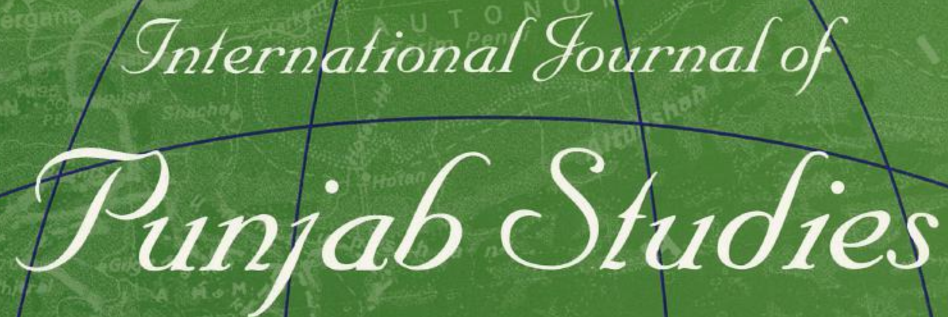

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Framing the Sikh Past

Tony Ballantyne
University of Otago

This essay examines the shape of Sikh historiography. It identifies five 'framings' that dominate the study of the Sikh past: the internalist, the Khalsacentric, the regional, the externalist, and the diasporic. It briefly examines key works that represent the methodologies and assumptions that shape the historical vision of each framing. After setting out this heuristic typology, the essay maps an alternative vision of the Sikh past, an approach which underscores the importance of cross-cultural encounters, the power of colonialism and the important forms of cultural traffic that have cut across the borders of the Punjab region and the Indian nation-state.

Sikh history is dominated by a series of ongoing and intense debates over the nature of Sikh identity, the 'evolution' of the Panth (lit. way; community), and the origins interpretative authority of 'western' scholars and methodologies.[1] These exchanges are of great intellectual and cultural significance for Sikhs, especially where the origins of Sikhism, the composition and provenance of venerated texts (most notably the *Adi Granth* and *Dasam Granth*), and key markers of Sikh identity (such as the 'five Ks' and turban (*pagri*)) are concerned. While these discussions frequently take on a polemical tone - reflecting the very real political stakes attached to representations of Sikhism post-1984 – they are borne out of ongoing encounters between scholars of the Sikh past and Sikh communities, both within South Asia and abroad. By and large, scholars of Sikhism have focused their attention on historical issues that are close to the heart of many Sikhs and this has meant that the field has been nourished by a profoundly important and mutually sustaining engagement between Sikh Studies as an academic discipline and Sikhs themselves.[2] Unfortunately, however, there have been relatively few attempts to explore the fundamental assumptions that shape Sikh studies. Those that do exist, typically either present a narrative of the sub-discipline's development or explore the supposedly fundamental rifts between 'western critical scholarship' and understandings of the Sikh past produced from within Sikh communities.[3] Here I adopt another strategy, a more schematic approach that charts the shape of the field, identifying a variety of analytical positions that are differentiated by their divergent visions of the shape of Sikh history, their various epistemological frameworks, and the conflicting methodologies they deploy.

This essay has two primary objectives. Firstly, it is an attempt to map the major analytical positions that dominate the historical work produced within the sub-discipline of Sikh studies in the hope that both the common ground and points of conflict within the field can be brought into stark relief. In other words, this paper identifies the most important ways in which the Sikh past has been framed. Secondly, this essay explores a series of epistemological and

methodological problems in order clarify the assumptions that currently govern the field and to push Sikh studies towards a more sustained engagement with a broader set of questions that are central to contemporary humanities scholarship. In forwarding a series of provisional responses to these problematics, this essay marks a first and hesitant step towards a reframing of the Sikh past, a vision which grapples with cross-cultural encounters, the power of colonialism and the important forms of cultural traffic that have cut across the borders of the Punjab region and the Indian nation-state.

Mapping the Field: 'Internalism' and its Varieties

It is useful to identify five divergent approaches to the Sikh past – the 'internalist', the 'Khalsacentric', the 'regional', the 'externalist' and the 'diasporic'. Even though the boundaries between these approaches is not always absolute or rigid, they provide a useful heuristic device that allows us to 'map' – to set out schematically – the dominant framings of the Sikh past that have been elaborated over the past century or so. The following discussion of this five-fold typology, which also highlights important variations within each position, undercuts the easy oppositions and binary logic that shapes the opposition between 'Khalsacentric' and 'Eurocentric' approaches to the Sikh past drawn recently by opponents of 'western critical scholarship'. Such a typology also marks a significant refinement of the simple opposition between 'internalist' and 'externalist' approaches to Sikh history that I have highlighted elsewhere.[4]

The first of these five analytical traditions is what I have termed the 'internalist' approach, a way of framing the Sikh past that has dominated Sikh historiography over the last century. Despite the significant methodological, epistemological and political differences that we can identify as marking four distinct versions of this internalist scholarship (normative, textualist, political, and cultural), those working within the internalist tradition are united by a common analytical orientation. Internalist scholars prioritise the internal development of Sikh 'tradition', rather than the broader regional, political and cultural forces that shape the community from the outside.

The oldest of these traditions is what we might term the 'normative tradition' or what Harjot Oberoi terms the 'Tat Khalsa' tradition. This vision of the Sikh past emerged out of the intense struggles over forms of devotion, community identity and political power that dominated colonial Punjab's public sphere during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. As colonial officials, Christian missionaries, Hindu reformers, and Muslim leaders forwarded conflicting visions of Punjabi history and culture, Sikh pamphleteers, editorialists, and social reformers forwarded conflicting visions of the boundaries of their community and the Panth's development. Within the context of colonialism history-writing became a crucial tool for community leaders who crafted epic poems, polemic pamphlets and commentaries on 'scripture' in the hope that by clearly defining the community's past they would be able to cement their own vision of the community's present and future.[5]

In particular, history writing was a crucial tool for the rival factions of the Singh Sabha movement, which flourished throughout Punjab after it was initially established in Amritsar (1873) and Lahore (1879). The so-called Sanatan faction insisted that their practices were in keeping both with Sikh custom and what they

imagined as the ancient, even eternal, devotional practices of north Indian Hindus. Sanatanis frequently saw the Gurus as avatars of Ram and Krishna, worshipped images and idols, and accepted the *varnasramadharma*, the paradigmatic Brahmanical view of the centrality of the four-fold divisions of *varna* (caste) and *asrama* (stage of life) in shaping an individual's identity and obligations. On the other hand, the modernist Tat Khalsa faction of the Singh Sabha advocated a clearly delineated Sikh identity and used historical writing to argue that Sikhism was a religious tradition entirely independent from Hinduism. Most famously, Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha proclaimed in his 1898 pamphlet '*ham hindu nahin*': 'we are not Hindus'. Nabha's pamphlet, like other texts produced by Tat Khalsa ideologues, was simultaneously an attack on the power of the Hindu reformers of the Arya Samaj in Punjab and also a response to the Sanatan tradition that remained popular with Punjabi aristocrats and the rural masses. These Tat Khalsa reformers rejected Urdu as a medium for education and administration, proclaiming that the Punjabi language written in the Gurmukhi script, the very script used in the *Adi Granth*, was *the* language of Punjab. While they battled the threat of Islamicization they saw as being embodied in Urdu's dominance, they also crafted a complex series of life cycle rituals that marked them off from Punjabi Hindus. Tat Khalsa leaders insisted that Sikhs were a distinct and self-sufficient community and this belief was articulated most clearly when the Chief Khalsa Diwan informed the Governor General in 1888 that Sikhs should not be 'confounded with Hindus but treated in all respects as a separate community.'[6]

To inscribe a firm boundary between Sikhs and Hindus, historical texts produced by Tat Khalsa historians rested on two narrative strategies. Firstly, they evoked ideal types, historical role models who embodied the ideals of the Khalsa. Suspicious of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's piety and morality and unsettled by Dalip Singh's conversion to Christianity, they looked back to a more distant Sikh past, a past untainted by colonialism, for *properly* Sikh heroes. The heroic martyrdom of the ninth Guru (Tegh Bahadur) and the martial spirit of the tenth, Gobind Singh, served as exemplary models, as did the great protector of the fledgling Khalsa, Banda Singh Bahadur. These heroes and martyrs devoted their lives to the faith and the promulgation of a distinctive Sikh identity in the face of Mughal oppression and Tat Khalsa historians enjoined their contemporaries to do the same.[7]

Following on from this, the second key element of Tat Khalsa historical narratives was an insistence on the dangers posed by Hinduism.[8] Like many British administrators, Tat Khalsa reformers conceived of Hinduism, especially in its popular forms, as an all-consuming jungle or a boa constrictor capable of crushing and consuming religious innovation through its stifling weight and incessant expansion. The efforts of Hindu reformers and the laxity of uneducated Sikhs not only blurred the boundaries of the community, but also threatened the very future of Sikhism. Only a return to teachings of the *Adi Granth* and the strict maintenance of the *rahit* (code of conduct), would prevent Hinduism from engulfing Sikhism altogether.[9]

This normative tradition of historical writing was consolidated in the early twentieth century by the likes of Bhai Vir Singh and after Partition it was increasingly professionalised by a new generation of scholars, most notably Ganda Singh and Harbans Singh. Both of these authors wrote what we might

term 'corrective histories', works that challenged interpretations of Sikhism popular outside the community (such as the belief that Nanak's teachings were essentially syncretistic) and disputed evidence that indicated diversity in Sikh identity and practice within the historical record. This corrective approach is most obvious in Ganda Singh's edited collection of European accounts of Sikhism, where his glosses and footnotes not only correct European misapprehensions, but also rebut European claims that Sikhs engaged in practices that contravened the injunctions of the *rahit*.[10] In short, this framing of the Sikh past became the dominant vision both within the Panth, or at least within the Khalsa, and was increasingly regarded by informed non-Punjabi South Asians and British commentators as the authoritative vision of Sikh history.

In the late 1960s this normative tradition faced its first serious challenge with the publication of W. H. McLeod's *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*. McLeod, who quickly established himself as the most influential modern historian of Sikhism, introduced a new methodological rigour and interpretive strategy into the study of the Sikh past: textual criticism. Published in 1968, one year before the quincentennial of Nanak's birth, McLeod's *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* was at odds with the reverential and even hagiographical tone of the numerous volumes that marked this important celebration. McLeod's book was not a celebration of the Nanak of faith, but rather a critical assessment of what we know about 'the man Guru Nanak'.[11] Taking the *janam-sakhi*s, the life stories of Nanak that circulated amongst his followers, as his sources, McLeod set about evaluating the reliability of each *sakhi* or *gost* (chapter). On the basis of miraculous content, the existence of corroborating external sources including the *Adi Granth*, agreement between different *janam-sakhi*s, and genealogical and geographical evidence, McLeod placed each narrative into one of five categories: the established, the probable, the possible, the improbable, and the impossible.[12]

According to this typology many treasured narratives – such as the young Nanak's restoration of a field of wheat ruined by buffaloes – were discounted entirely, others were dismissed as improbable, while others still were identified as merely possible: McLeod placed 87 out of 124 *sakhi*s in these categories. The remaining thirty-seven McLeod accepted as either probable or as established on the basis of corroborating evidence. From these sources, McLeod reconstructed the life of Nanak. After his meticulous reading of each *sakhi* and careful weighing of evidence, McLeod produced an account of Nanak's life – 'everything of any importance which can be affirmed concerning the events of Guru Nanak's life' – in just three short paragraphs. He insisted that in 'the janam-sakhis what we find is the Guru Nanak of legend and of faith, the image of the Guru seen through the eyes of popular piety seventy-five or a hundred years after his death'. The *janam-sakhi*s, McLeod insisted, 'provide only glimpses' of the historical Nanak.[13]

McLeod's critical reappraisal of the historical Nanak in *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* proved highly controversial (even while his summary of Nanak's teachings was widely accepted as a clear and accurate explication) and it established the key features of a textualist approach to the Sikh past. There are four key features of this analytical strategy that are worth underlining. Firstly, even though McLeod has produced an extremely important volume on bazaar

prints and Sikh popular culture, his fundamental approach is empirical and exhibits a deep-concern with the teachings of the Gurus and the development of the community as revealed by prescriptive tracts and other authoritative historical sources. Secondly, his method is grounded in careful source criticism, paying close attention to the provenance of particular texts and the relationships between texts. Thirdly, philology is central in his analysis, as he assiduously attends to questions of meaning, translation, and linguistic history. Fourthly, taking his substantial *oeuvre* as a whole (and while recognizing his significant pioneering contributions in the study of gender and diaspora), the real focus of McLeod's work is the period prior to western intrusion and the rise of Ranjit Singh and he is primarily interested in the development of textual traditions and the internal dynamics of the community.

McLeod's textualist approach transformed understandings of Sikh history and established a new analytical framework that has been extended in the last fifteen years by a younger generation of scholars. Where McLeod has focused largely on the *janam-sakhi*s and *rahit-nama*s, two recent works have focused on the core 'scripture' of the Sikhs, the *Adi Granth*. Pashaura Singh's meticulous yet controversial *The Guru Granth Sahib: Canon, Meaning and Authority* scrutinized the production of the *Adi Granth*, its canonization as 'scripture', and explored the ways in which the relationship between Sikhs and the *Adi Granth* have changed over time.[14] Gurinder Singh Mann's *The Making of Sikh Scripture* drew on recently discovered manuscripts in order to offer a brief yet broad vision of the development of Sikh scripture, extending and modifying McLeod's explorations of the making of the core Sikh textual tradition.[15]

Lou Fenech's recent monograph on the place of martyrdom in Sikh history works within the textualist approach pioneered by McLeod, but has pushed it in an important new direction as he used textual analysis to explore the development of a distinctive Sikh cultural tradition focussed on the figure of the *shahid* (martyr). By reading culture through textual analysis Fenech's work, to a greater extent than that of McLeod, Gurinder Singh Mann or Pashaura Singh, marks a sustained engagement with neglected cultural questions, such as literary expression, popular culture and the workings of community memory over the broad sweep of Sikh history.[16] Like Fenech, Jeevan Deol's work is deeply concerned with literary expression and his essays to date fruitfully explore a number of theoretical issues related to narrative and discourse while returning Sikh texts and history to a wider Punjabi cultural field.[17]

A third variant of the internalist approach is firmly rooted in the study of Sikh politics. Most notable here is the work of N.G. Barrier. One of the leading specialists on Sikh history in the colonial era, Barrier's work in the 1970s explored broader aspects of Punjabi administration and politics before the rise of Gandhi and his more recent work on Sikh politics remains highly cogniscent of both this regional context and the power of the colonial state. Unlike the textualist approach, Barrier foregrounds community mobilisation and access to political power, providing valuable insights into the institutions, power structures, and internal struggles that have shaped Sikh politics in the last 150 years, both in Punjab and beyond.[18] His current work on institutional and textual authority within a global Sikh community promises to create a paradigmatic and nuanced analysis of recent Sikh politics, filling a gaping hole in the scholarly literature on Sikhism.

While Barrier's work has been central in shaping our understanding of Sikh politics in the colonial era, Harjot Oberoi has produced the most sophisticated cultural analysis of social change in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Oberoi's critics have frequently identified him as a member of a 'McLeodian school', failing to recognise the fundamental epistemological and methodological break that Oberoi's cultural framing of Sikh history makes from the textualist tradition and McLeod's strict empiricism. Although Oberoi's *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition* notes that 'the field of modern Sikh studies has for long been nurtured by the writings of Professor W.H. McLeod' and acknowledges 'an enormous debt' to McLeod, his analytical framework is an entirely original one, at least within the context of Sikh studies.[19] The very title of the work, which foregrounds the *construction* of Sikh identity, signals an important shift away from empiricism towards a social constructivist approach. This rupture is also confirmed by Oberoi's epigram, taken from Tzvetan Todorov's discussion of the openness and multiplicity of historical narratives in Todorov's landmark *The Conquest of America*, a quotation that underlines Oberoi's keen interest in the production of narratives and discourses and their cultural power.[20] Oberoi cast a wide theoretical net: drawing both from the classical sociology of religion (Durkheim, Weber and Evans-Pritchard) through to Foucault's work on the shifting epistemological foundations of knowledge-construction. If these theoretical interests mark *The Construction of Religious Boundaries* off from the tradition pioneered by McLeod, so too does Oberoi's interest in the centrality of colonialism. Although his work covers a huge geographical and temporal terrain, McLeod's most detailed research explores the period up to the middle of the eighteenth century and it resolutely focuses on transformations that were driven from within the community. Oberoi instead focuses on the period between 1849 and 1920, recounting the birth of a new Sikh episteme under colonialism. It is important to note that for Oberoi, this crucial shift was not the direct result of British rule, but rather the social, economic, and cultural reconfigurations of colonialism created the conditions for this momentous reshaping of Sikh intellectual and cultural life. It is against this colonial background that Oberoi reconstructs the role of indigenous elites and propagandists in the reordering of indigenous identity along communal lines.

Oberoi detailed the clash between the Sanatan tradition and the systematised religious vision of the Tat Khalsa, a modernist vision that inscribed clear lines between Sikhs and other communities by insisting on the maintenance of a cluster of new rituals and social practices as markers of community. In short, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries* documented the undermining of an 'enchanted universe' of popular religious syncretism in the villages of the Punjab by a highly ordered pattern of practice and clearly delineated Sikh ('Tat Khalsa') identity formulated in the province's urban centres and disseminated through print culture, community organizations and sustained proselytization.

