

# **Sikh Educational Heritage**

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The paper traces the origin, elaboration, and systematization of Sikh educational heritage from the Sikh community's founding in the early sixteenth century to the present day. It begins with an examination of the core Sikh beliefs, and then goes on to locate the vessels, sites, and modes that the Sikhs developed to preserve and transmit these beliefs to successive generations over the past five centuries. The paper concludes with an attempt to understand various strands within twentieth century Sikh scholarship, and the possible impact of globalization of the Sikh community on its educational heritage.

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Sikh educational heritage is deeply rooted in Sikh beliefs and shapes Sikh practice. After all, the very word Sikh means a learner, a disciple, one who discovers the truth from the compositions of the Gurus, the founding leaders of the Sikh tradition (*Sikhi sikhia gur vichari*, M1, GG, 465), and then applies it to his or her life's activity (*Guri kahia sa kar kamavahu*, M1, GG, 933).<sup>1</sup> The literary corpus that constitutes the core of this heritage began to form at the very outset of the Sikh tradition in the early sixteenth century, and continued to expand until the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> In subsequent times, scholars have attempted to clarify, explicate, and standardize the information enshrined in these primary sources, and Sikh religious leadership has made concerted efforts toward its dissemination.

This essay is divided into three sections: the first traces the development of the Sikh educational heritage and addresses basic issues such as its nature, composition, and significance within the Sikh tradition. The second deals with the sites and modes that the Sikh community created over time for the communication of educational heritage to future generations. The final section focuses on the challenges that have surfaced in scholarly interpretation of this heritage during the twentieth century and the opportunities that have risen following the migration of large number of Sikhs outside the Punjab, their historic home and sacred land. The Sikh community presents an interesting case study toward an understanding of how the content of educational heritage, the modes adopted for its transmission, and its scholarly understanding within a religious community evolve to meet the needs of changing times.

## 1. The Context

Guru Nanak (1469-1539), the founder of the Sikh tradition, believed that the most productive human conversation is the one that focuses on the divine (*Mai gunh gala ke siri bhar, gali gala sirjanhar*, M1, GG, 351), consequently his approximately five hundred poetic compositions sing about Vahiguru, the most commonly used designation for God in the Sikh tradition. He adopted Punjabi, the indigenous language of the region, associated with rustic people of the time, as the medium of his compositions, and inscribed them in a distinct script named Gurmukhi (of the Gurmukh/Sikhs).<sup>3</sup> Compiled in the 1530s, the Pothi (book/volume) including his compositions served as the first container of Sikh educational heritage, and a significant marker of the new community's identity.

### 1.1 Foundational Beliefs

Guru Nanak's understanding of Vahiguru is centered on the belief in the unity and uniqueness of the divine. The Vahiguru's nature is understood to have comprised of two aspects: the primal aspect includes self-creation (*sambhau*) followed by an unrevealed phase (*gopat*) during which no attributes were developed (*nirgunh*). Later in time, Vahiguru decided to bring the creation into being, manifested (*pargat*) itself in the universe and in the process acquired positive attributes (*Avigato nirmailu upje nirgunh te sargunh thia*, M1, GG, 940). As for the primal aspect, very little--essentially restricted to negative terms--can be said about it, but it is the creative aspect of Vahiguru that constitutes the heart of Guru Nanak's reflections on divine nature.

Guru Nanak believes that Vahiguru created the universe as the divine abode (*Qudrati takhati rachaia sachi nibherhanhharo*, M1, GG, 580; *Sache takhat nivasu*, M1, GG, 1279; and M1, GG, 1035-1043), and watches over its activity with parental care and affection (*Rainhi dinasu duai dai daia jagu khelai khelai he*, M1, GG, 1021). Given this context, Vahiguru is the sole object of human prayer (*Eki ravi rahia sabh thai, avaru na dise kisu puj charhai*, M1, GG, 1345), source of all human values, and the divine overseeing of the world that provides the model for ideal living. Guru Nanak calls Vahiguru *Sachiar* ([*sach-achar*, One with truthful-conduct] *Ohu ape takhat bahai sachiara*, M1, GG, 1026; *Tu sacha sachiar jinni sachu vartia*, M1, GG, 1279), and all this leads to the primary thrust of his message, which is not theological but ethical in nature.

Guru Nanak expects that human beings must understand the details of divine activity and then attempt to adopt the values associated with it in their own lives. Translating these values into action constitutes the center of Guru Nanak's vision of a meaningful life (*Jaha karanhi taha puri mati, karanhi vajhahu ghate ghati*, M1, GG, 25; *karanhi kaba/karanhi kalama*, M1, GG, 140-141), which manifests itself in values such as service to others (*Vichi dunia sev kamaiai*, M1, GG, 26), truthful conduct, and social productivity (*Sachi rahit sacha sukhu pai*, M1, GG, 1343; *Ghali khai kichhu hathau dai*, M1, GG, 1245). For him, the acquisition of abstract truth is

not sufficient in itself, it must turn into truthful conduct (*Sachau urai sabhu ko upari sachu achar*, M1, GG, 62).

This basic dictum provides the starting point of the journey toward the attainment of liberation, a place of honor in the divine court and the ultimate destination of human life (*Dargah baisanhu paiai*, M1, GG, 26). Guru Nanak is, however, emphatic that liberation is not only personal, but collective and includes family, congregation, and “all people” (*Api tarai janu pitra tarai*, M1, GG, 1026; *Api tarai sangati kul tarai*, M1, GG, 353, 1039; *Api tarai sagalai kul tarai*, M1, GG, 622, 877; *Api tarai tarai bhi soi*, M1, GG, 944). This serves as the basis for the importance assigned to communal and social obligations in Sikh life.

How did Guru Nanak attain this knowledge? He believes that his compositions result from conversations with Vahiguru (*Jaisi mai avai khasam ki banhi taisarha kari gianu, ve Lalo*, M1, GG, 722; *Saha kia gala dar kia bata tai ta kahanhu kahaia*, M1, GG, 878; conversation which turns into questions at times: *Eti mar pai karlanhe tain ki darad na aia*, M1, GG, 360). The ideas enshrined in them represent the truth (*Sach ki banhi*, M1, GG, 722), and contain all that his followers need to live their lives meaningfully (*Sabhi nad Bed gurbanhi*, M1, GG, 879; *Sunhi sunhi sikh hamari*, M1, GG, 154; *Sunhi sikhvante Nanaku binavai*, M1, GG, 503). His followers fully agreed with his belief, Guru Angad (Guruship 1539-1551), his successor, was emphatic that those who had met Guru Nanak needed no further instruction (*Tin kau kia updesiai jin Guru Nanak deau*, M2, GG, 150).

Guru Nanak accepts the existence of revelations prior to his own and that sacred texts of other religious traditions that enshrine these revelations have the potential to serve as a source of liberating knowledge (*Pothi Puraanh kamaiai*, M1, GG, 25). Yet to be considered revelatory, these texts must meet the criterion of reasoning and rational inquiry (*Akali parh kai bughiai akali kichai dan, Nanaku akhai rahu ehu hori galan Saitanu*, M1, GG, 1245). For instance, Guru Nanak believes that the Atharava Ved, a Hindu sacred text containing magic spells, cannot offer any positive guidance toward how to orient human life and consequently cannot serve the role of a scripture (*Banhi Brahma Bedu Atharbanhu karanhi kirati lahaia*, M1, GG, 903).

Guru Nanak supports the idea of a discussion (*goshati*) where questions are asked and answered in a spirit of helping each other learn as an important way to refine knowledge (*Rosu na kijai utaru dijai kiau paiai gurduaro*, M1, GG, 938). He spent over two decades traveling and meeting leaders from varied religious backgrounds and discussing with them the issues pertaining to the creation of the universe and the obligations and goal of human life. Guru Nanak’s long composition reconstructing the discussion with the Nath Yogis, the Shaivite ascetics who dominated the religious landscape of the Punjab at that time, is the earliest composition in this genre of religious literature in north India (M1, GG, 938-946). His conversations with the other Hindu and Muslim leaders are also referred to in his compositions (M1, GG, 140-141, 465-466).

For Guru Nanak, knowledge is not abstract but has to have a practical thrust. Once acquired it works like a sword that cuts through the cobwebs created by human instincts diverting human attention away from the goal of life (*Gian kharhgu le man siu lujhe*, M1, GG, 1022), and it replaces egocentricity and arrogance with humility (*Saram*, M1, GG, 7; *Sifati saram ka kaparha mangau*, M1, GG, 1329). This personal cleansing further translates into a powerful yearning to do good for others (*Vidia vichari tan parupkari*, M1, GG, 356). Guru Nanak warns against intellectual arrogance that may come with the acquisition of knowledge (*Ved parhahi te vad vakhanhai bine hari pati gavai*, M1, GG, 638), and expects the bearer to emanate light as he or she carries on the routine chores of life while simultaneously progressing toward liberation (*Ihu telu diva iau jalai, kari chananhu sahib tau milai*, M1, GG, 25). These beliefs served as the foundation for the community of his followers at Kartarpur (1520(?)-1539).

## 1.2 The Heritage Expands

As the tradition evolved, Guru Nanak's successors internalized the knowledge contained in his compositions, and the images, metaphors, and themes closer to his heart echo in the poetic compositions of his successors. Guru Angad and Guru Amardas (1551-1574) came from outside the Sikh community and were exposed to Sikh ideas later in their lives, but from Guru Ramdas (1574-1581) onward, the remaining Gurus had grown up within Sikh settings and thus had ample opportunity to imbibe them from early childhood onward.

