of *pahul*, they were instructed to discard the false thread in favour of the sword, and not to associate with the Minas, the Masandias, the Dhir Malias, and the Ram Raiyas. It is interesting to note that Sukha Singh does not mention the fifth category, apparently those who shaved their head, saying that it was not concealed from anyone. He says that apart from the Wielder of the Sword, there was no refuge and no other object of worship. In this way Guru Gobind Singh is said to have created the third (*teesar*) Panth, distinct from, and superior to, Hindus and Turks.<sup>80</sup>

Sukha Singh refers to the horoscope (*janam patri*) prepared by Brahmans after the birth of Guru Gobind Singh. When some Brahmans

came to him with a sacred thread to perform the rite of '*jagg pavit*', Guru Gobind Singh told them that he was under the protection of the Wielder of the Sword, the Great God (Mahakal) from whom he had received the sacred thread of the sword. He proposed to give this protective shield to all the Khalsa at the time of their initiation through the baptism of the double edged sword (*khande ki pahu*).<sup>81</sup>

At the time of his death Guru Gobind Singh reportedly told his followers that as his end was ordained by God it was a matter of rejoicing for him; none should wail and cry after him; they should sing the praises of God and perform *katha* in accordance with the Guru's teachings. They should hold the *diwan* in this way for forty days and the lowest of the low should not be debarred from it. All varieties of food were to be prepared and distributed among all the four castes without any distinction. Finally, the Khalsa should organize *chauki-shabad* to celebrate the event.<sup>82</sup>

#### 4

#### **Evidence of Persian and European Sources**

Broadly two groups of the outsiders commenting on Sikh rites and rituals during the eighteenth century can be identified. The Persian writers of the early decades associated with the Mughal court comment on the distinctiveness of the socio-religious practices of the Sikhs who had posed a challenge to the Mughal empire. The available Persian sources of the later period are preoccupied with their political activity. After they came into power, the Sikhs attracted the notice of the European writers during the last decades of the century, initially as an interesting people, and then as potential opponents. This interest appears to have deepened after the defeat of the Marathas and occupation of Delhi by the British in 1803 which broadly coincided with the rise of Ranjit Singh.

The Persian sources of the early eighteenth century contain no detail of the Sikh rite of initiation or the rites of passage, but they do contain a few references which have a bearing on this subject. A report from the court of Emperor Bahadur Shah, dated 24 May 1710, refers to

the dismissal of the Masands by Guru Gobind Singh by one stroke of the pen to establish the Khalsa. 'It was settled by him that the Sikhs of the Khalsa would not cut the hair of the head, moustaches and beard and would be known as the Sikhs of the Khalsa'. The report goes on to say that a great disturbance occurred among the community of the Khatri, presumably over the new injunctions, due to which marriages between the two groups were given up. Actual fighting took place at village Chak in *pargana* Patti, which is known as Chak Guru Ramdaspur.<sup>83</sup> According to Muhammad Qasim Lahauri, the author of the '*Ibratnama*, after the death of Guru Gobind Singh, his followers assembled from all sides and 'proceeding with their own prescribed rituals, cremated his body with due ceremony'.<sup>84</sup> Mirza Muhammad, the author of another '*Ibratnama*, refers simply to some new customs introduced by Guru Gobind Singh for the Sikhs of the Khalsa.<sup>85</sup>

The European writers of the late eighteenth century did not necessarily observe the conduct of any of the ceremonies personally. Charles Wilkins asked the Sikhs present at their college at Patna about the ceremonies used in admitting a proselyte. He was told that if a person showed a sincere inclination to renounce his former beliefs to any five or more Sikhs, whether in a house, or on the highway, or in a place of worship, he was sent to a shop where sweetmeats were sold to bring a small quantity of *patashas* which were diluted in pure water; this water was sprinkled on his body and into his eyes, and one of the best instructed Sikhs repeated to him the chief canons of their faith, exacting from him a promise to abide by them for the rest of his life. This, observed Wilkins, was the whole ceremony after which the initiate was required to learn the language of their scripture. He goes on to add that they were prepared to initiate him into the Sikh faith, but he declined the honour. The point he makes is that the Sikh faith was open to everyone.<sup>86</sup>

Colonel A.L.H. Polier says that the mode of initiating converts to the Sikh faith was to make them drink out of a pan in which the feet of those present had been washed; this was meant presumably to abolish



all those distinctions of caste which encumbered the Hindus. Polier adds that for a Muslim convert the tusks or bones of a boar were steeped in this water and some of the blood of that animal was also added. The convert repeated 'Vaheguru', wore an iron bracelet on one arm, and let the hair of the head and beard grow. This formed the whole mystery of their religion, 'if such a filthy beastly ceremony can be dignified with that name'. Evidently, Polier's source of information was not very reliable and he had little sympathy with the Sikhs.<sup>87</sup>

George Forster takes notice of the mode of initiation into the order of the Khalsa. A person desirous of becoming a member of the Sikh doctrine was conducted into the presence of five or more Sikhs of any class or profession assembled for the occasion. One of them poured into the hollow of his hand a little water which had been touched by the toe of the Sikhs; the proselyte repeated the words '*Vaheguru ji ka Khalsa, Vaheguru ji ki fateh*' before swallowing the baptismal water. Afterwards, a cup filled with *sherbat* was offered to him and he drank five times out of this cup and repeated the exclamation. At the conclusion of this ceremony, the convert was instructed in the use of a prayer of great length in which the religious, moral and political duties of the Sikh were set forth and their observance enjoined. In Forster's view the first part of the ceremony 'of receiving proselytes' denoted the equality of the followers of Guru Nanak and marked 'an essential deviation from the Hindoo system'. He further says that the purpose of the Sikh priests in elevating the new religion on this simple base had been only partially executed. The military Sikhs (meaning the Singhs) permitted the hair of the head and beard to grow long; they fixed an iron bracelet on the left hand and they prohibited the use of tobacco. Widows were expressly forbidden to destroy themselves at the death of their husbands, and allowed to renew the ceremonies of marriage. However, Forster observes that adherence to the old practice was strong among the Hindus converted to the Sikh faith. Many of their women were seen ascending the funeral



pyre; others could not be induced to enter the connubial state for a second time.<sup>88</sup>

James Browne states that the Sikhs make the proselyte drink *sherbat* out of a large cup, with certain ceremonies which were designed to signify that every distinction was abolished; even a Musalman could become a Sikh on these conditions. After initiation, the convert wore a steel ring around one of his wrists and let his hair and beard grow to full length. Entrance into the Sikh faith was not only easy but also popular because religion and politics were united in it for aggrandizement.<sup>89</sup>

John Griffiths writes about the practices of the Sikhs in a letter of 1794. The Sikhs received proselytes from every caste which distinguished them the most materially from the Hindus; to initiate Muslims into their mysteries they prepared a dish of hog's legs which the converts were obliged to eat before admission. The use of the *hukka* (hubble bubble) was absolutely forbidden to them. They were allowed to eat meat except beef. They never shaved either head or beard and generally wore clothes of deep blue colour. Griffiths appears to be talking of the Akalis or the Nihangs when he says that their turbans were very large and they wore a piece of iron chain or net work over the turban.<sup>90</sup>

According to Malcolm, Guru Gobind Singh admitted converts from all tribes and classes. All those who subscribed to his tenets were on the same level; the Brahman who entered the fold had no higher claim to eminence than the lower Shudra who swept his house. It was the object of the Guru to make all Sikhs equal. He changed their name from Sikh to Singh, a lion, which till then was assumed only by the Rajputs. They were required to devote themselves to arms, always to have steel about them in some shape or other, to wear a blue dress, to allow their hair to grow and to exclaim '*Vaheguruji ka Khalsa, Vaheguruji ki fateh*' when they met each other. The blue dress was still worn by the Akalis. Malcolm thinks that perhaps Guru Gobind Singh's

idea was to separate his followers from all other classes of India as much by their appearance as by their religion.<sup>91</sup>

The way in which Guru Gobind Singh first initiated his converts was described by a Sikh to Malcolm who thus did not actually see the ceremony but only heard of it. He, however, thought that it was 'nearly the same as that now observed'. He was told that Guru Gobind Singh had initiated five converts in the first place and they were instructed how to initiate others. 'The convert is told that he must allow his hair to grow, he must clothe himself from head to foot in blue clothes, and he is then presented with five weapons: a sword, a firelock, a bow and arrow and a pike'. Sugar and water were put into a cup and stirred round with a weapon; the first chapter of the *Adi Granth* and the first chapter of the *Dasam Padshah ka Granth* were read, and those who performed the initiation exclaimed '*Vaheguru ji ka Khalsa, Vaheguru ji ki fateh*'. After exclaiming this for five times the water prepared for initiation was drunk by the proselyte. Some *sherbat* prepared in a similar manner was sprinkled over his head and beard. After these ceremonies he was told to abandon all intercourse with five categories of people. The first were the Minas and the Dhir Malias; the second were the Masandias; the third were the followers of Ram Rai; the fourth were those who killed their infant daughters; and the fifth were the *bhaddanis* who shaved the hair of their head and beard as a ritual. The initiate was instructed to sacrifice his life and property for the cause of the Khalsa; he was directed to read both the *Granth*s every morning and every evening. It was his duty to share whatever he received from God with others.<sup>92</sup>

Captain Matthews recorded that 'a Sikh wishing to become a Singh' could go to the Akalis at Amritsar and give proof of his determination to discard his former beliefs. With his own hands the proselyte broke his *zunar*, 'the small thread, or cord, worn across the shoulders by most of the Hindoo sects'. After the performance of certain ceremonies, he was given to drink a *sherbat* made of sugar and water by an Akali. After the initiation, he never shaved his beard, nor

cut his hair. He became heterodox and distinct from the Hindus who considered him as an apostate. He was allowed to eat whatever food he liked except beef. Another relevant fact mentioned by Captain Mathews is the practice of cremation among the Sikhs. Their ashes were thrown into the river. He also refers to the existence of small structures over the spots where some important men had been cremated.<sup>93</sup>

## 5

### In Retrospect

Differences of detail notwithstanding, the Sikh and non-Sikh sources cited here convey an overwhelming sense of (a) the distinctiveness of the path of Guru Nanak; (b) endeavor of the successive Gurus to evolve the rites and rituals commensurate with his message; (c) emphatic affirmation and dissemination of the Sikh rites of passage after the institution of the Khalsa; (d) new rites and rituals being sufficiently well-entrenched by the eighteenth century; and (e) their co-existence with local variations and the previous practices of the group that a Sikh came from. The variations in detail in the contemporary sources arose from the degree of familiarity with the scripture as well as from personal predilections and existential situations of the writers or their informants. It is nevertheless possible to elicit the norms and gather an impression of the Sikhs consciously acting on these. There is a sufficiently clear idea of what was rejected, what was instituted – both positively and negatively – and what was adapted in the course of the evolution of Sikh rites and rituals.

Since the Gurus themselves and the substantial segment of their followers came from within the fold of the Brahmanical system, there was a greater focus on the repudiation of Brahmanical practices in the course of creating alternative rites and rituals. There is an emphatic rejection in the *Guru Granth Sahib* of ritual bathing, shaving, purification, charities, fasting, mourning, and pacification and feeding of the dead, besides the practice of *sati*. Disapproval of the sacred thread as the visible symbol of one's ritual status and implicit superiority

occurs frequently in the *Granth* and the later sources. There is a virtual rejection of the mediacy of the professional priests. Their framework of the *Shastras* is emphatically replaced by that provided by the Sikh scripture. Significantly, the initiate is instructed to learn the Gurmukhi script, read the *Granth* for himself or herself and reflect on the message of the Gurus.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, specific compositions of the *Granth* were in use for different stages in a Sikh's life: the *Anand* for birth; the *Anand*, *Sohila*, *Ghorian*, and the *Lavan* accompanied by four rounds, for marriage; and the *Japuji*, the *Alahnian*, the *Anand*, and the *Sadd* for death. Performed in the presence of the fellow Sikhs, these ceremonies commenced and ended with the collective prayer (*ardas*). Every ceremony ended with the partaking of the *karha prasad* prepared and distributed in a prescribed manner. This was often followed by the common meal (*langar*) which too was required to be cooked and served in a given manner.

A person from any caste or creed could be initiated into the Sikh fold by drinking the baptismal water (*amrit*) and by agreeing to abide by the injunctions of the Gurus. The available evidence suggests that before the institution of the Khalsa the initiate probably drank the water touched by the toe of the devout Sikhs (rather than that of the Guru). It was called *charan amrit* or *charan pahul*. It is not unlikely that at places, and as an alternative to the *charan amrit* and *khande ki pahul*, the dipping of a foot of the *manji* of the *Guru Granth Sahib* in water came into use for baptism of a Sahajdhari Sikh.

At any rate, the initiation rite introduced by Guru Gobind Singh was meant to replace *charan amrit*. The core of the new rite was the stirring of the baptismal water with a *khand* (double edged sword) while reciting compositions from the *Guru Granth Sahib* and the *Dasam Granth*. There is broad agreement in the sources over the preparation of the sweetened *amrit*, and the procedure of administering it, which required, among others things, the presence of five devout Sikhs. Our

sources are quite consistent also with regard to the attendant obligations of the initiate regarding beliefs, practices, bearing of arms and change of name and appearance. The sanctity of the unshorn hair (*kesh*) figures in a big way in the initiation rite and the life of the Sikh thereafter. This was the obverse of the injunction against having any social relations with those who practised ritual shaving of the head (*bhaddan*) on different occasions in one's life. The instructions for the initiate are clear also with regard to shunning those reprobate groups who had turned away from the Gurus.

The emphasis in these instructions on ostracizing the perpetrators of female infanticide is striking. Our sources mention the disapproval of the practice of *sati* as well and point to its relatively less prevalence among the Sikhs. It is more than likely in this context that baptism of the double edged sword was open to women. The statement in the *Prem Sumarag* is significant that the *khanda ki pahul* should be given to the female infants to be named, girls to be married, the expectant mothers, and even the widows who, incidentally, were allowed to remarry in certain circumstances. The attendant detail and obligations are spelt out in each case. The assertion in the *Chaupa Singh Rahitnama* against giving *khanda ki pahul* to women can be attributed perhaps to the lurking Brahmanical prejudices of the Chhibbers.<sup>94</sup>

The *khanda*, in fact, emerges as an essential constituent of the rites of passage during the eighteenth century. It figures in the ceremonies related to birth, marriage and death. It sanctified the *karha parsad*, and it was required to be worn at the time of offering *ardas*. Although the other arms also figure in these rites, the sword is assigned a place next in importance to the *khanda* in the ceremonies related to initiation, birth, marriage and death. Fire is considered sacred, but it is one of the three witnesses to the wedlock, the other two being the sword (Sri Bhagauti Ji) and the community of believers (Sri Khalsa Ji). Water too is an essential constituent of the Sikh rites of passage. Prescriptions regarding diet (not to eat beef and the meat



butchered in Muslim fashion) and other 'dos' and 'don'ts' sometimes figure in the instructions to the initiate. The baptism of the double edged sword entailing new name, appearance, obligations, social relations, and attitudes had the potential of uplifting the recipient both psychologically and socially. A new emphasis on community identity as well as solidarity, irrespective of caste and gender, and a new set of values were built into the Sikh rites and rituals.

### NOTES

1. J.S. Grewal, *A Study of Guru Granth Sahib: Doctrine, Social Content, History, Structure and Status*, Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 2009, p. 247.

The term rite is used for a social custom or ceremony generally associated with passage from one important stage to another in someone's life like birth, initiation, marriage and death. It is also used for the procedure for an individual's entry into a new socio-religious order. Labelled collectively as rites of passage (*rites de passage*), such ceremonies are intended to exert ideological and educative influence over the individual going through these and help him assimilate the appropriate ideas, norms and values characteristic of the group he belongs to. His duties, obligations and privileges as well as social relations within and outside the community too are influenced by the rites he formally goes through. See, for example, G. Duncan Mitchell, ed. *A Dictionary of Sociology*, London: Routledge, 1977, pp. 98, 146-8. Hugo F. Reading, *A Dictionary of the Social Sciences*, New Delhi: Ambica, 1977, pp. 179-80. *A Dictionary for Believers and Non Believers*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1989, pp.493-4. *The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*, ed. Alan Bullock, Oliver Stallybrass and Stephen Trombley, Fontana Press, 1988, 2nd edn., pp. 748-9.

2. Ibid., pp. 39-40, 229. Guru Nanak emphasizes that since impurity is everywhere, the notion of pollution from menstruation, birth and death is an illusion. See *Shabdarath Sri*



- Guru Granth Sahib Ji*, 4 vols., Amritsar: Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, n.d., pp. 471-3.
3. *Shabdarath*, pp.1, 2, 3, 4, 6. See also, Grewal, *A Study of Guru Granth Sahib*, p.213.
  4. *Sohila* is used for a group of three compositions of Guru Nanak, and one each of Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan which are recited at night as part of daily worship (*nitnem*). These compositions are also recited at a Sikh's death, because while praising God, they use similes that lay stress on the transitoriness of worldly existence, inevitability of death and the ultimate goal of union with God. See *Shabdarth*, pp. 12-13. Also, Ratan Singh Jaggi, *Guru Granth Vishavkosh* (Punjabi), 2 vols., Patiala: Punjabi University, 2002, vol. I, pp. 241-2, 243.
  5. The traditional mourning songs (*alahnian* or *dirge*) were sung in unison by women led by professional female mourners from amongst the Nais or Mirasis. Making use of this poetical form, Guru Nanak composed five *Alahnian* which generate a feeling of detachment from worldly possessions and relations, and inspire the Sikhs to turn towards God without being despondent or afraid of death. It is emphasized that only that death is praiseworthy which results in union with God. Guru Amar Das also composed four *Alahnian* with a similar import. *Shabdarth*, p. 583. See also, Jaggi, *Guru Granth Vishavkosh*, vol. I, pp. 78-9.
  6. Grewal, *A Study of Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 41. Incidentally, while Guru Nanak favors charity from money earned through honest means, he does not seem to regard the Brahman priest as a worthy recipient of a Sikh's charity. For a discussion of Brahmanical sacraments, generally numbered sixteen, see Raj Bali Pandey, *Hindu Samskaras: Socio-Religious Study of the Hindu Sacraments*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1969, 2nd rev. edn., pp.17-24, 48-274. See also, Benjamin Walker, *Hindu World: An Encyclopedic Survey of Hinduism*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1983, vol.II, pp.315-16.

7. Metaphorically, the bridegroom in this composition of Guru Ram Das denotes the devotee, the mare his body, the bridle his self-control, the whip his love of God, and his wedding-party the *sadh-sangat* which, together, move in the direction of union with God. *Shabdarth* p. 576. See also, Jaggi, *Guru Granth Vishavkosh*, vol. I, p. 463.
8. Using the metaphor of an ideal married life, this composition dwells on the soul's yearning for, and union with, God. Here, the Guru seems to advise the newly married couple to spiritualize their married life. See *Shabdarath*, p. 774. See also, Jaggi, *Guru Granth Vishavkosh*, vol. II, p. 463. Incidentally, even Sodhi Harji, a great grandson of Guru Ram Das and leader of the dissenting Minas, composed four *lavans* on the pattern of Guru Ram Das's composition.
9. In this long and lyrical composition called the *Anand*, Guru Amar Das advises the Sikhs to strive to realize God, because the state of bliss (*anand*) or liberation through union with God is the ultimate goal of human life. While expounding on the nature of bliss, the Guru uses the metaphor of the seeker encountering several kinds of obstacles and overcoming these with the true Guru's guidance and God's grace.  
  
Guru Amar Das is believed to have composed the *Anand* on the occasion of the birth of a grandson. The first five and the last *pauri* of this composition of forty *pauris* are sung on all important occasions. See *Shabdarath*, pp. 917-22. See also, Jaggi, *Guru Granth Vishavkosh*, vol. I, pp. 39-40, 100-2.
10. Grewal, *A Study of Guru Granth Sahib*, pp. 143, 242.
11. Jaggi, *Guru Granth Vishavkosh*, vol. I, p. 39. In a shortened form *Anand* is included also in the compositions to be used for daily worship (*nitnem*).
12. Grewal, *A Study of Guru Granth Sahib*, pp. 144-5.
13. Baba Sunder is believed to be a great grandson of Guru Amar Das whose last message to the Sikhs and the family is

contained in this short composition which literally means a call or a cry. Jaggi, *Guru Granth Vishavkosh*, Ibid., vol. I, pp. 141, 212.

14. The term *kirya* or *kriya* is used for the Brahmanical pacificatory ceremonies performed on the tenth or the thirteenth day after death. As mentioned above, *pind* denotes the ball of rice offered to the dead, and *pattal* apparently stands for the lamp floating on a reed mat, supposedly to facilitate the dead person's 'progress through the utter darkness that enshrouds the road to the city of Yama'. See Pandey, *Hindu Samskaras*, pp. 261, 265-6.
15. Grewal, *A Study of Guru Granth Sahib*, pp. 50-7, 229, 247.
16. Ibid., pp. 101, 119-22, 250. Jaggi, *Guru Granth Vishavkosh*, vol. I, p. 75. The present form of *ardas* is believed to have crystallized sometime during the later part of the eighteenth century.
17. 'Mobad', *Dabistan-i Mazahib*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources: Translations of Major Texts*, ed. J.S. Grewal and Irfan Habib, New Delhi: Tulika/Indian History Congress, 2001, p. 78.
18. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib Di Kunji arthat Varan Bhai Gurdas* (shortened hereafter as *Varan Bhai Gurdas*), commentary by Giani Hazara Singh and edited by Bhai Vir Singh, Amritsar: Khalsa Samachar, 1962, p.105, VI, 3; also p. 336, XX,10, where Bhai Gurdas uses the word '*mahaprasad*' for the sanctified food distributed in a Sikh place of worship.
19. For translation and discussion, Karamjit K. Malhotra, 'The Earliest Manual on the Sikh Way of Life', in *Five Centuries of Sikh Tradition: Ideology, Society, Politics and Culture, Essays for Indu Banga*, ed. Reeta Grewal and Sheena Pall, New Delhi: Manohar, 2005, p. 73.
20. Cf. Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religions Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 61.

21. *Varan Bhai Gurdas: Text, Transliteration and Translation*, tr. and ed. Jodh Singh, Patiala: Vision and Venture, 1998), vol. II, p. 34, XXII, 14. Dr. Jodh Singh translates the last two lines as: 'The *Gurmukhs* have quaffed the dust of the feet of Guru like *amrit*. The tale is also ineffable'. Elsewhere, however, Dr Jodh Singh refers to the *gurmukh* taking the holy water touched by the feet of his companions. Ibid., vol. I, p. 31, I, 3.
22. Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha, *Gurshabad Ratnakar Mahan Kosh*, Patiala: Languages Department Punjab, 1999 (6<sup>th</sup> Printing), p. 457.
23. *Varan Bhai Gurdas*, p.4, I, 3; p.19, I, 19; p.115, VI, 17; p.367, XXII, 14. For a discussion of the importance of the dust of the feet of the men of piety in the medieval Indian religious traditions, see Jaggi, *Guru Granth Vishavkosh*, vol. I, pp. 471-2.
24. *Shabdarath*, pp. 1263 and 828, respectively.
25. Grewal, *A Study of Guru Granth Sahib*, pp. 111-19.
26. The practice according to the *Dabistan* is: 'When they make anyone a Sikh, they wash his feet and pass on the water to the [other] Sikhs so that all may drink of it, and this they regard as a curative'. In *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, p. 84, n. 65.
27. For a discussion of the existing scholarly understanding on the *Rahitnamas*, see Karamjit K. Malhotra, 'History, Literature and Ideology: A Historiographical Perspective on the Rahitnamas', *Journal of Regional History*, Vol XIII-XIV, 2007-8, pp. 75-96.
28. W.H. McLeod, *Sikhs of the Khalsa: A History of the Khalsa Rahit*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 82-135, 148-51. For placing the *Prem Sumarag* in the late eighteenth century, W.H. McLeod, *Prem Sumarag: The Testimony of a Sanatan Sikh*, New Delhi: OUP, 2006, pp. 3-4, 6; more explicitly, W.H. McLeod, 'Reflections on *Prem Sumarag*', Review Article, *Journal of Punjab Studies*, vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring, 2007), p. 124.
29. Gurinder Singh Mann, 'Five Hundred Years of Sikh Educational Heritage', in *Five Centuries of Sikh Tradition*, pp.249 & n 99.

30. For the dating of *Tankhahnama (Nasihahnama)*, Malhotra, 'The Earliest Manual on the Sikh Way of Life', pp.65-7. For the dating of the *Sakhi Rahit Ki*, see J.S. Grewal, 'The Two Early *Rahitnamas*', in *History, Literature and Identity: Four Centuries of Sikh Tradition*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press (forthcoming, seen through the author's courtesy).
31. Gurinder Singh Mann, 'Sources for the Study of Guru Gobind Singh's Life and Times', *Journal of Punjab Studies* (Special Issue on Guru Gobind Singh), vol. 15, Nos. 1&2 (Spring-Fall 2008), pp.249-50. See also, Grewal, 'The Two Early *Rahitnamas*', for the dating of the *Chaupa Singh Rahitnama*.
32. Mann, 'Sources for the Study of Guru Gobind Singh's Life and Times', p.250. See also, J.S. Grewal, *The Sikhs: Ideology, Institutions and Identity*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp.165-8, 181-2.
33. The prologue is given in the text published by Piara Singh Padam. See his *Rahitname (Punjabi)*, Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 1991, pp.80-82. The version in the *Bibek Bardhi Granth*, MS 228, available at Dr Balbir Singh Sahitya Kendra, Dehradun also has the prologue.
34. J.S. Grewal, 'Guru Gobind Singh: Life and Mission', *Journal of Punjab Studies*, vol. 15, Nos. 1&2 (Spring-Fall, 2008), pp.3-31.
35. For a discussion of the socio-political context of the eighteenth century, see Indu Banga, 'Raj-Khalsa: Ideology and Praxis', *ibid.*, pp.33-63.
36. Mann, 'Sources for the Study of Guru Gobind Singh's Life and Times', pp. 251 and 250, respectively.
37. *Prem Sumarg Granth Arthat Khalsai Jivan Jach (Patshahi Dasvin)* (Punjabi), ed. Randhir Singh, Jalandhar: New Book Company, 1965, rpt., pp.15-59, 79-93.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.
40. *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

41. Ibid., p.22.
42. Ibid., pp. 22-3.
43. Ibid., pp. 23-5.
44. Ibid., pp. 25-6.
45. Ibid., p. 27.
46. Ibid., pp. 27-39.
47. Ibid., pp. 39-42.
48. Ibid., pp. 79-85.
49. Ibid., pp. 85-93.
50. *Bhai Prahlad Singh Rahitnama*, in *Rahitname*, pp.65-7.
51. *Sakhi Rahit ki Patshahi 10*, in *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*, tr. and ed. W. H. McLeod, Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1987, pp. 133-6, 138.
52. *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*, in *ibid.*, p. 60.
53. Ibid., pp. 60,68,82-4,101.
54. Ibid., p. 68, 82-3, 101-3.
55. Ibid., p. 65.
56. Ibid., p. 72.
57. Ibid., p. 63.
58. *Bhai Daya Singh Rahitnama*, in *Rahitname*, p. 68.
59. Loc.cit.
60. The five who were selected for the ceremony bore the names of Ram Singh, Fateh Singh, Deva Singh, Tehal Singh and Ishar Singh. They had taken *pahul* from the hands of Guru Gobind Singh. They who administer *pahul* should possess the qualities of Sukdev, Durbasa, Krishan, Vashisht, Vishwamitar, Beas, Kapil, Jagyavalik, Gemini and Patanjali. *Daya Singh Rahitnama*, pp. 68-9.
61. Ibid., pp. 69-74.
62. *Desa Singh Rahitnama*, in *Rahitname*, 1991, pp.146-7.
63. Mann, 'Sources for the Study of Guru Gobind Singh's Life and Times', p. 2.



64. Koer Singh, *Gurbilas Patshahi 10* (Punjabi), ed. Shamsheer Singh Ashok, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1968, p.2. See also, Gurtej Singh, 'Compromising the Khalsa Tradition: Koer Singh's *Gurbilas*', in *The Khalsa: Sikh and Non-Sikh Perspectives*, ed. J.S. Grewal, New Delhi: Manohar, 2004, pp. 47-58.
65. J.S. Grewal, 'Chhibber's *Bansavalinama*', in *Lectures on History, Society and Culture of Punjab*, Patiala: Punjabi University, 2007, pp. 218-46.
66. Sarup Das Bhalla, *Guru Nanak Mahima arthat Mahima Prakash* (Punjabi), ed. Shamsheer Singh Ashok and Gobind Singh Lamba, Patiala: Language Department, 1970, vol. I. Sarup Das Bhalla, *Mahima Prakash* (Punjabi), ed. Gobind Singh Lamba and Khazan Singh, Patiala: Languages Department, 1971, vol. II.
67. Sukha Singh, *Gurbilas Patshahi 10* (Punjabi), ed. Gursharan Kaur Jaggi, Patiala: Punjab Languages Department, 1989, pp. i-xxxvi.
68. Nathmal, *Amarnama* (Persian), tr. and ed. Ganda Singh, Amritsar: Sikh History Society, 1953, pp. 27-36, 46-9.
69. Ibid., pp. 36-9, 49-50. It may be added that in the *hukamnama* of Guru Gobind Singh, dated 1700 A.D., the Sikhs are instructed not to attend any ceremony related to death and marriage (*marne* and *parne*) of the Masands. See, *Hukamname: Guru Sahibaan, Mata Sahiban, Banda Singh ate Khalsa ji De*, ed. Ganda Singh, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1967, pp. 164-5.
70. Sainapat, *Shri Guru Sobha* (Punjabi), ed. Shamsheer Singh Ashok, Amritsar: Sikh History Research Board, 1967, pp.76-8, 80-1, 84-5.
71. Ibid., pp.32-4, 42-4.
72. Ibid., pp. 63, 90, 94, 105-6, 131.
73. Koer Singh, *Gurbilas Patshahi 10*, pp. 128-9.
74. Ibid., p.186.
75. According to Chhibber, the Guru tells Chaupa Singh to bring water in a clean bowl; he is asked to stir it with a dagger (*kard*),

and to recite the *Japuji* and the *Anand*. Diwan Sahib Chand makes a request with folded hands that if sweet was added to the water it would become tasty. The Guru tells Dharam Singh to bring *patashas*. The water was stirred again with the dagger after putting *patashas* in to it. This was called *pahul*. Chaupa Singh takes this bowl of *pahul* and stands before Guru Gobind Singh. He tastes it with his finger and tells Chaupa Singh to sit down. He is asked to drink *pahul* with his right palm over his left and exclaim ‘*Vaheguru ji ka Khalsa, Vaheguru ji ki fateh*’. The Guru gives three palmfuls personally to Chaupa Singh to drink. Then it is sprinkled over his face, eyes and his head. His tuft is cut with a dagger before he is given *pahul* to drink. In this way five to seven of the Sikhs present were initiated. They are told to initiate others in the same way. Kesar Singh Chhibber, *Bansavalinama Dasan Patshahian ka* (Punjabi), ed., Ratan Singh Jaggi (*Parkh*, vol.II.), Chandigarh: Panjab University, 1972, pp. 125-33.

76. Ibid., p. 97.
77. Ibid., pp. 134, 164.
78. Sarup Das Bhalla, *Mahima Prakash*, vol. II., pp. 805, 825-29, 831, 892.
79. Sarup Das Bhalla, *Guru Nanak Mahima Prakash*, ed., Shamsheer Singh Ashok and Gobind Singh Lamba, Patiala: Punjab Languages Department, 1970, vol. I, pp. 345-6.
80. Sukha Singh, *Gurbilas Patshahi 10*, pp. 171-74, 177, 179-80, 182.
81. Ibid., pp. 34, 70, 71.
82. Ibid., pp. 436, 439, 441.
83. *Akhbarat-i Darbar-i Mua'lla*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources: Translations of the Major Texts*, ed. J.S. Grewal and Irfan Habib, New Delhi: Tulika/ Indian History Congress, 2001, pp. 107-8.

84. Muhammad Qasim Lahauri, '*Ibratnama*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, p. 115.
85. Mirza Muhammad, '*Ibratnama*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, p.132.
86. Charles Wilkins, 'The Sikhs and Their College at Patna', in *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, ed., Ganda Singh, Calcutta: *Indian Studies: Past & Present*, 1962 (first published in 1781), pp. 74-5.
87. Colonel A.H. Polier, 'An Account of the Sikhs' (first published in 1787), in *ibid.*, pp. 63-4. According to Dr. Ganda Singh, Polier's *The Siques* is 'the first known connected account of the Sikh people written by a European'. *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, p.53.  
  
It may be pointed out that the use of hog's bones and blood for converting a Muslim was probably intended to test genuineness of the intention to convert. If true, this was perhaps resorted to at some places after the Sikhs came into power.
88. George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England through Northern Parts of India, Kashmir, Afghanistan and Persia, and into Russia by the Caspian Sea (1782-1784)* (first published in 1808), Patiala: Punjab Languages Department, 1970, vol.I, pp.307-9.
89. Major James Browne, *History of the Origin and Progress of the Sicks* (first published in 1787), in *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, pp. 18-19.
90. John Griffiths, 'A Memorandum on the Panjab and Kandhar', written from Surat on 17 February 1794, in the form of letter to Alexander Adamson, reproduced in *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, p.92. See also, note 95 above.
91. John Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs* (first published in 1812), New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1986, pp. 44-8, 50-1, 74, 116-17, 148-9, 151.
92. *Ibid.*, pp. 180-5.

93. [Captain Matthews], An Officer of the Bengal Army, 'A Tour to Lahore in 1808', *The Panjab Past And Present*, vol. I, Pt.I-II, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1967, pp.112, 117.
94. Certain recommendations and points of information figure only in the works of Chaupa Singh and Kesar Singh, the two Chhibber Brahmans. Attention may be drawn towards the *Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama* recommending that marriage should be performed by a Brahman, and both Chaupa Singh and Kesar Singh referring to the immersion of ashes in the Ganga. Among the post-funerary ceremonies, Chaupa Singh recommends the performance of *katha* and *kirtan* for eleven, thirteen, fifteen or seventeen days, in addition to the installation of the *Granth* at home for a complete reading. Kesar Singh mentions that the Brahmanical rites were performed on the death of the ninth Guru and the wife of the tenth Guru.

## Chapter V

### ETHICAL CONCERNS

Guru Nanak and his successors were deeply concerned with good conduct in life. A life of selfless action marked their conception of liberation. It is not surprising, therefore, that several Sikh scholars have taken serious interest in the ethics and moral tradition of the Sikhs. Their views are presented in an appendix to this thesis.<sup>1</sup>

Our present purpose is to concentrate on the sources of the eighteenth century for a study of the ethical concerns of the Sikhs. The most important source for our purpose is the *Rahitnama* literature of the period. To this may be added the other Sikh literature. Then there are Persian and European sources. On the whole, it is possible to form a reasonably good idea of the ethical concerns of the Khalsa during the eighteenth century. It may be added that the *Guru Granth Sahib*, the *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas and the earlier *Janamsakhis* remained current as the sources of ethical ideas. The *sakhi* literature was reinforced in the eighteenth century.

#### 1

#### Evidence of the *Prem Sumarag*

We find the largest number of statements related directly or indirectly to ethics in the *Prem Sumarag*. The order in which they occur in the *Rahitnama* provides a rich though disorderly picture. A Khalsa should share his food with the hungry, and he should give clothes to the naked and the needy. If he thinks that he can be of any help to another person he should regard it as the grace of the Guru and brook no delay. He should leave his own work and use the opportunity for doing something good for others. This is the way to please the Guru. He should satisfy others in any way he can. He should remain indifferent to praise and blame and should treat the enemy as a friend. God is everywhere and in everyone. The Khalsa should speak sweetly and should not indulge in meaningless talk.<sup>2</sup>

The essence of the whole *rahit* is not to hurt anyone. The Khalsa should continue to work as long as he can. He should keep one-tenth of his earnings to be spent in the name of Akal Purkh. He should have a separate room (*kotha*) for whatever is to be offered as *mannat* and *ardas*. Out of these savings he should spend for a Sikh, a *sadhu*, a poor person, and a needy person. His *kotha* is a treasury of the Guru and he should give clothes and food to *sants* and Sikhs of Akal Purkh. He should help other needy persons with money and tell them to maintain a similar treasury in the name of the Guru. If a Khalsa takes money from the Guru's treasury to follow an honest occupation and earns profit, he should either return the money or keep it as the Guru's treasury. The moral obligation of the Khalsa to help one another is underlined in the *Prem Sumarag*. They should stick together through thick and thin, and love one another. If one of them is in danger, the others should be prepared to lay down their life for him. In such situations Guru Baba Sri Akal Purkh is always there to support them. About this there could be no doubt whatever.<sup>3</sup>

The Sikhs should honour their promise. They should observe restraint and contentment (*sil, santokh*). It was obligatory for a Sikh to observe fasting, but fasting of the bodily organs. His eyes should not look at another's wife or another's property; his tongue should not utter falsehood or slander; his tongue should not indulge in pleasure; his ears should not listen to slander; his hands should not touch another's wife or another's property; his feet should not move for doing an evil deed; he should not have sexual intercourse with any woman other than his wife; his nostrils should not indulge in sweet smells. A Sikh should not indulge in sensual pleasures (*bikhia*, from *vishay* in Sanskrit). This is the kind of fasting that the Khalsa should observe. He should not indulge in sexual pleasures which are ultimately the source of sorrow. The term *bikhia* refers to everything pursued for pleasure and comfort, resulting in sorrow and suffering. Too much of food is a source of trouble.<sup>4</sup>



A Khalsa should not indulge in tall talk. He should avoid backbiting, love of another woman, betraying trust, theft, illicit sexual relations, appropriation of another's property, miserliness, greed, unnecessary violence, pride, lust, anger, attachment, and longing for things which are not available. He should not speak untruth for his own gain, though it may be justified if it is spoken for the good of someone else. A Khalsa should help others but not as a favour. Since whatever happens in mundane affairs is in accordance with the wishes of God, a Sikh should not feel happy or sorry over the result but he should continue with his effort. A Khalsa should not laugh at others; it ends in misery. The person at whom he laughs acts as ordained by God. That is why a Khalsa should not laugh at him. Whatever good or bad anyone does is in accordance with the divine order. A Khalsa should keep his own end in view.<sup>5</sup>

The author of the *Prem Sumarag* lays great emphasis on eating together and sharing food with others. When the food is ready, the Khalsa should sit at one place on a fine sheet (*satranji* or *loi*) or some other cloth, and eat food in their proper dress. They should not bother about the constraints of *chauka*. Food is pure through God's grace. When the food is served they should think of the Guru and pray that he may send some hungry person or a Sikh of the Khalsa to share this food. If anyone comes on his own, they should feel happy and regard it as the Guru's grace. They should offer food to him in a respectful manner. If no one comes, they should keep one meal separately for a visitor, whether a Hindu, a Musalman or a Khalsa, or a hungry person. This food is accepted in the divine court. If food is insufficient because of visitors who have come on their own, a Khalsa should not entertain the thought why they had come. The food should be shared equally by all even if it is insufficient. This is the source of increase in one means. The host should eat after others have eaten. A Khalsa should utter 'Vaheguruji' with every morsel. He should not allow any particle of food to drop on the ground, nor leave it in the plate. If he can afford it by the Guru's grace he should eat meat everyday at least in a small quantity.

He should never miss it. God is pleased with its flavour, and it becomes *mahaprasad*; whosoever eats it becomes pure. Even during travel, or in another country, a Khalsa should follow his usual practice; he should eat good food. For drinking water, a pitcher full of water should be kept in a cool place, at a level higher than the ground. The traditional illusions about what should be and what should not be eaten were to be discarded. All food is pure. Whichever vegetables suit the body can be eaten. For eating meat and fish, the preference should be for an animal that has been killed by his own weapon. There was no prohibition on eating food with others, if who were well disposed, whether Hindus or Muslims.<sup>6</sup>

The Khalsa should not use any intoxicant. If they do, they should use opium of the best quality but no more than a large *moong*, mixed with spices. If they drink poppy (*post*), they should use only two and a half pods. If a Khalsa eats *bhang* it should be mixed with spices and should not exceed two and a half *masa*. He who uses alcoholic drinks would go to hell. However, alcohol could be used if prescribed as a medicine. The use of intoxicants is prohibited because it makes the user lazy and indifferent to both God and the affairs of the world. Addiction to intoxicants leads to evil deeds.<sup>7</sup>

The author of the *Prem Sumarag* shows keen interest in domestic matters. He mentions the items of food and fruit to be eaten at different times of the day. A Khalsa should fix the times for eating food, and eat at the fixed time. He should not appease his hunger completely. He should remember God while eating and should not smile or laugh. The items of dress, perfume and ornaments to be used by men and women are also mentioned. It is recommended that as far as possible the Khalsa should sleep in a *chhappar-khat*, that is, a cot with a piece of cloth fixed over four sticks to protect the body from dew. He should not sleep naked. The kitchen, the sitting room (*diwan-khana*) and the *tabela* (stable) should be kept separate from the other rooms in a place of residence. There should be a well in the house.<sup>8</sup>

The author of the *Prem Sumarag* goes on to talk about the occupations to be pursued by the Khalsa and the disposal of their earnings. First of all, whatever they do should be in accordance with *dharam* so that the Guru may increase their resources. The Khalsa is prohibited from taking service, and from sitting in a shop. Working in one's own home is recommended. However, the product prepared at home could be sold in the market. They should not be irregular in the pursuit of their work. The most preferable occupation for the Khalsa was trade, especially in horses. Next to trade and horses was cultivation of land. If a Khalsa does take up service, it should be soldiering. He should be content with his monthly salary and serve his employer sincerely; he should fight bravely and never indulge in plunder.<sup>9</sup> The Khalsa should divide what they earn into five parts. One-tenth, one-twentieth or one-fortieth of the earnings should be kept for the Guru. A similar share should be given to mother and father. Then, a share should be separated for the Khalsa and their food. Next comes the share of his own dress, food, and fragrance. The rest should be saved to be spent on happy occasions or in a situation of distress.

In connection with the union between husband and wife, the author of the *Prem Sumarag* recommends that the man should have a neat and clean room for sitting and sleeping. He should keep his body clean, use fragrance, and think of Sri Akal Purkh all the time. The woman should also use fragrance. She should also rub her body with fragrant mixture of gram flower and oil every fourth or eighth day and wash her hair with condiments. She should use fragrant oil for the hair and wear perfumed clothes. She should wear a garland of flowers and put on ornaments for adornment. She should think of Sri Akal Purkh all the time. She should never be lazy about bathing. The woman should bathe three days after menstruation, and adorn herself. The man and woman should have intercourse in the middle of the second quarter of the night, both thinking of God. For fourteen days they should have intercourse once every night and then wait for menstruation. The man

who has intercourse with his wife every day, and not just for the first fourteen days of the cycle, is not a human being but a beast.<sup>10</sup>

There is considerable emphasis on conduct in interpersonal relations. A Khalsa should not smile or laugh too much and he should not speak evil about others. He should think before uttering any word. He should respond to queries of others and not speak to them pointlessly. Sitting in a gathering, he should show respect to others. He should be the first to utter the salutation. He should treat others with love. He should meet better persons than himself. He should sit with other people only so long as it concerns his purposes. If he is dependant on another person, he should work according to his schedule. During the day, he should sit with his family for two to four and a half hours, and similarly during the night. He should outwardly meet other people in the customary manner but inwardly he should keep his mind centred on the Guru's *updes*. He should not do evil to any one and should not cause sorrow to anyone.<sup>11</sup>

## 2

### **The Other *Rahitnamas***

The *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh offers considerable evidence on ethics, particularly in the part which relates to *rahit*. The statements are scattered but it is possible to see that they relate mainly to three aspects: the life of the individual Sikh, his relations with other Sikhs, and their relations with non-Sikhs. The personal conduct, sexual behaviour, and culinary matters are important for the individual. The first appear to be related to some ethical principles, the second to the ideals of married life, and the third to cleanliness and health.

The essence of learning is *par-upkar*, that is doing good for others. Therefore, a Sikh of the Guru should never hesitate to perform a good deed in the interest of others. A phrase from the *bani* of Guru Nanak is appropriately quoted: '*vidya vichari tan par-upkari*'. A Sikh of the Guru should earn honestly (*dharam di kirat*). An occupation to be pursued by a Sikh is not necessarily hereditary. Every occupation is a gift of God. The only criterion for its choice is honesty. The Sikh should

work according to this principle so long as he is physically capable of doing so. The Sikh of the Guru should regard the mouth of a poor person as the Guru's *golak*. In other words, the merit of giving food to the poor is equal to the merit of taking offerings to the Guru. A Sikh of the Guru should speak sweetly. He should never hurt the feelings of another person. He should not resort to abusive language. Whereas sweet words bring honour, abusive language brings discredit. A Sikh of the Guru should not blame others (for his failures). He should perform good deeds in love so that he receives the nectar of life. He should never do things half-heartedly or without dedication. True dedication is not forced but voluntary. A deed done under compulsion has no merit. A Sikh of the Guru should not steal, gamble or have illicit sexual relations. They who do such things are crushed like the sesame seeds (in the oil press). A Sikh should not indulge in slander. There is a cure for everything else but not for slandering, or the slanderer.<sup>12</sup>

A Sikh of the Guru should get married. He should not lust for another's wife, nor have sexual relations with any woman other than his wife. He should not have sexual intercourse with his wife during the first or the last quarter of the night. The middling two quarters are more appropriate for this purpose. Getting up early in the morning he must bathe with cold or hot water. The preference for marrying a Sikh's daughter with a Sikh is implied in an incident in which a poor Sikh requests Guru Gobind Singh to enable him to perform the marriage of his daughter. The Guru asks him to whom he was going to give his daughter in marriage and he replies, 'with a Sikh'. Guru Gobind Singh tells his treasurer, Dharam Chand, to ensure that the marriage was well performed. All the expenses on the marriage were paid from the Guru's treasury. This incident also carries the implication that the Sikhs should help a needy Sikh in the performance of his daughter's marriage.<sup>13</sup>

A Sikh of the Guru should not eat alone. In the name of the Guru he should invite someone else to share his food. In support of this, the well known line of Guru Nanak is quoted to the effect that he who works hard and gives something to others out of his earning may



recognizes the right path.<sup>14</sup> The well known phrase '*band (vand) khana*' is also mentioned at another place in connection with a Sikh of the Guru who has plenty of food; he should not eat alone but share it with other Sikhs.<sup>15</sup> A Sikh of the Guru should not eat food without first making an offering (*bhet*). He should not boast about his charity and distribution of food on a festive occasion in the name of the Guru so that he does not become small and trivial.<sup>16</sup> A Sikh who receives food must know whether or not it is lawfully earned, whether or not it comes from a right place. A Sikh of the Guru who receives food from another Sikh should regard it as nectar (*amrit*).<sup>17</sup> A devout Sikh should not eat at a improper place. In support of this injunction the familiar verse of Guru Nanak is quoted which refers to those who perform prayers (*namaz*) and yet eat human flesh, who put on sacred thread and yet wield the knife to slaughter animals.<sup>18</sup> A Sikh of the Guru should wash his hands and feet and rinse his mouth before he enters the kitchen to sit for eating food. He should eat food with due respect and he should not speak. While eating, he should not stand up on the arrival of another person. He should utter Vaheguru before putting a morsel of food in his mouth. A Sikh of the Guru should eat with restraint, not eating to the full. Such food is nectar, the food of gods. What is eaten more than the need is like poison, comparable to animal feed. Overeating is a source of suffering. A Sikh of the Guru should not give the leavings of his meal to another person. For preparing food, a Sikh of the Guru should use firewood and not cattle dung cakes. If there is not enough of firewood he should use at least one stick.<sup>19</sup>

A Sikh of the Guru should turn away neither from the Guru nor from the Sikhs. A Sikh of the Guru should serve other Sikhs with dedication and with disregard for expense. On meeting a needy Sikh, the Sikh of the Guru should wash his clothes and hair, and offer food to him. This is one way of pleasing the Guru. A Sikh of the Guru should save one-tenth of his profits to be spent in the name of the Guru and for his Sikhs. A Sikh of the Guru who holds a good position should remember the Sikhs as well as the Gurus. The worldly goods are not



trustworthy. A Sikh of the Guru should offer the first fruit and grain to a Sikh, and eat it only afterwards. It is the duty (*dharam*) of a local Sikh *sangat* to receive Sikhs from outside with affection and respect and meet their needs. The service performed for a Brahman Sikh should be double (*duni*) the service performed for another Sikh. The reward of such a service is also double. When a Brahman becomes a Sikh of the Guru, the prestige of *sikhkhi* also increases because the Brahman is the teacher of the world. It is significant to note that the son of a prostitute is to be treated in the same manner as the other Sikhs. His birth does not make him necessarily evil. He is not bound to do undesirable deeds or oblige others to do so. A Sikh of the Guru becomes pure.<sup>20</sup>

There is a general injunction that a Sikh of the Guru should show the right path to a person who has gone astray. A Sikh of the Guru should cultivate kindness towards all (*sarbat*). However, he should avoid misplaced kindness. He should not keep evil company (*ku-sangat*). A Sikh of the Guru should not take water from a Musalman (*tatta*) to drink. He should not drink water from a container made from leather. Furthermore, a Sikh of the Guru should place no trust in the oath of a Musalman; he should not share a sleeping place with a Musalman. He should not sit and eat with a Musalman. He is an enemy of *dharam-karam*, the sacred thread and the cow. As the Guru says, a *mlechh* should be killed in a battle. The Sikh of the Guru should have no sexual intercourse (*judh*) with a Musalman woman (Turkani). A Sikh of the Guru should not take the side of a person of bad conduct (*ku-rahatia*) or a non-believer (*dharhia*). A Sikh of the Guru should never blame an innocent person. A Sikh of the Guru should not have any relation with a stranger before knowing him well. Finally, a Sikh of the Guru should not associate with five categories of people: the Minas, the Ram Raiyas, the Dhir Malias, the Masands and the Masandias. All these five were related to the Guru but they were also the slanderers of the Guru. A tree bears thorns as well as flowers and fruit, and these people were like the thorns.<sup>21</sup>

At the end of the part on *tankhah* there are some statements with a bearing on ethics. These statements relate to honest living, good conduct, truthful and sweet speech, service of others, especially of the Sikhs, use of sweet tongue, regard for the fellow-Sikhs, service of the parents, sharing food with others, thinking good of others, remaining content with daily food, and not using any intoxicant. It is emphasized that no other relationship is preferable to the relationship between a Sikh and a Sikh.<sup>22</sup>

The short *Rahitnamas* have much less to say about ethics. The *Nasihatnama* underscores the importance of deeds. A Sikh is expected not to indulge in backbiting, slandering, gambling or stealing. He is not expected to appropriate anything that does not belong to him. He is expected to be generous and charitable, especially towards the Sikhs who come as guests. He is expected to keep a promise he makes. A Sikh should not use snuff (*nasvar*). He should not eat with his head uncovered; and he should not distribute *prasad* without covering his head. Above all, he is expected to avoid the naked state. He should not take his bath naked; Even for the sexual act he should not be in a naked state. This last injunction is clearly intended to be a curb on sensuality. It gets related to the conception of proper sexual relations in the *Nasihatnama*. A Sikh is expected to observe strict fidelity to his wife. He must not visit a prostitute and he should not develop sexual relations with another woman. A Sikh is instructed not to look with lustful eyes on women present in the *sangat*.

There are injunctions meant specifically for the Khalsa, but all these injunctions could be, and have been, given to all Sikhs. A Khalsa should not indulge in slander; he should practise charity; he should curb sensual pleasures; he should avoid misdeeds; he should discard all false sense of honour, that is, pride, he should flee from a strange woman; he should keep awake at night; he should not have an eye on things which do not belong to him; he should remain attached to Gurbani; he should never harm a created being because the Creator of all beings is offended if anyone of them is harmed; he should protect

the poor; he should recite the Name and remain attached to it; he should stick to his *dharam* even at the cost of his life.

Some other injunctions in the *Nasihatnama* relate to the political situation. The Khalsa should fight in the van; they should kill *khans*; they should destroy the enemy; they should attack the opponents; they should ride horses; they should be ready all the time to fight; they should bear arms, and kill the Turks. A Sikh should not show any respect for the authority of the Turks. He is not expected to touch iron with his feet, since iron had acquired a certain degree of sanctity in the form of weapons. Since the Turks were the enemy, a Sikh was not expected to take meat from a Turk for eating.<sup>23</sup>

In the *Sakhi Rahit*, the familiar injunction against the use of tobacco is reiterated in very strong terms. To smoke or to sniff tobacco is like eating beef. To look at the daughter or sister of another person with lust is a great sin. A Sikh of the Guru should never steal another's property. He should not slander others. The Guru's word is clear on this point. Every disease can be treated for cure but not the slanderer; there is no cure for the slanderer. A Sikh should never turn away from the Guru. He should serve the Sikhs. Nothing is more important than living in accordance with *dharam*. The essence of *dharam* is to serve the hungry and the naked; to serve the Sikhs, the brothers in faith.