'Khalsacentrism'

The Construction of Religious Boundaries pushed Sikh studies in a new direction, stimulating an analytical reorientation that was strongly resisted by many conservative Sikhs. The book and its author were targeted by fierce

polemics. In the introduction to their *The Invasion of Religious Boundaries*, a sustained rebuttal of *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*, Jasbir Singh Mann, Surinder Singh Sodhi and Gurbakhsh Singh Gill characterised Oberoi's work in the following way:

> Clumsy distortions, mindless anthropological constructions and assumptions, producing ignominious forged postures, sacrilegious statements about mystic Gurus, effectless effort of a bland, blunted, unattached, constricted, shallow, pathetic Oberoi has produced a disjointed cynical, conscienceless and unscrupulous book … to attack the independent Sikh Identity … In writing this book, he has shown his pathological identification with Eurocentric paradigms, and has attempted to bring nihilistic depersonalisation by biting the hands that fed him.[21]

Elsewhere in the *Invasion of Religious Boundaries*, Sodhi and Mann argue that 'Oberoi has become prisoner of [the] McLeodian Eurocentric research paradigm.'[22]

To counter 'western critical scholarship', Mann, Sodhi and Gill advocate the adoption of a Khalsacentric approach to the Sikh past, which requires thecomplete rejection of 'wedtern' analytical models and scholarly traditions. Sodhi, for example, insists that Khalsacentric research eschews 'the use of European social science methods' and instead grounds scholarship in a belief 'in essence, wholism [sic], introspection' and that, as a result, Khalsacentric scholarship describes 'Sikh realities from a subjective faith point of view of the Khalsa values and ideals'.[23]

While, at an important level, this approach exhibits the same deep concern with the maintenance of a prescriptive normative order that typified the older Tat Khalsa tradition, Khalsacentric scholarship is characterised by its thorough rejection of 'western critical scholarship'. Where the Tat Khalsa tradition developed out of an urbanized late nineteenth century Punjabi elite that was receptive towards colonial education and western disciplines, the Khalsacentric tradition repudiates the authority claims of disciplines like history, sociology, anthropology, women's studies, and religious studies. Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon, for example, has asserted that 'a proper study of religion … is beyond the domain of Sociology, Anthropology and History', while Sukhmander Singh has argued that '[m]ethodologies relevant to Christian ideology where scriptures developed as a result of history and culture, [are] inapplicable to Sikhism where scripture is revelatory and authenticated by the prophet himself.'[24] It follows on from this that Sikhism can only be understood from a 'scriptural' basis:

> As Sikhism is not a history grounded religion, the application of Judo-Christian [sic] principles in Sikh studies will bring about the wrong results. Sikhism is not a product of history. Rather, the Sikh thought is its cause, and the historical events that followed, represent the unfolding of the philosophy preached by the Gurus, and enshrined in Sri Guru Granth Sahib.[25]

This rejection of western disciplines is energized by the social concerns of a conservative section of a transnational Sikh elite, many of whom are professionals based in North America, anxious about the maintenance of

tradition in a diasporic age. Although the Khalsacentric model has drawn some support from non-Sikh scholars, most notably Noel King, it is enabled by a nativist politics that simply rejects the authority of non-Sikh scholars and dismisses many professional Sikh historians in *ad hominem* attacks as 'brain-washed', 'role-dancing' or 'fallen'.[26]

It is important to recognise that Khalsacentric critiques of western scholarship are partly motivated by a legitimate concern about the colonial origins and the Eurocentric freight of many academic disciplines. The Khalsacentric refutation of 'western knowledge' rests upon the supposed materialism of all western scholarship (an assertion that seems dubious in the wake of post-structuralism, post-modernism, gender studies and the linguistic turn) and an engagement, albeit a scant and seemingly haphazard one, with the work of Edward Said, Talal Asad and other critics of Orientalism.[27] Given this, however, it is ironic that the Khalsacentric critique of 'western knowledge' replicates the binary logic that structured the most pernicious forms of colonial discourse, merely reversing the moral and political value attached to spirituality as opposed to science, tradition to modernity, faith to scholarship.

Thus Khalsacentrism is, fundamentally, an 'Occidentalising' discourse that caricatures western culture and academic disciplines in an effort to insulate the community from the 'invasive' effects of professional scholarship and to enable the construction of an autonomous, self-contained and privileged interpretative tradition within the community. Not surprisingly, Khalsacentric discourse replicates many of the arguments made by the Hindu right against 'western scholarship' and the 'historical religions' of the 'West', while simultaneously closing down debates about history and identity with 'outsiders'.[28] At a fundamental level, such arguments merely reinforce long-established Orientalist stereotypes of South Asia as a land of unchanging and eternal spirituality, the very tradition that much recent post-Orientalist scholarship on South Asian has been working against.[29]

Yet, there is much to admire in Sodhi's exposition of a program for Khalsacentric scholarship, particularly his insistence that as an approach it is grounded in 'humanistic and emancipatory anti-racist awareness' and that will 'screen out oppressive assumptions'.[30] But on the basis of the work produced by Khalsacentric scholars to date, there seems to be the possibility that this model may itself create and enforce 'oppressive assumptions', a likelihood that seems very real in light of the polemics against the personality, morals and families of Harjot Oberoi, Hew McLeod, Pashaura Singh and others. Moreover, by insisting that scholarship be should be produced from within the Khalsa and should affirm its values and program, this approach to the Sikh past calls into question the faith and identity of those Sikhs who do not accept all of the practices and identity markers of the Khalsa. This is clear, for example, in the work of Manjeet Singh Sidhu, who dubs Oberoi a 'mendacious gleaner' and dismisses the Sanatan faction of the Singh Sabha as 'Hindu saboteurs' and 'conspiratorial and peripheral Sanatan Sikhs'.[31] Used in this way, Khalsacentrism can only reify community boundaries, disempower non-Khalsa Sikhs and prevent the possibility of any positive dialogue with other South Asian religious communities or with non-Sikh scholars.

'Regional' Framings: Sikhism in its Punjabi Context

While these internalist models often recognise that the Sikh community has been moulded by the broader structures, institutions and cultural patterns of Punjabi life (even in the diasporic context), they share a tendency to abstract Sikhism from this crucial regional context.[32] At a fundamental level, of course, this is a product of the Tat Khalsa insistence on the originality, internal coherence, and incomparability of Sikh tradition. As a result, internal scholarship tends to privilege religious identity over social and commercial affiliations or regional identity and Sikhism is extracted from the dense webs of economics, social relations, and political traditions that have moulded its development in Punjab and beyond.

Several historians break with the internalist tradition through their explicit emphasis on the importance of this regional context. Indu Banga, whose writings cover the late eighteenth century through to the twentieth, has consistently foregrounded the importance of Punjab as a context. In part, this seems to be a product of her groundbreaking work on Ranjit Singh's kingdom, a state that is frequently imagined as being explicitly Sikh, yet rested upon the Maharaja's skilful balancing of different faiths and ethnicities in both his administration and military establishment. Banga's emphasis on the importance of the regional context also reflects her strong interest in the economic and agrarian history of the region, the crucial milieu within which Sikhism emerged and developed.[33]

J. S. Grewal has consistently grounded his explorations of Sikhism in the history of Punjab. Of all the historians working on Sikhism, Grewal has published the most widely on Punjabi history more generally and his research consistently foregrounds the importance of the region's geography, its institutions and political structures, its economic fortunes and its cultural ethos. In light of this insistence, his work typically uses a broader range of sources and deploys a range of approaches – from literary analysis to discussions of political economy – in teasing out the multi-faceted nature of Sikh history. For Grewal, Sikh history is a dynamic story of the shifting relationship between this community and its regional environment. It is telling that the recent *festschrift* for Grewal was entitled *Five Punjabi Centuries: policy, economy, society, and culture*[34]

For the colonial period, the work of Kenneth W. Jones firmly located Sikh debates over identity and Sikh socio-religious reform movements within a wider regional and national context.[35] His landmark 1973 *Journal of Asian Studies* article on Arya Samaji-Singh Sabha relations located the articulation of an increasing clearly defined Sikh identity within the broader context of educational change, urbanization, and class formation in Punjab.[36] For Jones, it was clear that the religious reform and the definition of clear-cut boundaries between Hindus and Sikhs was not only the product of the encounters between the communities, but was also the result of struggles within the community between newly-powerful urban elites and the older 'orthodox world' of rural life. Although Jones's exploration of these struggles within the Sikh community have been elaborated and refined by Oberoi, there has been limited effort to extend his pioneering work on the relationship between Arya Samajis and Singh Sabha reformers. Anil Sethi's recent Cambridge PhD thesis provides some insight into this process within his broader analysis of the changing operation of community

boundaries in key spheres of Punjabi popular culture and daily life, including commensality, festivals and popular entertainment.[37]

'Externalist' Framings: Sikh Identity as a Colonial Product

A smaller group of historians have privileged imperial power relations over regional structures as they emphasise the centrality of colonialism in the making of Sikhism. This approach is most obvious in Richard Fox's *Lions of the Punjab*, which argued that the British played a central role in constituting the orthodox 'Singh' [i.e. Khalsa] identity as they hoped a distinctive and loyal Sikh soldiery would form a bulwark to British authority.[38] In short, Fox suggested that the British pursued a project of 'domestication', as they used military recruitment 'to turn the Singhs into guardians of the Raj' while using 'Sikhism's religious institutions to discipline them [Sikh soldiers] to obedience.'[39] Through the mechanism of the 'martial races' policy the British were thus instrumental in the constitution of a new 'orthodoxy', a religious identity that fulfilled the needs of the British, not Punjabis themselves. Although Fox suggests that 'antecedent conditions of class relations and religious identities set the material and cultural limits for the making … of the Punjab's culture', his monograph foregrounds the instrumentality of the colonial state and fails to acknowledge the significance of pre-colonial structures, practices, and identities.[40] Thus, in contrast to the long dominant internalist historiographical tradition, Fox's work was characterised by an 'externalist' approach. In stressing the pivotal role of British cultural assumptions and the mechanisms of the colonial state in the creation of modern Sikh identity, Fox effectively relocated the drive-wheel of historical change from within the Sikh community to British offices, libraries and drill-halls. Fox's work challenged the tendency to treat the Sikh community as self-contained, underlining the transformative power of colonialism and identifying colonial rule as the major rupture in Punjabi history.

Bernard Cohn developed similar arguments in his important essay on the symbolic and political importance of clothing, including the Sikh turban, in South Asian society. Cohn argues that the 'British rulers in nineteenth-century India played a major part in making the turban into a salient feature of Sikh identity'. While Cohn briefly reviews Sikh history, beginning with the age-old (and erroneous) assertion that Sikhism 'grew out of syncretic tendencies in theology and worship among Hindu and Muslims in north India', his discussion of the *dastar* or *pagri* (turban) fails to note its significance in eighteenth century texts such as the *Chaupa Singh Rahit-nama* and its prominence in the ranks of Ranjit Singh's army.[41] Such evidence suggests that the turban had already became an important marker of identity for some Sikhs, at least some Sikh men, long before the extension of the East India Company's authority over Punjab in 1849. Certainly, Cohn is correct in suggesting that during the colonial period the turban increasingly became a standard marker of Sikh identity, but his neglect of the pre-colonial period allows him to overplay the extent of this transformation. By privileging the prescriptive power of the colonial state, Cohn also effaces the role of indigenous reformers, especially the members of the Tat Khalsa, in promulgating the turban as a distinctively Sikh symbol in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Thus both Cohn's and Fox's externalist interpretation of the genesis of modern Sikh identity are enabled by truncated chronological frameworks which effectively erase the pre-colonial period. By defining the rise of a distinct Sikh identity as the direct product of the initiatives of the colonial state, ironically these visions of Sikh history actually make it difficult to gauge the exact nature, extent and legacy of the colonial moment in Sikh history. Indeed, this story may seem very different, if the question of modern Sikh identity was re-imagined within a broader exploration of the problem of identity under *imperial regimes in general* rather than *under British colonialism in particular*, for then we might have a fuller understanding of how the imperial systems of the Mughals and Ranjit Singh dealt with the heterogeneous nature of Punjabi society. We await a study that will place the reformist zeal of the final three decades of the nineteenth century in a broad chronological context, allowing us to assess the true extent of British power and the cultural programme of the Tat Khalsa.

'Diaspora': Sikhism in a Global Frame

The most recent approach to the Sikh past that has emerged is grounded in the study of the Sikh community as a trans-national and diasporic social formation. At one level, this approach grew out of an older tradition of work on Sikh (and Punjabi) immigration, such as Arthur Helweg's sociological studies of the British Sikh community and W. H. McLeod's pioneering work on Punjabis in New Zealand.[42] These early studies largely dealt with the staples of immigration history as it developed in the 1970s and 1980s, such as the decision to immigrate, the nature and organization of the community in its 'host country', and questions of 'assimilation' and 'acculturation'.

This immigration history paradigm has been called into question recently as some scholars have adopted a range of approaches that have emerged out of the analytical problematic of 'diaspora'. As Verne Dusenbery has argued, this shift towards a diasporic model marked a significant reconceptualisation of the position of the Sikh community and the project of Sikh studies. Where earlier histories of Sikh communities beyond Punjab were written in the vein of 'immigration history' and as such took the 'host nation' nation as its analytical unit, imagining a Sikh diaspora invoked a very different model. The term 'diaspora', originally used to describe the Jewish experience and well established as an analytical category in Jewish studies, suggested that diasporic Sikhs were a people unified by a common culture and who had been dispersed, either temporarily or permanently, from their 'homeland'.[43] At an analytical level, the concept of a Sikh diaspora was both promising and troubling. In conceiving of the 'diaspora' itself as the analytical focus (rather than the Sikh community in a particular nation), the possibility of a genuinely trans-national approach to Sikh studies was opened up, a strategy through which we might not only recover the social networks, institutional structures and cultural traffic that has linked Sikhs living overseas with the Punjab, but also the ties that directly connect different diasporic communities (say, for example, in Britain and Canada).

Darshan Singh Tatla's *The Sikh Diaspora: the Search for Statehood* provided the first monographic study of the Sikh diasporic experience.[44] Tatla's text focuses on the post-1947 period, and more especially on the 1980s and

1990s, tracing the development of Sikh political institutions in the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States of America. It is a particularly valuable study because it documents crucial debates within the community and the rise of community organizations that actively linked various Sikh communities into a shared space of debate and exchange. Tatla's exploration of the development of a vigorous diasporic Punjabi print culture is particularly important as it underscores the importance of technology and communications in shaping the social patterns and political aspirations of an increasingly dispersed and diverse global Sikh community.[45] But, in mapping the global context of the demand for Khalistan, Tatla has fashioned an important window into recent Sikh politics, but his political focus pushes other cultural issues – the dynamics of marriage within the diaspora, the position of Sikh women, or Sikh relationships with non-Sikh communities in Britain and North America – to the margins.

More recently still, Brian Keith Axel's *The Nation's Tortured Body* developed a rereading of the last 150 years of Sikh history through the lens of the contemporary transnational and diasporic global Sikh community. Most provocatively, Axel argues that the notion of Punjab as the 'Sikh homeland' was not something created in India and carried out into the world by migrants, but rather it was the diasporic experience of displacement that actually created the notion of the homeland. Axel's transnational approach allows him to produce and juxtapose ethnographies and histories of a range of important sites for various Sikh communities, ranging from Harmindar Sahib in Amritsar to Southall's Glassy Junction pub. Not only does Axel return these 'local' sites to the broader field of the diaspora, he also examines the ways in which these various sites and communities are connected. He makes a convincing case that it is the circulation of images of the male Sikh body – with Maharaja Dalip Singh serving as the exemplary case – that mediate between far-flung Sikh communities.

Most importantly, Axel argues that since 1983 it has been images of the tortured bodies of Sikh 'militants' and Khalistanis, which now freely circulate on the internet, that have played a central role in creating the social relations that constitute the diaspora. Axel shows that these images remind diasporic Sikhs of the constant threat of violence they face and foreground the dislocation, longing for home and struggle for power that are implicit in the diasporic condition.[46] Unlike Tatla, Axel is sensitive to gender and representation and his work underlines the crucial, but often overlooked, place of masculinity in representations of Sikh politics and identity.

But diaspora, Tatla's and Axel's foundational category, remains a contested term in the Sikh case. As Verne Dusenbery, McLeod and Karen Leonard have pointed out, the notion of a 'Sikh diaspora' may in itself be misleading as it privileges religious identity at the expense of other social markers, economic ties, and kinship networks.[47] Dusenbery has demonstrated that diasporic Sikhs are not simply motivated by projecting a publicly recognizable Sikh identity, but rather manifest concern with maintaining a range of what he terms 'ancestral genera', the linguistic usages, occupational traditions, marriage patterns, and village connections that shape Punjabi culture as a whole.[48] Not only do we have to guard against the fetishization of religious identity implicit within the notion of a 'Sikh diaspora', but we also have to be cautious in the concept's changing analytical purchase across time. While Axel's work demonstrates the very real

strengths of a diasporic interpretation of Sikh identity formation in the post-World War II period, both McLeod and Leonard have suggested that the concept may be of limited use for work on migration and community-formation amongst Punjabi migrants in the early twentieth century because early Punjabi settlers in Britain, Canada, the United States and Australasia, like many rural Punjabis, did not necessarily define themselves in terms of their religious community. These knotty analytical problems again underscore the ways in which both regional context and historical contingency disrupt the easy creation of new paradigms, reminding us that while concepts such as a 'Sikh diaspora' are useful heuristic tools, they should be deployed with care and self-reflection.

Reframing the Sikh Past

Thus far I have presented a schematic 'map' of Sikh historiography and have highlighted some of the major epistemological and methodological difficulties that face each of the positions. In the remainder of the essay, I will briefly elaborate on this critical commentary and sketch the foundations of an alternative vision of Sikh history, one that tries to reconnect the pre-colonial past, colonialism and diaspora. This vision remains rudimentary and is not meant in any sense to be paradigmatic. Rather, I hope, it will raise a series of questions concerning the ways in which we produce knowledge about the past of Sikh communities and it will highlight some fruitful avenues for future research.

As the foregoing discussion of the notion of a 'Sikh diaspora' suggests, an important starting point for re-imagining Sikh history is the assessment of the sub-discipline's existing conceptual vocabulary and the exploration of new analytical concepts. Given the contentious status of 'history' as an interpretative discipline and the centrality of hermeneutic debates over the interpretation of sacred texts, historians of Sikhism have paid considerable attention to translation. This has been a particular hallmark of the textualist approach pioneered by McLeod and much of his work proceeds from the close analysis and discussion of a particular key term or concept. McLeod firmly respects linguistic and cultural difference, highlighting the problem of translation and has frequently argued that Sikhism, where possible, should be understood on its own terms, rather than according to a Judaeo-Christian framework. He has, for example, been a firm advocate of the use of the term 'Panth' to describe the Sikh community, preferring it to other terms such as 'sect' or 'denomination'.[49] McLeod has been even-handed in his attentiveness to questions of translation: he is just as concerned with the way in which English terms are mapped onto Punjabi concepts as he is with the accurate renderings of Punjabi words into English.