Guru Amardas emphasized the centrality of moral deeds in one's search for liberation (*Sachu kamavai sachi rahai sachai savi samai*, M3, GG, 560). For Guru Arjan, the performance of good deeds and belief in Vahiguru represented the desirable religious path (*Sarab dharm mahi sreshat dharm, hari ko namu japi nirmal karamu*, M5, GG, 266). He also extended Guru Nanak's image of "knowledge as the oil in the lamp" to knowledge as "the lamp itself," the source of light (*Binu tel diva kiau jale*, M1, GG, 25; *Gur gian dipak ujiaria*, M5, GG, 210). He called it an eye cleanser, something that focuses and sharpens one's vision (*Gur gian anjanu sacu netri paia*, M 5, GG, 210; *Gian anjanu guri dia agian andher binasu*, M5, GG, 293). Knowledge also appeared as a sword to cut down negative emotions (*Gian kharhgu kari kirpa dina dut mare kari dhai he*, M5, GG, 1072). He designated an ideal Sikh as a *Brahmgiani* (Knower of Vahiguru), an active participant in life who always yearns to do good for others (*parupkar umaha*, M5, GG, 273; M5, GG, 816).

The Pothi containing Guru Nanak's compositions underwent expansion during the leadership of Guru Amardas and Guru Arjan, respectively. The compositions of successor Gurus, bards at the Sikh court, and careful selections from some non-Sikh saints, both Hindu and Sufi, which synchronized with Sikh understanding of human life and the unity of the divine were appended to those of the founder. Guru Arjan also believed in the revelatory nature of Sikh sacred literature (*Dhur ki banhi*, M5, GG, 628; *Mahali bulaia prabhu amritu bhuncha*, M5, GG, 562), and described the

Pothi as a ceremonial plate (*thal*, M5, 1429), which carried food that contained all the elements required for a recipe for liberation. It was the seat of Vahiguru (*Pothi pamesar ka thanu*, M5, GG, 1226), and in this status, it becomes an object of reverence.

Beliefs enshrined in the compositions recorded in the Sikh Pothe were not only to be recited and revered, but understood and translated in real life (*Dithai mukati na hovai jicharu sabadi na kare vichar*, M3, GG, 594; M3, 560). Guru Nanak's successors attempted to elaborate on his themes. In one of his compositions, Guru Nanak asks "how could I reflect on the divine with my mind staying out of control?" (*Kiau simari siviria nahi jai*, M1, GG, 661). Guru Amardas creates a composition, which presents the divine grace as instrumental in peaceful reflection (*Nadari kare ta simaria jai*, M3, GG, 661), and appends it to that of Guru Nanak's.<sup>4</sup>

The exegesis of Sikh sacred compositions began around the turn of the seventeenth century. The traditional view is that Bhai Gurdas (d. 1638) was given the duty to exegese these compositions so that all Sikhs could understand the knowledge contained in them. The structure of his ballads (*vars*), where he takes important themes and explains them on the basis of the Gurus' writings, reveals his commitment to providing a clear interpretation of Sikh tenets.<sup>5</sup> The themes presented in his compositions include an ideal Sikh (Gursikh), the nature of relationship between the Guru and his followers (*guru-chela/pir-murid*), the characteristics of a Sikh congregation (*sangat*), and the primary Sikh values such as service (*seva*).

For Guru Amardas, the superiority of the Sikh path was taken for granted and he exhorts the Sufis and Brahmins to recognize this (*Shekha chauchakia...eharh teharh chhadi tu gur ka sabadu pacchanhu*, M3, GG, 646, *Brahmu bindahi te brahmanha je chalahi satigur bhai*, M3, GG, 849-850). The Sikh path is presented to be on the rise and Guru Arjan refers to its landmark achievements such as the establishment of the community at Ramdaspur (*Mai badhi sachi dharamsal hai gursikha lahada bhali kai*, M5, GG 73); completion of the Darbar Sahib (*Mera gharu bania banu talu bania prabhu parase hari raia ram*, M5, GG, 782); the majesty of Sikh center and the spread of the community (*Mandar mere sabh te uche... Kirati hamari gharighari hoi, bhagati hamari sabhani loi*, M5, GG, 1141). If Guru Nanak and Guru Arjan sang of the glory of the divine court (M1, GG, 6; M5, GG, 1235-1236), the bards at the Sikh court praised the majesty of the Gurus and their courts as a replica of the divine court on this earth (Bhatta, GG, 1385-1409). The tensions with the Mughals made it into Sikh records as well (M4, GG, 306; M5, GG, 199).

Furthermore, as the Gurus were understood to have lived out the content of their teaching; it was considered important to record the life story of the founder Guru. Bhai Gurdas composed an entire ballad on this theme, and the Janam Sakhi literature expanded on it. This genre served an excellent venue to envision the life of the founder of the community as a special human being. For these storytellers, Guru Nanak was the leading teacher of the age (*Jagat Guru*), who was the bearer of the divine word enshrined in Sikh Pothe. Following the prophets in Islamic literature

that these people may have heard about, they presented Guru Nanak as having the ability to perform miracles. The focus of this literature remained on Guru Nanak, but the stories about Guru Amardas and other Gurus were developed as the time passed.<sup>6</sup> With this literature another dimension of learning entered the field, namely, Sikh history.

In about a century following Guru Nanak's death, then, Sikh educational heritage included the revelatory compositions enshrined in the scriptural text, their exegesis, and the stories about the Gurus and their courts. This heritage is characteristically manifested in a manuscript supposed to have been prepared for Bibi Rup Kunvar, the daughter of Guru Harirai (1644-1664). The opening section of the text contained Sikh liturgical compositions, and the second part included stories built around Sikh moral values and episodes from the lives of the Gurus.<sup>7</sup> These aspects of Sikh education continued to develop as the tradition matured.

The closing decades of the seventeenth century saw further expansion of this corpus of literature. We have references to the training of Gobind in the 1670s, who would later become Guru Gobind Singh (1675-1708). His education included the learning of Gurmukhi, Takari (script used in the Punjab hills to write local dialects of Hindi), and Farsi (the language of the Mughal administration). This demonstrates the importance that the Sikhs assigned to the larger context. While the learning of Gurmukhi was essential to immerse oneself in Sikh sacred lore as well as other day-to-day communications, the Takari helped in dealing with the people living in the Punjab hills, and Farsi being the language of the nobility and administration of the time would be expected from a well-informed person.<sup>8</sup>

The future Guru's formal training also included the use of weaponry. The metaphorical sword of knowledge of Guru Nanak, and the double-edged sword of humility of Guru Arjan (*Garibi gada hamari khana sagal ranu chhari*, M5, GG, 628), which were to trim the complications of life, had taken the form of a literal steel sword required to address the situation of political oppression of the Sikhs by the local Rajput chiefs and the Mughal rulers. With Guru Gobind Singh's decision to elevate the Sikh community to become the Khalsa (the pure community) in the late 1690s, the Sikh belief system expanded to maintain the body in its pristine form, by keeping bodily hair, and adorn it with symbols of royalty such as turban and arms. In this new look, the Sikhs emanated divine light (*didar*), and were assigned the destiny to establish the Khalsa/Sikh Raj, a sovereign state.<sup>9</sup> This vision of the Khalsa Raj was understood to have its roots in Guru Nanak's belief in divine justice and a human being's right to live a life of self-respect.

Sikh literary heritage also expanded during this period. Beginning with the late 1670s, we see poets and singers from the distant Sikh congregations as well as the courts of the local chiefs in the hills seeking Sikh patronage at Chak Nanaki, Paunta, and Anandpur.<sup>10</sup> The bulky literature of the period falls in three parts. The better known of these is a compilation that later came to be named the Dasam Granth (the tenth book or book of the tenth Guru). This includes Braj and Punjabi translations of Hindu mythological tales (*Bachitar Natak*) and Arabic and Persian literatures (Mir Maihdi and *Hikayats*), and stories about a medley of contemporary characters

(*Charitro Pakhayan*).<sup>11</sup> The second part includes texts such as the *Sarab Loh Granth* (book of all iron), the *Pothi Prem Ambodh* (book about poets of love), and so on, which claim to have been produced at Anandpur. Finally, there are references in eighteenth century sources to compilations such as the *Samund Sagar* (sea of seas), the *Vidaya Sagar* (sea of knowledge), which are no longer extant.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, the elevation of the Sikh community into the Khalsa and the dissolution of the office of the personal Guru created a situation in which the rahit, the code of Sikh beliefs and practice, came to focus. The statements pertaining to rahit such as “five dos and five do nots” appear in the opening pages of scriptural manuscripts beginning with the turn of the seventeenth century, and these evolved into the new genre called the Rahitnamas (Letters of code of belief and practice). The three early extant documents of this type are attributed to Nand Lal (1695), Prihald Singh (1695/1705), and Chaupa Singh and a group of Sikh scholars (1700), who created a detailed statement on rahit supported with relevant quotes from the Guru Granth and claim that this had the endorsement of Guru Gobind Singh.<sup>13</sup> The Janam Sakhi literature expanded to include a new auxiliary form called the praise of the Gurus (Gur Sobha/ later Gur Bilas). Sainapati, a court poet at Anandpur, introduced this genre by writing a text about Guru Gobind Singh, which he completed in 1711.<sup>14</sup>

By the end of the Guru period, then, Sikh educational heritage contained literature in five different areas which had developed in the following chronology: (1) Sikh revelatory writings, which began with those of Guru Nanak, reached their canonical form in the 1680s, and this sacred text attained the status of the Guru Granth (Guru manifested in the book) after Guru Gobind Singh’s death in 1708. (2) The writings of Bhai Gurdas, the exegesis of the compositions in the Guru Granth and the ideas enshrined in them, served as the core of interpretive literature. (3) The rudimentary statements pertaining to rahit had started to be recorded around 1600 and by the turn of the eighteenth century they emerged as an autonomous genre called the Rahitnamas. (4) By the early seventeenth century, the Janam Sakhi literature began to be committed to writing and stories about the lives of Guru Nanak, Guru Amardas, Guru Arjan, and Guru Gobind Singh were created later. (5) Finally, the poetry associated with the court at Anandpur was recorded in the Dasam Granth and *Sarab Loh Granth* etc. and subsequently became part of Sikh educational heritage.