Guru Gobind Singh has emphasized that nothing else is so meritorious as feeding of a fellow-Sikh (Gurbhai). All increase in one's wealth and merit is due to the service of Gurbhais. To serve the Gurbhai is to serve the Guru. To turn away from the Gurbhai is to turn away from the Guru. This is the Guru's own word and must be accepted as true. He who accepts it attains happiness, and he who does not would be drowned in suffering. There is a great emphasis on the service of the Gurbhai in the *Sakhi Rahit*. Sri Krishan ji told his friend Udhe that fasting on the *ekadasi* (eleventh day of the bright moon) earns the merit of feeding a lac of Brahmans; even a lac of cows given in charity does not equal the merit of fasting. A Sikh of the Guru who feeds his Gurbhai with love earns the four-fold merit of fasting on

the *ekadasi*. This is because a Gurbhai is like the Guru. He who treats the Gurbhai in this manner attains liberation.<sup>24</sup>

The *Rahitnama* of Bhai Prahlad Singh, though very brief, contains several ethical injunctions. A Sikh should not have any dealings with the Minas, the Masandias, and those who cut off the hair of their heads or kill their infant daughters. If a Sikh takes food from the hands of the killer of an infant daughter, his whole life is wasted. He who wears clothes of red colour and inhales snuff would go to hell. He who serves the Guru and his Sikhs, and who disregards demons and gods, is a form of Akal Purkh; the Khalsa is the manifest body of God. The Guru is pleased with the Sikh who cooks food and offers it to another Sikh.<sup>25</sup>

The *Rahitnama* of Bhai Daya Singh, which is nearly three times larger than the *Rahitnama* of Bhai Prahlad Singh, contains a much larger number of statements with a bearing on ethics. As in the other *Rahitnamas*, the injunctions with regard to the individual Sikh, his relations with other Sikhs, and with others are found mixed together even in single statements. Not to associate with the Masandias, the Dhir Malias, the Ram Raiyas and those who cut off the hair of their heads is given as the first injunction of the *rahit*. The service of Singhs is mentioned immediately after. A Singh should not speak falsehood, nor look at another woman with lust; he should discard anger, pride, attachment, backbiting, unnecessary violence, and untruth. He should do no evil to others, nor should he hurt their feelings; he should speak sweetly. He should earn his living honestly and he should be indifferent to both joy and sorrow. He should share his food with others, and do whatever he can for them. This is the way to please the Guru. He should recognize the *hukam* and entertain no pride; with the exterior of the lion he should behave like a cow. He should not sleep or speak too much. He should earn his living honestly and serve the Sikhs; the Guru is the bestower of all gifts. He should not do five things so that he attains liberation in life: appropriating another's wealth (*par-dhan*),

associating with other woman (*par istri*), slandering others (*par-ninda*), gambling and drinking spirituous liquors.<sup>26</sup>

Using several metaphors for items of the Sikh *rahit* the author states that a Singh should wear the *kachh* of calm disposition and right mode. He should wear a *kachh* made from five or two and half yards of cloth. He should not inhale snuff. He who bathes in a naked state goes to hell. So does he who kills his infant daughter, or who gives his daughter to a person who cuts off the hair of his head. He who gambles or drinks spirituous liquor goes to hell. He who eats meat from a Turk or who goes to the prostitute, would go to hell. A Singh should not associate with a person who associates with a Turk. A Singh should not curse another Sikh. He should not bow to anyone but the Sikhs who have received the gift of the form the Guru; such a Singh obtains everything. He should not wear a loin cloth or a *dhoti*. The ears and the nose should not be pierced. A Sikh of the Guru should not put collyrium in the eyes nor should he sleep naked. Most of these injunctions are reiterated with slight variations or difference of emphasis in the remaining portion of the *Rahitnamas*. Only a few injunctions are new, and apparently less important.<sup>27</sup>

Bhai Desa Singh in his *Rahitnama* makes a number of statements which have a direct bearing on the ethics of an individual Singh, his relations with the Khalsa and his relations with others. The injunction against slander and misappropriation appears as a part of the original core of the *rahit* enunciated by Guru Gobind Singh. It is followed by the injunction on charity according to one's capacity. A Singh should regard lust, anger, pride, spirituous drinks and greed as his enemies. About his occupation, it is generally stated that he should do nothing which involves infringement of *rahit*. The three occupations recommended are agriculture, trade and crafts but a Singh could take up other occupations according to his inclination. It is interesting to note that the term used for occupation is service (*tehal*). A Singh should pursue his occupation in all earnestness and never think of theft or robbery. He should not go to a prostitute, should not gamble and



should not smoke tobacco; he should never eat fish or meat. He should not eat *kuththa* meat, use *hukka*, *charas*, *ganja* or tobacco in any form. He should never wear a cap. There was no bar on eating opium if it was no more than a *ratti*, and no bar on using *bhang* if it was no more than a *masa*. If he takes more, it is certainly harmful. The only meat he should eat is mutton for which a he-goat is to be killed by *jhatka*. A Singh should avoid five evils; association with another woman, gambling, untruth, stealing, and spirituous drinks. He should never become so engrossed in his family that he forgets the Guru or God. He should never discard humility and never keep evil company; there is no comfort in the company of evil men. He should have nothing to do with lust, anger, greed, a spirituous drink or pride. He should never speak falsehood. If a Singh becomes rich and prosperous he should regard this as a gift from the Guru; he should never take pride in his position deeming it to be his own achievement; he should always remain subject to the Guru's teaching. If he uses food cooked by someone else, he should never forget to purify it with his dagger (*karad*). When he distributes food he should do it evenly, not giving more to one and less to another. He should never become a false witness or take bribe for giving justice. This may be with reference to a local arbitrator or to a ruler, or even a sort of magistrate. For eating food, a Singh should wash his hands; he should never eat alone. He should share his food with as many Singhs as possible. When a Singh goes out to meet the call of nature, he should take a full water pot with him; he should put away his weapons while he is sitting to relieve himself.<sup>28</sup>

For relations with other Singhs, Bhai Desa Singh recommends that, if a Singh has to take service, he should take service with a Singh. To serve him is as meritorious as to serve the Guru. A Singh should love other Singhs and never bear enmity towards them. A Singh should never strike another Singh with a weapon; he should fear the wrath of the Guru-Khalsa. A Singh should shun a person who has taken *pahul* but does evil things and infringes the *rahit*; he should remain far away from such a person. There were many kinds of Khalsa but it was



necessary to identify those Singhs who lived in accordance with the *rahit*. The author is emphatic about the importance of *rahit* for the Singh. Only he who follows the *rahit* is a true Sikh of the Guru.<sup>29</sup>

It is interesting to note that Bhai Desa Singh recommends that a Singh should inspire members of all the four *varnas* to become Singhs. Perhaps, the author is thinking of the non-Singhs within the fold of Sikhism. In any case, he states that there are many *panths* in the world; none of them should be slandered because all the *panths* are God's *dham* (place, dwelling house, home); they remember God's name in their own way.<sup>30</sup>

### 3

#### **The *Gurbilas* Literature**

The *Gurbilas* literature does not reflect the same degree of concern with ethics as the *Rahitnamas*. This is largely because the authors of this genre are more interested in other aspects of the life of Guru Gobind Singh and the Khalsa. Nevertheless, the works of Sainapat, Koer Singh, Kesar Singh Chhibber and Sukha Singh do contain statements which have a direct bearing on the ethics of the Khalsa.

Sainapat is aware of the detractors of the Khalsa. He says that the slanderer of the Sikhs of the Khalsa is bound for hell. He does not identify the slanderers but he does emphasize that there are five categories of people with whom the Sikhs of the Guru should not associate; they should not see the face of those who cut off the hair of their heads; they should not go to them for mourning or other such occasions. These are the categories of people who have not joined the fold of the Khalsa. Instead of associating with this category of people, a Sikh of the Guru should love the Khalsa *sangat*. He should practise kindness and righteousness, and discard all greed. The Khalsa of Vaheguru should not use the *hukka*, nor should they cut the hair of their head or beard. Sainapat suggests indirectly that a Sikh of the Guru should have no pride; he should never commit evil deeds or be oblivious of God. The Khalsa should not be deceitful. He who discards

pride and takes refuge with the *sant*, his body becomes pure. Sainapat refers to penance (*tankhah*) for an ethical failure.<sup>31</sup>

Koer Singh talks of ethics in connection with the *rahit* proclaimed by Guru Gobind Singh at the time of instituting the Khalsa. Apart from the injunction against association with those who cut their hair and those who killed their infant daughters, and the Minas, the Masands and the Turks, Koer Singh refers to the injunction against gambling, going to the prostitute and entertaining greed of any kind. The Khalsa should feed the hungry. Guru Gobind Singh introduced the practice of interdining among the Khalsa irrespective of their background in terms of Shudar, Vaish, Khatri and Brahman. This carries the implication that the Khalsa were not to observe the formalities of *chauka* based on the distinctions of caste. The Khalsa should not have any sexual relations with a Muslim woman, nor should they trust the Turks. They who do not heed this injunction suffer in the end. The Khalsa should sacrifice their life for the cause of the Guru. Before his death Guru Gobind Singh underlines that the Khalsa should not have any sexual relations with another woman, nor should they have any association with the Turk. Guru Gobind Singh recites the hymn of Guru Arjan in which the liberated Sikh gets rid of lust, anger, greed and attachment.<sup>32</sup>

Kesar Singh Chhibber was much concerned with the *rahit* and ethics. A Sikh of the Guru should perform service for the devout Sikhs. He refers to an incident in which a Sikh preserves his faith and is not tempted by a prostitute, even though he loses the chance to become rich. A Sikh woman should never think of any other man than her husband. A Sikh of the Guru should not be engrossed in *maya*; he should discard *haumai* and attachment. One of the charges against the Masands was that they molested Sikh girls by force or deceit; they oppressed the Sikhs. By implication, the Sikhs of the Guru should not do such things. The essence of *rahit* is not to do an evil deed. The Sikh of the Guru had nothing to do with Muslims and should not allow them to enter his home. He should not go to the prostitutes (who are supposed to be Muslim). The Sikh of the Guru should not use tobacco,

nor should he gamble or steal; he should have no illicit sexual relations. He should love the Sikhs and never an enemy of the Sikhs. A Sikh of the Guru should not associate with the Masands or Masandias, nor should they associate with the Dhir Malias, the Ram Raiyas and the Minas. A Brahman Sikh should be honoured. If a Sikh becomes a Raja, a *musaddi*, a Sah or a *chaudhari*, he should help the Sikhs in every situation. All defaults of a Sikh are forgiven if he is a *musaddi* in a government and helps the Sikhs in the court. A Sikh *musaddi* should try his best to help the Sikhs. Four injunctions of the *rahit* were obligatory even for such a *musaddi*. If he faltered in any of these, he should seek forgiveness of the Sikhs. The Sikhs also should not hesitate to forgive him. One of the four injunctions was not to smoke, the second was not to observe *bhaddan*, the third was not to kill an infant daughter and the fourth was not to associate with the five condemned groups of people.<sup>33</sup>

Kesar Singh Chhibber quotes a verse of Guru Nanak to emphasize that a Sikh, or even a Hindu, should stick to his *dharam* and not learn a language of the *mlechh*, like Arabic, Turkish or Persian. He should never think of taking the side of Turks in any way. It is stated in the *Granth Sahib*, and the *Gita*, that one should stick to one's own *dharam* even if another's *dharam* is better. He who learns the language of the *mlechh* and appreciates the *Qur'an* and the *Kateb* (semitic books), or who, sides with the Turks, deviates from his own *dharam*.<sup>34</sup>

A Sikh of the Guru should wash his feet before entering the *chauka*. The author appears to be talking of a Brahmanical practice. He gives expression to his characteristic stance in support of the *varna* ideal when he talks of matrimonial relations. It is interesting to note that Kesar Singh Chhibber goes on to add that if a Sikh wishes to enter into a matrimonial relation with a follower of the Guru (*sevak*), he should waste no time; he may afterwards request (the *sangat*) for forgiveness.<sup>35</sup>

For Kesar Singh Chhibber, the relationship between the Sikhs is as sacrosanct as the relation with kith and kin. He appreciates the Sikh

warrior's death on the field of battle; such a martyr goes to heaven. A Sikh should have great regard for a fellow-Sikh (Gurbhai); to deceive a Sikh amounts to turning away from the Guru. Kesar Singh lays great emphasis on charity. In order to underline the obligation of *dasvandh* he states that the ideal thing to do was to give one-fourth of one's profits or earnest earnings in charity. In support of this he quotes the *Granth Sahib* to the effect that every gift comes from God. He who gives charity in the name of God receives two-fold to ten-fold of the amount given in charity in his future birth as a human being. A Sikh of the Guru should never be lured by *maya* and he should share with other Sikhs whatever he receives through the Guru's grace. A Sikh should be careful about commensality. Good food produces good qualities and bad food is injurious to life and intelligence. Kesar Singh goes on to add that a Sikh should discard association with the *mlechh* and the Chandal. A Sikh of the Guru who does not discard evil association is bound to see his life wasted. An example of evil association is going to a prostitute. A Sikh should love his wife more and more; he should not even dream of another woman. Kesar Singh lays great emphasis on destroying the Turks. For this he invokes the authority of Guru Gobind Singh.<sup>36</sup>

Sukha Singh makes only a few statements which have a bearing on ethics, and these too in connection with the *rahit* pronounced at instituting the Khalsa. A Sikh of the Guru should not associate with five categories of people: the Minas, the Masandias, the Dhir Malias and the Ram Raiyas; the fifth category is not mentioned because it was believed to be known to everyone. This was a strict injunction of Guru Gobind Singh. A Sikh of the Guru should serve the *sants*; this was the secret of ever lasting rule. A Sikh of the Guru should bow at the feet of the Khalsa. The *deg* and *teg* would triumph in the end. A Sikh of the Guru should not associate with the *mlechh*. No one else among gods and human beings had the same status as the Khalsa. Immersed in the divine light they have become superior to gods.<sup>37</sup>

### Evidence of the Persian and European Sources

The works in Persian which deal with the Sikhs do not have much to say about Sikh ethics. In the last decade of the seventeenth century, Sujan Rai Bhandari makes the following observation: 'In the name of their Guide, which they continually have on their tongue, they consider it a great act of worship to attend on travellers. If a person arrives at midnight and takes the name of Baba Nanak, though he be a stranger and unknown person, even a thief, robber, or a person of evil conduct, they treat him as a brother and friend and serve him in a manner proper to his needs.'<sup>38</sup>

Bhandari wrote about the Sikhs of Guru Nanak and his successors before the institution of the Khalsa. About seventy years later, Qazi Nur Muhammad made the following observation on the Keshdhari Singhs:

Leaving aside their (mode of) war, hear you of another aspect that distinguishes them among warriors. At no time do they kill one who is not a man (*namard*). Nor would they obstruct the passage of a fugitive. They do not plunder the wealth and ornaments of a woman, be she a well-to-do lady or a maid-servant. There is no adultery among the Sikhs, nor are these people given to thieving. Whether a woman is young or old they tell her, '*Budhiya*, go and occupy a corner'. The word '*budhiya*' in the Hindi language means old woman.' No thief is to be found among these Sikhs, nor is house-breaker (present) among them. They do not approve of adulterers and house-breakers.<sup>39</sup>

In Qazi Nur Muhammad's view, these traits distinguished the Sikhs from other Indians.

The early European writers too do not say much about Sikh ethics. John Surman and Edward Stephenson observed in March 1716 that the Sikhs who were being beheaded in Delhi (before Banda Bahadur was executed) were remarkably patient in meeting their fate, and none of them 'apostatized' from his new religion.<sup>40</sup> About sixty



years later, James Browne refers to the remarkable customs of the Khalsa. They never used tobacco, though its use was common among other Indians. However, they used spirits and *bhang* to the excess of intoxication.<sup>41</sup> Polier had observed a few years earlier that the Sikhs plundered and burnt towns and villages but they seldom killed in cold blood, or made slaves. Polier refers to their abstinence from or their indulgence in intoxicants in terms similar to those of James Browne.<sup>42</sup> William Franklin states that the Khalsa never smoked tobacco but they were not averse to drinking spirituous liquors. They also took opium, *bhang* and other intoxicating drugs.<sup>43</sup> John Malcom states that the use of tobacco was forbidden to the Sikhs but they were allowed to indulge in spirituous liquors which they drank to excess. They used opium, *bhang* and other intoxicating drugs. Martyrdom for the faith was the shortest and the most certain road to honour in this world and eternal happiness in the future. Malcolm underlines that the spirit of equality was considered as the vital principle of the Khalsa, and made all Sikhs reluctant to own either a temporal or a spiritual leader.<sup>44</sup> James Skinner, who gives a brief description of the Sikh community in his *Tashrih al-Aqwam*, says that they avoided the smoking-pipe, and they did not eat beef but they ate the meat of wild pig and other animals and birds, and they consumed wine. The meat of an animal slaughtered in the Muslim manner (*halal*) was distasteful and forbidden to them; they ate *jhatka* meat, that is, the meat of an animal slaughtered by one stroke of the sword.<sup>45</sup>

## 5

### In Retrospect

The Persian and European sources do not say much about the ethics of the Sikhs. The war ethics of the Khalsa include no attack on a fugitive or a non-combatant, and no molestation of women. They never made slaves. The Khalsa did not use tobacco in any form. However, they used intoxicants like liquor, opium and *bhang*. They avoided *halal* meat, and ate *jhatka* meat.



The *Gurbilas* literature lays stress on regard for fellow Sikhs. The relationship of faith is as important as the concern for kinship, if not more. The Khalsa should stick to their *dharam* even at the cost of life. The Khalsa from all the four *varnas* should eat together. A Khalsa should share his food with others. They should have no friendship or connection with Muslims. They should never come near a Muslim woman, just as they should not go to a prostitute or have illicit sexual relations with any woman.

The *Rahitnamas* of the time of Sikh rule indicate a few new concerns. For example, a Singh should encourage members of all the four *varnas* to become Singhs: what is new here is not 'four *varnas*' but encouragement to be given. All *panths*, other than the Khalsa, should be seen as adoring God in their own way. For the rest, however, these two *Rahitnamas* generally reiterate what we find in the early *Rahitnamas*.

The short *Rahitnamas* do not have much to say about ethics but what they actually say becomes important because it is a part of the essential *rahit* for the authors. Any kind of misappropriation, stealing and gambling are prohibited. Backbiting and slandering are denounced. Sensuality in general and sexual indulgence in particular are to be kept under restraint. Illicit sexual relations are denounced very strongly. The Khalsa should protect the poor. The essence of *dharam* is to serve the hungry and the naked. Great regard, consideration, and concern for the fellow-Sikhs are emphasized. At the opposite end are the Turks to whom no respect is to be shown and who are to be killed in the field of battle.

The most comprehensive statement on the ethics comes from the two largest *Rahitnamas*: the *Prem Sumarag* and the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh. The individual, communitarian and social obligations are laid down. There are recommendations culinary and domestic matters, relations of a Sikh with other Sikhs, and the relations of the Sikhs with all others. To take up social responsibility with a deep sense of commitment is the foremost obligation. Not to hurt the

feelings of a fellow human being is the basic principle. However, exceptions are made on the basis religious beliefs and practices and political concerns. No association with certain groups and hostility towards the rulers and their supporters are strongly emphasized. For the rest, the principle of *par-upkar*, or welfare of others, is all inclusive. On the whole, what is emphasized most is honest living, good conduct, truthful and soft speech, and service of others. Use of all intoxicants is prohibited. No other relationship is preferable to the relationship of the Sikh faith.

### NOTES

1. For received wisdom on the subject, see Appendix 3, 'Scholarly Concern with Sikh Ethics'.
2. *Prem Sumarag Granth Arthat Khalsai Jiwan-Jachi* (Punjabi) ed. Randhir Singh, Jalandhar: New Book Company, 1965, rpt., pp. 8-10.
3. Ibid., pp. 9, 10, 12.
4. Ibid., pp. 14, 17-18.
5. Ibid., pp. 19-20, 47.
6. Ibid., pp. 61-2, 64-5.
7. Ibid., p. 65.
8. Ibid., pp. 68-9, 71-2.
9. Ibid., p. 73.
10. Ibid., p. 75.
11. Ibid., pp. 76-8.
12. *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama* (Punjabi), tr. and ed. W.H. McLeod, Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1987, pp. 57, 60, 62, 69, 71-2, 74, 78.
13. Ibid., pp. 58, 63.
14. Ibid., p. 57.
15. Ibid., p. 65.
16. Ibid., p. 63.
17. Ibid., pp. 66.
18. Ibid., p. 61.

19. Ibid., pp. 59, 63, 67-8, 71.
20. Ibid., pp. 60, 62, 66, 68-9, 70-1.
21. Ibid., pp. 59, 67, 72, 78.
22. Ibid., pp. 77-8.
23. Karamjit K. Malhotra, 'The Earliest Manual on the Sikh Way of Life', in *Five Centuries of Sikh Tradition: Ideology Society, Politics and Culture*, ed. Reeta Grewal and Sheena Pall, New Delhi: Manohar, 2005, pp. 66-71.
24. *Sakhi Rahit Ki Patshahi 10* (Punjabi), in *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*, pp. 133-5, 137.
25. *Bhai Prahlad Singh Rahitnama*, in *Rahitname* (Punjabi), ed. Piara Singh Padam, Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 1995, pp. 65-7.
26. *Bhai Daya Singh Rahitnama*, in *Rahitname*, pp. 69-71.
27. Ibid., pp. 72-6.
28. *Bhai Desa Singh Rahitnama*, in *Rahitname*, pp. 146-7, 149, 151-2.
29. Ibid., pp. 153-5
30. Ibid., pp. 149-50.
31. Sainapat, *Shri Guru Sobha* (Punjabi), ed. Shamsheer Singh Ashok, Amritsar: Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, 1967, pp. 31, 33, 37-40, 51.
32. Koer Singh, *Gurbilas Patshahi 10* (Punjabi), ed., Shamsheer Singh Ashok, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1968, pp. 129-30, 132, 136, 282-3, 287-8.
33. Kesar Singh Chhibber, *Bansavalinama Dasan Patshahian Ka* (Punjabi), ed. Ratan Singh Jaggi (*Parkh*, vol. II), Chandigarh: Panjab University, 1972, pp. 23-4, 118, 120, 127, 129, 132-4, 138.
34. Ibid., p. 137.
35. Ibid., pp. 107, 151, 165-6.
36. Ibid., pp. 167, 169, 226, 228, 232-3.
37. Sukha Singh, *Gurbilas Patshahi 10* (Punjabi), ed. Gursharan Kaur Jaggi, Patiala: Punjab Languages Department, 1971, pp. 174-5.

38. Sujan Rai Bhandari, *Khulasatu't Tawarikh*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources: Translations of Major Texts*, ed. J.S. Grewal and Irfan Habib, New Delhi: Tulika/Indian History Congress, 2001, p.92.
39. Qazi Nur Muhammad, *Jangnama*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, p. 209.
40. John Surman and Edward Stephenson, 'Massacre of the Sikhs at Delhi in 1716', in *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, ed. Ganda Singh, Calcutta: Indian Studies: Past & Present, 1962, p. 52.
41. James Browne, 'History of Origin and Progress of the Sikhs', in *Early European Accounts*, pp. 18, 61, 63.
42. A.L.H. Polier, 'An Account of the Sikhs', in *Early European Accounts*, pp. 61-3.
43. William Franklin, 'The Sikhs and their Country', in *Early European Accounts*, p. 100.
44. John Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs*, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1986 (first published in 1812), pp. 48-9, 50-1, 138-9, 184, 195.
45. James Skinner, *Tashrihu'l Aqwam*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, pp. 218-19.

## Chapter VI

### SIKH SOCIAL ORDER: IDENTITIES AND DIFFERENTIATION

During the past half a century, several scholars have taken interest in the Sikh social order. Sardar Kapur Singh argued at some length in the late 1950s that the Sikh movement was distinguished from all other religious movements in India in discarding the caste system and propounding the idea of equality as the basis of new social order. A decade later, Professor J.S. Grewal took notice of this view and underlined that Guru Nanak's enunciation on equality was very emphatic. However, it was necessary to see how the idea of equality was translated into religious, social and political life of the Sikhs.

In the 1980s, Professor Jagjit Singh argued in great detail that Guru Nanak and his successors, discarded the caste ideology and the caste system and that the Sikh social order was marked by a large measure of equality till the establishment of Sikh rule in the late eighteenth century. Like Sardar Kapur Singh, Professor Jagjit Singh gave great importance to the concept of the four-fold *varna* ideal in which *jatis* or occupational groups, with their peculiar patterns of matrimony and commensality were placed hierarchically. Professor Jagjit Singh emphasized that the notion of hierarchy was discarded altogether for the Sikh social order, and commensality was extended even to the outcastes. Only the old patterns of matrimony remained unaffected.

Professor W.H. McLeod has argued recently that Guru Nanak and his successors can be said to have discarded the hierarchical *varna* system but they appear to have accepted *jati* as a social unit. The patterns of matrimony did not change at all. Commensality was never extended to the outcastes; even among the other *jatis* it remained confined largely to the sacred space where the *karha prasad* was distributed among all, and everyone could eat in the *langar*. Whereas Sardar Kapur Singh was interested primarily in Sikh ideology and not in its actual operation in the Sikh social order, Professor Jagjit

Singh used a wide range of sources from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth century for empirical evidence. Professor McLeod has used a considerable number of the eighteenth century Sikh works in support of his argument. However, none of these scholars has paid close attention to the eighteenth century Sikh literature as a whole.

Writing in the 1990s, Professor Harjot Oberoi analysed the eighteenth century Sikh social order in terms of a paradox: the Khalsa identity attained hegemonic position within the Sikh tradition and, simultaneously, the alternative ways of being a Sikh became acceptable. Professor Oberoi argues that the Sahajdharis, among whom could be placed the Nanak-Panthis and the Udasis, became as acceptable as the Khalsa. Consequently, the late eighteenth century was marked by an extraordinary fusion of the Khalsa and the Sahajdhari identities in the Sikh tradition. The religious culture of the Sahajdharis was conceded to be legitimate, and the cultural codes of 'brotherhoods' continued to be operative in matters of commensality and matrimony.

Professor J.S. Grewal has paid close attention to contemporary literature and appreciated the changes that marked the Sikh social order during the eighteenth century. He has analysed the *Prem Sumarag* all afresh from the viewpoint of the Sikh social order, and discussed the relevance of the works of Kesar Singh Chhibber and Ratan Singh Bhangu for the idea of equality, and the practices related to matrimony and commensality, and the issue of identity in the Sikh social order. He looks upon the Khalsa of the first three quarters of the eighteenth century as far more egalitarian than the Khalsa of the last quarter of the century.<sup>1</sup>

The scholarly studies of the Sikh social order are helpful in many ways but a thorough study of the Sikh social order during the eighteenth century requires a systematic analysis of all the contemporary evidence that has become available by now. We propose in this chapter to examine the evidence of Persian, Sikh and European works of the eighteenth century to form a comprehensive



view of the Sikh social order with special reference to identities and differentiation.

## 1

### **Eighteenth Century Sikh Social Order**

Writing around 1650 about the Sikhs of the Guru, called Nanak-Panthis, the author of the *Dabistan-i Mazahib* refers to *meli* and *sahlang* as the category of persons who were initiated into the Sikh faith by the Masands of Guru Arjan. He also states that Guru Arjan's brother Pirtha (Prithi Chand) sat in his place (after his martyrdom). His followers called him 'Guru Mihrban', and they called themselves '*bhagats*' or devotees of God. But the followers of Guru Hargobind called them 'Mina', a name that was regarded as derogatory.<sup>2</sup> Thus, there were three categories of Sikhs or Nanak-Panthis: the followers of Guru Nanak and his successors upto Guru Hargobind, the followers of Prithi Chand and his successors, and the Sikhs initiated by the Masands.

Writing in 1696, Sujan Rai Bhandari talks of mystics, discoursers, ascetics and prayerful men among the followers of Baba Nanak. He refers to the Udasis too as the followers of Baba Nanak. They were ascetical medicants (*darveshes*). Bhandari does not say so, but he appears to make a distinction between the householder Sikhs and the renunciate Udasis.<sup>3</sup>

In an order of Aurangzeb the term used for the Sikhs in general is *Nanak-Prastan* or the devotees of Nanak. In another order of Aurangzeb Guru Gobind Singh is included among them. Indeed, in yet another order, he is called the chief of the devotees of Nanak (*Nanak-Prastan*).<sup>4</sup> In other words the same term was used for the Sikhs and the Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh. In a report of August 1707 from the court of Bahadur Shah, Guru Gobind Singh is referred to as 'Nanaki'. In November 1708 he is referred to as 'Nanak-Panthi'. In a report of May 1710 there is the statement that Guru Gobind Singh dismissed the Masands by one stroke of pen and established the Khalsa who, in another report, are referred to as 'the Sikhs of the Khalsa'.<sup>5</sup>

For the Persian chroniclers of the early eighteenth century, the term Nanak-Panthi covered both the Sikh and the Khalsa. Muhammad Qasim Lahauri distinguishes the Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh from the Sikhs in general.<sup>6</sup> The common epithet of 'infidels' is used for them in the time of Banda Bahadur.<sup>7</sup> Mirza Muhammad refers to the Sikhs in general as the disciples of the Guru and to the followers of Guru Gobind Singh as the Khalsa or the Sikhs of Gobind.<sup>8</sup> He goes on to use the term 'Sikhs' for the supporters of Banda Bahadur.<sup>9</sup> Muhammad Shafi Warid states that the followers of Guru Nanak and his successors were known as 'Sikhs' since the times of Guru Nanak.<sup>10</sup>

In a *hukamnama* of Guru Hargobind it is stated that the *sangat* of the east is the Guru's Khalsa. Guru Tegh Bahadur refers to the *sangat* of Pattan Farid as the Khalsa of the Guru. A *hukamnama* of Guru Gobind Singh issued in 1698 contains the statement, 'the *sangat* is my *Khalsa*'. In another *hukamnama* of Guru Gobind Singh issued on 25 April 1699 the *sangat* of the village Phaphre is referred to as 'sahlang'.<sup>11</sup> It may be argued that the term Khalsa, which makes its appearance in the *hukamnama* of Guru Hargobind, was meant to make a distinction between the 'sahlang' and the 'Khalsa', the former initiated by a Masand and the latter by the Gurus of the main line of succession. We have firm evidence in the *hukamnamas* of Guru Gobind Singh that the removal of the Masands was meant to establish a direct link between the Guru and the 'sahlang'.<sup>12</sup>

Several *hukamnamas* of Guru Gobind Singh refer the *sangats* as 'my Khalsa'. In a *hukamnama* of 3 February 1708, however, the *sangat* of Benares is called 'the Khalsa of Vaheguruji'. Thus, in the *hukamnamas* of Guru Gobind Singh, we have references to the 'sahlang' and the 'Khalsa', and to the Khalsa of the Guru and the Khalsa of Vaheguruji.<sup>13</sup> In the *hukamnamas* issued by Banda Bahadur, Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devi, the Sikhs are addressed as the Khalsa of Akal Purkh or Vaheguru. In a *hukamnama* of Mata Sundari dated 20 September 1722, all the Sikhs mentioned are Singhs but in another *hukamnama* of the same date, there is no Singh amongst the

fifty persons mentioned by name. Both these *hukamnamas* are addressed to the Khalsa of Patna. Evidently there were two Khalsa *sangats* in Patna; one consisted of Singhs and the other of non-Singhs. Thus, the Khalsa in the early eighteenth century appears to have consisted of both Singhs and non-Singhs.<sup>14</sup>

In the *Tankhahnama* associated with Bhai Nand Lal the terms used for the Sikh are Khalsa and Singh. There is enough indication that the author is addressing himself solely to the Khalsa Singhs. A certain degree of preference for them is built into this usage.<sup>15</sup> The author of the *Sakhi Rahit* is even more emphatic in using the term Sikh for the Khalsa. Even though the term Singh is not used, the characteristics of the Sikh and the Khalsa leave no doubt that they are synonymous with the Keshdhari Singhs. In other words, both the authors equate the Sikh with the Khalsa and the Khalsa with the Keshdhari Singh.<sup>16</sup>

The author of the *Prem Sumarag* talks of the creation of the Khalsa as a divine dispensation. Therefore, his concern is solely with the Khalsa of Sri Akal Purkh Ji. Another term used for the Khalsa is 'Sant Khalsa', besides Gurmukh, Sikh, and Singh. The author leaves no doubt that he is talking of one and the same entity. It is explicitly stated that the injunctions of the first two chapters, which relate to the Sikh faith and initiation, are meant for both men and women. The *sangat* of the *Prem Sumarag* is Khalsa *sangat*. The Sikh of the Khalsa of Sri Akal Purkh was to be addressed as 'Singh ji'. Women were to be initiated through baptism of the double edged sword. Individuals belonging to other religious dispensations could join the Keshdhari Singhs. The author of the *Prem Sumarag* visualizes their universal prevalence in the future.<sup>17</sup>

In the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh, the Sikhs of the Guru consist of two components: Keshdhari and Sahajdhari. The former are initiated through baptism of the double-edged sword; they wear *kesh*, they bear arms, they add the epithet Singh to their names, they fight and conquer, and they establish their rule. Whether Keshdhari or Sahajdhari, the Sikhs of the Guru were not to associate

with the Minas, the Ram Raiyas, the Dhir Malias, the Masands and the Masandias. The *Rahitnama* is addressed to the entire body of the Khalsa, both men and women. The *rahit* prescribed in it is meant for all, except when specific injunctions are given for women or the Sahajdharis, who were allowed to take *charan pahul*. The Sahajdharis were not supposed to keep the hair of their head uncut, but they were forbidden to cut their beards. They did not have to keep their sacred thread and sacred mark. They were not to kill their infant daughters, to use tobacco or to perform *bhaddan*. They were not to perform Brahmanical rites connected with death. Belief in the ten Gurus, the Guru-Granth and the Guru-Panth was common to the Keshdhari Singhs and the Sahajdhari Sikhs. The preference for the former over the latter is indicated by the injunction that a Keshdhari Singh should not distribute *prasad* in a gathering of the Sahajdharis.<sup>18</sup>

The *Amarnama*, composed in October 1708 talks of Sikhs and Singhs. The latter are the Sikhs who were initiated through baptism of the double edged sword (*amrit*).<sup>19</sup> The work known as the *Parchian Patshahi Dasvin Ki* was also composed originally in October 1708. It contains fifty episodes of which thirty-eight relate to Guru Gobind Singh. The terms used for the followers of Guru Nanak and his successors are the 'Sikh' and the 'Khalsa'. The term Khalsa Panth is also used. Its members must 'never remain without kesh and arms'. There is good deal of emphasis on the misdemeanour and misconduct of the Masands who had begun to think of themselves as a rival authority with the Guru and, consequently, they were removed.<sup>20</sup> The *Mahima Prakash Vartak* contains only three additional episodes relating to Guru Gobind Singh but they do not add anything to the position stated in the *Parchian*.<sup>21</sup> The author of the *Var Bhagauti*, who is called Gurdas Singh in a contemporary work, makes the statement that Guru Gobind Singh transformed the Sikh *sangat* into 'Khalsa' by administering baptism of the double edged sword (*khandedhar pahul*). The Khalsa kept their *kesh* unshorn, they carried arms, especially the sword, they wore *kachh* and blue clothes, and they proclaimed the

Guru's victory. They represented a third social entity (*teesar panth*). The Singhs are the only category of Sikhs recognized and upheld.<sup>22</sup>

The major works of the eighteenth century Sikh writers contain explicit or implicit information on the Sikh social order. For Sainapat, the author of *Sri Gur Sobha*, the most important category of Sikhs are the Khalsa. They are the Sikhs who are directly linked with Guru Gobind Singh. More than any other Sikh writer, Sainapat is emphatic that the primary connotation of the Khalsa is this direct link: the removal of the Masands was meant to establish this direct link. Furthermore, as we go through the *Sri Gur Sobha* we find that Sainapat uses the terms Sikh, Khalsa Sikh, Khalsa Singh, and Singh, for the Khalsa of his definition. The equation of the Khalsa with the Singh carries the implication that Sainapat is talking of the Khalsa who have been initiated afresh through baptism of the double edged sword. He refers to five categories of people (*panj-mel*) with whom the Singhs were not to have any connection. However, only two of these are explicitly mentioned. One of these is evidently the Masands and those who follow them. The second category consisted of those who cut off the hair of their head (*sirguman*). The other three categories were almost certainly the followers of Prithi Chand and his descendants, popularly called Minas, the followers of Dhir Mal and his descendants, and the followers of Ram Rai and his successors.<sup>23</sup>

Writing in 1759-60, Rai Chaturman Saksena places the 'Nanak-Panthis' among the 'Hindu Sects'. Guru Nanak was a Vaishnava who worshipped Ram but his followers were opposed to the Veda. Their separate faith derived probably from the innovations of his successors. In any case, the Nanak-Panthis had a way of life and clothing different from others. Chaturman appears to be talking of the Khalsa of the eighteenth century, equating them with 'Nanak-Panthis'. The ten Gurus, from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh, were regarded as eminently authoritative. According to Chaturman, Ajit Singh sat on the spiritual seat in 1711-12 to guide Guru Gobind Singh's disciples, taking permission from the imperial court on the plea that Guru Gobind Singh



had recognized him to be his son. Mata Sundari established a separate spiritual seat in the reign of Farrukh Siyar. Some Sikhs deserted Ajit Singh and joined her camp. The Guruship of Ajit Singh lasted for fourteen years and he was succeeded by his son Hathi Singh. In 1759-60, he was living in Mathura with a hundred or two hundred persons. Some 'Nanak-Shahi's' had turned away from him. On Mata Sundari's death, the people were drawn towards Mata Sahib Devi, known as Kuwara Dola (virgin bride), who died a year later.<sup>24</sup>

Tahmas Khan, who refers to the Khalsa as 'Sikhs', mentions *sardar* of some note who enjoyed the reputation of a spiritual guide among the Sikhs (*murshid-i-Sikhan*). This is a reference to a descendant of Dhir Mal at Kartarpur.<sup>25</sup> The newsreports sent from Delhi to the Nizam of Hyderabad in 1759-65 refer to the Khalsa Singhs as 'the Sikhs'.<sup>26</sup> Qazi Nur Muhammad, who accompanied Ahmad Shah Abdali during his invasion of the Punjab in 1764-65 uses the terms 'Sikhs' and 'Singhs' for the same set of people and looks upon them as a separate entity from that of the Hindus.<sup>27</sup>

Koer Singh uses the terms Gurmukh Sikh and Gursikh Khalsa who should not have any connection with five categories of people: those who cut their hair, those who kill their infant daughters, the Minas, the Masands and the Turks. Thus, the '*panch-mel*' of Koer Singh tends to equate the Khalsa with the Singhs. There is no reference to Udasis or Sahajdharis. Thus, there are only two categories of Sikhs for Koer Singh: the Khalsa Singhs and the excommunicated groups among the Sikhs. In other words, the Sikh Panth and the Khalsa Panth are synonymous.<sup>28</sup>

Kesar Singh Chhibber in his *Bansavalinama* refers to Keshdhari Singhs and Sahajdhari Sikhs. It must be pointed out that the Sahajdhari Sikhs of Chhibber did not include the Minas, the Dhir Malias and the Ram Raiyas who are bracketed by Chhibber with the Masands. Chhibber uses the term Sikh for the followers of Guru Nanak and his successors including Guru Gobind Singh. However, he makes a clear distinction between the Sikh and the Singh. The latter is a person who



has been initiated through baptism of the double edged sword (*khande ki pahul*), introduced by Guru Gobind Singh in place of *charan amrit*, and who keeps unshorn hair and adopts the epithet Singh. Thus, the Keshdhari Sikh of Chhibber is actually a Singh. Chhibber also talks of *didari*, *mukte*, *mayiki* and *murid* Sikhs. In the first category were those Sikhs who remained present with the Guru; in the second category were the Sikhs who died fighting in his cause; in the third category were the people who acquired political power and remained engrossed in earthly things (*maya*) to become oblivious of the true faith; in the fourth category were the Sikhs who had preserved the true faith even when they acquired political power. Thus, the *murid* Sikhs of Chhibber are not necessarily 'Sahajdhari'. In fact, Chhibber refers to *sikhkhi* as the seed and *singhi* as the flower. There can be no true Singh without being a true Sikh. On the whole, Chhibber tends to equate the Khalsa with the Singh. The Keshdhari Singhs represent the third *panth*, separate and distinct from Hindus and Muslims.<sup>29</sup>

Sarup Das Bhalla refers to the followers of Guru Nanak and his successors as 'Sikhs' or the Sikhs of the Guru. He refers to the Masands and their misconduct. Their mediacy was abolished to institute the Khalsa. With the removal of the Masands the entire *sangat* became the Guru's Khalsa. Sarup Das Bhalla underlines that the Hindus ridiculed the Sikhs and the Turks were opposed to them. Their enmity was one reason for instituting the Khalsa. Guru Gobind Singh introduced baptism of the double edged sword (*khande ki pahul*) in place of the *charan-pakhal*; the baptized Khalsa kept their *kesh* uncut adopted the epithet Singh and put on blue clothes. Thus, the Khalsa are equated with Keshdhari Singhs. They became a permanent source of irritation for Hindus and Turks, like a mote in the eye. Towards the end of his work, the term Sikh is appropriated for the Khalsa and the *rahit* of the Khalsa becomes the *rahit* of *sikhkhi*.<sup>30</sup>

Sukha Singh refers to the followers of Guru Nanak and his successors as Sikhs or Sikhs of the Guru. The term *sangat* or *sadh-sangat* is used for local congregations of the Sikhs. The new order

instituted by Guru Gobind Singh is called 'Panth Khalsa'. With the creation of the Khalsa the number of Panths increased from two to three. The first two were Hindu and Muslim and the third was the Khalsa Panth which was distinct and different from the other two. The Sodhis of Anandpur (one of whose ancestors was opposed to the Khalsa in the early eighteenth century) are mentioned by Sukha Singh as 'Sodhi *sangat* Khalsa'. Like Sarup Das Bhalla, Sukha Singh thinks primarily of two categories of Sikhs: the pre-Khalsa Sikhs and the Khalsa Singhs. Towards the end of his work, the Khalsa Singhs are regarded simply as 'Sikhs'.<sup>31</sup>

In the late eighteenth century, Bhai Desa Singh sets out to record the *rahit* of Singhs, and the most frequently used term in his *Rahitnama* is Singh. He uses the terms Khalsa and Sikh as synonyms for the Singh. The Khalsa Panth was open to all the four castes. There were many kinds of Khalsa but the best were those who followed the *rahit* strictly. The other Panths of the world were not to be denigrated.<sup>32</sup> Bhai Daya Singh uses the terms Khalsa, Sikh and Singh for one and the same entity, that is, the Keshdhari Singh. They are not supposed to have any association with the Masandias, the Dhir Malias, and the Ram Raiyas and with those who shaved their heads, who killed their infant daughter or who performed *bhaddan*.<sup>33</sup>

The earliest European observers use no specific term for the followers of Guru Nanak and his successors but in the late eighteenth century, James Browne refers to them as 'Sicks'.<sup>34</sup> He refers to the ceremony of *pahul* introduced by Guru Gobind Singh and some other features of the Khalsa but for them too he uses a term 'Sicks'. Colonel A.L.H. Polier talks of the 'Siques' of Guru Nanak. The term used for the followers of Guru Gobind Singh is also 'Siques'. The Singhs who establish their own rule in the late eighteenth century are also called 'Siques'. Even when he describes the characteristics of the Keshdhari Singhs he uses the term 'the sect of the Siques'.<sup>35</sup>

The mode of initiation described by Charles Wilkins suggests that he is talking of baptism of the double edged sword. Thus, for him

the term Sikh covers the Khalsa Singhs. George Forster talks of the 'Seicks' a term that covers the Khalsa Singhs of Guru Gobind Singh. In fact, Forster suggests that the word 'Seik' is a corruption of 'Sing' (a lion).<sup>36</sup> John Griffiths use the term 'Seeks' for the Khalsa Singhs as well as the Sikhs of Guru Nanak and his successors. William Franklin uses the term 'Seiks' for both the pre-Khalsa Sikhs and the Khalsa Singhs.<sup>37</sup>

John Malcolm has much more to say about the Sikhs than the late eighteenth century European writers. He uses the term 'Sikh' throughout his work with reference to all categories of Sikhs. Guru Gobind Singh changed the name of his followers from 'Sikh' to 'Singh', and transformed them into 'a political community'. Malcolm refers to the non-Singhs as the 'Khulasa Sikhs' and looks upon them as 'non-conformists.' In other words, the Khalsa Singh represented the orthodox Sikh for Malcolm.<sup>38</sup>

The 'Khulasa Sikhs' in general were the followers of Guru Nanak; they were not devoted to arms. However, Malcolm goes on to talk not only of the Singh soldiers but also of the Singh merchants and the Singh cultivators who differs little in character from the soldier, 'except that his occupation renders him less presuming and boisterous.' They all bore arms and were ready to use them in their own interest or in the interest of the community in which they lived. Malcolm has little appreciation for the non-Singhs. 'Full of intrigue, pliant, versatile, and insinuating, they have all the arts 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 very difficult to distinguish them'.<sup>39</sup>

Malcolm talks of the 'schismatical sect' of the followers of Banda who maintained that Banda Bahadur escaped into the hills and his sons, Ajit Singh and Zorawar Singh, successfully propagated his doctrine. The Sikhs did not revere his memory and some of the Sikh authors termed him a heretic because he tried to change the religious institution and laws of Guru Gobind Singh, going to the extent of putting to death some of the followers of Guru Gobind Singh who refused to

depart from the code of Guru Gobind Singh. Among the changes sought to be introduced by Banda were abandoning the blue dress, refraining from drinking alcohol and eating flesh, and exclaiming '*fateh darshan*' instead of '*Vaheguruji ki fateh*'. The Singhs who continued to oppose Banda's innovations with great obstinacy are referred to by Malcolm as the Akalis; they came to have the exclusive privilege of wearing the 'original uniform of a true Sikh', that is, the Khalsa Singh of the days of Guru Gobind Singh.<sup>40</sup> Malcolm states that no Sikh chief had a Muslim background. However, a number of Muslims had become Sikhs. Their descendants were known as Mazhabi Singhs. They were further divided into four classes: Sayyad, Shaikh, Mughal, and Pathan. These names were derived from the races of Muslims, but erroneously. The Mazhabi Sikhs intermarried with each other but they were not allowed any other usage of their former faith. Another 'tribe' among the Sikhs was called the Nanak Putras, or the descendants of Guru Nanak. They were mild and inoffensive, and they did not recognize the institution of Guru Gobind Singh. They were greatly revered by his followers. They were generally mendicants or travelling merchants. They did not carry arms and professed to be at peace with all mankind.<sup>41</sup>

Malcolm mentions the Nirmalas, the Shahids and the Akalis among the 'religious tribes' of the Sikhs. The Shahids and the Nirmalas, particularly the latter, had more knowledge and more urbanity. They were almost all men of quiet and peaceable habits; many of them were said to be learned. Both the Shahids and the Nirmalas had *bungas* in Amritsar. Their duty was to read and explain the *Adi Granth* to the Sikhs. A Sikh of any 'tribe' could be admitted into their orders.<sup>42</sup>

Malcolm gives far more attention to the Akalis than to the Shahids and Nirmalas. They were the most remarkable class of the devotees of Guru Gobind Singh. They still wore the blue dress. They were desperate soldiers and fanatic priests. They had usurped the sole direction of all religious affairs at Amritsar. They were the leading men

in a general council held at Amritsar. They had a *bunga* on the bank of a sacred tank Amritsar. They could accuse the Sikh chiefs of crimes and impose fines upon them; if they refused to pay they were prevented from performing their religious ceremonies at Amritsar. This was the secret of their influence over the chiefs. They had great interest in maintaining the religion and the government of the Sikhs as established by Guru Gobind Singh. The close association of the Akalis with Amritsar (the Akal Takht and the Harmandir) gave them the authority which they exercised. Shorn of this authority they would be reduced to the level of other mendicants. Malcolm had little appreciation for the Akalis. They were insolent, ignorant, and daring; presuming upon those rights which their numbers and fanatic courage had established; their deportment was hardly tolerant to the other Sikhs and insufferable to the strangers, for whom they entertained visible contempt. Finally, Malcolm believed that the Akalis, the Nirmalas and Shahids could possibly introduce some changes in the usages of Guru Gobind Singh but not really set them aside.<sup>43</sup> In other words, these usages were prevalent among the majority or Singhs.

Ghulam Ali Khan, who wrote *Imad us-Sa'adat* in 1808 for the British Resident, talks of two categories of Sikhs: the Khalsa and the Khulasa. The former were Singhs and the latter non-Singhs. He refers also to a disciple of Guru Gobind Singh, named Suthra, whose followers were known as Suthra-shahis. They insisted on getting a copper coin or a seer of flour or whatever they demanded from every shop and house. The term 'Sikhs' is used for all the categories mentioned by the author.<sup>44</sup> James Skinner, who wrote his *Tashrih al-Aqwam* in Persian in 1825, refers to the followers and disciples of Guru Gobind Singh as 'the Sikhs'. He talks of two categories among them. Those who followed the code of Guru Gobind Singh very strictly were designated Akali Sikhs; the other Singhs simply Sikhs.<sup>45</sup>



### Identities and Differentiation

The institution of the Khalsa was meant to unify the Sikhs into a single whole. At the time of its institution, there were several groups among the Sikhs. First of all, there were the followers of the line of Gurus from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh, or 'Khalsa', as distinct from the Sikhs initiated by the Masands, or '*sahlang*s'. Then there were the followers of Prithi Chand and his successors. Dhir Mal and his successors, and Ram Rai and his successors. Guru Gobind Singh's decision to remove the mediacy of the Masands appears to have become effective in his lifetime and we do not hear of any Masandias, or the followers of a Masand, during the eighteenth century. However, the other groups remained in existence and we get casual references to their presence in the contemporary literature. However, they were overshadowed by the Khalsa. The Sodhi Gurus at Guru Harsahai (the descendants of Prithi Chand) and at Kartarpur (the descendants of Dhir Mal) joined the Khalsa fold in the late eighteenth century, like the Sodhis at Anandpur. It seems, however, that they did not renounce their position as Gurus for a decreasing number of followers. Some of the Bedis also became Singhs, with a separate following of their own, like Sahib Singh Bedi.<sup>46</sup>

The evidence of the *hukamnamas*, and the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh, leaves no doubt that all the Khalsa, that is, the Sikhs who were directly linked with the Gurus (and did not follow any Masand or a rival claimant to Guruship) did not take *pahul* of the double-edged sword. The *Rahitnama* refers to them as Sahajdharis to distinguish them from the Keshdhari Singhs. The Sahajdhari Sikhs shared common doctrines and beliefs with the Singhs, but all their practices were not the same.<sup>47</sup> In the course of the eighteenth century the Keshdhari Singhs became far more important than the Sahajdhari Sikhs, so much so that the Khalsa and the Singh became synonymous and they came to be equated with 'the Sikhs'. Some peripheral groups also emerged during the eighteenth century, like the Udasis. Ghulam



Ali Khan, for example, refers to 'Suthra-Shahis' as the followers of Guru Nanak.<sup>48</sup> The non-Sikh writers of the late eighteenth century generally looked upon the Sikhs as consisting of two components: the Khalsa, or the followers of Guru Gobind Singh and the Khulasa, or the followers of Guru Nanak. Ghulam Ali Khan, for example, says that the Sikhs who grew their hair all over were known as the 'Khalsa' and those who cut their hair were called 'Khulasa'. His statement about their proportions is very telling. 'Out of a thousand', he says, 'or rather out of ten thousand persons, can one find only one or two persons who cut their hair'.<sup>49</sup>

In the late 1840s, Joseph Davey Cunningham made a general statement on the numbers and distribution of the Sikhs. The particular country of the Sikhs, he observed, could be regarded as lying around Lahore, Amritsar and even Gujrat to the north of the Sutlej, and around Bhatinda and Sunam to its south. In the latter region, called Malwa, the Sikh population was found unmixed, and it was said that 'the priest, the soldier, the mechanic, the shopkeeper, and the plough man are all equally Sikh'. Some of the Sikhs regarded themselves as 'inferior members of the Sikh community.' The Sikhs were not very numerous, but they were distinguished by 'the unity and energy of religious fervour and warlike temperament'. Cunningham noticed that the Sikh population of the Punjab and the adjoining districts had been estimated at 500,000 in all. This number appeared to be too small. There were no exact data, but the gross Sikh population could probably be considered to amount to 'a million and a quarter or a million and a half of souls, men, women and children'. The largest bulk of the Sikhs were Keshdhari Singhs.<sup>50</sup>

Turning to the eighteenth century sources we face nearly complete silence about numbers. Warid in the early eighteenth century states that the Sikhs joined Banda Bahadur from all parts of the country, from the Dakhin, Bengal, Kashmir and Kabul, and many other places.<sup>51</sup> In the mid-eighteenth century, Chaturman states that the followers of Guru Nanak were in such large numbers that in every

country and city they were to be counted in thousands. At some places, which were especially connected with them, lacs of them assembled.<sup>52</sup> Towards the end of the eighteenth century, William Franklin says that the Sikhs continued to gain converts.<sup>53</sup> Ghulam Ali Khan in the first decades of the nineteenth century talks of 'thousands of thousands' but nothing beyond this.<sup>54</sup>

John Malcolm makes a rather comprehensive statement which can serve as the starting point for a discussion of the various aspects of the Sikh social order during the eighteenth century. According to him the civil officers of the Sikh chiefs were in general the followers of Guru Nanak who were not devoted to arms; educated for peaceful occupations, they were called Khulasa. They were more like the lower classes of Hindus than the Singhs. Another set of people among the Sikhs were the descendants of Guru Nanak who did not follow the institutions of Guru Gobind Singh. However, they were greatly revered by his followers. Among the Singhs, there was little difference between the merchants and the cultivators of land. Among the religious entities of the Khalsa, there were Akalis, Shahids and Nirmalas. The Sikh converts continued all those civil usages and customs which did not infringe the tenets of Guru Nanak or the institutions of Guru Gobind Singh. The Sikhs converted from Hindus continued with the older patterns of matrimony and commensality. At the time of the general assembly, however, they ate together. Among the Jat and Gujjar Sikhs the older patterns of matrimony were retained but not among the Brahman and Khatri Sikhs. The Muslim Sikhs married amongst themselves. They were obliged to eat pork and to abstain from circumcision.<sup>55</sup>

There are references to the social background of the Sikhs and their general composition in a few of the contemporary sources. Khafi Khan says that countless people from the lower caste of Hindus joined Banda who enjoyed the support of Khatri and Jats as well.<sup>56</sup> In the last decade of the eighteenth century George Forster says that the larger portions of the Sikhs consisted of Jats and Gujjars, and they were

mostly agriculturists.<sup>57</sup> Ghulam Ali Khan underlined the plebian character of the Sikhs. Their leaders were mostly from the lower classes, such as carpenters, shoe-makers and Jats. He goes on to add that the Sikhs were mostly 'market-people' (*bazarian*), like the yoghurt sellers, confectioners, fodder vendors, grain-sellers, barbers and washer-men. Only a few of the Sikhs were well-born.<sup>58</sup> According to John Griffiths, the Sikhs received converts from every caste, and on this point they differed most from the Hindus. They admitted Muslims too into their faith.<sup>59</sup>

As we noticed in several cases, the Sikh writers of the eighteenth century underline the principle of equality among the Sikhs. Muhammad Shafi Warid makes the observation that the Sikhs in the time of Banda Bahadur made no 'distinction in honour between the lowly and the well born.' A scavenger sat with a Sikh of great status and 'they felt no hostility towards each other.'<sup>60</sup> In the *Asrar- -i Samadi*, Nawab Abdus Samad Khan says that Banda brought into the forefront many idle, useless and unknown people.<sup>61</sup> James Skinner observed that anyone from any caste, whether Brahman or sweeper, could join the Khalsa order and no distinction was made among them in eating and drinking.<sup>62</sup> John Malcolm underlined that every Khalsa Singh was equal to others and had equal title to the good things of this world and the blessings of the future life. The spirit of equality was the vital principle of the Khalsa commonwealth which made all Sikhs very reluctant to own either a temporal or a spiritual leader. This was the basis of Malcolm's conviction that no single chief was likely to establish 'an absolute power over the whole nation'.<sup>63</sup>

In social matters, however, the contemporary writers notice differences, related mostly to commensality and matrimony. Even in the *Rahitnama* literature, which dwells largely on the normative, distinctions are admitted. The principle of equality is most emphatically stated in the *Prem Sumarag* but a certain degree of compromise is mentioned as a politic and temporary measure. The Sikhs with the background of unclean outcastes could not eat with other Sikhs.