Harjot Oberoi has also paid close attention to this issue, particularly with regards to the origins and use of the term 'Sikhism'. Drawing upon the work of other historians of South Asian religions, most notably Romila Thapar, Oberoi has highlighted the difficulties in translating the very notion of 'religion' into the South Asian context (especially before 1900) and the centrality of the colonial state in fashioning and consolidating 'religion' as a concept in South Asia.[50]

One term that is in wide currency amongst Sikh historians, however, requires careful scrutiny and that is 'tradition'. Historians of Sikhism use 'tradition' as a catchall phrase that describes the textual corpus, practices and discourses

produced by Sikhs. Yet this term is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, 'tradition' frequently stands in contradistinction to modernity, representing the authentic essence of a pre-modern community. While historians generally see 'tradition' as being disrupted, undermined and frequently supplanted by modernity, in Sikh studies 'tradition' is frequently used in discussions of the contemporary moment and diasporic communities.[51] This is not surprising given the strength of the internalist approach and the tendency to insulate the Sikh past from the transformative power of colonialism and migration. The category of 'tradition' itself has not been subject to sustained analysis, even though the work of both Lou Fenech and Harjot Oberoi seems to suggest that the very notion of tradition was itself the product of the Singh Sabha movement. Secondly, and following on from this, the use of 'tradition' as a concept tends to imagine a homogeneous and strictly unified community, evacuating the Sikh past of struggle and contestation. This tendency is partly marked in the scholarship for the pre-colonial era, partly because of the predominance of textualist readings of the pre-1849 period: a more sophisticated social and cultural history that attended to pre-colonial social differentiation and political struggle would fundamentally transform our understandings of the pre-colonial past in the way that Oberoi revised our vision of the 1870 to 1930 period.

What I am suggesting here then is to extend our critical interrogation of the ways in which concepts such as 'tradition' have been produced. The work of Fenech on martyrdom and Oberoi on the Tat Khalsa episteme mark important starting points for this project, but despite their pioneering work there are fundamental aspects of the colonial period that require careful re-examination. The cultural values and political pressures that shaped the 'Punjab school' of colonial administration remain largely unquestioned, reflecting a central unevenness in the scholarship on the colonial period. Thanks to Oberoi, we have a rich anthropological understanding of Punjabi culture under colonialism, but the values and motivations of British actors remain un-anthropologized.[52] As it stands, Sikh historiography is in danger of replicating the long-established and pernicious assertion that natives have culture, while Europeans have history. A two-sided rereading of the colonial period, as my discussion of Fox and Cohn above suggests, must also attend carefully to questions of both power asymmetries and agency, recognising the importance of long-established community dynamics and the important reformist and prescriptive literature produced by Sikhs themselves (both in the pre-colonial and colonial periods).

One way we might avoid privileging the instrumentality of the colonial state is to delineate what can be termed the 'points of recognition' that shaped the cultural terrain of colonial Punjab: those values, ideals, and practices that Britons and Sikhs believed that they shared. These points of recognition, especially notions of masculinity and martiality, were spaces where Sikh leaders could win cultural recognition and economic benefits (especially through military service) from the colonial state and where colonial policy in turn could gain purchase, creating new institutions and reshaping cultural patterns with the aim of shoring up imperial authority.

It is crucial to insist that while these processes constructed and affirmed cross-cultural commensurability, this production of affinity rested on the identification and marginalisation of other groups who lacked those qualities that Sikhs and Britons supposedly shared. In other words, the production of

sameness also required the production of difference.[53] The British celebration of the 'manliness' and 'warrior ethos' of Khalsa Sikhs depended upon a complex series of comparisons made between monotheistic Sikhs and polytheistic Hindus, the sturdy Punjabi and the effeminate Bengali, the manly meat eater of the north and the physically weak vegetarians of the Gangetic plains and the south, as well as the almost complete erasure of Sikh women from colonial discourse.

The most crucial shared discursive formation articulated by Tat Khalsa reformers and British scholar-administrators was 'Sikhism in danger'. The British recruiting officer R. W. Falcon expressed this anxiety clearly when he noted the 'great slackness there is at the present time in taking the *pahul* (Khalsa initiation rite), very many who call themselves Singhs ... omit to take the *pahul* though adopting the surname and keeping some of the observances.'[54] In a similar vein, the missionary Henry Martyn Clark noted in *Panjab Notes and Queries* that he had encountered a group of seasonal-workers who observed the injunctions of the *rahit* at home, but would cut their hair and openly smoke when they were working away from their villages. Surely this was evidence of the decay of Sikhism?[55]

In short, the British saw their role as the policemen of tradition, installing *granthis* for Sikh regiments, supplying *jhatka* meat for Sikh soldiers, and collecting a dense archive of ethnographic information about patterns of popular practice. They had to protect Sikhism from the 'all-consuming jungle' of popular Hinduism.

This brings us to the work of the most important western interpreter of Sikhism before W. H. McLeod, Max Arthur Macauliffe. Macauliffe was posted to the Punjab as an Indian Civil Service (ICS) officer in 1862 at the age of twenty-five. In 1893 he resigned from the ICS after a distinguished career in the Punjab administration, serving as a Deputy Commissioner between 1882 and 1884 and as a Divisional Judge from 1884. From the mid-1870s Macauliffe became interested in the ethnography and religious history of the Punjab. In 1875 he produced an article in the *Calcutta Review* on the shrine to *Pir* Sakhi Sarvar in the Suliman Mountains, which marked the beginning of a distinguished career, establishing Macauliffe as an important interpreter of Sikh tradition.[56]

Macauliffe's *The Sikh Religion* (six volumes, 1909) created a vision of Sikh scripture and history that has remained tremendously influential within the Sikh Panth. Macauliffe insisted that Sikhism was a distinctive religion and that its history was characterised by a constant battle against Hinduism. Popular Hinduism, he argued, was like a 'boa constrictor of the Indian forests .... it winds round its opponents, crushes it in its fold, and finally causes it to disappear in its capacious interior.' Sikhism was threatened with this same fate: 'the still comparatively young religion is making a vigorous struggle for life, but its ultimate destruction is...inevitable without state support.'[57] This argument dovetailed nicely with the agenda of the Tat Khalsa reformers Macauliffe worked closely with, who were proclaiming '*ham hindu nahin*' (we are not Hindus). The proclamation of a leading Sikh periodical that as a result of Macauliffe's translation 'the promiscuousness in Sikh ideas will vanish, and Tat Khalsa will begin to start on a new career' reveals the close interdependence of the two views.[58]

These shared visions conditioned the British use of military recruitment as a means of preserving the Khalsa identity. R.W. Falcon's 1896 recruiter's manual enshrined this official understanding, suggesting that recruitment should be aimed only at those 'Sikh tribes which supplied converts to Sikhism in the time of Guru Gobind Singh, who in fact formed the Singh people': more recent converts were to be avoided as they could not be considered 'true Sikh tribes'.[59] The ultimate test of 'Sikh-ness' was whether an individual maintained the external symbols of the Khalsa: 'Singhs, the members of the Khalsa; these are the only Sikhs who are reckoned as true Sikh .... The best practical test of a true Sikh is to ascertain whether calling himself a Sikh he wears uncut hair and abstains from smoking tobacco.'[60] The various non-*kes-dhari* (*sahaj-dharis*, shaven *mona* and *patit* Sikhs) groups who might have identified themselves with (elements of) the Sikh tradition were to be avoided. Khalsa Sikhs were 'true' Sikhs and Khalsa Sikhs alone could be relied on to exhibit the true values of a warrior. Falcon mapped these martial qualities across the different regions of Punjab, warning officers away from eastern and southern regions where the 'Hindustani type' was prevalent and against those regions where Sikh identity was 'very diluted by Hinduism'.[61] Once recruited Sikh troops were placed in Sikh regiments, *kes-dhari* Sikhs who were not *amrit-dhari* were required to undergo the Khalsa's *khande ki pahul* initiation rite and all Sikh troops were to maintain the external symbols of their Sikh identity and to accept the authority of the *granthi*s appointed by the Army to perform Sikh rituals.[62] British officers believed that a sensitivity to religious identity and the fastidious maintenance of that identity was central to the *esprit de corps* of the Sikh troops and to the general effectiveness of the Indian Army, a force which was increasingly reliant on the ability and loyalty of its Sikh soldiers.

Thus, rather than 'making a culture' (as Fox suggests) the British were intent on fostering a Khalsa tradition revivified by the new class of educated and energetic urban reformers driving the Singh Sabha movement. Within the dominant interpretative frameworks deployed by the British, these reformers were heirs to the reforming spirit that was at the heart of the Sikh tradition. For the British the Sikhs were a product of an 'Indian Reformation', which, like the European Reformation, was an ongoing process not some distant historical fact. The gains that the Khalsa had made needed to be carefully guarded, least they be swallowed and destroyed by the relentless pressure of the 'boa constrictor' of Hinduism.

One useful model for making sense of these exchanges comes not from Punjabi historiography, but from colonial South India. In his excellent *Dialogue and History*, Eugene Irschick insisted that the colonial social order was 'a negotiated, heteroglot construction shaped by both weak and strong, the colonized and colonizer, from the present to the past.' Irschick's study of land tenure in the Madras hinterland traced the interplay between the demands of colonial administrators and the authority of indigenous knowledge traditions, stressing the 'dialogic' nature of British colonial knowledge.[63] He warned that 'we can no longer presume' that British understandings of India were the 'product of an "imposition" by the hegemonic colonial power onto a mindless and subordinate society.'[64] Local aspirations and colonial agendas were in a constant dialogue, a dynamic process of exchange where claim and counter-claim led each interest group to modify its position almost constantly.

In the Punjabi case, we can perhaps think of the construction of knowledge and identity as being polylogic rather than dialogic. Where Irschick's case study explored the encounter between peasant cultivators and a small cadre of British officials in the Madras hinterland, the negotiation of Sikh identity was a more diffuse and open process. Not simply the product of an encounter between coloniser and colonised, the renegotiation of Sikhism was produced by contestations within the community as well as encounters with various Hindu reformers, Christian missionaries, and colonial officials. Pamphleteers and preachers were aware of the multiplicity of arguments that they were responding to and the divergent audiences they were addressing: their texts seem deeply imprinted by these multiple engagements and the necessity to construct multifaceted arguments suited to heteroglot population of the region.

This argument for the creation of an approach that explores the complex and polylogic negotiation of identity under the uneven power relations of colonialism reflects an insistence on the inherent heterogeneity of Punjabi society. The region's inherently diverse and hybridised population reflects the reality that Punjab has long stood at the confluence of the Islamic and Indic worlds and the cultures of Central and South Asia. As a result, the British encountered a heterogeneous society in Punjab, a society where numerous social groups were differentiated by a range of socio-economic, cultural and political factors. Given this, any search for one representative Sikh, yet alone one representative Punjabi, voice in the colonial archive is futile in the face of the multiplicity of local actors whose pamphlets, speeches and testimonies survive in British and Punjabi archives. Tracing the inter-relationships between these various Punjabis, establishing points of recognition and as well as points of conflict between these colonised groups and various British interests, and fighting against the limits of the colonial archive to recover the experiences of under-represented groups (especially tribals, Dalits and women), will allow us to locate the negotiation of Sikh identity within the deep structures and complex dynamics of Punjabi life.

More broadly still, this insistence on the polylogic construction of culture and identity also recognises that Sikhs were incorporated into the British empire and that this imperial system worked as system of mobility, where certain ideas, commodities and people circulated. Sikhs, especially Sikh soldiers, were conspicuous in this imperial world and the turbaned Sikh soldier became one of the most potent imperial symbols. Unfortunately, to date, most scholarship on the Sikh 'diaspora' focuses on Sikh 'settlers', those migrants who left Punjab and established permanent homes in North America, Britain, Europe, Africa, Asia or Australasia. We know much less about 'sojourners', those Sikhs who lived outside the Punjab for a short period of time or who travelled backwards and forwards from Punjab. In part, this lacuna is the product of our limited knowledge of the early decades of the diaspora and, in particular, the absence of work that explores the important connections between British imperialism and the very genesis of the diaspora in the second half of the nineteenth century. Most of the early Sikhs who ventured outside South Asia did so as soldiers, yet we have little in the way of extended analysis of their experience: the path-breaking work in this area, such as Susan VanKoski's work on Sikh soldiers in Europe during World War I, is largely descriptive and offers limited insights into the culture of Sikh military service before 1914.[65] Ideally, trans-national

histories of Sikhism will grapple with the nineteenth century and allow us to explore the relationships between mobility, fixity and colonialism that are currently being explored by scholars of other colonised societies.[66]

Thus, the new vision of modern Sikh historiography that I am gesturing towards calls into question the rigid divisions commonly drawn between the colonial period and the age of the diaspora and it highlights the various forms of mobility that have shaped Sikh experiences. It also underlines the importance of encounters, both within and outside South Asia, in shaping Sikh identity. Although Kenneth W. Jones and Himadri Banerjee have explored some of the important intellectual connections between Bengal and Punjab, we still know relatively little about the experiences of Sikhs living in other parts of South Asia. This leaves significant gaps in our understanding of the relationship between Sikhs and the project of building a national Indian culture and means that some crucial processes, such as the Punjabization of Delhi, remain largely unexplored.[67] Similar questions can be raised about the scholarship on the diaspora, where much work has focused on development of community institutions and relations with the 'host' state, rather than assessing the ways in which Sikh identities have been shaped by daily encounters with non-Sikhs. Thus much work on the diaspora continues to treat Sikhs as a self-sufficient community insulated from other individuals and collectivities. As a result relations between Sikhs and other prominent South Asian diasporic communities, such as Gujaratis and Sylhetis, unexplored and the encounters between diasporic Sikhs and Asian, Afro-Caribbean and European migrant communities remain uncharted and the broader social contexts that have shaped modern Sikh life are still under studied.

Conclusion

In urging a move towards a mobile and transnational history of Sikhism, this essay encourages historians of Sikhism to increasingly engage with broader debates in history, anthropology, sociology and gender studies. This is not to suggest that Sikh studies should shift its focus from addressing the Panth. Rather this paper is calling for what we might term 'Janus-faced' scholarship, which is attentive both to the historical questions that interest Sikhs and the epistemological, methodological and theoretical debates that animate humanities scholarship more generally. By recovering the complex cultural traffic and diverse encounters that have moulded the Panth, such an approach is not only more in keeping with recent directions in historiography that are sensitive to cross-cultural contact, but it also recognises that although the Panth is united by its devotion to the Gurus and the *Guru Granth Sahib*, Sikhs occupy diverse cultural locations and articulate a multiplicity of identities. Recognition of the cultural exchanges and hybridised social patterns borne out of the inequalities of colonialism and the upheavals of migration necessitate the creation of new historiographical visions and forms of practice. With the recent celebration of the 300th anniversary of the Khalsa and 150th anniversary of British annexation, it now seems a good time to begin to explore the possibilities that such an approach to the Sikh past might offer.

Notes

[1] The key arguments developed in this essay were first presented in September 2001 to the Program in South Asia and Middle Eastern Studies Seminar at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, the Cultural Studies Group at Urbana, and the 'Sikhism in Light of History' conference held at Ann Arbor, Michigan. The author would like to thank Hew McLeod, Antoinette Burton, and Brian Moloughney for their responses to earlier versions of this paper, but notes that he bears sole responsibility for the material articulated here. The arguments presented here will be expanded in his forthcoming work *Entangled Pasts: Sikhism, Colonialism and Diaspora.*

[2] One of the best examples of this is Hew McLeod's role as an 'expert witness' in a Canadian court case over the right of Sikhs to wear turbans while serving for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. See *The Sikh Review* 42:2 (1994), 74.

[3] E.g. Gianeshwar Khurana, *British historiography on the Sikh Power in the Punjab* (London, 1985); Darshan Singh, *Western Image of Sikh Religion* (NBO, Delhi, 1999); Fauja Singh ed., *Historians and Historiography of the Sikhs* (Delhi, 1978); Trilochan Singh, *Ernest Trumpp and W.H. McLeod as Scholars of Sikh History, Religion and culture* (Chandigarh, 1994). J. S. Grewal's *Contesting Interpretations of the Sikh Tradition* (Manohar, Delhi, 1999) offers an important overview of the field, while Arvind-pal Singh Mandair's essay 'Thinking Differently about Religion and History: Issues for Sikh Studies', *Sikh Religion, Culture and Ethnicity* Christopher Shackle, Gurharpal Singh and Arvind-pal Singh Mandair eds (Curzon, London, 2001), 47-71 offers a critical reading of the secular and historicist underpinnings of Sikh studies.

[4] Tony Ballantyne, 'Resisting the "Boa Constrictor" of Hinduism: the Khalsa and the Raj', *International Journal of Punjab Studies* 6:2 (1999), 195-215.

[5] The best guide to these exchanges is N. Gerald Barrier, *The Sikhs and Their Literature: a guide to tracts, books, and periodicals, 1849-1919* (Delhi, 1970).

[6] Bhagat Lakshman Singh, *Autobiography* Ganda Singh ed., (Calcutta, 1965), 58.

[7] Some of these traditions are explored in the work of Lou Fenech on martyrdom in Sikh tradition. See n. 16 below.

[8] It is important to note that 'Hinduism' itself is a problematic term in the South Asian context. The product of the Orientalist study of South Asian textual traditions and the sociological knowledge produced by the colonial state, there is no equivalent term for 'Hinduism' in any pre-colonial South Asian language. Nevertheless, during in the nineteenth century the term was adopted by a variety of South Asian leaders, especially those writing in English.

[9] Ballantyne, 'Resisting the "Boa Constrictor"'.

[10] Ganda Singh, *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs* (Calcutta, 1962).

[11] W. H. McLeod, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* (OUP, Oxford, 1968), vii.

[12] Ibid., 68-70.

[13] Ibid., 146-7.

[14] Pashaura Singh, *The Guru Granth Sahib: canon, meaning and authority* (OUP, Delhi, 2000).

[15] Gurinder Singh Mann, *The Making of Sikh Scripture* (OUP, New York, 2001).