The first category was represented in the form of a bounded text and remained unchanged. The next three genres by definition were open ended and expanded over time. The rahit related documents multiplied as later writers addressed new issues facing the community at the time of their writing. Sikh writers retold stories about the lives of the ten Gurus; the life of Guru Hargobind became the subject of a Gur Bilas; a text celebrated the martyrdom (*Shahid Bilas*) of Bhai Mani Singh (d. 1738), the first Sikh to have been elevated to the level of becoming part of Sikh heritage (1800).<sup>15</sup> The early eighteenth-century beliefs in the special status of the Sikh community as the Guru Panth, and the resulting belief that it was divinely sanctioned to rule the Punjab reached its full development in Ratan Singh Bhangu’s

*Guru Panth Prakash* (Rise of the Guru Panth) completed in 1841.<sup>16</sup> The status of the literary corpus produced at the Sikh court during the period of leadership of Guru Gobind Singh has been under dispute since the early eighteenth century and there seems to be no resolution in sight.<sup>17</sup>

By this point in time, the primary corpus of Sikh educational heritage reached its completion and what follows can be safely considered as its elaboration and systematization. Later writers are larger in number, more prolific in production than their predecessors, and register a distinct consciousness of being scholars who engage with other people's ideas and views. Bhai Santokh Singh (d. 1843), who marks the transition to the new period, wrote on Guru Nanak and his successors, in over 6,500 printed pages, created the *Garbh Ganjani Tika* (pride breaking commentary) on the *Japji* denouncing another contemporary interpretation of the same text, and sought work in three Sikh courts on the basis of his scholarly credentials.<sup>18</sup>

### 1.3 In Modern Times

The annexation of the Sikh Raj by the British in the 1840s resulted in the arrival of Western education and the printing press to the Punjab. The Sikhs welcomed the press, and the first printed edition of the Guru Granth was created in the mid-1860s. Numerous editions have come forth since then. In the process, its pagination became standardized at 1430, and the text is available in the standard size used in ritual worship and in smaller sizes for devotional and scholarly purposes at home. In the 1970s, the earlier tradition of manuscripts where the words were connected with each other was discontinued and as the words were separated the reading became easier. In addition to Gurmukhi, the sacred script, its texts are also available in Devanagari and Indo-Persian, and these are intended for those who can understand the language but cannot read the script. In the 1990s, a text with three columns including the Gurmukhi, its transliteration in Roman script, and its translation into English, respectively, was created. This is primarily for use by the Sikhs living in the West who may not have access to the Gurmukhi original.<sup>19</sup> At present an edition of the Guru Granth with Gurmukhi, Devanagari, and an English translation is available on the Inter-net ([www.srigranth.org](http://www.srigranth.org)).

The tradition of commentaries on key sections of the Guru Granth also continued and we have a large bulk of writings available in the area. Research has been conducted on both its structure and message. The annotated editions of the complete text of the Guru Granth began to be created in the closing decades of the nineteenth century and since then we have witnessed over half-dozen efforts in this direction. Several translations of the Guru Granth in English and one in French are also available. G. B. Singh's work in the 1940s developed an area of scholarship that focused on early Sikh scriptural manuscripts in an attempt to reconstruct the history of the canonical text, and the past decades have seen key strides in this direction.<sup>20</sup>

The Rahitnama literature also underwent significant systematization during this period. This work began in the 1870s with an important compilation by Bhagwan Singh entitled *Bibek Bardhi Granth* (book of wisdom), which included thirty-six early rahit related documents.<sup>21</sup> This was followed by Avtar Singh Vahiria's comprehensive statement on the rahit (*Sikh Dharam Shashtar*, 1894). Working on the basic assumption that rahit is an evolving discipline, Sikh representative bodies such as the Panch Khalsa Diwan (*Khalsa Rahit Prakash*, 1908) and the Chief Khalsa Diwan (*Gurmat Prakash*, 1915) started the initiative toward creating an authoritative statement. Under the auspices of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), preeminent Sikh organization legislated by the Sikh Gurdwara Act of 1925 and based in Darbar Sahib, Amritsar (here after, the SGPC), this effort attained its final form in a document entitled *Sikh Rahit Maryada* (Sikh way of life) published in 1950. The *Sikh Rahit Maryada* has successfully served as the authoritative statement for an overwhelming majority of the Sikh community since then.<sup>22</sup>

The Janam Sakhi and Gur Bilas literature began to be published in the 1870s and has continued to attract attention. Over time critical editions of various branches within this large corpus have been created and efforts have been made to assess their historical value. In addition a creative rendering of the old stories within this broad genre has continued to surface.<sup>23</sup> This literature serves as the primary source for information imparted in the gurdwara and other forums. In the 1990s, Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale (d. 1984) followed Bhai Mani Singh as the rightful subject of a *Shahid Bilas*.<sup>24</sup> Finally, the text of the Dasam Granth was printed in the 1890s for the first time and several printed editions have been created since then. In 2002, the management of the Takhat Sri Hazur Sahib, Nanderh, released what it believes to be an authoritative edition of the text.

At the heart of Sikh literary corpus lie the Guru Granth, Sikh scripture, which serves as the repository of Sikh beliefs and practice and numerous commentaries are available to understand its message, and scholars have attempted detailed reconstruction of the history of its making. Rooted in these teachings, the *Sikh Rahit Maryada* provides guidance for both the personal and corporate life of the Sikhs. Numerous editions of the Janam Sakhis and their new versions, the Gur Bilas, and other historical documents such as that of Bhangu provide understanding of the lives of the Gurus and the destiny of the Sikh community. The literature produced during Guru Gobind Singh's period marks the phase of Sikh heritage whose literary and historical context is yet to be firmly understood.

## 2. Modes of Transmission

Early Sikh literature provides us with a fairly good sense of the setting in which the educational heritage was transmitted during the formative stages of the Sikh community. At Kartarpur, Guru Nanak was the center of the community, which looked upon him as the model for their own living. He guided their path by

providing them with core beliefs and direction (*Bhule Sikh guru samjhae ujharhi jade maragi pai*, M1, GG, 1032; *Guru kahia sa kar kamavahu*, M1, GG, 933). He structured the daily rhythms of their lives by inviting them to gather at his place at sunrise and sunset and assigned a prayer to be recited just before going to sleep.<sup>25</sup> The congregational sessions comprised of listening to the recitation of the Guru's verses, (*path*), their singing (*kirtan*), their exegesis (*katha*) in which the Guru himself must have clarified the complexities of his ideas and answered questions, and supplication (*ardas*, *sacha arazu sachi ardasi*, M1, GG, 355; *Ih Nanak ki ardasi je tudhu bhavasi*, M1, GG, 752). Work in the fields seems to have filled the day in between these two prayer sessions.

The newly created Sikh rituals, ceremonies, and institutions marked another level of Sikh life, which would have also served as an important mode of transmission of this heritage. Guru Nanak constructed ceremonies around his beliefs and the performance of these ceremonies would have further reinforced the beliefs inherent in them. From simple Sikh greetings such as *Dhan Nirankar* (the formless one is great)/*Sat Kartar* (the creator is true), to more complex rituals such as the *Charan pahul* (the nectar of the feet), the initiation ceremony in the early Sikh community, would have served to educate Sikhs of their identity (*Guruduarai hoi sojhi paisi*, M1, GG, 730). For instance, in the Sikh *Charan pahul*, the nectar was generated by the touch of the toe of the new entrant.<sup>26</sup> Those who participated in the ceremony could not have missed the significance assigned to humility in Sikh belief (*Mithatu nivi Nanaka gunh chanagia tatu*, M1, GG, 470), and the Guru or other officiating Sikhs would have clarified the distinct character of the Sikh ceremony from the one prevalent among the Vaishnavas, from whom the Sikhs had appropriated it. This was true of the role of Sikh institutions too. The langar (community meal/kitchen) enshrined Sikh values of equality (*Sa jati sa pati hai jehe karam kamai*, M1, GG, 1330), hard work, service, and charity. It was not a unique Sikh institution, but the Sikhs unlike the Nath Yogis who begged for food, and many Sufis who accepted land grants from the local chiefs to run their kitchens, provided for the langar themselves.

## 2.1 The Formative Phase

This model of transmission that began at Kartarpur continued throughout the early period. The Guru served as the primary source of knowledge and guidance, and as the community grew, the Masands, the Guru's nominees in distant congregations, replicated this model in their respective places. They were well versed in Sikh beliefs and practice and were able to provide guidance to their constituents. If there were any issues, they could ask the Guru when visiting the Sikh court during the Vaisakhi/Divali, the local harvest festivals that became part of sacred Sikh calendar. It seems that a letter could also be written seeking advice if there was some urgent matter. Prominent Sikhs such as Bhai Gurdas could also help in matters of belief and practice.