Marriages too could be restricted to certain *jatis* among the Sikhs.<sup>64</sup> Writing in the 1780s, George Forster remarked that there was no difference between the Sikhs and Hindus in terms of the patterns of matrimony and commensality. The one common item of food that the Sikhs shared without distinction was the *prasad*.<sup>65</sup> Towards the end of the eighteenth century, George Thomas, observed that there was a considerable similarity in the customs of the Sikhs and the Jats. This could be due to the Jat background of a large number of Sikhs. Thomas goes on to add that Sikh Jats intermarried with non-Sikh Jats. They did not eat or drink from the hands of a stranger, except a Brahman.<sup>66</sup> Matthews observed that the Keshdhari Singhs did not eat with non-Singhs.<sup>67</sup>

The contemporary writers underline the distinct identity of the Keshdhari Singhs. This is true not only of the authors of the early *Rahitnamas* but also of the authors of the *Bansavalinama* and the *Mahima Prakash* in the late eighteenth century.<sup>68</sup> Gurdas Singh underlines the distinctive identity of the Khalsa Panth both as a religious dispensation and a social and political entity.<sup>69</sup> Qazi Nur Muhammad looked upon the Singhs as different from the Hindus.<sup>70</sup> A.L.H. Polier comments, however, that the religion of the Sikhs had a strong taint of the Hindu religion. The Sikhs venerated the cow and abstained from killing it or eating beef. They showed respect for idols or gods, and they went to Ganges as well as to Amritsar for pilgrimage.<sup>71</sup> John Malcolm remarks that wherever the religion of Guru Gobind Singh prevailed the Hindu institutions vanished. The admission of converts from all castes, the abolition of the distinction of caste, the eating of all kinds of flesh except beef, the form of religious worship and the general devotion of the Singhs to arms could not be reconciled to Hindu mythology. This was the reason why the religion of the Sikhs was obnoxious to Brahmans and higher castes of Hindus and, conversely, why it was popular with the lower orders.<sup>72</sup>

Finally, it may be added that only the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh Chhibber and the *Bansavalinama* of Kesar Singh

Chhibber uphold the differences of caste and *jati*, invoking the authority of *Granth Sahib* and Guru Gobind Singh. The *Rahitnama* talks of the equality in social position (*mathha, haan*) between the two families for a matrimonial relation.<sup>73</sup> A Sikh of the Guru should conduct his social affairs according to his *varna* (*baran*) and should not become an infringer (*be-marjaad*).<sup>74</sup> All the four *barans* are Sikhs of the Guru and cherish the norms of *rahit* and *ku-rahit* all alike; but they should follow the conventions of the *baran* to which they belong.<sup>75</sup>

Kesar Singh Chhibber talks of *didari, mukte, murid* and *mayiki* Sikhs in terms of their role or attitude towards the Sikh faith.<sup>76</sup> The Sikh of the Guru is praiseworthy for sticking to his faith (*sikhkhi*), and the Brahman is praiseworthy for sticking to the Brahmanical rites and ceremonies.<sup>77</sup> A Brahman Sikh deserves greater respect and consideration than the other Sikhs.<sup>78</sup> Guru Gobind Singh says that the Sikhs of all the *barans* are equally his Sikhs, and *dharam* was to be cherished at all costs. They were to conduct themselves in accordance with the *Granth Sahib*.<sup>79</sup> According to the *Granth Sahib*, matrimonial relations within the Sikh Panth should be guided by the consideration of the status of the two parties. The '*haan nal haan*' of the *Granth Sahib* is taken to mean that both Khatri and Brahmans should practise endogamy, each following the *dharam* of his *baran*. The tie of faith binds all Sikhs together as equals but social ties should follow the traditional patterns.<sup>80</sup> Kesar Singh Chhibber narrates an incident in which a *majbi* (*mazhabi*) (outcaste) Sikh eats with Sandhu *zamindar* (Jat) Sikhs and, for this infringement of the caste norms of commensality, he was hanged to death. It was appreciated by the Sikhs as a lesson for others.<sup>81</sup> The *rahitvan* Sikhs remained hungry for five to seven days but did not eat impure (*aila, maila*) food.<sup>82</sup> The idea of '*sankar baran*' (*varnasankara* in Sanskrit), in which caste distinctions are not observed, is regarded as something evil.<sup>83</sup> The Sikh ruler should be careful about 'pure' and 'impure' food (*dhan, ku-dhan*). A Sikh of the Guru should have no social relations with the *mlechh* or a *neech*.<sup>84</sup> By discarding the distinctions of *varnashrama* one becomes



impure (*bhrisht*).<sup>83</sup> The norm of purity and pollution is upheld. Thus, Kesar Singh Chhibber is explicit and emphatic about the obligations of observing the Brahmanical norms in social relations, both for matrimony and commensality, and upholds the notion of purity and pollution. This position appears to be closely linked to the fact that the compiler of the *Rahitnama* and the author of *Bansavalinama* belonged to the same family of Chhibber Brahmans. It may be added that Ratan Singh Bhangu, though writing in the 1840s when the Sikh social order stood more differentiated, looked upon common commensality for all (*sarbangi-reet*) as the normal practice of the Khasla of the eighteenth century.<sup>85</sup>

### 3

#### In Retrospect

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Sikhs or Nanak-Panthis were found in many parts of the country, and in Kabul, with a concentration in the province of Lahore and the *Sarkar* of Sirhind. Their number could be in lacs but no exact or even approximate figures are available. They did not constitute a uniform whole. Apart from differences of social background and occupations, they were divided into several more or less sectarian groups. The main stream Sikhs were declared by Guru Gobind Singh to be his Khalsa, which meant that all other groups were, in theory, excommunicated. The Masands and their followers were not heard of in the eighteenth century, but the followers of Prithi Chand, Dhir Mal and Ram Rai have survived into the present. During the late eighteenth century, a number of Sodhis and Bedis joined the Khalsa and became Singhs. However, they appear to have retained their position as *gurus* for a limited number of followers even though they were not recognized as Gurus by the general body of the Khalsa.

In the time of Guru Gobind Singh, and even in the early decades of the eighteenth century, all the Sikhs directly linked with the Guru as his Khalsa, did not take *pahul* of the double edged sword. In other words, the Khalsa consisted of two components: those who had taken



*pahul* and become Keshdhari Singhs and those who did not take *pahul* but were nonetheless 'Khalsa'. In the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh the non-Singh Khalsa are called Sahajdhari. They shared all their doctrines and beliefs with the Keshdhari Singhs and most of their religious practices. However, the Keshdhari Singhs became so dominant by the end of the eighteenth century so much so that we do not hear of the Sahajdharis. If they existed in the late eighteenth century, they have to be identified.

During the course of the eighteenth century arose some groups of people called Udasis. They showed respect for the Sikh Gurus and used the *Granth Sahib* for preaching, along with Hindu scriptures, practised renunciation, received patronage from Mughal and Sikh rulers, and established their own centres or *akharas*. Whether or not they were regarded as 'Sikh' by the other Sikhs is not clear, and whether or not they regarded themselves as Sikhs is not clear either. It is quite clear, however, that neither the Udasis nor the former dissenting groups can be regarded as 'Sahajdharis' in the sense in which the term was used in the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh.

The Persian writers of the eighteenth century were not much concerned with sectarian differences among the Nanak-Panthis. The European writers saw only Singhs and non-Singhs on the scene. They were aware of further marks of distinction among each of the two components but they lumped all categories together as Keshdhari Singhs and other Sikhs. The predominance of the former was admitted in their equation with 'the Sikhs'.

#### NOTES

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6. Muhammad Qasim, '*Ibratnama*', in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, p. 114.
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10. Muhammad Shafi Warid, *Mirat-i Waridat*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, p. 161.
11. In *Hukamname: Guru Sahiban, Mata Sahiban, Banda Singh ate Khalsa Ji De* (Punjabi), ed. Ganda Singh, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1967, pp.66-7, 73, 155. Ajit Singh Baagha, *Banur Had Orders: A Critical Study of an Hitherto Unknown 'Hukamnamah' of Guru Gobind Singh*, Delhi: Ranjit Printers and Publishers, 1980, pp.54-5.
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73. *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*, pp. 59-60.
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## Chapter VII

### GENDER RELATIONS AMONG THE KHALSA

In recent decades, gender relations have become an important area for historical studies. Even in the 1940s, Professor Teja Singh cited the evidence of the *Asa di Var* to assert that Guru Nanak established almost complete equality between men and women. This view was reinforced by Sardar Kapur Singh in the late 1950s in very categorical terms. Professor J.S. Grewal pointed out a decade later that Guru Nanak placed women at par with men in terms of access to spirituality and liberation. At the same time, however, Guru Nanak projected the traditional image of the ideal wife through his metaphors. Essentially, the woman's place was in the home. In a more detailed study of the compositions of Guru Nanak, published in the 1990s, Professor Grewal developed in much greater detail the argument that Guru Nanak created exceptionally large space for women but this space was created within the patriarchal framework.

More recently, Professor W.H. McLeod has discussed the question of gender in the Sikh Panth. He points out that Guru Nanak and his successors in their compositions maintain complete equality for men and women, opposing such practices as dowries, seclusion and female infanticide. However, Sikh history did not indicate equality between Sikh men and Sikh women except in terms of access to spirituality. Even in the present times Sikh institutions are dominated by men. Thus, there is a gap between the ideal of equality in the Gurbani and the empirical realities of the Sikh Panth. Sikh society was no different from other societies in the world which even today are not free from gender inequalities. Though true, this observation is too general to be of much use for the study of gender relations among the Sikhs during the eighteenth century.

Professor Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh has argued that Guru Gobind Singh's treatment of Durga affirms the female power and projects a positive attitude towards women. The myth of Durga as

treated by Guru Gobind Singh could inspire both men and women for positive action. Opposed to this view is the argument of Dr. Dorris R. Jakobsh that the institution of the Khalsa transformed the masculine ethos of the seventeenth century Sikh social order into the hyper-masculine ethos of the eighteenth century Khalsa Panth. The evidence used by Dr. Jakobsh in support of this interpretation is mainly that of the *Charitro Pakhyan* and the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh.

The views of Sardar Kapur Singh, Professor McLeod and Jakobsh are considered by Professor Grewal who then uses the evidence of the *Prem Sumarag*, the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh and the *B-40 Janamsakhi* for an exposition of gender relations among the Khalsa during the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

We can see that the issue of gender is becoming increasingly important. We propose in this chapter to analyse the *Rahitnamas* and other Sikh literature of the eighteenth century, together with the evidence of Persian and European works for a close look at gender relations in the Sikh social order of the eighteenth century.

## 1

### **Evidence of the *Prem Sumarag***

The most elaborate statement on gender relations among the Khalsa is made by the author of the *Prem Sumarag*. All its ten chapters contain references to gender relations. In chapter one, it is stated at one place that a person who follows the prescribed *rahit* would attain liberation, whether a man or a woman. The mutuality of fidelity on the part of married men and women is underlined. At the end of the second chapter it is stated that they who follow the *rahit* prescribed in the first two chapters would taste its fruit in this life, whether men or women. These two chapters relate to religious beliefs and practices, ethical life and baptism of the double edged sword. In other words the religious and ethical values are common for men and women. It is important, therefore, to note that a woman had the option to join the path of the *sikhkhi* of the Khalsa of Sri Akal Purkh. The author goes on to lay down

the procedure by which a married woman was to be initiated through baptism of the double edged sword. However, whereas a Sikh was to be initiated by five Singhs, a Sikhni was to be initiated by one Gurmukh Sikh. She should acquire Gurmukhi learning and love *shabad-bani*, and read it. The Sikhnis should associate with one another to reflect on the *shabad*. Every Sikhni should serve her husband and obey her so that she may receive the gift of true Sikh faith. A widow could be initiated through baptism of the double edged sword with a slight variation in the procedure.<sup>2</sup>

In a few chapters of the *Prem Sumarag*, the references to gender relations are rather incidental. For example, in chapter five, which relates to the preparation and partaking of food, the Khalsa Sikh who eats the sacred food consecrated to Akal Purkh alone is compared to a woman who eats from the hand of her husband alone or eats the food tasted by him. In chapter six, which relates to bodily care and hygiene, it is stipulated that a woman should bathe three days after menstruation and have sexual intercourse with her husband, and not during the days of menstruation. In the last chapter there is an injunction to treat married and unmarried woman alike. The remaining five chapters relate to the ceremonies of birth, marriage and death, rulership and justice. In all these chapters there are multiple or elaborate references to women.<sup>3</sup>

About the ceremony of birth, it is stated first of all that the woman who has conceived should be administered *khande ki pahul* and she should keep the unsheathed *khand* and the bow and arrow and the sword in her sight. At the time of delivery she should pray to Akal Purkh that she has taken refuge in him. This is followed by the detail of ceremony to be performed on the birth of a male child. With appropriate variations, similar ceremony is to be performed at the birth of a girl child. It is explicitly stated that the procedure detailed for the birth of a son is to be followed on the birth of a girl. Among other things, the baby girl is to be given *khande di pahul* and given the epithet 'Devi';

*karha prasad* is to be distributed and *ardas* performed in the same manner as for the boy.<sup>4</sup>

The fourth chapter, on marriage (*sanjog*), starts with the recommendation that the girl should be married at a suitable age, the young age being more appropriate for the Kaliyuga. However, in the ninth section of the chapter it is stated that the girl and the boy should be married at the age of seventeen when both of them are grown up (*javan*). The parents of the girl should give their daughter in marriage to a Khalsa Sikh who may be poor but earnest in his occupation. In the procedural detail, the fifth day of the month (*panchmi sudi*) is recommended as the day for marriage. It should be preceded by a betrothal ceremony performed a month and a half earlier. The parents on both sides should perform the customary ceremonies in relation to the exchange of gifts with members of the extended family (*kul*), spending no more than one-fourth of the cash in their possession. Five days before the marriage the girl should start eating the food specified for her. On the day of marriage she should be given *karha prasad* to eat at mid-day. An important feature of the detail is the wearing of arms by the bridegroom when he rides the horse; and the marriage party should sing or hear *shabad-bani* and the *Anand*. The actual rite of marriage should be conducted by a Gurmukh Sikh of the Khalsa of Sri Akal Purkh. He should obtain the consent of the girl and the boy and their parents to the performance of the rite. To stand witness to the rite are the fire of the pit used for *hom*, the sword, and the Khalsa. An *ardas* should be performed before the couple goes around the fire four times while one of the four stanzas of the *lavan* of Guru Ram Das is recited and sung in turn. After this, *ardas* should be performed again and the wedded couple should be administered baptism of the double edged sword. The first five *pauris* of the *Anand* should then be recited and sung. After this, *karha prasad* should be distributed among all the people present.<sup>5</sup>

The customs of both the families may be followed but no god or goddess should be worshipped and no *jantar-mantar* or *tona-taman*

should be done. An *ardas* should be performed, seeking peace for the couple and mutual love between them. The bride should serve the groom as her lord and should always be faithful to him; the groom in turn should regard her as a part of his body (*ardh-sariri*) and be kind to her; he should share with her whatever he earns; they should remain faithful to each other; the wife should look towards her husband for every thing and towards no one else. Not to take anything from the bride's parents has a merit equal to millions of Gurpurabs. In the *ardas* to be performed on the first night of the union (*suhag rat*), the items gifted by the bride's parents are mentioned and the groom is advised to accept them with pleasure. The whole description suggests that the primary purpose of marriage is procreation (and not sensual pleasure). The parents on both sides should regard themselves as equal and none should try to demonstrate superiority in any way. The union takes place at the bride's place and the marriage party departs on the day following. When the parents of the bride visit the place of her in-laws, they should eat and drink without any hesitation as it is done between two Khalsa families.<sup>6</sup> This carries the implication that the relationship of the faith is primary and the social tie is secondary.

The term used for widow remarriage is *par-sanjog*. Expressing the traditional view that a woman has far greater sexual urge than a man, it is argued that if a man could not live without a woman, how could a woman be expected to live without a man? This is the main argument for widow re-marriage. However, a number of restrictions are mentioned. The first preference of a widow should be to try to lead a life of contentment and self-control without getting married. If she has a son or a daughter, she should not get re-married. However, if she has no children or her children have not survived, she could get re-married. The first circle of men whom she could marry were the collaterals of her deceased husband. If that were not possible for any reason she could marry a man who belongs to a good family and is a good person irrespective of his *jati* or *baran*.<sup>7</sup>



The procedure of widow re-marriage is given in a separate section. With appropriate variations, the basic procedure is the same or very much similar to the procedure followed in the case of first marriage. Some of the notable features of widow re-marriage too are the absence of a Brahman, the recitation and singing of *shabads*, the *Anand* and *mangals*, consent of the couple, recitation of the first five *pauris* of the *Anand*, performance of *ardas*, and distribution of *karha prasad*. The same ceremony was to be performed in case of re-marriage to a man outside the circle of collaterals. The woman was to be administered baptism of the double edged sword in this case, as in the other.<sup>8</sup>

Apart from widow re-marriage, the marriage of a slave girl is also visualized. She too was to be given baptism of the double edged sword and, with appropriate variations, the procedure of marriage was similar to the procedure described earlier. This applied to an unmarried girl as well as to the widow. The daughter of a *mlechh* (Muslim) could also be married to a Khalsa Sikh in a similar manner. It is interesting to note that the daughter of a Muslim is to be given pork to eat for fifty-one days before she is married. Baptism of the double edged sword in her case too is obligatory. A Muslim widow could also be re-married to a Khalsa Sikh in this manner. It is significant to note that the treatment of the children born from re-marriage was to be exactly the same as that of the children born from a marriage. An infringement of this injunction made a person liable to excommunication.<sup>9</sup>

On the death of a Khalsa, no traditional mourning was to be observed. Instead the compositions called the *Alahanian* were to be read. The women should also read and sing *bani* instead of beating their breasts. The ceremony to be performed on the death of males is given in detail. It is then stated that similar ceremony should be performed at the death of females. Some of the features of this ceremony are singing of *Gurbani* (*kirtan*), offering of a prayer (*ardas*), and distribution of *prasad* among all the men and women present. In

the case of the death of a young Sikh, from the age of ten to fifteen, the recitation of the first five *pauris* of the *Anand* is also mentioned. It is underlined that no mourning is to be observed even in his case. In the case of a child upto the age of ten the rite of cremation was to be performed. The death of an old person, from the age of sixty to one hundred or more, the ceremony was almost celebratory, with an emphasis on instrumental music (*saj-baj, nagare*) and *kirtan*. His death anniversary too was to be celebrated by offering all kinds of delicious foods to the Khalsa Sikhs. The ceremony to be performed on the death of a girl was to be almost the same as for the boy. The ceremony to be performed on the death of a childless widow included *kirtan* instead of lamentation. Only slight variations are mentioned for the ceremonies to be performed on the death of married and un-married women, and the widows. There is a strict injunction against the performance of traditional *shraddh*; in its place food is to be offered to the Sikhs after *kirtan* and *ardas*.<sup>10</sup>

Women figure in the chapter on Raj in several situations. Education was to be imparted to Sikh girls as to Sikh boys. The ruler of the ideal Sikh state should patronize not only artists and the performers of *kirtan* but also *patars* who are as attractive as the Mohinis of Indar. They were to sing *kirtan* and also to perform dance. But they were also to tempt *jogis, sanyasis, bairagis, Udasis, Jain monks and pirs*, and whoever donned a religious garb. They who were tempted were to be obliged to adopt the life of a house-holder.<sup>11</sup>

The Sikh ruler was to organize a general festival on every Puran-mashi in which all men and women, and all boys and girls, were to dress well to join the celebration. Both men and women should sing the praises of Sri Akal Purkh. A restriction is also suggested for women. With the exception of prostitutes, they should not be allowed to go out of the home unveiled. If a man indulged in illicit sexual intercourse with a woman, both of them were to be seated on a donkey, with their faces blackened; and they were to be ordered to get married. Their social status was to be determined by the caste that was

lower. It is not clear that this case refers to the Sikhs alone. The quarters of the prostitutes should be clearly demarcated and separated from the rest of the people. It is interesting to note that, though any relationship with the prostitute is bad, it is better than illicit sexual relation. The ruler of the Sikh state should provide assistance to all kinds of needy persons, including the parent or parents who do not have the means adequate enough to marry off their daughters. It should be obligatory for every young man and young woman to get married. The Maharaja should have only one wife. However, if she did not bear any children he could marry another woman. Normally, he should have no intercourse with a slave girl. But when the wife is not present and sexual urge gets hold of him he may have intercourse with a slave girl. It is bad, but it is better than having sexual intercourse with another woman. All women employed in the palace of the Maharaja and in the female quarters should be married women. The mount for women should preferably be the elephant, which is the royal mount, a camel, a horse, a mule, a *chandol* or a *palki*. Evidently, the author is thinking of the woman belonging to the royal and affluent households.<sup>12</sup>

The chapter on justice is more interesting from the view point of gender relations. A man should divide whatever he earns for different purposes. He should first of all take out the share of the Guru. He should offer one rupee to his mother and father, and one rupee to his wife. He should save one rupee. For some other items, the amount mentioned is less than a rupee. If he has incurred any debt, he should use half his earnings to repay it. If a man dies without children, the debt incurred by him should be paid first out of his property and the rest only should be taken over by the Maharaja (as an escheat). However, if the deceased person had a daughter who has given birth to a son, the property of the deceased, after the payment of the debt, should go to his daughter's son. If he has only a daughter and she has no son, then the property should go to her. If he gives any movable or immovable property to his daughter during his lifetime and the daughter dies, this property should go to her husband. But if the father had given no

property to his daughter in his life-time and she dies, her husband has no claim over the property of the deceased. However, if the daughter who has died leaves a daughter behind, the property should go to her. In short, the daughter's son and daughter (*dohtra* and the *dohtri*) are equally entitled in certain circumstances to inherit the property of their mother's father. If the deceased had no son or grandson and no daughter who has a son or a daughter the property should go to his real brother or to his son or to his daughter or to his grandson and grand daughter or to his *dohtra* and *dohtri*, in that order. So long as any of these inheritors was alive, the ruler should not escheat the property of the deceased. About the shares in property of the deceased, it is stated that *dohtras* and *dohtris* should have an equal share. Similarly, among brothers and sisters the property should be divided equally. The wife's share in the property is one-fourth; in the case of two wives, this share is to be equally divided among them. The detail given for other shares clearly mention the equal share of daughters. An absolute right in property is recognized. If a man is annoyed with a son till the time of his death to the extent of disinheriting him, then no share in property should be given to this son after the father's death. However, if the son is forgiven during the life-time of the father he becomes entitled to an equal share. It is explicitly stated that if a daughter or a sister is the only legal claimant to the property, it should go to her, that is, to the daughter first and if she is not there then to the sister. If a man has two wives, he should treat them equally well in all respects. If a person has no sons but only daughters and their mother is alive, then his property should go to the wife. When the property is to go to the daughters, the one who is unmarried should get the equivalent of expenditure on marriage in addition to her equal share in the rest of the property. If one of the daughters is a widow, she should get the double share. No distinction was to be made between a real mother and a step mother, a real brother and a step brother, or a real sister and a step sister. *If a woman leaves her husband for any reason and gives birth to a son or a daughter she has no claim over him or her; they belong to the*

husband. Finally, there are strict injunctions against extra-marital relations of any kind.<sup>13</sup>

## 2

### The Other *Rahitnamas*

In the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh, the injunctions for women relate to their initiation, religious life and domestic duties, besides some statements which carry implications for the position of women in the Sikh social order. It is categorically stated in the *tankhah* part of the *Rahitnama* that a Sikh of the Guru who administers baptism of the double edged sword (*khande di pahul*) to a Sikhni is a defaulter (*tankhahya*), or liable to penance. The Sikh of the Guru should not give his daughter in marriage to a person who cuts his hair (*mona*). However, the daughter of a *mona* could be married to a Sikh boy after she has been administered *charan-pahul*. As the phrase suggests, it is baptism of the foot. Since there is no personal Guru, the *manji* of the *Granth Sahib* serves as the substitute. As in the case of baptism of the double edged sword, so in this case *patashas* had to be added to the water in which the foot of the *manji* has been washed. While the *pahul* is being prepared, five *pauris* of the *Japuji* and the five *pauris* of the *Anand* are to be recited. This description of *charan-pahul* takes it closer to *khande ki pahul* than the *charan-pahul* administered in the earlier history of the Sikh movement.<sup>14</sup>

Married life is the ideal for a woman. She is appreciated all the more if she comes from a good family. As a matter of detail it is recommended that, like the Sikh of the Guru, the Sikhni should wash her hands before serving food or kneading dough. She should not allow her nails to grow long and she should not talk (while preparing food). She should have proper respect for *prasad*. The situation in which the *Charitra (Pakhyan)* was compiled in 1696 refers to a woman named Rup Kaur who had come with the *sangat* of Lahore at the time of the Baisakhi and tried to tempt the Guru himself.<sup>15</sup>

In positive terms, the role of Mata Gujri in the affairs of the Sikh Panth is highlighted by the situation in which the *Masands* and the



Sikhs, together, request her that the *raj-tilak* of the *sahibzada* (Guru Gobind Singh) should be performed. While preparing *khande ki pahul*, the *savvayya* of the *Chandi Charitra* starting with *deh siva bar mohe ehae subh karman te kabhu na taro* is to be recited. Whether a Sikh of the Guru or a Sikhni, it was commendable for them to remain steadfast and detached even in *raj*. Regarding it the *raj* of Vaheguru, they should retain purity amidst *maya*. They should remain humble.<sup>16</sup>

It is important to note that over a dozen instructions meant for a Sikhni of the Guru are given at one place in the *tankhah* part of the *Rahitnama*. Most of the injunctions are negative, that is what women should not do. However, the positive injunctions included are equally important, or probably more. There are some mixed injunctions too. A Gursikhni should go to the *dharamsal* twice a day; sitting in a *sangat* she should keep her head covered to pay homage (to *Granth Sahib*) and concentrate on the *shabad bani* of the Guru. She should take something in kind as an offering, like a ball of cotton thread, a sheet or a small piece of cloth according to her means. She should also save a part of the raw food in the name of the Guru and take it to the *dharamsal* or give it to a needy Sikh. She should offer better food to a needy Sikh than to a member her family. She should regard her husband as *karta* (literally, doer) and look upon other men as a father, a brother or a son. She should give instructions to her husband in the Sikh faith because men in the Kaliyuga listen to women more than to fellow men; the instructions given by the Sikhni would be very effective.<sup>17</sup>

A Gursikhni should read and understand the *Granth Sahib* without paying heed to worldly concerns. Before reading Gurbani she should bathe or at least wash her face, hands and feet. She should not go to a grave or a *marhi*. She should take refuge with the Guru. Except the Guru, her husband, and the *sat-sangat* she should not believe in anything. She should remain faithful to her husband and observe *dharam*, adopting all the good qualities of a person mentioned in the *Granth Sahib*. She should discard the singing of popular songs, verses



making fun of others, and vulgar songs; she should sing only the hymns of *Suhag* and *Ghorian*. She should never associate with a man other than her husband and she should not sit alone with a woman of ill-repute to talk. She should not curse a man, nor quarrel with him. She should not take her bath naked nor should she stand naked, in water or before the sun. She should regard the water and the sun like her father. She should keep herself physically clean and, if dirty, she should not cook or serve food. While kneading dough or cooking food in the kitchen she should not talk because her spittle would fall into the food. If she cleanses her nose or scratches her body she should wash her hands immediately. A small boy or a girl should not be allowed to enter the kitchen while cooking is being done. The fundamental instruction is common for both men and women: they should strive not to miss the opportunity of human birth for liberation. In the rest of the *Rahitnama* there are a number of injunctions with regard to the attitude of the Sikhs towards women in general or towards Sikh women but there are only a few injunctions for a Sikh woman.<sup>18</sup>

In the *Rahitnama* of Bhai Desa Singh a man without *kesh* is compared with a woman without clothes. A woman without restraint is compared to a Brahman who does not know the *Vedas*. When *deg* is distributed no distinction is to be made between men and women.<sup>19</sup> In the *Rahitnama* of Bhai Daya Singh the marriage of a Sikh with the daughter of a Sikh is like mingling *amrit* with *amrit*. To give the daughter of Singh in a marriage to a non-Singh is like entrusting a goat to a butcher.<sup>20</sup>

In the *Gurbilas* literature of the eighteenth century statements with bearing on gender relations are not so numerous as in the *Prem Sumarag* and the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh. Nevertheless, they have a significance of their own. In the *Sri Gur Sobha* there is a reference to mythical times in which *Chandi* was sent by Akal Purkh to destroy the demons. In connection with the injunction against *bhaddan*, the mother is mentioned along with the father.<sup>21</sup> The lure of beautiful women for the lustful man is also mentioned. These

concerns are reflected in the literature of the time of Guru Gobind Singh.

Koer Singh invokes Ad Purkh Kartar at the opening of his work but at the end of the same *chaupai* he invokes Ad Shakti Mata too who made the Panth powerful. As we noticed earlier Koer Singh devotes nearly a score of pages to the worship of the Goddess by Guru Gobind Singh before the institution the Khalsa. When Guru Gobind Singh announced that he was going to depart from this world, it was reported to him that Mata Sahib Devi would not be able to live without him (and she would like to burn herself on his funeral pyre). Guru Gobind Singh makes it absolutely clear that this was forbidden.<sup>22</sup> Clearly, thus, the practice of *sati* is declared to be forbidden for Sikh women.

As we noticed earlier, Kesar Singh Chhibber gives great importance to the worship of Mata Kali and the boons she gives for the institution of the Khalsa, and even for some features of the Khalsa *rahit* and Khalsa *rule*. The day on which Guru Gobind Singh declared that only the *Adi Granth* was the Guru and his own compositions were not to be included in the Granth, he also performed *Chandi Path*. In another episode, preference for male child is clearly indicated and the Guru has no hesitation in giving the boon of male children to all the seven wives of a ruler.<sup>23</sup>

Kesar Singh Chhibber takes notice of Mata Gujri, Mata Sundari, Mata Jito ji and Mata Sahib Devi. Mata Gujri is mentioned simply as giving birth to Guru Gobind Singh. The marriage of Mata Sundari to Guru Gobind Singh is placed in 1673. The marriage of Mata Jito ji to Guru Gobind Singh is placed in 1685. Mata Sundari gave birth to Jit (Ajit) Singh in 1688. Jujhar Singh was born to Mata Jito ji in 1690. When Mata Sundari misses her son Jit Singh and is not prepared to leave Nander for Delhi, Guru Gobind Singh entrusts a young Sikh named Ajit Singh to Mata Sundari as her son. Mata Sundari left Nander with her adopted son. At Delhi, the *sangat* was entrusted to Jit Singh as the *sahibzada*. He began to disobey Mata Sundari and he was persuaded by 'uncle' Kirpal to return to obedience.<sup>24</sup>

Kesar Singh Chhibber gives a separate chapter to Mata Sahib Devi. She succeeded Mata Sundari as the leader of the *sangat* after her death. The Sikhs used to come to her presence from all sides, particularly at the time of Baisakhi and Diwali. Thinking of their insecurity in the capital Mata Sahib Devi thought of stopping the gatherings of Baisakhi and Diwali. Eminent Sikhs, including 'Bebe Gulabo', discussed the whole matter with Mata Sahib Devi and they all adopted the resolution (*gurmata*) that the general gathering of Sikhs on these two occasions should be organized at Amritsar. In 1727, 'uncle' Kirpal, with seven other Sikhs nominated by Mata Sahib Devi, went to Amritsar, and made appropriate arrangements for the bi-annual gatherings and the revival of traditions associated with the Harmandir Sahib. Kesar Singh gives the detail of these arrangements. He goes on to add that after the death of Mata Sahib Devi, 'Bebe Gulabo' looked after the *dera* for sometime before she died.<sup>25</sup>

In *Sakhi* 17 of his *Mahima Prakash*, Sarup Das Bhalla refers to the assistance of Chandi Mata after the performance of *hom-jagg*. He also refers to a costly bangle (*chura*) sent by a devout follower of Guru Gobind Singh for Mata ji through a Masand who gave it to his wife. This misappropriation was exposed later and the Masand was reprimanded. According to Sarup Das Bhalla, Mata Gujri persuaded Guru Gobind Singh to evacuate Anandpur, giving him the assurance that the hill Rajas would honour their oath and would not attack the Sikhs. There is a reference to the *dehuras* of Mata Sundari, Mata Jito ji and Mata Sahib Devi as well as Mata Gujri, erected at different places by the Khalsa.<sup>26</sup>

In three consecutive chapters of his *Gurbilas*, Sukha Singh dwells on the worship of Kalka, her appearance, and the boons she gives to Guru Gobind Singh. He refers to women becoming Sikhnis of the Guru and he brackets men and women as the Guru's followers; he refers to Guru Tegh Bahadur's mother as 'Jagg Mata Nanaki'. Like Koer Singh, Sukha Singh refers to the preference being given to the

male child in the society and Guru Gobind Singh gives the boon of a son to a Rani.<sup>27</sup>

### 3

#### **Observations of the European Writers**

The early European writers showed little interest in gender relations among the Sikhs. Only a few of them take notice of Sikh women or the attitude of Sikh men towards Sikh women. George Thomas observed that women were held in little esteem among the Sikhs. They were illtreated by their husbands and prohibited from accompanying them in their wars. The women attended to their domestic concerns with diligence. There were instances, 'not infrequent', in which Sikh women had taken up arms to defend their habitations from the desultory attacks and conducted themselves throughout the contest with a highly praiseworthy spirit of intrepidity. This statement refers to the last few decades of the eighteenth century when the Sikh rule had been established over much of the area between the Indus and the Yamuna.<sup>28</sup>

In the first decade of the nineteenth century an officer of the Bengal Army (Captain Matthews) travelled through the Sikh territories and observed that both Sikhs and Singhs married one wife. In the event of her death, they could marry again. But if the husband died, the widow did not re-marry, except in the case of Jats who allowed widows to marry a second or a third husband. Sikh widows rarely became *satis* in the Punjab, though the practice was common in Jammu.<sup>29</sup>

John Malcolm states that the conduct of the Sikhs towards their women differed in no material aspect from that of the Hindus and Muslims. Their moral character with regard to women was generally much more lax than that of their ancestors who lived under severe restrictions; the fear of excommunication obliged them to cover their sins with the veil of decency. Among the contemporary Sikhs, however, there was hardly any infamy of which they were not accused with justification. They conducted themselves 'in the most open and

shameful manner' in their sexual relations with women. Malcolm refers to the Sikhs in this context as a 'debauched and dissolute race'.<sup>30</sup>

This is too sweeping a generalization to be true. This observation could never apply to all Sikh males. Malcolm probably had in mind the examples of a few members of the Sikh ruling class in relation to their conduct with professional dancing girls and prostitutes. It may be added that the early European writers based their observations on limited evidence, and quite often on the basis of hearsay. Gender relations formed an unimportant aspect of any social order in their eyes. They remained distant and cursory observers of gender relations among the Sikhs.

#### 4

#### The Sikh Women

Professor Gurinder Singh Mann refers to a short poem by a poet named Mangal recorded on the opening folio of the *Anandpur Bir* which, in Professor Mann's view, was compiled in the 1690s at the court of Guru Gobind Singh. This poem is addressed to Mata Jito, and begins with a prayer that her glory may be like that of the sun and the moon, that her sons Jujhar and Zorawar may live long and that her husband Guru Gobind Singh, 'the ruler of the three worlds', may have eternal life. Mata Jito herself is called Jagat Mata who grants wishes of all who come to her. The poet requests for financial support to enable him to perform the marriage of his daughter in Pasrur (near Sialkot). He hopes to return to Anandpur in order to serve Mata Jito without any anxiety on his mind. Mata Jito is seen as the overseer of the community, normal routine to ensure every family welfare. The place of her cremation at Anandpur was marked with a Gurdwara.<sup>31</sup>

The *Amarnama*, composed at Nander in October 1708, contains an episode narrated by Guru Gobind Singh in which the wife receives great consideration from her husband in all decisions on matters important to the family.<sup>32</sup> In the *Parchian* of Sewa Das, written at Nander soon after the death of Guru Gobind Singh, there is a *sakhi* that underlines that service of the poor and the needy was undertaken



by Mata ji who was persuaded that the ideal of service (*sewa*) meant for women was as much as for men.<sup>33</sup>

The *hukamnamas* of Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devi indicate that they assumed leadership of the Sikh community on their own after the death of Guru Gobind Singh. The published *hukamnamas* of Mata Sundari, nine in all, are addressed to the *sangats* of Patna and Ghazipur, and the family (*kabila*) of Bhai Rama (son of Phul), from 1717 to 1730. The published *hukamnamas* of Mata Sahib Devi, nine in all, are addressed to the *sangats* of Patna, Benares, Pattan Shaikh Farid and Naushehra Pannuan, to Alam Singh Jama'atdar and the family of Bhai Rama of Phul, from 1726 to 1734. In both sets of *hukamnamas* the Sikhs are called 'sons' (*putt*, *farzand*) and they are exhorted to recite 'Guru, Guru' so that their birth is redeemed. They are given the assurance that the Guru would save them, fulfil their wishes, and they would prosper. They are asked to send the stipulated amount of money through a *hundi* handed over to the *mewara* authorized to receive it. This amount is meant for the *langar* in Delhi, maintained in two separate establishments by Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devi. The money sent to them came from *kar*, *bhet*, *golak*, *dasvandh*, *sukh*, *mannat*, and *chaliha*. Even the smallest contribution (*kaudi*, *damri*) was welcome.<sup>34</sup>

In these *hukamnamas* there is no overt claim to Guruship. The authority of Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devi is acceptable to the Sikhs because of their status as the wives of Guru Gobind Singh and due to their personalities. A few of the *hukamnamas* are interesting in this connection. The *hukamnama* of Mata Sundari addressed to Bhai Duna, Bhai Bighamal, Bhai Gurdas and the entire family of Bhai Rama on 13 September 1726 simply acknowledges the receipt of Rs. 21 sent by them with a *mewara* as a part of their usual practice.<sup>35</sup> The *hukamnama* of Mata Sahib Devi addressed to Bhai Duna, Bhai Sabha, Bhai Ala, Bhai Bakhta, Bhai Ladda, and the entire family of Bhai Rama of Phul in the 1720s states that they had never sent anything for Mata Sahib Devi, and that they should make no distinction between her and



Mata Sundari, both of whom belonged to the same house. All the persons addressed in these *hukamnamas* were important individuals, especially Ala Singh who had established his control over Barnala and a number of villages in the 1720s.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, they are addressed like other Sikhs as 'the sons' of Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devi who exercise their authority essentially on moral grounds.

This does not mean, however, that Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devi were not interested in the mundane affairs of the Sikhs. The *hukamnama* of Mata Sundari addressed to Bhai Chain Singh, Bhai Bhopat Singh, Bhai Sangat Singh, Bhai Alam Singh and Bhai Mani Singh on 18 October 1723 states that Bhai Lal and Pala had some accounts to settle with Bhai Sango; the five Singhs addressed by name in the *hukamnama* are asked to do impartial justice to the two parties (on behalf of the entire Khalsa of Vaheguru); their decision must be based on moral justice (*dharam-nian*). Mata Sundari is authorizing five Singhs on behalf of the Khalsa to arbitrate in a dispute between Sikhs. Instead of going to a Panchayat or a court, Bhai Lal and Pala go to Mata Sundari to seek justice.<sup>37</sup> In a *hukamnama* of Mata Sahib Devi addressed to Bhai Man Singh on 30 December 1734, there is the order (*hukam*) to construct a well in Pattan Shaikh Farid for the use of the Sikhs. Expenditure on the construction of the well through Bhai Binta was to be debited to Mata Sahib Devi.<sup>38</sup> There is hardly any doubt that both Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devi were maintaining regular establishments in Delhi with the help of Sikhs employed for various purposes, including secretarial work. The institution of open kitchen (*langar*) was maintained as a part of each establishment. The evidence of the *hukamnamas* indicates that an important role assigned to Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devi in the Sikh literature of the eighteenth century is not without a firm foundation.

In the *B-40 Janamsakhi*, completed in the central Punjab in 1733, women in all situations are welcomed to join the Sikh fold. Women as well as men are present in the *dharamsal*. An entire family is visualized as 'Sikh' and the wife is praised as much as the husband

for their dedication to their faith. The *sakhis* which carry this import are placed obviously in the time of Guru Nanak, but their relevance for the eighteenth century cannot be minimized. In a sense, their import is normative but it is conveyed through empirical situations which are supposed to be a part of the social reality.<sup>39</sup>

The Persian sources of the eighteenth century do not talk much about Sikh women. The silence of the Persian writers is not surprising. They were interested primarily, almost exclusively, in the political activity of the Sikhs. Consequently they could take notice of men and women directly involved in politics. Since the women were not directly involved in political activity, they were not noticed. An incident of exceptional interest to Khafi Khan was that of a mother who felt concerned about her son who had been made a captive along with Banda Bahadur and his companions who were being executed in Delhi in 1716. She had the means and a patron to enable her to make a representation to the emperor and the *wazir* contending that her son was actually captured by the Sikhs and since he did not joined them voluntarily he was innocent of any crime against the state. The emperor sent a mace-bearer with the order to secure her son's release. The executioner was ready to use a sword when the order was handed over to him. However, the son refused to be released. 'My mother lies', he declared, 'I am, heart and soul, a life-sacrificing believer and devotee of my Guide (*murshid*). Send me soon to join my companions already killed'. Apart from the bravery of the young man and the mother's concern for his life, the incident reflects her initiative and resourcefulness.<sup>40</sup>

The only other Persian writer to mention Sikh women is Rai Chaturman Saksena who takes notice of Ajit Singh, the adopted son of Guru Gobind Singh. During his tenure of Guruship, Mata Sundari established a separate spiritual seat in the reign of Farrukh Siyar and some Sikhs deserted Ajit Singh in order to join her camp. When she died, people turned to Mata Sahib Devi as her successor. She too died a year later.<sup>41</sup> The evidence of the *hukamnamas* of Mata Sundari and

Mata Sahib Devi, as we noticed earlier, shows that Mata Sahib Devi had begun to exercise authority during the life-time of Mata Sundari. Nevertheless, the two sources highlight the role played by the wives of Guru Gobind Singh in the affairs of the Sikhs.<sup>42</sup>

It may be added that the early British records refer to *dharmarth* grant of Rani Sada Kaur, the widow of Gurbaksh Singh Kanhiya, for a *pakka* temple in 1798 AD. Elsewhere, there is a mention of the grant of a well and 25 *ghumaons* of land by Bhag Singh Sodhi to his grand daughter, Chand Kaur in dowry.<sup>43</sup>

## 5

### In Retrospect

The eighteenth century sources provide both normative and empirical evidence on gender relations among the Khalsa. The most comprehensive statement is in the *Prem Sumarag*. The religious life is as much open to women as to men, though for initiation a few differences of detail are mentioned. For the ceremonies at birth, marriage and death also the differences are of degree and not of kind. Widow re-marriage is allowed in certain situations. Within the general social and patriarchal framework, thus, a large degree of equality is visualized. The most radical feature is the right of women to hold property in certain situations.

The *Rahitnamas* associated with Chaupa Singh forbids *pahul* of the double edged sword for women. A Sikh woman should not address an assembly of Sikh men. She should regard her husband as her lord and master. The *Rahitnama* is silent about rituals, widow re-marriage, and matters of property. In all other respects it visualizes a large space for women. Essentially, spiritual life is open to her; it is obligatory for her to go to the *dharamsal* with offerings; she can address a gathering of women and she is expected to instruct her husband in the home. The later *Rahitnamas* say very little about women, and nothing new.

The Sikh literature other than the *Rahitnamas* does not have much to say about gender relations, though several writers refer to the episode of the Goddess, prohibition of *sati* and preference for the male

child. Men and women are bracketed for religious life, and women of the Guru's household play a considerable role in Sikh affairs, and *dehuras* are built for them.

The European writers are generally silent about gender relations. One of them states that women were held in little esteem among the Sikhs, but they attended to their domestic duties diligently and took up arms on certain occasions in defence. Widow re-marriage was allowed only among Jat Sikhs. Sikh widows rarely became *satis*. The Persian sources have little to say about gender relations but a few writers take notice of some Sikh women.

The role of some Sikh women in the public affairs of the Sikhs finds mention in Sikh sources, especially the *Gurbilas* literature and the *hukamnamas*, especially Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devi. However, all such women did not belong to the Guru's house.

#### NOTES

1. For academic discourse on gender relations among the Sikhs, see Appendix 5 on 'Scholarly Views on Gender Relations'.
2. *Prem Sumarag Granth Arthat Khalsai Jiwan Jach*, ed. Randhir Singh, Jalandhar: New Book Company, 1965, rpt., pp.8, 20-1.
3. Ibid., pp. 66, 74-5, 147.
4. Ibid., pp. 22-6.
5. Ibid., pp. 27-38.
6. Ibid., pp. 38-42.
7. Ibid., pp. 43, 46-8.
8. Ibid., pp. 49-56.
9. Ibid., pp. 56-8.
10. Ibid., pp. 80-91.
11. Ibid., pp. 103, 105-6.
12. Ibid., pp. 103, 105-6, 108-10, 119, 121, 122-3.
13. Ibid., pp. 125-31, 133-4, 137-9, 142.
14. *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*, tr. and ed. W.H. McLeod, Dunedin, New Zealand: University of Otago Press, 1987, pp. 59-60, 111.

15. Ibid., pp. 66-7, 69, 77, 82, 127.
16. Ibid., pp.81,123.
17. Ibid., pp. 115-16.
18. Ibid., pp. 114-16.
19. *Desa Singh Rahitnama*, in *Rahitname* (Punjabi), ed. Piara Singh Padam, Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 1995, rpt., pp. 133-4.
20. *Daya Singh Rahitnama*, in *Rahitname*, p. 70.
21. Sainapat, *Shri Guru Sobha* (Punjabi), ed. Shamsher Singh Ashok, Amritsar: Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, 1967, pp. 12, 32, 44.
22. Koer Singh, *Gurbilas Patshahi 10* (Punjabi), ed. Shamsher Singh Ashok, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1968, pp. 18, 103-23, 133, 153, 272, 286-7. See also, Appendix 2, 'The Goddess in the Eighteenth Century Sikh Literature'.
23. Kesar Singh Chhibber, *Bansavalinama Dasan Patshahian Ka* (Punjabi), ed. Rattan Singh Jaggi (*Parkh*, vol.II), Chandigarh: Panjab University, 1972. pp. 99, 102-15, 126, 136, 191, 235.
24. Ibid., pp. 99, 113, 125,157-8, 178-9.
25. Ibid., pp. 182-6.
26. Sarup Das Bhalla, *Mahima Prakash*, ed. Gobind Singh Lamba and Khazan Singh, Patiala: Punjab Languages Department, 1971, vol. II, pp. 801, 820-40, 876, 882.
27. Sukha Singh, *Gurbilas Patshahi 10* (Punjabi) ed. Gursharan Kaur Jaggi, Patiala: Punjab Languages Department, 1989, pp. 6, 8-9, 34, 37, 42, 126-57, 208-9.
28. 'Memoirs of an Irish Maharaja, 1803', in "Siques, Tigers, or Thieves": *Eyewitness Accounts of the Sikhs (1606-1809)*, ed. Amandeep Singh Madra and Parmjit Singh, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p. 202.
29. [Captain Matthews], 'A Tour to Lahore in 1808', *The Panjab Past and Present* ed. Ganda Singh, vol.I, pt 1-2, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1967, pp.112-13.

30. John Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs*, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1986 (first published in 1812), pp. 139-40.
31. Gurinder Singh Mann, 'Sources for the Study of Guru Gobind Singh's Life and Times', *Journal of Punjab Studies* (Special Issue on Guru Gobind Singh), vol., 15, nos 1 & 2, (Spring-Fall 2008), pp. 246, 257-8.
32. Nathmal, *Amarnama* (Persian), tr. and ed. Ganda Singh, Amritsar: Sikh History Society, 1953, pp. 28, 36.
33. *Parchian* Sewa Das (Punjabi), tr. and ed. Kharak Singh and Gurtej Singh, Chandigarh: Institute of Sikh Studies, 1995, *Sakhi* 33, p. 148.
34. For Mata Sundari see document nos. 68-73, 79, 80; and for Mata Sahib Devi document nos. 74, 75, 77, 78, 81-5, in *Hukamname: Guru Sahiban, Mata Sahiban, Banda Singh ate Khalsa Ji De*, ed. Ganda Singh, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1967, pp. 196-211, 214-231.
35. Document no. 76, in *Hukamname*, pp.292-3.
36. Document no. 74 in *Hukamname*, p.209. For a biography of Ala Singh see, Kirpal Singh; *Baba Ala Singh: Founder of Patiala Kingdom*, Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 2005, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn.
37. Document no. 73, in *Hukamname*, pp. 206-7.
38. Document no.85, in *Hukamname*, pp. 230-1.
39. *Janam Sakhi Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji*, ed. Piar Singh, Amritsar: Guru Nanak University, 1974, pp. 57-8, 77-9, 105-12.
40. Khafi Khan, *Muntakhabu'l Lubab*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, pp. 158-9.
41. Rai Chaturman Saksena, *Chahar Gulshan*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, pp. 166-7.
42. For Mata Sundari, see document nos. 68-73, 76, 79, 80; and for Mata Sahib Devi, see document nos. 74, 75, 77, 78, 81-5, in *Hukamname*.



43. National Archives of India, New Delhi, Foreign/ Political Proceedings, 13 February, 1857, No. 294 and 21-28 February, 1851, No. 218 A, respectively.

## Chapter VIII

### LITERARY ARTICULATION

In their *History of Punjabi Literature*, Sant Singh Sekhon and Kartar Singh Duggal take notice of some eighteenth century works of Sikh literature: the *Gian Ratnavali*, *Bhagat Ratnavali* or *Bhagat Mala*, the *Prem Sumarag* and the *Parchian Dasan Patshahian Dian* by Sewa Das Udasi. These four works showed a strong influence of Braj Bhasha, 'a trend in the writings of the Sikhs that had set in probably from the time of Guru Gobind Singh himself.' This trend militated against the writing of Punjabi even in the poetry of the period.<sup>1</sup> This may partly be the reason why Sant Singh Sekhon and Kartar Singh Duggal have not shown any interest in the Sikh works in verse written during the eighteenth century.

Sikh literature being a major source of Sikh history; historians of the Sikhs have turned increasingly to Sikh literature in the past four or five decades. Beginning with an analysis of the *Prem Sumarag* in 1965, Professor J. S. Grewal published analyses of the Sikh literary works like the *Bachittar Natak*, the *Zafarnama*, and the *Sri Gur Sobha* in 1972. Under his supervision then, a doctoral thesis was completed by Surjit Hans in 1980; it covered major works of Sikh literature from 1500 to 1850. Already in 1968, Professor W. H. McLeod had analysed the *Janamsakhis* to use their evidence for the life of Guru Nanak in his *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*. He took further notice of the *Janamsakhis* in *The Evolution of the Sikh Community* in 1975. An elaborate analysis of the *Janamsakhis* was published by him still later as *The Early Sikh Tradition* in 1980. In this process, Professor McLeod took notice of some of the Sikh works of the eighteenth century.

Professor J.S. Grewal has written afresh on the *Bachittar Natak*, the *Sri Gur Sobha*, and the *Prem Sumarag* and he has added articles on the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh, the *Sakhi Rahit*, the *Var Bhagauti* of Gurdas Singh, the *B 40 Janamsakhi*, and the *Bansavalinama* of Kesar Singh Chhibber. Among the other scholars

who have contributed articles on Sikh literature of the eighteenth century are Professor Madanjit Kaur and Professor Gurtej Singh, who both have written about Koer Singh's *Gurbilas Patshahi* 10, and Anne Murphy who has written on the *Sri Gur Sobha*. This considerable volume of work on Sikh literature is extremely helpful in understanding the major literary forms and works of the period, and clarifies a few important issues for our purpose.

First of all, we are clearer about the dates in the present state of knowledge. Four short and two long *Rahitnamas* can be placed in the time of Guru Gobind or very close to it. This is true also of the *Sri Gur Sobha*, the *Parchian Patshahi Dasvin Ki*, and the *Sarab Loh Granth*. The narrative and *tankhah* parts of the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh, the *B40 Janamsakhi* and Koer Singh's *Gurbilas* can be placed between 1730 and 1765. The *Bansavalinama* of Kesar Singh Chhibber, the *Mahima Prakash* of Sarup Das Bhalla, Sukha Singh's *Gurbilas* and the *Gian Ratnavali*, can be placed in the period of Sikh rule from 1765 to about 1800. The *Rahitnamas* of Desa Singh and Daya Singh were also composed in the period of Sikh rule. To these can be added a few more works, like Darshan Bhagat's *Amritsar di Var*, written in 1709, and Kavi Saundha's *Ustat Sri Amritsar Ji Ki*, written in 1797.

The major forms of Sikh literature of the period can be identified as the *Rahitnama*, the *Var*, the *Gurbilas*, the *Sakhi*, and the *Ustat*. It may be pointed out, however, that all the literary works of the eighteenth century do not strictly fall into these categories. It may also be noted that two forms out of five were developed in the eighteenth century: the *Rahitnama* and the *Gurbilas*. Some features of these forms can overlap and they can have some common purposes, but each form has its own peculiar features. The theme or themes of a literary work reflect the major interests of the authors and of at least some of their contemporaries. Inter-textuality and use of earlier works by later writers indicate the lines of literary and cultural development.

The worldviews of the authors and their attitudes can be seen in relation to the Sikh faith and the pull of their traditional cultural heritage.

We find that three main approaches have been adopted by historians in dealing with the Sikh literature of the eighteenth century. Professor McLeod has examined the works of Sikh literature for evidence on Sikh history. Professor Hans has analysed each literary work as a whole in terms of the worldviews, of the authors, their attitudes and their major concerns. However, he tends to write with an eye on Sikh history, treating the literary works as sources for reconstructing Sikh history. Generally, he makes a few major points on each work, supporting each with a string of quotations. Quite often, the points made reinforce his prior understanding of Sikh history. Professor Grewal too has used some literary works as sources of Sikh history but with a difference. He is concerned primarily with what appeared to be important to the author. Generally, therefore, the findings add a new dimension to our understanding of Sikh history.<sup>2</sup>

We have made ample use of Sikh literature of the eighteenth century as evidence for various aspects of the social and cultural life of the Sikhs during the eighteenth century. Therefore, it needs to be emphasized that literature in itself is a form of cultural expression. The production of a large volume of literature in the eighteenth century by Sikh writers is an integral part of the cultural history of the Sikhs. The response from the Sikh writers to the changing situations during the eighteenth century adds a further dimension to their socio-cultural history. Finally, this literature entered history through its influence on the readers and the listeners.

## 1

### **The Vars**

The *Var* as a poetic form was popular in the Punjab before it was adapted by Guru Nanak for his religious compositions. His example was followed by some of his early successors. There are over a score of *Vars* in the *Granth Sahib*. Bhai Gurdas popularized the form further in the early seventeenth century. The *Var* figures prominently in

Punjabi literature of the eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that we find some Sikh writers of the eighteenth century making use of the *Var* for giving expression to their ideas on themes and concerns related directly or indirectly to the Sikh tradition.