[16] Louis E. Fenech, *Martyrdom in the Sikh Tradition: playing the 'game of love'* (OUP, New Delhi, 2000).
[17] Jeevan Deol, 'Eighteenth Century Khalsa Identity: Discourse, Praxis and Narrative', *Sikh Religion, Culture and Ethnicity* Christopher Shackle, Gurharpal Singh and Arvind-pal Singh Mandair eds., (Curzon, Richmond, 2001), 25-46; 'The Minas and Their Literature', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 118:2 (1998), 172-184; 'Surdas: Poet and Text in the Sikh Tradition', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 63:2 (2000), 169-193; '"To Hell With War": Literature of Political Resistance in early Nineteenth Century Punjab', *South Asia Research* 17:2 (1997), 178-209.
[18] See, for example, N.G. Barrier, 'The Formulation and Enactment of the Punjab Alienation of Land Bill', *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 2:2 (1965), 145-165; 'Mass Politics and the Punjab Congress in the Pre-Gandhian Era', *Journal of Indian History* 50:149, (1972), 459-470.
[19] Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: culture, identity and diversity in the Sikh tradition* (OUP, Delhi, 1994), xii.
[20] Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: the question of the other* Richard Howard trans., (New York, 1984).
[21] Jasbir Singh Mann, Surinder Singh Sodhi and Gurbakhsh Singh Gill, 'Introduction', *Invasion of Religious Boundaries: a critique of Harjot Oberoi's work* (Vancouver, 1995), 1.
[22] S.S. Sodhi and J.S. Mann, 'Construction of Religious Boundaries', ibid., 167.
[23] S.S. Sodhi, 'Eurocentrism vs. Khalsacentrism', ibid, 342.
[24] Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon, 'Review of *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*', *Sikh Press*, 4:33 (May 1994), 4; Sukhmander Singh, 'A Work of Scholarly Indulgence', *Invasion of Religious Boundaries – a critique of Harjot Oberoi's work* Jasbir Singh Mann, Surinder Singh Sodhi and Gurbaksh Singh Gill eds., (Vancouver, 1995), 257.
[25] Mann, Sodhi and Gill, 'Introduction', ibid., 7-8.
[26] Noel Q. King, '"Modernity", "Fundamentalism" and Sikhism: a *tertium quid*', *Invasion of Religious Boundaries*, 106-111; 'The Siege Perilous (Hot Seat) and the divine Hypothesis', ibid., 11-116; 'Capax imperii – Scripture, Tradition and European style critical method', *Advanced Studies in Sikhism* Jasbir Singh Mann and Harbans Singh Saraon eds., (Irvine, CA, 1989), 3-15.
[27] E.g. Mann, Sodhi, and Gill, 'Introduction', 3.
[28] Just as the popular journal *Hinduism Today* declared that 'history is always inaccurate and often injurious. The good news is that India and Hinduism live beyond history', Sodhi, Mann and Gill argued that '[t]he Sikh religion or its identity cannot be studied with such parameters as are applied to Judeo-Christian studies ... as their religion and scriptures, which numbering over 60, make it a history grounded religion' where 'Sikhism is not the product of history'. 'Introduction', 7; *Hinduism Today*, 16 (December, 1994).
[29] On the possibilities of a 'post-orientalist' history see Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: history, culture, and political economy* (OUP, London, 1998).
[30] S.S. Sodhi, 'Eurocentrism vs. Khalsacentrism', 342-3.

[31] Manjeet Singh Sandhu, 'Harjot Oberoi - Scholar or saboteur', *Invasion of Religious Boundaries*, 192-3.
[32] This tendency varies between approaches and individual historians: it is much more pronounced in the Tat Khalsa normative tradition than in the political approach of Barrier or the cultural history produced by Oberoi.
[33] Indu Banga, *Agrarian System of the Sikhs: late eighteenth and early nineteenth century* (Delhi, 1978); edited with J.S. Grewal, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh and His Times* (Amritsar, 1980); 'Agrarian System in Punjab during Sikh Rule', *History of Agriculture* 2:1 (1980), 35-65.
[34] Indu Banga ed., *Five Punjabi Centuries: policy, economy, society, and culture, c. 1500-1990: essays for J.S. Grewal* (Manohar, New Delhi, 1997).
[35] Kenneth W. Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India* (CUP, Cambridge, 1990); *Religious Controversy in British India: Dialogues in South Asian Languages* (Albany, 1992).
[36] Kenneth W. Jones, 'Ham Hindu Nahin: Arya-Sikh Relations, 1877-1905', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 32:3 (1973), 457-475. Also see his earlier 'Communalism in the Punjab: the Arya Samaj contribution', *Journal of Asian Studies* 28:1 (1968), 39-54.
[37] Anil Sethi, 'The Creation of Religious Identities in the Punjab, c.1850-1920', (University of Cambridge Ph.D. 1998).
[38] Oberoi's arguments in *The Construction of Religious Boundaries* can be read as an extended response to Fox's work.
[39] Richard G. Fox, *Lions of the Punjab: culture in the making* (OUP, Delhi, 1990), 140.
[40] Ibid., 207.
[41] Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: the British In India* (Princeton, 1996), 107; *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-nama* W.H. McLeod (Dunedin, 1987). The changing place of the turban in Sikh identity is explored in W.H. McLeod, 'The Turban: Symbol of Sikh Identity', *Sikh Identity: Continuity and Change* Pashaura Singh and N. Gerald Barrier eds., (Delhi, 1999), 57-68. Elsewhere McLeod has insisted that the *rahit-namas* are important agents and markers of continuity between the seventeenth century and nineteenth century Panth. W.H. McLeod, *Early Sikh tradition: a Study of the Janam-Sakhis* (Oxford, 1980), 105.
[42] Arthur Helweg, *Sikhs in England: the development of a migrant community* (Oxford, 1979); W. H. McLeod, *Punjabis in New Zealand: a history of Punjabi migration, 1890-1940* (GNDU, Amritsar, 1986).
[43] Verne Dusenbery, 'A Sikh Diaspora? Contested Identities and Constructed Realities', *Nation and Migration: the Politics of Space in the South Asian Diaspora* Peter van der Veer ed., (Philadelphia, 1995), 17-42.
[44] As against a study of Sikh migration or an examination of the development of an overseas Sikh community within a particular nation.
[45] Of course, it also underscores the continued importance of print in the definition of Sikh identities and, more generally, in the way in which people imagine their communities.
[46] Brian Keith Axel, *The Nation's Tortured Body: violence, representation, and the formation of a Sikh "Diaspora"* (Duke, Durham, NC, 2001).

[47] Dusenbery, 'A Sikh Diaspora?', W. H. McLeod, 'The First Forty Years of Sikh Migration: Problems and Possible Solutions', *The Sikh Diaspora* N.G. Barrier and Verne Dusenbery eds., 29-48; Karen Leonard, 'Pioneer Voices from California: Reflections on Race, Religion and Ethnicity', ibid., 120-140.
[48] Verne Dusenbery, 'On the Moral Sensitivities of Sikhs in North America', *Divine Passions: the social construction of emotion in India* (Berkeley, 1990), 239-261 and 'The Sikh Person, the Khalsa Panth, and western Sikh Converts', *Religious Movements and Social Identity: Volume 4 - Of Boeings and Bullock-carts* (Delhi, 1990), 117-135.
[49] W. H. McLeod, 'A Sikh Theology for Modern Times', *Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century* J.T. O'Connell et al eds., (Manohar, 1990), 32-43.
[50] Oberoi, *Construction of Religious Boundaries*, 1-35; also see Romila Thapar, 'Syndicated Moksa?', *Seminar*, September 1985, 14-22 and Gunther Sontheimer and Herman Kulke eds., *Hinduism Reconsidered* (New Delhi, 1989).
[51] E.g. Sardar Singh Bhatia and Anand Spencer eds., *The Sikh tradition: a continuing reality: essays in history and religion* (Patiala, 1999).
[52] Two essays mark an important start on this project: Harold Lee, 'John and Henry Lawrence and the origins of Paternalist Rule in the Punjab, 1846-1858', *International Journal of Punjab Studies* 2:1 (1995), 65-88 and Brian Caton, 'Sikh Identity Formation and the British Rural Ideal, 1880-1930', *Sikh Identity*, 175-194. More generally, Clive Dewey has offered some important insights in his *Anglo-Indian Attitudes: the mind of the Indian Civil Service* (London, 1993).
[53] The relationship between affinity and difference in the history of colonialism is critically explored in *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History. Special issue: From Orientalism to Ornamentalism: Empire and Difference in History*, 3.1 (2002).
<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_colonialism_and_colonial_history/toc/cch3.1.html>
[54] R.W. Falcon, *Handbook on Sikhs for Regimental Officers* (Allahabad: Pioneer Press, 1896), 21.
[55] H.M. Clark, 'The Decay of Sikhism', *Panjab Notes and Queries*, 3 (1885), 20.
[56] M.A. Macauliffe, 'The Fair at Sakhi Sarvar', *Calcutta Review*, LX (1875), 78-101. For more recent analyses of the worship of Sakhi Sarvar in nineteenth century Punjab see Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries* 147-160 and 'The Worship of Pir Sakhi Sarvar: Illness, Healing and Popular Culture in the Punjab', *Studies in History*, 3 (1987), 29-55.
[57] Macauliffe, *Sikh Religion* I, lvii. In a similar vein David Petrie praised the colonial state for 'buttressing the crumbling edifice of the Sikh religion' but warned that the maintenance of a separate Sikh identity was an ongoing project. David Petrie, *Recent Developments in Sikh Politics, 1900-1911, a Report* (Amritsar, 1911), 52.
[58] Undated excerpt from *The Khalsa*, Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, xi.
[59] Falcon, *Handbook on Sikhs* 61-2.
[60] Ibid., 15.
[61] Ibid., 71-3, 98-102.

[62] For a first-hand account of this see Vincent Eyre, *The Sikh and European Soldiers of Our Indian Forces: A Lecture* (London, 1867), 7-8. On the *kes-dhari/amrit-dhari* distinction see W. H. McLeod, *Who is a Sikh: the problem of Sikh identity* (Clarendon: Oxford, 1989), 110-115.
[63] Eugene F. Irschick, *Dialogue and History: constructing South India, 1795-1895* (Berkeley, 1994), 10.
[64] Ibid., 8.
[65] Susan VanKoski, 'Letters home, 1915-16: Punjabi soldiers reflect on war and life in Europe and their meanings for home and self', *International Journal of Punjab Studies*, 2:1 (1995), 43-63.
[66] Most notably Radhika Mongia, 'Race, nationality, mobility, a history of the passport', *Public Culture* 11:3 (1999), 527-56.
[67] Jones, 'Ham Hindu Nahin'; Himadri Banerjee, 'Bengali Perceptions of the Sikhs: the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', *Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century*, 110-135 and 'Sikh Identity Question: a view from eastern India', *Sikh Identity* 195-216.

Episodes from the Life of Shaikh Farid-ud-Din Ganj-i-Shakar

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Focusing on the charismatic personality of the Chishti saint Shaikh Farid-ud-Din Ganj-i-Shakar, popularly known as Baba Farid, this essay draws attention to the significance of the stories of *karamat* (miracles) in Sufi literature, mainly *malfuzat* and *tazkiras* of the Sultanate period. These works were compiled in Persian language by prominent Sufis or their leading disciples. The anecdotes analysed in this article highlight, among other things, Shaikh Farid's role as a healer and protector of the people, his relations with the Muslim political and religious establishment, and his attitude towards the non-Muslims. It is indicated that our understanding of the process of the making of the saint and his widespread popularity will be richer, if we take into account the tales of miracles attributed to Shaikh Farid even as they appear incredulous to the rational mind.

A leading saint of the Chishti order (*silsila*) of Sufism,[1] Shaikh Farid-ud-Din Ganj-i-Shakar, popularly known as Baba Farid,[2] occupies an important position in the social, cultural, religious and literary history of medieval Punjab. Yet it appears that Shaikh Farid's career remains marginal to the mainstream discourse on the historical scholarship of the region. Besides, the meagre existing literature on the shaikh leaves a lot be desired. This essay aims to highlight the significance of the anecdotes on the life of the shaikh in early Sufi literature. We will mainly draw from the *malfuzat* (collection of the conversations of a Sufi saint compiled by a disciple) and *tazkiras* (biographical dictionaries) from the Sultanate period. This material is in Persian language and chiefly pertains to the Chishti silsila. The article is divided into two parts. The first section briefly refers to the nature of extant sources and the historical context in which Farid's spiritual career may be located. The second portion focuses on the anecdotes and legends in Sufi literature.

Sources and History

Two collections of Shaikh Farid's discourses or the malfuzat are available from as early as the first half of the fourteenth century. One of them is referred to as *Asrar-ul-Auliya* (*Secrets of the Friends of God*). Its compilation is attributed to Shaikh Farid's attendant (*khadim*), successor (*khalifa*) and son-in-law (*damad*), Shaikh Badr-ud-Din Ishaq. Another collection titled *Rahat-ul-Qulub* (*Comfort for the Hearts*) is said to have been compiled by Shaikh Farid's leading spiritual successor of the Chishti silsila, Shaikh Nizam-ud-Din Auliya (d. 1325).[3] Together, the two malfuzat present interesting dimensions of Shaikh Farid's

personality as a Sufi saint - rooted in Islam's grand tradition even as he appropriated and adapted mystical ideas and exercises from diverse sources. A critical assessment of Shaikh Farid's spiritual discipline and his quest for power and authority in his *wilayat* (spiritual territory) has not been attempted, even as the historians reject the malfuzat, mentioned above, as 'apocryphal'.[4] Other Chishti sources, which remain neglected, include *Fawa'id-us-Salikin* (*Morals for Mystics*), conversations of Shaikh Qutb-ud-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki (d. 1235) compiled by Shaikh Farid-ud-Din Ganj-i-Shakar.[5]

Setting aside the so-called 'spurious' literature, the established knowledge on Shaikh Farid and generally on the Chishti Sufis of the Delhi Sultanate depends for its material on three major works from the early-fourteenth century. Of these, two belong to the category of malfuzat: (i) *Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad* (*Morals for the Heart*), compilation of the conversations of Shaikh Nizam-ud-Din Auliya by Amir Hasan Sijzi; (ii) *Khair-ul-Majalis* (*Noble Assemblies*), discourses of Shaikh Nasir-ud-Din Chiragh-i-Dehli collected by Hamid Qalandar.[6] The third is classified as a tazkira, Amir Khwurd's *Siyar-ul-Auliya* (*Lives of the Friends of Gods*). In the considered opinion of the authorities, the accuracy and genuineness of these sources are given. There is no need to critically evaluate and prove it. The other set of sources are fabricated because a) they contain principles and practices which are at variance with what is expounded in the authentic texts; b) the narrators and compilers commit blunders about well-known facts and dates of Indian history; and c) they contain horrendous tales of miracles. Thus, the forged *malfuzat* was basically a 'light literature' – a mixture of mysticism, theology and fiction, the last component comprising the chunk of the material – of little value commissioned by booksellers for 'honest trade' (Habib 1974, 385-433). The leading authorities on Sufism in India adhere to this position, even as doubts are often raised concerning the authenticity of texts like *Khair-ul-Majalis* and *Siyar-ul-Auliya* as well (Jackson 1985; Currie 1989).

As we have discussed in detail elsewhere (Aquil 1997-98), this dichotomy of 'authentic' versus 'forged' does not stand a critical scrutiny in so far as the nature of their contents is concerned. The following discussion on some aspects of Shaikh Farid's career will further illustrate the point that it would be safer to avoid passing judgements on the 'forgeries' done by the disciples of the 'lower' order and keepers of the shrine subsequently. For, there is hardly any contradistinction in the picture that emerges from the separate readings of, say, *Rahat-ul-Qulub* and *Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad*. Shaikh Farid's disciple Nizam-ud-Din is involved in both the texts; in the former as a 'compiler' and in the latter as a 'narrator'. As we shall see below, there is no disjuncture in the narrative. Even if one agrees for a moment that the compilation of *Rahat-ul-Qulub* was later attributed to Nizam-ud-Din, we should do well to keep in mind the latter's remark in *Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad* that he had collected Shaikh Farid's discourses and they were lying with him. Further, in the *khilafat-nama* issued by Shaikh Farid and preserved in the *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, the shaikh has stated that Nizam-ud-Din was permitted to narrate things which he had learnt or heard from him and had collected and preserved (*Siyar-ul-Auliya*, 127-29). This entire corpus of Chishti literature from the fourteenth century was subsequently utilised by Shaikh Jamali in his *Siyar-ul-Arifin* (*Lives of the Saints*) and Abdul Haqq Muhaddis Dihlawi in his *Akhbar-ul-Akhyar* (*Chronicles of Holymen*) in the sixteenth

century.[7] Abdul Haqq is admired as the most reliable of early biographers of Indo-Muslim saints (Nizami 1953; Zaidi 1985). References to the activities of the Sufis of the Delhi Sultanate are also to be found in the court-chronicles and political histories. Significantly, two well-known chroniclers Amir Khusrau and Ziya-ud-Din Barani were close disciples of Nizam-ud-Din Auliya.[8] Among other things, their career and voluminous writings are valuable for issues relating to the role of the Sufis in politics and society of the Sultanate period.

With this perspective on the nature of extant material, we shall now turn to the context in which Farid received spiritual training. A new chapter in the history of the subcontinent begins with the eastward expansion of Islam in the last decade of the 12th century and the establishment of a series of Islamicate Sultanates.[9] The Ghurid forces of Mu'iz-ud-Din bin Sam, referred to as the *lashkar-i-islam* in the early sources (*Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, 397, 399-400; *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, 57; *Akhbar-ul-Akhyar*, 28), over-ran Ghaznavid Punjab. The Rajput resistance was smothered at Tarain (*Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, 400). The Muslim army went on to occupy large swaths of territory in upper North India (Ibid., 400-01). They eliminated the symbols of Rajput power and prestige in the region. Remarkably, there was no general massacre of the populace and no major demographic dislocation. Much as the chroniclers celebrated the conquest of new territories, the conquerors themselves preferred minimum use of force and violence. Though iconoclasm may have been a motivating factor for some of the soldiers, the places of worship were generally plundered for their wealth. Alternatively, their despoliation was aimed at hammering home the point that the old regime was overthrown. It could no longer protect the people and their religious places. The general public was thus made aware that the Turks and their sultan had established a new, Islamic order. Indeed, the minaret attached to Delhi's congregational mosque, and known as the Qutb Minar, was subsequently perceived as a victory tower.

In their misplaced understanding of the Sultanate as an Islamic state, the *ulama* (Muslim religious scholars) wanted the sultans to confront the Hindus of the dominion with the alternative of death or Islam. In a measure, which speaks of the rulers' attempts for rapprochement with the non-Muslims, they ignored the pressure tactics of the ulama. The Turks had realized that it was difficult to rule a vast majority of non-Muslim population through a strict adherence to a narrow interpretation of the *shari'at* (Islamic law). Instead, they evolved a broad, secular state law (*zawabit-i-mulki*) with public protestation of respect to the Muslim divines and their institutions.