We do not know the literacy level within the early Sikh community, but there are interesting details that are worth mentioning. The respect assigned to scribal activity seems to have developed very early in the tradition. We do know that Lehina, later named Angad when elevated to the office of Guru Nanak, was involved in scribal activity at Kartarpur. Bhai Gurdas in addition to himself being a scribe mentions names of other scribes who held position of leadership within the Sikh community.<sup>27</sup> It is also clear that the majority group that joined the early Sikh community came from nomadic background and could not have had much exposure to reading and writing. During the seventeenth century, however, they seem to have become proficient in writing and scriptural manuscripts inscribed by Burha Sandhu (1605), Gurdita Jateta (1653), and Pakharmal Dhillon (1688), who belonged to this segment of the society, are still extant. In later history, influential writers from within this group included Sainapati, Bhai Mani Singh, Koer Singh Kalal, and Ratan Singh Bhangu. We do not know of their counterparts among the nomads who joined the Muslim and Hindu communities during this period.

## 2.2 The Post-Guru Period

After the elevation of the Sikh community to the Khalsa and the resulting dissolution of personal authority, we see an interesting expansion of the modes of transmission of Sikh educational heritage. Needless to say, the family setting was an important arena of transmission since early times, Guru Nanak is emphatic that liberation has to be attained within familial setting (*Ghari rahu re man mughadhiane*, M1, GG, 1030) and the society at large. With the turn of the eighteenth century, we begin to have concrete references to it. Chaupa Singh advises the lady of the house to visit the gurdwara twice a day, memorize the verses of the Guru, and teach her husband the beliefs of the tradition.<sup>28</sup> In *Prem Sumarg* (path of love), we see women moving closer to the center of Sikh society and expected to undergo the ceremony of the *khande di pahul* (nectar of the double-edged sword), learn Sikh literature (*Gurmukhi vidia*), practice Sikh beliefs, and be able to transmit them to their children.<sup>29</sup>

Chaupa Singh also mentions the office of the Dharamsalia (the custodian of the *dharamsal*, the Sikh place of worship in early Sikh history), his qualifications, and the community's responsibility toward him. With the Granth becoming the Guru, the *dharamsals* became the gurdwaras, the house of the Guru Granth, and its caretaker was named the granthi/bhai. In this role, the granthi oversaw the ritual routine at the gurdwara, and being well versed in Sikh sacred lore officiated over ceremonies such as weddings, and also helped young Sikhs to learn how to read the Guru Granth. With the rise of Sikh political power in the second-half of the eighteenth century, the Sikh numbers grew and as a result new gurdwaras were built in villages with Sikh populations. These served as the places for the transmission of Sikh educational heritage with the granthi as the primary teacher. This model was

not unique to the Sikhs but synchronized well with the mosque and its school (*madrasa*), and the Hindu temple with its facility to teach (*pathshala*).

In addition, we have an interesting eighteenth-century document, which informs us that while leaving for South India in 1705, Guru Gobind Singh appointed Bhai Mani Singh and Bhai Fateh Singh to be the caretakers of the Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, and the Damdama Sahib, Talwandi Sabo, respectively.<sup>30</sup> Their primary brief was to impart education to Sikhs. While Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, remained in the eye of the storm during the Sikh struggle for sovereignty with the Mughals, Iranians, and Afghans until the 1860s, the Damdama Sahib, Talwandi Sabo quickly developed as a place of Sikh learning (Guru ki Kashi). Traditions associate Baba Dip Singh (d. 1757) with the inscribing of the manuscripts of canonical versions of Sikhs scriptures and the sending of them to other historical gurdwaras. Both these places expanded their work during the Sikh Raj (1799-1849) and served as centers where the granthis and itinerant Sikh scholars received training.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, we have references to Sikh savants, who took up an informal role of providing guidance. The learning of the Guru Granth and/or earlier associations with the Guru and the Sikh court may have helped them in this role. Bhai Mani Singh is the most prominent figure in the early part of the eighteenth century. We have documents that claim to have been his answers to questions pertaining to matters of belief, practice, as well as history.<sup>32</sup> There are other writings attributed to Daya Singh, Desa Singh, Sahib Singh, only known to us by name who offered their views on issues of Sikh beliefs and practice confronting the community at various point in time.<sup>33</sup> It seems that the answers these people offered were copied and circulated within the community. We come across numerous small size manuscripts (*gutaka*) from this period, which include Sikh liturgical compositions and the statements of rahit attributed to these people.

In the post Guru period, thus, the Sikh community managed to evolve a system that effectively met its educational needs. We see the transmission of Sikh heritage spreading out of the Sikh court to include the mother, the family, the village gurdwara, large Sikh centers of learning at Amritsar and Talwandi Sabo, and even independent scholars who were available to teach. The British administration report of 1849-1851 on popular education records an extensive system of gurdwara-attached "Gurmukhi schools" where "sacred books" of the Sikhs were taught and it registers the presence of "some females" among the student body. G.W. Leitner refers to Babe di Birh, "a typical Sikh village," in Sialkot, in which everyone before annexation could read and write Gurmukhi.<sup>34</sup>

### 2.3 The Modern Times

As referred to in the previous section, the Sikh community welcomed the arrival of printing press to the Punjab. While it slowly eroded the tradition of Sikh calligraphy and manuscript production, it made the Guru Granth, its commentaries, rahit related documents, historical texts, and a host of other publications such as community newspapers, periodicals, etc. available to large number of people. The increasing

accessibility of this literature enabled lay people to learn the basics of the tradition and then transmit them to their children.

The schools attached to the village gurdwaras, however, came under pressure from the British educational system and were eventually phased out during the early decades of the twentieth century. Government schools were opened to impart secular education and teach subjects such as English, science, and mathematics, which were expected to prepare young people to obtain jobs in the administration. The fundamental shift in the goal of education, from imbibing Sikh heritage to preparing for a career in government service, made the gurdwara schools redundant. The education that the granthi was trained to impart was no longer helpful for job prospects in the changed circumstances.

The institution of the gurdwara, however, continued to thrive and the need for granthis to oversee its activity grew. Consequently, the role of central places such as Amritsar and Talwandi Sabo in training these personnel did not diminish and these centers of learning continued to function. Scholars associated with Damdama Sahib, Talwandi Sabo created new branches such as at Boparai and Bhindran Kalan, Ludhiana, and Mehta, Amritsar. At all these places, Sikh children undergo rigorous training in reciting, singing, and exegesis of the Guru Granth, along with immersion in the Dasam Granth, Janam Sakhi, and Gur Bilas literature. After they complete their training, they move into positions of granthis in gurdwaras now spread all over the world. The SGPC also took interest in training the granthis and established institutions such as Sikh Missionary College, Amritsar. This mode of transmission of Sikh educational heritage continues the eighteenth-century traditions in all their purity.

In the decades that followed the arrival of the British in the Punjab, Sikh leadership responded to the new developments in several ways ranging from complete rejection (Baba Ram Singh, 1816-1885) to extreme fascination with modernity (Dayal Singh Majithia, 1849-1898). The mainstream Sikh leadership floated a middle alternative that had profound impact on Sikh education.<sup>35</sup> These leaders were fully committed to preserving Sikh heritage while simultaneously expanding its boundaries to incorporate the content of Western education, which was not deemed to conflict with Sikh beliefs and practice. New subjects such as science, mathematics, and English were added to help the general progress of the community, and pave the way for Sikh youth to avail employment opportunities in the police force and civil service. The Sikhs had learned Farsi earlier and they took the learning of English in stride. This thinking manifested itself in the creation of places of learning such as Khalsa College, Amritsar. The attempt was to blend Sikh educational heritage with new areas of knowledge.

Khalsa College with its boarding facilities was seen to provide a congenial and effective environment for the inculcation of Sikh beliefs and practice in the younger generation while training future leadership. In 1892, a command (*hukammama*) was issued from the Darbar Sahib, Amritsar which initiated the fund-raising drive that made it possible to establish the College. Keeping with the tradition of sponsoring

the cause of Sikh education, Sikh chiefs and common folk alike contributed handsomely in cash and kind and the college was founded the very same year. The Sikhs whole-heartedly supported the college, and in return expected it to nurture the religious and political leadership of the community.<sup>36</sup> It continues to enjoy a special status within Sikh communitarian thinking. In 2000, the buildings needed conservation work and Sikhs from neighboring villages came in their own tractor-trolleys and offered free labor to accomplish this task.

The gurdwara on the campus served as the center of Sikh religious life, where the students gathered for morning and evening prayers, and to listen to experts on the Sikh tradition. The special hour for Gurmat (Sikh teachings), which was a formal part of the curriculum, completed the transmission of Sikh education. Prominent Sikh intellectuals of the twentieth century such as Bhai Jodh Singh (1882-1981), Sahib Singh (1892-1977), Teja Singh (1895-1958), to name only a few, served as Gurmat teachers at Khalsa College. In teaching these classes, they created syllabi that were later developed by Dharam Prachar Committee (committee for the propagation of religion) of the SGPC in the form of elaborate teaching materials for use in Sikh schools (*Dharam Pothis*).