Perhaps the best known *Var* in Sikh literature is the *Chandi di Var*. It is generally held that the *Chandi di Var* is one of the three versions of the myth of Durga included in the *Dasam Granth*. All the three versions are seen as based on the verses in praise of Durga in the *Markendya Purana*. Whereas the other two versions are in Braj, the *Chandi di Var* is in Punjabi. It is generally attributed to Guru Gobind Singh. It consists of 55 *pauris* and only one *dohra*. The opening *pauri* starts with '*Pritham bhagauti simarke*', which now forms the opening part of the Sikh *Ardas*. Contrary to the popular impression, '*Bhagauti*' does not refer to Durga but to the Supreme Deity who created the *khanda* first and then Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh for the manifestation of his power; he created the earth and the sky, the mountains and the seas; he created demons and gods and a constant clash between them; he created Durga to destroy the demons. She received power from God like Rama who killed the ten-headed (Ravana), and like Krishna who held Kansa by the hair and dashed him to the ground. Like Rama and Krishna, Durga derives her power from God, takes the side of God's devotees, and uses physical force with great effect. These are the traits which Guru Gobind Singh appreciates. The *Chandi di Var* is a heroic composition in which the power of Durga, and not her beauty, comes to the fore. It could inspire warriors to fight for the right cause and for the welfare of the pious.<sup>4</sup>

Equally famous is the *Var Bhagauti* of Gurdas Singh. It is generally placed in the late eighteenth century but an early manuscript of the *Sri Sarab Loh Granth* mentions 1700 as a year of its composition by Gurdas Singh. Written in praise of Guru Gobind Singh and the Khalsa it embodies a triumphant spirit, which makes it a celebration of spiritual liberation and political freedom. Therefore, it has a remarkable consonance with the literature of Guru Gobind Singh's period. Gurdas

Singh talks exclusively of the baptized Singhs and their great prowess as warriors. Their religious life is as important as their political activity. In fact, these spiritual and temporal activities present two sides of the same coin. The author was conscious that, sung by the *dhadis*, it could serve as a source of inspiration.<sup>5</sup>

As argued by Dr. Ganda Singh, the work known as the *Amarnama* was completed by Dhadi Nath Mal at Nander within a few days of Guru Gobind Singh's death in October 1708. It was composed in Persian, though very inelegantly. The internal evidence of this work suggests that Nath Mal always accompanied Guru Gobind Singh who gave '*amarnama*' as a reward. The term carries the same significance as '*hukamnama*'. The Sikhs are told to patronize the *dhadi* after the Guru's death. It is not surprising that this composition was carefully preserved by the descendants of Nath Mal for eight generations covering more than two centuries. His last known descendant, Bhai Fatta, handed it over to a patron before leaving for Pakistan in 1947. The *Amarnama* is a kind of *Var* which Nath Mal composed for singing in the presence of Guru Gobind Singh. It relates to his stay at Nander. The first incident mentioned is the Guru's decision to encamp in a graveyard on the bank of the river Godavari, which annoys Muslims but they are silenced by a demonstration of extra-ordinary powers by the Guru. The second incident relates to the submission of a haughty and an aggressive *sadh* to Guru Gobind Singh after an unsuccessful attempt to overpower the Guru and a representation to seek intervention from the emperor. This *sadh* was Banda who was sent towards the Punjab with five Singhs. In narrating this episode, faith in one God is emphasized. In another situation, Brahmanical rites and rituals are rejected. The Sikhs are instructed to get baptized and never to follow what the Brahmans say. Acceptance of *amrit* and rejection of Brahmanical practices go together. The Sikhs should listen to *kirtan* and *katha*, and eat in the *langar* sitting with others on the floor; they should attend the *dhadi darbar* where *Vars* are sung. Just as Guru Nanak kept Mardana always with him, the Singhs should keep *dhadis*



with them all the time. Thus, the *Amarnama* celebrates a few incidents of the life of Guru Gobind Singh at Nander, and it propagates the Khalsa *rahit*.<sup>6</sup>

The *Var Amritsar Ki*, composed by Darshan Bhagat in 1709 is a heroic composition on a battle fought in Ramdaspur by the Khalsa Singhs against the representatives of the Mughal government soon after the Baisakhi of 1709. The bravery of the Singhs in the face of the strength of their opponents is sought to be depicted in this *Var*. The House of Nanak, the Chak of the Guru, and the sacred tank known as *amritsar* are praised by the poet. This event appears later in the *Bansavalinama* of Kesar Singh Chhibber and the *Shahid Bilas* of Sewa Singh. However the spirit in which Darshan Bhagat depicts the event with the Khalsa as the hero is absent in the later works. The *Var Amritsar Ki* was expected to inspire the Khalsa to fight for the protection of their sacred space.<sup>7</sup>

## 2

### The *Sakhis*

Contrary to the general impression, the *sakhi* remained an important form of Sikh literature during the eighteenth century. Apart from the *B 40 Janamsakhi* and the *Gian Ratnavali*, which are better known, we have the *Parchian Patshahi Dasvin Ki*, the *Mahima Prakash Vartak* and the *Guru Kian Sakhian*, published in recent decades. All the five works are in prose. Incidentally, the *Mahima Prakash* of Sarup Das Bhalla, which is in verse, also uses the *sakhi* form for the lives of all the ten Gurus.

The published text of the *Parchian Patshahi Dasvin Ki* is based on a copy of the manuscript completed in October 1708. At the opening of the printed text the word used is *Parchi* and not *Parchian*. At the end of the text, the name of the author is given as Sewa Das Udas; he prepared this '*pothi*' in praise of the Guru (*Gur-ustat*). It is again referred to as '*Parchi*' of Guru Gobind Singh at the end; it consists of 50 *sakhis*: thirty-eight *sakhis* relate to Guru Gobind Singh, one *sakhi* each to the first eight Gurus, and four *sakhis* to Guru Tegh Bahadur.<sup>8</sup>

The names of the ten Gurus are given at the outset, followed by 13 *shaloks* in their praise. Dr. Kharak Singh and Professor Gurtej Singh, who have published an English translation with the text and a useful commentary in the form of notes, appreciate the work and underline its importance for its evidence on the Sikh doctrine and values. They also point out, however, that Sewa Das could not discard his Brahmanical values and notions completely, though he had accepted the Sikh faith. At places, he appears to project his own Udasi cult rather than Gurmat.<sup>9</sup> A close reading of the text suggests that the Udasi concerns are far stronger in the *Parchi* than even what the learned translators point out. It is doubtful, therefore, that the primary purpose of Sewa Das was to write in praise of the Gurus. Their explicit or implicit approval of the Udasi position appears to be more important for the author.<sup>10</sup>

The *Janamsakhi* known as the B-40, due to the number given to its manuscript in the British Library, is one of the dated *Janamsakhis*. It was completed in 1733, inscribed by Daya Ram Abrol, illustrated by Alam Chand Raj, and commissioned by Bhai Sangu Mal on behalf of the local *sangat*. The text, the illustrations, and an English translation of this *Janamsakhi* have been published. It is a composite work in the sense that its *sakhis* are selected from several *Janamsakhi* traditions, besides the oral tradition current in the early eighteenth century. There is a broad chronological order in the *Janamsakhi*, though each *sakhi* constitutes a separate unit. On the whole, it does not present a unified and coherent image of Guru Nanak in terms of his doctrines and ethics, and his attitude towards the contemporary systems of religious beliefs and practices. The divinity of Guru Nanak is taken for granted and reinforced. His path is new and his followers are distinct from Hindus and Muslims. Their ideal is *nam*, *dan* and *isnan* and their distinctive institution is the *dharamsal*. Guru Nanak is critical of the Brahmanical, ascetical and Islamic traditions but with a certain degree of respect for the Sufis and the Siddhs. His austerities are emphasized and his supernatural powers become the means of propagation of his

message. Though, on the whole, Guru Nanak remains close to the image that emerges from his own compositions, two features go against the spirit of his *bani*: austerities and miracles. At the same time, a remarkable importance is given to the *sangat* and the *shabad*, which suggests that the patron of this *Janamsakhi* did not belong to a sectarian group. He was evidently not a Singh, but he could be a Khalsa.<sup>11</sup> The *B-40 Janamsakhi* does not appear to project any conscious concern very strongly. This, probably, is a corollary of its composite character.

A reasonably authentic text of the *Gian Ratnavali* prepared by Professor Jasbir Singh Sabar on the basis of a considerable number of manuscripts of the early nineteenth century, has been published by Guru Nanak Dev University. Professor Sabar has assessed the views of the earlier scholars and he comes to the conclusion that by and large their study of the *Gian Ratnavali* has been rather superficial. In his assessment, Professor McLeod is somewhat close to his own understanding and Professor Hans is wide off the mark. Professor Sabar argues that Bhai Mani Singh gave an exposition of the eleventh *Var* of Bhai Gurdas, adding information received at the court of Guru Gobind Singh. Giani Surat Singh gave it the literary form with additions from the earlier *Janamsakhis* presented in his own way. This makes the *Gian Ratnavali* a new and a non-sectarian tradition. In other words, Professor Sabar does not agree with Professor McLeod about the influence of the Bala tradition and with Professor Hans on the Udasi influence.<sup>12</sup>

In Professor Sabar's view this *Janamsakhi* was compiled before 1776, probably in Amritsar. However, the main argument for this dating is the common *sakhis* with the *Mahima Prakash*, which is not very strong. The *Gian Ratnavali* combines the features of *sakhi*, *gosht*, *teeka* and *parmarth*. The primary concern of the author is to use his understanding of traditional learning, the revealed word and philosophic knowledge for projecting the new ideals and ethical principles of Guru Nanak. The work was meant to inspire the reader to

strive to know the truth and attain liberation. The author tries to recapture and convey the essential message of the Guru. One may not agree with Professor Sabar that the *Gian Ratnavali* depicts the religious and social environment of Guru Nanak but there is hardly any doubt that the author tries to place the distinctive position of Guru Nanak in the larger context of the Indian and Islamic traditions.<sup>13</sup>

The text of the *Guru Kian Sakhian* has been edited and published by the well-known Sikh scholar Piara Singh Padam on the basis of only one manuscript, partly edited by Giani Garja Singh. Written originally in Bhattakhari in 1790 by Bhai Sarup Singh Kaushish, this work was transliterated into Gurmukhi in 1868 by a descendant, Bhatt Chajju Singh of Bhadson near Thanesar. It contains 112 *sakhis* on the last five Gurus. It starts with Guru Hargobind and only four *sakhis* relate to him. Of the eight *sakhis* for Guru Har Rai, six relate actually to Ram Rai. Three *sakhis* relate to Guru Har Krishan and 15 to Guru Tegh Bahadur. Four *sakhis* relate to Dhirmal and his successors. The number of *sakhis* on Guru Gobind Singh alone is 76. He visits Khurvaddhi (Dehradun) twice to meet Ram Rai and to support his widow, Mata Punjab Kaur. The relations of the Gurus with Dhirmal and Ram Rai are presented as cordial. Though Rai Rai is patronized by Aurangzeb the emperor was so hostile to Dhir Mal that he was executed in Delhi like Guru Tegh Bahadur two years earlier. Guru Gobind Singh visits Sodhi Kanwal Nain after the battle of Chamkaur and gives him a boon. Thus, the relations with the descendants of Prithi Chand, called Minas, too are presented as cordial.<sup>14</sup>

The *Guru Kian Sakhian* is generally thought to be based on *Bhatt Vahis*. As pointed out by Piara Singh Padam, all the dates given in *Bhatt Vahis* are not necessarily correct. This is understandable because all entries made in *Bhatt Vahis* were not based on personal observation or made contemporaneously with the event. A close study of the *Guru Kian Sakhian* clearly shows that its author used other sources, both literary and oral. He seems to have seen a number of places he mentions in the text. Thus, the *Guru Kian Sakhian* is

remarkable for its empirical content in terms of dates, persons and places. Furthermore, though each *sakhi* is an independent unit, there is a large degree of logical coherence in the *sakhis* selected for inclusion. However, miracles are not ruled out. Not only Ram Rai but also Guru Gobind Singh demonstrates extra-ordinary powers so much so that the peg of wood to which his horse is tied becomes a green plant overnight. The Guru redeems not only men but also birds and beasts. Equally remarkable at the same time is the frequency with which *path*, *kirtan*, *ardas* and distribution of *karha prasad* are mentioned; five *kakars* are mentioned, though *keski* takes the place of *kesh*; quite explicitly and emphatically, 'Gurta' is passed on to 'Sri Granth Sahib' before the death of Guru Gobind Singh.<sup>15</sup>

In 1928, Bhai Vir Singh made a copy of the *Mahima Prakash Vartak* from a manuscript in the possession of Akali Kaur Singh. In 1932, Dr. Ganda Singh made a copy of the copy of Bhai Vir Singh. This later manuscript has been edited by Dr. Kulwinder Singh Bajwa and published recently. He argues that there is no internal or external evidence to support the attribution of this work to Bawa Kirpal Singh or Kirpal Das Bhalla, suggesting that further research is needed to establish its authorship. Similarly, the year 1741 as the year of its composition cannot be regarded as accurate. Dr. Bajwa argues that it can be placed between 1769 and 1776, that is, after the *Bansavalinama* of Kesar Singh Chhibber and before the *Mahima Prakash* of Sarup Das Bhalla.<sup>16</sup> Whereas Dr. Bajwa thinks that Bhalla made use of the *Vartak*, Professor Raijasbir Singh has argued that the author of the *Vartak* made use of the *Mahima Prakash* of Sarup Das Bhalla.<sup>17</sup> Neither Dr. Bajwa nor Professor Raijasbir Singh has taken notice of three *sakhis* in the *Vartak* which are taken entirely from the work of Sarup Das Bhalla in verse form. This leaves no doubt that the author of the *Vartak* borrowed these *sakhis* from Bhalla's work. A close study of the *Vartak* and *Guru Kian Sakhian* shows that the *sakhi* on Ram Rai in the former is based on the *sakhis* on Ram Rai in the latter.<sup>18</sup> This would place the *Vartak* after 1790. In the published text of



the *Vartak* it is stated that '*pothi sakhian ki*' was completed by Nihal Singh of Bhag Nagar in 1824. After this, however, there are three more entries which could have been added between 1824 and 1928. The last *sakhi* relates to the death of Guru Gobind Singh in spite of the fact that the 50<sup>th</sup> *sakhi* from the *Parchian* of Sewa Das is already given as *sakhi* 153 of the *Vartak*. The two versions of the death of Guru Gobind Singh are different. On the whole, it seems that Nihal Singh of Bhag Nagar used a copy of the *Parchian* of Sewa Das prepared by Gurdas Singh of Bhag Nagar in 1741 or earlier. The other major source he used was the *Mahima Prakash* of Sarup Das Bhalla, though the rendering in prose is not exactly faithful. Possibly he made a minor use of other sources, whether literary or oral. The Bhalla family interests are reflected in the early *sakhis* upto Guru Tegh Bahadur and the Udasi interests are reflected in the 38 *sakhis* of Guru Gobind Singh taken from the *Parchian*. Thus, the *Vartak* as a whole does not present any fresh or significant evidence for the eighteenth century.

### 3

#### **The *Gurbilases***

An autobiographical narrative in verse, entitled *Sarab Kal Ki Benati*, was completed around 1698 to head the compositions included in the *Bachittar Natak Granth*. It has come to be known as the *Bachittar Natak*, now included in the *Dasam Granth*. It goes into mythical past to trace the origins of the Bedis and the Sodhis and to project the dispensation of Guru Nanak as the only dispensation meant for the Kaliyuga. Guru Gobind Singh was sent into the world by the Supreme Being to ensure that the followers of Guru Nanak and his successors become the instrument of destroying the enemies of this dispensation in order to promote its propagation. The events of Guru Gobind Singh's life from his birth to the mid-1690s reveal that he was under the protection of the Supreme Being who ensured his success in battles against his opponents. The supporters of Guru Gobind Singh remain safe and those who leave his side come to grief. The *Bachittar Natak*



becomes in a sense an open declaration of Guru Gobind Singh's mission on the eve of instituting the Khalsa.<sup>19</sup>

Begun in 1701 and completed soon after the death of Guru Gobind Singh in October 1708 by the court poet Sainapat, the *Sri Gur Sobha* is in a way an extension of the *Bachittar Natak*. A narrative (*katha*) of the events (*sakhi*) of Guru Gobind Singh's life, the *Sri Gur Sobha* was written in his praise (*sobha*, *upma*) to highlight his wondrous deeds (*chalitar*, *kautak*). His purpose was to protect the *sants* and to destroy their enemies. For this, he created the pure (*nirmal*) Panth of the Khalsa, made manifest to be ever ascendant in the world. The chronological order in which the events are presented is indicated, not by actual dates or years but by mentioning the number of days, months or years between two events. Both before and after the institution of the Khalsa the major events of the Guru's life are battles which depict the valour and martial prowess of Guru Gobind Singh and his warriors. However, the core event of his life is the creation of the Khalsa who are equated with 'Singhs' through a transition from 'Sikh' to 'Khalsa Sikh', 'Khalsa Singh' and 'Singh'. The Sikh *sangat* is transformed into the Khalsa Panth as the source of liberation. The Khalsa are as much the subject of the *Sri Gur Sobha* as Guru Gobind Singh. They become his heirs as the Guru, like the *Granth Sahib*. Their ultimate triumph as a sovereign entity is built into their creation with divine sanction. The *Sri Gur Sobha* was meant to inspire the reader and the listener with firm faith in the Khalsa as the instrument of universal redemption.<sup>20</sup>

Koer Singh's *Gurbilas Patshahi 10* covers the same ground as the *Bachittar Natak* and the *Sri Gur Sobha*, together. Indeed, 'gurbilas' bears the same connotation as 'gursobha'. Apart from the literary sources like the *Bachittar Natak* and the *Sri Gur Sobha*, Koer Singh used the oral evidence provided by Bhai Mani Singh who was an eyewitness to many events in the life of Guru Gobind Singh. However, a few of the dates given for events are incorrect. The episode of the Goddess is given in a separate chapter. Guru Gobind Singh is

projected not as a religious leader so much as a hero fighting against the Turks in a struggle for freedom. The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur is seen as the means of taking over rulership from the Turks who are explicitly stated to be the 'enemy' in the *Gurbilas*. Their destruction is necessary for establishing 'Khalsa Raj' at Delhi. The Guru remains present among the Khalsa to ensure their ultimate triumph. By hearing *katha* of the *Gurbilas* all one's desires could be fulfilled, including the attainment of Raj. Written in 1751, Koer Singh's *Gurbilas Patshahi 10* could inspire people to support the Khalsa in their struggle for sovereign power.<sup>21</sup>

Sukha Singh's *Gurbilas Patshahi 10*, written in 1797 at Anandpur, follows the pattern of Koer Singh and remains rather close to it in many ways. Three chapters are given to the episode of the Goddess. Like Koer Singh, he places the episode after the battle of Nadaun and before the institution of the Khalsa. Writing at a time when Sikh rule was firmly established Sukha Singh does not talk of the struggle for political power, a theme that was all important for Koer Singh. Sukha Singh's *Gurbilas* is composed in love (*prem*) and loving devotion (*bhagti-bhao*). He who reads it and listens to it, all his hopes are fulfilled. It is a work of piety meant to generate piety. Three places are specifically sanctified by Guru Gobind Singh as sacred: Patna, where he was born; Anandpur, where he administered baptism of the double-edged sword to the five Sikhs; and Nander, where he assumed his eternal form.<sup>22</sup>

Two other works appeared between the works of Koer Singh and Sukha Singh: the *Bansavalinama* of Kesar Singh and the *Mahima Prakash* of Sarup Das Bhalla. Generally placed in the category of *Gurbilas*, these two works are different from the works of Sainapat, Koer Singh and Sukha Singh. The authors of the *Bansavalinama* and the *Mahima Prakash* write about all the ten Gurus, reflecting the increasing concern of Sikhs in the eighteenth century with the ten personal Gurus as a single entity before their office passes on to the *Adi Granth* and the entire Khalsa. The interest of Kesar Singh and

Sarup Das is not confined to the ten Gurus. Chhibber's work has 14 chapters, one each on the ten Gurus, one on Banda Sahib, one on Jit Singh, one on Mata Sahib Devi, and one on the contemporary Sikhs. In his own way, Chhibber covers the whole of Sikh history from the time of Guru Nanak to his own. Though he underlines that Guruship was vested in the *Adi Granth*, he advocates that the *Granth* of Guru Gobind Singh may also be regarded as the Guru, and he talks of the Guruship of Banda Sahib, Jit Singh and Mata Sahib Devi. Sarup Das Bhalla's work consists of *sakhis* of all the Gurus, with the maximum number for Guru Nanak, followed by Guru Gobind Singh. A few *sakhis* related to Guru Gobind Singh are in prose. Unlike Chhibber who admires Banda for taking revenge on the Muslim oppressors of the Guru and his Sikhs, Sarup Das Bhalla has little appreciation for Banda because he turned away from the Guru. Both Chhibber and Bhalla are aware of the establishment of Sikh rule and both try to highlight the close association of their ancestors with the Gurus. Kesar Singh's ancestors had served the Gurus as Diwans, and Sarup Das was actually a descendant of Guru Amar Das. Whereas Kesar Singh Chhibber tends to Brahmanize the Sikh tradition in his presentation of the Gurus, Sarup Das tends to maximize the role of the Bhallas in the affairs of the Sikh Panth and to minimize the tensions amongst the descendants of the Gurus. Both the writers appear to write for seeking patronage through their works which, consequently, appear to lack any kind of unity or cohesion.<sup>23</sup>

#### 4

#### **The *Rahitnamas***

The word *rahit* occurs in the compositions of Guru Nanak for a way of life that accords well with one's professed beliefs and values. His successors too were seriously concerned with the actual conduct of life in accordance with their ethical values. Certain statements about *rahit* are also attributed to them. However, formal works on *rahit*, now known as *Rahitnamas*, made their appearance in the time of Guru Gobind Singh. In fact, after a phase of scholarly scepticism, the serious

scholars of the Sikh tradition, like Professor J.S. Grewal and Professor Gurinder Singh Mann, are inclined to place a number of *Rahitnamas* in the time of Guru Gobind Singh. Consequently, the close link between the production of *Rahitnamas* and the institution of the Khalsa gets highlighted. However, all the early *Rahitnamas* are not placed after the institution of the Khalsa. There has been a consensus among the scholars to place the *Prashan-Uttar* of Bhai Nand Lal in 1695. Professor Mann places the *Rahitnama* of Prahlaad Singh too before the institution of the Khalsa. The introductory and *rahit* parts of the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh is accepted as composed in 1700, that is, soon after the institution of the Khalsa. The narratives and the *tankhah* part were appended to this *Rahitnama*, by Gurbakhsh Singh Chhibber, son of Dharam Chand who was the Diwan of Guru Gobind Singh, probably in the 1740s when the *Rahitnama* too gets attributed to Chaupa Singh Chhibber who was a senior collateral of Diwan Dharam Chand. The most comprehensive *Rahitnama*, known as the *Prem Sumarag*, was composed in the time of Guru Gobind Singh, like the short *Rahitnamas* known as the *Tankhahnama* and the *Sakhi Rahit*, both associated with Bhai Nand Lal. Thus, the largest *Rahitnama*, four short *Rahitnamas*, and a large part of the second largest *Rahitnama* can be placed in the years from 1694 to 1708.<sup>24</sup>

Only two *Rahitnamas* are placed in the time of Sikh rule, the *Rahitnamas* of Bhai Desa Singh and Bhai Daya Singh. Both of these are longer than the short *Rahitnamas* of the time of Guru Gobind Singh, but much shorter than the two largest *Rahitnamas*. These two *Rahitnamas* are important not simply because of their contents but also because they enable us to compare the concerns of the writers of these two phases separated by time and a major change in the historical situation. The common ground between them, therefore, becomes very important.

The earliest *Rahitnama* is also the shortest. It opens with a statement of Guru Gobind Singh on how a Sikh of the Guru should observe his daily worship, both individually and in congregation. Since

he is expected to see the Guru, Bhai Nand Lal requests that this reference to the Guru may be clarified. Guru Gobind Singh refers to three forms of the Guru: one is beyond attributes and therefore, can never be known; another in the *Granth ji*, the visible body of the Guru, the third is the Sikh who is nurtured on Gurbani and lives in accordance with its principles to attain liberation. Thus, the Guru is *nirgun*, *Guru-shabad*, and *sargun*. The foremost obligation of the Sikh is service (*seva*). We can see that the *Prashan-Uttar* is concerned with the basic beliefs, the daily worship, and the ideal of service.<sup>25</sup>

The published *Rahitnama* of Bhai Prahlad Singh is dated Magh Vadi 5, Sambat 1752 (AD 1695), which makes it only a little later than the *Uttar-Prashan*. It refers to the Guru sitting in Abchnagar, which is held against the authenticity of the date because Abchnagar is assumed to be used for Nander. However, the term could be used for Anandpur (and later given to Nander). Also, this *Rahitnama* refers to 'Khalsa' as the manifest body of the Guru, and to the Granth as the Guru. The only difference between the *Uttar-Prashan* and this *Rahitnama* on the point of Guruship is that the latter uses the term 'Khalsa' and not 'Sikh'. However, the term 'Khalsa' occurs even in the *hukamnamas* of Guru Hargobind and Guru Tegh Bahadur. There is also the injunction that a Sikh should place no trust in a Turk, and the injunction that the Sikhs should have no association with the Mina, the Masandia, the *mona* and the *kuri-mar*, which appear to be a little too early for 1695. Possibly, the *Rahitnama* was modified later but not necessarily after the time of Guru Gobind Singh. The importance of the service of the Sikhs is emphasized and boundaries are drawn between Sikh beliefs and practices and the Brahmanical, ascetical and Islamic traditions.<sup>26</sup>

In the *Sakhi Rahit*, the terms Khalsa and Sikh are used for the same entity but there is clear indication that the author is thinking of Keshdhari Singhs. To use the razor and to cut the beard is as heinous as incest. A Khalsa stands distinguished in a crowd of Hindus and Musalmans due to his *kesh* and flowing beard. This *Rahitnama* is



remarkable for its emphatic rejection of all Brahmanical rites and rituals. The recitation of the *Anand* and the performance of the *ardas* are the common substitutes for all rites and ceremonies. There is great emphasis on strictly Sikh beliefs and there is strong injunction against having anything to do with the representatives and institutions of the contemporary systems of religious beliefs and practices whether Brahmanical, ascetical or Islamic. The service of the hungry and the naked is highly commendable. The fellow Sikhs are raised to the status of the Guru in terms of importance given to them.<sup>27</sup>

The *Tankhahnama*, also called *Nasihatinama* in its earliest known copy, refers to the question by Bhai Nand Lal as to what was and what was not commendable for a Sikh. The response of Guru Gobind Singh is much longer now and it brings in detail. The daily individual and congregational worship in the *sangat* brings in the distribution of *karha prasad* and how it was to be prepared to ensure grace, and also how a Sikh was to conduct himself in relation to the men and women coming to the *sangat*. Other injunctions relate to dress, food and intoxicants, *dasvandh*, *golak* and *bhet*, and attitude towards women in general and towards prostitutes in particular. The *Rahitnama* is addressed to the Sikh and the Khalsa as one entity. Not to injure human beings (*khalak*) is the basic principle for all. However, the Khalsa has to fight every day, to ride the horse, and to attack the *mle'chh*. Guru Gobind Singh says that he would establish his own rule (*raj*), and shall conquer all quarters of the world. The *Rahitnama* ends with the well known couplet of the Sikh anthem on '*raj karega khalsa*'. It is obligatory for the Khalsa to bear arms, to fight, to conquer, and to establish Khalsa Raj.<sup>28</sup>

In the *Prem Sumarag*, God tells Guru Gobind Singh what is ordained for the future. This form enables the author to present a kind of prevision in which Khalsa praxis and Sikh ideology are used to project the picture of an ideal Khalsa order and an ideal Sikh state. The injunctions of *rahit* relate to daily worship in the home and in the *sangat*, the religious beliefs of the Khalsa, their practices, their ethics,



and their political stance. A separate chapter is given to initiation through baptism of the double edged sword for both men and women. The obligations of the Khalsa are emphasized. They should regard *shabad-bani* as the Guru, and see the Guru in the Khalsa. The rites related to birth, marriage and death, both for men and women, are given in detail. The widow is allowed to re-marry in certain situations. The ideal of equality is sought to be reconciled to the social prejudices of the people in matters of matrimony and commensality. The head of Sikh state is the Maharaja who exercises his power for dispensing impartial justice and ensuring the welfare of the subject people, and gives great importance to Gurmukhi and Sikh education. The supreme purpose of the life of the Khalsa Singh is liberation.<sup>29</sup>

In the prologue of the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh, the *mukte* Gurmukhs, who give instruction to the Sikhs visiting Anandpur, insist on rejection of the traditional patterns of matrimony and the ceremony of marriage. This is brought to the notice of Guru Gobind Singh who orders the *mukte* Singhs to prepare a manual of *rahit* in accordance with the teaching of the *Granth Sahib*. They prepare a manual in six days and take it to the Guru who listens to a part of it and approves of it. The *rahit* part in the present text ends with the statement that this *rahit* has been prepared for the Sikhs by the Guru's order and with the consent of the Sikhs. In addition to this *rahit*, the Sikhs could adopt 'Gurmat-rahit' in consultation with one another. There are 154 injunctions in the *rahit*, which make it rather comprehensive in scope. The *Granth Sahib*, which is regarded as the Guru, is quoted at many places. A lot of importance is given to the *dharamsal* and its maintenance. The Khalsa consist of both Keshdhari Singhs and the Sahajdhari Sikhs. The sanctity of *kesh* and respect for the sword are emphasized. The attitude of a Sikh towards other Sikhs, and their attitude towards non-Sikhs, figures prominently in the *rahit*. The five excommunicated groups are mentioned. The injunctions never to be infringed by any Sikh are against female infanticide, *bhaddan* and the use of tobacco. The Brahman Sikh is to be given a preferential

treatment. The ideal of *varnashrama* is upheld for commensality and connubium. On this point, this *Rahitnama* embodies a far more conservative view than the other *Rahitnamas*.<sup>30</sup>

In the *tankhah* part, Guru Gobind Singh declares in his lifetime that 'the *sarbat sangat* in my Khalsa, and the Khalsa is the Guru'. To bear arms, to fight, and to establish their ruler (*raj*) is the duty of the Khalsa. The last injunction in this part reiterates Guru Gobind Singh's declaration that 'I am present in the *sarbat*; regard the *sarbat Sikh sangat* as the Guru'. There are over 280 injunctions on acts of *kurahit* which make Sikh men and Sikh women liable to penance. Many of these injunctions are common with those of the *rahit* part but others mention new situations introducing greater detail. Some preference is shown for the Keshdhari Singh over the Sahajdhari Sikh. *Langar* and *karha prasad* figure prominently in the *tankha* part. Respect for *shahidganj* is enjoined. Specific injunctions for Sikh women are followed by the statement that the Guru's instruction is meant for both men and women.<sup>31</sup>

The narrative part of the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh makes Chaupa Singh the narrator and, therefore the author of the *Rahitnama*. The episode of the Goddess is introduced for instituting the Khalsa. The concept of four categories of Sikhs (*didari*, *mukte*, *murid* and *mayiki*) is brought in to create a room for sin in the time of Sikh rule. Guru Gobind Singh's *savvayas* in praise of the Sikhs are presented as verses in praise of the Brahmans who are regarded as superior to the Khatris. The opposition to the Gurus from the very beginning, both internal and external, is narrated at some length. The role of Dharam Chand as the *Diwan* of Guru Gobind Singh is highlighted. Towards the end, Chaupa Singh is made the writer of the original document on the basis of which Gurbakhsh Singh Chhibber, son of Dharam Chand, prepares the present '*chiththa* of *Rahitnama*'.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the narrative serves two additional purposes: reconciliation of Brahmanical elements to the Khalsa tradition and appropriation of the *Rahitnama* by the Chhibber Brahmans.

Bhai Desa Singh himself narrates that he wrote his *Rahitnama* after having lived in the Muraliwala Bunga in Amritsar in the time of Jassa Singh. He left the place in old age, went to Patna, and had the *darshan* of Harmandar. He stayed there for twenty days and moved on. On the way, one day he felt tired and went to sleep. Guru Gobind Singh gives his *darshan* in a dream in all his regal majesty, and tells him that he had composed the *Jaap*, the *Akal Ustat*, the *Bachittar Natak*, the *Chaubis Avtar*, the *Charitra Pakhyan* and the *Shabad Hazare*. The Guru then spoke about the *rahit* of the Khalsa, which was not inscribed. He told Desa Singh to write the *rahit*. When he expressed his inability to perform such a difficult task, the Guru assured Desa Singh that he would guide him. That was how Desa Singh wrote the *Rahitnama*. In his own way, thus, he invokes the authority of Guru Gobind Singh though much later than the time of Guru Gobind Singh.<sup>33</sup>

Bhai Desa Singh's *Rahitnama* contains Guru Gobind Singh's response to Bhai Nand Lal's question about *rahit*. First of all, a Sikh should take *pahul* from five Singhs who should instruct him in the *rahit* of Singhs. It consisted of three things: appropriation of the *bani*, no association with the killers of infant daughters and the like, and no indulgence in slander or misappropriation. In the detailed *rahit* that follows we can notice a few significant statements. Actual manual work is referred to for earnest livelihood. A Singh should protect the cow and the Brahman. He should visit the holy places like Anandpur, Amritsar, Patna and Abchnagar. He should serve the Khalsa who represent the Guru's form and never a Turk. He should confine matrimonial ties to his own *varna*. He should commit selected portions of 'the bani of both the Granths' to memory. A Sikh ruler should patronize Sikhs and help them; he should employ the Singhs in his service. A Singh should look upon the Khalsa as the Guru and have proper respect. He should encourage men of all the four *varnas* to become Singhs, and even hold out temptation if necessary. He should not love his family more than the Guru. Wealth and power are the gift of the Guru: he should never

feel proud. He should never take bribe to do justice and he should never give false witness. Much of the *Rahitnama* reiterates the injunctions we find in the earlier *Rahitnamas*. The importance of the Khalsa *rahit*, *dharamsal*, *langar* and *karha prasad* is underlined. The Brahmanical rites and ceremonies are rejected.<sup>34</sup>

The *Rahitnama* associated with Bhai Daya Singh refers to Daya Singh's request to Guru Gobind Singh for stating a '*rahitnama*' (not *rahit*) so that by listening to it one may attain liberation. The response given by the Guru is the *Rahitnama* itself. When the Goddess (*devi*) appeared, all the gods came to contribute one thing or the other for the institution of the Khalsa. Indar (Indra), for example, brought sweets and Yamraj brought the vessel of iron; Kalji gave the sword of steel, Chandi the *kesh*, and Hanuman the *kachh*. For *karha prasad* of three ingredients in equal quantities (*tribhav*), Brahma gave *ghee*, Vishnu gave sugar, and Mahadev gave fine flour (*maida*). This contribution from mythical entities was combined with Guru Nanak's *mantar* of '*1 onkar satnam*' and his *Japuji* for liberation, the *Anand* of Guru Amar Das for peaceful disposition, and the *chaupai* and *savvayyas* of Guru Gobind Singh for the firm intention to fight. The qualities of Sukdev, Durbasa, Krishan, Vashisht, Bisvamittar, Bias, Kapil, Jagnavalik, Jaimini and Patanjali are also brought together in Guru Gobind Singh. All this may suggest infiltration of Brahmanical elements.<sup>35</sup>

However, there is hardly anything else in the *Rahitnama* to indicate Brahmanical influence. Most of the injunctions come from the earlier *Rahitnamas*. There is greater emphasis on some of the familiar injunctions. For example, 'whosoever takes *amrit* from amongst the four *varnas* represents my form (*sarup*)' says Guru Gobind Singh. In his eyes, his own faith is like Sumer Mountain and that of another, like a grain of mustard. 'Where there is the Granth, there is the door of liberation'. 'The body of the Guru-Khalsa is the manifest form of God'. 'Regard the *Granth* and the Panth as the Guru'. One cannot become pure without bathing at Amritsar; one cannot attain *sikhkhi* without having *darshan* of Kesgarh. By bathing at Muktsar one attains

liberation. A Sikh should celebrate Baisakhi and Diwali at Amritsar, Hola at Anandpur and should go to Abchnagar for the liberation of his whole family.<sup>36</sup>

## 5

### The *Ustat*

One of the major developments in the history of the Sikhs during the eighteenth century was the emergence of the town of Ramdaspur as the city of Amritsar. Evidently, the name of the sacred tank is transferred to the city. The Harmandir, in the midst of the tank, was the core of the sacred space. The sacred tank figures prominently in the *Bansavalinama* as 'Ramdas-sar' or '*amritsar*'; Kesar Singh Chhibber looks upon this sacred space or the supreme place of pilgrimage for the Sikhs.<sup>37</sup> Sarup Das Bhalla praises 'Sri Amritsar' as unique in all the three worlds.<sup>38</sup>

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century began to appear independent works on the subject of the sacred tank. Kavi Kankan in his *Das Gur Katha*, which was written in praise of the ten Gurus from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh, refers to Ramdaspur as superior to 'Indarpuri', 'Shivpuri' and (the golden) 'Lanka'; he praises the *amrit sarovar* as a unique *tirath* in the world. Kavi Sant Das wrote his *Amritsar Sarovar Ustat* to bring in mythology in order to exalt *amritsar* above all other sacred places during the Kaliyuga. Known by different names, it was a supreme *tirath* in the earlier *yugas* too. The desecration of *amritsar* by Ahmad Shah Abdali induces the poet to remark that whoever shows disrespect to this place incurs the curse of all the gods. The *Granth Sahib* (installed in the Harmandir) is the essence of all the four Vedas, the eight *Shastras* and the eighteen *Puranas*.<sup>39</sup> The beginning of *ustat* of the sacred place synchronizes with the beginning of the work of reconstruction and embellishment under Sikh rule.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, Kavi Saundha wrote his *Ustat Sri Amritsar Ji Ki* to pay his homage to this sacred place. There is no pool like *amritsar* in the three worlds; the Harmandir in its



midst is like the house of Ram; it is studded with priceless pearls, gems and diamonds. The Khalsa obtained rulership by bathing in *amritsar*. Whosoever bathes here finds all his wishes fulfilled. The people of Rum, Sham, Arabia and Ajam would bow before it and none would remain obdurate in the East or the West, in the North or the South. With the centrality of Amritsar under Sikh rule emerges a new literary form in praise of the supreme centre of Sikh pilgrimage.<sup>41</sup>

We may take notice of the *Shahid Bilas*, written by Sewa Singh, the younger brother of Bhai Sarup Singh Kaushish. They were descendants of Bhatt Bhikha whose *savvayyas* are included in the *Granth Sahib*. The *Shahid Bilas* relates to the life of the martyr Bhai Mani Singh. Based on a number of sources, including *Bhatt Vahis*, it was written in Bhattakhari in the early nineteenth century and transliterated into Gurmukhi later by Bhatt Chhajju Singh of Bhadson. Born in 1644, Bhai Mani Singh was associated with Guru Tegh Bahadur before he acquired importance as a Sikh of Guru Gobind Singh. For a long time he was associated with Ramdaspur, looking after the affairs of the Khalsa as a custodian of the Harmandir and the Akal Takht. He used to preach the Sikh doctrine and to propagate the Khalsa *rahit*. The political struggle of the Keshdhari Singhs against the Mughals revolved around Ramdaspur where Bhai Mani Singh was the kingpin. He died as a martyr at Lahore in 1734 when Zakariya Khan, the Mughal governor, was keen to suppress the Singhs as a threat to his power. Bhai Mani Singh is projected as a staunch Sikh who died for the faith in the interest of others as an embodiment of *par-upkar*. A number of other eminent Singh also became martyrs on this occasion.<sup>42</sup>

Along with the martyrs, the Sikhs of the earlier Gurus were also admired. The work known as *Sikhan Di Bhagat Mala* <sup>43</sup> is an elaborate version of the eleventh *Var* of Bhai Gurdas in which he gives the names of the eminent Sikhs of Guru Nanak and his five successors. The *Bhagat Mala* relates to the lives of 21 Sikhs of Guru Nanak, 15 Sikhs of Guru Angad, 11 Sikhs of Guru Amar Das, 20 Sikhs of Guru



Ram Das, 209 Sikhs of Guru Arjan, and 37 Sikhs of Guru Hargobind. They are located in the former Mughal province of Lahore and at many other places outside that province, like Sirhind, Thanesar, Delhi, Agra, Lucknow, Benares, Patna and Burhampur and in the provinces of Gurjarat and Kashmir. The *sangats* of Dalla, Sabharwal and Sultanpur are collectively mentioned. The work informally falls into two parts: exposition of Gurmat and the *sakhis* of the Sikhs of the first six Gurus. The lives of the Sikhs on the whole, are meant to expound the values and principles of Gurmat reflected in the lives of the Sikhs. Thus, the two parts are integrated into what may be regarded essentially as exposition of Gurmat.

## 6

### In Retrospect

Despite the differences of detail, and some contradictory statements, the works in all the forms collectively reveal serious concern with the ten Gurus, especially Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. The Khalsa and the *rahit* of the Khalsa were almost equally important. The Sikh sacred space known as *amritsar* emerged as the most sanctified centre. Next in importance were the Sikh martyrs and eminent Sikhs of the earlier Gurus. Much of this literature was produced to influence and inform Sikh beliefs and attitudes and to inspire them with Sikh ideology. In a sense, the bulk of this literature was quasi religious in character and purpose. Nevertheless, we can see the growing of historical consciousness emerging in this literature.

### NOTES

1. Sant Singh Sekhon and Kartar Singh Duggal, *A History of Punjabi Literature*, New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1992, pp. 98-100.
2. For received wisdom on the subject, see Appendix 6, on 'Approaches to Sikh Literature of the Eighteenth Century'.
3. Sekhon and Duggal point out that ballads or *vars* were next to the stories of love as significant works of medieval Punjabi poetry. They refer to the popularity of the Vars of Dulla Bhatti

and Jaimal Fatta. The *Var* of Nadir Shah related to his invasion of India in the first half of the eighteenth century. The *Var* of Hakikat Rai pertained to the time of Zakariya Khan. The *Chaththiyan-di-Var* described the battles between the Chaththa Sardars and Maha Singh Sukarchakia. The tradition continued into the early nineteenth century. *A History of Punjabi Literature*, pp. 91-7.

4. *Var Sri Bhagauti Ki (Chandi di Var)*, (Punjabi), ed. Kala Singh Bedi, New Delhi: Punjab Book Store, 1965.
5. Gurdas Singh, *Var 41* (Punjabi), in *Varan Bhai Gurdas* ed. Giani Hazara Singh, Amritsar: Khalsa Samachar, 1962, 7th edn.
6. Nathmal, *Amarnama* (Persian), tr. and ed. Ganda Singh, Amritsar: Sikh History Society, 1953.
7. Darshan Bhagat, *Amritsar di Var* (Punjabi), in Sarwan Singh, 'Amritsar in Medieval Panjabi Literature: An Historical Analysis', Ph.D Thesis, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 1994, pp. 107-20.
8. Sewadas, *Parchian*, tr. and ed. Kharak Singh and Gurtej Singh, Chandigarh: Institute of Sikh Studies, 1995, pp. 2, 162. The title to this work is *Parchian Sewa Das*.
9. Ibid., pp. 3-7.
10. An analysis of *Parchian Patshahian Dasvin Ki* was seen in typescript through the kind courtesy of Professor J.S. Grewal.
11. For the text see, *Janamsakhi Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji* (Punjabi), ed. Piar Singh, Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1989, rpt. For translation of this work see, *The B40 Janam-Sakhi*, tr. W.H. McLeod, Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1980. For a detailed analysis of this *Janamsakhi*, see, J.S. Grewal, 'The B40 *Janamsakhi*', in *Lectures on History, Society And Culture of the Punjab*, Patiala: Punjabi University, 2007, pp. 167-217.
12. *Gian Ratnavali: Janamsakhi Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji* (Punjabi), ed. Jasbir Singh Sabar, Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1993, pp. 44-51.

13. Ibid., pp. 61-89.
14. Bhai Swaroop Singh Kaushish, *Guru Kian Sakhian*, ed. Piara Singh Padam, Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 1999, rpt., *Sakhi* nos. 19, 34-6, 41-2, 51, pp. 66-7, 86-92, 95-7, 109-10.
15. Ibid., *Sakhi* 112, p. 200.
16. *Mahima Parkash Vartak*, ed. Kulwinder Singh Bajwa, Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 2004, pp. 13, 16-19.
17. *Guru Amardas: Srot Pustak*, ed. Raijasbir Singh, Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1986, pp. 438-40.
18. A masterly analysis of the *Mahima Prakash Vartak* was seen in typescript through the kind courtesy of Professor J.S. Grewal.
19. *Bachittar Natak*, in *Sri Dasam Granth Sahib*, ed. Ratan Singh Jaggi and Gursharan Kaur Jaggi, New Delhi: Gobind Sadan, vol. 1, pp. 104-91. For an analysis of this work, see J.S. Grewal, 'Bachittar Natak: Proclamation of a Mission', in *Sikh Ideology, Polity and Social Order: From Guru Nanak to Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2007, rev. and enlarged edn., pp. 92-5. See also, Surjit Hans, *A Reconstruction of Sikh History from Sikh Literature*, Patiala: Madaan Publications, 2005, rpt., pp. 212-17.
20. Sainapat, *Sri Gur Sobha*, ed. Ganda Singh, Patiala: Punjabi University 1967. Also, Sainapat, *Shri Guru Sobha*, ed. Shamsheer Singh Ashok, Amritsar: Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, 1967. For analysis of this work see J.S. Grewal, 'Gursobha: In Praise of the Khalsa', *Sikh Ideology, Polity and Social Order*, Manohar: New Delhi, 2007, pp. 107-10. See also, Surjit Hans, *A Reconstruction of Sikh History from Sikh Literature*, pp. 227-32.
21. Koer Singh, *Gurbilas Patshahi 10*, ed. Shamsheer Singh Ashok, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1968. For an analysis of this work, see Hans, *A Reconstruction of Sikh History from Sikh Literature*, pp. 247-50. Madanjit Kaur, 'Koer Singh's, Gurbilas Patshahi 10: An Eighteenth Century Sikh Literature', in *Recent Researches in*

- Sikhism*, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1992, pp. 161-72. Gurtej Singh, 'Compromising the Khalsa Tradition: Koer Singh's Gurbilas', in *The Khalsa: Sikh and Non-Sikh Perspectives*, ed. J.S. Grewal, New Delhi: Manohar, 2004, pp. 47-58.
22. Sukha Singh, *Gurbilas Patshahi 10*, ed. Gursharan Kaur Jaggi, Patiala: Punjab Languages Department, 1989. See also, Hans, *A Reconstruction of Sikh History from Sikh Literature*, pp. 232-34.
  23. Kesar Singh Chhibber, *Bansavalinama Dasan Patshahian Ka*, ed. Ratan Singh Jaggi, (*Parkh*, vol. II), Chandigarh: Panjab University, 1972. See also, J.S. Grewal, 'Chhibber's *Bansavalinama*, *Lectures on History, Society and Culture of the Punjab*, Patiala: Punjabi University, 2007, pp. 218-46. See also, Sarup Das Bhalla, *Mahima Prakash*, ed. Gobind Singh Lamba and Khazan Singh, Patiala: Punjab Languages Department, 1971.
  24. For dating of the *Sakhi Rahit Patshahi 10*, the *Chaupa Singh Rahitnama* and the *Prem Sumarag*, see J.S. Grewal, 'The Two Early Rahitnamas', in *History, Literature and Identity: Four Centuries of Sikh Tradition*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press (forthcoming). See also, Professor Grewal's 'The *Prem Sumarag*: A Sant Khalsa Vision of Sikh Panth', in *The Sikhs: Ideology, Institutions and Identity*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 181-2. See also, Gurinder Singh Mann, 'Sources for the Study of Guru Gobind Singh's Life and Times', *Journal of Punjab Studies* (Special Issue on Guru Gobind Singh), vol., 15, nos. 1-2, (Spring-Fall 2008), pp. 249-51.
  25. *Prashan-Uttar*, in *Bhai Nand Lal Granthavali*, ed. Ganda Singh, Malacca (Malaysia): Sant Sohan Singh, 1968, pp. 191-3.
  26. *Bhai Prahlad Singh Rahitnama*, in *Rahitname*, ed. Piara Singh Padam, Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 1995, 7<sup>th</sup> impression, pp. 65-7.

27. *Sakhi Rahit Patshahi 10*, in *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*, tr. and ed. W. H. McLeod, Dunedin, New Zealand: University of Otago Press, 1987, pp. 133-8.
28. *Tankhahnama*, in *Bhai Nand Lal Granthavali*. For a detailed analysis see, Karamjit K. Malhotra, 'The Earliest Manual on the Sikh Way of Life', in *Five Centuries of Sikh Tradition: Ideology, Society, Politics and Culture* (Essays for Indu Banga), New Delhi: Manohar, 2005, pp. 55-81.
29. *Prem Sumarag Arthat Khalsai Jivan Jach*, ed. Randhir Singh, Jalandhar: New Book Company 1965, rpt.
30. For the prologue see, *Rahitnama Hazuri, Bhai Chaupa Singh Chhibber*, in *Rahitnamme*, edited by Padam, pp. 77-8. For the text of the *rahit* portion, see *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*, translated and edited by W.H. McLeod, pp. 57-78.
31. For the *tankhah* part, see *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*, pp. 97-116.
32. This version containing the narravive part was composed later on. For the narrative part, see *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*, pp. 79-97.
33. *Bhai Desa Singh Rahitnama*, in *Rahitname*, pp. 136-7.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 128-36.
35. *Bhai Daya Singh Rahitnama*, in *Rahitname*, ed. Padam, p. 68.
36. *Ibid.*, pp. 69-76.
37. Chhibber, *Bansavalinama*, pp. 192-6.
38. Bhalla, *Mahima Prakash*, vol. II, p. 321.
39. For the text of this work, See, Sarwan Singh, 'Sant Das Chhibber, *Ustat Sri Amritsar Ji Ki*', M.Phill Dissertation, Amritsar, 1988, pp. 46-97.
40. Kankan Kavi, *Das Gur Katha*, in Sarwan Singh, 'Amritsar in Medieval Punjabi Literature: An Historical Analysis', Ph.D. Thesis, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 1994, p. 208.
41. Kavi Saundha, *Ustat Sri Amritsar Ji Ki (Tirth Ustat)*, in Sarwan Singh, 'Amritsar in Medieval Punjabi Literature', pp. 617-63.

42. Sewa Singh, *Shahid Bilas* (Bhai Mani Singh), ed. Giani Garja Singh, Ludhiana: Punjabi Sahit Academy, 1961.
43. *Sikhan di Bhagat Mala*, Amritsar: Khalsa Samachar, 1955.



## Chapter IX

### PAINTING AND ARCHITECTURE

Unlike Sikh literature of the eighteenth century, painting and architecture related to Sikhs did not receive much attention from scholars, partly due to the paucity of materials and partly due to lack of interest. In recent decades, however, a number of scholars have dug up new materials and written on some aspects of the Sikh arts and their patronage. The picture is far from being complete but it is possible to form some idea of the tradition of painting and architecture among the Sikhs on the basis of the work done by a number of scholars.

A number of books related to Sikh painting have been published in recent years. The paintings reproduced in these works come mostly from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A few of these, however, refer to some eighteenth century paintings related to Sikh themes: illustrations in *Janamsakhis*, illuminations in the Sikh scriptural manuscripts, and portraits of Sikh chiefs.<sup>1</sup> The whole set of illustrations in the *B40 Janamsakhi* has been published. A more recent publication shows that evidence on the early Sikh art is likely to increase with more field work in search of relevant materials.<sup>2</sup>

#### 1

#### ***Janamsakhi* Illustrations and Scriptural Illuminations**

Professor B.N. Goswamy has observed that a very uneven view has been taken of painting in the Punjab. It is believed to be too derivative to have a clear identity of its own. The thinking on the subject has moved within certain grooves, with fixed notions of sources and influence, the quantum of work done, the levels at which it was patronized, and the range of themes or the period which it covered. Professor Goswamy goes on to suggest that these grooves of thought are rather narrow and some of the notions are rooted more in ignorance or prejudice than in fact. There was little doubt that painting in the Punjab went back to the sixteenth century when illustrated manuscripts were being produced, and painters drawn from the region

were working in the imperial ateliers. William Finch, who was in Lahore in 1611, saw a great deal of painting and describes some of the murals in the royal quarters of Jahangir. In the first half of the eighteenth century, paintings in the late Mughal style covered Punjabi themes, like Heer and Puran Bhagat, among others. There are portraits of Sikh Gurus in the late-Mughal style, scattered in different collections, which were done in the Punjab plains. Then, a great Pahari painter, Nain Sukh, did the portraits of Mir Mannu and Adina Beg Khan. The family of painters to which he belonged inscribe three Sikh Sardars in a large drawing which gives the names of a number of hill states. All the three Sardars are well known figures of the late eighteenth century: Jai Singh Kanhiya, his son Gurbakhsh Singh, and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. Evidently, the Pahari painters worked for these late eighteenth century Sikh chiefs. Thus, Professor Goswamy makes a clear case for the existence of art activity in the Punjab from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century which included Sikh themes and Sikh patronage.<sup>3</sup>

The *B40 Janamsakhi* is one of the earliest extant works with illustrations. Like the number of its *sakhis*, the number of illustrations is 57. Professor Piar Singh, who edited the *B40 Janamsakhi* for publication in 1974, reproduced six illustrations in black and white. He noticed the name of the artist given in the text as Alam Chand 'Raj', and pointed out that the word 'Raj' indicates his profession of a mason; it should not be seen as an indication of his connection with any state or royal court, which a scholar appeared to have done. Alam Chand was one of the numerous masons who used to paint pictures on walls and, when an opportunity arose, on paper as well. He does not appear to be familiar with the Gurmukhi script because the titles on the illustrations are given in Persian script. A separate sheet of paper was used for each painting, and it was pasted on the relevant page of the *Janamsakhi* or in the space left empty for the purpose.<sup>4</sup>

Professor Piar Singh goes on to add that the *Janamsakhi* of Sant Das Chhibber in verse and its copies were some of the other examples of illustrated works. These illustrations were in Kashmiri style. There

were other *Janamsakhis* illustrated in a different style. One of these was inscribed as early as 1658. In the library of Bhai Ardaman Singh of Bagarian there is an illustrated manuscript of 1724. Another illustrated *Janamsakhi* of 1740 was in the possession of 'Harbhajan Singh Harcharan Singh Chawla' of Bazar Mai Sewan, Amritsar. Yet another illustrated manuscript of 1743 was in the library of the Maharaja of Patiala, and a manuscript of 1768 was with the Ram Kishan Udasin Mandal, Patna. Professor Piar Singh does not agree with Dr. Kirpal Singh and Dr. Fauja Singh in their view that all the illustrations are the work of Pahari painters. In his view, a tradition of Sikh painting developed in the plains of the Punjab at places like Lahore, Jalandhar, and Kapurthala, among other cities.<sup>5</sup>

In his translation of the *B40 Janamsakhi*, Professor W.H.McLeod has noted that 30 of the illustrations are full-page; 16 occupy two-thirds to three quarters of a page; and the remaining 11 are half page. Nearly all the illustrations appear at the beginning of individual *sakhis* and depict a scene from the narrative which follows. Sakhi 24 has an extra illustration, and Sakhi 34 has three extra illustrations. Consequently, four *sakhis* have no illustration. The captions in most cases appear in Arabic script in the margin. Gurmukhi captions are added to 11 illustrations in a later hand. Like the other Punjab art of the period, the *B40* illustrations display only a rudimentary notion of perspective. However, they are expertly executed in attractive colours. Six illustrations reproduced by Professor McLeod in black and white in his translation are the same as in Professor Piar Singh's text. Professor McLeod adds that two half-page illustrations were reproduced in two books on world religions in 1952 and 1965, both in black and white. The painter Alam Chand 'Raj' was a distinguished forbear in terms of professional skill of the masons included later in the Ramgarhia caste who made distinctive contribution as artists and interior decorators of Gurdwaras.<sup>6</sup>

Professor Surjit Hans has given a brief introduction to the set of 57 illustrations of the *B40 Janamsakhi: Guru Baba Nanak Paintings*.