Significantly enough, the enthronement of Qutb-ud-Din Aybak (ruled AD 1206-10) at Lahore was synchronized with the election of Chenghis Khan as the great leader of the Mongol hordes.[10] The irruption of the Mongols witnessed a large-scale devastation in Central and West Asia in the next fifty years. Major centres of Islam like Bukhara and Baghdad were sacked. The subcontinent was yet protected, though Punjab and Sindh were exposed to the threat of a possible onslaught. Escaping the wrath of the Tartars, Islam prospered in the Delhi Sultanate with the name of the caliph still being mentioned in the *khutba* (Friday sermons) and the *sikka* (coins). The period witnessed large-scale immigration of the Muslims. A number of Sufi saints had also come to settle there.

The institutions of the Sufis like the *khanqah* (hospice) and the *dargah* (shrine) have contributed a great deal to the making of the harmonious culture of the subcontinent. In particular, the arrival of the Sufis of the Chishti order ensured that force and violence were not used for converting the general population to Islam. Much as the Islamic orthodoxy strove for the total annihilation of the *kafirs* (infidels),[11] the seemingly liberal approach of the Sufis proved to be more appealing to the early sultans. The rulers themselves detested the arrogance of the ulama, and felt that the Sufis' position on such questions as the treatment to be meted out to the Hindus, and generally on matters related to the shari'at, was more correct. The Sultanate was thus going to have a 'secular' and broad-based polity, though religious ideas and institutions did play important roles. Controversial religious issues, which had the potential to break the pluralistic fabric of medieval India, did come to the public arena, but in the end accomodation prevailed.

In a way it augured well for the history of Islam in India that the earliest Muslim to have been born in the capital city of Delhi after the Turkish conquest went on to be a Chishti Sufi of considerable reputation for syncretistic proclivities. Shaikh Hamid-ud-Din (died 1274)[12] was a disciple and khalifa of none other than the great Khwaja Mu'in-ud-Din Chishti Ajmeri (died 1236).[13] Mu'in-ud-Din, in turn, was said to have been directed by Prophet Muhammad in a dream in Medina to go to Hindustan. The Khwaja's arrival coincided with the conquest of the Turks. The Sufi tradition claims that Mu'in-ud-Din had prophesied Shahab-ud-Din Ghuri's victory in the second battle of Tarain in 1192. The Chauhan ruler Rai Pithora or Prithviraj was said to be harassing the shaikh and his disciples at Ajmer. Later traditions also suggest that the Sufi shaikh had to display his miraculous power to subdue the opponent (Aquil 1995). The shaikh's charisma won him a large following, and his khalifas spread in different directions. Hamid-ud-Din, referred to above, went to live in a village near Nagaur. He cultivated a small plot of land, became a vegetarian, and seemingly led a life conforming to the Hindu environment.

Mu'in-ud-Din Chishti chose a more sophisticated Qutb-ud-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki (died 1236), preceptor (*pir*) of Shaikh Farid, for the cosmopolitan wilayat of Delhi. Bakhtiyar Kaki was born at Ush in the province of the Jaxarates. He had met Mu'in-ud-Din for the first time in Baghdad, and had become his disciple. Amongst the noted Sufis in the Abbasid capital at that time were Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani and Shaikh Abun Najib Suhrawardi. Bakhtiyar Kaki however followed his pir Mu'in-ud-Din, the Sultan of Hind, and reached Delhi in the reign of Shams-ud-Din Iltutmish (ruled A.D. 1211-36). The sultan welcomed the shaikh and invited him to live in the city. Though he was hesitant initially, he agreed to the ruler's request. Bakhtiyar Kaki had to compete for a space in the spiritual geography of the city. Besides the ulama, quite a few eminent Sufi shaikhs of various orders had come to settle there. Many of them had just arrived following the Mongol invasions in Central Asia and Iran. Bakhtiyar Kaki found the most powerful antagonist in Shaikh-ul-Islam Najm-ud-Din Sughra, a Sufi of his own order. Najm-ud-Din and Kaki's pir Mu'in-ud-Din were disciples of the same shaikh, Khwaja Usman Harwani. Najm-ud-Din did not take kindly to the growing popularity of Kaki and his influence in political circles.

To prevent the tension between Najm-ud-Din and Bakhtiyar Kaki from escalating further, Mu'in-ud-Din, who was on a visit to Delhi, asked his disciple to leave the place and accompany him to Ajmer (*Siyar-ul-Auliya*, 64). The news of the departure of the saints was perceived as a sign of calamity by the sultan and the people. They followed the shaikhs for miles – crying and wailing. Touched by the grief of the ruler and the ruled alike, Mu'in-ud-Din allowed Kaki to remain in Delhi (Ibid., 65). As a patron saint of the city, Bakhtiyar Kaki enjoyed prestige and authority, and in a measure influenced the sultan's style of governance.

The weakness of the rulers and the supremacy of the nobles were two important features of the period following the death of Iltutmish. Within a decade of his death, the nobles put four of his descendants on the throne and removed them at will. The next twenty years saw his slaves exterminating his dynasty by executing all the male members of his family. One of his slaves, Ghiyas-ud-Din Balban, ruled from Delhi for over forty years from about the middle of the 13th century - acting first as *naib* (deputy) of the puppet Sultan Nasir-ud-Din Mahmud (ruled 1246-66)[14] and subsequently ascending the throne of Delhi as sultan (ruled 1266-87) in his own right. Balban came to power at a time when the Mongols had ravaged the major part of the Muslim world. Having sacked Punjab, they were threatening to take Delhi by storm. Balban's aggressive Mongol policy protected the Sultanate from the depredation of the Mongol hordes (*Tarikh-i-Firuz-Shahi*, fols. 23b-24a).

Balban not only rebuilt and fortified the cities in Punjab and Sindh, which had suffered at the hands of the Tartars, but also constructed large forts on the route to the Northwest. The Mongols, who were perceived as the 'fire from hell', were to be stopped on the frontier itself. Huge forces were also garrisoned in the forts en route to Punjab, which checked the easy penetration of the invaders into Hindustan (Ibid., fol. 28b). Balban thus ensured that Delhi was spared the fate that befell Baghdad. Immigration of the Muslims, originally from Central Asia, Iran and the Middle East, continued in his reign.

The suppression of the rebellion in Mewat, the Doab, Katehr (Rohilkhand) and Bengal, and the protection of trade routes were other achievements of Balban, which brought great prestige to the throne (Ibid., fols. 26a-28a, 38a-45a). He also checked the political upheavals in the capital by providing a veneer of divinity to his rule. He called himself the shadow of God on earth (*zillullah*), and proclaimed that kingship was the vice-regency of God (*niyabat-i-khudai*). Tracing his genealogy to the mythical Afrasiyab, the sultan emulated the customs and ways of life of the pre-Islamic Sassanid rulers of Persia. Elaborate court rituals, including *sijda* (prostration) and *paibos* (kissing of feet) were introduced. The nobles meekly submitted to his wishes. Those who refused to toe the line were eliminated, either silently or with a ruthless display of his power in public. Seen in the backdrop of anarchy in the aftermath of the death of Iltutmish, Balban's measures restored the authority of the crown (Ibid., fols. 13b-17b).

Significantly, as an all-powerful noble under Nasir-ud-Din Mahmud, Balban, then known as Ulugh Khan was a devotee of Shaikh Farid (*Siyar-ul-Auliya*, 89-90; *Siyar-ul-Arifin*, fols. 56b-57a; *Jawahir-i-Faridi*, 204, 214-15. For Balban's religiosity and his veneration of the Sufi saints generally, see *Tarikh-i-*

Firuz-Shahi, fols. 21b-22a). Ali Asghar, himself a descendent of the shaikh, recorded in the early seventeenth century that the saint had married Ulugh Khan's daughter Bibi Huzaira and had six sons and three daughters from her (*Jawahir-i-Faridi*, pp. 215-18. Also see *Khazinat-ul-Asfiya*, 301). Amir Khwurd notes that the shaikh had several wives (*harem basyar bud*) and had five sons and three daughters (*Siyar-ul-Auliya*, 76, 195). The saint's favourite son, Nizam-ud-Din (not to be confused with his spiritual successor Nizam-ud-Din Auliya) had joined Balban's army. He is said to have died fighting the Mongol invaders in Punjab (Ibid.,100,200).

Biographical Material in Sufi Literature

Farid was born in a respectable Muslim family at Kahtawal, a town near Multan, sometime in 1175 (*Siyar-ul-Auliya*, 69). He was sent to a *madrasa* (Islamic seminary) at Multan, which is referred to by Amir Khwurd as the *qubbat-ul-islam* or the stronghold of Islam (Ibid., 70-71).[15] He committed to memory the entire text of the Qur'an and went on to specialize in Arabic grammer, *tafsir* (Qur'anic commentires) and *fiqh* or Islamic jurisprudence (Nizami 1965), even as he travelled to the major centres of Islamic learning in the Middle East.[16] Farid had met the Chishti Shaikh Qutb-ud-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki at Multan. The erudite young scholar eventually joined the order as a disciple of Bakhtiyar Kaki. Before his death, Bakhtiyar Kaki nominated Shaikh Farid as his spiritual successor. Farid was at Hansi, in Hisar district, at the time and could only reach Delhi three days later. Soon the shaikh decided to leave for Hansi, notwithstanding the reminder from the fellow mystics and followers that Qutb-ud-Din had chosen him for the wilayat of Delhi. Farid defended his decision to go as on account of blessings received from his pir he could no longer differentiate a city from a desert (*Asrar-ul-Auliya*, 220; *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, 82-83). Farid may have been uncomfortable with Delhi's volatile political culture. Bakhtiyar Kaki's problems with his fellow shaikhs in Delhi may also have been at the back of his mind. Farid thus returned to Hansi, before shifting permanently to Ajodhan, deferentially referred to as Pak Pattan,[17] now in Pakistani Punjab. It is at Ajodhan that Farid's reputation as a charismatic spiritual leader was built, which made him something of a living legend. His successors and disciples have narrated a large number of stories of miracles (*karamat*) performed by him.

Karamat constituted an important aspect of the beliefs and practices of the Sufis. The word karamat denotes the marvels displayed by the 'friends of God' or *auliya* (sing. *wali*). The saints are supposed to get the power to perform miracles on account of their devotion to God (Gardet 1973). The sources distinguish between the miracles attributed to the prophets, Sufis, *yogis* or Hindu mystics, and the street charmers (*Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad* II: 23rd meeting). Even as the Sufi tradition notes the impeccability of the prophets and the fallibility of the saints, the legitimacy for karamat is derived from the *mu'jizat* or miracles of the Prophet. In his *Kashf-ul-Mahjub*, said to be the earliest known mystical treatise in Persian, Shaikh Ali Hujwiri, in fact, identifies the karamat of the Sufis with the mu'jizat of the Prophet (Wensinck 1990).

We shall recount here some of the tales of miracles, which highlight Shaikh Farid's role as a healer and protector of the people in his wilayat; his relations with the Muslim political and religious establishment and the leaders of the rival spiritual traditions within Islam; and finally his attitude towards the non-Muslim environment in which he established his spiritual authority. The Shaikh had widespread following among the courtiers and soldiers who were engaged in the consolidation of the Delhi Sultanate even as the irruption of the Mongols under Chengis Khan threatened the very survival of the polity, as we saw in the previous section. Nizam-ud-Din Auliya, however, believed that the region of Punjab was secured from the Mongol onslaught because of the blessings of Shaikh Farid. In the year when the shaikh departed from this world, the Mongols invaded and devastated the region (*Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad*, Vol. V, 2nd meeting). Thus, as noted earlier also, the departure of the Sufi shaikh from a particular area was considered to be a bad omen. The disciples and the general public approached the shaikh for protection from certain malevolent supernatural beings as well. Shaikh Farid is said to have rescued the people from the clutches of the demons or *jinns* (*Rahat-ul-Qulub*, 39). Many references in the sources show that the saint recommended the recitation of certain verses from the Qur'an as an antidote to their visitations (Ibid., 16, 65, 87). The sources also refer to the belief in the evil eye and magic. In the course of a discussion in his *jama'atkhana* (hospice), Shaikh Nasir-ud-Din Chiragh-i-Dehli mentioned the illness of Prophet Muhammad, Shaikh Farid, Nizam-ud-Din Auliya, and others due to the effect of black magic. Chiragh-i-Dehli also narrated the story of the recovery of a bag containing an idol made of flour with needles inserted in different parts of it. The idol was believed to be responsible for a serious illness of Shaikh Farid. The shaikh was cured only after the idol was destroyed (*Khair-ul-Majalis*, 35th meeting. Also see *Siyar-ul-Arifin*, fols. 49a-50b). This reference points in a way to Islamic iconoclasm and the symbolic victory of the Muslims over the idol-worshippers. We shall return to the question of the attitude of the Chishtis, particularly Shaikh Farid, towards the non-Muslims later in this article.

Visits to the tombs of the shaikhs, their relics and amulets (*t'awiz*) distributed by them were effective healing means in medieval Sufi circles. According to an anecdote narrated by Nizam-ud-Din Auliya and recorded in *Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad*, a large number of visitors came to the jama'atkhana of Shaikh Farid and asked for the amulets. Shaikh Farid was directed by his preceptor Bakhtiyar Kaki to prepare the amulets in the name of God and distribute them amongst the public. Nizam-ud-Din added that it often occurred to him that he should ask his pir for permission to write the amulets. Once Badr-ud-Din Ishaq, who used to assist Shaikh Farid in this task, was not present. Many people had gathered at the jama'atkhana hoping to obtain the t'awiz. The shaikh asked Nizam-ud-Din, then a young disciple, to prepare them. At one point turning to Nizam-ud-Din, Shaikh Farid asked whether he was tired of meeting such a huge demand. He replied that the spiritual boon of the shaikh sustained him. Later the shaikh authorised Nizam-ud-Din to write and give amulets on his own. Recounting this episode, Nizam-ud-Din Auliya commented that even something touched by the saints produced an effect (*Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad*, Vol. IV, 51st meeting). Indeed, Amir Khwurd records in his *Siyar-ul-*

Auliya that once a disciple of Shaikh Farid had a serious backache. The shaikh asked him to bend forward and touched his waist. The pain disappeared once and for all (*Siyar-ul-Auliya*, 96. This story was later recounted by Ali Asghar in his *Jawahir-i-Faridi*, 238). According to another report, an ailing Shaikh Farid sent Nizam-ud-Din Auliya, along with some other disciples, to the shrines of martyrs (*shahids*) in the area (*Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad*, Vol. II, 17th meeting. Also see *Siyar-ul-Arifin*, fols. 57a-b).

The sources also point to the occasional failure of the shaikh to cure illnesses, for it is explained that God had decided otherwise. While referring to the miraculous healing power of a relic of Shaikh Farid, Nizam-ud-Din Auliya informed his audience that once a friend called Taj-ud-Din Minai came to see him and asked for the relic for his sick child. It was found missing from the place where it was generally kept. When all attempts to procure it went in vain, Minai had to return disappointed. His son died soon after. Later, the relic was discovered at its usual place. Nizam-ud-Din Auliya concluded that since his friend's son was destined to die, the relic had disappeared (*Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad*, Vol. II, 18th meeting; *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, 88; *Siyar-ul-Arifin*, fols. 59b-60a; *Jawahir-i-Faridi*, 236). It may be noted here that whereas the Sufis got the credit for their ability to cure physical and mental disorders, their failures were attributed to the will of God. A modest Sufi did explain from time to time that his miracle was actually a divine grace, otherwise he had no power. Also, the Sufis were expected to hide their ability to perform miracles, just as the prophets were authorised by God to display them (Gardet 1973; Wensinck 1990). However, most saints and their disciples did believe in these extraordinary feats. A wide range of motifs in the tales of marvellous exploits of the Sufis may be found in the sources.

It is related that often a symbolic miraculous contest was held between the shaikhs of different silsilas. For instance, there is a reference in the *Rahat-ul-Qulub* to a 'miracle-show' in the hospice of Auhad-ud-Din Kirmani at Siwistan. Kirmani caused the death of the local ruler who had no faith in his spiritual accomplishments. Shaikh Farid, in his turn, took the fellow saints for a visit to the Ka'ba at Mecca in Arabia and after sometime brought them back. The wandering dervishes, who were present in the hospice, were impressed. They, on the other hand, hid their heads in their *khirqas* (robes) and disappeared. The khirqas remained empty (*Rahat-ul-Qulub*, 32-33).[18] Earlier, during a visit to Multan, Shaikh Farid was asked by the incumbent shaikh, Baha-ud-Din Zakariya of the Suhrawardi silsila to perform some miracle.[19] The shaikh said: 'If I ask this chair on which you are sitting to rise from the ground and suspend itself in the air, it will do so'. No sooner than the shaikh had finished the sentence, the chair flew up. Zakariya had to grasp the chair with his hands to bring it back to the floor. The Suhrawardi saint was convinced of the capabilities of the Chishtis (*Rahat-ul-Qulub*, 14-15; *Jawahir-i-Faridi*, 207-08. For a cryptic remark on this episode attributed to Bakhtiyar Kaki, see *Jawahir-i-Faridi*, 274). Farid would often tease Zakriya in other ways as well. It is reported that once the latter wrote to Farid: *darmiyan-i ma wa shuma ishqbazi ast* (there is a love-affair between the two of us). In a pun of words, Farid retorted: *ishq ast, bazi nist* (there is love, not contestation) (*Siyar-ul-Auliya*, 87; *Akhbar-ul-Akhyar*, 33; *Jawahir-i-Faridi*, 265). Also, Zakariya is said to have

offered to exchange all his disciples for Farid's khalifa Jamal-ud-Din Hanswi. Farid replied that any such transaction was possible regarding *mal* (property) but not *jamal* (beauty) (Nizami 1955, 69).[20]

These anecdotes reveal an intense competition for power and prestige amongst the Sufi shaikhs of diverse traditions. A possible conflict was avoided by recognising each other's spiritual attainments and areas of control, called the wilayat. An example of such mutual legitimacy is Shaikh Farid's words to a traveller who had come to seek his intercession for a safe journey southwest from Ajodhan to Multan. He said something to this effect: From here to such and such a village is in my charge, and from such and such a reservoir is the frontier of Baha-ud-Din Zakariya, the territory beyond which is in his charge. It is suggested that the traveller was able to reach his destination safely, invoking the *barkat* (blessings) of the two saints in their respective area of control (*Siyar-ul-Arifin*, fols. 21b-22a). The passage also demonstrates how closely the notion of spiritual authority could parallel that of political authority, and represents one of several ways in which religious and political categories of power and influence were fused together (Eaton 1984).

