

HISTORICAL SIKH SHRINES IN DELHI

FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS OF SIKH RELIGION

THE TEN MASTERS

by

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DELHI SIKH GURDWARA BOARD
Sis Ganj Chandni Chowk
Delhi-6

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June 1972

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Price Rs. 3/- Shillings, 5, \$ 1

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Published by Sardar Pritam Singh Sandhu for Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Board, Sis Ganj, Chandni Chowk, Delhi-6, and printed at the Statesman Press, Connaught Circus, New Delhi.

A Sikh

*Dead to the world,
A Sikh lives in the Spirit of the Guru.
A man does not become a Sikh,
By merely paying lip service to him.
A Sikh dispels all doubts and fears
And lives a life of deep patience and faith.
Verily, he is a living martyr,
A slave of the love of the Lord.
He does what the Lord wills,
He forgets all hunger and sleep in His love.
His hands are busy helping the needy,
His hands are busy comforting the weary,
His hands are busy serving the lowly,
His hands are busy washing their feet.
Magnanimous, tolerant and serene,
He lives in the service of humanity.
In glory a Sikh does not laugh,
In suffering he does not weep,
He is a seer living in His Presence.
He is a devotee imbued with His love,
He steadily grows into perfection,
And is blessed and adored
Like the full moon on the Muslim sacred day of Id.*

BHAI GURDAS: (1552-1632 C)

Father of Sikh Philosophy

CONTENTS

Foreword	...	...	...	...	5
 <i>Part I: Ten Masters</i>					
Guru Nanak	...	...	...	...	7
Guru Angad	...	...	...	...	9
Guru Amar Das	...	...	...	...	10
Guru Ram Das	...	...	...	...	11
Guru Arjan Dev	...	...	...	...	12
Guru Hargobind	...	...	...	...	13
Guru Hari Rai, Guru Hari Krishan	...	...	...	...	15
Guru Tegh Bahadur	...	...	...	...	16
Guru Gobind Singh	...	...	...	...	18
 <i>Part II: Historical Sikh Shrines</i>					
Shrines of Guru Nanak	...	...	...	...	21
Shrines of Guru Hari Krishan	...	...	...	...	24
Shrines of Guru Tegh Bahadur	...	...	...	...	28
Shrines of Guru Gobind Singh	...	...	...	...	34
Shrines of Mata Sundri	...	...	...	...	36
Place of Martyrdom of Banda	...	...	...	...	38
Baba Buddha's Hermitage	...	...	...	...	45
 <i>Part III: Fundamental Beliefs of Sikhism</i>					
The Sikh Concept of Religion	...	...	...	...	47
God and Nature	...	...	...	...	48
Man and Society	...	...	...	...	51
The Guru, The Word of God	...	...	...	...	54
Karma and Free Will	...	...	...	...	55
Heaven and Hell, Last Judgement	...	...	...	...	56
Sikh Sacraments: <i>Karah Prashad, Langar, Baptism</i>	...	...	...	...	57

FOREWORD

This booklet has been specially written for foreigners and non-Sikh Indian visitors who come to see the Sikh shrines in Dehi, which commemorate and symbolize the sacred names and personality of the Sikh Gurus and historic events of their inspiring lives.

Sikhs are seen everywhere in the world but very little is known about their religion, their way of life and history. Everyone is deeply impressed by their unique personality, by their impressive performance as soldiers and sportsmen, by their fiery pacifism and revolutionary passion, by their stoic powers of endurance and by their gay abandon to merriment. Very little is, however, known in India and abroad about their culture and outlook which moulds their character, and about their history which inspires them with revolutionary idealism.

In the first section of the booklet the personality of the ten Sikh Gurus is presented in historical perspective, and their contribution to the development and evolution of the Sikh religion and culture is briefly described. The second section gives the historical background of all the Sikh shrines in Delhi. The third section sums up concisely the fundamental beliefs of the Sikhs in the light of modern thought and present-day problems. The booklet aims to serve a limited purpose of enlightening non-Sikh Indian and foreign visitors to Delhi about the Sikh Gurus, the Sikh shrines in Delhi and the basic Sikh beliefs.

I gratefully acknowledge the interest all the learned members of the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Board have shown in this and my other works on Sikh history and philosophy, namely, Sardar Jogendra Singh, President (Governor Rajasthan), Sardar Bahadur Ranjit Singh (Member), Mr Justice Tikka Jagjit Singh Bedi (Member), Bhai Mohan Singh (Secretary), Sardar Pritam Singh Sandhu (Member).

I also express my sincere gratitude to Sardar Iqbal Singh, Administrative Officer, and Sardar Gurdial Singh Manager, for seeing it through the press and getting it so well printed.

TRILOCHAN SINGH.

Nehru Nagar,
Ludhiana-2.
March 28, 1972.

PART I

The Ten Masters

GURU NANAK (1469-1539 A.D.)