He looks upon the *B40* manuscript as 'the oldest extant manuscript of the Punjabi language'. Its illustrations constitute 'a unique achievement of Sikh art'. They were not only painted by a Sikh and for the Sikhs but also embodied the basic doctrines of Sikhism. 'No other group of paintings has been found to fulfil an ideological function so far'.<sup>7</sup>

Professor Hans goes on to underscore the extraordinary merit of these paintings. Alam Chand had a profound understanding of Sikhism, and he had the technical inventiveness to convey its ideas through his paintings. Some of the paintings are divided into two planes. Baba Nanak belongs to a higher world, corresponding to *parlok* (transcendental reality) as distinct from *lok* (the world). Baba Nanak grows spiritually: his beard starts greying after his meeting with God. Like a *sakhi*, an illustration successfully depicts the Sikh doctrine.<sup>8</sup>

Alam Chand uses a number of devices to portray the spiritual sovereignty of Guru Nanak. His face is painted three-fourth while all other major characters are painted in profile. The minor figures whose faces are shown three-fourth are in the lower panel. Only Kabir is painted like Guru Nanak; his face is only slightly smaller in size; he is just a little lower. The same colour on the caps of Baba Nanak and Kabir points out their spiritual affinity.<sup>9</sup>

Alam Chand uses several other devices to enhance the centrality of Guru Nanak. He occupies a higher elevation and is more richly dressed. The area covered by him is more than by any other person. A tree over his head denotes his spiritual royalty. The characters in paintings focus their eyes on the centre of action or on Guru Nanak who looks beyond them. The perspective in the picture has the quality of 'being on the end of the world'; it is a means of fostering a spiritual frame of mind. There is hardly any sky; it is filled by the flight of birds. The gesture made by hands portrays spiritual combat with exquisite facility. The repertory of technical devices to establish the spiritual sovereignty of Guru Nanak is always selectively used according to the requirements of the doctrine and context.<sup>10</sup>

After Guru Nanak the most painted person is Guru Angad. The representations of Guru Angad pictorially proclaim the orthodox line of succession: he is always painted in the image of Guru Gobind Singh. Here, the image is the argument. The picture of Kaliyuga makes an important point of Sikh theology. His submission to Guru Nanak in the picture corroborates his promise in the text that he would not harm his Sikhs. Baba Nanak's ecstasy in the court of God is a beautiful picture of 'inspiration'. The 'wilderness' in the paintings gives a contemporary appreciation of nature. There is social history, and there are theological paintings. Professor Hans looks upon this group of 57 paintings as a 'supreme example of Sikh aesthetics in paintings'. The *B-40* paintings pictorially match the art of the *B-40 Janamsakhi* narrative'. 'A higher praise is difficult to imagine'.<sup>11</sup>

Professor Hans is not an art historian. His perception of the aesthetic merit of the *B-40* paintings is based on his sensibility and his understanding of Sikh aesthetics and Sikh theology. These paintings were supposed to be poor specimens of one school of art or another. 'Nothing could be far from the truth'. There is a good case for the existence of 'Sikh school' of painting in the early eighteenth century. This gives further support to Professor Piar Singh's view based on three illustrated manuscripts of the first half of the eighteenth century. However, neither Professor Hans nor Professor Piar Singh has taken into account the composite character of the *B-40 Janamsakhi*. It does not possess the kind of unity attributed to it by Professor Hans. Consequently, the sort of harmony seen between the text and the picture is not always there. The most notable example of this discord is one of the paintings to which Professor Hans refers several times in his introduction: illustration 31 (Baba Nanak and Bhagat Kabir). In the painting, Kabir is almost an equal of Gurū Nanak, in the text he is a disciple.<sup>12</sup> Incidentally, a feature that figures prominently in a number of paintings is not mentioned by Professor Hans. It is architecture. The material objects in paintings are used by historians as evidence. The evidence of *B40 Janamsakhi* representations of the architecture of the



eighteenth century acquires special importance because the artist was a mason by profession.

Albert J. Del Bonta points out that the narrative genre in Sikh painting has been largely overlooked in spite of the popularity it enjoyed. Many of the *Janamsakhis* were illustrated to tell the story of Guru Nanak. 'It is this barely considered genre of narrative art on which I shall focus my discussion.' Of the scores of manuscripts handed down for generations only one complete set was published. The reference is to the work of Professor Hans. 'Although the style is not discussed, it is clearly derived from a Rajasthani school.' Thus, Bonta dismisses the claim of Professor Hans (and Professor Piar Singh) for the autonomy of a 'Sikh school'. Bonta refers to the range of *Janamsakhi* manuscripts from 1680 to the late nineteenth century and the variety of versions. However, he concentrates only on two sets of *Janamsakhi* illustrations in the Kapany Collection, both from the nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup>

Apart from taking notice of two *Janamsakhi* manuscripts of the eighteenth century and some of the illustrations in these and some other works, Bonta makes the general observation that the mix of deities and demons in the illustrations and tops of people's heads reveal a great range of religious movements and disciplines that covered the age and its art. 'We are only at the beginning of truly understanding the content of the art of this period.' More manuscripts and paintings would enable scholars and art historians to make more intelligent assessment of 'the interchange between the various religious, arts and practices up to the late nineteenth century.' Bonta does not say so, and perhaps he is not even aware, that an essential requirement of 'intelligent assessment' is thorough familiarity with historical contexts, especially in terms of Sikh theology and ethics. He refers to 'a distinct Sikh flavor' of the way in which scenes of Guru Nanak's encounters are depicted, but he does not see any 'Sikh style'. He discerns four distinct styles in the ten manuscripts he has studied: Kashmiri, Kangra, Rajasthani and the late-Mughal. A 'formative period



of Sikh history' is represented in the texts and illustrations of the *Janamsakhis*.<sup>14</sup>

Professor B.N. Goswamy has taken notice of considerable number of eighteenth century paintings related to the life of Guru Nanak. Three of these paintings are rather unusual, but they have inscriptions mentioning Guru Nanak as the subject. The first two of these are placed in the second quarter of the eighteenth century and the third in the last. The first two are associated with the Pahari style of Bilaspur and Mankot, and the third with the late-Mughal school. The Persian inscription in the first is '*Sri Guru awwal Nanak ji*', in the second it is '*Sri Nanak ji*' in Devnagari, and in the third again in Persian it is '*darvesh-i Nanak-shahi*'. The general appearance in the first is that of a Muslim *faqir*, in the second that of an Udasi ascetic, and in the third that of a Muslim Sufi. A certain degree of uncertainty persists about these three figures.<sup>15</sup>

Of the remaining illustrations, five are placed in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, and all the five are associated with Murshidabad in West Bengal. Four of these depict scenes in which young Nanak is taken to school, he is at carpenter Lalo's home as Guru Nanak, he is facing the priests of Kurukshetra, and he is meeting the Mughal emperor Babur. In the fifth illustration, Guru Angad is receiving homage.<sup>16</sup> The explanation of strong similarities between the Murshidabad and Pahari paintings comes from a 'template' of the eighteenth century in which 74 episodes from a *Janamsakhi*, with a brief inscription in Persian and Gurmukhi characters, are drawn on a single sheet as 'thumbnail sketches'. These summary drawings are clear. This sheet throws valuable light on 'the methods used by the artists in the eighteenth century and the means through which ideas and images seem to have disseminated'.<sup>17</sup>

The method of the Pahari artists is further illustrated by 14 drawings which were to serve as the base of the coloured painting. All of these are ascribed to the family workshop of Nainsukh of Guler, and placed in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.<sup>18</sup> There are seven

coloured paintings of this family, based on such drawings. In the first of these, Guru Nanak is shown in earnest conversation with Hindu holymen. The inscription at the back seems to indicate Rameshwaram as the place of meeting but there is no city-scape. An air of remarkable stillness pervades the scene, despite the streaks of rich colour running through it; some monkeys hold their playfulness in check as if aware of the importance of the moment. Accompanied by Mardana and a devotee, Guru Nanak is wearing a cap with a water pot by his side, an armrest under the left armpit and a *mala* in his right hand. The Hindu holy men are clean shaven.<sup>19</sup>

In the second illustration, a king pays homage to Guru Nanak who is sitting cross-legged in the open on a piece of cloth under a tree, with an open book in front, accompanied by Mardana and a devotee. A princely figure on a horseback approaches the group with his gaze on Guru Nanak.<sup>20</sup> The third illustration shows Guru Nanak in conversation with two Muslim holy men. The inscription in Gurmukhi clearly states, 'Baba ji Uch gaye'. The holy men are listening to Guru Nanak intently and appreciatively but 'there is no true air of engagement in the exchange'. The architecture is suggestive of a *dargah*.<sup>21</sup> The fourth illustration depicts Guru Nanak and a young man besides a cistern as if to bathe. The inscription in Gurmukhi reads '*Dina Nath Khatrete nu mile*'. The picture by itself does not carry any obvious import.<sup>22</sup> In the fifth illustration Guru Nanak is looking at an ascetic lying on a sheet of ochre-coloured cloth spread on a tiger skin on a patch of grass by the side of a stream. The inscription in Gurmukhi clarifies that the ascetic is Dattatreya. However, a sense of mystery pervades the scene. There is no conversation.<sup>23</sup> In the sixth illustration, a couple of *jogis* approach Guru Nanak; they are disciples of Bal Nath. They stand before Guru Nanak folding their hands as if asking to be accepted as disciples.<sup>24</sup> The last illustration shows Guru Nanak subduing Kaliyuga. The divine sage Narad is standing on the left of Kaliyuga. Guru Nanak is lifting his staff as if to strike Kaliyuga and the latter throws up his hands in submission.<sup>25</sup>

In four of these seven paintings Guru Nanak meets Hindu and Muslim holy men, two *jogis* and a *sanyasi*. Whereas in the *sakhis* Guru Nanak's triumph over all categories of individuals is quite emphatic, it is merely suggestive in the paintings. In two of these paintings Guru Nanak meets a royal personage and an ordinary individual without a clear import. However, Kaliyuga is clearly subdued but not so emphatically or meaningfully as in the *sakhi*. Compared with the *B40* illustrations, these paintings are technically superior but their import becomes weak when it is not lost altogether.

'One type of manuscript that has received only sporadic attention in art- historical scholarship', observes Jeevan Singh Deol, 'is illuminated and illustrated texts of the *Adi Granth*, the Sikh scripture.' In his own article, Deol attempts a tentative reconstruction of the genre as a whole. He talks of three types of adorned and illustrated manuscripts: (a) those bearing pieces of paper with the handwriting of a Guru (called *nishan*) on their opening folios, (b) those with illumination or decoration, and (c) the illustrated manuscripts proper. Both adornment and illustration are usually found at the beginning of manuscripts, though illumination is found occasionally at the beginning of each *Rag* section of a manuscript. All the known *Adi Granth* recensions have illumination, but illustration is found in the nineteenth century manuscripts of the of the Damdami and Banno recensions.<sup>26</sup>

Most of the extant *nishans* are attributed to Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh. However, two *nishans* are said to be in the hand of Guru Arjan, three in the hand of Guru Hargobind, and one in the hand of Guru Har Rai. Most of the *nishans* come from the seventeenth century. A number of these manuscripts combine *nishans* with illumination to frame the *nishan*. An example given by Deol is that of a Banno recension dated 1679. It shares the usual Islamicate blue and gold geometric patterns of illumination. However, it does not have any *nishan*, which suggests that such illuminations were prepared in the hope of obtaining a *nishan*. Another illumination on a late seventeenth or early eighteenth century manuscript bearing the *nishan*

of Guru Gobind Singh does not have the Islamicate blue and gold geometric patterns but a floral decoration in yellow, gold and blue.<sup>27</sup>

Illumination by itself is found in the texts of the *Adi Granth* and earlier compilations. The two extant *Goindval Pothis* begin with illuminated folios which bear geometric designs in blue and gold. The decorated folios of MS 1245 (Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar) have a *shamsa* that was a characteristic decoration of Arabic and Persian manuscripts. The opening folio of the *Kartarpur Pothi*, and the one beginning with *Rag Suhi*, are extensively illuminated in blue and gold.<sup>28</sup> A seventeenth century manuscript of the *Adi Granth* in the British Library is adorned with a typical Islamicate blue and gold 'unvan. Through the course of the eighteenth century, illumination moved away from the Islamicate models. Most of the illuminated manuscripts of the mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth century exhibit floral decorations characteristic of Kashmiri illumination which became increasingly popular in the early nineteenth century.<sup>29</sup> It may be added that in a *Damdami Bir* of 1775 a sword and shield are depicted on a banner.<sup>30</sup>

The extant illustrated texts of the *Adi Granth* date from the nineteenth century, as in a mixed Lahore-Banno recension from Dina Kangar and in a Damdami recension at the Punjabi University Patiala. Independent paintings of the Gurus were pasted on the initial folios of the *Adi Granth* manuscripts, like the *nishans* for the same reason. It is interesting to note in this connection that the term used for the *nishan* of Guru Tegh Bahadur on the opening folio of an *Adi Granth* manuscript of 1674 is 'darshan' as if it represented the Guru's sight.<sup>31</sup> A painting of Guru Nanak, with Bala and Mardana, faces the final index folio in a Banno manuscript of 1776. On the whole, illuminated and illustrated *Adi Granth* manuscripts are 'a window into a lost Sikh cultural universe'. At the present stage of research we know little about the geographical, temporal and social distribution of adorned manuscripts and even less about the patrons, the scribes and the artists who produced them.<sup>32</sup>

### Portrait Painting

‘Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries’, observes Professor B.N. Goswamy, ‘there are encounters even with the Mughal authority, both at the centre and through the seat of provincial power at Lahore. It is entirely possible that in this situation the Gurus were even portrayed’. But no portraits seemed to have survived, and it is not until the beginning of the eighteenth century that any works recording, or recalling the images of the Gurus, come our way’. Professor Goswamy is thinking of the Mughal artists or workshops in the Punjab plains. He goes on to add that portraits of all the ten Gurus were made mostly in what is termed the ‘provincial Mughal style’.<sup>33</sup>

Portraits of Guru Ram Das, Guru Hargobind and Guru Tegh Bahadur were produced in the Punjab plains during the first half of the eighteenth century. The figure of Guru Ram Das is shown on a carpeted terrace, with a marble balustrade at the back, and another in front with a small opening. The Guru is seen seated, with an attendant standing behind holding fly-whisk (*chauri*) over his shoulder. The background is left bare, with only a strip of the blue sky showing at the top, marked by stylized clouds. The Guru is depicted in his quiet dignity, with an air of formality about the stance, as in Mughal portraits of princes and noblemen.<sup>34</sup> In the portraits of Guru Hargobind the setting is essentially the same as in the portraits of Guru Ram Das. Even the general appearance of the Guru and the dress he wears are much like those of Guru Ram Das. However, a falcon perches on the gloved hand of Guru Hargobind and an aigrette (*kalghi*) tops the turban he is wearing. The falcon and the *kalghi* are appropriate to the image of Guru Hargobind as symbols of sovereign power for the Guru to whom both spiritual and temporal power (*piri* and *miri*) was attributed. The Guru’s *patka* can be recognized as of the Shahjahani kind. But nothing is based on observation. The painter attempts to introduce little variation upon a theme through these changes.<sup>35</sup> For the portrait of Guru Tegh Bahadur again the setting is conventional. However, the



Guru is standing, carrying a staff and dressed in a long yellow coloured cloak. Much in this portrait links it with the other two. The attendant, carrying a flywhisk, stands just a little behind on a simple striped carpet covering the terrace floor. The painter has tried to depict the qualities of forbearance, poetic disposition, indomitable spirit, and unwillingness to bend before injustice. However, the portrait does not appear to have been produced by an 'insider'.<sup>36</sup>

In the second half of the eighteenth century, when the tradition of painting was well established in a number of hill principalities, the Sikh rulers came into increasing contact with the hill chiefs. It is not surprising, therefore, that the artists of the hills began to take interest in Sikh themes, including the Sikh Gurus. Portraits of Guru Ram Das and Guru Gobind Singh were made by artists of the family of Nainsukh of Guler, and portraits of Guru Arjan and Guru Hargobind were made by artists of the family of Purkhu of Kangra.

The portrait of Guru Ram Das produced around 1800 in the family workshop of Nainsukh is one of the most accomplished paintings of the Gurus. It reaches out and captures the nobility and vision associated with Guru Ram Das. He is sitting in quiet dignity in his kingly attire. An attendant is standing at the back waving a fly-whisk over the Guru's head. The painting is rich in colour and pattern, held in balance. The portrait of Guru Arjan produced around 1800 in the family workshop of Purkhu has no similarities with the other portraits of the Guru done in different styles by different artistes in different regions or times. There is nothing to be sure that this is a portrait of Guru Arjan, but the inscription on the dust cover is very clear. The painter keeps the work simple so that the viewer may concentrate on the figure of the Guru more than the other elements in the painting. The portrait of Guru Hargobind, thought to have been produced in the Punjab plains in 1750, is not perhaps authentic. 'A measure of uncertainty about the identity of the person continues to cling to this work of luxuriant color and pattern'. It is interesting to note, however, that this portrait appears on the dust jacket of the book.<sup>37</sup>



Understandably, the artists of Guler and Kangra began to produce portraits of the Sikh chiefs of the late eighteenth century. Jai Singh Kanhiya was portrayed by artists of the families of Nainsukh and Purkhu, but the family of Purkhu alone portrayed Gurbakhsh Singh Kanhiya, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Bhag Singh Ahluwalia, and Tara Singh Gheba. All these Sikh chiefs were rather close to the Kangra hills. Whereas the Gurus were imaginatively 'recalled' in the late eighteenth century, the chiefs were realistically portrayed.<sup>38</sup>

In the painting produced around 1775 in the family workshop of Nainsukh, Jai Singh Kanhiya is shown with hill chiefs. The painter concentrates more on the figure of Jai Singh Kanhiya and the two Akalis sitting beside him than on the figures of the hill chiefs. We know from other sources that some of the hill chiefs were paying tribute to Jai Singh in recognition of his superior power. In the portrait of Jai Singh Kanhiya produced around 1780 in the family workshop of Purkhu he is shown sitting alone with an attendant standing behind him, holding a fly-whisk over his head. Jai Singh is dressed as a warrior, holding bow and arrow in his hand, with a sword strapped to the waist with a cross-belt. The painter appears to be intent upon producing an image of a warriorlike Sikh chief.<sup>39</sup>

In the portrait of Jassa Singh Ramgarhia produced around 1760 in the family workshop of Purkhu, he is shown sitting with his sons Bir Singh and Jodh Singh. The martial character of all the three figures is indicated by their weapons. They are all simply dressed. Significantly, the blue colour is dominant in the painting. The portrait of Sardar Tara Singh Gheba produced in the same workshop in 1775 depicts him seated on a terrace in an informal posture and a simple dress. His turban is coloured vivid yellow, he is wearing a sword, and the attendant standing behind him is dressed in a blue turban and is waving a fly-whisk over the chief's head. A young boy seated before him is richly dressed in saffron yellow, holding a bow and wearing a sword. The portrait of Bhag Singh Ahluwalia produced around 1785 shows him seated on a blue and white rug placed upon a terrace. He is

holding a bow in his right hand and an arrow in his left and he is wearing a sword. His dress is rather simple. He is sitting in quiet dignity, with an air of self-assurance. The portrait of Gurbaksh Singh Kanhiya shows him simply dressed, sitting on a decorated floral carpet spread out on a terrace. A long sword is attached to a cross-belt and he is holding an arrow in his left hand. A large pearl ring is worn in the ear, indicating his royal status. He is also wearing a necklace of small beads. His bearing is dignified but there is no suggestion of great valour. Despite the weaponry, his figure is rather benign.<sup>40</sup>

Professor Gurinder Singh Mann has published two *hukamnamas* of Guru Gobind Singh, dated 1698 and 1699, which are elaborately illuminated with floral patterns. In the *Anandpur Bir* completed in the 1690s, two portraits of Guru Gobind Singh are pasted on the opening folios, one presenting him sitting on the throne with an attendant waving the ceremonial whisk, and the other showing him riding a horse and shooting arrows at a lion. These portraits, more even than the *hukamnamas*, leave little doubt that some of the accomplished artists of the time had moved to Anandpur to work under Sikh patronage. The portraits compare easily with the finest paintings of the period. Professor Mann points out that in the National Museum, New Delhi, there is a portrait of 'Guru Gobind Singh' made by an artist of the Mandi state in the late 1690s. A portrait at Patna is stated to have been 'prepared during the Guru's lifetime'. Even more significant are some of the portraits of Guru Gobind Singh in his childhood. The one reproduced by Professor Mann is in the possession of Anurag Singh in Ludhiana; it was acquired by his father, Dr. Trilochan Singh, from the Patna area; it shows Guru Gobind Singh in his early age.<sup>41</sup>

There is a great possibility that such portraits of Guru Gobind Singh were prepared in the time of Guru Tegh Bahadur. A portrait of Guru Tegh Bahadur, dated 1670, appears to capture the 'quiet vision' of the Guru. Dressed in Mughal attire, he holds a hawk often associated with Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh, but it is an apposite symbol for the Guru who was to sacrifice his life five years later for the religious

freedom of others. Professor Mann adds that there are references to actual portraits of Guru Tegh Bahadur prepared during his visit to Assam. Professor Mann refers to the statement in the *Gurbilas Patshahi Chhevin* that a painter arrived at Amritsar (Ramdaspur) for making a portrait of Guru Hargobind. Bidhi Chand was one of the eminent Masands of Guru Hargobind. His seat at Sur Singh near Amritsar holds two portraits which closely resemble the Guru's portraits available at Bhai Rupa and Dehra Dun.<sup>42</sup> One such portrait from Dacca, in the possession of Professor J.S. Grewal, appears to be of fine quality as a work of art.<sup>43</sup> Thus, the Sikh tradition of portraits seems to go back to the time of Guru Hargobind who adopted martial measures and constructed the Akal Takht.

### 3

#### **Religious and Secular Architecture**

It has been observed that architectural structures did not survive for a very long time in the Punjab. Architecture tended to be of brick rather than stone. Made from local earth and low-fired in wood-burning kilns, the bricks had to be small and thin to be fully baked. Most often, mud was used to bind them. Lime mortar had to be imported from Rajasthan; it was a luxury item, and used sometimes in mud mortar joints. In a smaller number of cases mud-mortar structures were plastered with lime and decorated with paintings. Lime was rarely used as a mortar for entire structures. Nevertheless, it is possible to know the architectural interests of the Sikhs during the eighteenth century; monuments which have survived give us an idea of the architectural features of the period.

Gurmeet Rai and Kavita Singh have depicted something of the architectural projects of the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century. Guru Arjan is associated with the building of water tanks not only in Ramdaspur but also in Tarn Taran, Guru ki Wadali, and Thatte Khera. The tank of Thatte Khera in Amritsar District is said to have come down from the days of Guru Arjan, like the painted pavilion in the tank complex. The present day Golden Temple has been built on the

foundations of a sixteenth century structure. The structure of the Akal Takht that we see now has been raised on the site of a considerably high and large platform or throne, built by Guru Hargobind.<sup>44</sup>

A small kiosk-like structure in Sri Hargobindpur is believed to have been built by Guru Hargobind. It has octagonal plan and four doors. The blind faces have niches with foliated arches, and the roof has a squat dome. The Guru ki Maseet at Sri Hargobindpur of the days of Guru Hargobind in a modest three-bayed structure, with three square domes. The central arch is larger than the one on either side, and the central dome is larger than the other two. The author's also talk of Lohgarh built by Guru Hargobind in Ramdaspur, and notice that there are no remnants of the fortress now in Amritsar. As noted by the author of the *Dabistan*, he kept 700 horses in his stable at Kiratpur. There is also a reference to the *dharamsal* of the Guru.<sup>45</sup>

As in Ramdaspur so in Kiratpur, the Guru would hold a court and he would have residential places. Guru Tegh Bahadur had lived in Ramdaspur and Kiratpur for over twenty years during the lifetime of his father Guru Hargobind. When he became the Guru in 1664 he thought of establishing his own headquarters. He chose Makhawal as the site of his headquarters and named it 'Chak Nanaki'. The Guru-ke-Mahal formed the nucleus of Chak Nanaki. There was a *dharamsal* and a *langar*. The Guru would hold his court, and there would be other buildings for running the whole establishment. This was the place where Guru Gobind Singh succeeded his father to carry forward his legacy. He extended the township. In 1684 or 1688, he founded Anandpur, adjoining Chak Nanaki. In the 1690s it was a thriving town. The Guru's residential quarters were at its centre, surrounded by the houses of his battle-tested warriors of the days of Paonta (where a fortress had been built by Guru Gobind Singh). He held his court at Ucha Asthan which later came to be known as Kesgarh (fort of the blessed hair). Four other fortresses were built: Lohgarh and Holgarh across the stream called Charan Ganga; Fatehgarh between the town and the Charan Ganga, and Anandgarh on the top of a hillock close to

Kesgarh on the opposite side of Lohgarh. Anandgarh was the largest of the five fortresses, having a well with stairs within its thick walls which had provision for guns to be fitted in. Ramdaspur (Amritsar) emerged as the premier centre of Sikh activity in the historical circumstances of the eighteenth century but Anandpur was never forgotten by the Khalsa.<sup>46</sup>

For much of the eighteenth century the Khalsa were waging a long war in their determination to establish their own rule, temporarily under the leadership of Banda Bahadur (1710-15) and on a lasting basis after 1765. During this half a century, Ramdaspur (Amritsar) emerged as by far the most important centre of Sikh activity. It is not surprising, therefore, that much of the information that we have on the architectural activity of the Sikhs during this period, and even later, relates to Amritsar. However, no important monument appears to have survived from the phase of the struggle for power.

A newsreport of 24 May 1710, refers to a fight at Chak Guru in which the Sikhs of the Khalsa came out victorious. The force that had been sent from Lahore failed to control matters'.<sup>47</sup> Darshan Bhagat's *Amritsar di Var* presents contemporary account of a fight between the Khalsa and the Mughal authorities on the Baisakhi of 1709 for control of Ramdaspur.<sup>48</sup> Kesar Singh Chhibber also refers to the fight, and to the *thana* established by the Turks at Ramdaspur in the 1730s. Between these two events, he refers to the struggle between the Akal Purkhias (Tat Khalsa) and the followers of Banda for control over Ramdaspur. In the early eighteenth century, thus, Ramdaspur had become important for the Sikhs and, consequently, for the Mughals. In this context, Chhibber refers not only the *amritsar* tank and the Darbar Sahib as the '*Guru ki jagah*' and '*Guru ka nagar*' but also to 'Akal Bunga' and 'Jhanda Bunga'. The use of the term '*bunga*' suggests a structure for keeping banners and standards and probably arms. As a part of the regular administration set up in Ramdaspur, four masons were permanently employed for repair and new construction.<sup>49</sup>



In the time of Banda Bahadur, some of the contemporary Persian sources refer to Lohgarh in the north of Sadhaura as a place fortified by Banda for defence against the Mughal forces.<sup>50</sup> Tahmas Khan refers to 900 Sikhs going into the fort of Ram Rauni, which was adjacent to the Chak Guru.<sup>51</sup> It was destroyed probably during the invasions of Ahmad Shah Abdali, when the Harmandar and the Akal Takht were also destroyed. Qazi Nur Muhammad makes an important statement in this connection. Towards the end of 1764, Ahmad Shah Abdali came to know that 'the doomed Sikhs had gone towards Guru Chak, which is the place of pilgrimage of the infidels'. 'I will unhesitatingly go to that place', said the Shah, 'and massacre the wily Sikhs and also destroy the Chak'. Before this also, 'the Shah of Islam, acting with faith and devotion, had destroyed and razed [the Chak] to the ground. The Sikhs had repaired it, though not as it was earlier'. The Qazi goes on to narrate how thirty Sikhs died fighting against all odds to defend the sacred precincts at Ramdaspur.<sup>52</sup> Ratan Singh Bhangu also refers to this event in which Nihang Gurbakhsh Singh was the leader of the Sikhs who had resolved to die in defence of the Sikh sacred place. He also adds that the bodies of all the Sikh martyrs were cremated together at the spot close to the Akal Bunga where a Shahidganj was constructed later.<sup>53</sup> Already by 1765 the phase of reconstruction and construction had started at Ramdaspur on an extensive scale.

The construction work on the *sarovar* (*amritsar*), the Harmandar, the bridge, and the Darshani Deodi was completed by 1776. The work on subsidiary shrines was completed in 1784, and a number of Bungas around the *sarovar* were built later. Out of over 70 Bungas constructed, Professor Madanjit Kaur places 25 before 1800.<sup>54</sup> Every Sikh chief built a separate dwelling place, and in some cases a fort, with a bazaar which supplied his retainers with food and other necessities of life. Professor V.N. Datta mentions the Katras of the Kanhiyas, the Baggas, the Ramgarhias, and the Ahluwalias, and the forts built by the Bhangi, Sukarchakia and Ramgarhia chiefs.<sup>55</sup>



In his *The Golden Temple: History, Art and Architecture*, P.S. Arshi, has given architectural drawings and illustrations, the sources of the design of Golden Temple, architectural detail of the extent buildings in the complex, and the historical background. However, the eighteenth century architecture does not figure much in his book, though it is regarded as a pioneer work 'on the subject of art and architecture of the Golden Temple'.<sup>56</sup> S.S. Bhatti observes that the Golden Temple is 'the most celebrated example of Sikh architecture'. All the characteristics of the Sikh style of architecture are represented to make the Golden Temple 'the stylistic index of Sikh architecture'. The stylistic peculiarities of Sikh architecture, according to S.S. Bhatti, are pointed, semi-circular, and ellipited arches, with or without cuprs, ogee arches, multiplicity of *chhatris*, kiosks or pavilions, the fluted or ribbed dome, and oriel embowed windows with shallow elliptical cornices supported on carved brackets. Arches are lavishly enriched by numerous foliations and other structural ornamentation of a similar order. As a rule, a dome (*gumbad*) is the crowning feature of a Gurdwara. Use of water as an element of design was specially exploited in Sikh architecture.<sup>57</sup>

Writing around 1850, Ganesh Das in his *Char Bagh-i Panjab* takes notice of some Sikh places of the eighteenth century. Their number is not large but they include forts and Samadhs as well as Dharamsalas and Gurdwaras. Besides the new forts built by the Sikhs, a number of forts of the earlier times were important, like Lahore, Rohtas, Attock, Gujrat, Sialkot and Kangra which are mentioned by Ganesh Das. Such forts remained in use after occupation by the Sikh chiefs. The city and the fort of Sialkot, for example, was occupied by four Sardars: Jiwan Singh, Sahib Singh, Natha Singh Shahid, and Mohar Singh Atariwala. In 1808, the fort was taken over by Maharaja Ranjit Singh.<sup>65</sup> It is probable that some new structures came up within the forts according to the need of their Sikh masters. New forts were built by the rulers of Nabha, Jind and Patiala during the eighteenth century, besides the new forts mentioned by Ganesh Das.<sup>58</sup>

Ganesh Das mentions two *samadhs* of the late eighteenth century: the *samadh* of Sahib Singh, the ruler of Gujrat, near Bajwat, and the *samadh* of Sahib Singh Bedi, a descendant of Guru Nanak, at Una. The latter had become a place of pilgrimage (because of the sanctity acquired by Sahib Singh Bedi). Two places were associated with Guru Hargobind: the *dharamsala* of Bhai Qandhara Singh in Gujrat, which was an old place of worship, and the *dharamsala* of Guru Hargobind, called Kotha Guru, in Wazirabad, which too was an old place of worship. In Sialkot, two places were associated with Guru Nanak. One was a *ber* and the other was a *baoli*. Both these were well known. A place of Guru Har Rai in village Ghalotian was a place of worship for the Sikhs.<sup>59</sup>

Iqbal Qaiser's *Historical Sikh Shrines in Pakistan*, as the title clearly states, covers the whole of Pakistan. He gives 181 coloured photographs which relate to 165 places. Some of these, however, belong to the categories of *dargah*, *darbar*, *mazar* or *maqbara*. A number of *samadhs* are represented. A few of them are structures showing places of birth, and a few others showing Shahidganj. The use of the terms *dharamsala*, *tibba*, and *kotha* may actually represent Gurdwara which is the term used for the largest number of places. In a few cases, the land attached to Gurdwaras is clearly said to be coming down from the time of Sikh rule. In other cases, it was given either by individuals or by the village communities. A number of structures are explicitly stated to be of the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh; a still larger number are clearly later. Some structures appear to be old, but only a few can be placed in the eighteenth century with any degree of certainty. The author is not seriously concerned with the dates of the structures, but his work is extremely useful.<sup>60</sup>

For a place of birth, the most important structure is the Janam Asthan of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Gujranwala. This solid, *haveli*-like two-storeyed structure could have been built either in the time of Charhat Singh or in the time of Mahan Singh. The architectural features of this structure are similar to those generally associated with

Sikh architecture, especially the arches for doors and windows.<sup>61</sup> The *samadhs* of Charhat Singh and Mahan Singh in Gujranwala were built in the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The arches and domes of the structure are quite remarkable.<sup>62</sup> Two structures representing Shahidganj are very interesting: those of Bhai Mani Singh and Bhai Taru Singh. The latter has a *jagir* of Rs 100 a year since the days of Sikh rule.<sup>63</sup> The Gurdwara known as 'Babe di Ber' in Sialkot was built by Natha Singh Shahid, one of the earliest rulers of Sialkot. The Gurdwara known as "Baoli Sahib" was also built by Natha Singh Shahid.<sup>64</sup>

Some of the Gurdwaras can be noticed for stylistic interest, irrespective of their dates: Gurdwara Sach Khand near Chuhan Kana for its large dome, Janam Asthan Bibi Nanaki at Dera Chahal in district Lahore for its dome and arches, Gurdwara Tibba Nanak Sar near Pakpattan for its dome and arch, Gurdwara Fateh Bhinder in district Sialkot for its entrance, Gurdwara Bucheki in district Sheikhupura for its dome and arches, Kotha Guru in Hafizabad for its general structure and dome, and a tower of Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi at Minhala in district Lahore. These Gurdwaras reveal sub-regional variations in style, highlighting the richness of the tradition of Sikh architecture.<sup>65</sup>

#### 4

#### Patronage

In his arduous field work which enabled him to photograph architectural features of more than a hundred Gurdwaras in the Punjab (Pakistan), Iqbal Qaiser refers at a few places to the sources of patronage: ruling chiefs, village communities and private individuals. The patterns of state patronage emerge conspicuously from the archival materials with a direct bearing on the late eighteenth century. A number of files in the National archives of India, New Delhi, relate to *dharmarth* grants given by the contemporary rulers to Sikh, Hindu and Muslim institutions and individuals, besides confirming the old grants coming from the Mughal times. Several of these files relate to Sikh religious and quasi-religious or social institutions.

First of all, there are *dharamsalas* which received state patronage. It is important to note, however, that all these places do not appear to be Sikh institutions. A *dharamsala* at Mahilpur in *pargana* Hoshiarpur, which had enjoyed a grant since 1705 under the control of three generations of Udasi *faqirs* was not seen as a religious institution by the British authorities. The grant was resumed, but the *zamindars* on their own began to pay the revenue of the resumed land.<sup>66</sup> The village Cheecha, worth Rs. 70 a year, in *pargana* Saurian was given by Sewa Singh, a *jagirdar*, to Nanak Das, an Udasi *sadh*, in the 1750s; his fourth successor, Megh Das, lived in the *dharamsala* but the *Granth Sahib* was not read there.<sup>67</sup> Sardar Gulap Singh Bhangi gave a grant in the late 1790s for the maintenance of a *chhabil* to provide free drinking water for all who might like to drink. Though a charitable work for public welfare, it was surely not a religious institution.<sup>68</sup> In the same way, a considerable number of *dharamsalas* were patronized for providing food and accommodation to travellers as a work of public welfare.<sup>69</sup> In Chamiari itself, Sardar Nar Singh patronized a *dharamsala* with a Thakurdwara.<sup>70</sup> Evidently, every *dharamsala* could not be regarded as a Sikh institution.

However, in Chamiari proper there was a pakka *dharamsala* for which Sardar Nar Singh Chamiariwala gave a well with sixty-seven *bighas* of land, worth Rs. 7 a year, by way of *dharmarth*; it had a Sikh Granthi, and the *Granth Sahib* was read every day. Built in 1773 or earlier, it provided accommodation to travellers and *faqirs* and had a certain degree of devotional character. It could be regarded as a Sikh Institution, if not exactly a Gurdwara.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, the *Granth Sahib* was read and travellers were entertained in a *dharamsala* at Harappa in the region of Pakpattan for which the Nakkai chiefs had given a village called Mirdan by way of *dharmarth* in 1773; this grant was confirmed by Prince Kharak Singh and Maharaja Ranjit Singh.<sup>72</sup>

However, the reading of the *Granth Sahib* did not necessarily make a place religious. The *Granthis* associated with *samadhs*, for example, were given *dharmarth* grants by Sardar Mahan Singh and

Maharaja Ranjit Singh, respectively to Bhai Bhangu Singh and his son Ganda Singh.<sup>73</sup> Similarly, Sardar Khushal Singh gave *dharmarth* grant to the Granthi Bhanga Singh in Jalandhar in 1763; he was succeeded by his son Jhanda Singh.<sup>74</sup> Sardar Desa Singh gave two-thirds of a village to Sarup Singh in the 1780s for reading the *Granth Sahib*; this grant was enjoyed by three generations of Nimala *sadhs*.<sup>75</sup> In the early nineteenth century, *dharmarth* grants were given not only to the *Damdami Bir* but also to what is popularly known as the *Banno Bir* and the *Kartarpur Pothi*. No such example has yet been found for the late eighteenth century, but the sanctity of the *Granth Sahib* was on the increase.

The increasing sanctity and importance of the *Guru Granth* was reflected in the use of the term Gurdwara in place of *dharamsal*. A number of places called Gurdwara, associated with Guru Nanak, Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjan, Guru Hargobind and Guru Tegh Bahadur, received attention from the Sikh rulers. It may be noted that a few of the Gurdwaras were apparently managed by non-Singhs. Bawa Ram Ditta, for example, was given half a village, worth Rs. 50 a year, by Sardar Jassa Singh in 1773 for the support of a Pakka Gurdwara in district Amritsar.<sup>76</sup> In 1856, the Governor-General released lands worth Rs. 100 a year in perpetuity as an endowment for the shrine of Ror Sahib at Eminabad.<sup>77</sup> This carries the implication that the Gurdwara associated with Guru Nanak was in receipt of a much larger grant earlier. In the late 1750s Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia gave 100 *ghumaons* of land, worth Rs. 50 a year, in village Loharke, Pargana Tarn Taran for a Pakka Gurdwara associated with Guru Nanak.<sup>78</sup> The Manji Sahib Guru Nanak, a costly building, in Pargana Sheikhupura, had received five wells and twenty *ghumaons* of land from Sardar Sher Singh in the late 1760s; this place was a local celebrity, and a fair was held there.<sup>79</sup> In the late 1770s, a *zamindar* named Raja gave 30 *ghumaons* of land with a well, worth Rs. 30 a year, for the Manji Sahib.<sup>80</sup>



The Dera Sahib of Guru Ram Das at Lahore, managed by an Udasi, received half a village, worth Rs. 700 a year, in 1800 for the maintenance of an open kitchen (*langar*).<sup>81</sup> The 'Dera of Guru Arjan' at village Thatte in Pargana Amritsar, which has been noticed by Gurmeet Rai and Kavita Singh, was said to have been built by an attendant of the Guru and supported by the village *zamindars*. In the early nineteenth century it was managed by a *Nirmala sadh*; some Nihang Singhs claimed a share in the revenue from land attached to the Dera.<sup>82</sup> The place of Guru Hargobind in Guru ki Wadali in Pargana Amritsar received a village, worth Rs. 300 a year, from Sardar Dharam Singh Kadarabadia in the early 1780s for the services of a Rababi named Sahib Ditta attached to the Gurdwara.<sup>83</sup> A well with 20 *ghumaous* of land, worth Rs. 60 a year, in Kadarabad was given to Sahib Ditta Rababi by Sardar Dharam Singh.<sup>84</sup> A Pakka Gurdwara at Mandiali associated with Guru Hargobind, received land worth Rs. 73 from Sardar Sahib Singh in the early 1750s.<sup>85</sup> The Kotha Guru Ka in village Valla, associated with Guru Tegh Bahadur, received 25 *ghumaons* of land, worth Rs. 40 a year, from Sardar Hakikat Singh Kanhiya. This place was held in much esteem by the people of the villages around, and an annual fair was held there.<sup>86</sup> Towards the end of the eighteenth century, Raja Devi Chand of Bilaspur gave one-third of a village, worth Rs. 175 a year, for the Gurdwara of Guru Tegh Bahadur in Pargana Una.<sup>87</sup> The Shahidganj at Lahore received villages worth Rs. 650 a year from Sardar Lehna Singh Bhangi; the place was in the charge of a Granthi.<sup>88</sup>

It is well known that Sikh rulers alienated land revenue in favour of the Harmandar Sahib and other institutions in its precincts in the city of Amritsar.<sup>89</sup> The archival records provide details not only about the time and place of grants but also about the donor and the grantee.

## 5

### In Retrospect

We can see that interest in painting among the Sikhs began in the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century, with illumination of the



opening folios of scriptural manuscripts in geometric designs of the Islamicate tradition. Towards the end of the seventeenth century the geometric designs were replaced by floral designs, a trend that continued in the eighteenth century. The *nishans* of the Gurus and their *hukamnamas* were also illuminated. The painting of portraits appears to have begun with Guru Hargobind and a number of known portraits of Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh suggest that the art of painting was patronized by them. *Janamsakhi* manuscripts began to be illustrated in the late seventeenth and this art flourished in the eighteenth century in a number of styles, including the 'Sikh'. Portraits of the Gurus were produced during the early eighteenth century in the Punjab plains in the provincial Mughal style, and in the late eighteenth century in the Murshidabad style. To these were added the portraits in Pahari styles. The portraits of the Sikh rulers of the late eighteenth century in Pahari styles reflect the political change that had come about in the Punjab.

The evidence on Sikh painting that has come to light in the recent decades raises the hope that more materials would be discovered. The names of artists or the families of artists who produced the paintings are known only in a few cases. It is quite clear that the art was not patronized by the hill chiefs alone. The patronage started with the Gurus and it was taken up by the Mughal nobility and the local communities and then by the Sikh rulers and, possibly, the members of the Sikh ruling class. The illuminations, illustrations, and portraits are directly linked with the Sikh faith: the Gurus and the scriptures. The only exception to this is the portraits of the Sikh rulers of the late eighteenth century. In this, as in some other respects, they followed the practice of the earlier rulers of the land.

Architectural activity was an essential part of the towns founded by the Gurus in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The *dharamsal*, the Guru ke Mahal, and the Guru's court were some of the architectural features of the towns, apart from residential buildings. Guru Hargobind built the Akal Takht and a fort in Ramdaspur, and

Guru Gobind Singh built a number of forts in Anandpur. In the eighteenth century, a large number of Gurdwaras, a number of forts and *havelis*, and some *samadhs* were built. The structures called Dehura and Shahidganj were in a sense the sacred *samadhs*. The resources for raising these structures came occasionally from local *zamindars*, affluent individuals, and members of the ruling class, but mostly from Sikh rulers in the late eighteenth century. The Gurdwara architecture exhibited important regional and sub-regional variations. At Amritsar, however, a distinct Sikh style of architecture developed in the late eighteenth century. It was represented at its best by the Darbar Sahib, now popularly known as the Golden Temple.

#### NOTES

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2. Albert J. Del Bonta, 'An Illustrated Life: Guru Nanak in Narrative Art', in *Sikh Art and Literature*, ed. Kerry Brown, London: Routledge, 1999, pp. 67-8.
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4. *Janam Sakhi Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji*, ed. Piar Singh, Amritsar: Guru Nanak University, 1989 (first published in 1974), pp. 20-1, plates I-VI.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 21-2.
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7. *B-40 Janamsakhi: Guru Baba Nanak Paintings*, ed. Surjit Hans, Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1987, p. 5.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-9, 11.
13. Bonta, 'An Illustrated Life; Guru Nanak in Narrative Art', pp. 53-61.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 61, 63, 66-8.
15. B.N. Goswamy, *Piety and Splendour: Sikh Heritage in Art*, New Delhi: National Museum, 2000, pp. 31-2.
16. B.N. Goswamy and Caron Smith, *I See No Stranger: Early Sikh Art and Devotion*, New York/India: Rubin Museum of Art in association with Mapin Publishing, 2006, pp. 46-7, 54-5, 92-3, 94-5, 98-9.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 100-1.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 48-9, 50-1, 58-9, 62-3, 66-7, 70-1, 74-5, 78-9, 80-1, 82-3, 84-5, 86-7, 96-7, 125-7.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 68-9.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 76-7.

26. Jeevan Singh Deol, 'Illustration and Illumination in Sikh Scriptural Manuscripts', in *New Insights Into Sikh Art*, ed. Kavita Singh, Mumbai: Marg Publications, 2003, pp. 50-67.
27. Ibid., pp. 50-3.
28. Gurinder Singh Mann, *The Making of Sikh Scripture*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 45, 52, 65.
29. Jeevan Singh Deol, 'Illustration and Illumination in Sikh Scriptural Manuscripts', pp. 52-4.
30. Gurinder Singh Mann, 'Sources for the Study of Guru Gobind Singh's Life and Times', in *Journal of Punjab Studies* (Special Issue on Guru Gobind Singh), vol. 15. nos. 1-2 (Spring-Fall 2008), pp. 260, 272 n 77.
31. MS 1192, dated 1674, Panjab University Library, Chandigarh.
32. Jeevan Singh Deol, 'Illustration and Illumination in Sikh Scriptural Manuscripts', pp. 55-9, 63.
33. Goswamy, *Piety and Splendour*, p. 43.
34. Ibid., p. 44.
35. Ibid., p. 45.
36. Ibid., p. 48.
37. Goswamy and Smith, *I see No Stranger*, pp. 134-9.
38. Ibid., pp. 166-77.
39. Ibid., pp. 166-7.
40. Ibid., pp. 170-7.
41. Mann, 'Sources for the Study of Guru Gobind Singh's Life and Times', pp. 237-8, 242-4.
42. Ibid., pp. 235-6.
43. Seen through the kind courtesy of Profesor J.S. Grewal.
44. Gurmeet Rai and Kavita Singh, 'Brick by Sacred Brick: Architectural Projects of Guru Arjan and Guru Hargobind', in *New Insights into Sikh Art*, pp. 32-49.

Iqbal Qaiser has given examples of the modest structures of the earlier times being replaced by larger structures during

the period of Sikh rule. See his book *Historial Sikh Shrines in Pakistan*, Lahore: Punjabi History Board, 1998.

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47. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i Mu'alla*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources: Translations of Major Texts*, ed. J.S. Grewal and Irfan Habib, New Delhi: Tulika/Indian History Congress, 2001, pp. 107-8. Also see, Gurinder Singh Mann, 'Sources for the Study of Guru Gobind Singh's Life and Times', pp. 232-5.
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50. Muhammad Hadi Kamwar Khan, *Tazkiratu's Salatin Chaghata*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, p. 150.
51. Tahmas Khan, *Tahmasnama*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, p. 172.
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63. Ibid., pp. 342-5.
64. Ibid., pp. 154-7.
65. Ibid., pp. 50-1, 68-9, 102-3, 188-9, 202-3, 238-9, 292-3, 272-3.
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71. NAI, Foreign/Political Proceedings, 5-11 December, 1856, No. 217, p. 432.
72. NAI, Foreign/Political Proceedings, 23 June 1854, No. 205.
73. NAI, Foreign/Political Proceedings, 7 January 1853, No. 222, pp. 420-1, 422-43.
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83. Ibid., pp. 398-9.
84. Ibid., pp. 400-01.
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## CONCLUSION

The political, social and cultural aspects of the life of the Khalsa during the eighteenth century were intermeshed to an unusually large degree. An undercurrent of religious ideology informed their politics, and their political objectives and polity in turn had a close bearing on their social and cultural life. This comes out clearly in retrospection on the major developments of the period as a whole.

The confrontational background, which was marked by increasing tension between the Mughal state and the mainstream Sikhs, reached its culmination in the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1675. Guru Gobind Singh's creative response to the new situation then was sustained and systematic. The ideal of political ascendancy was deliberately cultivated and propagated, and it was supported by a new surge in literary activity. The followers of Guru Gobind Singh were transformed into a political community that derived its inspiration from religious ideology for pursuing political power. Their operative slogan was '*Raj Karega Khalsa*'.

The establishment of a sovereign state by the Khalsa under the leadership of Banda Singh within two years of Guru Gobind Singh's death, though short-lived, created an example, and reinforced the ideal of Khalsa Raj. Despite persecution and suppression, they survived as a political entity. In 1752, when the province of Lahore was transferred to the empire of Ahmad Shah Abdali, the Khalsa were increasing their political power in pockets of territory in the central Punjab. Around 1760, when Ahmad Shah Abdali was trying hard to strike down the Marathas, the Khalsa established their hold over much of the Punjab. Ahmad Shah Abdali failed to dislodge them. Aware of their power and strength, they declared their sovereignty by striking a coin at Lahore in 1765, carrying the same inscription as on Banda's seal. What sustained them in successful pursuit of their ideal was their religious ideology, the institutions built on its basis, and the revival of Ramdasapur, later called Amritsar, as their religious and political centre.

The Khalsa rulers established regular government and administration, patronized Sikh institutions, and extended patronage to others as well. As a measure of their importance, the Khalsa figure prominently, not only in the Sikh literature of the eighteenth century but also in the Persian and European works of the period. The political activity and organization of the Khalsa was inseparably linked with their social and cultural life in all its important aspects: doctrines, institutions, religious beliefs and practices, rites and rituals, ethics and social order, and Sikh literature, arts and architecture.

Even though the doctrinal and institutional developments of the eighteenth century had their roots in the earlier period of the Sikh history, they came to have a significance of their own. Before his death, Guru Gobind Singh declared the *Granth* to be the Guru, and the idea became acceptable to larger and larger number of the Khalsa. Belief in the ten Gurus from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh and in Guruship of the *Granth* became the foremost tenet of the Khalsa during the eighteenth century. The *Granth* as the Guru became their constant source of inspiration and the doctrine of Guru-Panth made them all equal, and equally responsible for protecting and promoting the collective interests of the Khalsa. This doctrine can also be traced to the decision of Guru Nanak to install one of the disciples as the Guru in his lifetime. The Sikh congregation steadily acquired great importance. Much before the institution of the Khalsa the Sikh *sangat* had come to be equated with the Guru. Before his death Guru Gobind Singh declared the collective body of the Khalsa to be his successor. Thus, the *Granth* and the Khalsa represented two sides of the same coin of authority for the Khalsa. The doctrine of Guru-Panth provided the operative principle of organization during the period of political struggle. However, it was not given an institutional form. It did not remain operative in the government and administration of the Khalsa rulers. The equality built into the doctrine was not given any democratic forms. Therefore, it did not acquire the same kind of importance in the social and cultural life of the Khalsa as the doctrine of Guru-Granth.

The *dharamsal*, established by Guru Nanak for congregational worship and community meal, emerged as the centre of Sikh religious life under his successors. From the very beginning, the *dharamsal* where the Guru was present was seen as more important than the others. When the Masands were removed by Guru Gobind Singh, the management and control of the *dharamsal* became the responsibility of the local Khalsa *sangat*. With the increasing importance of the doctrines of Guru-Granth and Guru-Panth, the *dharamsal* became all the more important because both the *sangat* and the *Granth* were present in the *dharamsal*. The term 'Gurdwara' began to be used for this institution during the eighteenth century. The sacred space thus acquired a greater degree of sanctity. As a political community growing in the eighteenth century, the Khalsa took control of the Harmandar Sahib at Ramdaspur and revived the institution of Akal Takht. The importance of Ramdaspur began to increase in the context of the political struggle of the Khalsa. Before the end of the century, the town of Ramdaspur became the city of Amritsar; the *sarovar*, the Harmandar and the Akal Takht made it the premier place of Sikh pilgrimage.

What the Khalsa should believe and practise was laid down in the *Rahitnamas* at the beginning of the period and reinforced in the time of the Khalsa Raj. Besides the belief in ten Gurus, the Guru-Granth and the Guru-Panth, a great stress was laid on the unity of God. He alone was the object of worship. The early *Rahitnamas* rule out the worship of sepulchres, idols of stone, gods, goddesses, and *pirs*. These injunctions are reiterated in the *Rahitnama* of Daya Singh, which adds Sakhi Sarwar to the list. It is emphatically stated that the only medium of worship for the Khalsa is the *shabad* of the Guru.

A Khalsa should observe a daily regimen of individual and congregational worship. Early in the morning, he should recite the *Japuji* and the *Jaap*. In the evening, he must recite the *So-Dar* and the *Rahiras*, and before going to sleep he should recite the *Sohila*. This is the necessary minimum. He should read the *bani* of the Guru and reflect on it. In this connection, Daya Singh mentions the *Akal Ustat*

and *Chandi di Var* too. A Khalsa should go to the *dharamsal* in the morning and listen to *kirtan*, participate in the *ardas*, and receive *karha prasad*. He should make offerings to the *Guru Granth Sahib*. He should conduct himself well in relation to men and women present in the *sangat*. The ideal of religious life for the Khalsa is '*nam, dan, isnan*'. All Brahmanical rituals are included among the practices explicitly prohibited. Essential for the Khalsa is to take *pahul*, keep unshorn hair, adopt the name 'Singh', bear arms, wear *kachh*, keep the *kangha*, use the salutation of '*Vaheguruji ka Khalsa, Vaheguruji ki fateh*', go on pilgrimage to places associated with the Gurus, to celebrate Gurburabs, never to use tobacco in any form, and never to eat *halal* meat.

In the other Sikh literature too the unity of God is emphasized. The doctrines of Guru-Granth and Guru-Panth are upheld, and the unity of the ten Gurus is emphasized, or taken for granted. In some of the works, however, it is stated that Guru Gobind Singh worshipped the Goddess for instituting the Khalsa, though her role is limited and she is not the supreme deity to be worshipped. A few works tend to assimilate Guru Nanak with the earlier incarnations of Vishnu, but he is generally regarded as the incarnation of Janak, with reference to his equal interest in spiritual and temporal matters. Kesar Singh Chhibber tends to Brahmanize the Khalsa tradition but even he mentions all the important injunctions of the Khalsa *rahit*. Some of the works refer to the construction of memorials (*dehura*) at places associated with the Gurus and Sikh martyrs. On the whole, the common ground between the *Rahitnamas* and the other Sikh works is far larger than their differences.

The Persian writers refer to the reading of Gurbani and singing of the hymns of *Granth Sahib* as the essence of Sikh worship. The 'Sikhs of the Khalsa' did not cut their hair and they wore a chain of iron in place of the sacred thread. They visited Amritsar at the time of Baisakhi and Diwali in large numbers for bathing. They were separate

from the Hindus and opposed to the Vedas. They were hostile to *hukka* smokers. Their salutation was '*Vaheguru ki fateh*'.