The Sufi saint's claim to power and authority in his wilayat was often construed as a threat to the political authority. Contrary to the notion that the Sufis, particularly the Chishtis, kept themselves away from politics,[21] the sources point to the involvement of the Sufis in political matters leading to both conflict and collaboration with the rulers (For Sufis' role in politics, see Eaton 1978; Digby 1986; idem 1990; Zilli 1986; idem 1987; Ernst 1992; Aquil 1995-96. Also see Alam 1996). Some of them avoided visiting the sultan's court perhaps because they considered it below their dignity to visit the court and follow its rituals (Digby 1986; idem 1990; Aquil 1995). A section of them may have also felt that a tactical distance from the rulers was in order for the reconciliation of a hostile non-Muslim population. Significantly, three of the five 'great' Chishti saints – Shaikh Farid's preceptor Qutb-ud-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki, his successor Nizam-ud-Din Auliya, and the latter's disciple Nasir-ud-Din Chiragh-i-Dehli – had settled down in Delhi. Other strategic places they chose to stay were on the much-trodden trade routes. Ajodhan, where Shaikh Farid established his hospice, was located at a strategic place on the Multan-Delhi road. Caravans and armies passed through it and carried Shaikh Farid's fame to different regions (Nizami 1965). Certainly, the Sufi orders were against the idea of settling in forests or at lonely places. The Sufis were supposed to stay amongst the people and look after the welfare of the public in their wilayat.

The Sufis also accepted cash grants from the rulers and prayed for their success. Shaikh Farid received money from Ulugh Khan, later known as Balban, even as it was immediately distributed amongst the dervishes (*Siyar-ul-Auliya*, 89-90). Farid's successor Nizam-ud-Din took five lakh tankas from the usurper Khusrau Malik and distributed the sum amongst the public (*Siyar-ul-Arifin*, fols. 97b-99b). Often during the campaign, the soldiers made a detour to visit a Sufi's hospice or shrine and sought blessings. The sources refer to Nasir-ud-Din Mahmud's army visiting Shaikh Farid at Ajodhan (*Siyar-ul-Auliya*, 89). Also the shaikhs were approached to inquire about the fate of the Muslim army campaigning in the region. Ala-ud-Din Khalji is said to have sought Nizam-ud-Din Auliya's intercession to know the fate of his army campaigning in the

south. The Shaikh predicted the victory of his army (*Tarikh-i-Firuz-Shahi*, fols. 153a-b). Later, he spoke to his audience about the enormous booty collected by Malik Na'ib during the campaign and suggested that it should be used for public welfare (Nizami 1991a, 110).

Some Sufis even contributed to a lasting Muslim control of newly conquered territories by sending their khalifas along with the army.[22] Others allowed their sons to join the sultan's army and fight a *jihad* (holy war) against the infidels. The case of Shaikh Farid's son Nizam-ud-Din is noted above. Yet others went to report the events of the campaign.[23] Most of the Sultans, members of the royal family and court officials were actually *murids* (disciples) of the shaikhs, who bestowed kingship on a person of their choice and snatched it when dissatisfied with his performance.

Also, there are a number of anecdotes in the texts concerning the opposition, disrespect and abusive epithets used by the rulers, ulama and other people of worldly influence, leading to the provocation of the *jalal* (wrath) of the shaikh. The saint's curse caused sudden and often painful death of the antagonists. It is related that the curse of Shaikh Farid led to the death of many of his opponents, including the *wali* (ruler) of Multan and the *qazi* (judge) of Ajodhan, who according to the Chishti memory bore grudges against the shaikh and conspired to kill him (*Rahat-ul-Qulub*, 32; *Jawahir-i-Faridi*, 220. For the *qazi*'s hostility, also see *Siyar-ul-Arifin*, fol. 45b). Miracles, thus, served as a weapon to overawe, subdue, terrorise and occasionally even to annihilate the adversary. Alternatively, the saints displayed a more informed understanding of Islamic scriptural authority in their encounter with the ulama. The theologians were uncomfortable with the seemingly deviant nature of the Sufi saints' mystical ideas and practices. Much of the spiritual exercises within Sufic discipline did appear to be of syncretic nature, and free from the bigotry of the Hanafite ulama who sought to dominate the religious milieu without much success. For instance, Shaikh Farid is said to have performed *chilla-i-ma'kus* by hanging himself upside down in a well for forty nights. It may be useful to point out that this evidence comes from the so-called 'authentic' tazkiras by Amir Khwurd (*Siyar-ul-Auliya*, 79-80) and Shaikh Abdul Haqq (*Akhbar-ul-Akhyar*, 59; also see *Jawahir-i-Faridi*, 187), though we no longer believe in such a characterisation of Sufi literature. The Chishti tradition claims that it was a legitimate way of prayer as it was earlier performed not only by their predecessors (Asrar-ul-Auliya, 197-98; *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, 80), but also by Prophet Muhammad (*Siyar-ul-Auliya*, 80).

Despite such attempts to link the local Chishti discipline with the great tradition of Islam, the influence of the yogic mystical practices is clearly discernible. Many anecdotes do, in fact, refer to Shaikh Farid's contact with the non-Muslim religious leaders. Some cases of conversion at his hands are also reported. It is recorded in the *Rahat-ul-Qulub* that a yogi had come to Shaikh Farid's jama'atkhana. He made obeisance to the shaikh by kneeling on the ground, but the divine aura of the shaikh was so magnificent that he could not raise his head. When the shaikh noticed him, he inquired the purpose of his visit to the hospice. The yogi was so spellbound that he could not utter a word. When the shaikh insisted, the yogi meekly submitted that the radiance of the aura surrounding the shaikh's head was so dazzling that he [illegible]

entranced. The shaikh then informed the audience that the yogi had come to challenge him. Once he bowed his head to the ground, he was unable to lift it. The shaikh added that had the yogi not been forgiven, he would have remained in that posture till the Day of Judgement.

Turning to the yogi, the shaikh inquired about his spiritual attainments. The former informed that he could fly in the air. At the instance of the shaikh the yogi demonstrated the feat. As soon as the yogi started to fly, the shaikh threw his shoes at him, which hit the yogi on the head. In whichever direction he moved, by God's command, the shoes pursued him and kept striking his head. Unable to bear this, the yogi immediately descended, acknowledged the shaikh's spiritual superiority, and embraced Islam (*Rahat-ul-Qulub*, 47-48).[24]

It will be inaccurate to suggest that such reports of levitatory combats with the yogis occur only in the 'fabricated' malfuzat. Shaikh Farid's successor Nizam-ud-Din told his audience about the ability of the mystics to fly in the air In this connection, he narrated a story, which is recorded in the *Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad*. Once a yogi came to challenge Safi-ud-Din Gazruni at Uchch, started to argue with him, and asked him to demonstrate his ability to fly. The shaikh told the yogi that since he was the one who was making claims to mystical attainments he should perform the feat first. The yogi immediately elevated himself from the ground defying the law of gravity and remained suspended so high in the air that his head touched the roof of the hall in which this encounter was taking place. Thereafter, the yogi descended straight on the floor, and challenged the shaikh to repeat the miracle. Safi-ud-Din Gazruni raised his head towards the sky and prayed to God that since 'the others' (*begana*) had been blessed with the skill, the same should be bestowed upon him as well. Soon the shaikh found himself flying in all the four directions. The yogi was amazed prostrated before the shaikh and confessed that his power was limited to performing a straight elevation in the air and returning the same way, and that it was beyond his capacity to take left or right turns. Marvelling at the shaikh's ability to fly in various directions, the yogi admitted that the shaikh's practices were true (*haqq*) and his false (*batil*) (*Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad*, Vol. II, 7th meeting).

Another anecdote referred to the conversion of a thief at the hands of Shaikh Farid's mother. Farid told his audience that the thief broke into their house when all the inmates had retired for the night except his mother who was engrossed in her prayers. The moment the thief entered the house he lost his sight. Not knowing how to escape from there, the thief exclaimed that the inmates of the house were like his family members. 'Whoever is there in the house, it can be said with certainty that the terror created by his/her very presence has blinded me. Pray for me that my sight is restored. I repent and swear that I will not commit theft for the rest of my life'. On hearing his invocations, the shaikh's mother prayed for the restoration of his sight. Having got his vision back the thief left the house. His mother kept silent about the incident. The thief returned along with his family in the morning, narrated the account of the previous night's encounter and embraced Islam at the hands of the shaikh's mother (*Asrar-ul-Auliya*, 242). Shaikh Farid's disciple Nizam-ud-Din Auliya too narrated this anecdote in his jama'atkhana and it was included in the collection of his discourses (*Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad*, Vol. IV, 5th meeting). Amir Khwurd

Jamali added that the converted thief went on to become a saintly person and came to be known as Shaikh Abdullah. The people visited his tomb in the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth century and sought his blessings (*Siyar-ul-Arifin*, fol. 44a; also see *Jawahir-i-Faridi*, 184).

Sufi literature presents a complex picture of the attraction and repulsion of non-Muslims towards Islam in medieval India. Farid's jama'atkhana, and later his tomb, attracted the local population in large numbers. The shaikh recommended recitation of prayers in local dialects and thus contributed to the growth of the vernacular, mainly Urdu and Punjabi languages (Haqq 1953; Qureshi 1971; Mahmud 1971; Jalibi 1975. Also see Shackle 1993; idem 2001; Matringe 1993). A large number of *shalokas* attributed to Shaikh Farid were included by Sikh Gurus in the Adi Granth. Though some historians have suggested that Shaikh Farid was not the actual author of the verses incorporated in Farid-bani, their inclusion by the Gurus in their 'Book' demonstrates the universal appeal of the preaching of the Sufi saints in medieval India. Farid's teachings not only helped in the widening of the influence of the Chishti order, but also in the propagation of Islam in the region of Punjab.[25]

There are a number of theories concerning Islamization or conversion in the medieval period. They are mostly inspired by contemporary political and ideological concerns. These include Islamization through large-scale immigration of 'foreign' Muslims, conversion through the sword or political patronage and social liberation of low caste Hindus, who were said to have been attracted toward the egalitarian Islam practised by the Sufis. These explanations have been questioned in recent years (Eaton 1994, 113-19; Ernst 1992, 156-57; Aquil 1997-98). Even on the question of the role played by the Sufis in this connection, there is no single opinion. Some scholars have explained the attitude towards conversion in terms of the general outlook of a particular Sufi order. Thus, it is suggested that the Chishtis were disinterested in formal conversion because they were tolerant and accommodative. On the contrary, the Suhrawardis are considered to be orthodox and uncompromising and, therefore, aimed at converting the non-Muslims even if it meant use of force (Nizami 1961, 177-80; Rizvi 1978, 215-26). This difference of approach is also attributed to the varying ideological stance of the Sufi shaikhs. It is argued that those who believed in *wahdat-ul-wujud* (monism as a reality) were open-minded towards the Hindus and cared little about their formal conversion to Islam. On the other hand, those who followed *wahdat-us-shuhud* (feeling of monism as a reality) tended to be hostile to them and also favoured forced conversion (Rizvi 1993, 54-56; Mujeeb 1985, 297-98). A more balanced opinion treats conversion in terms of a long process of Islamic acculturation (Mujeeb 1985, 22; Eaton 1984).

Indeed, conversion of various communities in Punjab may be attributed to this process of interaction with Shaikh Farid and his shrine. Farid's descendants have contributed a lot to the making of the saint as it were. To begin with, he was buried in his own jama'atkhana and not in a local graveyard. As his son, Nizam-ud-Din pointed out, nobody would care to visit the shaikh's descendants, if he were interned in a general burial ground (*Siyar-ul-Auliya*, 100). Also, there was a danger that Farid would have been 'lost' amongst a large number of shahids and *ghazis* (victorious soldiers) buried at Ajodhan. Further, his

grandson, Ala-ud-Din who succeeded his father Badr-ud-Din Sulaiman as the keeper of the shrine made it a point to send every visitor to the grave of the 'Baba' for blessings and benediction. Disciples were enrolled at the shrine even as the saint lay buried in his grave (Ibid., 204). Thus, the epithet of 'Baba' began to gain currency from as early as the last quarter of the thirteenth century.

Shaikh Farid's disciples played an important role in the dissemination of his teachings further down the Gangetic plane. Karamat or Miracles again contributed to the spread of the image of the shaikh as a charismatic personality. Already in the middle of the fourteenth century, Amir Khwurd incorporated in his *Siyar-ul-Auliya* an anecdote concerning his title 'Ganj-i-Shakar'. He recorded that some pebbles, which he had put in his mouth in extreme hunger due to fasting for three consecutive days, had turned into sugar with the blessings of God. From then onwards he began to be called as 'Ganj-i-Shakar' (Ibid., 77-78). In the early sixteenth century, Shaikh Jamali noted in his *Siyar-ul-Arifin* that one day Shaikh Farid went to see his preceptor Bakhtiyar Kaki. He was wearing a wooden sandal and the roads were muddy due to rain. He was very weak as he was fasting for seven days. He slipped and fell on the ground. Some mud went inside his mouth and immediately turned into sugar (*Siyar-ul-Arifin*, fols. 55a-b). Later Abdul Haqq recounted Amir Khwurd's version of the anecdote in his *Akhbar-ul-Akhyar* and added another interesting story. According to him once a merchant came to meet the shaikh at Ajodhan. He was carrying sugar with him. The shaikh asked him for some sugar. The merchant replied that he was carrying salt. The shaikh remarked that it must actually be salt. Later, on opening the sacks the merchant found to his dismay that the sugar had converted into salt. He rushed to the shaikh and begged for forgiveness. The shaikh's prayer transformed the salt into sugar. From that time the shaikh came to be known as Ganj-i-Shakar (*Akhbar-ul-Akhyar*, 59; also see *Jawahir-i-Faridi*, 259-60). Not satisfied with the tales, later reporters came up with their own versions, which sent the origin of the title backward in time – to the shaikh's childhood. For instance, it is suggested that as a child Farid was fond of sugar. His mother had told him that God sent sugar to the boys who punctually offered their morning prayers and kept some sugar under his pillow every night. When the shaikh reached his twelfth year, his mother stopped putting the packet of sugar. It was however discovered that the divine 'gift' continued to reach him (*Khazinat-ul-Asfiya*, Vol. I, 291-93; *Jawahir-i-Faridi*, 185).

Thus, the shaikh's charisma began to be traced from his very childhood. Even early sources refer to Farid's popularity as a *diwana bachcha* (*Akhbar-ul-Akhyar*, 51). One anecdote in fact traces the saint's religiosity to the date of his birth. It is suggested that there was some confusion concerning the beginning of Ramazan as the moon was not sighted at the place. A saintly person, visiting the saint's father Jamal-ud-Din Sulaiman, said that if Jamal-ud-Din's infant son took milk in the morning it might be assumed that the fast of Ramazan had not begun. As it turned out the baby did not feed the whole day, which signified that the fast had started. Meanwhile, news came from far and near, supported by a *fatawa* (religious decree) from Multan, that Ramazan had indeed started. The child continued his 'fast' for the whole month, as he would take milk only after the sunset (*Jawahir-i-Faridi*, 185).

These anecdotes have contributed immensely to the making of the saint's image and his widespread following. What is also important is the fact that these stories do not merely pertain to the folk-tradition. They involve learned scholars of their time and have been included in authoritative works in Persian, itself a language of the elite in medieval India. In view of the detailed references above, it is difficult for us to agree with a modern scholar's view that persons 'having little understanding of the mystic principles and ideology have disfigured these saints by attributing meaningless miracles to them (Nizami 1955, 79)'. Also, it would be inaccurate to assume that they were peculiar to the superstitious past created to befool the credulous (Rizvi 1978; Mujeeb 1985; Siddiqui 1989). Such beliefs in the spiritual power of the saintly persons, whether alive or buried in their shrines, continue to persist even in modern times. Sufi tradition in fact claims that the saints never die. They take care of the affairs of the world even while resting in their graves. No wonder then that the dargah of the saints enjoy such a pervasive influence in the minds of the people of the subcontinent. Thus, karamat is an important source of the Sufi saints' authoritative position in Muslim societies as well as in the non-Muslim environment. We would do well to come to terms with the tales of miracles attributed to Shaikh Farid, incredulous as they may seem to the rational mind. This may lead to a more informed understanding of the process of the making of the saint and his massive popularity in the region of Punjab.
Ya Hayyo Ya Qayyum!!![26]

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Notes

[1] For the Chishtis of the Delhi Sultanate, see Nizami 1965; Rizvi 1978; Bowering 1992.
[2] For Shaikh Farid's life, see Nizami 1955; Idem 1965; Talib 1973; Rizvi 1978, 138-50; Eaton 1984; Hamid 2000.
[3] For Nizam-ud-Din Auliya, see Nizami 1991a.
[4] Mohammad Habib (1974, 385-433) has classified the Sufi literature of the Delhi Sultanate as 'genuine' and 'fabricated'.
[5] Nizam-ud-Din Ahmad notes that he had utilised Qutb-ud-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki's malfuzat, which were collected by Farid-ud-Din Ganj-i-Shakar, *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, fol. 27b. For an account of the life of Bakhtiyar Kaki, see Rizvi 1978, 133-38.