Khalsa College, Amritsar, was only open to men but female education was not neglected, and the first college for women, another community-supported project, was established at Ferozpur in 1892, the same year. Both Bhai Takhat Singh, the leading light behind the project, and Bibi Harnam Kaur, his wife, were interested in formally educating Sikh women in their heritage, so that they could effectively nurture Sikh children and provide religious guidance within the context of the Sikh family. Like the Khalsa College, the motive behind the Sikh women's college was an emphasis on the transmission of Sikh values to the younger generation. Bhai Takhat Singh went out of his way to keep the college a community venture and did not accept government grants.<sup>37</sup>

As the Sikhs moved into the twentieth century, other institutions of higher learning were founded along similar lines, and with the same supporting agencies. The Sikh National College, Lahore, was built on land donated by Dehra Sahib, the historic gurdwara in Lahore. When B.R. Ambedkar, an influential untouchable leader, considered converting to Sikhism along with his large following in the middle decades of the twentieth century, the Sikh leadership built Khalsa College, Bombay, to welcome them; this time funds came from the gurdwara at the birthplace of Guru Nanak at Nankanha Sahib.<sup>38</sup>

Beginning with 1908, the Sikh community developed the forum of the Sikh Educational Conference, which effectively responded to the Sikh community's concern for education. When the Sikh Educational Conference started, there were only seven Khalsa Schools, but by 1947, three hundred and forty Sikh schools were established. The mode of operation was simple. An educational conference would be called under the auspices of a local gurdwara. Sikh intellectuals gathered there would make speeches emphasizing the need for Sikh education, and an appeal would be made to the congregation to donate money. The gurdwara would add the required amount to donations that had already been collected, and a school would be

started. The number of schools that were founded by this method indicates the vigorous response given by local communities to these appeals in the cause of Sikh education.<sup>39</sup>

After the partition of the Punjab in 1947, Sikh concern for education has translated into the founding of the Punjabi University, Patiala (1962), and Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar (1969). Whatever the official understanding of these places, the Sikh community regarded them as Sikh institutions. The credentials of the first Vice Chancellors Bhai Jodh Singh, at Patiala, and Bishan Singh Samundari, at Amritsar, clearly suggest that. Both of them had long and fruitful association with Sikh education before they moved to head these new universities.<sup>40</sup>

In addition to these major universities, numerous Khalsa colleges and schools were established with the help of the local gurdwaras and grants from rich Sikhs. Such grants were not confined to the Punjab itself. Principals of colleges in the Doaba region, which has sent so many Sikhs overseas, commonly made trips abroad to collect donations from Sikhs who had previously resided in their particular areas or had been students at their colleges. Between 1966 and 1975 the centenaries of the births of Guru Nanak, and Guru Gobind Singh, and of the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur provided appropriate occasions for the opening of new Sikh educational institutions. Many Sikhs saw the building of a college or a school as the right tribute to the memory of their Gurus. Although often overlooked, the significance of these twentieth-century educational institutions, and the forums that created them, is immense.

It was in the context of such a forum--at the Sikh Educational Conference, held in March, 1981--that Ganga Singh Dhillon, a naturalized American Sikh reiterated the claim that the Sikhs were a distinct nation and therefore entitled to an independent state, called Khalistan.<sup>41</sup> Similarly it was the Khalsa colleges, as places of religio-political learning, which served as the main setting for the Sikh Students Federation. Of course, not all of the formidable Sikh resistance to the political structure in the Punjab during the 1980s and the early 1990s can be attributed to forces that grew up as a consequence of the educational legacy of the past century. The indigenous Sikh system that preceded the colonial period survived in all its purity in the center at Mehta from which Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale emerged. To them, their institution represents a continuum of over two and a half centuries of Sikh learning, and Sant Bhindranwale found his direct descent from Baba Dip Singh to be a major source of inspiration. Yet Sant Bhindranwale may never have achieved what he did if he had not become closely associated with the Sikh Students Federation, whose members were educated in the Sikh colleges of the Punjab that fulfilled the dream of blending modern education with Sikh heritage. Had these two visions of Sikh education not coalesced we might never have seen the drive for greater Sikh autonomy in the 1980s.

## 2.4 The Global Context

The arrival of modernity coincided with Sikh emigration from the Punjab and the community's spread all over the globe in the past century and a half. The Sikhs, like any other first-generation immigrant community were initially concerned with establishing themselves in a basic way. The first indication of the establishment of a Sikh community, however small, was the founding of a gurdwara. The gurdwaras at Kalindni, East Africa (1898), Hong Kong (1901), Vancouver, Canada (1908), London (1910), and Stockton, California (1912) mark the early spread of the Sikh community, and as we write, there are over six hundred gurdwaras outside South Asia. Once established, the gurdwara serves as the center where collective thinking and action take shape. It also functions as the place for social activity and provides a natural environment for the transmission of Sikh educational heritage to each new generation. In large congregations, the gurdwara has a school where the teaching of Gurmukhi, the compositions of the Gurus, and Sikh history are taught. Many devoted individuals offer their service to this cause, but the general feeling persists that this is not enough and that more disciplined training is required.

This has resulted in the organization of residential summer camps, which offer an opportunity to teach young Sikhs a complete Sikh way of life. Each day begins with the recitation of morning prayers (*Japji*) and ends with the traditional thanks giving prayer (*Sohila*). All through the day children are taught Sikh history and religious ideas. The Sikh children I have spoken to seem to enjoy these camps. They easily make friends with other Sikhs, friendships for which they have often yearned for in the local schools where no other Sikh children are in attendance. They return home having learned much more in a group setting than their parents could teach them in individual family settings.<sup>42</sup>

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the community overseas has established three schools: Thai Sikh International School, Bangkok (1985, [www.thaisikh.com/index.htm](http://www.thaisikh.com/index.htm)), Khalsa School with branches at Vancouver and Surrey (1986, 1992, [www.khalsaschool.ca/page124.htm](http://www.khalsaschool.ca/page124.htm)), and Guru Nanak Sikh Secondary School, Hayes, Middlesex (1993, [www.axcis.co.uk/26996.html](http://www.axcis.co.uk/26996.html)), and their settings create provisions for local Sikh children to have a total immersion in Sikh education during the regular school year.<sup>43</sup> Recognized by local educational authorities, these schools offer a regular academic program that is supplemented by an extra hour of Sikh teachings daily. From my conversations with students and their parents in the past years, it emerged that these children are far more comfortable in Sikh schools and happy to learn about their religious beliefs while not having to explain Sikh religious symbols such as uncut hair and the turban to those who do not understand them. These schools are thus an important response to Sikh education overseas.

The issue of the transmission of Sikh heritage has been a high priority of several private Sikh organizations. The Sikh Education Foundation of Singapore has done seminal work in both imparting Sikh educational heritage to children in Singapore and creating teaching materials for Punjabi and the "Sikh Way of Life," which can

be used anywhere in the world. The Sikh Foundation of Palo Alto, California has helped establish Sikh Studies programs at the University of California (Santa Barbara, Riverside, and a research program at Irvine). The Sikh Heritage Foundation, West Virginia, has been instrumental in the establishment of Sikh Heritage Gallery at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, Washington D.C., in 2004.

The period following the Indian Army's attack on the Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, in 1984, is often interpreted as a time when the overseas Sikhs took a leading role in demanding Khalistan, a separate state for the Sikhs, and advanced issues of Sikh human rights in international forums.<sup>44</sup> This view rightly emphasizes their initiative but fails to take full account of the ways in which such Sikhs responded to these events. The single most significant result of the happenings in the Punjab was the incredible boost they provided to overseas efforts to articulate, define, consolidate, and perpetuate the religio-political identity of the Sikhs. The work of earlier decades has gathered considerable momentum since 1984 as new ways and means to improve the teaching of a Sikh way of life to Sikh children were devised.

This context also demanded the projection of a clearer image of the community beyond its own boundaries. As a consequence Sikh leadership began to establish liaisons with leading North American universities, prodding them to introduce Sikh Studies into their academic programs. Such efforts have met with considerable success. Within a brief span the teaching of Sikhism was introduced at Toronto University (1986-1992), the University of British Columbia (1987-97), Columbia University (1989-99), the University of Michigan (1989-), the University of California at Santa Barbara (1999-) and Riverside (2005-), and Hofstra University, New York (2001-).<sup>45</sup> Other ways such as participation in Interfaith forums, holding Sikh Day parades in cities like New York, were developed to reach the mainstream and be able to explain to them Sikh way of life.<sup>46</sup>

In the past five centuries then, the Sikh created sites and modes to impart Sikh educational heritage to its future generations. These evolved to meet the needs of changing historical circumstances ranging from religious persecution, political supremacy, confrontation with modernity, to participation in the process of globalization. Historically, the Sikhs have kept a relatively open mind toward new developments. If the late eighteenth century saw the Sikh community adopting Farsi, as the language of administration, the present day Sikhs are happy to put up the text of the Guru Granth on the Internet, and their forums are keenly debating issues confronting them around the globe.<sup>47</sup> In the intermittent period, they welcomed the printing press, the electrification of the Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, in the 1880s, the use of loud speakers in places of worship, the making of the audiocassettes, and more recently the televising of the ritual opening of the Guru Granth in the morning and evening service at the Darbar Sahib. While this provides the other gurdwaras the opportunity to follow the routine at the Darbar Sahib, the presence of the camera has also brought a new level of precision to the activity itself. Sikhs who may never have had the chance to be at the Darbar Sahib during

these times can watch the ceremony from their homes, and also receive the command of the day (*hukam*) on the Internet.