For the European observers the Sikhs were monotheists who worshipped the Supreme God, and no idols. The *dharamsal* was the centre of Sikh worship which consisted of the reading of the *Granth*, singing of hymns, performing of *ardas*, and partaking of *karha prasad*. The mode of initiation into the Khalsa removed all barriers of caste and occupation. The Khalsa kept unshorn hair, bore iron bracelets, wore a blue dress, and never used tobacco. Their salutation was '*Vaheguruji ka Khalsa, Vaheguruji ki fateh*'. They visited Amritsar twice a year in large numbers. Choirs assembled there at the Harmandar, where the *Granth* was installed, and chanted hymns from very early morning till late at night. Women too bathed in the tank. Another religious resort was Kartarpur (Dera Baba Nanak) where a piece of Guru Nanak's garment was shown as a sacred relic.

Thus, many of the religious beliefs and practices recommended as norms for the Khalsa in the *Rahitnamas* figure in other Sikh literature. The Persian and European works have less information but it pertains to some of the basic features of the Khalsa ideology and praxis in Sikh literature of the eighteenth century. In spite of some differences in the statements, the degree of consensus is pretty large. In other words, much that is stated in the Persian and European sources confirms the normative statements of the *Rahitnamas*.

The works of Guru Nanak and his successors reflect their serious concern with rites and rituals. The rejection of old ideologies made it necessary to discard the old rites and rituals in due course. Since a substantial segment of Sikhs came from within the fold of the Brahmanical system, there was a greater emphasis on rejection of Brahmanical practices for creating alternative rites and rituals. The rite of initiation from the very beginning was not Brahmanical. The baptism of the double edged sword (*khand*) was peculiar to the Khalsa and totally unknown in other religious systems. It was all the more important for its implications, particularly bearing arms and keeping the hair



uncut, both of which made the Khalsa obtrusively distinct in appearance. Even for *charan pahul*, the dipping of a foot of the 'cot' (*manji*) of the *Guru Granth Sahib* in water came to be recommended for baptism.

The *khanda* figures in the ceremonies related to birth, marriage and death. It sanctified the *karha parsad*, and it was required to be worn at the time of offering *ardas*. Although the other arms also figure in these rites, the sword is assigned a place next in importance only to the *khanda* in the ceremonies related to initiation, birth, marriage and death. In the *Rahitnamas* of the eighteenth century, there is no indication that the Brahman was given any role in the Sikh rites of birth, marriage and death. Various kinds of rites and ceremonies refer to reading of the *Granth*, recitation of the *Anand*, performance of *ardas*, distribution of *karha prasad* as well as to the baptized Singhs. On the ground, old practices could continue, or elements of both the old and the new could be combined, but in the Sikh norms of rites and ceremonies the Brahman priest does not figure anywhere.

The most comprehensive statement on the ethics comes from the two largest *Rahitnamas*: the *Prem Sumarag* and the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh. The injunctions relate to personal conduct, communitarian concerns and social obligations. No other relationship is preferable to the relationship of the Sikh faith. To take up social responsibility with a deep sense of commitment is the foremost obligation. Not to hurt the feelings of a fellow human being is the basic principle. Exceptions are made on the basis of differences in religious beliefs and practices and due to political concerns. No association with certain groups and hostility towards the Muslim rulers and their supporters are strongly emphasized. For the rest, the principle of *par-upkar* (welfare of others) is all inclusive.

The *Rahitnamas* of the time of Sikh rule during the last quarter of the century indicate a few new concerns. For example, a Singh should encourage members of all the four *varnas* to become Singhs: what is new here is not 'four *varnas*' but 'encouragement' to be

deliberately given. All *panths*, other than the Khalsa, should be seen as adoring God in their own way. On the whole, however, these *Rahitnamas* reiterate what we find in the early *Rahitnamas*. The short *Rahitnamas* do not have much to say about ethics but what they actually say becomes important because it is a part of the essential *rahit* for the authors. Any kind of misappropriation, stealing and gambling are prohibited. Backbiting and slandering are denounced. Sensuality in general and sexual indulgence in particular are to be kept under restraint. Extra-marital relations of all kinds are denounced very strongly. The essence of *dharam* is to serve the hungry and the naked. The Khalsa should protect the poor. Great regard, consideration, and concern for the fellow-Sikhs are emphasized. At the opposite end are the Turks to whom no respect is to be shown and who are to be killed in battle.

The *Gurbilas* literature lays stress on great regard and consideration for fellow Sikhs. The relationship of faith is as important as the concern for kinship, if not more. The Khalsa from all the four *varnas* should eat together. A Khalsa should share his food with others. They should have no friendship or connection with Muslims. They should never come near a Muslim woman, just as they should not go to a prostitute or have illicit relations with any woman. The Khalsa should stick to their *dharam* even at the cost of life.

About the ethics of the Sikhs, the Persian and European sources do not say much. The war ethics of the Khalsa include no attack on a fugitive or a non-combatant, and no molestation of women. They never made slaves. The Khalsa did not use tobacco in any form. However, they used intoxicants like liquor, opium and *bhang*. They shunned *halal* and ate *jhatka* meat.

The Sikh social order in the eighteenth century was not a monolithic whole. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Sikhs, called Nanak-Panthis, were found in many parts of the country, with their concentration in the province of Lahore and the Sarkar of Sirhind. Their number could be in lacs but no exact, or even approximate,

figures are available. Apart from the differences of social background and occupations, they were divided into several 'sectarian' groups. The mainstream Sikhs were declared by Guru Gobind Singh to be his Khalsa, which meant that all other groups were, in theory, excommunicated. The Masands and their followers are not heard of in the eighteenth century, but the followers of Prithi Chand, Dhir Mal and Ram Rai have survived even into the present. During the late eighteenth century, a number of Sodhis and Bedis joined the Khalsa and became Singhs. However, they appear to have retained their position as *gurus* for a small number of followers. They were not recognized as Gurus by the general body of the Khalsa.

In the early decades of the eighteenth century, all the Khalsa Sikhs did not take baptism (*pahul*) of the double edged sword. In other words, the Khalsa consisted of two components: those who had taken *pahul* and become Keshdhari Singhs and those who did not take *pahul* but were nonetheless 'Khalsa'. The latter are called Sahajdhari in the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh. They shared doctrines and beliefs and most of their religious practices with the Keshdhari Singhs. However, the Keshdhari Singhs became so dominant by the end of the eighteenth century that we do not hear of Sahajdharis in our sources. If they existed in the late eighteenth century, they have to be identified.

Some other orders, called Udasis, arose during the course of the eighteenth century. They showed respect for the Sikh Gurus, used Brahmanical scriptures as well as the *Granth Sahib* for their discourses, preaching, practised renunciation, received patronage from Mughal and Sikh rulers, and established their own centres or *akharas*. Whether or not they were regarded as 'Sikh' by the Khalsa is not clear, and whether or not they regarded themselves as 'Sikhs' is not clear either. It is quite clear, however, that neither the Udasis nor the former dissenting groups can be regarded as 'Sahajdharis' in the sense in which the term is used in the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh.

The Persian writers of the eighteenth century were not much concerned with sectarian differences among the Nanak-Panthis. The European observers saw only Singhs and non-Singhs on the scene. They were aware of further marks of distinction among each of the two components but all the categories in each component were lumped together.

No Sikh source of the eighteenth century talks of hierarchy of castes. Only a few uphold the differences between *jatis* for commensality and matrimony. The principle of equality is emphasized. However, whereas commensality was extended to all castes (but not to all the outcastes), there was only a marginal change in the patterns of marriage. The main insistence was on forming ties amongst the Sikhs. The eighteenth century sources provide both normative and empirical evidence on gender relations among the Khalsa. The most comprehensive statement is in the *Prem Sumarag*. The religious life is as much open to women as to men, though for initiation a few differences of detail are mentioned. For the ceremonies at birth, marriage and death also the differences are of degree and not of kind. Widow re-marriage is allowed in certain situations. Within the general social and patriarchal framework, thus, a large degree of equality is visualized. The most radical feature is the right of women to hold property in certain situations.

The *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh forbids *pahul* of the double edged sword for women. A Sikh woman should not address an assembly of Sikh men. She should regard her husband as her lord and master. The *Rahitnama* is silent about rituals, widow re-marriage, and matters of property. In all other respects, however, it visualizes a large space for women. Essentially, spiritual life is open to her; it is obligatory for her to go to the *dharamsal* with offerings; she can address a gathering of women and she is expected to instruct her husband in the home. The later *Rahitnamas* say very little about women and nothing new.

The Sikh literature other than the *Rahitnamas* does not have much to say about gender relations. Several writers refer to the episode of the Goddess, prohibition of *sati*, and preference for the male child. Men and women are bracketed for religious life. Women of the Guru's household play a considerable role in Sikh affairs, and memorials are built for them.

The European writers are generally silent about the position of women. One of them states that women were held in little esteem among the Sikhs, but they attended to their domestic duties diligently and took up arms on certain occasions in defence. Widow re-marriage was allowed only among Jat Sikhs. Sikh widows rarely became *satis*. The Persian sources have little to say about gender relations but a few writers take notice of some Sikh women. The role of some Sikh women in the public affairs of the Sikhs finds mention in Sikh sources, particularly the *Gurbilas* literature and the *hukamnamas*, and especially Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devi. A few other such women did not belong to the Guru's house.

The eighteenth century was quite remarkable for literary articulation among the Sikhs. Besides the continuation of the *Var* and the *Sakhi* form, the new forms like the *Rahitnama* and the *Gurbilas* were evolved during this period. Towards the end of the century appeared the *Ustat* as almost a new form. Despite the differences of detail, and some contradictory statements, the works in all the forms collectively reveal serious concern with the ten Gurus, especially Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. The Khalsa and the *rahit* of the Khalsa were almost equally important. The Sikh sacred space known as *amritsar* is depicted as the most sanctified centre. Next in importance were the Sikh martyrs and eminent Sikhs of the earlier Gurus. Much of this literature was produced to influence and inform Sikh beliefs and attitudes and to inspire the reader with Sikh ideology. In a sense, the bulk of this literature was quasi religious in character and purpose. Nevertheless, we can see a growing consciousness of the past among the Sikhs in this literature as a whole.



Interest in painting among the Sikhs began in the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century, with the illumination of the opening folios of scriptural manuscripts in geometric designs of the Islamicate tradition. Towards the end of the seventeenth century the geometric designs were replaced by floral designs, a trend that continued in the eighteenth century. The *nishans* of the Gurus and their *hukamnamas* were also illuminated. The portrait painting appears to have begun with Guru Hargobind; the known contemporary portraits of Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh suggest that the art of painting was patronized at their court. *Janamsakhi* manuscripts began to be illustrated in the late seventeenth century and this art flourished in the eighteenth century in a number of styles, including the 'Sikh'. Portraits of the Gurus were produced during the early eighteenth century in the Punjab plains in the provincial Mughal style, and in the late eighteenth century in the Murshidabad style. To these were added the portraits in Pahari styles. The portraits of the Sikh rulers of the late eighteenth century in Pahari styles reflect the political change that had come about in the Punjab.

The evidence on Sikh painting that has come to light in recent decades raises the hope that more materials would be discovered. The names of artists or the families of artists who produced the paintings are known only in a few cases. It is quite clear that the art was not patronized by the hill chiefs alone. The patronage started with the Gurus and it was taken up by the Mughal nobility and the local communities and then by the Sikh rulers and, possibly, the members of the Sikh ruling class. The illuminations, illustrations, and portraits are directly linked with the Sikh faith: the Gurus and the scriptures. The only exception to this are the portraits of the Sikh rulers of the late eighteenth century. In this, as in some other respects, they followed the practice of the earlier rulers of the land.

Architectural activity was an essential part of the towns founded by the Gurus in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The *dharamsal*, the Guru-ke-Mahal, and the Guru's court were some of the



architectural features of the towns, apart from residential buildings. Guru Hargobind built the Akal Takht and a fort in Ramdaspur, and Guru Gobind Singh built a number of forts in Anandpur. A large number of Gurdwaras, a number of forts and *havelis*, and some *samadhs* were built in the eighteenth century. The structures called *dehura* and *shahidganj* were in a sense sacred as *samadhs*. The resources for raising these structures came occasionally from local *zamindars*, affluent individuals, and members of the ruling class, but mostly from Sikh rulers of the late eighteenth century. The Gurdwara architecture exhibited important regional and sub-regional variations. At Amritsar, however, a distinct Sikh style of architecture developed in the late eighteenth century. It was represented at its best by the *Darbar Sahib*, now popularly known as the Golden Temple.

We can see that the social and cultural life of the Sikhs in its doctrinal, institutional, ritualistic, ethical, social, literary, and artistic aspects experienced significant change amidst the political revolution that brought the Khalsa to the top during the eighteenth century. Sikh identity became more obtrusive than ever before.

## APPENDICES

Six appendices are given here to elaborate some of the points made in the text of this thesis. All of these have a direct bearing on the themes discussed in the relevant chapters. The first appendix pertains to the recension called the *Damdami Bir* which came to be regarded as the Guru. The history of this recension is much clearer now than what was the case twenty years earlier. Therefore, it is thought necessary to provide brief information on the *Damdami Bir* which is now known as the *Adi Granth*. The second appendix takes into consideration the views of three scholars who have studied Sikh ethics and moral philosophy during the eighteenth century on the basis of the *Rahitnamas*: Professor S.S. Kohli, Professor Avtar Singh, and Dr Nripinder Singh. Similarly the views of Professor J.S. Grewal, Professor Harjot Oberoi, Sardar Kapur Singh, Professor Jagjit Singh, Professor W.H. McLeod, and Professor Teja Singh, Professor Nikki-Guninder Kaur Singh and Dr. Doris R. Jakobsh on the Sikh social order of the eighteenth century, with special reference to the issues of caste and gender relations, are taken up in the third Appendix. The fourth Appendix relates to the three major approaches to the Sikh literature of the eighteenth century as reflected in the works of Professor W.H. McLeod, Professor Surjit Hans and Professor J.S. Grewal. In the fifth appendix is discussed the treatment of the Goddess in the works of Koer Singh Kalal, Kesar Singh Chhibber, Sarup Das Bhalla, and Sukha Singh, all of whom lay great emphasis at the same time on the Khalsa *rahit* and distinctiveness of the Khalsa. The last appendix takes up the various approaches to the study of Sikh literature of the eighteenth century.

## MAKING OF THE *ADI GRANTH*

The doctrine of Guru-Granth is closely linked with the issue of the authorized recension. It is generally believed that the *Granth* was compiled and installed by the fifth Guru as the Sikh scripture in 1604, and the compositions of the ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur, were added subsequently; this recension came to be known as *Damdami Bir* (recension). However, scholars have been exercised over the questions as to when, where and by whom was the *bani* of Guru Tegh Bahadur added: was it done by Guru Tegh Bahadur himself or his son and successor? Was it done at Damdama in Makhawal or Talwandi Sabo? Was the *Damdami Bir* prepared in the last quarter of the seventeenth century or during the first decade of the eighteenth? Did the *Damdami Bir* become commonly current during the eighteenth century.

The first scholar to identify the '*Damdame Wali Bir*' was G.B.Singh. He saw several of manuscripts in Dhaka in 1915 and one of them appeared to be the complete (*puran*) *Granth Sahib* as it was known in the twentieth century. Inspired to collect information on manuscripts of the *Granth* either directly or through other scholars or friends, G.B. Singh was able to see about 175 manuscripts all over the country.<sup>1</sup> In his influential work, the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib dian Prachin Biran*, he describes and analyses over forty of these manuscripts.<sup>2</sup>

The manuscript at Dhaka identified as *Damdame Wali Bir* by G.B. Singh was completed on *Maghar Vadi 7 Sammat 1732* (1675 AD), that is, 17 days after the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur. This manuscript contained all the *shabads* of Guru Tegh Bahadur at proper places according to *Rags*, and his *shaloks* after the *Rags*. G.B. Singh points out that the *shalok* attributed to Guru Gobind Singh was also there in the manuscript, and suggests that this manuscript was being prepared at Makhawal in accordance with the wishes of Guru Tegh Bahadur and it was completed after his martyrdom. This work was

carried on at the place called Damdama in Makhawal. Therefore, G.B. Singh calls this complete *Granth Sahib* as '*Damdame Wali Bir*'.<sup>3</sup> This *Bir* is said to have remained at Makhawal till 1704 when Guru Gobind Singh evacuated Anandpur. A Sikh from the *sangat* of Dhaka, who had come for the Guru's *darshan*, apparently took the *Bir* to Dhaka where it is said to have remained till 1915 when G.B. Singh saw it.<sup>4</sup> He refers to a few other copies of this *Bir* prepared in the 1680s and 1690s for Guru Gobind Singh.<sup>5</sup>

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, Principal Harbhajan Singh took notice of a different set of *Birs* and came to the conclusion that Guru Gobind Singh added the *bani* of Guru Tegh Bahadur to the *Kartarpuri Bir* at Damdama in Anandpur soon after the martyrdom of his father.<sup>6</sup> More recent research, however, has confirmed G.B. Singh's impression that the *bani* of Guru Tegh Bahadur was incorporated in the Sikh scripture in the time of the ninth Guru himself. The clinching evidence is furnished by a manuscript in the library of the Panjab University, Chandigarh, which bears the emblem (*nishan*) of Guru Tegh Bahadur and contains a note which was written on the full moon day (*Puranmashi*) of *Jeth*, *Sammāt* 1731 (1674 AD),<sup>7</sup> that is, before his departure for Delhi to meet Aurangzeb. Attention towards this manuscript was drawn by Professor Gurinder Singh Mann who also challenged G.B. Singh's view that the Dhaka manuscript of 1675 was the *Damdami Bir* prepared in the time of Guru Gobind Singh at Makhawal-Anandpur.<sup>8</sup> However, Professor Mann supports G.B. Singh's view that the *Damdami Bir* was not prepared at Talwandi Sabo (the present Damdama Sahib) in 1705-06. Contrary to the commonly held view, Professor Mann argues that the text of the *Damdami Bir* was prepared in the 1680s at Anandpur.<sup>9</sup>

Professor Mann argues further that there is no justification for treating the so called Banno tradition as a separate category. He argues that the seventeenth century manuscripts fall into two branches and not into three groups (*Kartarpur Pothi*) Bhai Banno's *Bir*, and the Lahore *Pothi*). In 1605, a manuscript of the *Kartarpur Pothi* compiled in

1604, was inscribed by Bhai Bura Sandhu in the presence of Guru Arjan, containing some additional hymns. Bhai Banno's *Bir* is a copy of the *Kartarpur Pothis* completed in 1606. Prepared in 1642, Bhai Banno's *Bir* represents the second branch of the *Kartarpur Pothis*. Guru Tegh Bahadur's *bani* was added to a copy of the first branch. Further changes, though minimum, were made in the time of Guru Gobind Singh for the *Damdami Bir*.<sup>10</sup>

The extant manuscripts of the *Granth* prepared during the eighteenth century fall into two groups: (a) the *Damdami Bir* and (b) a version of the seventeenth century manuscripts of the second branch (with the *Banno Bir* as an example of the category) to which compositions of Guru Tegh Bahadur are added. On the basis of his extensive field work in the Punjab, Professor Mann suggests that the extant scriptural manuscripts in places like Anandpur and Bathinda (Damdama) are almost always the *Damdami Bir*, that is the text created at Anandpur in the 1680s with Guru Gobind Singh's authorization. In fact, most of the versions are completely identical with the text of the *Granth Sahib* presently used and revered by the Sikh community. These manuscripts are distinct in one important respect: they do not contain the date on which they were copied or compiled. The second group of manuscripts on the other hand is marked by substantive variations because they did not originate from a single source. We know that the compositions of Guru Tegh Bahadur were included in a manuscript of 1674, and the manuscripts of this type compiled in 1675 and 1677 eventually reached as far as Benares and Dhaka. It is reasonable to expect that scribes in their areas copied them without being aware that their contents differed from those of the *Damdami Bir*.<sup>11</sup>

Professor Mann points out that the two branches of manuscripts were not prepared in competition with each other. The compositions of Guru Tegh Bahadur simply began to be added to the manuscripts of the second branch prepared prior to the creation of the *Damdami Bir* which 'achieved relative hegemony in the Sikh scriptural tradition at the

beginning of the eighteenth century', and this hegemony has 'remained unchallenged to the present day'.<sup>12</sup> This was how the *Kartarpur Pothis* became the *Damdami Bir* in which Guruship was vested by Guru Gobind Singh. Professor Mann's view is radically different from the one presented by Professor Pashaura Singh in his study of the *Guru Granth Sahib*.<sup>13</sup>

It may be added that scholars refer indiscriminately to the *Kartarpur Pothis*, the *Damdami Bir* and the *Guru Granth Sahib* as the *Adi Granth*. Strictly speaking, 'Adi Granth' refers only to the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

### NOTES

1. G.B. Singh, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib dian Prachin Biran* (Punjabi), London: International Supreme Council of Sikhs, 2004 (first published in 1944), pp.3, 4, 217.
2. Ibid., pp.91-340.
3. Ibid., pp. 215-17.
4. Ibid., p. 217.
5. Ibid., pp. 280-1, 283, 291, 298-9, 301-6, 310-11.
6. Harbhajan Singh, *Gurbani Sampadan Nirnay* (Punjabi), Chandigarh: Satnam Prakashan, 1981, pp. 85, 117, 120-2, 127-8, 150, 165, 168, 173.
7. MS 1192, A.C. Joshi Library, Panjab University, Chandigarh.
8. Gurinder Singh Mann, *The Making of Sikh Scripture*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003 (first published in 2001), p.15.
9. Ibid., pp. 83-5.
10. This argument is developed by Professor Mann in chapter 5, *ibid.*, pp. 69-85.
11. Ibid., p.123.
12. Ibid., pp.121-5.
13. Professor Pashaura Singh's position, which has been refuted by Professor Mann, can be summed up as follows: The *Banno Bir* constituted one of the three traditional categories of manuscripts. It was prepared from the *Kartarpur Pothis* in 1642.



But its reputation became widespread among some sections of the Panth like the Handalis during the last quarter of the seventeenth century due to political disturbances. The period of turmoil for the Sikh community during the eighteenth century provided ample opportunity for the Banno group, particularly the Handalis, to assert their influence, and the Banno version came to be widely used during the eighteenth century. Professor Pashaura Singh refers to a dozen manuscripts of the eighteenth century as manuscripts of the Banno recension. Yet, he admits that an actual examination of these manuscripts shows that there was no single text of the Banno version during the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, he argues that the *Damdami Bir* was popularized by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in the early nineteenth century. The printing press provided 'another impetus' for the Damdami version to be universally accepted by the Sikh community. See, Pashaura Singh, *The Guru Granth Sahib: Canon, Meaning and Authority*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp.217-20. Cf. Gurinder Singh Mann, *The Making of Sikh Scripture*, pp. 122-25.

## THE GODDESS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY SIKH LITERATURE

The episode of the Goddess in connection with the institution of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh occurs mainly in four works composed during the second half of the eighteenth century. However, in the *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, the articles on Koer Singh's *Gurbilas Patshahi 10*, Kesar Singh Chhibber's *Bansavalinama Dasan Patshahian Ka*, Sarup Das Bhalla's *Mahima Prakash*, and Sukha Singh's *Gurbilas Patshahi 10* make no reference to the episode of the Goddess which appears in all these four works.<sup>1</sup> More recently, however, Professor Gurtej Singh has analysed Koer Singh's *Gurbilas* in a manner that gives a good deal of importance to Koer Singh's induction of the episode of the Goddess in his account of the institution of the Khalsa.

According to Professor Gurtej Singh, Koer Singh's treatment of the myth of Durgapuja is 'partly an expression of the dichotomy that prevailed in his mind.' He was unable to subscribe exclusively to 'Sikhism' or 'Hinduism'. He appears to rationalize the wielding of weapons by the lower castes through the tale of Durgapuja. A popular tale was harnessed by Koer Singh to portray his theory that Mughal rule had lost its legitimacy by becoming unjust, particularly when Aurangzeb undertook to destroy Hinduism. Guru Gobind Singh decided to obtain the blessings of Durga for destroying 'Muslim rule'. Significantly, Koer Singh represents Guru Gobind Singh as personally deciding to hold the ceremony and participating in Durgapuja in its last phase. The gods and goddesses of the Brahmanical pantheon worship the Guru after the *devi* has appeared. They offer weapons and other items which the Guru would later prescribe as mandatory symbols of the faith of the Khalsa. An imaginary story was woven into the narrative for the consumption of the Hindu masses. The Khalsa were destined to succeed and they deserved wholehearted support of the Hindus in the

interest of preserving Hinduism. This was the underlying purpose of the book.<sup>2</sup>

Professor Gurtej Singh suggests that Koer Singh, who was the first to mention a tale that was to become current in Sikh literature, could be its originator. The source of this myth could be the Kashmiri Brahmans at whose request Guru Tegh Bahadur had courted martyrdom.<sup>3</sup> We know, however, that the episode of the Goddess figures in a *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh, which was composed earlier. It is also important to note that there are differences of detail in the episodes found in the *Rahitnama* and the *Gurbilas*. The version given in the *Rahitnama* is elaborated by Kesar Singh Chhibber in his *Bansavalinama*. It seems, therefore, that more than one version of the episode had become current by the mid-eighteenth century.

Professor Gurtej Singh observes that, shorn of its Hindu features, Koer Singh's *Gurbilas Patshahi 10*, can provide 'a complete code of conduct for the Khalsa'.<sup>4</sup> This observation carries the implication that the episode of the Goddess does not impinge upon the beliefs and practices of the Khalsa presented in the *Gurbilas*. In other words, the treatment of this episode can be appreciated in terms of its purpose and function in a work as a whole.

Koer Singh places the episode of the Goddess after Guru Gobind Singh's return to Makhawal-Anandpur from Paonta (after the battle of Bhangani) and before the institution of the Khalsa. Unlike the *Bachittar Natak* and the *Sri Gur Sobha*, Koer Singh's *Gurbilas* places all other battles after the institution of the Khalsa. He sets out to narrate the appearance of Chandika (Bhavani, Ambika, Kali and Sharda Bhavani) to bless Guru Gobind Singh. She was worshipped for three years but she did not appear. The Brahmans told Guru Gobind Singh that the Goddess appeared in one year during the Satyuga, in two years during the Treta, in three years during the Duapar, and in four years during the Kaliyuga. They, therefore, needed a secluded place to invoke her. Naina Devi was chosen for this reason. They present the Goddess as the Supreme Deity, the creator of Brahma, Vishnu and

Mahesh. Her praises could bring political power (*raj*), and Khalsa Panth could be made manifest to destroy the enemy. Destruction of the 'Turks' and the establishment of a sovereign rule were two sides of the same political coin. Guru Gobind Singh participated in the worship. The gods were now afraid that the Guru might be empowered by the Goddess at their cost. Koer Singh goes on to say that the gods did not know that the Guru was doing all this for the sake of others (*par-upkar*). Millions of paradises and thousand of thrones were at his feet, and millions of boons from gods and goddesses were not equal to his feet. Only for the welfare of others did the Guru keep himself aloof and use the agency of the Goddess to institute the Khalsa. The worship of the Goddess was his wondrous act (*kautak*).<sup>5</sup>

Many spirits are said to have tried to scare or lure the Guru when he was worshipping the Goddess without eating anything. However, they could not cross the line of '*satnam*'. The Guru paid no attention to them. Those who had no faith in the Guru were sceptical about the whole project. When the time of the Goddess's appearance was coming close, the officiant Brahman told Guru Gobind Singh that she required sacrifice of a brave person. The Guru told him that none else was so brave as the Brahman himself. The Brahman ran away. Five Sikhs of the Guru offered themselves to be sacrificed. The Guru told them that he would call them if and when needed. They were 'the five beloved' (*panj piara*). The Goddess appeared with different weapons or other articles in her eight hands. The Guru offered to make the sacrifice of 1,25,000 Sikhs. The Goddess said, 'ask for the boon'. The Guru asked for the creation of the Khalsa to destroy the *mlechh*. The Goddess said that, like her son Shankar, the Guru would always remain detached (*nirban*). Then she gave to Guru Gobind Singh the *khanda* with which she had killed Sumbh and Nisumbh.<sup>6</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh praised the Goddess. Brahma, Mahesh and others praised the Guru. They offered whatever was in their power. Hanuwant gave *kachhehra*, Vishnu gave *kesh*, and the Goddess herself gave weapons. The Guru gave gifts to the Brahmans and they

sang his praises. He was distinguished from everyone else in the world to have the *devi's darshan*. Guru Gobind Singh now resolved to set his own house in order (*greh-sodh*) by removing the Masands. With one exception, they were all burnt. On the occasion of the Baisakhi, the Sikhs came in large numbers. They had heard about the appearance of Kalika. The episode of the Guru and the Goddess, says Koer Singh, ends here.<sup>7</sup>

At the outset of his work, Koer Singh invokes the aid of Ad Purkh, Kartar. He praises the True Guru. He seeks the aid also of Adi Shakti Mata who made the Panth all powerful. At the time of Baisakhi, when Guru Gobind Singh asked for heads, some people said that he was unable to bear the sight of Kali, and she had an adverse effect on his mind; he had killed the Masands and now he was out to kill the Sikhs. In his representation to Aurangzeb, Raja Bhim Chand states, among other things, that Guru Gobind Singh had the sight of Kalika after worship and received *khanda* from her, which made him very powerful. In connection with the arrival of Prince Mu'azzam in the Punjab (in 1696) for action against the rebels, Koer Singh mentions the worship of Kalika at the time of worshipping the weapons in Anandpur, on the occasion of the Navratas.<sup>8</sup> These are all the references to Kalika that we have in Koer Singh's *Gurbilas* in addition to the chapter in which the episode is narrated. It is not clear how the Khalsa were supposed to worship Kalika when they worshipped the weapons. In any case, the role of the Goddess remains restricted to empowerment of the Khalsa, and Kalika remains peripheral and tangential to the belief system of the Khalsa. She finds no place in the Khalsa *rahit*.

Turning to Kesar Singh Chhibber's *Bansavalinama Dasan Patshahian Ka*, we find that of all its chapters the one on Guru Gobind Singh is the longest. The treatment of the Goddess in this chapter is quite elaborate. After the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh went into seclusion to perform austerities for the destruction of 'Turks'. A voice from above told him to grasp the *khanda*. He resumed his duties as the Guru. Pandit Devi Ditta used to recite

and explain the *Mahabharata* to him. Guru Gobind Singh asked him how the Pandav Bhim Sen had become so powerful as to hurl elephants at the enemy. The Pandit replied, 'by performing *jagg-hom*'. Guru Gobind Singh expressed his wish to perform that, but told him that Bhavani should appear before him in person when *hom* was performed. The Pandit confessed his inability to make it happen, but suggested that Brahmans of Kashi and Kashmir might perform the *hom* successfully.<sup>9</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh tested a number of Brahmans to identify the true ones. They were invited to eat food. The cash award for eating meat was far larger than the one for vegetarian food. The award was steadily increased to tempt more and more Brahmans to eat meat. At the end, only three remained stuck to vegetarian food: Hari Das, Har Bhagwan, and Lachhi Ram. Even when threatened with death, they remained steadfast. Guru Gobind Singh appreciated their firmness, washed their feet in water, and took *charanamrit*. Preparations for *hom* were now made at Naina Devi. Two more Brahmans were specially invited: Vishanpal from Kashi and Shivbakar from Kashmir. Guru Gobind Singh insisted that the fire should arise from self-ignition and that the Goddess should appear in person. However, the Brahmans said that they were not able to do this. They told the Guru that Kalakdas was capable of making the Goddess appear anywhere.<sup>10</sup>

Kalakdas was invited from the South. He asked Guru Gobind Singh whether or not he would be prepared to undergo the hardship of the rite for 40 days in one and the same posture. The Guru was prepared for the rite. Kalakdas wanted to know why the Guru wanted to perform the rite. Guru Gobind Singh told him that he was ordained by God to destroy the wicked and the evil. Kalakdas suggested that this could be done by creating a *panth* that should destroy the wicked and the evil. The Guru decided to create a new *panth* for *raj*. The sacred thread, the sacred mark and *dhoti* should be replaced by a new mark for battle against the wicked. Kalakdas argued that rulership involved sin and the Guru should make room for sin in the *panth*. Here, the Guru



mentions four categories of Sikhs: *didari*, *mukte*, *murid* and *mayiki*. The last category would accommodate sin.<sup>11</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh put on a new sacred thread and got ready for the rite. For 40 days the *hom* was performed, while the praises of the Goddess and *kirtan* were sung outside. On the 40<sup>th</sup> day the eight-armed Goddess appeared in all her splendour. Guru Gobind Singh could not open his eyes after the first glimpse of the Goddess. Kalakdas asked him to offer his head. The Guru said that Kalakdas should offer his head. He offered his hands and the *khanda* of the Goddess cut off his hands. Kalakdas touched with his foot the Brahmans who had become unconscious and they became conscious. Kalakdas asked them to recite a particular prayer from the *Devi Istotar*. They did so and Kalakdas's hands were restored. He told Guru Gobind Singh that his head would have been restored in the same way if he had offered it to the Goddess. Kalakdas could not offer his head because none else knew how to revive him. Nevertheless, the hands offered by Kalakdas pleased the Goddess and this went in Guru Gobind Singh's favour. All the Brahmans were given generous *dakshina* except Devi Das. Guru Gobind Singh apologized for ignoring him and made him happy with gifts and presents. This event is said to have taken place in 1678. However, according to Chhibber, the Khalsa Panth was created in several stages from 1693 to 1703.<sup>12</sup>

In the opening verse of the *Bansavalinama*, the writer invokes Satgur Purkh, all the gods, Mata Gauri, Mata Sarusti, and Ganesh for aid in composing the work. In the body of his work, Chhibber never misses the chance to minimize the difference between the Sikh faith and the Brahmanical tradition. He saw no contradictions between the belief in One God and in the *devi* at the same time. Yet, in his own way, he mentions all the basic features of the Khalsa *rahit*. He looks upon the Khalsa as clearly distinct from Hindus and Muslims, as an entity which in fact is irritating for both Hindus and Muslims. There are contradictions of this kind in the work of Kesar Singh Chhibber and,

consequently, his treatment of the episode of the Goddess is rather diffused and devoid of focus.<sup>13</sup>

The *Sakhi 17* in Sarup Das Bhalla's *Mahima Prakash* relates to the invocation of Chandi Mata for laying the foundation of the Khalsa Panth through *kharag jagg*. Sarup Das talks of a general situation in which the Sikhs coming from all directions for the Guru's *darshan* at Anandpur were ill treated by Hindus and opposed by 'Turks', resulting occasionally in armed fight. Due to the enmity of both Hindus and 'Turks', many Sikhs died on the way. The Sikhs appealed to the Guru for protection.<sup>14</sup>

It is said that Guru Gobind Singh did not wish to reveal his spiritual attainments (*siddhi*) because it was against his *dharam*, but nothing could be done without making use of *siddhi*. Therefore, he thought of creating brave *chhatris* (Kshatriyas) through the medium (*abahan*) of Chandi. By performing *kharag jagg*, the *dharam* of *Chhatris* could be made manifest in order to destroy the *mlechh*. The temple at the top of the hill was chosen for this purpose and the materials required for *hom* were made available to the *pandits*. They assured the Guru that the Goddess would appear in person. They added that they would lose their senses on seeing the Goddess. Therefore, the Guru should make the offering prepared for her. For the sake of *dharam*, the Guru adopted the tradition of Kaliyuga to follow the *Atharva Veda*.<sup>15</sup>

The eight-armed Mata appeared on the proper recitation of *mantras* for *hom*. Guru Gobind Singh bowed to her, and offered food and his sword. The Goddess was pleased. She placed her *khanda* in the fire pit. Then the Guru awakened the *pandits*. By using water and milk the fire was made cold and the pit was cleared. The double-edged *khanda* was found there. The Guru took the *khanda* and gave generous charities to the *pandits*. The *khanda* was named 'Sri Sahib'. With the completion of *kharag jagg* the Guru acquired the means of victory over the enemy. He decided to introduce the use (*parchar*) of *khanda* to transform the whole *sangat* into the brave Khalsa bearing

arms. The *dharam* and *karam* of the Kaliyuga were thus made manifest through the Khalsa.<sup>16</sup>

Sarup Das Bhalla invokes God and the True Guru for aid at the beginning of his work.<sup>17</sup> The Goddess does not figure anywhere in the work except in *sakhi* 17. She has no place in the *rahit* of the Khalsa. If *sakhi* 17 were to be dropped from the *Mahima Prakash* it would make no difference to the account of the Khalsa in the rest of this work. The mechanical imposition of the episode for the creation of the Khalsa is more evident in the *Mahima Prakash* than in any other work.

Writing his *Gurbilas Patshahi* 10 towards the end of the eighteenth century, Sukha Singh gives three chapters to the Goddess. These chapters follow the one on the battle of Nadaun and the expedition of the Khanzada, and they precede the chapters on the killing of Masands and the manifestation of the Panth. The story goes that one day at Anandpur Guru Gobind Singh thought of instituting the Panth to fulfil the purpose for which he had been sent by God. He invited Brahmans from different parts of the country, like Mathura, Kashi, Prayag and Kashmir. All kinds of food was served to them. A *taka* was fixed as *dakshina* for those who would eat vegetarian food, 5 *mohars* for those who would eat meat, and 500 *ashrafis* for those who would drink alcohol too. In all, fourteen Brahmans did not eat meat (or drink alcohol). They were praised by the Guru as true Brahmans. They were told to worship the Goddess so that she appeared in person. They expressed their inability and named Datta Nand of Ujjain as the Brahman who could make the Goddess appear. Guru Gobind Singh was keen to have the blessings of the Goddess for creating the Khalsa Panth to destroy the oppressive 'Turks'. Through God's grace, the Brahman from Ujjain came to Anandpur. All the materials needed were made available to him. The Brahman suggested that the bank of the river Sutlej, which was as beautiful as the Ganga, was appropriate for the worship of Adi Bhavani, Chandi. All the necessary arrangements were made to perform the rite.<sup>18</sup>

For two and a half years, sacrifice of all kinds was offered to the Goddess and her praises were sung, but she did not appear. Guru Gobind Singh called the Brahman to the court to know the reason for this delay. The Brahman said that he needed four years and a secluded place for the rite. Naina Devi was then chosen on this account, and all the necessary arrangements were made.<sup>19</sup>

Sukha Singh describes how Guru Gobind Singh participated in the rite. When the time for the appearance of the Goddess came close, Guru Gobind Singh was warned that it was not easy to look at the Goddess. He remained steadfast. The Goddess asked Guru Gobind Singh to say what he wanted to have. He asked for the gift of the sword so that he should be victorious and destroy the *mlechh*; the *sants* and the whole world should remain in peace; no enemy should ever defeat them; *deg*, *teg* and *bijay* (bounty, sword and victory) should always be their lot. The Goddess gave the boon and vanished. There was all praise for the Guru. None else had seen the Goddess in person during the Kaliyuga. The Brahmans were generously rewarded by the Guru. The stage was set for the great event in the life of Guru Gobind Singh.<sup>20</sup>

Sukha Singh says in all modesty that he was no learned *pandit*; he related the episode as it was current in the world.<sup>21</sup> However, the episode given by Sukha Singh is very close to what we find in Koer Singh's *Gurbilas*. Sukha Singh refers to Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh as unique in the world for removing sin and ignorance. He refers to Adi Purkh, Kartar, as the creator of the universe. Kalka, for Sukha Singh, is the power of God, as in the *Shastar Nam Mala*.<sup>22</sup> In Sukha Singh's work too the Goddess has no relevance for the doctrines and conduct of the Khalsa.

On the whole, we have three versions: one, presented in the *Rahitnama* of Chaupa Singh and the *Bansavalinama* of Kesar Singh Chhibber; two, presented by Koer Singh and Sukha Singh; and three, presented by Sarup Das Bhalla. It appears, therefore, that the episode of the Goddess had become current in the oral tradition and Sikh

writers incorporated the episode in their works for their own purposes. Paradoxically, the writers who tend to treat the Goddess as the Supreme Deity are also the writers who strongly support the Khalsa *rahit* in much detail from which the Goddess is absent. Thus it seems, she plays a limited role, appearing only in one episode which does not integrate with any *Gurbilas* as a whole.

#### NOTES

1. *The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, ed. Harbans Singh, Patiala: Punjabi University, vol. 1. (1992), pp. 279-80; vol. II (2001), 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (first published in 1996), pp. 135-7; vol. III (1997), pp. 16-17.
2. Gurtej Singh, 'Compromising the Khalsa Tradition: Koer Singh's Gurbilas', *The Khalsa: Sikh and Non-Sikh Perspectives*, ed. J.S. Grewal, New Delhi: Manohar, 2004, p. 49, 53-5.
3. Ibid., pp. 54-6.
4. Ibid., p. 56.
5. Koer Singh, *Gurbilas Patshahi 10*, ed. Shamsheer Singh Ashok, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1968, pp. 110-16.
6. Ibid., pp. 116-21.
7. Ibid., pp. 121-6.
8. Ibid., pp. 17-18, 128, 143, 175.
9. Kesar Singh Chhibber, *Bansavalinama Dasan Patshahian Ka*, ed. Ratan Singh Jaggi (*Parkh*, vol II), Chandigarh: Panjab University, 1972, pp. 100-2.
10. Ibid., pp. 102-7.
11. Ibid., pp. 107-12.
12. Ibid., pp. 113-43.
13. J.S. Grewal, 'Brahmanizing the Tradition: Chhibber's Bansavlinama', in *The Khalsa: Sikh and Non-Sikh Perspectives*, pp. 59-87.
14. Sarup Das Bhalla, *Mahima Prakash*, ed. Gobind Singh Lamba and Khazan Singh, Patiala: Punjab Languages Department, 1971, vol. II, pp. 818-20.

15. Ibid., pp. 820-2.
16. Ibid., pp. 822-4.
17. Ibid., vol. I, p. 1.
18. Sukha Singh, *Gurbilas Patshahi 10*, ed., Gursharan Kaur Jaggi, Patiala: Punjab Languages Department, 1989, pp. 126-35.
19. Ibid., pp. 136-40.
20. Ibid., pp. 146-58.
21. Ibid., p. 159.
22. Ibid., pp. 1, 2.



### SCHOLARLY CONCERN WITH SIKH ETHICS

Several scholars have written on Sikh ethics and moral philosophy, giving considerable importance to the *Rahitnamas* of the eighteenth century. For example, Professor Avtar Singh's *Ethics of the Sikhs* contains a chapter on 'Duties' which takes into account the evidence of the *Rahitnamas*. He makes the observation that these codes of conduct were formulated after the institution of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh. Some of the codes were the product of the time when the Sikhs were actively involved in a political struggle. Therefore, the codes reflect the hostile attitude of the Khalsa towards their opponents. Compilers of the *Rahitnamas* were also faced with the problem of consolidating the forces of Sikhism. As a result, some of the extreme positions adopted were more in the spirit of conservation and internal discipline. Furthermore, the codes contain minute details, indicating love for detail by an individual compiler rather than any logical necessity of the doctrine.<sup>1</sup>

According to Professor Avtar Singh, the *Tankhanama* of Bhai Nand Lal and his *Prashan-Uttar*, and the *Rahitnama* of Bhai Desa Singh were not dictated by Guru Gobind; some devotees of the Guru recorded his dialogue with Bhai Nand Lal and Desa Singh. Chaupa Singh's *Rahitnama* was also sometimes ascribed to Guru Gobind Singh. The *Rahitnama* of Prahlad Singh was also claimed to have been written by Guru Gobind Singh because it begins with '*Bachan sri mukh vak Patshahi 10*'. Professor Avtar Singh knows that Sikh scholars have expressed diverse views about the date and authorship of the *Rahitnamas*. He is inclined to agree with Bhai Jodh Singh who expresses his inability to establish which of the *Rahitnamas* was actually dictated by Guru Gobind Singh, and who suggests further that these *Rahitnamas* were written by faithful devotees and leading Sikhs who sought to describe the Sikh way of life at its best as known to them. The fact that Bhai Jodh Singh quotes from the *Rahitnamas* of

Bhai Prahlad Singh, Chaupa Singh, Desa Singh and Nand Lal indicates that he looked upon these *Rahitnamas* as relevant for understanding the Sikh way of life. In other words, no *Rahitnama* as a whole could be treated as authentic and no *Rahitnama* could be regarded as entirely spurious. The editing of the various *Rahitnamas* by Bhai Kahn Singh in his *Gurmat Sudhakar* also indicates that he was not sympathetic to some of the extremist views and injunctions laid down in them. While he was not willing to completely reject them, he was equally unprepared to lend credence to them in the form in which they were available to him. The *Prem Sumarag*, though prefaced with *Patshahi 10* could not be attributed to Guru Gobind Singh. Professor Avtar Singh refers to Ernest Trumpp who categorically rejects the idea that any *Rahitnama* was dictated by Guru Gobind Singh. Professor Avtar Singh comes to the conclusion that in their present form the *Rahitnamas* cannot be treated as directly dictated by the Guru, partly because of their great variance and partly due to the fact that many injunctions contained in them are unequivocally against the teachings of the Tenth Guru. The *Rahitnamas* appear to have been interpolated later by the copyists to include their personal views. On the whole, however, the *Rahitnamas* had a core inspired by Guru Gobind Singh and his predecessors. This core, apart from some organizational duties, embodied the moral duties.<sup>2</sup>

Avtar Singh is deliberately selective in taking into account only the main moral duties. The *Rahitnamas*, according to Avtar Singh, lay stress on three duties: right belief; two, right livelihood, and chastity and fidelity, including restrictions of sexual relationship within the marital bounds. The prime purpose of the first duty was to ensure that the teachings of the Guru were acted upon and the new converts to Sikhism did not import into it their own superstitious notions and practices. The second duty underlines that every Sikh should adopt right means of livelihood. They should not be dishonest in their trade or depend on the charity of others. Even the persons looking after the Gurdwaras should not use the offerings for personal purposes. These

injunctions could be traced to the teachings of Guru Nanak. The third duty was then to underline that sexual intercourse was to be confined strictly to the marital bounds. Adultery is emphatically forbidden. These duties also echo some of the familiar expressions in the *Adi Granth*. Apart from these moral duties, the Sikhs were required to wear *kachh*, *kesh*, *kangha*, *kirpan* and *kara*. It was obligatory for them to be baptized. There were other miscellaneous duties in the *Rahitnamas*, which included minute details contributed by the compilers or the authors according to their own interests or inclinations.<sup>3</sup> Professor Avtar Singh emphasizes that the principles of duties and the rules of life (*raza* and *rahit*), taken together, were the basic obligations in Sikhism. The Sikhs did not emphasize any conflict between the two.

A few years after the publication of Professor Avtar Singh's book, Professor Surinder Singh Kohli published his *Sikh Ethics* in 1975. He states in the preface that a code of conduct for the Sikhs and the Khalsa was formed after the institution of Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh. 'Still the basic moral code for all Sikhs is contained in the *Adi Granth*, the Sikh scripture.' Therefore, Professor Kohli uses the *Adi Granth* as the basic and main source for his book on the Sikh moral code. Among the other sources he mentions, the poetry of Bhai Gurdas is next in importance to the *Adi Granth*. The *Rahitnamas* are seen as useful sources, like those of Bhai Daya Singh, Bhai Nand Lal, Bhai Chaupa Singh and Bhai Desa Singh. The *Prem Sumarag Granth* is mentioned separately as a detailed treatise on ethics and Khalsa polity.<sup>4</sup>

Professor Kohli justifies his undertaking by emphasizing that the Sikh Gurus laid great emphasis on effort on the part of the Sikh. Liberation could not be attained without God's grace, but effort was necessary for creating the possibility of receiving grace. According to Professor Kohli, the *Adi Granth* is most emphatic about the Godly qualities. However, there are virtues and vices. Kohli mentions three categories of virtues and vices relevant for human effort: those of the conduct, those of the speech, and those of the mind. Then he devotes

a chapter to the Sikh way of life. The Khalsa figures in this chapter. Then there are two appendices on sourcebooks for Sikh ethics and a compendium of injunctions for the Khalsa from '*Rahitnamas*'. However, the bulk of Professor Kohli's work relates to the Guru period though the eighteenth century is not ignored. We may look only at what he says about Sikh ethics of the Khalsa, directly or by implication.<sup>5</sup>

Professor Kohli refers to the creation of the Khalsa on the Baisakhi of 1699. The purpose of administering baptism of the double edged sword was the bestowal of both *bhakti* and *shakti* on the Khalsa. The *amrit* was prepared for the *panj piyaras*. In Professor Kohli's view, the tradition of martyrdom in the Sikh community was linked up with the baptism of the double edged sword. The Guru considered the Sikh and the discipline of the Khalsa as synonymous. Guru Gobind Singh gave new symbols to the Khalsa: *kesh*, *kangha*, *kara*, *kachch* and *kirpan*. The *kesh* symbolized saintly life, the *kangha* symbolized cleanliness of *kesh*, the *kara* was a symbol for honest and right use of the hands, the *kachch* symbolized continence, and the sword was a general symbol for the primal power for the *Adi Shakti*. Besides the five Ks, the Guru prohibited the commission of four deadly sins: cutting of *kesh*, eating meat prepared in Muslim fashion, using tobacco, and adultery with a Muslim woman. Professor Kohli comments on each of these points to suggest the general principles on which the specific application was based. Adultery with a Muslim woman for example was an extension of the general principle in the *Adi Granth* against all kinds of illicit sexual relations. He suggests finally that the four taboos could be understood as injunctions against (a) shaving or cutting of hair, (b) having slavish mentality, (c) using intoxicants, and (d) adultery and fornication.<sup>6</sup>

In the first appendix, Professor Kohli refers to two major categories of sources for Sikh ethics. He places the Sikh scriptures known as the *Adi Granth* and the *Dasam Granth*, in the first category. In the second category are the works prepared by the Sikhs. They contained several ethical injunctions but several thoughts in these works were not in consonance with the spirit of the *Adi Granth*. These

works are said to be of three kinds: (a) interpretative, like the compositions of Bhai Gurdas; (b) biographical like the *Janamsakhis*, the *Mahima Prakash*, *Gurbilas Patshahi* 6, the *Gurbilas Patshahi* 10, the *Sri Gur Sobha*, the *Sau Sakhi*, the *Guru Pratap Surya* (including *Guru Nanak Prakash*), and the *Panth Prakash*; (c) injunctive, like the *Rahitnamas* of Bhai Daya Singh, Bhai Nand Lal, Bhai Desa Singh, Bhai Chaupa Singh and Bhai Prahlad Singh, the *Prem Sumarag Granth*, the *Sudharam Marg Granth*, the *Tankhahnama*, the *Muktnama*, and the *Wajibul Arz*. Of all these, the work of Bhai Gurdas was considered authentic by the Sikhs. Professor Kohli tells us that none of the other works of the second category has been taken into consideration by him. In other words, though he talks of the Khalsa he does not use the evidence of any of these sources.<sup>7</sup>

The only exception that Professor Kohli makes is that of the *Rahitnamas*, which appears to carry the implication that the *Rahitnamas* are more important for the study of Sikh ethics than the other works of the eighteenth or the nineteenth century. In any case, he selects injunctions from the *Rahitnamas* and gives their English translation in the second appendix. There are twenty-two injunctions from the *Tankhahnama*, only two from the *Rahitnama* of Bhai Nand Lal, known as the *Prashan-Uttar*, twenty-nine from the *Rahitnama* of Bhai Desa Singh, and seventeen from the *Rahitnama* of Bhai Chaupa Singh.<sup>8</sup>

In his *Sikh Moral Tradition*, Dr. Nripinder Singh is concerned primarily with the ethical perceptions of the Sikhs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. However, he goes into the earlier inheritance in which the *Rahitnamas* figure very prominently. He points out that Professor Kohli had contented himself by translating apothegms from a few *Rahitnamas* in an appendix to his *Sikh Ethics*. Professor Avtar Singh had subsumed the entire discussion in a chapter entitled 'duties'. Thus, the Sikh scholars trained in the *Guru Granth Sahib* Studies considered the *Rahitnamas* alien to their discipline. If this is the position of scholars interested in the study of ethics and *Guru*



*Granth Sahib* not much could be expected from others, maintains Dr Nripinder Singh. Their works amount to little more than a positional paper or two, as in the case of Professor J.S. Grewal. Bhai Randhir Singh and Piara Singh Padam give only introductory comment in their edited works. Professor Teja Singh and Mohan Singh in their larger works on Sikh history and Punjabi literature have simply a passing remark to offer. Orthodox Sikh scholars like Bhai Kahn Singh and Bhai Jodh Singh treat the *Rahitnamas* as part of Sikh literature but avoid serious investigation. They counteract the assumption that these discourses are precepts from Guru Gobind Singh. They find little need for further comment. The Western scholars like Ernest Trumpp and Max Arthur Macauliffe see only a limited significance in the *Rahitnamas*. Trumpp looks upon them as indirectly inspired by Guru Gobind Singh for making the majority of his unruly followers subservient to him and arousing in them hatred for Muslims. Macauliffe looked upon this body of literature as extra-scriptural and did not include it in his work on the Sikh religion. The point which Dr. Nripinder Singh wishes to hammer is the importance of the *Rahitnamas* for religious and ethical concerns developing within the Sikh moral tradition. In his view, the *Rahitnamas* are second only to the *Guru Granth Sahib* as the authoritative source for the study of Sikh faith and Sikh ethics.<sup>9</sup>

The beginning of *rahit* for Dr. Nripinder Singh is the Baisakhi of 1699, but he points out that the precedents of *rahit* were there in the earlier Sikh history. He analyses the *Rahitnamas* as the primary source materials on Sikh *rahit*, envisaging a code that encompasses the personal and organizational aspects of Sikh life. The code derived its basic inspiration from the lives of the Gurus and the themes they articulate in the Sikh scripture; it was an evolving product related as much to the moral and cultural features present in the early Sikh Tradition as to the events coterminous with its formal promulgation and the events that took place subsequently. The author goes on to add that the *Rahitnamas* can be best understood in their fundamental ideal



direction as being consonant with the teachings of *Guru Granth Sahib*. He puts forth the idea that Sikh *rahit* began accumulating with the life and work of Guru Nanak but its first instructional formulation took place substantially with the founding of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699.<sup>10</sup>

Dr. Nripinder Singh mentions the major problems with the *Rahitnamas*: they are difficult to date, and secondly, there is hardly any extant text which has not suffered from interpolations made by pious or self-serving writers. The account given by Sainapat in his *Sri Gur Sobha* is very brief; it does not include even an outline of the proceedings of the Baisakhi of 1699. Dr. Nripinder Singh thinks that the *Bachittar Natak* is relevant in its own way for the *rahit* prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh. The author mentions two things in this connection: One that man's moral depravity could be understood only at the human level, and two, that God is the embodiment of fearless and unconquerable will, and of dauntless courage. According to the *Sri Gur Sobha*, the immediate cause for the assembly of 1699 was the institution of the Masands. The process of moral uplift had received a setback due to the presence of these debased intermediaries. The disciples of the Guru were to be linked directly to him. The message which Guru Gobind Singh gave to the Khalsa made for an inspired brotherhood of ardently devoted men and women. Though the symbols given to the Khalsa were external, they constituted an integral part of the moral scheme envisioned by the Guru. Dr. Nripinder Singh talks on the assumption that the five Ks were enjoined upon the Khalsa on the Baisakhi Day of 1699. Each symbol was one link in the chain of moral rejuvenation. There was a unity of conception underlining them all. The outwardly visible symbols were more than metaphorical expressions of the inner valiance of the soul to stand for justice.