[6] For a modern biography of Shaikh Nasir-ud-Din, see Nizami 1991b. Also see, Shafi 1965.
[7] *Akhbar-ul-Akhyar*, 29, 32, 60, 73. Writing in the early seventeenth century, Ali Asghar has utlised and cited these sources in his *Jawahir-i-Faridi*, 3, 194, 207, 247, 249, 261, 265. These sources have been considered reliable in Sufi fraternities for generations, see, for instance, a short biography of Ali Ahmad Sabir, a nephew, son-in-law, and successor of Shaikh Farid-ud-Din (Siddiqui 1895). Also see, Baryan n.d.; Hafizullah n.d.
[8] A proper study of this Sultanate intellectual is yet to be attempted. For disparaging remarks on Barani's social and political ideas, see Habib and Khan n.d. For Amir Khusrau, see Mirza 1935.
[9] For the history of the period, see Habibullah 1945; Nizami 1961; Husain 1963; Lal 1967; Siddiqui 1969; Habib and Nizami 1970; Halim 1974; Jackson 1998.
[10] For Qutb-ud-Din's enthronement, see *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, 417.
[11] The diverse images of the *kafirs* are to be found in the Indo-Muslim literature. This is the theme of a separate paper being prepared by this writer.
[12] For the life of the saint, see Faruqi 1963.
[13] For Mu'in-ud-Din's career, see Currie 1989; Nizami 1965.
[14] Ziya-ud-Din Barani notes that Sultan Nasir-ud-Din was a mere *namuna*, as the reins of power were in the hands of Balban then known as Ulugh Khan, *Tarikh-i-Firuz-Shahi*, fols. 12b-13a.
[15] The Ghurid Mu'iz-ud-Din bin Sam had captured the city from the Carmathians in 1174-75, Friedmann 1990.
[16] For reports about Shaikh Farid's journeys, see *Asrar-ul-Auliya*, 83, 91, 94-95, 108, 111, 117, 127, 194, 243; *Jawahir-i-Faridi*, 189-190, 270, 274.
[17] For Pak Pattan, see Nizami 1995. For information on Farid's departure from Delhi, stay at Hansi and subsequent decision to settle down at Ajodhan, see *Siyar-ul-Arifin*, fols. 44b-45a.
[18] For Auhad-ud-Din Kirmani's mystical career and poetical works, Forouzanfar 1969; Wilson and Weischer 1978; Weischer 1979.
[19] Ali Asghar refers to Baha-ud-Din Zakariya as a cousin (*baradar khala-zad*) of Shaikh Farid, *Jawahir-i-Faridi*, 187, 189.
[20] Farid had a particular liking for Jamal-ud-Din. He is said to have stayed in Hansi for twelve years for him and would often say, *jamal jamal-i ma ast* (Jamal is my beauty), *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, 188; *Jawahir-i-Faridi*, 277.
[21] K.A. Nizami (1955, 100) has noted that following the long established traditions of Muslim mystics, particularly those belonging to the Chishti *silsila*, Shaikh Farid severed all direct contact with the government of the time and developed an attitude of contemptuous indifference towards it.
[22] Nizam-ud-Din Auliya sent Wajih-ud-Din Yusuf with the army of Ala-ud-Din Khalji for the conquest of Chanderi, a strategic place on the route to the Deccan. Yusuf stayed at Chanderi after its conquest, *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, 296-97.
[23] Nizam-ud-Din Auliya's leading disciples Amir Khusrau and Amir Hasan Sijzi participated in the campaigns. Khusrau's reports reflected the mood in the army.
[24] For other versions of this tale, see *Jawahir-i-Faridi*, 212, 252. Ali Asghar also notes that the conversion of the yogi was followed by mass conversion in the region, *Jawahir-i-Faridi*, 212-13.

[25] An admirer and devotee of the shaikh, Raja Mokulsi built a fort, south of Firuzpur in the Indian Punjab, and named it Faridkot (Ansari 1965). It is related that while the fort was being built Shaikh Farid was forced to work as a labourer, but, being observed to possess supernatural powers, he was allowed to depart and the name of the place was changed to Faridkot in his honour (*Jawahir-i-Faridi*, 268). For a versified account of the incident, see Bhadanawi, A.H. 1319, 22-25). A three-day fair is held at the end of the month of Muharram of the Hijri calendar at the saint's *chilla* in Faridkot, see *Punjab State Gazetteers, Faridkot State* (1907), 2, 30-32.

[26] The shaikh died (c. 1265) uttering the statement *Ya Hayyo Ya Qayyum* (O The Living and the Immortal), *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, 100; *Akhbar-ul-Akhyar*, 60.

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Shared Melodies, Partitioned Repertoires? An Ethnography of Sikh and Sufi *Ḍhāḍī* Performance in Contemporary Punjab

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Moving beyond the statistical enterprise of earlier approaches to the study of India's Partition, historians and anthropologists have recently been interested in studying sites of cultural and social meaning production through which the experience of violence and displacement could be given a voice. In the context of this anthropologically inspired work however, culturally inherited traditions of oral storytelling and musical performance have largely been overlooked, presumably because of the marginalisation of this domain of 'folk' culture. I will argue in this article that performative traditions continue to form important sites of identity formation – sites that in the context of post-Partition context allow for a different and more nuanced understanding of the long-term impact of this event. In what follows below, I will examine contemporary forms of Sikh and Sufi *dhadi* performance in Punjab, investigating the extent to which they have been shaped by discourses of religious and state patronage after 1947. Even though Sikh and Sufi *dhadi* repertoires assume different religious and political affiliations, my ethnography will unravel alternative notions of belonging and religiosity as they are embodied in the practices of *dhadi* performance.

Prologue

As a part of my ethnographic fieldwork on performative traditions in Punjab, I had a series of conversations with *ḍhāḍī* musician Ajaib Singh, one among the few remaining hereditary *sāraṅgī* players in the region. During one of my regular visits at his house, I met Ajaib Singh with his *sāraṅgī* placed on his knees when I entered the room. He was busy tying his turban giving me a gesture to sit beside him on the bed. Shortly afterwards, I found myself listening to his tuning the *sāraṅgī* when, eventually, he gave me instructions of how to press my fingers and how to handle the bow. Following a somewhat tiring experience for both parties involved, he started to demonstrate different musical styles. We had been through this procedure before and I had also recorded most of the tunes of his *sāraṅgī* performance. So, I used the opportunity to ask him about some of the genres that were played by Sufi *ḍhāḍīs*, some of whom we met at a recent public event in the vicinity. What would be the difference, I simply asked. A smile appeared on his face and then he said the following: 'oh … they … they play only *shānt rasa, dukh rasa* … they are "singers" (*gauṇwāle hai, uh*)'. Indeed, I expected another rather brief elaboration on the topic, having tried this

before without much of a success. Rather than performing such songs, Sikhs would represent themselves as the singers of the *vār*, the 'authentic' expression to incite fervent passion (*jos*). While responding to my question, Ajaib Singh suddenly began to play a few melodies of those tunes that Sikhs would not play at public events. This happened so suddenly and went so smoothly that he himself was puzzled. He stopped playing the very next moment. The *sāraṅgī* was being put aside. We changed the topic of our talk and Ajaib Singh indicated that we should move to the local Khalsa College, where he was teaching some of the young students. Then I would see how one would perform a *vār*.

Ajaib Singh is someone who is usually not reluctant in demonstrating his performance skills. Thus, it was not really a question of missing opportunities that would have prevented him from performing such songs. The encounter I have just described was of a different quality altogether. It happened in a fashion that I could immediately seize his being taken by surprise - his astonishment about the effect of his own musical gesture. Embedded in this gesture, I would argue, is a suppressed memory that elapsed in the ethnographic encounter. His playing of ludic melodies indicates that a tradition of cultural performance embodies social memories in historically and culturally specific ways. Let me briefly explain why I think that this embodied memory has become a memory for certain unspoken truths in the post-Partition period.[1]

In the contemporary cultural and political landscape of Punjab, I have encountered Sikh and Sufi *ḍhāḍī* performers. Among them, differences in religious affiliation, performative style and repertoire are clearly marked, as expressed in the statement of Ajaib Singh. The performance of Sikh *ḍhāḍī* has become part of the community's commemorative and liturgical rituals. Broadly defined, this is the framework in which Ajaib Singh situates himself today. Sufi performers, on the other hand, sustain a living as 'folk singers', dependent on state fellowships and political patronage. As can be culled from the anecdote however, the voice of the *ḍhāḍī* genre is tuned in a way in which notions of aesthetic expression and receptivity are not yet fully shaped according to the new religious and performative 'tastes' of patronage that have emerged after Partition in 1947.[2]

In this article, I want to further explore the politicisation of this sphere of cultural practice. Thus, I am interested in what ways the Partition event has been replicated in the separation of Sikh and Sufi *ḍhāḍī* aesthetics. To put the question differently: must we assume two separate 'aesthetic communities' associated with Sikh and Sufi performative practice intertwined with different visions of moral community?[3] As I want to argue, reconfigurations of the space of cultural performance and revaluations of inherited, non-discursive forms of cultural expression, can indeed tell us something about how violence and the history of migration have become embodied in Punjabi performative practice. Hence, this article traverses *ḍhāḍī* performance as a conceptual site through which one might come to a partial understanding of the embodiment of political violence and historical change.

Between the Borderlines: The Social Locus of *Ḍhāḍī*

As a media of cultural performance, the *ḍhāḍī* tradition has a firm place in the history of Punjab and Rajasthan. It comprises crucial elements of bardic song-recitation and incorporates elements of devotional singing and modern historical discourse. *Ḍhāḍī* performers are musicians, forming a group of two drum (*ḍhaḍḍ*) players and a player of a stringed instrument called *sāraṅgī*. In the Sikh tradition, a fourth member accompanies the musicians. The latter performs oratory (*kathā*) and narrates historical episodes (*itihāsak prasaṅga*). Thus, the traditional appearance of the *ḍhāḍī* performers is that of a collective agent. Although the performers are hierarchically positioned, due to reputation, experience and social status, they usually do not refer to themselves as individual performers, but as a *jatthā*.

In terms of instrumentation, there is some flexibility, yet the two instruments of *sāraṅgī* and *ḍhaḍḍ* are considered characteristic. Both are mentioned in Mughal chronicles.[4] Joep Bor (1987) cites Faquirullah (1665/66) and a Venetian travel account from around the same time in which the origin of *ḍhāḍī* musicians is traced in Rajput groups. Note specifically the generic associations with narrative-musical forms and performative styles in Bor's citation:

> According to Faquirullah (1665/66), *dhadhis* [*ḍhāḍīs*] were the oldest community of musicians, and originally Rajputs. They sang *karkha*, which was 'composed in four to eight lines to sing the praises of the war-lords, the brave soldiers, and to narrate the affairs of battles and war.' He also informs us that the Punjabi *dhadhis* [*ḍhāḍīs*] payed the *dhadh* [*ḍhaḍḍ*] (a small-sized *dhol* to which they owed their name), and sang heroic ballads, called *bar* [*vār*]. They were sung by at least two persons: the ustad [*ustād*], who was the leader of the group, tunefully recited the opening lines while the *shagirds* (disciples) followed, sometimes repeating the lines, sometimes returning to the opening section (ibid. p. 62).

This seventeenth century description of the genre is astonishingly close to the image of the contemporary *ḍhāḍī* genre. The Sikh performers with whom I worked would indeed form a group of musicians consisting of *shagird* in relation to an *ustād* who takes the lead role in reciting the opening verses of each song. The Rajput code of honour, martial qualities and the moral values of self-sacrifice are emphasized specifically among the rural Sikh performers. If we look at the distribution pattern of *ḍhāḍī* public participation, we find that the Sikh performers visit preferably historical sites and local festivals that are associated with the Sikh Gurus and historical martyrs. Sikh *gurdwārā*s associated

with Guru Hargobind (considered the patron of the Sikh *ḍhāḍī* performers) and Guru Gobind Singh rank high in this regard.[5]

In pre-colonial times, the bards perpetuated a history in which they were singing the praises for their royal patrons and saintly figures, bestowing innumerable localities with the memory of heroic deeds, lost lives, unfulfilled loves and a desire for the unknown. A large part of the social and cultural geography that connects such memories to specific sites is currently inaccessible to performers on the Indian side. In the politically fragile borderzone of contemporary Punjab, security at the national border between Pakistan and India are tightened and roads bifurcated. The travel of goods and people in the region is thoroughly constrained. Yet, at the same time, the settlement of Punjabi overseas communities has provided new opportunities for *ḍhāḍī* practice. Sikh performers tour the diaspora in Europe, North America and South- East Asia. Visits to Europe and the Americas are institutionalised in the context of Sikh patronage. The overseas *gurdwāre* have the necessary funds to invite religious preachers (*granthīs, pracāraks*), *kīrtan* singers (*rāgīs*) as well as *ḍhāḍīs* to perform for the diaspora communities (Pettigrew 1992, Tatla 1999, p. 76).

While preferences of *ḍhāḍī* affiliation with Sikh institutions has a long and complex history (Nijhawan 2003a), paradigmatic differences between Sikh and Sufi ways of performing *ḍhāḍī* are the consequence of recent political developments.[6] The large-scale migration of Punjabi Muslims to Pakistan and Sikhs and Hindus living in former West-Punjab to India, has not only led to a reconfiguration of entire neighbourhoods and local communities, but also to a decline of hereditary musicians in East-Punjab. These musicians were mostly Muslims. Right until Partition, many of the hereditary musicians had an affiliation with local religious authorities – including some of the *ḍhāḍī* musicians who performed at Sikh *gurdwārās*. Their moving to the other side of the border caused a significant gap in musical expertise on the Indian side.

The gap has not been really filled, yet paradoxically, after Partition the *ḍhāḍī* genre emerged as a substantial part of the cultural landscape in East-Punjab and the Sikh diaspora, whereas at the same time it is now on the verge of extinction in Pakistan. What had been the reasons for this development? As I have argued elsewhere, pre-partition politics and reformist agendas were effective in bringing about a revitalization of the *ḍhāḍī* genre as a mode of Sikh self-representation in the Indian Punjab (Nijhawan 2002). However, this alone is not a sufficient explanation. Different political stances of Punjabi regionalism on both sides of the border provide another reasonable scenario of explanation. Political analysts have emphasized that on the Pakistani side, there has been a devaluation of cultural tradition expressed in idioms of regionalism. In a time in which threats to the political order surfaced, Punjab's role as a cultural region proved to be crucial as a warrant of *national* stability in Pakistan. Punjabi intellectuals and politicians sidelined the potential danger of ethnic conflict by seeking stronger alliances with Urdu- and Sindhi-speaking elites (Malik 1998, p. 9,

Talbot 1998). It seems that this went at the cost of Punjabi regionalism. Iftikar Malik has described this situation as follows:

> Simultaneous with the Punjab's preponderance over the state in Pakistan, one comes across serious criticism about a common lack of a cultural and political cohesiveness among the Punjabis. A sense of non-chalance towards Punjabi language, common irreverence for any proposed super-arching Punjabi identity, contrasted with the willingness to assume the role of the flagship of a national or trans-regional Muslim identity have persistently perplexed the Punjab's observers. Thus, on the one hand, Punjab appears manifestly outgoing, accommodative, assimilative, cosmopolitan and trans-regional, whereas simultaneously, there is a bleak absence of a sustained debate on a coherent Punjabi identity revolving around cultural, territorial or historical symbols. Punjab, to its observers, concurrently appears trans-regionalist and localist, even at a time when ethno-regional forces have assumed greater proportions in South Asia and elsewhere (ibid. pp. 7-8).

As an undercurrent of Pakistani nationalism, Punjab has surpassed its long-standing tradition of regionalism and factionalism in favour of trans-regional political alliances. This new role of Punjab as political mediator was characterized by two elements: First, the absence of large sections of the former population, constituted by Sikhs and Hindus. Second, with the fresh memory of Partition violence and resurfacing border disputes, Muslim Punjabis also consciously de-emphasized the cultural links with the Indian Punjab. Folk genres that were based on shared idioms of Punjabi expressive culture thus suffered a decline in local and state patronage. As far as my own investigations allow concluding, *ḍhāḍī* performance was regionally confined to the areas around Faisalabad (earlier: Lyallpur) after 1947. This region – central part of the former British Canal Colonies – comprised the great majority of Partition migrants from Jalandhar and Ludhiana districts. One of the remaining practitioners of his art, *ḍhāḍī* performer Muhammad Shareef Ragi, said in one of our conversations that, after his family's resettlement in Faisalabad, his father would perform at wedding occasions and religious festivals, such as the *urs*-celebrations at Sufi-shrines. Major and minor shrines were still worshipped by villagers and the urban folks alike. In this way, *ḍhāḍī* continued to play a role as a form of entertainment and source of moral reinforcement, if only on a somewhat suppressed level. In subsequent years, Ragi also performed at Nankana Sahib, the birthplace of Guru Nanak, founder of the Sikh religion. After Partition, and despite the absence of the Sikh community, Guru Nanak was still venerated by the local population in traditionally held fairs. Thus, on a marginal scale, the *ḍhāḍī* genre was still practiced as a cultural tradition that transgressed the boundaries of religious affiliation. The Pakistani state obviously did not interfere in this practice. It did not have to do

so, as a matter of fact. As Mohammad Shareef complained, the absence of any form of patronage apart from the local community networks and the opportunities provided by the Sufi-festivals, made it virtually impossible for most performers to maintain their profession. Ragi could build up his reputation in the region due to his exceptional musical skills. With the musical industry gaining influence, he was able to shift to the production of *ḍhāḍī* cassettes of Sufi tales and oral epics. This allowed him to keep up a living, as one of the few remaining *ḍhāḍī* musicians in Pakistan.

In the Indian part of Punjab, the Partition event had two major consequences in terms of *ḍhāḍī* patronage. First, in the wake of the *Punjabi Suba Morcha,* Akali politics emerged as a major player of linguistic nationalism and religious revitalization of Sikh identity. This had an ultimate impact on processes of *ḍhāḍī* self-definition. Second, as a consequence of anti-Muslim hostilities, the participation of those few remaining Muslim performers in political or other congregational gatherings was commonly seen as inappropriate. It was only later in the 1970s (in the course of an emerging regional consciousness expressed in folk discourses) that those performers could acquire a new position in the public sphere. Strong demarcations emerged between performers associated with the religious institutions of the Sikhs and those who tried to benefit from the secularly defined patronage of folk arts by the state (many patrons were associated with the Congress party). This implied a reconstitution of performative space. Shareef Idu, a hereditary Muslim performer, whose family did not migrate during Partition, has made this point very clear in our conversation. He mentioned that in the 1950s his family was denied access to the local *gurdwārā*. Consequently, Muslim bards refrained from performing registers associated with the Sikh Gurus, concentrating on the few remaining Sufi festivals, many of which have become politically appropriated and transformed as folklore.

Thus, in the aftermath of Partition, and in the course of emergent border conflicts and political antagonisms, the crossover between religious affiliations was seen as inappropriate – particularly, but not exclusively, in Indian urban space where anti-Muslim sentiments were still feasible. The dismissal of what was seen as 'non-Sikh' *ḍhāḍī* or folk singing alludes to an altered understanding of the performative practice after Partition. Different from the colonial period where the rejection of such forms was articulated in a reformist idiom and under different conditions of cultural plurality and caste politics, after Partition it was directed against the social category of Muslim performers. Musicians of low caste origin had to clarify their position. One of the musicians, with whom I was acquainted from the very beginning of my fieldwork, told me that he stopped performing the Punjabi oral epics in the early 1950s. At that time, as a young performer, he decided to take Sikh baptism and to restrict his repertoire of performances for the new Sikh patrons. With the breakdown of the old patronage system, the pressure was high on musicians. The choice was one of abolishing *ḍhāḍī* performance or seeking full affiliation with Sikh institutions. All this has

led to a redistribution of performative styles and repertoires and to a stronger emphasis on narrative repertoires with religious content.