Guru Nanak was born at Talwandi, now known as Nankana Sahib (Pakistan) about forty miles from Lahore on *Kartik Purnamashi* 1526 B.S., the full moon day of October 20, 1469 A.D. Having mastered his mother tongue, Sanskrit, and Persian he wrote passionate songs at an early age and revolted against ritualism, caste prejudices, hypocrisy, idolatory during boyhood. He disregarded the artificial cultural gaps between the Hindus and Muslims. He revolted against the social degradation and the despotism of the Pundits and Mullahs.

He was married and had two sons. He served as the *Modi* (Granary officer, next to the Diwan and Bakshi) of Daulat Khan Lodhi, Viceroy of Punjab. It is here he received the *call* and he felt profoundly inspired to carry to all the distant countries and civilizations the New Dispensation. When he was asked whether by faith and belief he was a Hindu or Muslim he replied, "I am transfigured by the blazing Light of God Who is neither Hindu nor Muslim. I am a brother of all lovers of truth and God. All those who live in His service are my kith and kin. They are my brothers in faith, be they Hindus or Muslims."

He first toured Punjab and then some time in 1505 he set out for his Eastern Missionary journey. Starting with Hardwar and Kurukshetra in the Punjab he visited all the holy shrines, *maths* and *khanqas* of Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims, stretching across the country up to Dhakeshwari in Dacca and Kamakhya in Assam. To the Vaishnavas he said "Banish cruelty and hypocrisy from your minds. Mere vegetarianism will not

PART II

Historical Sikh Shrines in Delhi

HISTORICAL SHRINES OF GURU NANAK

(1) *Gurdwara Nanak Piyao.*

(2) *Gurdwara Majnu Tilla.*

(1) *Nanak Piyao*

Guru Nanak was twenty when Sikander Shah Lodhi came to the throne and he was thirty-four when he set out on his first Punjab tour. Two years later, at the age of thirty-six or so, he set out for the eastern tour in the year 1505 A.D. along with his bard Mardana, his devoted servant, Bhai Bala, and a few more disciples. On the Baisakhi festival of the year 1505 A.D. he was at Hardwar. Sometime in May he was at Kurukshetra. In June 1505 or there about he reached Delhi.

Guru Nanak camped on the outskirts of Delhi in a garden now situated on the Grand Trunk Road, outside Sabzimandi. People flocked in large numbers to pay homage to the new prophet, who delivered sermons in music and poetry. They not only began to worship Guru Nanak and brought precious offerings for him, but bestowed countless gifts on his bard Mardana wherever he went. Guru Nanak distributed all the offerings he received, among the poor and needy. The garden in which he rested became a shrine, and a haven of peace for pilgrims and wayfarers. The man to whom the garden belonged changed it into Guru Nanak's shrine. The highway travellers rested here in the summer heat, and were served with cold water from the well and food from the free kitchen (*langar*). Guru Nanak appointed one of his devotees as the missionary incharge of the shrine which later came to be known as Nanak Piyao (shrine of slaking thirst). Here Guru Nanak slaked the thirst of many wanderers in the wilderness. Gyani Thakur Singh in his *Gurdwara Darshan* says that the original name of this shrine was *Pau Sahib*. Here Guru Nanak humbled a very haughty *sannyasin* in a religious discourse.

PART III

Fundamental Beliefs of Sikhism

The Sikh Concept of Religion. In Sikhism man is the source of spirituality, society is the centre of moral and creative action, and God is the end of all religious effort. The object of Sikhism as a way of life is to create a spiritual kinship and unity between man and man, between man and God, and between man and society, be he a Hindu, Muslim, Christian or a Jew. "All men are equal at social level, and on all God bestows His grace and bounty without discrimination." The aim of Sikhism is to help the seeker of truth to discover within himself the light of perfection, and the power of immanence, and realize God not only in sublime mystical experiences, but in the very life and existence of humanity. This world, for a Sikh, is not an illusion, nor a vale of sorrow from which man must run away, but the very earth on which man lives, is a temple of righteous actions: *dharti-dharam-sala*. This world is the abode of Truth and the True One resideth in it. The Sikh Gurus did not believe in any abstract and blood-less mysticism, but in a wide awake spirituality of healthy social, cultural and political wisdom.

"Guru Nanak's religion," says Barth "stood distinguished from the sectarian schools in general by the simplicity and spiritualistic character of its worship and especially by its moderation in regard to mythology." (*The Religions of India*, p. 243). From the very outset the great distinguishing quality of Sikhism has been its reconciliation with secular life.

Estlin Carpenter rightly comments: "Starting with a Puritan quietism which repudiated outward rites, as in themselves meritorious and conceived the life of the believer as a continued communion with God, it developed temple and service, and observances of ceremonial piety. Rejecting every kind of violence and enjoining the completest forgiveness of wrongs, it protected itself by military organisation, made disciples into