Dr. Nripinder Singh does not feel satisfied with Sardar Kapur Singh's interpretation of '*raj karega Khalsa*' which implies the political dominance of the Sikh community in the eighteenth century. The Sikhs did cherish the proposition of a milieu in which they would be rulers

rather than the ruled. For Dr. Nripinder Singh, the faith of the Khalsa and the ideals they upheld lay eventually beyond their *panj kakari rahit*; the ideal of the *raj karega Khalsa* was not so much the founding of a Sikh kingdom as the instituting of an entire way of living. Dr. Nripinder Singh clarifies that 'the moral significance of the five symbols and litany appended to the Sikh *ardas* lies eventually in the faith of the Sikhs and the transcendent element they encounter through them rather than in any single representation in which those symbols or those words figure'.<sup>11</sup>

Dr. Nripinder Singh attaches great importance to the investiture of Sikhs with symbols which received prominence in the literature on *rahit*. Eventhough Sainapat gives the fewest details of the event, Koer Singh, Kesar Singh Chhibber and Sukha Singh are eloquent about the ceremonial in which they give prominence to the Goddess Kali as equivalent of the feminine principle. Dr. Nripinder Singh comes to the conclusion that the creation of the Khalsa was 'as much a response to an existential situation as it was the fulfillment of the moral vision inspired by Guru Nanak'. In face of the state oppression by both the Mughal administrators and the Hindu hill Rajas, historical exigency seems to have reacted on a morally imbued personality. The choosing of the five Sikhs, their investment with the five symbols, the baptismal rite and the confirmation of the Khalsa as the Panth were together instrumental in creating a new awareness for united action in behalf of justice and equality.<sup>12</sup>

Before his death, Guru Gobind Singh invested the *Granth* in the presence of the Khalsa with Guruship, bringing to a close the line of personal preceptors. This was his homage to a body of literature considered to be the word of God. Only a little less important was Guru Gobind Singh's political philosophy, expressed in the *Zafarnama* and the *Fatehnama*, in which the principles of state craft were to be made subservient to ethical considerations. The mandatory mode of Sikh conduct issued from the explicit objective and activity of Guru Gobind Singh made manifest on the Baisakhi Day of 1699.<sup>13</sup>

In Dr. Nripinder Singh's view, though the *Rahitnamas* did not contain the exact statements of Guru Gobind Singh, they nonetheless constituted a unique body of literature in a consistent style which has little resemblance to the compositions of Guru Gobind Singh. Their verve and tone was markedly different from those of the *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas. The two singularly significant and by far the longest ones are the *Prem Sumarag* and the *Chaupa Singh Rahitnama*. Six other *Rahitnamas* ranged between four and forty pages each. Their dates of composition vary and their authorship is spurious. Texts, even when assigned to particular authors have dissimilarity. There were no critical editions. What is absolutely clear, the *Rahitnamas* were not written in defiance, or correction, of the *Guru Granth Sahib*. On the contrary, the scripture has been taken as a general source of direction and inspiration. They conform to *Guru Granth Sahib's* teaching in the general principles that they enunciate. However, the detail given in the *Rahitnamas* is not necessarily identical with that of the scripture.

For making use of the evidence of the *Rahitnamas*, Dr. Nripinder Singh proposes a working hypothesis. He suggests that a larger work bearing on *rahit* must have come into circulation sometime in the middle of the eighteenth century, probably, written in prose after the *Prem Sumarag* variety. In due course, to this were added or from it were extracted, the smaller *Rahitnamas* written in terse, epigrammatic verse. To lend credence and respectability, the names of the more outstanding Sikhs of Guru Gobind Singh's time were appended to these later compositions. In view of the speculative status of his working hypothesis, Dr. Nripinder Singh uses their evidence for studying the Khalsa tradition and the emergent *Rahitnamas* as specifying morally significant institutional arrangements in Sikh life.

The author comments on the significance of each of these. The *pahul* implied the birth of a new spirit and the beginning of a new discipline of life. In accepting the new name of Singh, the Sikh announces the new morally sentient personality he has been invested with. The insistence on uncut hair is made in the name of adhering to

the natural and archetypal form bestowed upon human kind by its creator. The shared form of the Khalsa assured a sense of identity and a natural condition of equality. The concept of *tankhah* marks out the moral necessity of accepting responsibility for one's actions and indicates the individual's subservience to the collective will of the community. The confession is made in an open assembly and the penance imposed is borne willingly as atonement and correction. Admission to the new community was accompanied by constraints imposed on female infanticide, falsehood, gambling or cheating, and adultery. The severe chastisement of killing of female children is a vivid example of the respect paid to the moral norm of respect for life. The killer of daughter (*kurimar*) is labeled as an enemy of the Khalsa. He has exercised his right to procreate but not met the obligation to rear offspring. Gambling, cheating, falsehood and intoxicants are destructive of human association. Dr. Nripinder Singh quotes the *Prem Sumarag Granth* for the manner in which the use of opium is allowed rather hesitantly. Another feature of the *Prem Sumarag* he emphasizes is that even kings cannot claim exemption from the moral norms of truthfulness and equity. It underlines the duty of the ruler to be absolutely just. The conception of justice includes the obligations of the ruler towards the poor. The author of the *Daya Singh Tankhah Updes* describes the relationship between the ruler and the ruled as one between the father and the child. The injunction against adultery in the *Rahitnamas* embodies primarily the violation of the marital covenant. The categories to be avoided are termed as *parinari* or *paristri* (another's wife), *besva* (prostitute) and Turkani (Muslim woman). In the total context of Sikh ethics what is emphasized is chastity and absolute truthfulness in relationship between man and woman for the endurance of community. References to Muslim women are to be seen in the historical context. Muslim men, at time of war, captured Hindu and Sikh women. Sikh men were therefore to take special precaution against retaliation in the like manner.<sup>14</sup>

In the Sikh tradition, according to Dr. Nripinder Singh, the *Rahitnamas* are a singular literature that informs us of the religious insights of the community in the eighteenth century. They contribute to the development of Sikh moral behaviour and character, and they indicate the state of ethical awareness at the time of their writing. In a way, thus, they provide us with an example of the possibility of deriving moral knowledge from the religious experience. Through a recognition of moral abilities and characteristics they strive to implicate the Sikh religious inheritance within Sikh institutions and associations. The *Rahitnamas* specify institutional arrangements that are morally significant for the existence of Sikh community. They are located intrinsically within the historical situation and they are different from moral philosophy in style and character. It may be for this reason that we find in the *Rahitnamas* prolonged and relentlessly reiterated statements on the necessity of breaking away from the customs and conventions of Hindus and Muslims. In Dr. Nripinder Singh's understanding, the *Rahitnama* injunctions on societal inter-relationships are governed more by historical circumstance than awareness of religious and theological differences. The *Prem Sumarag* and the Chaupa Singh *Rahitnama* contain fewer of this kind of prohibitions than some of the later *Rahitnamas* and *Tankhahnamas* do.<sup>15</sup>

Dr. Nripinder Singh points out that despite the shift of emphasis in the *Rahitnamas* of the colonial period, the *Rahitnama* literature as a whole reveals basic constants: the ten Gurus as embodying the same light; the word of the *Guru Granth Sahib* as the word of God; right actions and right conduct as springing from the *Granth Sahib*; cleanliness of the body as requisite for the cleanliness of the spirit; submission to the Khalsa discipline; maintenance of the five symbols; companionship of the fellow Sikhs and respect for them; fidelity as the basis of human relations; justice as the foundation of government and economic institutions; and equality as the corner stone of all human associations.<sup>16</sup>



We can see that Dr. Nripinder Singh presents a general analysis of the *Rahitnamas* which is both perceptive and comprehensive. However, he places the *Rahitnamas* much later in time than the actual date of their compilation or composition. Our understanding of the historical significance of the *Rahitnamas* in their bearing on ethics is likely to change with a more credible view of the time of their creation. Dr. Nripinder Singh makes use of the *Gurbilas* literature in conjunction with the *Rahitnamas*. We know that there are still other sources of information on Sikh ethics.

### NOTES

1. Avtar Singh, *Ethics of the Sikhs*, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1996 (3<sup>rd</sup>. edn.), p.131.
2. Ibid., pp.132-5.
3. Ibid., pp. 135-9, 144.
4. Surinder Singh Kohli, *Sikh Ethics*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1975, see Preface and pp.1,9-10.
5. Ibid., pp. 11-20, 44, 43-51.
6. Ibid., pp.48-9.
7. See Appendix A, 'The Source Books for Sikh Ethics', in *ibid.*, pp.66-7.
8. See Appendix B, 'A Compendium of Injunctions for the Khalsa from "*Rahatnamas*"' in *ibid.*, pp.68-74.
9. Nripinder Singh, *The Sikh Moral Tradition*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1990, pp. 126-8.
10. Ibid., pp. 103, 105, 107-8.
11. Ibid., pp. 108-14, 116-18.
12. Ibid., pp. 118-22.
13. Ibid., pp.122-25.
14. Ibid., pp.133-9.
15. Ibid., pp. 139-41.
16. Ibid., p.142.



## SCHORLARLY VIEWS ON THE SIKH SOCIAL ORDER

Quite a few scholars in recent decade have taken interest in the Sikh social order and its various aspects. The ball was set rolling by Professor J.S. Grewal with his presentation of 'A theory of the Sikh Social Order' on the basis of the *Prem Sumarag*, which appeared to contain the author's conception of an ideal Sikh society and the ideal Sikh state. The differences of caste and gender were recognized but reduced to the minimum possible. The *rahit* for the pursuit of religion was the same for men and women. In the social sphere, however, the women's activity was centred on domestic life. The liberal attitude of the author was revealed nonetheless in his argument in support of re-marriage of widows. There was only one caste among the Khalsa, that of Sodhi Khatri and there was no distinction between the high and the low. However, some concessions were allowed in favour of caste and sub-caste due to the strong prejudices of the people in relation to commensality and matrimony. For commensality, the ideal was '*ek panth ek prasad*'. In practice, however, the Khalsa with caste background were not expected to eat food cooked by *chuhra*s, *chamars* and *sansis*. For matrimony, the ideal was to think of a good Sikh in connection with the marriage of a daughter, but concessions could be given to the prejudices of the people in favour of the traditional pattern of endogamy and exogamy. Even when the author of the *Prem Sumarag* does not say so, the reader, according to Professor Grewal, can see a large degree of social stratification embracing the rulers and the ruling class on the one hand and the servants and slaves on the other, with the trading communities, the peasantry and the artisans in between. But no one was to be looked down upon because of his profession or occupation. However, the three most commendable occupations were trade, agriculture and soldiering. On the whole, the author of the *Prem Sumarag* is said to conceive of the Sikh social order as not exactly egalitarian but more egalitarian than

the Sikh social order under Sikh rule during the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

Elsewhere, analysing the *Bansavalinama* of Kesar Singh Chhibber, completed in 1769, from the viewpoint of Sikh social order, Professor Grewal brings out his social prejudices. According to Chhibber, the rule of the Jats was sanctified by Guru Gobind Singh himself who had decided to confer rulership on the Shudras. The Brahman Sikhs were entitled to receive state charity, like the descendants of Sikh Gurus. Chhibber believed that power and piety did not go together. Therefore, it was all the more important to do justice and to avoid oppression so that their power was sanctified. He did not like the association of Khatri and Muslims with Sikh administration. He quotes Guru Nanak's denunciation of the Khatri of his days for taking to Persian which was the language of the *mlechch*. In Chhibber's considered view what was common to all the four castes and the outcastes was the Sikh faith (*sikhkhi*), but the traditional patterns of commensality and matrimony were not to be changed. Chhibber regrets that the Khalsa in the past did not always care about these norms, but they should do it now. Thus, caste distinctions could be upheld because Chhibber sees no contradiction between the equality of faith and the differential in social practices within the Sikh Panth. He appears to hold on to Brahmanical beliefs and attitudes with a remarkable tenacity. The *Vedas* and the *Puranas* were nearly as important for him as the Sikh scripture. He can bracket the *Adi Granth* and the *Gita* as equally authoritative. Thus, instead of enlarging the scope of inequality he is keen to curtail it. On the other hand, as Professor Grewal points out, Ratan Singh Bhangu presented a contrast to Kesar Singh Chhibber though he was writing in the early 1840s. In Bhangu's view, the bonds of faith were far more important for the Singhs than the ties of caste or class. The ideal social order of Ratan Singh Bhangu was more egalitarian than the Sikh social order during the early nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

According to Professor Harjot Oberoi, the increasing political power of the Khalsa allowed them to recast Sikh society after their own image. During the course of the eighteenth century tens of thousands of Sikhs took to the Khalsa identity. Some in pursuit of worldly power and others in pursuit of religious conviction. The solidarity infused through the 'rituals' of Gurmata and Sarbat Khalsa was a crucial ingredient in the making of these Khalsa Sikhs. In the process of state formation the Khalsa rulers acquired the trappings of royal power. They began to use titles, robes of honour, kettledrums and banners; they minted coins, appointed subordinate administrative and military officials, and they patronized musicians and painters. By the last decade of the eighteenth century, the Khalsa managed to replicate the earlier Mughal State in pomp, order and ideas of kingship. Professor Oberoi thinks that there were Sikhs like Kesar Singh Chhibber who were not happy with the triumph of the Khalsa, or with the Khalsa Sikh identity having become dominant. Despite detractors like Chhibber and considerable opposition from certain other quarters, the Khalsa Sikhs went from one success to another and their identity continued to attract recruits in increasing numbers.<sup>3</sup>

Paradoxically for Professor Oberoi, the Khalsa mode attained hegemony within Sikh tradition while it was simultaneously accepted that there were alternative ways of being a Sikh. In other words, it was possible to be a Sikh without being a Khalsa. Here the author refers to the evidence of Kesar Singh Chhibber on this point. Furthermore, he extends Chhibber's concept of the Sahajdhari to include all categories of Nanak-Panthis and the Udasis. In his presentation, the Sahajdhari Sikhs totally inverted Khalsa categories of thought and religious boundaries: cutting their hair, not undergoing the Khalsa initiation, not carrying arms, smoking tobacco, and accepting different lines of succession to Guruship, and accepting a living Guru instead of the *Adi Granth*. Professor Oberoi tries to show that the category Sahajdhari, Nanak-Panthis and Udasi overlapped and exemplified a close correspondence in their religious identities. It is his contention that non-

Khalsa Sikhs may be meaningfully considered under the category Sahajdhari. However, he concentrates only on the Udasis to explore and specify this 'plural constituency'.<sup>4</sup>

Professor Oberoi explains the 'duality in Sikh identity' in terms of the dictates of state formation. The Khalsa Sikhs were a tiny segment of Punjabi society, according to him. In their quest for political power, they used all the allies they could get. They found one important ally in the Sahajdharis. Here again, he is talking of the Udasis. Another category of suitable allies were the intermediaries belonging to the system of brotherhoods (*biradaris*) with their diverse customs, rituals and social practices. Oberoi refers particularly to the rites of passage for which the *jajmani* or the *sepidari* system is said to be eminently relevant. The intermediaries, generally titled *chaudharis*, belonged both to the central hierarchy of the state and the organization of the brotherhood. The Khalsa principalities did not seek to dissolve these social hierarchies. This process was started in the second half of the eighteenth century and completed under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The *kardars* of the state left the villages alone. Thus the rituals and life cycle ceremonies associated with Brahmanical Hinduism, together with its *varna* hierarchy, were sanctioned by the state. Thus, Professor Oberoi prefers to see 'the paradox in the coexistence of Khalsa and Sahajdhari identities as part of the complex process of state formation'. He comes to the conclusion that the demands of state formation seem to have taken the Khalsa Sikhs towards a rapprochement in the social and the cultural spheres. The late eighteenth century was marked by an extraordinary fusion of Khalsa and non-Khalsa identities in the Sikh tradition. The author maintains that the Sahajdharis and their religious culture was conceded to be legitimate and the concession made to the cultural codes of the brotherhoods was reflected in the patterns of commensality and matrimony among the Khalsa. He thinks that the *Adi Granth* had not yet become the exclusive focus of the Sikh religiosity. It shared its status as a sacred text with the *Dasam Granth*. The Khalsa

Sikhs fell short of fully containing the diversity which was 'a central feature of indic thought and culture'.<sup>5</sup>

In his discussion of 'Sikh social order' under Sikh rule, Professor J.S. Grewal recognizes the changes in the Sikh social order during the late eighteenth century and later but he does not subscribe to Professor Oberoi's hypothesis of Sanatan Sikhism as stated above. Professor Grewal points out that the Sikh writers of the period were not necessarily linked with the state. They wrote for the Sikhs in general. The *Gurbilas* literature of the period, written in praise of the ten Gurus, insists on the end of personal Guruship after Guru Gobind Singh and the vesting of Guruship in the Khalsa and the Granth. The existence of the Goddess is recognized, but she is not the Supreme Deity; she is subordinate to Akal Purkh; she is closely linked with a single event and invoked for a specific purpose decided upon by Guru Gobind Singh. The *Var* composed by Gurdas towards the end of the eighteenth century underscores the unity of God and the unity of Guruship, equates the Sikhs with the Khalsa, and celebrates the establishment of Sikh rule as an era of justice, peace and the freedom of conscience. Not to belong to the Khalsa Panth is to be a non-Sikh. Both the Sikh faith and the Khalsa Panth have an identity that is different and distinct from that of Muslims and Hindus. The Khalsa believe in the unity of the ten Gurus and the Guruship of the Granth and the Panth. *Bhagauti* and *Kalika* clearly symbolize the power of Akal Purakh and do not refer to any Goddess. As in the *Rahitnama* of Chaupa Singh earlier, the goddess figures in the *Rahitnamas* of Desa Singh and Daya Singh which are generally taken to belong to the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century. According to these *Rahitnamas*, the Khalsa should pay no heed to any God or Goddess, any temple or image, any place of pilgrimage, fasting, or religious worship; they should not make libation to any god, repeat the *gayatri* or any other prayer; they should never wear a sacred thread or hold a *shradh*; they should have nothing to do with the Brahmans; they should not seek to become well versed in *Shastras*. The Singhs should avoid Shaiva medics (*jangams*),



tantrics (*bamis*), and renunciates like the *sanyasis*, *jogis*, *bairagis* and *Udasis*. The Khalsa should obliterate the authority of both Musalmans and Hindus. The *Rahitnama* of Bhai Desa Singh is meant for Singhs of all the four castes. The *nais*, *jhiwars*, weavers and potters, and others of low caste, were not to be associated with the preparation of *langar* but everyone could eat in the *langar*. Bhai Daya Singh states that any member of the four castes who takes *amrit* would attain liberation, and so would he whose status is lowlier. All the members from the four castes should sit on the mat to receive *prasad*. 'To adopt the forms of caste is not to our taste'. 'When a Singh gives his daughter to anyone other than a Singh it is like giving a goat to a butcher'.<sup>6</sup>

The chronicles of the period of the Sikh rule provide information on state patronage and religious practices of the rulers. Revenue-free lands were confirmed or granted to individuals and institutions of all religious systems: Sikh, Hindu and Muslim. The largest share of new grants went to Sikh individuals and institutions. All the important Sikh rulers gave revenue-free lands and offerings in cash and kind to the Darbar Sahib at Amritsar. Ganesh Das refers to Amritsar as the foremost pilgrimage centre of the Sikhs with a number of sacred places. There were other Gurdwaras in the Punjab which received offerings in cash and kind from the Sikh rulers who took interest in the management and day to day programmes of the historic Gurdwaras under their jurisdiction. The Sikh of Ganesh Das is the Khalsa Singh. Ram Sukh Rao provides detailed information on Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and his successors. He highlights the 'services' rendered to the Harmandar Sahib by Jassa Singh who was authorized by the Khalsa to look after the management of Sikh sacred places in Amritsar. This responsibility was taken up later by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. It was customary for the rulers of Kapurthala to offer revenue-free land and cash to Sikh sacred places on all important occasions such as birth, marriage, death, and coronation. The Sodhis and Bedis were highly respected by the Sikh rulers but they were also treated like other *jagirdars* and grantees. The patronage extended by the Sikh rulers to



non-Sikh individuals and institutions should be seen in terms of state policy and not necessarily as a compromise with their faith. They ignored some of the norms of the Khalsa, especially the negative ones and their example could be followed by the members of the ruling class but the state did not impose any restrictions on the religious beliefs and practices of the people. There was a certain degree of tension in the Sikh norms and the Sikh praxis. Out of this tension appear to have arisen the Nirankari and the Namdhari movements before the end of Sikh rule. The leaders of both these movements placed *Guru Granth Sahib* at the centre of religious life and they had nothing to do with Brahmans for the performance of the ceremonies of birth, marriage and death. In this respect, they were close to the norms of the *Rahitnamas* though the movements at this stage probably were Sahajdhari.<sup>7</sup>

Professor Grewal then refers to the late eighteenth century European observers who generally equated the Sikh with the Singh or Khalsa and looked upon them as distinct from both Hindus and Muslims. They refer to the *Adi Granth* and its central role in daily worship in the *dharamsal* where *ardas* is regularly performed and sacred food distributed. They refer to the book of the Tenth Master held in 'almost as much reverence as the *Adi Granth*'. The Singhs were initiated through the baptism of the doubled edged sword, and it was open to all castes and to outcastes and Muslims to be initiated. This distinguished them from the Hindus. The Khalsa had their own peculiar conventions of food and dress. John Malcolm in the early nineteenth century refers to non-Khalsa Sikhs as 'non-conformist', underlining that the Khalsa represented the Sikh mainstream. Known as the *khulasa*, the non-Khalsa resembled the lower classes of Hindus from whom they could not be easily distinguished. They differed in their character from the Singhs who shared a number of common traits, beliefs and practices, irrespective of their occupations. 'Wherever the religion of Guru Gobind prevails, the institutions of Brahman must fall'. Malcolm refers to the book of the Tenth Master at several places as different from the *Adi Granth*. The former was 'as much revered, among the

Sikhs as the Adi-Granth'. It was considered 'in every respect, as holy as the Adi-Granth'. However, as Professor Grewal points out, Malcolm does not refer to any of the *Granth*s as the Guru. He talks of a number of denominations among the Sikhs. Apart from their social backgrounds he refers to occupations among the Sikhs. The Akalis looked after the Akal Takht and played an important role in the meetings of the Sarbat Khalsa when all the Sikhs ate together, including converts from Muslims and the sweeper caste.

Professor Oberoi quotes from *A History of the Sikhs* by J.D. Cunningham as one of the most informed individuals on the Sikh faith to show that Sikhism was a living faith in the 1840s, without realizing that Cunningham was talking of the faith of the Khalsa.

The Sikhs do not form a numerous sect, yet their strength is not to be estimated by tens of thousands, but by the unity and energy of religious fervour and warlike temperament. They will dare much, and they will endure much, for the mystic Khalsa or commonwealth.

In Professor Grewal's view, a careful reading of Cunningham's *History of the Sikhs* leaves hardly any doubt that he was equating the Sikh with the Singh even in estimating their numbers. The concluding paragraphs of this article by Professor Grewal indicate that the basic doctrines, institutions, and practices of the Khalsa remained the core of the Sikh tradition amidst all changes during the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup>

The idea of equality being important in the Sikh movement, both Sikh and non-Sikh scholars have dealt with the issue of caste in the Sikh social order. Sardar Kapur Singh was the first Sikh scholar to treat this issue somewhat elaborately. He refers to the twofold basis of group division amongst the Hindus: the *varna* or the class, and the *jati* or the caste proper. The former was believed to be God-ordained, primaeval and eternal, while the latter was a system of groups within the *varna* characterized by and perpetuated through endogamy, commensality, and craft-exclusiveness. The basic authority for the

*varna* classification is contained in the tenth book of the *Rigveda*. The *jati* was primarily functional. Certain civil and religious rights and duties were implicated irrevocably in the social group in which one is born. The term *varnashramadharma* carried the implication that *dharma* of the man of high birth was not that of the common man, and the *dharma* of the student was not that of the aged man. Thus, there were no ethical or social values of universal validity. This principle of *varnashramadharma*, which inspired and validated the social stratification of *jati*, was laid down by Manu.<sup>9</sup>

Sardar Kapur Singh goes on to explain that this principle was never entirely discarded by any segment of people in Indian history. The only exception was Sikhism which offered escape from this *cul-de-sac*. According to Kapur Singh, Sikhism makes it clear that the *Vedas* and the *Smritis*, which are the ultimate sources of law for the Hindus and the Hindu society, are not so for the Sikh society. Furthermore, Sikhism dreams of a universal human society. Sardar Kapur Singh gives free translation of verses from the *Guru Granth Sahib* to clarify his point. 'The teachings of the Gurus, the Sikhism, verily destroy the superstitions relating to *varna*, *jati* and other caste classifications'. When one *jati* group interloped into the economic reserve and monopoly of the other, it was regarded as a great calamity, called *varnasankara* or the confusion of castes. Both in practice and theory this principle sought to confine higher cultural refinements to the pre-ordained higher classes. 'All the four *varnas* must follow a common ethical code of conduct'. Recognise the spiritual dignity of the individual as such and do not look for his caste, for in the basic reckoning caste distinctions do not count. Sikhism unambiguously declares that 'class and caste distinctions are just so much nonsense'. Human beings were not created from different parts of the primeval being but they 'all originate from the same source, the light of God, and therefore, there are no high or low by birth'. Kapur Singh comes to the conclusion that Sikhism unreservedly rejects repeated the religious sanction or theological validity of birth distinctions; it refuses to admit that there are

any divinely ordained classes amongst mankind; and it denies that social gradation determined social ethics and civil obligations of individuals. For Kapur Singh, the Sikh doctrine repudiates the bases and the institutes of the Hindu caste system and lays down secure foundations on which the traditions of a liberal democracy may be reared and the superstructure of an equalitarian society may be raised, in which social justice is secured by secular laws and guaranteed by the refined and awakened conscience of the community.<sup>10</sup>

Professor J.S. Grewal refers to the exposition of equality in Sikh ideology given by Sardar Kapur Singh. He quotes the verses of Guru Nanak in support of the idea of equality and subscribes to the idea that Guru Nanak was seriously concerned with the unjust system of caste. He goes on to underline that Guru Nanak identified himself with the lowest of the low. Guru Nanak had a good deal of appreciation for those who rose above the distinctions of caste. His sympathy with the lowly good is clear enough in his compositions. Guru Nanak's criticism of the contemporary society was in a sense fundamental. He appears to discard the *varnashrama* order; he sees no use in caste. However, he does not appear to conceive of equality in social or economic terms. Especially on this point, Guru Nanak's ideological position must be related to his practice, bearing in mind that it is hardly possible to doubt his grave dissatisfaction with the existing social order. Guru Nanak's compositions may not prove a radical departure from the existing order, but a radical departure would be justified by his compositions.<sup>11</sup>

More recently, Professor Grewal has written on 'Caste and the Sikh Social Order'. He refers to two sets of view of caste in relation to the Sikh social order: one represented by Kapur Singh's work mentioned above, and the other by W.H. McLeod.<sup>12</sup> They have very little to say about the eighteenth century or about the social order prevailing in the Punjab in the early eighteenth century, nor do they talk of the compositions and the character of the early Sikh community. Professor Grewal talks of the social order in the times of Guru Nanak which consisted of two main components, the Islamic and the Hindu.

The former was marked by social stratification despite the norm of equality in Islam. In the latter, the ideal of *varnashrama* was upheld but the empirical realities did not conform to this ideal. For the early Sikh Panth, Professor Grewal states that the contemporary social order appears to have lost its legitimacy for Guru Nanak and his intention was to create a new social order on the basis of equality. His Panth was open to all irrespective of caste and creed. He addressed himself to all categories of people, and it was yet to be seen who would respond to his message and how the idea of equality would become operative. Bhai Gurdas is the first Sikh writer to provide information on the distribution and composition of the Sikh Panth. Among the prominent Sikhs of the Gurus, the Khatri formed the most important constituent. They belonged to a large number of *gotras*. There were some Jats too. A few Brahmans are also mentioned, and so are Lohars, Nais, Chhimbas, Mochis, Dhobis, Kumhars, Telis, masons and goldsmiths. Among the eminent Sikhs of Guru Arjan there was certainly a Muslim and also a Chandal. In this wide range from the top to the bottom of the social scale, at one end were the rich merchants and *sarraf*s in cities and towns and *chaudharis* in villages; on the other there were labourers and slaves with artisans and craftsmen, petty shopkeepers and peasants in between. Evidently, the social background of the eminent Sikhs covered a wide range. It is also clear that the Sikh Panth was not exactly egalitarian in terms of the economic means of its members. In theory, all the Sikhs were equal as brothers in faith. The notion of hierarchy was discarded. Bhai Gurdas is emphatic about total equality of Sikhs in the *sangat* in the *dharamsal*.<sup>13</sup>

Professor Grewal talks of equality in the Khalsa order. The doctrine of Guru-Granth ensured equality within the sacred space and the doctrine of Guru-Panth extended it to the Sikh social order. The doctrine of Guru-Panth in particular reinforced the ideal of equality in the sphere of religion, and introduced the ideal of equality rather emphatically in social and political terms. This equality was best represented in the institution of *gurmata* or the resolution passed by the



entire body of the Khalsa. Included among them were individuals who were outcastes in terms of their social background. Not only Khattris and Jats but also carpenters (*tarkhans*) and vintners (*kalals*) of the traditional social order became rulers. However, the scope of the *gurmata* was not extended to cover the government and administration of territories conquered and occupied on the basis of equality. The individual Sikh ruler was completely autonomous in the internal administration of his principalities and his relation with other rulers. The principle of hereditary succession was adopted by all the Sikh rulers. Whereas the politics of the Khalsa during the eighteenth century before the establishment of the Sikh rule was essentially egalitarian, the government of the Khalsa rulers from the very beginning was monarchical. In a monarchical form of government the social order could not remain egalitarian. The evidence of Ratan Singh Bhangu is cited by Professor Grewal to suggest that no hierarchy of caste was recognized within the Sikh Panth. Nevertheless, social differentiation had begun to appear among the Khalsa even before Ranjit Singh imposed a unified rule over the Punjab. The world of the Sikh *jagirdar* was different from the world of the Sikh peasant. Individual carpenters and vintners by caste joined the ruling class but the majority of their erstwhile kinsmen remained in their former lowly occupations. The Akalis and Nihangs, the professed representatives of the Khalsa, received stipends and *jagirs* from Ranjit Singh. The doctrine of Guru-Panth became inoperative. An individual Sikh chief could rule with a clear conscience on behalf of the Khalsa.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, Professor Grewal visualizes three main phases in the history of the Sikh social order: the pre-Khalsa, the Khalsa before the establishment of Sikh rule, and the Sikh social order during the period of Sikh rule. Guru Nanak and his successors discarded the caste system based on the principle of inequality, and they did not uphold the inequality of any kind. They founded institutions which undermined distinctions of caste and social status. However, there was a certain degree of social stratification among them in terms of their material



resources. The doctrine of Guru-Panth carried the implication that all social differences were obliterated for the Khalsa and they were all equal in social and political terms. There was no ban on inter-caste marriage but in actual practice the old patterns did not appreciably change. There was no restriction on commensality, but inter-dining was not extended in practice to the 'un-clean' outcastes. The ideal of equality was realized in religious matters, but in social and political matters it was realized only partially. The ideal of equality was not seen as relevant for matters economic. Consequently, differences in wealth remained outside the operation of the egalitarian ideal. Horizontal stratification began to appear in the Sikh social order, both before and after the institution of the Khalsa, especially with the establishment of Sikh rule. Differences of wealth and caste were not obliterated but there was no hierarchical caste order among the Khalsa. The norm of equality was seldom abandoned in theory but it was only partially realized in practice. In the early nineteenth century, differentiation in terms classes was as conspicuous as the existence of caste considerations. Both of these were diffused more or less by the sentiment of Sikh brotherhood which was strengthened by the existence of the Sikh sacred space.<sup>15</sup>

Professor Jagjit Singh's discussion of 'Caste System and Sikhs', is much more elaborate than that of Kapur Singh. The starting point for Jagjit Singh is also the caste and the caste system. He points out that social stratification was a characteristic of all societies in the world. The elements that go into the formation of caste were present in them: colour and racial antipathies; taboos regarding human beings, animals and occupations; notions of purity and impurity; status differentiation on the basis of heredity; social disabilities and segregation. However, these caste-like elements of social exclusiveness in societies outside India never developed into an elaborate system of castes. The number of well defined *jatis* in India was more than three thousand, and all of these were meticulously arranged in an hierarchical social pyramid. These *jatis* were endogamous, and they worked sedulously to isolate

themselves from each other. In all social matters the caste system was an hierarchical system with a vengeance. Restrictions on connubium and commensality were the most outstanding features of this hierarchy as a part and parcel of a general principle of purity and impurity. The constituents of the Indian caste system were interdependent and interlocked both horizontally and vertically in the social fabric. There could be no Hindu without being a member of one caste or another.<sup>16</sup>

Professor Jagjit Singh underlines that three main factors consolidated the castes into the Indian system: the caste ideology, the Brahmins, and the caste society itself. Permanent human inequality by birth was the *summum bonum* of the officially declared Brahmanical ideology. The wealthiest Bania was lower in caste status than the poorest Kshatriyas. The authority of the *Vedas* and the other scriptures linked with them was invoked to sanctify and to declare that the caste system and its retrograde groups were inviolable. Any threat to the *varnashramadharma* was condemned and opposed, depending upon the seriousness of the threat. The Brahmins were hostile towards all heretical sects not so much to their orthodox creed but to their opposition to the caste system. In other words, conformity with the caste system was a central criterion for admission to the Hindu *dharma*. Ritualism was the most widespread of the three paths to emancipation. Due to the principle of purity and impurity, certain castes came to be downgraded because they took to occupations which involved processes or handling of articles considered to be religiously impure. Impurity or defilement was believed to be imparted not only by direct conduct but also indirectly through objects or even through sight. The Karma theory not only explained the caste origin of individuals but also benumbed the moral sensitiveness of those who came under its influence. It made them blind to the evident immorality of the caste ethics. In any case, this theory served the ends of the caste order. The Brahmins were the axis of the caste system. They were mainly responsible for the maintenance of the institution which perpetuated itself through excommunication.<sup>17</sup>

According to Professor Jagjit Singh, the Sikh movement broke away completely from the caste, the caste system, and the caste society. The Sikh Gurus directly condemned caste and caste ideology. Since the motivating power behind the caste system was the caste-status of the Brahman and other high castes, the Gurus discarded the notion of caste-status. 'The four castes were made into one, and castes (*varna*) and out-castes (*avarna*) regarded as noble'. By discarding the Brahmanical scriptures, Sikhism and the Sikh Panth cut away from this perennial source and sanction of caste ideology. By cutting itself away from Hinduisim, Sikhism delinked itself from that aspect of Hindu *dharma* which was the main vehicle for providing religious sanction to the *varnashramadharma* in day to day action. The Sikh Gurus proclaimed a new version of *dharma* which was the anti-thesis of the Hindu *dharma* at least as far as caste was concerned. All the members of the Khalsa Dal, who were drawn from all castes, including the Ranghretas, dined together. In short, the Khalsa not only broke away from the caste society, but also succeeded to a remarkable degree in giving an egalitarian socio-political orientation of its own. Apart from its egalitarian political mission, the Sikh movement had a plebian base. It was inspired by a spirit of equality which heightened the sense of brotherhood and fraternization. The leadership of the movement devolved on the Khalsa Panth as a whole, and it became an article of living faith with the Sikhs. The caste priorities and prejudices were abandoned. Even the Khalsa of the lowest background acquired political power, like the ordinary peasants, shepherds, and village menials and distillers. The '*raj karega Khalsa*' was as much an egalitarian social mission as it was a political one.<sup>18</sup>

Professor Jagjit Singh refers to a wide range of literary evidence from the days of Guru Nanak to the early nineteenth century in support of his hypothesis. He also makes a distinction between what he calls the pristine period of Sikh history from the time of Guru Nanak to the establishment of Sikh rule in the late eighteenth century, and the period from the late eighteenth century onwards. In the first period, equality

was realized almost completely in the religious, social and political aspects of the Sikh social order. In the later period, compromises were made with the principle of equality, especially with reference to connubium and commensality, particularly in relation to the Sikhs with the background of outcastes. Even so, the ideal of equality was never discarded and the principle of hierarchy was never admitted at the Panthic level.<sup>19</sup>

Professor Jagjit Singh suggests at the end that the achievement of the Sikh movement should be judged in the context of Indian caste system. No other Indian movement enabled the Shudra Jat to regard his status as higher than that of the Rajput. The carpenters and vintners as well as Jats became rulers of the land, and enabled the Khatri, Aroras, Jats, artisans, village menials, and outcastes like sweepers and leatherworkers, who were regarded as the lowest of the low in Indian estimation, to merge into a genuine brotherhood on equal terms. The Sikh movement worked in the spirit of egalitarian ideology for 275 years from 1486 to 1769. The highest of the so-called high castes worked under the leadership of the lowest of the low who were free to rise to that position purely on the basis of ideological merit and service to the society.<sup>20</sup>

Professor W.H. McLeod refers to Professor Jagjit Singh's vigorous defence of the Sikh attitude towards caste and the caste system. In his work entitled, *The Sikh Revolution*, summarized at length in the volume entitled, *Perspectives on the Sikh Tradition* (both of these works appeared in the 1980s). Professor McLeod goes on to add that Professor Jagjit Singh does acknowledge that Sikh *dalits* create a problem for other Sikhs, though their position is superior to that of Hindu *dalits*. There was no caste hierarchy among the Sikhs and caste differences had been completely overthrown by the teachings of the Gurus. Professor McLeod gets the impression that Professor Jagjit Singh was concerned exclusively with the *varna* (caste) and not with *jati*. Professor McLeod suggests that both the terms require close attention. If the statement that Guru Nanak

abolished the caste system concerns only the *varna*, the claim can perhaps be sustained. By stressing on the needless inequalities of *varna*, Guru Nanak could be held to have abolished the caste system. However, there was no such system in actual existence, according to Professor McLeod. Guru Nanak discarded the fourfold hierarchy which was taken for granted by his contemporaries. When it came to access to liberation, all were equal; to this extent it can certainly be claimed that Guru Nanak and his successors preached the end of the Hindu caste system for their followers.<sup>21</sup>

Professor McLeod refers to the emphasis in the *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas on the merger of all the four *varnas* into one in the Sikh Panth. Bhai Gurdas frequently uses the symbol of the betel leaf. Members of the four different *varnas* who become Gurmukhs find that they live in a single *varna*. Professor McLeod thinks that this emphasis leaves the *dalits*, who were outside the scope of the four *varnas*, in an uncertain condition. He then refers to the *Tankhahnama* of 1718-19 which attributes to Guru Gobind Singh the statement, 'I shall merge the four *barans* into one'. In the *Sakhi Rahit* the Sikhs are counseled never to seek the services of the Brahman. However, Chaupa Singh clearly signals his belief in the necessity of the Sikhs accepting the four-fold division of society according to the traditional view. Kesar Singh Chhibber recommends that a Brahman Sikh should receive greater respect than others. Desa Singh in his *Rahitnama* says that the Singh protects cows and Brahmans. 'A Khalsa should marry a girl [of] the same *baran* as his own'. Daya Singh in his *Rahitnama* reiterates that the forms of *baran* are not to the taste of the Sikhs, and no Sikh should ever have a Brahman perform a marriage for him. A member of any *baran* can take *amrit* to become a Khalsa Sikh and *karah prasad* could be distributed to Sikhs of all *barans*. The author of the *Prem Sumarag* declares that there would be one single *baran* of the Khalsa and its name would be Khatri-Sodhi. In other words, the conventional four-fold hierarchy would come to an end and in its place would be erected the single *baran* of the Khalsa, giving expressions to its ideals. Professor



McLeod appears to suggest that even the notion of four-fold hierarchy was not discarded by all the Sikh writers of the eighteenth century.<sup>22</sup>

Professor McLeod quotes verses from Guru Nanak in which *jati* is distinguished from *baran*. He quotes an example in which both the words are used: 'Observe the divine light in a man and ask not his *jati* for there is no *jati* in the hereafter.' This example appears to Professor McLeod to introduce doubt concerning the claim that Guru Nanak regarded *jati* as wrong. There may be no *jati* in the hereafter but the verse quoted above appears to indicate that it was certainly accepted in the here and now. Professor McLeod suggests that the Gurus condemned only that aspect of *jati* which upheld the notion that one *jati* conferred any advantage in terms of liberation. What is condemned is not *jati* but merely the notion that it confers privilege on a person because he or she is born into one which society regards as high, low, or in between. *Jati* as such is given a central position in the system, though in terms of liberation it is worthless. The attack is on the ranking of the person's *jati*; the *jati* itself is not condemned. This message, according to Professor McLeod, is reiterated by Guru Nanak's successors both by precept and by the institution of the distinctive customs. The verses of Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan are quoted in support of this interpretation. In one instance, Bhai Gurdas uses the expression *nich-jati* which can mean those of *dalit* or near-*dalit* status. There is some doubt concerning its intended meaning. Bhai Gurdas relates the story of Namdev, the low-caste *chhimba*, in a manner which suggests that the lowcastes (*nich-jati*) were still regarded as units of lowest *barna*. Sadhna is described as a *jati ajati kasai* which means that he was a butcher and presumably a *dalit*. Bhai Gurdas says that Bhagats have no *jati*. Professor McLeod concludes that Bhai Gurdas accepted *jati*. In the list of the prominent Sikhs of the Gurus he identifies them often by using their *jati* or *gotra* attached to their names. The *Rahitnamas* of the eighteenth century appear to refer to both *baran* and *jati*, with the overall impression that *jati* was accepted as a social unit. Professor McLeod does not talk of



the pre-colonial period for 'caste among the Sikhs'. In the colonial period, those who followed the Tat Khalsa principles and abandoned caste in its entirety might be a small minority but commonly they made their views very public. As a result, amongst Westerners, Gurmat is widely, if erroneously, believed to be free of caste. In Professor McLeod's view, a version of caste is generally accepted by a large majority of the Sikh Panth and widely practised by them. 'It differs from the general Hindu concept of caste but clearly derives from the same range of hierarchies and of endogamous *jati* and exogamous *gotra*'. Professor McLeod believes that they are not deviating in terms of acceptance of *jati* and *gotra*. 'Whether they deviate in terms of status ranking is, however, another question'.<sup>23</sup>

#### NOTES

1. J.S. Grewal, 'A Theory of the Sikh Social Order', in *Sikh Ideology, Polity and Social Order: From Guru Nanak to Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2007 (rev. and enlarged), pp. 248-57.
2. J.S. Grewal, 'Social Order in *Bansavalinama* and *Guru Panth Prakash*', in *ibid.*, pp. 236-47.
3. Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in Sikh Tradition*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 71-5.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 75-81.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 81-91.
6. J.S. Grewal, 'Sikh Raj and the *Sikh Social Order*', in *Sikh Ideology, Polity and Social Order*, pp. 258-66.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 266-9.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 269-75.
9. Kapur Singh, *Parasaraprasna: The Baisakhi of Guru Gobind Singh*, ed. Piar Singh and Madanjit Kaur, Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1989, pp. 251-6.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 269-72.

11. J.S. Grewal, *Guru Nanak in History*, Chandigarh: Panjab University, 1998 (rpt.), pp. 186, 188-91, 196.
12. For W.H. McLeod's views on the Sikhs and caste see, *Sikhism*, London: Penguin Books, 1997, pp.
13. J.S. Grewal, 'Caste and the Sikh Social Order', in *The Sikhs: Ideology, Institutions and Identity*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 189-96.
14. Ibid., pp. 196-200.
15. Ibid., p. 203.
16. Jagjit Singh, 'Caste System and Sikhs', *Perspectives on the Sikh Tradition*, ed. Gurdev Singh, Patiala: Siddharth Publications, 1986, pp. 231-2, 237-42.
17. Ibid., pp. 243-63.
18. Ibid., pp. 263-71, 275-88.
19. Ibid., pp. 288-93.
20. Ibid., pp. 303-5.
21. W.H. McLeod, 'The Sikh Concept of Caste', in *Essays in Sikh History, Tradition, and Society*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 171-2.
22. Ibid., pp. 172-6.
23. Ibid., pp. 178-87.

## SCHOLARLY VIEWS ON GENDER RELATIONS

Over sixty years ago Professor Teja Singh cited the evidence of *Asa di Var* to assert that Guru Nanak restored to women the fullest rights in society. They were given back their personal share in religion. They were to have the same responsibility in spiritual matters as men, and in every way they were equal to men in the sight of God. Religious congregations were thrown open to women. No social custom was to hinder them from doing so. Guru Amar Das forbade *sati*. Examples were known of Sikh women who not only fought in battles but also ruled over states. They assisted men in spheres of social and political activity. Professor Teja Singh came to the conclusion that all invidious distinctions between men and women were abolished.<sup>1</sup>

Fifteen years later, Sardar Kapur Singh reinforced the idea of women's equality with men in the Sikh social order. In his view, the Hindu evaluation of women was based on the Law of Karma. Although she was treated with great tenderness and reverence in Hindu texts her social position throughout the ages had been inferior and subordinate to man. 'As a girl, she was under the tutelage of her parents, as an adult of her husband and as a widow, of her sons'. Sikhism repudiated the nexus between *karma* and the social status of woman, declaring her to be 'the very essence of social coherence'. This 'ideological position' was a course of vitality and strength for the democratic and republican traditions, and polity of the Sikhs. Thus, Sardar Kapur Singh reiterated the idea of equality even more forcefully than Professor Teja Singh.<sup>2</sup>

Professor J.S. Grewal in his *Guru Nanak in History* (1969) refers to the statement of Sardar Kapur Singh and goes on to add that the verse quoted by him did demonstrate that Guru Nanak was prepared to defend women against those who insisted on relegating her to an inferior position merely on the basis of her sex. Guru Nanak's path of liberation was open to women. 'In this sense, she was certainly placed

at par with man, just as the Shudra was placed at par with a Brahman'. By far the largest number of metaphors relating to women in the compositions of Guru Nanak comes from the conjugal relationship. The image of the ideal wife that emerges from these metaphors is not unconventional. Even if she is beautiful, accomplished and well mannered, she is humble and modest before her lord, and obeys his command with pleasure. She adorns herself only to please her lord. She is faithful to him. Evidently, the woman's place is in the home.<sup>3</sup>

With the increasing scholarly interest in gender relations, Professor Grewal turned to this subject again in 1993 and published a short monograph entitled, *Guru Nanak and Patriarchy*. Almost all the verses of Guru Nanak with a bearing on gender relations are taken into account and his position is compared with that of a few other religious figures of the medieval period. Giving twenty-seven extracts from Guru Nanak's composition in English translation as the appendix to this volume, Professor Grewal states that the text and the appendix together, represent nearly all the ideas of Guru Nanak on gender relations.<sup>4</sup>

It is not necessary here to go into the detail of his exposition. We may refer only to his concluding statement. The counterpart of the 'fallen' female is the woman attached to *maya*. She is a victim of the same five adversaries (*kam, krodh, lobh, moh, hankar*) that keep man in bondage. She is very much the counterpart of Guru Nanak's *manmukh*, the self-willed man. The good woman is devoted to her spouse, but much more important is her appropriation of the truth, the name and the word. She needs the mediacy of the Guru and the grace of God as much as the man who turns to the Guru (*Gurmukh*). If no man can 'achieve' or 'earn' emancipation, for in the last analysis it depends on God's grace, it is for the 'spouse' of the good woman too to decide whether or not to make her *sohagan*. The ultimate objective for woman as for man is *sahaj*, the state of eternal bliss in union with God, the mingling of light with light. The female voice appears to bring the

woman within the orbit of emancipatory venture, so much so that even the widow can become a *bairagan*.<sup>5</sup>

To pursue the argument further, to covet the wife of another person, or an unwedded woman, is immoral in Guru Nanak's system of values. However, the advocacy of mutual fidelity does not necessarily ensure monogamy. Furthermore, the ideal wife is squarely placed in the patriarchal structure as a *sohagan*. Guru Nanak appears to create a larger space for women than what we find in Kabir or perhaps in the whole range of Indian literature springing from devotional theism. Total equality of woman with man in the spiritual realm was a radical idea in Indian history, especially because it embraced all women: it was not confined to female *bhikhus* or *bhaktas*. Guru Nanak's symbolic attack on discrimination against women due to physiological differences carried the idea of equality a long step forward. If he does not carry it into the home, giving a share to the daughter in ancestral property, he does not say anything which can be used to support inequality of any kind. However, much of the space he creates for women is created within the patriarchal framework.<sup>6</sup>

More recently, Professor W.H. McLeod has written a short essay on 'Gender and the Sikh Panth'. One of the reasons for writing this article was 'that excellent booklet by Jagtar Singh Grewal entitled *Guru Nanak and Patriarchy*', which showed that the subject was certainly alive and gave a very useful analysis of Guru Nanak's position on the subject. Professor McLeod points out that the often quoted *shalok* of Guru Nanak in *Asa di Var* would seem to maintain complete equality of women with men, not just for the Sikhs but for every one. The other Gurus supported the stand taken by Guru Nanak, and opposed such practices as dowries, seclusion and female infanticide. 'The views of the Sikh Gurus were vastly ahead of those of their contemporary society'. However, there were some other facts of Sikh history which did not indicate equality between Sikh men and women. Even the contemporary Sikh institutions are male dominated. The point is elaborated by Professor McLeod in some detail. This situation raises

the issue of the gap between the ideal of equality in *Gurbani* and the empirical realities of the Sikh Panth in its history of five hundred years. The position of the Sikh Panth in this respect was not different from that of the other societies because no society in the world even today is free from gender inequalities. Professor McLeod's point is valid but it leaves out the issue of the relative position of the Sikh Panth in this respect during the early centuries of Sikh history.<sup>7</sup>

In the notes to this article Professor McLeod refers to two works which concern the issue of gender: Professor Nikki-Guninder Kaur Singh's *The Feminine Principle in the Sikh Vision of the Transcendent* (1994) and Dr. Doris R. Jakobsh's *Relocating Gender in Sikh History* (2003).<sup>8</sup> Both these works are relevant for gender relations in the Sikh social order during the eighteenth century. According to Nikki Singh, Durga was a favourite literary subject for Guru Gobind Singh. She underlines that Durga is 'recalled' by the Guru 'as a figure of myth' and not 'invoked' as a goddess. Guru Gobind Singh does not profess in his compositions to be a devotee of Durga or Chandi. In Dr Jakobsh's view, the controversial Durga compositions were Guru Gobind Singh's own work. The *Chandi Charitra* figures in the *Bachittar Natak*, and Guru Gobind Singh is stated to be its author in the *Rahitnama* of Bhai Desa Singh. The Sikh *ardas* till today starts with the opening verse of the *Chandi di Var*. However, it may be pointed out that the *Chandi di Var* gives no indication that Guru Gobind Singh believed in Durga or Chandi. Like Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, Durga is God's creation. Like Rama and Krishan, God created Durga and 'caused the demons to be destroyed'.<sup>9</sup>

According to Professor Nikki Singh, Guru Gobind Singh's treatment of Durga is suggestive of woman's power in society. The myth of Durga could provide inspiration for revitalizing the society. She is independent and powerful. By affirming the female power Guru Gobind Singh projected a positive attitude towards women. Durga could inspire both men and women for positive action. All women are exalted through the mythical Durga. The recalling of Durga as Bhagauti



imparts feminine identity to the sword which, in Professor Nikki Singh's view, is a metaphor leading towards a recognition of female principle. Both Durga and Bhagauti assert the right to freedom. The prayer at the end of the *Chandi Charitra* is to stand for the right and to die fighting till the end.<sup>10</sup>

Professor Nikki Singh's hypothesis is not acceptable to Dr. Jakobsh who thinks that it is difficult to draw a line between literary licence and veneration. By postulating a difference between recalling and invoking, Nikki Singh has drawn a rigid line rather unrealistically between the recognition of Durga's literary merit and actual homage to the Goddess. Professor Nikki Singh appears to Dr. Jakobsh to have missed an opportunity to explore how the situation in relation to gender in the early Sikh tradition had changed by the late seventeenth century. Jakobsh does not talk about any relevance of Durga mythology for gender relations. She chooses to concentrate on the evidence of the *Pakhyan Charitra* in the *Dasam Granth* support of her hypothesis that a novel construct of gender difference was developing in Sikhism to result in transformation from masculine to hyper-masculine ethos. In the first place, the occasion for the collection of these 404 tales is provided by a vily woman. It is true that there are stories in which women play no part and there are stories of heroic and honourable women; also the women is portrayed both as victim and inherently powerful over men. But the majority of tales related to sexual intrigue and violence in which women are generally the seducers. An explicit statement is made that there is no end to their intrigues. Dr. Jakobsh accepts the view that the *Dasam Granth* was held at par with the *Adi Granth* during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This carries the implication that the *Pakhyan Charitra* was popular among Sikh men. These tales were said to be a part of the construction of gender in the light of the male construct initiated by Guru Gobind Singh through the Khalsa order. The women represent an anti-thesis of the warrior-saint, according to Dr Jakobsh. Thus, the *Pakhyan Charitra*

was important for understanding gender construction in the eighteenth century.<sup>11</sup>

Dr. Jakobsh accepts Professor McLeod's view that Chaupa Singh's *Rahitnama* is the earliest of all the extant *Rahitnamas*. Compiled around 1750, this *Rahitnama* showed that women were not included in the regular discipline outlined for the Khalsa. Anyone who administers baptism of the double edged sword to a woman was a defaulter and liable to penance. The woman was forbidden to read the *Granth Sahib* in a general assembly of Sikhs. Notions of impurity came to be associated with women, and men who took orders from their women were regarded as sinful, licentious, and stupid. A Gursikh should not trust a woman. Thus, a polarization of sexes was brought about by the institution of the Khalsa. Woman became the opposite of the identity of the manliness of the warrior saint. The male was exalted and the female was depressed.<sup>12</sup> Jakobsh refers to the *Prem Sumarag* on the basis of secondary sources and, therefore, does not know that this *Rahitnama* recommends baptism of the double edged sword for women. The *Rahitnama* literature of the eighteenth century does not support the 'Theology of difference postulated by Jakobsh as a hypothesis'.

In his 'Sikhism and Gender', Professor J.S. Grewal refers to the prevalence of *sati*, the harsh treatment of widows and polygamy as some of the general features of the medieval Indian society. He goes on to comment on the views of Sardar Kapur Singh, Professor W.H. McLeod, and Dr Dorris R. Jakobsh on gender relations, before turning to gender in the compositions of Guru Nanak, Guru Angad and Bhai Gurdas. More relevant for our purpose is the evidence used by Professor Grewal in the eighteenth century sources like the *B-40 Janamsakhi*, Chaupa Singh's *Rahitnama* and the *Prem Sumarag*. The *B-40 Janamsakhi* makes it absolutely clear that the path enunciated by Guru Nanak was open to women as well as men. Chaupa Singh's *Rahitnama* contains injunctions for the Keshdhari Sikhs, the Sahajdhari Sikhs, and the Sikhnis. They all belonged to the Sikh or

Khalsa community. They were not supposed to have any association with the other categories of Sikhs, like the Minas, Dhirmalias, Ram Raiyas, the Masands, and their followers. The baptism of the double edged sword was essential only for the category called Keshdhari, but the injunctions of the *Rahitnama* were generally common for all the three categories. The difference in the observances of the Keshdharis, the Sahajdharis and the Sikhnis were specified. The essential message of the *Rahitnama* for both men and women was not to waste the opportunity provided by human birth for liberation. The author of the *Prem Sumarag* postulated almost a total equality between Sikh men and Sikh women, both of whom were to be administered baptism of the double edged sword. On the issues of *sati*, the treatment of widows and polygamy, this *Rahitnama* moves far away from the position upheld in the medieval Indian society.<sup>13</sup>

#### NOTES

1. Teja Singh, 'Woman in Sikhism', *Essays in Sikhism* (first published in 1944), New Delhi: Siddharth Publications, 1990 pp. 44-9.
2. Kapur Singh, *Parasaraprasna: The Baisakhi of Guru Gobind Singh*, eds. Piar Singh and Madanjit Kaur, Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1989, p. 252.
3. J.S. Grewal, *Guru Nanak in History*, Chandigarh: Panjab University (first published in 1969), 1998 (rpt.), pp. 192-4.
4. J.S. Grewal, *Guru Nanak and Patriarchy*, Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1993, pp. 1-20, 23-47.
5. Ibid., p. 20.
6. Ibid., p. 21.
7. W.H. McLeod, 'Gender and the Sikh Panth', in *Essays in Sikh History, Tradition, and Society*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 191-5.
8. Ibid., p. 196. Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh, *The Feminine Principle in the Sikh Vision of the Transcendent*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Doris R. Jakobsh,

*Relocating Gender in Sikh History: Transformation, Meaning and Identity*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003.

9. Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh, *The Feminine Principle*, pp. 118-26.
10. Ibid., pp. 126-49.
11. Doris R. Jakobsh, *Relocating Gender in Sikh History*, pp. 44-6.
12. Ibid., pp. 46-9.
13. J.S. Grewal, *The Sikhs: Ideology, Institutions and Identity*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 206-25.

## APPROACHES TO SIKH LITERATURE OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

In his *Guru Nanak and Sikh Religion*, Professor McLeod approaches literary works as sources for the life of Guru Nanak. The *Gian Ratnavali* and two versions of the *Mahima Prakash* figure in his sources. The prologue at the beginning of the *Gian Ratnavali*, as noted by Professor McLeod, attributed this work to Bhai Mani Singh as 'an expanded commentary' on the first *Var* of Bhai Gurdas. At the end of the work it is stated that it was approved by Guru Gobind Singh. However, the extant version of the *Gian-Ratnavali* was certainly not the work of Bhai Mani Singh. It was 'a composite product' which drew on more than one source. Professor McLeod points out that Bhai Mani Singh is mentioned in this work in the third person, its language is comparatively modern, and it lacks homogeneity. In addition to the independent material, several *sakhis* in its first part were borrowed from the *Bala* tradition; in its second part, the work becomes in substance a *Bala Janamsakhi*. The independent material could well be a revised version of material dating back to the early eighteenth century, but the work as a whole was much later than the time of Bhai Mani Singh. The time of compilation and authorship of a work was important for Professor McLeod because of his concern for the value of a work for the life of Guru Nanak. Coming to the relative value of the different *Janamsakhi* traditions, 'the relatively late *Gyan-Rantanavali* offers little that is not available in the earliest *Janam-sakhi* sources'. Therefore, it was 'summarily excluded' from further discussion'.<sup>1</sup>

Professor McLeod maintains that the *Mahima Prakash Vartak* and the *Mahima Prakash Kavita* deserved only a brief mention for the same reason. The former was written in 1741 by Bawa Kirpal Singh Bhalla, and the latter version was written by Sarup Das Bhalla in 1776. 'The two accounts are basically the same, but the prose version, the *Vartak*, is appreciably shorter, having only twenty *sakhis* devoted to

Guru Nanak as opposed to sixty-five in the metrical version'. Neither work deals exclusively with Guru Nanak, and both are 'too recent to be regarded as primary sources for the life of Guru Nanak'.<sup>2</sup>

In *The Evolution of the Sikh Community*, Professor McLeod dwells on three aspects of the *Janamsakhi* literature: the nature, development, purpose, and function of the *Janamsakhi*; their usefulness as sources for the life of Guru Nanak; their value as sources for the later history of the Sikhs. In *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, Professor McLeod had taken notice of the *B40 Janamsakhi* as older than the known versions of the *Puratan Janamsakhi* and, though different but affiliated, with the *Puratan* tradition.<sup>3</sup> In *The Evolution of the Sikh Community*, the *B40* is stated to have been written in the eighteenth century, though essentially 'a seventeenth century *janam-sakhi* in content'.<sup>4</sup>

In the *Early Sikh Tradition: A Study of the Janamsakhis*, Professor McLeod sums up his understanding of the principal *Janamsakhi* traditions: the *Bala*, the *Puratan*, the *Adi Sakhis*, the *Miharban*, the *Gian Ratnavali* and the *Mahima Prakash*. He talks also of individual *Janamsakhis* and miscellaneous works closely related to the *Janamsakhis*. Among the individual *Janamsakhis*, he mentions the *B40* as 'perhaps the most important of all extant *janam-sakhis*'. This manuscript was illustrated and the date of its composition (31 August 1733) was also given. Furthermore, the names of the person who commissioned it, the scribe, and the artist who prepared the paintings are given: Bhai Sangu Mal, Daya Ram Abrol, and Alam Chand Raj, respectively. Professor McLeod gives a summary of the *B40* sources in terms of the different traditions, including the oral *sakhis* and miscellaneous discourses.<sup>5</sup>

The text of the *B40 Janamsakhi*, edited by Professor Piar Singh, was published by Guru Nanak Dev University in 1974 as *Janam Sakhi Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji*, with an introduction on the various aspects of the *Janamsakhi* tradition with special reference to the *B40*, four appendices, and six illustrations in black and white. The English



translation of the text by Professor McLeod has also been published by Guru Nanak Dev University. In an elaborate introduction to his translation, Professor McLeod gives reasons for selecting the text for translation: the *B40* manuscript was still little known, it was relatively brief, it provided, specific information concerning the time and circumstances of its compilation, and it was the most representative of all the *Janamsakhis* in terms of its content. Though all extant *Janamsakhis* are composite products, none can compare to *B40* in terms of variety. Professor McLeod provides a description of the manuscript, including the script and illustrations, sources used by the *B40* compiler, its language, its origin, the way in which it is translated and the missing folios.<sup>6</sup>

In *The Early Sikh Tradition*, Professor McLeod devotes the bulk of the work to the origin and growth of the *Janamsakhi* tradition, their constituents, forms, transmission, the evolution of *sakhis* and the sources used by their compilers. He talks rather briefly of the language of the *Janamsakhis*, their position in Punjabi literature, their purpose and function, and their value as historical sources for the life of Guru Nanak, for the Sikh community in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and for the wider history of the Punjab. The *Janamsakhi* image of Guru Nanak in the seventeenth century is also outlined. Professor McLeod has argued that the *Janamsakhis* have served as the vehicle of a powerful myth. Stated briefly, the myth is that 'Baba Nanak was the divinely commissioned giver of salvation. To all who would seek salvation the way was open. The means of salvation consists in loyalty to the person of Baba Nanak and acceptance of his teachings'.<sup>7</sup> However, Professor McLeod has analysed no single *Janamsakhi* in detail for the 'myth' of Guru Nanak.

Professor McLeod's interest in the *Rahitnamas* has culminated in his *Sikhs of the Khalsa: A History of the Khalsa Rahit*, published in 2003. This work takes into account the whole range of known Sikh literature on the Khalsa *rahit*. For the eighteenth century, besides the *Dasam Granth*, the *Sri Gur Sobha*, and the *Guru Kian Sakhian*, six

*Rahitnamas* are discussed in terms of the time of their compilation and authorship. The *Rahitnamas* taken up in a separate chapter are the *Tankhahnama*, the *Prahlad Rai Rahitnama*, the *Sakhi Rahit Ki*, *Chaupa Singh Rahitnama*, *Desa Singh Rahitnama* and *Daya Singh Rahitnama*. The *Prem Sumarag* and the *Sarab Loh Granth* (which contains the *Khalsa Mahima*) are placed in the nineteenth century.

The main contents of all the *Rahitnamas* are given. The issues arising from the *Rahitnamas*, are given in a separate chapter: the *sangat*, the daily discipline, *ardas*, *khande ki pahul*, *charan pahul*, *Sahajdharis*, the five Ks, attitude towards Hindus, the *shradh* ceremony, caste, *karha prasad*, the Devi, attitude towards Muslims, the ban on tobacco, relations with Muslim women, the ban on *kuhtha* meat, *jhatka* meat versus vegetarianism, *dharamsala* and Gurdwara, the *langar*, alcohol, the tithe, the five reprobate groups, female infanticide, Guru- Granth and Guru-Panth, *raj karega Khalsa* and *Miri Piri*, Akhand Path, Vah Guru, hell and heaven, martyrdom, Anand marriage, the place of women in the Khalsa, and *tankhah* for infringement of the *rahit*. This list is very comprehensive but each issue is taken up as a unit by itself and no single *Rahitnama* is analysed as a whole.

The five short *Rahitnamas* are translated into English, along with other materials. Professor McLeod had translated the *Chaupa Singh Rahitnama* and the *Sakhi Rahit Ki* in 1987. The contents of the former are given in terms of 'issues', followed by 'sundry prohibitions' and 'miscellaneous injunctions'. Professor McLeod's translation of the *Prem Sumarag* has appeared in 2006. Its contents are not analysed but the subtitle, 'The Testimony of a Sanatan Sikh', reveals Professor McLeod's basic interpretation. Its date is discussed in detail, but it is still placed in the early nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup>

In the *Sikhs of the Khalsa*, the earliest *Rahitnama* for Professor McLeod is the *Tankhahnama* attributed to Bhai Nand Lal. Its copy of 1718-19, called *Nasihatanama*, indicates an early origin but Professor McLeod, somehow, places it after the *Sri Gur Sobha*, generally placed in 1711.<sup>9</sup> The *Rahitnama* of Prahlad Rai or Prahlad Singh could be

placed after the 1720s. The *Sakhi Rahit Ki* is placed in the mid-1730s. The *Chaupa Singh Rahitnama* is placed between 1740 and 1765, written possibly in the 1740s. Professor McLeod suggests the end of the eighteenth century for the *Rahitnama* of Daya Singh; for the *Rahitnama* of Desa Singh either the end of the eighteenth or the early nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup>

About the authorship, Chaupa Singh could be an almost certainty, and Desa Singh could be a probability but the close associates of Guru Gobind Singh, that is Nand Lal and Daya Singh, were out, and no *Rahitnama* was written or dictated by Guru Gobind Singh, Professor McLeod maintains.<sup>11</sup>

Unlike Professor McLeod, Professor Surjit Hans analyses full texts in his historical analysis of Sikh literature from 1500 to 1850, published as *A Reconstruction of Sikh History from Sikh Literature*. As he states in the preface, some of this literature had been analysed by both textual critics (who had edited some of the works) and by historians. In the Bibliography figure Professor McLeod's *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* and *The Evolution of the Sikh Community*, and Professor J.S. Grewal's *Guru Nanak in History*, his *Guru Tegh Bahadur and the Persian Chroniclers* and his *From Guru Nanak to Maharaja Ranjit Singh: Essays in Sikh History*. The last work contains analyses of four texts: the *Bachittar Natak*, Sainapat's *Sri Gur Sobha*, the *Zafarnama* and the *Prem Sumarag*.<sup>12</sup> Professor Hans emphasizes that it is necessary to examine 'the entire work' even to understand the 'facts' it contains. Sikh literature is highly important for the outlook, attitudes and the major concerns of the Sikhs in given historical situations. A historical analysis of each work was necessary for understanding it in 'all its complexity and nuances'.<sup>13</sup>

Professor Hans thinks that the *Janamsakhi* and the *Gurbilas* are the characteristic literary forms, respectively of the seventeenth and the eighteenth century. However, his work includes the *B40*, the *Gian Ratnavali*, the *Mahima Prakash* of Sarup Das Bhalla, the *Bachittar Natak*, the *Zafarnama*, the *Bansavalinama* of Kesar Singh Chhibber,

the *Gurbilas* attributed to Sohan Kavi, and also the one to Koer Singh. The last two works are placed in the early nineteenth century by Professor Hans, and the *B40* is seen as a seventeenth century work, like the *Adi-Sakhian* and the *Puratan* tradition. Thus, the works placed in the eighteenth century by Professor Hans are the *Gian Ratnavali*, Sainapat's *Sri Gur Sobha*, Sukha Singh's *Gurbilas Patshahi 10*, the *Bansavalinama* of Kesar Singh Chhibber, and the *Mahima Prakash* of Sarup Das Bhalla.

Professor Hans accepts Professor McLeod's argument that the *Gian Ratnavali* was a work of the late eighteenth or the early nineteenth century. A reflex of Sikh rule could be seen in this *Janamsakhi*. The principle of spiritual ascendancy of Guru Nanak in this work has 'the taken for granted quality which is closely linked with Sikh political ascendancy'. Conversely, the establishment of Sikh rule 'inevitably flowed from the spiritual ascendancy of Guru Nanak'. Mecca comes half way to meet Mardana; a Shivling installed in the Ka'ba is washed with elixer brought by angels. There is a developed sense of geography in the *Gian Ratnavali*. The most eloquent testimony of the impress of Sikh rule is provided by its legitimization. Guru Nanak in his tenth incarnation was to destroy the *mlechhas* to establish a rule based on *dharma*. He is a comforter of kings as well as the Sikhs. The new context transcends Hindu-Muslim dichotomy in order 'to bring the Muslim subjects into the mainstream of Sikh rule'. The *Gian Ratnavali* remains a sectarian work, but in favour of Handalis. It gives recognition to the Udasis. As Professor Hans puts it, 'the compiler of this work traduced the name of Bhai Mani Singh under the cloak of Vedantic philosophy to annihilate the Nanak of history and the early tradition of the Sikh Panth for a beggarly Udasi purpose'.<sup>14</sup>

The *Gurbilas* form at its best is represented by Sainapat's *Sri Gur Sobha* in the early eighteenth century and Sukha Singh's *Gurbilas Patshahi10* towards its end. The former was written before the establishment of Sikh rule and the latter after Sikh rule was firmly established. These works have a biographical form but they are not

biographies. The *Sri Gur Sobha*, according to Professor Hans, was designed to advance the cause of redemption through its study and the reader's participation in the activities of the Khalsa. Guru Gobind Singh and the Khalsa loom large in this work. It bears the impress of the *Bachittar Natak*.<sup>15</sup>

In the *Gursobha* Guru Gobind Singh is God himself, almost his physical presence; his mission is to kill the ungodly and to protect the saints; its expression is the independent rule of Guru Gobind Singh at Anandpur. The hill chiefs conspire against the kingdom of Guru Gobind Singh. There is a millenarian hope of Sikh rule at Anandpur as the city of God. The *Sri Gur Sobha* thus becomes 'a *de facto* manifesto of Sikh rule in the eighteenth century'. Sainapat's pre-eminent concern is the Khalsa, its genesis, its theological status, and its future. The Khalsa is the *sangat* of the earlier Gurus. Those who fail to come into the Khalsa fold are *manmukhs*. The Khalsa are the only Gurmukhs. The non-Khalsa are condemned in terms used traditionally for the detractors (*nindaks*). The Khalsa represent an institution of redemption. Fighting is a part of the theological import of the Khalsa. They considered it supremely fortunate to die in battle. They were unique in their fearlessness. Sainapat is the first Sikh writer to enunciate the doctrine of Guru Khalsa. In the last words of Guru Gobind Singh, 'the Khalsa is my form; I have only the Khalsa to look after. The Khalsa bodily represents the Guru'.<sup>16</sup>

Sukha Singh's *Gurbilas Patshahi 10* bears an Udasi stamp. Five hundred Udasis participate in the battle of Bhangani. The individuals who take charge of Anandpur and Nander after the Guru's departure are Udasis. They have a special claim on the *Adi Granth*. However, the chief merit of Sukha Singh's work is explicit detail of the implications of the vision of Guru Nanak unfolded by the course of history. The Sikh faith had to work a dispensation for Hindus and Muslims. The Khalsa stood over the Hindus and the Muslims. In the Kaliyuga, the responsibility to rule fell to lower orders. Violence had to be met with violence to ensure victory. The Guru has to turn the Khalsa into new



rulers. This unfolding of Sikh history underscored the significance of 'raj-jog' of Gurbani. Sukha Singh gives an ideal picture of the Khalsa. They are unique in making Chandi appear. The Khalsa is an everlasting entity, the image of Primal Being. The climax of the divinity of the Khalsa reaches with the perfect Guru asking for *amrit* from the hands of the Khalsa. Men of all ages and castes were mixed in one lot, including shoe-makers and Chuhars. The Khalsa were out to rule. The city of God was to be built 'on the bones of the enemies for men to live like gods'.<sup>17</sup>

The authors of the *Bansavalinama* and the *Mahima Prakash* were connected with the Gurus through their ancestors, and both of them worked for patronage after the establishment of Sikh rule. Their approach to the past changes with the change in the purpose. They appear to have been influenced more by the *Janamsakhi* form than by the biographical *Gurbilas*, though they wrote in verse.<sup>18</sup> That is why these two works are treated together by Professor Hans and separately from the *Gurbilas* proper of Sainapat and Sukha Singh.

Kesar Singh Chhibber highlights the significant role of his ancestors in the times of the last five Gurus. But the Sikh rulers had ignored him. He viewed the contemporary Sikh rule as a disaster. A place for sin in the Panth had actually been provided at the institution of the Khalsa in the form of *mayiki* Sikhs as distinct from the *didari*, the *mukte* and the *murid* Sikhs. The Panth was increasing but true *sikhkhi* was decreasing. The *mayiki* Sardars did what they liked and created 'confusion'. Genuine Sikhs had become rare. The majority were out to buy sin. Kesar Singh Chhibber allows another ten years for the survival of Sikhism. His tone is spiteful. The Khatris were the enemies of the Gurus and the Muslims were their persecutors. They should have no place in Sikhism. The low castes were inherently disqualified. The Sikh ruler should uphold Brahmans and Brahmanism. The Sikh rule appears to embody Kaliyuga to the author because the Shudras are at the top. He lives on the fringes of Sikh faith and Sikh history. The idea of Guru-Granth was gaining greater currency: 'these days', says Chhibber, 'the



*Granth Sahib* is our Guru'. Professor Hans thinks that testimony on the eighteenth century Sikhs can be regarded as very remarkable precisely because he could see things which a man of faith would have missed.<sup>19</sup>

Sarup Das Bhalla was a descendant of Guru Amar Das. The purpose of his *Mahima Prakash* was to glorify his distinguished ancestry and to celebrate the descendants of the Gurus in general. By underlining the services of his ancestors to the Sikh Panth, he could hope to rehabilitate the reviled rivals in the eyes of the Sikhs. There was nothing wrong with Prithi Chand, Dhirmal or Ram Rai. Even Handal was a devout Sikh. Sarup Das Bhalla has no insight into the role of the 'rivals'. He misses the significance of the foundation of the Khalsa and the socio-historical role of the battles of Anandpur. He writes in the *Janamsakhi* genre which had outlived its utility. The incompatible choice of a form along with a limited family purpose is said to make the *Mahima Parkash* 'a fat book of thin verse'. The principle of familial 'sanctity' marks the paradox of Sikh rule which betrays vision of Guru Nanak while seeking its origins in it.<sup>20</sup>

Professor Hans looks upon the *Gurbilas Patshahi 10* attributed to Koer Singh, like the *Gurbilas Patshahi 6* attributed to Sohan Kavi, as work of the early nineteenth century. The supposed clue to the date of the former is ambiguous. Though the published version speaks of Koer Singh as the author, the editor seems to disagree with it. This work is based on the *Bachittar Natak*, the *Sri Gur Sobha*, and Sukha Singh's *Gurbilas*. The last work is closely followed in terms of episodes. The vocabulary remains the same at times. A large number of passages are lifted with only slight changes. The most important feature of the work attributed to Koer Singh is its heterodoxy. Guru Gobind Singh worships the Goddess; the *Puranas* are placed on almost the same level as the *Adi Granth*. A *masnavi* (probably of Rumi) is referred to as a new authority on the immanence of God. Apart from the Gurus, ten more hidden incarnations are expected.<sup>21</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh is portrayed in this *Gurbilas*, paradigmatically, as an incarnation of Vishnu. The doctrine of Guru-Granth is underlined. The Khalsa would wield the sword and follow the *shabad*; the Guru is the *Granth*. The statements on the principle of Guru-Khalsa are ambiguous. The author does not show much sympathy with 'the people'. Like land and women, people are faithful to none. Professor Hans suggests that the wars between the Khalsa and the Turks forecast in the *Gurbilas* can be seen as a post-eventum prophecy. There are echoes of differences between the Majha and Malwa Sikhs. The author of the *Gurbilas* was familiar with the presence of the English in the country. His stance towards the Muslims is pacificatory. All this would, it is suggested, place the *Gurbilas* in the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.<sup>22</sup>

The arguments of Professor Hans in favour of the early nineteenth century for the composition of *Gurbilas Patshahi 10*, though generally accepted unquestioningly by some scholars,<sup>23</sup> have been contested by Professor Madanjit Kaur. She lists nine arguments put forth by Professor Hans and contends each of these. The statement made in the work itself about the date of its composition has been interpreted as 1751, 1754 and 1762 but not beyond the last date. The direction of borrowing too is automatically settled. The internal evidence clearly makes Koer Singh the author of the work. His bias against 'the people' (and women) comes from his Hindu background and not from the early nineteenth century situation. The argument of post-eventum prophecy appears to be valid only on the assumption of a later date. Even Sainapat talks of Sikh rule in the future. The 'Malwa Sikhs' were not an integral part of the Khalsa even in the eighteenth century. The '*firangis*' are mentioned in Persian and Sikh literature much earlier than the early nineteenth century. Professor Madanjit Kaur is convinced that the views expressed by Professor Hans are 'incorrect assertions' without adequate evidence.<sup>24</sup>

Professor Gurtej Singh's understanding of Koer Singh's *Gurbilas* is totally different from that of Professor Hans. In the first place,

Professor Gurtej Singh finds no reason to doubt the internal evidence of the work that Koer Singh Kalal was its author and the work was composed in 1751. Koer Singh used the *Sri Gur Sobha*, the *Bachittar Natak*, the *Zafarnama*, the *Sarab Loh Granth*, and oral evidence for his work. Guru Gobind Singh's meeting with Bahadur Shah and his last days at Nander appear to be described on the basis of eyewitness accounts. Koer Singh was thoroughly familiar with the tenets of Islam. He gives expression to a phenomenal hatred of Islam. Philosophically, Koer Singh is divided between his newly found faith and his former allegiance to traditional Brahmanical beliefs. The Gurus are projected as incarnation of God. They exercise supernatural powers. Guru Gobind Singh is the liberator of the oppressed. Equality is the cardinal virtue of the Khalsa. They belonged overwhelmingly to castes regarded as low. Koer Singh underscores the democratic element in the constitution of the Khalsa. He subscribes to the doctrines of Guru-Granth and Guru-Panth. He presents the Khalsa as spearheading a movement for self rule for amelioration of the downtrodden and the underprivileged. He approves of the Khalsa theory of vesting political power in the lower castes. The objective of the Khalsa was sovereignty and not any subordinate status. Durga legitimizes the wielding of weapons by the lower castes. The Brahmanical gods are made to worship the Guru after the *devi* has appeared. They offer arms and other items which would be later prescribed as mandatory symbols of the faith of the Khalsa. The essential clue to Koer Singh's *Gurbilas* lies in his political purpose: to gain support for the Khalsa bid for sovereign rule. Hindu features are combined with 'a complete code of conduct for the Khalsa'.<sup>25</sup>

If anything, Professor J.S. Grewal's interest in the eighteenth century Sikh literature has increased in the last decade. Apart from fresh analysis of the *Bachittar Natak*, the *Sri Gur Sobha* and the *Prem Samarag*, he has analysed the *B40 Janamsakhi*, the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh, the *Sakhi Rahit Ki*, the *Bansavalinama* of Kesar Singh Chhibber and the *Var Bhagauti* of Gurdas. The

*Bachittar Natak* is interpreted as an open declaration of Guru Gobind Singh's mission which was institutionalized through the Khalsa.<sup>26</sup> The *Sri Gur Sobha* is seen as projecting the Khalsa as 'a fraternity armed to fight for temporal power as a part of its religious duty'.<sup>27</sup> The *Prem Sumarag* is interpreted as 'a Sant vision of the Sikh Panth' in the early years of the eighteenth century.<sup>28</sup> The *B40 Janamsakhi* has been analysed for the 'myths' of Guru Nanak in the *sakhis* from various traditions included in this composite work.<sup>29</sup> The *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh is analysed as a composite work consisting of two main parts: the prologue and the *rahit* compiled in the time of Guru Gobind Singh, and the narrative and *tankh'ah* added later, probably in the 1740s, by Gurbakhsh Singh Chhibber, the father of Kesar Singh Chhibber. The *Sakhi Rahit Ki* is placed in the time of Guru Gobind Singh, like the *Tankhahnama* associated with Bhai Nand Lal.<sup>30</sup> The *Bansavalinama* is seen as Brahmanization of the Khalsa tradition.<sup>31</sup> The *Var Bhagauti* is interpreted as celebrating the freedom of conscience ensured by the Khalsa for Hindus as well as Sikhs.<sup>32</sup> All these works are analysed primarily in terms of what appeared to be important to the authors themselves. Professor Grewal's differences with Professor McLeod are sometime explicitly stated. The reader can also see Professor Grewal's differences with Professor Hans, though there is no reference to his work.

In a recent article Professor Gurinder Singh Mann has discussed the textual sources for the life and times of Guru Gobind Singh and their dating. The first statement of *rahit* created during Guru Gobind Singh's period is attributed to Bhai Nand Lal and is dated 4 December 1694. A document entitled *Tankhahnama* also refers to Nand Lal as its author and seems to have been created in the following years. Another *Rahitnama* authored by Prahlad Singh refers to its date of composition as 17 January 1697. The *Sakhi Bhai Dan Singh*, though undated, falls in the same time period. The *Rahitnama* compiled by Chaupa Singh carries the date of its completion as 1700. The core of the text is constituted by the preface and set of prescriptions that follow

it, while the narrative and the string of transgressions were appended later. The counting of the sentences was extended to the appended parts, creating the impression that they were parts of a single whole. A text entitled the *Prem Sumarag* synchronizes well with Sikh religious, social, and political aspirations of the rule of the *deg* and *tegh*, says Professor Mann.<sup>33</sup>

Professor Mann further says that a narrative entitled *Sarab Kal Ki Benati*, compiled around 1698, presents a first person account creating the impression of its being an autobiography of Guru Gobind Singh. It appeared at the head of the string of compositions called the *Bachittar Natak Granth* and came to be known as the *Bachittar Natak*. The *Sri Gur Sobha* carries the date 1701 at the opening, which could imply that the work was begun in 1701. It was completed soon after the death of Guru Gobind Singh. It may have been recited before the Guru and corrected by him. The *Janamsakhi* genre was continued in the form of the *Parchian Patshahi Dasvin Ki* completed at Nander soon after the death of Guru Gobind Singh. An early manuscript bears the date 1709. Later manuscripts mention Sewa Das Udasi as its author. The work of the court poets was compiled in the form of three *Granth*s: *Charitro Pakhyan Granth* in 1696, the *Bachittar Natak Granth* in 1698, and the *Sarab Loh Granth* in 1698. A later manuscript of the last work refers to 'Gurdas Singh' having written the *Var Bhagauti* included as the last in the printed *Varan Bhai Gurdas*.<sup>34</sup>

#### NOTES

1. W.H. McLeod, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1968, pp. 24-8.
2. Ibid., p. 28.
3. W.H. McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1975, pp. 17-18.
4. Ibid., pp. 24-5.
5. W.H. McLeod, *Early Sikh Tradition: A Study of the Janamsakhis*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1980, pp. 43, 229-32.

6. *Janam Sakhi Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji*, ed., Piar Singh, Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1974, pp. 1-32. *The B-40 Janamsakhi*, tr. W.H. McLeod, Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1980, pp. 1-32.
7. McLeod, *Early Sikh Tradition*, pp. 9-10.
8. *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*, tr. and ed. W.H. McLeod, Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1987, pp. 66-7, 82-3. W.H. McLeod, tr., *Prem Sumarag: The Testimony of a Sanatan Sikh*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 3-6.
9. The year 1741 as the year of the composition of the *Sri Gur Sobha* has been rejected by several Sikh scholars, including Ganda Singh and Shamsheer Singh Ashok, in favour of 1711. Professor Gurinder Singh Mann has argued that it was composed soon after Guru Gobind Singh's death in 1708. For detail, see Sainapat, *Sri Gur Sobha*, ed., Ganda Singh, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1967, pp. 21-3. Sainapat *Shri Gur Sobha*, ed., Shamsheer Singh Ashok, Amritsar: Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, pp. 4-5. Gurinder Singh Mann, 'Sources for the Study of Guru Gobind Singh's Life and Times', *Journal of Punjab Studies* (Special Issue on Guru Gobind Singh), vol. 15, nos. 1-2 (Spring-Fall 2008), p. 252.
10. McLeod, *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*, pp. 68-72.
11. W.H. McLeod, *The Sikhs of the Khalsa: A History of Khalsa Rahit*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 65-9.
12. J.S. Grewal, *From Guru Nanak to Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1982 (2<sup>nd</sup> edn).
13. Surjit Hans, *A Reconstruction of Sikh History from Sikh Literature*, Patiala: Madaan Publications, 2005 (rpt.), pp. vii-viii.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 191-6.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 227-8.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 228-32.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 232-4.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 261.



19. Ibid., pp. 261-5.
20. Ibid., pp. 265-7.
21. Ibid., pp. 247-8.
22. Ibid., pp. 248-50.
23. For example, Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 99. W.H. McLeod, *The Sikhs of the Khalsa*, pp. 58n. 33, 206.
24. Madanjit Kaur, 'Koer Singh's *Gurbilas Patshahi* 10: An Eighteenth Century Sikh Literature', *Recent Researches in Sikhism*, ed. Jasbir Singh Mann and Kharak Singh, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1992, pp. 161-72.
25. Gurtej Singh, 'Compromising the Khalsa Tradition: Koer Singh's *Gurbilas*', in *The Khalsa: Sikh and Non-Sikh Perspectives*, ed. J.S. Grewal, New Delhi: Manohar, 2004, pp. 47-58.
26. J.S. Grewal, '*Bachittar Natak*: Proclamation of a Mission' in *Sikh Ideology, Polity and Social Order: From Guru Nanak to Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2007 (rev. and enlarged edn.), pp. 92-5.
27. J.S. Grewal, '*Gursobha: In Praise of the Khalsa*', in *ibid.*, pp. 107-11.
28. J.S. Grewal, 'The *Prem Sumarg*: A Sant Khalsa Vision of the Sikh Panth', in *The Sikhs: Ideology, Institutions and Identity*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 158-85.
29. J.S. Grewal, 'An Early Eighteenth Century *Janamsakhi*', in *ibid.*, *The Sikhs* pp. 123-57.
30. I am grateful to Professor J.S. Grewal for lending the typescript of his study of 'Early *Rahitnamas*', forthcoming in *History, Literature and Identity: Four Centuries of Sikh Tradition*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
31. J.S. Grewal, 'Chhibber's *Bansavalinama*', in *Lectures on History, Society and Culture of the Punjab*, Patiala: Punjabi University, 2007, pp. 218-46.

32. J.S. Grewal, 'Celebrating Freedom: The Var of Gurdas', in *Sikh Ideology, Polity and Social Order*, pp. 111-19.
33. Gurinder Singh Mann, 'Sources on the Study of Guru Gobind Singh's Life and Times', *Journal of Punjab Studies*, vol. 15. nos. 1-2 (Spring-Fall 2008), pp. 252-4.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 252-4.

## GLOSSARY

*Abchnagar*: eternal city; also used for Nander.

*Ad Purkh*: Primal Being, God.

*Adi Granth*: the Sikh scripture, compiled by Guru Arjan in 1604 (containing the compositions of the first five Gurus and a number of *bhaktas*, *sants* and Sufis) and authenticated by Guru Gobind Singh with the compositions of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Now known as *Guru Granth Sahib*.

*ahankar*: pride, conceit; one of the five adversaries of man.

Akal Bunga: the structure raised over the site of the Akal Takht adjacent to the Harmandar; now called Akal Takht.

Akali: a staunch follower of Guru Gobind Singh; equated with the Nihang in the early nineteenth century.

*amil*: an administrator; a revenue collector; interchangeable with *kardar* as the administrator of a ta'alluqa under Sikh rule.

*amrit*: nectar, elixir of life; used for baptism of the double-edged sword.

*amritsar*: literally the pool of the water of immortality; the term originally used for the tank constructed by Guru Ram Das; the usage was extended to the town of Ramdaspur (Amritsar) by the early nineteenth century.

*ardas*: a prayer; the formal and collective prayer of the Sikhs, noticed by the author of the *Dabistan-i Mazahib* in the seventeenth century; probably going back to the time of Guru Nanak.

*ardasia*: one who performs *ardas*; a person employed for this purpose.

*bairagi*: a renunciate, usually a Vaishnavite.

*bani*: utterance; used for divine self-revelation through creation and the utterance or the word of the Guru; generally equated with Gurbani.

*baoli*: a well with steps for easy accessibility to water simultaneously for several persons; the well constructed by Guru Amar Das at Goindval, which came to be regarded as sacred.

*barat*: from *vrata* in Sanskrit for ritual fasting.

*bhaddar* also *bhaddan*: the rite of removing the hair, especially on the death of one's father.

*bhagauti*: used in Sikh literature generally for the sword, and not for the goddess 'Bhagavati'.

*bhang*: hemp, cannabis, its leaves and pistils; hashish.

Bhattakhari: the script used by Bhattas, which is different from Gurmukhi and Devnagari.

*bhet*: an offering; an offering made to the Guru or *Guru Granth Sahib*.

*bigha*: a measure of land generally considered equal to 20 *biswas* or 2 *kanals*; also one half of a *ghumaon*; the actual size varied from region to region.

Bir: used for mythical a being known for his bravery.

*biradari*: literally brotherhood; used for local collateral communities.

*bhog*: conclusion of the reading of the *Adi Granth*, followed generally by singing of hymns and always by an *ardas*; also used for the sanctified food.

*bunga*: a structure, a building; used for each of the many structures raised around the pool of nectar (*amritsar*) in Ramdaspur.

*but*: an idol.

*chaliha*: appears to be a kind of rite on the fortieth day after death; a kind of offering for the Guru on this account.

*chandal*: one of the lowest categories of the outcastes; an untouchable.

*charanamrit*: generally wash of a Sikh feet; also called *charan pahul*.

*charan pahul*: water of the foot; the earlier practice of drinking the water in which the toe of the men of piety have been dipped, symbolizing humility and dedication on the part of the initiate; also called *charanamrit*.

*charan-pakhal*: used alternatively for *charan pahul* on the assumption that the foot was washed in the water to be administered to a novice.

*chaudhari*: the head of a group of villages for collecting revenues on behalf of the government; the office was generally hereditary.

*chauka*: a square drawn on the ground and plastered with cow-dung generally by a Brahman for eatings food, with the idea that all impurities would be kept out.

*chauki*: a four legged low table.

*chauki-shabad*: *kirtan*; *kirtan* by turns for a fixed time called *chauki* at the Harmandar Sahib.

*chaupai*: a form of poetic composition consisting of units of four lines, with the rhyme scheme of a a, b b. The *Benati Chaupai* composed by Guru Gobind Singh is sometime referred to as simply 'the *chaupai*'.

*chhimba*: used for both a tailor and a calico-printer.

*chhota ghallughara*: the small carnage, with reference to an event of 1746 in which a large number of Sikhs were killed by the Diwan of Lahore in a single campaign; called small or rather smaller, in comparison with the larger (*vaddha*) massacre of the Sikhs by Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1762.

*dal khalsa*: a term used for the combined forces of the Sikh leaders during the eighteenth century.

*dalit*: generally used for the lower caste, especially the outcaste.

*dan*: charity; to give away something from one's honest earnings for the use of others.

*dargah*: a holy place; the place of a *pir* who is no longer alive, regarded as a place of pilgrimage.

*darshan*: the sight of a venerable person or place; used in the context of the Sikhs visiting the Guru as an act of merit.

*deg*: literally, a cauldron, signifying bounty.

*devi*: a goddess or the Goddess as the supreme deity.

*devta*: a god.

*dhadi*: a singer who generally used a miniature drum (*dhadh*) while singing of love or war for the entertainment of his patrons; used

as a metaphor for the Guru as the singer of God's praises and also for his Sikh.

*dhadi darbar*: a gathering in which a minstrel (*dhadi*) sings heroic poems called *Vars*.

*dharma*: the appropriate moral and religious obligations attached to any particular group; duty, moral obligation; a righteous cause.

*dharamsal*: the place for earning merit; Sikh sacred space or the Sikh place of worship in early Sikh history, now generally called Gurdwara.

*dharamsala*: a resting place for way-farers, like a *sarai*.

*dharamsalia*: one who looks after the Sikh sacred space called *dharamsal*.

*dharmarth*: granted in charity; equivalent of the Persian *madad-i ma'ash* or aid for subsistence.

Dhir Mallia: the followers of Dhirmal, the elder grandson of Guru Hargobind, and his descendants, and their followers; their centre was at Kartarpur in the Jalandhar *doab*, and it is still there.

*dhobi*: a washer man.

*diwan*: used for a religious gathering in Sikh literature as a synonym for *sangat*; also used for the keeper of a treasury; the head of the finance department.

*doab*: the land between two rivers; an interfluvium.

*dohagan*: a woman who does not enjoy the presence or the love of her husband; an unhappy wife.

*dohra*: a rhyming couplet of a certain measure, popular in Punjabi poetry.

*dwija*: the twice born who are entitled to wear the sacred thread.

*faqir*: a pious person; a devotee of God; used generally for a mendicant.

*fateh*: victory.

*fateh darshan*: the slogan introduced by Banda Singh Bahadur in place of 'Vaheguruji ka Khalsa, Vaheguruji ki fateh'; used in his



*hukamnama* of 1710, it appears to stand for the victory of a school or sect.

*faujdar*: one who keeps troops; a military officer under the Mughals whose duty in peace time was to maintain law and order and to assist civil authorities; the office survived into the early nineteenth century Punjab.

*gayatri*: a *mantra* of the *Rigveda* which is often recited by Brahmans by way of prayer.

*ghari*: from the Sanskrit *ghati*, a duration of 24 minutes; the day is divided into 8 *pahar* or 60 *gharis*, which makes a *pahar* equal to  $7^{1/2}$  *gharis*.

*ghee*: clarified butter, regarded as rich food.

*Ghorian*: verses meant to be sung at the time of wedding.

*ghumaon*: a measure of land consisting of 8 kanals; also, equal to 2 *bighas* or about an acre; the actual size varied from region to region.

*golak*: treasury; a box to receive cash offerings; money saved in a home to be carried to the Guru.

*gosht*: a discourse or debate, used for an episode in the *Janamsakhis* of Guru Nanak.

*gotra*: a branch or a sept of a *jati*; a distinct exogamous social group claiming a common descent.

*granthi*: a professional reader of the *Granth*.

Gurbani: an utterance of the Guru; compositions of the Gurus included in *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Gurbilas: a poetical work written in praise of the Gurus, or one of the Gurus.

Gurdwara: 'the door of the Guru'; a Sikh place of worship, generally the centre of social activity too.

Gurmat: the Guru's instruction, the Guru's wisdom; Sikh ideology as a whole.

Gurmata: decision of a general congregation of Sikhs, generally taken in the presence of *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Gurmukh: one who has turned to the Guru, a Sikh, a pious Sikh.

Gurpurab: celebration of an event associated with the Guru, like birth and death.

Gurta: Guruship, the office of the Guru.

Guru: preceptor; religious teacher; an epithet used for the founder of Sikhism and each of his nine successors, and also for the *Granth Sahib* and the Panth.

Guru-Granth: the doctrine that the Sikh scripture authenticated by Guru Gobind Singh is the Guru, and not any individual other than the ten Gurus from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind.

Guru-Panth or Guru-Khalsa: the doctrine that the collective body of the Khalsa (Sikhs) is the Guru; the authority of this doctrine is next only to that of Guru-Granth.

*halal*: the traditional Muslim mode of slaughtering animals for meat; anything lawful, as opposed to *haram* (unlawful).

Harmandar: 'the temple of God'; the central Sikh shrine in Amritsar popularly called the Golden Temple.

*haumai*: the psyche of self-centredness, arising out of attributing to oneself what actually is due to God's will.

*haveli*: a large mansion for residence.

*hom*: the ritual of burning incense in a fire pit.

*hukam*: an order; the divine order operative in the natural and the moral world as an expression of God's omnipotence.

*hukamnama*: 'a written order'; used generally for the letters of the Sikh Gurus to their followers.

*hukka*: from the Arabic *huqqa*, a device for smoking tobacco.

*hundi*: a bill of exchange.

*huzuri*: in the presence; in the presence of the Guru; used for Sikhs living in the Guru's presence; also for literary works prepared at the court of the Guru.

*jagir*: an assignment of land revenue in lieu of salary for performing service for the state.

*jagirdar*: the holder of a *jagir* who is entitled to collect revenues from a given piece of land in lieu of service to the state.

*Janamsakhi*: a collection of episodes associated with the life of Guru Nanak, meant primarily to depict his doctrines, ethics and his spiritual status; several traditions of this genre developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

*janju*: the thread worn by the upper caste Hindu as a sacred symbol; also called *janeo*.

*jantar*: a machine in general, an instrument or apparatus; a diagram of a mystical character.

*jap*: silent recitation of the name or praise of God.

*Japuji*: a composition of Guru Nanak used for the morning prayer; in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, this composition includes a *shalok* of Guru Angad at the end.

*jathere*: the ancestors whose place of cremation is worshipped.

*jatha*: a fighting band.

*jati*: an occupational group placed within a larger category of caste, indicating its ritual status in the *varna* order.

Jhanda Bunga: the structure close to the Akal Bunga or Akal Takht, where standards and arms of the Khalsa were kept.

*jhatka*: the mode of slaughtering an animal for meat with one stroke of the sword or some other weapon; the traditional mode of slaughtering animals in India. Unlike *halal*, it carried no religious signification.

jhivar: a waterman.

*jihad*: a religious war in the Islamic tradition.

*jogi* or *yogi*: one who practises *yoga*; a person belonging to any of the twelve orders of the followers of Gorakh Nath.

jogini: a female demon, believed to have magical powers.

*kachh*: short drawers of a special kind meant to be worn by those Sikhs who are initiated through baptism of the double-edged sword.

*kalal*: a vintner, a distiller of alcohol; a seller of alcoholic drinks.

Kaliyuga: the fourth and the last of the cosmic ages traditionally regarded as the age of degeneration.

*kanpata* Jogi: an order of the Gorakh Nathi jogis who split the ear lobes for putting on large rings called *mundre* as a symbol of their spiritual status.

*kar*: literary work; used for offering to the Guru, probably as a share from the profits or income.

*kara*: an iron bracelet meant to be worn by the baptized Khalsa.

*kar-bhet*: an offering; an offering made by a Sikh to the Guru.

*kard*: a short sword, a dagger.

*kardar*: an official; generally used for the administrator at the *ta'alluqa* (*pargana*) level under Sikh rule.

*karha parsad*: sacramental food distributed in Gurdwaras to all persons present, generally prepared with equal quantities of wheat flour, sugar and ghee.

*karm* or *karma*: an act, a deed; the law of *karma*, according to which living beings take birth in different forms, with human birth as the best; that is why it is regarded as a rare opportunity for emancipation or release from the chain of transmigration.

*karm-kand*: the belief that certain ritual practices can lead ultimately to release; equated sometimes with the path of action, as distinct from the path knowledge and the path of *bhakti*.

*kasai*: a butcher.

*katha*: an exposition of the Guru's verses, generally in connection with the life of the Guru.

*katra*: a locality; an enclosed market-cum-residential quarters.

*kesh*: hair of the head, uncut hair.

Keshdhari: a baptized Singh who maintains long unshorn hair.

Khalsa: the Sikh brotherhood instituted by Guru Gobind Singh; used for an individual as well as the collective body.

**Khalsa Panth:** the collectivity of the Khalsa.

**khanda:** the double-edged sword.

**khande ki pahul:** baptism of the double-edged sword, introduced by Guru Gobind Singh for initiating Sikhs into the order of the Khalsa Singhs.

**kharif:** the autumn harvest, sown in April-May before the commencement of the rains and reaped in October-November.

**Khulasa:** a term used for Sikhs not initiated through baptism of the double-edged sword and, consequently, not keeping unshorn hair, and not bearing arms or the epithet 'Singh'; also called 'Khalasa'.

**kirpan:** a sword.

**kirtan:** the singing of hymns in praise of God, especially from the sacred scriptures of the Sikhs; hence *kirtan darbar* for an elaborate performance.

**Kirtan Sohila:** a composition in the *Guru Granth Sahib* to be recited before going to sleep.

**kirya or kirya-karm:** the performance of a traditional Brahmanical ritual appropriate for the occasion like death, marriage or birth.

**krodh:** anger.

**Kumhar:** a potter.

**kuththa or halal:** meat obtained by slaughtering an animal in the Muslim fashion.

**langar:** the kitchen attached to a Gurdwara from which food is served to all regardless of caste or creed; a community meal.

**Lavan:** the verses of Guru Ram Das meant to be sung for the marriage ceremony among the Sikhs, called Anand marriage because the *Anand* of Guru Amar Das is recited or sung at the end.

**madad-i ma'ash:** literally aid for subsistence; most commonly used in the Mughal times for land-revenue alienated in favour of a religious personage or institution.

**Mahant:** the head of a religious establishment.

*mahaprasad:* used for *karha prasad* but much more often for cooked meat.

*makbara:* from *maqbarah*, a tomb.

*mansab:* an office, position or rank under the Mughals indicating the status, obligations and remuneration of its holder in the official hierarchy.

*manmukh:* turned towards his own mind, a self-centred person as opposed to the one who has turned to the Guru.

*mannat:* an offering vowed for the fulfilment of a wish.

*mantar:* magical formulae; the word in Sikh usage.

*mantra:* a sacred word.

*marhi:* a small structure raised on the spot of cremation ; treated by some people as an object of worship.

*masa:* one twelfth of a *tola*; a small quantity, roughly equal to a milligram.

**Masand:** a representative appointed by the Guru to look after the affairs of a local congregation of Sikhs, or a number of such congregations.

**Masandia:** the follower of a Masand.

*masit* or *masjid:* a mosque.

*matth:* a religious establishment, a monastery; generally associated with renunciates who remain celibate.

*maya:* the material world and all that is therein, treated in the Sikh tradition as 'false' in contrast with the eternal truth of God.

*mazar:* a mausoleum; the tomb of a Sufi Shaikh regarded as a place of pilgrimage; the site of a *dargah*.

**Mazhabi:** used for the out-caste *chuhra* who accepts baptism of the double-edged sword.

*meli:* an associate, a synonym for *sahlang*.

**Mina:** a derogatory epithet used for Prithi Chand, the elder brother of Guru Arjan, and also for his successors and their followers.



*miri-piri*: leadership of both the spiritual and temporal realms associated with Guru Hargobind and his successors.

*misal*: a combination of Sikh leaders in the eighteenth century for the purpose of defence and occupation of territories.

*misaldari*: used for the system of polity established by the Khalsa in the late eighteenth century in which the unit called *misal* is supposed to be independent of other such unit.

*mlechh*: impure; a derogatory term used for an outcaste or a foreigner, both were regarded as outside the four-tier *varna* order.

*mukta*: a liberated person in Sikh usage.

*muqaddam*: the headman of a village or a part thereof.

*murid*: a disciple; a devout Sikh.

*musaddi*: a functionary of the government.

Nai: a barber.

*nam*: the name, the name of God; the transcendent and immanent God; the whole creation; the Guru's *shabad*, Gurbani.

*nam-dan-isnan*: the phrase used by Guru Nanak for the essential features of the Sikh way of life, that is, meditation on God, charity, and both physical and moral purity.

Nanak Panthis: the followers of Guru Nanak, equated with Sikhs in general.

Nanak Puttras: the descendants of Guru Nanak.

Nath: master; used for the jogi of an exalted status; one of the nine mythical Nath.

Navratra: the nine fasts observed in honour of the Goddess.

*nihangs*: the militant followers of Guru Gobind Singh who regarded themselves to be the guardians of the faith.

*nirgun*: without qualities, without attributes; the primal state of God before creation.

Nirmala *sadhs*: the ascetics and renunciates belonging to the Nirmala order among the Sikhs.

*padarath*: a thing, a blessing; one of the four *padaraths* of observance of religious duties, material wealth, fulfilment of desires and liberation (*dharma*, *arth*, *kam* and *moksh*).

Pahari Style: any style of painting in the Punjab hills.

*pahul*: water used for initiating a person as a Sikh (*charan pahul*) or a Singh (*khande ki pahul*).

*pakka*: built of baked bricks; strong.

*pancha*: one of five; the member of a *panchayat*; the headman of a village or one of its subdivisions.

*pandit*: a Brahman; a learned Brahman; a learned person.

*panj piare*: the 'five beloved' so called for offering their heads to Guru Gobind Singh, who were baptized all afresh and who baptized the Guru, in term.

Panth: literally a path; the people following a particular path; collectively the followers of the Gurus; the Sikh community.

*pargana*: a small unit of administration in a province under the Mughals; remained in use in the Punjab till the mid-nineteenth century and became synonymous with the *ta'alluqa*.

*parmarth*: explanation, meaning, gist.

*parsad*: sacred food; simply food.

*par-tirya*: literally, another woman; appears to carry the import of a woman other than one's wife.

*parupkar*: something good done for others.

*path*: reading of Gurbani or the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

*pattal*: a tree leaf used as a plate.

*pauri*: a stanza, a form of poetic composition.

*peshkar*: the head of an office.

*pind*: a ball of rice for feeding Brahmans as a part of mortuary rites.

*pir* or *shaikh*: among Muslim mystics the guide who leads on the path of union with God; believed to be a bestower of blessings after his death.

*pothi*: a book.

*purkh*: a person; used for God to clarify that God in the Sikh tradition is not an impersonal reality as in the Vedanta.

*purohit*: the Brahman who performs the customary duties for a family, or a number of house-holds.

*qanungo*: a hereditary keeper of the revenue records at the *pargana* or the *ta'alluqa* level.

*Qur'an*: the Islamic scripture regarded as revealed by Allah to the prophet Muhammad through the angel Gabriel.

*rababi*: one who plays on the *rabab*, a kind of violin with three strings.

*ragi*: a singer, particularly of the hymns of the Sikh scripture.

*rahit*: a way of life, used especially for the Sikh way of life in accordance with the philosophic and ethical principles advanced by the Gurus.

*Rahitnama*: a written code of belief and conduct; norms laid down for the Sikh way of life in accordance with the principles of Sikhism, including 'penance' for infringing those principles.

*raj-jog*: a position or a system in which temporal and spiritual concerns are seen as two sides of the same ideology.

Ranghreta: a Singh whose background is that of an untouchable *chuhra*.

*Sadd*: a form of poetic composition.

Sahajdhari: a Sikh who is not baptized as a Singh and does not observe the Khalsa code of discipline; a non-Singh Khalsa.

*sahaj-jog*: the path through which *sahaj* is pursued and attained; the path of Guru Nanak and his successors.

*sahibzada*: son of the Master; used for the sons of Guru Gobind Singh.

*sahlang*: an associate; a person admitted to the Sikh faith by a representative of the Guru on his behalf.

*sakhi*: an eyewitness; testimony; an episode bearing witness to the spiritual status of a religious guide; a statement bearing witness

to the truth of God; used generally for an episode in the life of a Guru.

*samadh*: a structure raised over a spot of cremation in honour of an important person, whether secular or religious; the counterpart of a mausoleum.

*sandhya*: a form of worship in the morning, at noon, and in the evening in the Brahmanical system.

*sangat*: association, an assembly, a religious congregation; a congregation of Sikhs; the collective body of Sikhs at one place.

Sansi: a category of the outcaste.

*sanyasi*: a renunciate, generally a Shaivite.

Sarkar: the primary division of a province under the Mughals.

*sarovar*: a tank, a pool of water.

*sati*: the practice in which the wife burnt herself on the funeral pyre of her dead husband as a mark of her devotion and fidelity to him.

Savvyya: a poem written in praise, a kind of eulogy.

*sepidari*: from the word *sep* which is generally the grain given for the service rendered by the village artisans and menials; *sepi*: one who renders service and receives the customary remuneration. The system of mutual obligation between the land holders and menials was also called *jajmani*.

*seva*: service; service of God; service of the Guru; service of the Sikhs; service of others.

*shabad*: the word; a hymn; a verse of the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

*shahid*: a martyr.

*shahidganj*: a structure built in commemoration of a martyr.

Shaikh: the head of a Sufi order; a respectable Muslim.

*shalok*: a unit of verse, generally rather short, like a *doha* or a rhyming couplet.

*shraddh*: the rite by which the dead ancestors are supposed to be fed through the mediacy of Brahmans.

*siddha*: a renunciate of great spiritual status; a mythical entity.

*siddhi*: the power of a supranatural order.

*sikh*: a discipline; used generally for a follower of Guru Nanak and his successors.

*simmal*: a tree with bright flowers, which does not bear fruit.

*Sohila*: a composition of Guru Nanak recited especially at the end of a ceremony.

*sutak*: the notion of pollution in certain situations, especially in relation to women during menstruation and childbirth.

*takht*: a throne; one of the five Sikh religious centres of authority.

*tankhah*: ordinarily salary, but used by the compilers of the Rahitnamas (manuals for the Sikh way of life) for corrective penance prescribed for a Sikh who has infringed a particular norm.

Tarkhan: a carpenter.

*tarpan*: offering water in ritual worship.

*teeka*: annotation, an annotated work.

*teg*: the sword, signifying physical force.

Teli: the person who prepares oil.

*Thakurdwara*: a temple dedicated to Vishnu or one of his incarnations.

*thana*: a place, a place where troops are posted for maintaining peace and order, and for assistance in the collection of revenues.

*thanadar*: the commandant of a garrison or a fort.

*tilak*: the sacred mark on the forehead, also called *tikka*.

*tirath*: a sacred place; a place of pilgrimage; notionally, there are sixty-eight such places in India.

Udasi: a renunciate belonging to an order tracing its origin to Guru Nanak through his son Sri Chand but not through Guru Angad and his successors.

*Vaheguru*: praise be to the Guru; used for God.

*var*: a literary genre, generally used for heroic poetry; Guru Nanak used it for his religious compositions; the most famous Vars in Sikh literature were composed by Bhai Gurdas in the early

seventeenth century for celebrating Sikh Gurus and the Sikh Panth.

*varna*: literally colour, used for any one of the ideal four-fold social order.

*varnasankara*: the breaking down of the *varna* ideal, mixing of castes regarded as a social calamity.

*varnashrama*: the four-fold division of society into *varnas* or classes and of human life into *ashramas* or stages.

*varnashramdharma*: the ideal according to which the social order is divided into four castes and the individual's life is divided into four stages.

*vartak*: a work in prose.

*vadda ghallughara*: the great carnage of the Sikhs at the hands of the Ahmad Shah Abdali in February 1762.

*wazir*: the first or the prime minister, next in authority and importance to the king.

*zamindar*: literally the holder of land; applied alike to the intermediary who collected revenue on behalf of the state, to a vassal chief, and to a peasant proprietor.



## **B I B L I O G R A P H Y**

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