### 3. Challenges and Opportunities

As referred to earlier, the literary corpus that enshrines primary Sikh educational heritage attained its final shape by the middle of the nineteenth century and since then the community has labored hard to standardize and disseminate it. The hallmark of this literature is an assortment of interpretations of Sikh beliefs, practice, history, and vision of the future.<sup>48</sup> This scholarly tapestry contains five broad strands shaped by such factors as the educational training of people writing in the field, their medium of expression, the primary purpose of their writing, their targeted audience, etc.

The products of the indigenous education constitute the oldest strand in Sikh scholarship. It began with Bhai Santokh Singh and can be traced through Tara Singh Narotam (d. 1895), Giani Gian Singh (d. 1921), Sant Gurbachan Singh (d. 1969), and Jathedar Joginder Singh (b.1940-). Sant Gurbachan Singh was based at Bhindran Kalan, a branch of the Sikh center of learning at Damdama Sahib, Talwandi Sabo. His writings emerged from his lectures to prospective granthis at his center and Sikh audiences during his extensive tours of the region. They belong to the *katha* tradition as he spoke and wrote to inspire his listeners and encourage them to follow a Sikh way of life. There are fine insights scattered all over in his writings and it is interesting to understand his version of Sikh beliefs and history.<sup>49</sup> Jathedar Joginder Singh was also educated at Bhindran Kalan, became a granthi at the Darbar Sahib and rose to the position of the Jathedar of the Akal Takhat. In addition to being an exegete of Sikh sacred writings, his scholarly work includes a comparative study of the various editions of the Guru Granth and a critical edition of the *Gur Bilas Patshahi Chhevin*.<sup>50</sup>

There are others who are products of indigenous Sikh education but had the opportunity to move out of the purely religious setting. The most prominent among this group included Kahn Singh Nabha (1861-1938), Shamsheer Singh Ashok (1903-1986), Piara Singh Padam (1921-2001). Padam, for instance, was educated at his village school but later worked for the SGPC (1943-1950), Punjab Language Department, Patiala (1950-1965), and Punjabi University (1966-1983) during his long career. His writings range from the lives and teachings of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh to the history of Gurmukhi, and Punjabi literature. His contribution to scholarship includes both the first time publication of early Sikh writings and new interpretations of Sikh beliefs and practice, and his essay on Guru Gobind Singh's *Zafarnamah* (letter of victory) is the best statement on this important document.<sup>51</sup>

The third strand includes scholars such as Bhai Jodh Singh, Sahib Singh, and Teja Singh, who all started with indigenous Sikh education but went on to join institutions run along Western educational lines. Teja Singh, the most prominent among them, started education at the gurdwara and mosque schools in his village,

and went on to do his B.A. (1914) and M.A. (1919) from Gordon Missionary College, Rawalpindi. From 1919 to 1946, he worked at the Khalsa College, Amritsar, and produced an annotated edition of the Guru Granth, which stands unchallenged since its publication in the 1940s. A deeply committed Sikh, he did not feel comfortable in even putting his name on this seminal work. His writings, which include commentaries on Sikh liturgical texts, first-hand records of events leading to the Gurdwara Reform Movement in the 1920s, essays in Sikh history, etc., were geared to meet the challenges of modernity, mentoring young scholars, and providing guidance to Sikh religious and political leadership.<sup>52</sup> Here we see writers who largely used Punjabi as their medium of expression but had the facility to write in English.

This takes us to the next strand—scholars who had different readership in mind than just the Sikhs and wrote only in English. The first authoritative figure in this group is J.D. Cunningham (d.1851), a British administrator cum scholar, who wrote a history of the Sikhs in the late 1840s. Through Ernest Trumpp (d. 1885), a German philologist hired by the British authorities to prepare an English translation of the Guru Granth and other sacred Sikh writings in the 1870s, and Max Arthur Macauliffe (d. 1913), another British administrator who wrote a multi-volume history and translations of sacred writings, this strand reached its climactic hue in the works of W.H. McLeod (1930-). McLeod, a New Zealander, has written extensively on the origin, evolution, and modernization of the Sikh tradition, has prepared critical editions of the Janam Sakhi and rahit literature, and has significantly contributed toward introducing the Sikh tradition to the Western world.<sup>53</sup>

During the twentieth century, this strand expanded to include Sikh scholars who were trained in Western modes of education and wrote only in English. Beginning with the late 1960s, J. S. Grewal (1927-) emerged as the central figure in this genre of scholarship. Trained at the School for Oriental and African Studies, London University, he has practiced what he calls “methodological atheism,” and the seal of his scholarship lies in his precise interpretation and rigorous use of the sources at his disposal. His wide range of scholarly interests, fresh interpretations of existing materials, introduction of a large set of primary sources will remain an object of emulation for future historians, and his *Sikhs of the Punjab* is a classic in the field.<sup>54</sup>

Finally, the past two decades have seen the emergence of a new variety of scholarship. It began with Richard Fox, a brilliant cultural anthropologist, who used Sikh history at the turn of the twentieth century to support his understanding of culture in a constant state of making with changing conditions of time and place. The others who followed him include scholars like Harjot Oberoi and more recently Brian Axel.<sup>55</sup> Their primary interest lies in theory and they are keen to examine contemporary Western ideas about religion and society by applying them to the Sikh tradition. In the past years, these writings have been in considerable fashion and even the American Academy of Religion put its seal of approval on Harjot Oberoi’s

work in 1996. As for these scholars' grasp of Sikh history and their contribution toward a better understanding of the Sikh tradition, it is an open question.<sup>56</sup>

Given such diverse background and interests of scholars, it is natural to have differences of interpretations. At times, these academic differences have spilled into public debates. A simple listing of these storms points to the complexity of the situation. The twentieth century began with the publication of an annotated text of the Guru Granth by a group of Sikh scholars under the leadership of Giani Badan Singh.<sup>57</sup> This text was prepared under the patronage of the Sikh state of Faridkot and was intended to correct Ernest Trumpp's "misinterpretation" of the Guru Granth published in 1877. Later debates that developed into major controversies resulting in the intervention of the SGPC were as follows:

Years	Author	Title of the book	Issue at stake
1920s	Teja Singh Bhasorh	<i>Sanchian Guru Granth</i>	Text of Guru Granth
1930s	G. S. Preetlarhi	<i>Param Manukh</i>	Life of Guru Gobind Singh
1940s	G.B. Singh	<i>Prachin Birhan bare</i>	The Kartarpur Pothe
1970s	Giani Bhag Singh	<i>Dasam Granth Darpanh</i>	Authorship of Dasam Granth
1970s	Fauja Singh Bajwa	<i>Guru Tegh Bahadur</i>	Circumstances of his death
1990s	Amarjeet Singh Grewal	<i>Guru Granth &amp; Modernity</i>	Message of Guru Granth
1990s	Pashaura Singh	<i>Guru Granth</i>	History of Guru Granth
1990s	Piar Singh	<i>Gatha Sri Adi Granth</i>	History of Guru Granth
2000s	G. S. Kala Afghana	<i>Dasam Granth</i>	Authorship of Dasam Granth
2000s	Jathedar Joginder Singh	<i>Gur Bilas Patshahi Chhevin</i>	Life of Guru Hargobind
2000s	Giani Gurdit Singh	<i>Mundavanhi</i>	Text of Guru Granth <sup>58</sup>

A detailed discussion of what went into the making of these controversies and the role of the SGPC in resolving them are beyond the scope of this essay but some basic observations are in order. First, the issues at the heart of these controversies are wide ranging. Beginning with the status of early scriptural manuscripts, the contents of the Guru Granth, the history of its making, and the relevance of its message (G.B. Singh, Bhasorh and Giani Gurdit Singh, Pashaura Singh, Piar Singh, Grewal), they also include events pertaining to the lives of three Gurus, Guru Hargobind, Guru Tegh Bahadur, and Guru Gobind Singh (Jathedar Joginder Singh, Bajwa, Preetlarhi), and the authorship and the precise status of the Dasam Granth within Sikh sacred literature (Giani Bhag Singh, Kala Afghana).

Secondly, the social and intellectual backgrounds of the writers of these so called controversial texts are considerably diverse. They come from both rural and urban backgrounds and include singers of the verses of the Guru Granth (Giani Bhag Singh), scholars trained in indigenous Sikh modes (Giani Gurdit Singh, Jathedar Joginder Singh), university professors (Bajwa, Pashaura Singh, Piar Singh), public intellectuals (Preetlarhi), community activists (Bhasorh and Grewal), and retired government officials (G. B. Singh, Kala Afghana). The people who raised objections against the above mentioned writings also came from wide range of socio-intellectual backgrounds including singers of the verses of the Guru Granth, university professors, public intellectuals, community activists, retired

government officials. The texts at the heart of these controversies were written in English (Bajwa, Pashaura Singh) as well as in Punjabi (all others) and their critiques also appeared in both these languages.

Finally, the reasons for these public debates range from genuine academic differences in interpretation, to anxiety of some scholars regarding the implications of these works for the community, to downright desire to control scholarship on the part of some individuals. Yet the relevance of these issues shows no ebbing and they continue to surface. The latest controversy around Giani Gurdit Singh's research echoes the Bhasorh episode in the 1920s. This is centered on the *Ragmala* (rosary of musical measures), a composition of twelve verses recorded at the closing of the text of the Guru Granth. There are differences of opinion about its authorship as well as the time of its entry into Sikh sacred corpus. Bhasorh had dropped this from his multi-volume text of the Guru Granth, and Giani Gurdit Singh argued that the *Ragmala* is not present in the early scriptural manuscripts meaning thereby that it is not part of the original canon. The SGPC is well aware of the issue and the absence of an easy solution. In the 1940s, after prolonged deliberations its leadership left it to the discretion of each congregation to decide whether to read the *Ragmala* or not in its ritual worship.<sup>59</sup>

Here is thus a lively stream of scholarship eroding its own edges here and there resulting in considerable personal agony for some scholars.<sup>60</sup> In the past decades, these controversies have diverted the SGPC leadership's attention away from broader issues of the transmission of Sikh educational heritage and the teaching of Gurmat in Sikh educational institutions. For instance, running largely on the government grants, the Khalsa schools in the Punjab are no longer able to afford classes in Gurmat, and the prestigious position of the Gurmat teacher at Khalsa College, Amritsar has been in animated suspension for years. Sikh leadership, though keen on the establishment of a new Sikh university at Fatehgarh Sahib, and recently, new Khalsa Schools in the region, has yet to show interest in revamping the existing structures of Sikh education.<sup>61</sup>

The globalization of the Sikh community, however, brings unique opportunities. The Sikhs overseas, now numbering two million and steadily increasing, are in an interesting historical situation. These small communities scattered around the globe cannot take the transmission of Sikh heritage to the children for granted and the need for Sikh parents' to acquire and then pass on the accurate information about beliefs and practice is being felt acutely. Further more, the cultural winds blowing in the newly adopted lands impact key Sikh institutions ranging from the need for a new type of granthi, who can communicate with children in their first language, undertake pastoral responsibilities, and participate in the inter-faith activities in the neighborhood, to the traditional gurdwara architecture undergoing adjustments while being housed in an old church or incorporating local architectural norms in brand new buildings.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, living in a post-Operation Bluestar phase, when the Western world first took notice of the Sikhs, and now the post-September

11, 2001 world, it is imperative that the mainstream people of the countries the Sikhs have adopted are provided with basic knowledge of who the Sikhs are.<sup>63</sup>

This new phase of Sikh history has thus created circumstances that require a new level of elaboration and expansion of Sikh educational heritage expressed in an idiom that is understood by Sikh children growing up in the new homes of their parents as well as the mainstream people living there. The Sikh community in North America has taken the lead and responded to this need by establishing programs in leading universities where a new generation of scholars and teachers of Sikhism can be trained. In the future, young scholars from the Punjab may also be interested in participating in these activities. In their routine functioning, such programs will generate up-to-date translations of Sikh text and produce other source material required for teaching Sikhism. Projects like the Sikh Heritage Gallery at the Smithsonian Institute, Washington D.C. will help toward defining what constitutes Sikh material heritage and how best to present it to both the Sikh and non-Sikh public.<sup>64</sup> As the community continues to reflect on these issues, the Sikh tradition will advance further towards becoming a major actor on the stage of world religions, a status it rightly deserves.

[Acknowledgment: I am grateful to John S. Hawley and Shinder Thandi for their comments on an earlier draft of this essay.]

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> M 1 stands for Mahala 1, Guru Nanak, M2 for Guru Angad and so on; GG for the Guru Granth and all page references are from *Shabadarth Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji* (Amritsar: Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, 1969). The pagination being uniform these references would apply to any standard edition of the Guru Granth.

<sup>2</sup> I consider Ratan Singh Bhangu's *Guru Panth Prakash* as the cut off point for primary Sikh heritage. The earliest manuscript of the *Guru Panth Prakash* that I know is dated Phagan, Samat 1898 (1841CE) and is inscribed by Dayal Singh. This manuscript records both the *Guru Panth Prakash*, and *Sri Guru Panth Prakash*, as the title. For the sake of consistency I follow the *Guru Panth Prakash*. For the recent printed edition, see *Sri Guru Panth Prakash*, ed., Balwant Singh Dhillon (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Guru Nanak's compositions "are in the language of the Jatts of the Punjab. 'Jatt' in the dialect of the Punjab means a villager, a rustic," see Mobad, *Dabistan-I Mazahib*, ed., J.S. Grewal and Irfan Habib (New Delhi: Tulika, 2001 [1640s]), 63.

<sup>4</sup> This composition is attributed to Guru Nanak in the printed version of the Guru Granth, but in all early manuscripts it is under Guru Amardas' name.

<sup>5</sup> Bhai Gurdas, *Varan*, ed., Gursharan Kaur Jaggi, (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1987) is the standard edition of the text.

<sup>6</sup> For this literature, see *Janam Sakhi Prampara*, ed., Kirpal Singh (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1990); Raijasbir Singh, ed., *Guru Amardas Srot Pustak* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1986); Piara Singh Padam, *Prachin Punjabi Gadd* (Patiala: Kalam Mandir, 1978). For English translation and critical discussion, see W. H. McLeod, *The B40 Janam-Sakhi* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1980), and his *Early Sikh Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).

<sup>7</sup> The manuscript was extant at Kiratpur until recently, Anne Murphy and I examined and photographed it in 1999.

<sup>8</sup> For these details, see Chaupa Singh, *Rahit-Nama*, ed., W.H. McLeod (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1987), 79; *Apanhi Katha in Shabadarth Dasam Granth Sahib*, ed., Bhai Randhir Singh (Patiala: Punjabi University), 1: 76-77. For rahit literature, see Piara Singh Padam, *Rahitname*, (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 1995), and W. H. McLeod, *Sikhs of the Khalsa* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>9</sup> Chaupa Singh, *Rahit-Nama*, 88

<sup>10</sup> Chaupa Singh mentions that the Guru sent letters asking scribes to reach the Sikh court, *Rahit-Nama*, 82.

<sup>11</sup> *Shabadarth Dasam Granth Sahib* does not include the *Charitro Pakhayan*. For the internet edition, visit <http://www.sridasam.org>

<sup>12</sup> *Sarab Loh Granth*, ed., Harnamdas Udasi (Anandpur: Guru ka Bagh, n.d.); *Pothi Prem Ambodh*, ed., Davinder Singh Osahan (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1989); for references to other texts, see Chaupa Singh, *Rahit-Nama*, 82.

<sup>13</sup> The dates in these texts appear as follows: Nand Lal: Maghar 9, Samat 1752 (1695); Prihlad Singh early manuscripts have two different dates mentioned, Magh Vadi thit panchami Ravivar, Samat 1752 (1695) and Magh vadi thit pancami, Virvar, Samat 1762 (1705), and Chaupa Singh et al: Jeth 7, Samat 1757 (1700).

<sup>14</sup> Sainapati, *Sri Gur Sobha*, ed., Ganda Singh (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1988) is the standard edition of the text.

<sup>15</sup> Seva Singh, *Shahid Bilas*, ed., Garja Singh Giani (Ludhiana: Punjabi Sahit Academy, 1961).

<sup>16</sup> See note 2.

<sup>17</sup> For two opposing position on this text, see Piara Singh Padam, *Dasam Granth Darshan* (Patiala: Kalam Mandir, 1990), and Ratan Singh Jaggi, *Dasam Granth da Karatritava* (New Delhi: Punjabi Sahit Sabha, 1966). A partial discussion of the related issues and the translations of some sections from the text are available on the Internet ([www.dasamgranth.org/dasamgranth](http://www.dasamgranth.org/dasamgranth)). For an interesting survey of these debates, see Robin Rinehart, "Strategies for Interpreting the Dasam Granth," in Pashaura Singh, et al, eds., *Sikhism and History* (New Delhi: Oxford Univeristy Press, 2004), 135-150.

<sup>18</sup> For a brief introduction to this interesting figure, see Piara Singh Padam, *Mahan Kavi Santokh Singh* (Patiala: Kalam Mandir, 1990). The commentary of the *Japji* in

question was created by Anand Ghanh, an Udasi. We know very little about Anand Ghanh as well as the Udasis. The general impression is that the Udasis constituted a major scholarly tradition in Sikh history but there is no documentary evidence to substantiate this position. Building on this vague assumption, Harjot Oberoi declares Anand Ghanh to be representative of the ‘great code’ within the Sikh tradition, which was “picked up by tens of thousands of people besides Anandghanh.” See his *Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 101. The detailed three-page description of Anand Ghanh becomes even more curious given the fact that there is complete absence of any reference to Ratan Singh Bhangu in the index of Oberoi’s book.

<sup>19</sup> See my *Making of Sikh Scripture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 121-136.

<sup>20</sup> G.B. Singh, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib dian Prachin Birhan* (Lahore: Modern Publications, 1944). Later works include Swami Harnamdas Udasi, *Adi Sri Guru Granth Sahib dian Puratani Birhan te Vichar* (Kapurthala: Kantesh Pharmacy, n.d. [1969?]); Piar Singh, *Gatha Sri Adi Granth* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1992); Balwant Singh Dhillon, *Early Sikh Scriptural Tradition* (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 1999); Pashaura Singh, *The Guru Granth Sahib* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000); Gurinder Singh Mann, *The Making of Sikh Scripture*, and Giani Gurdit Singh, *Mundavanhi* (Chandigarh: Sahit Prakashan, 2003).

<sup>21</sup> I am grateful to Punjabi University for permitting me to photograph this manuscript (MS 228) presently available at Dr. Balbir Singh Sahitya Kendra, Dehradun.

<sup>22</sup> However, it is important to register the presence of variants: see Bhai Randhir Singh, *Gurmat Bibek* (Ludhiana: Bhai Randhir Singh, 1946); Jathedar Joginder Singh, *Sri Hazuri Miryada Prabodh* (Nanderh: Sri Takhat Abchal Nagar, 1967); Giani Gurbachan Singh Khalsa, *Gurmat Rahit Maryada* (Amritsar: Khalsa Brothers, 1986); *Khararha Sikh Rahit Maryada* (Sant Samaj, 1994).

<sup>23</sup> For instance, see Bhai Vir Singh, *Sri Kalagidhar Chamatkar* (Amritsar: Wazir Hind Press, 1925); *Sri Guru Nanak Chamatkar* (Amritsar: Wazir Hind Press, 1928); *Sri Asht Guru Chamatkar* (Amritsar: Wazir Hind Press, 1952).

<sup>24</sup> *Shahid-Bilas Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale*, eds., Gurtej Singh and Swaranjeet Singh (Chandigarh: Satsandhi Publications, 2001).

<sup>25</sup> Bhai Gurdas, *Varan*, 1:38, 73

<sup>26</sup> Mobad, *Dabistan-I Mazahib*, 78 and 84

<sup>27</sup> Bhai Gurdas, *Varan*, 137; Chaupa Singh also refers to the presence of Sikh scribes, see his *Rahit-Nama*, 65, 82.

<sup>28</sup> Chaupa Singh, *Rahit-Nama*, 115.

<sup>29</sup> *Prem Sumarag*, ed., Bhai Randhir Singh (Jalandhar, New Book Company, 2000 [1953]), 13-14, The text is yet to be firmly dated, the earliest manuscript that has come to my notice was prepared in 1807.

<sup>30</sup> *Gurdwara Gazette* (November 1965), 274-275.

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<sup>31</sup> Madanjit Kaur, "The Contribution of the Bungas to the Education of the Punjab," *Punjab History Congress* (1978), 94-101. For references to Dip Singh, see Ratan Singh Bhangu, *Sri Guru Panth Prakash*, 210, and 334; Giani Gian Singh, *Tvarikh Guru Khalsa* (Patiala: Language Department, 1987), 2:262.

<sup>32</sup> *Sikhan di Bhagatmala*, ed., Tarlochan Singh Bedi (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1994).

<sup>33</sup> See note 7.

<sup>34</sup> G.W. Leitner, *History of Indigenous Education in the Panjab* (Patiala: Language Department, 1971 [1883]), 36; 155-156. For details regarding schools, see Part III. 1-13

<sup>35</sup> See my *Sikhism* (Prentice Hall, 2004), 58-59.

<sup>36</sup> Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 2:144.

<sup>37</sup> For primary documents, see Dalwinder Singh, *Bhai Sahib Bhai Takhat Singh Ji* (Ludhiana: Sikh Missionary College, 2003).

<sup>38</sup> Durlab Singh, *The Valiant Fighter* (Lahore: Hero Publishers, 1942), 153 and 157.

<sup>39</sup> Amrit Walia, "Achievements of Sikh Education Conference," *Punjab History Conference* (April 1975), 205-212.

<sup>40</sup> Sikhs saw the founding of Guru Nanak Dev University, in particular as a major event. It was understood as the fulfillment of the dream that Khalsa College could develop into a full-fledged university. The physical proximity of the two institutions and the appointment of Bishan Singh Samundri, who at that time was the principal of Khalsa College, as the first head of the university supported this general communal understanding of the issue.

<sup>41</sup> Paul Wallace and Surendra Chopra, eds., *Political Dynamics and Crisis in Punjab* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1988), 37.

<sup>42</sup> *The New York Times*, July 18, 1998.

<sup>43</sup> Guru Nanak Sikh School in Hayes was opened as an independent school but in 1999 became the first school to receive public funding. Primarily a secondary school, catering for 11-18 year olds, this school has a very good reputation and was almost at the top of table of schools "adding value" to student education i.e. getting higher qualifications relative to their socio-economic background. Lea Junior School, in Slough, Berkshire--further west from London and Heathrow is almost set to become the second Sikh school. This will be a primary school i.e. catering from 4-11 year olds.

<sup>44</sup> Darshan Singh Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1998).

<sup>45</sup> The UC Riverside is in the process of filling its newly created position in Sikh Studies as we write and Dr. Pashaura Singh of the University of Michigan has emerged as the top candidate for the position.

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<sup>46</sup> See my “Sikhism in the United States of America,” in Harold Coward, et al, eds., *The South Asian Religious Diaspora in Britain, Canada, and the United States* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), 259-276.

<sup>47</sup> See <http://www.sikhtimes.com/> February, 2005.

<sup>48</sup> Harjot Oberoi argues that beginning with the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the Tat Khalsa imposed a singular reading of Sikh beliefs and history etc., see his *Construction of Religious Boundaries*. In my view, this reading of Sikh history neither shows a clear understanding of primary themes in early sources nor does it register the diversity of views available in the twentieth century Sikh writings. For another interesting effort at understanding Sikh historiography, see Tony Ballantyne, “Framing the Sikh Past,” *International Journal of Punjab Studies* (10), 1-23.

<sup>49</sup> Giani Gurbachan Singh Ji Khalsa, *Gurbanhi Path Darshan* (Bhindran Kalan: Gurdwara Akhand Prakash, 1990s).

<sup>50</sup> *Gur Bilas Patshahi Chhevin*, eds., Jathedar Joginder Singh and Amarjit Singh (Amritsar: SGPC, 1998).

<sup>51</sup> See the special issue in his honor of *Punjabi Dunia* (Patiala: Language Department, April 2002)

<sup>52</sup> For his life story, see S.S. Amol, *Professor Teja Singh* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1977).

<sup>53</sup> See Joseph D. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs* (Delhi: S. Chand and Company, 1985); Ernest Trumpp, *The Adi Granth* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1978); Max Arthur Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion* (New Delhi: S. Chand and Company, 1985); Hew McLeod, *Discovering the Sikhs: Autobiography of a Historian* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004).

<sup>54</sup> *The Sikhs of the Punjab* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990). For his seminal contribution to scholarship, see Indu Banga, ed., *Five Punjabi Centuries* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1997), 11-41.

<sup>55</sup> Richard G. Fox, *Lions of the Punjab: Culture in the Making* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Harjot Oberoi, *Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition*, Brian K. Axel, *The Nation's Tortured Body: Violence, Representation, and the Formation of Sikh Diaspora* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001)

<sup>56</sup> J.S. Grewal's judgment goes as follows: Harjot Oberoi, despite his sophisticated conception of historical methodology, can come up with highly inadequate interpretation of the known evidence, see his *Contesting Interpretations of the Sikh Tradition* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1998), 305; and *Historical Perspectives on Sikh Identity* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1997), 33-76.

<sup>57</sup> Giani Badan Singh, *Adi Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji Satik* (Patiala: Language Department, 1970 [1905]); for an interesting critique of this project, see Niranjana Singh Saral, *Jhataka Prakash* quoted in Pritam Singh, ed., *Sikh Concept of the Divine* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1985), 9

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<sup>58</sup> For several of these texts see above note 20. I did not mention debates around the research of W. H. McLeod, Harjot Oberoi, and to some degree my own, for the reason that the SGPC was not directly involved in these cases.

<sup>59</sup> Shamsheer Singh Ashok, *Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee da Punjab Sala Itihas* (Amritsar: SGPC, 1982), 228. It is important to recognize that Jathedar Manjit Singh, who had the singular feat of dealing with three controversies during his brief stint as the Acting Jathedar of the Akal Takhat reached the right conclusion: it was not useful to enter these debates. Though these controversies were raging there is no reference to them in the *World Sikh Meet-1995* (Amritsar: SGPC, 1995), 5-11.

<sup>60</sup> For these debates, see Piar Singh, "Kufr da fatva jaiz kiven," *Punjabi Tribune* (Chandigarh), February 7, 1993, and his "Open letter addressed to Jathedar Manjit Singh of the Akal Takhat," March 17, 1994; Bachittar Singh Giani, ed., *Planned Attack on Aad Sri Guru Granth Sahib* (Chandigarh: International Center of Sikh Studies, 1994); Pashaura Singh, "Recent trends and prospects in Sikh studies," *Studies in Religion* (1998); and W.H. McLeod, "Discord in the Sikh Panth," *Journal of American Oriental Society* 119.3 (1999).

<sup>61</sup> *The Tribune* (Chandigarh), May 29, 05. The write up refers to the SGPC decision to set up 100 schools in Punjab and Haryana in the coming five years.

<sup>62</sup> The most creative effort at this appears in the gurdwara in Palatine, Illinois. Amarjit Singh Sidhu, a student of Louis Kahn at the University of Pennsylvania, designed this building in a lot spread over thirteen acres in 1976.

<sup>63</sup> Sikh leadership overseas is well aware that the rumblings such as "we need to tell the Americans that Sikhs are not Muslims," which followed September 11, 2001, were neither useful nor justified. Simultaneously, there is a relative openness on the part of mainstream forums to incorporate Sikhism in their activity. For instance Cambridge University Press published *The Sikhs of the Punjab* (1990) in the New Cambridge History of India and is now taking interest in producing a volume on Sikhism in its prestigious series on introductions to major religious traditions, and Oxford University Press' new series on Religion in American Life intended for high schools made it a point to include Sikhism in their offerings in 2001.

<sup>64</sup> For details visit <<http://www.sikhs.org/smithsonian/empire.html>>.