Continuities and Change in Performative Context

As I want to argue in this section, the spatialization of performative practices in the post-Partition period only partially reflects the new divisions in terms of religious and folk patronage. We need to turn attention to the structural setting of the congregational gathering called *melā* that forms the performative framework in which *ḍhāḍī* performers with Sikh and Sufi affiliation would meet on the stage.

The public event of a *melā* gives occasion to a large gathering of listeners. Earlier in Punjab, a *melā* was patronized by political leaders, landlords, and religious authorities like the Sufi *Pirs* and their successors. As a social institution, the *melā* creates a space in which musical performance, drama, and oratory function to vitalize the links between the participants. A *melā* gives rise to the staging of particular histories and songs that are associated with the locality or event. Following the religious calendar of such fairs, the *ḍhāḍī* bards change their stories and melodies, adopting performative styles according to the local tastes and commemorative frameworks set by the localities and patrons. Although currently *melā*s are discarded by the modern middle class and urban elite as an occasion for 'low strata folk culture', reconstituted in utilitarian ways as a platform for election campaigns by politicians, and rejected by orthodox religious institutions as occasions of immoral conduct, it has not entirely lost its central role as a meeting point of local communities. The *melā* remains a cultural space characterized by particular forms of participation and aesthetics to which *ḍhāḍīs* contribute, regardless of their religious affiliation.

The spatial arrangement of bardic performances at a *melā* is rather informal and its duration depends on the kind of performed narrative and the capability of bards to keep listeners focused and involved. Modern *melā*s - newly invented by folk institutions, societies, or well-known public actors – are organized differently. As the set of expectations and time schedules of performance change, so does the performative meaning and nature of *ḍhāḍī* presentations. A singer is allotted a certain amount of time on the stage and the performer-audience relationship is transformed to the extent that the distance between both, singer and audience increases. Listeners are usually sitting in chairs or in rows on the ground. The increasing distance between performers and audiences does not essentially affect the multifaceted communicative system of bardic performance. However, it results in a decline of the immediacy of bodily gesture and movement that makes much of the patterned complexity of a performative event.

In north India, bardic performance creates aesthetic spaces that sometimes play a key role in the formation of religious experience. In Garhwal and Ku-

maon – regions in the Himalyan hills that border Punjab – dancers are possessed and chosen by deities to communicate to the participants of a ritual (Alter 2000, Leavitt 1987, Sax 1995). Bards are acknowledged here as entertainers and religious mediators. Significantly, some of the performative styles and forms of instrumentation are quite similar to that of the *ḍhāḍī* genre. Contrasting their colleagues in the hills, however, *ḍhāḍī* bards are not known as diviners. Performative process and aesthetics are transgressive only insofar as they are aimed at creating collectively shared experiences in the process of listening. What matters for participants in a musical congregation, as for instance during the annual death celebration of a saint (*'urs*), are the musical skills, and the quality of the voice of the bards. During a Sufi ritual occasion, the *ḍhāḍī* singers would perform outside the immediate precinct of the shrine in what one might call minor congregational rituals. People gather in a half-circle around the group, engaged in listening; they sometimes join in the chorus and occasionally I also saw people beginning to dance ecstatically. This means that there are instances of ecstasy, even though in the eyes of the participant this does not necessarily constitute a part of the performative event, such as would be the case in divination rituals.

In the contexts of Sikh liturgy, there is a perceptible tendency toward narrative elaboration and oratory. *Ḍhāḍī* oratory consists of representations of Sikh history, preferably narratives on Sikh martyrs. The performers are placed to the right of the platform, on which the *Adi Granth* is kept and recited. They face the congregational gathering that is assembled on the ground. In such settings of *ḍhāḍī* performance too, there must be variation between narrative and song, and much of the audience's appreciation depends on the evaluation of the inspiring songs. Direct interaction between performers and audiences, however, is at a minimum. The most I heard were brief affirmative comments, voiced by individuals in the audience. A performance in a *gurdwārā* is usually between thirty minutes and an hour long, which is very short in terms of the usual 'epic' length of Indian bardic performances. Exceptions are made, in case, the performers present are regarded as particularly gifted in oratory and musical performance.

Modalities of the Epic Space: Expressive Forms of *Ḍhāḍī* Performance

An unsaid dialogue begins. [...] As each listener is familiar with the story line, the 'what' of the story, the plot becomes insignificant; what assumes primacy is the 'how', the art of story telling. It is here that the unique role of the bard in an epic acquires the central position. The narrative recedes to the background, what assumes significance is the style of the narrator, his points of entry, interpretation and intervention. From the art of narration and sustenance of interest, the epic style evolves elaboration, intonation, repetition and improvisation. The bard constantly improvises, constantly returns to himself, foregrounding his own mode of narration. The figure of the bard becomes the pivotal point around

which the epic revolves. The epic form is thus self-conscious and self-referential as it constantly reverts around its own fictional and narrative mode (Vahali 1998, pp. 255-256).[7]

Considering that, in bardic performances, the story is always already known, the interplay between storytelling and listening is essentially defined through its reflexivity. The notion of bardic reflexivity is wonderfully pictured in Vahali's quote. Performers are engaged in a process of listening, the focus is on a particular and nuanced understanding of selected plots and social relations. *Ḍhāḍī* performance can thus be conceptualised along a dialogic axis. It comprises the narrative strategy of the bards, the selective focus of the listeners, and the plot-structure of the reported narrative which, in turn, is not authorized or owned by either performer or audience. The bard's verbal performance challenges listeners to respond in their imagination.[8] Persuasiveness rest as much on the capacity and reputation of a performer as it depends on the knowledge horizon of the audience and the intensity of the act of listening. The interaction between bards and listeners has to be considered crucial to the extent that bardic agency is generated and shaped through such interaction. Listening, too, is not a passive state of mind; it is a central activity. As Aditya Malik (1999: 47) has phrased it, listening 'provides the context for the speaker's utterance to unfold and make sense. Therefore, it is a non-verbal *activity* that engenders speech. Thus, the activity of singing and speaking is not solely about the singer's agency, but due to the audience's particular agency evoked through listening.'

The expressive form of the *ḍhāḍī* genre, I suggest, is always based on this mediation between speaker and listener's agency at particular contexts of performance. The process of listening is not as much limited by external guidelines and concepts, as would be the case for the purely spiritual purposes of a religious ritual. Punjab's *ḍhāḍī* performances are oriented towards discursive contents as much as they are instantiations of aesthetic experience. Yet, in what characteristic ways are *ḍhāḍī* performances composed? Is it possible to identify something like a script of performance – implicit and explicit codes and conventionalised forms of ritualised action in the way in which these are recurrent in different performative events? In this section I want to further investigate if scripts of *ḍhāḍī* performance are in any way connected to the kind of discursive reconstruction of the genre along different lines of religious affiliation.

Even though there can never be uniformity in cultural performance – each event is unique as a social process – there is some merit in thinking of a script of performance that differs between Sikh and Sufi styles. To begin with, all *ḍhāḍī* bards usually perform in an upright position. In contrast to Sufi *qawwalī* gatherings or Sikh *kirtan* congregational singing, *ḍhāḍī* performers never perform in a sitting posture. Typically, three musicians (two *ḍhāḍ*-players and one *sāraṅgī*-player) form a *jatthā*. In the Sikh case they are led by the orator, thus forming a group of four. The framing of the performance consists of the invocation of the spiritual authority, which is followed by the respectful greeting of the present

audience, for whom the story is performed. The allusion to divine voices is a shared practice as well. Thus, Sufi *ḍhāḍī* Idu Shareef opens his recitation of the *Hīr Rānjhā*, a popular oral epic, by evoking the name of the creator (*paidā karan walā*), paying his special tribute to members of the spiritual lineage of a Sufi saint and only then addressing the audience: 'Friends! For one hour, we are going to present *Hīr Rānjhā*. All your yearlong ailments and sufferings will be healed.' This opening of the performance also indicates the modern measuring of narratives in time segments, which is due to the altered performative context during folk festival occasions on the stage. The fluidity and longevity of the oral epic narrative has certainly lost some of its essential characteristics in such circumstances. At performance occasions on the Sikh stage, the opening greeting is: 'The Khalsa belongs to the Wonderful Guru! Victory belongs to the Wonderful Guru!' (*vāhegurū jī kā khālsā! vāhegurū jī kī fateh*). Depending on occasion, patrons or popular persons among the audience might be subsequently mentioned and welcomed. Otherwise, the orator would begin to introduce the topic of the performance.

I have pointed out that *ḍhāḍī* performance falls into the category of song-recitation, which, according to Blackburn and Flueckiger (1989, p. 9), is the primary form of oral epic performance in India. Accordingly, the second characteristic element of the *ḍhāḍī* performance is the weaving together of oratory (or prosaic narrative) and song. In this respect, *ḍhāḍī* resembles the *ḍholā* performance of western Uttar Pradesh (Wadley 1989, p. 9). Verbal aspects of performance and musical accompaniment are combined in each performance to complex poetical-musical patterns. Usually, the first section of *ḍhāḍī* performance consists of verbal presentations without the help of musical accompaniment. The first part of a Sufi *ḍhāḍī's* performance can be very brief. Concentration of performers and audiences firmly rests on the kind of telling and the development of the selected sub-plot. The case is somewhat different on the Sikh stage. Although the heroic deeds and ailments of Sikh heroes are also widely known, Sikh performers perceive a didactic purpose in their presentation. The 'what' of the story is not just the background upon which bardic performance unfolds; Sikh performers evaluate historical content as an important part of *ḍhāḍī* oratory. Thus, the opening oratory of a Sikh *ḍhāḍī* performance is usually considerably long and outlines the moral and historical significance of the story in some detail. Following the introductory verbal performance, the narrator of the group raises his voice dramatically, indicating to the singers in the background to begin their performance.

There are some commonalities in the sequence of performance as well. The first musical item performed on the *sāraṅgī* is called the *alaṅkār* (ornamentation). The *alaṅkār* is a short item, in which the *sāraṅgī* plays the characteristic underlying mood of the song. It can be repeated as an interlude and improvisation at various instances. A chorus of two or three singers will then perform a

high-pitched, vibrato-laden vocal line that replicates the *alaṅkār*. This would be called *hek lagauṇā*. In Punjabi musical culture, the performance of the *hek* is a crucial point of orientation insofar as the musical apprenticeship of a singer is assessed on the grounds of his mastery of voice in performing the *hek*. In a successful performance, the *hek* will evoke the emotive qualities of the song within a single dense musical metaphor. In the moment of singing the *hek*, the risk and potential of a good performance is located – it might draw everybody's attention to the stage, yet, as I witnessed several times, a bad apprentice might likewise cause listeners to withdraw their attention.

The central position of the *sāraṅgī* is also indicated in the way in which the singing proceeds. The *sāraṅgī* player would perform and sing the first hemistich. At the beginning of the second hemistich, a chorus of two or three singers (usually the *ḍhaḍḍ* players who are positioned in the background) intrudes. Depending on the chant, the singing proceeds in formulaic or poetic couplets of two to four lines:

[Lead singer] *Hīr kahandī bha'ī,* [chorus] *jā tak jīwan mahiyā,*
[Lead singer] *Kaḍe nā hairān Kaulāṃ toṃ,* [chorus] *ithe uthe, dowī we jahānī*

[Hir says, as long as I shall live, my beloved
I shall not be harrassed by the Kauls, whether in this or any other world]

Poetic lines and songs can be distinguished according to well-established vernacular genres. Those which are specifically associated with the *ḍhāḍī* genre are called *jhoṛī, bhaiṃt, sākā, mirzā, kallī, talaṅg* and particularly the *vār*. They are associated with various narrative traditions in Punjab, a point to be further explored in the next section.

Following each song we have another verbal performance, thus introducing the next song element. In the case of an epic performance, these prosaic parts are recited very rapidly. In contexts of religious performances in the Sikh *gurdwara*, oratory sections are rhetorically structured, including pauses, variations in pitch intensity and direct appeals to the audience. Oratory by Sikh *ḍhāḍī* often moves between historical and moral-religious discourse. We also find employed different speech genres, most popularly the recitation of short poems (which are also commented upon during oratory) but also proverbs, appellatives, citations, everyday talk, and so forth. The performance continues in this manner. Depending on the performative occasion, the pleasure it instils in the audience and the time allotted by the patron, the performance continues from half an hour to several hours. Participants in the congregation would step forward during the recitations and donate money to the group, which is usually shared among all members equally. The *jatthā* terminates the performance with a final song.

Cultivating Different Sensibilities: *Dukh Rasa* and *Vīr Rasa*

Common to the various events of *ḍhāḍī* performance is the idea that there must be *rasa* or 'taste'. As an aesthetic category, performers and listeners understand *rasa* differently, depending on their familiarity with and expertise in traditional Punjabi drama, poetry, and song. Contemporary musicians, drama actors, and poets alike, have at least a basic understanding of *rasa* as a necessary element of their performative aesthetics. As a form of bardic song-recitation, *ḍhāḍī* performance is distinguished from drama play (such as the *rasdhārī* genre) that is also very popular in Punjab. This does not mean, however, that *ḍhāḍī* performance would be altogether different from drama play. What it has in common with Panjabi drama are forms of embodiment and voice production that sets it clearly apart from off-stage interactions.

Although *ḍhāḍī* performers do not use a complex grammar of facial expressions and meaningful gestures, as it is known from drama plays, they are engaged in a manner in which the movements of the hand, the modes of voice production, the play of gestures, and the symbolic meanings displayed by the body in terms of dress and pose, constitute recognizable performative aesthetics that at least share common parameters with various other forms of dramatic performance. The aesthetic evaluation of a "good' *ḍhāḍī* performance therefore always entails the perception of the visible signs of facial expression, gesture, and bodily movement.

How do these concepts translate into different styles of bodily expression in performance and do these differences amount to a difference between Sikh and Sufi *ḍhāḍī* practices? Let me first turn to the Sufi performers. In their performance of the Hir Ranjha (part of the repertoire is discussed below), Sufi *ḍhāḍī* Idu Shareef and his partners move their bodies rhythmically throughout the song performance. The longer the performance, the more ecstatic and transformative it becomes. Idu's movement is mediated by the playing of the *sāraṅgī* that he holds at the left shoulder while using the bow with his right hand. During years of musical practice, the *sāraṅgī* has become the extension of his expressive body, from which the laments, teasing and complaints of the hero and heroine have become audible and visible in bodily movement. The two *ḍhaḍḍ* players' movement is less ecstatic, but they clearly participate in the rhythm and movement set by the lead singer and *sāraṅgī* player. This entire configuration of collective bodily movement creates the aesthetic image that the audience is confronted with at an empirical level. Aesthetic images are created through the power of visualization engendered by means of poetic expression and inspiration. Sufi *ḍhāḍīs* use the language of the *rasas* to frame the performative context in a way in which it is meant to create the taste of grief and longing, *dukh rasa*.

While Sikh bards share the 'taste' for grief and longing with their Sufi colleagues, the main emphasis of Sikh *ḍhāḍī* performances is placed on the heroic

mood: *vīr rasa*. This is the second aesthetic concept explicitly framed in terms of the *rasa* theory. Performers consider the musical-poetical meter of *vār* and *sākā* as particularly suited to create this state of *vīr rasa*. They describe it in terms of bodily heat (the blood is brought to a boil - *khūn vic joś paidā hai*) and eruptive inner forces (*man andar ubāl āuṇā*). The according body image of the Sikh *ḍhāḍī* bard is also a different one: the performers hardly move their bodies, their pose is majestic and noble, and the eyes are fixed in one direction. The entire bodily dynamic consists of the raised oratory finger and the alteration of voice. When a *vār* is performed, the voice is of very high pitch and intense (*tez*) on the vocal cords; whereas in a *baiṃt*, the voice is sweet (*mīṭhī*), prolonged and vibrating on the vowels – fashioned in a way to express a degree of mourning or lament.

Good performers are masters of these differently nuanced musical-poetical forms of voice production. The modes of voice production by singers are reflected in the play of the *sāraṅgī*. The *sāraṅgī* is metaphorised as an extension of the human voice. A performer of reputation is able to produce eager desire or pleasure (*shauk, amar, su'ād*), in the body of the listener, by fusing human and instrumental voice. Therefore, the singer-composer needs to be a master of voice and *sāraṅgī* music. Quality of voice is evaluated in oratory too. A good speaker captures audiences by ornamenting historical discourse with poetic recitation, by altering his or her voice between exhilarating exclamations and calm deliberation. Performers and audiences alike assign transformative power to the poetic voice of the orator. The reputation of the *ḍhāḍī* orator is often cast in terms of his or her ability to essentially change the mood of the listeners. Sikh *ḍhāḍī* bards in particular have held a notion of the perfect orator as a 'master musician', quite similar to that of the European rhetorical tradition. According to Jody Enders (1990), Cicero's ideal of a rhetorician implied that,

> the whole of a person's frame and every look on his face and utterance of his voice are like strings of a harp, and sounds according as they are struck by each successive emotion. For the tones of the voice are keyed up like the strings of an instrument.

My interest in the notion of *rasa* and voice has less to do with the continuities and discontinuities between classical models of Indian aesthetics and its folk renderings. What I am interested in is the possibility of critical self-measurements against commonly held ideas of performative aesthetics and musicality (cf. Gade 2002). In *ḍhāḍī* performative practice, notions of *rasa* and voice are employed as technical language in the process of musical apprenticeship and as evaluative categories of different performative aesthetics. Evaluations of Sikh and Sufi ways of performing *ḍhāḍī* assume differences in moral orientation. It is at this point that processes of aesthetic evaluation blend with processes of identity formation. Idioms of martial fervour, heroic spirit, self-

sacrifice and resistance spirit are tied to the notion of *vīr rasa*. This is completely absent in Sufi *ḍhāḍī* performance in which idioms of romantic love and subversion gain primacy. It is possible to argue that Sikh and Sufi performers thus present complementary styles and aesthetic values that are appreciated by the Punjabi public at large. But it would be wrong to generalize this observation. Both modalities of performance, I would assume, are iconic of different visions of moral community. Let me just mention a fieldwork anecdote: a Punjabi poet and friend of mine who is engaged in the peace movement was emotionally so disturbed when I asked him to read through some of the *ḍhāḍī* compositions that I had collected that it became a sort of embarrassment. What I showed to him were *ḍhāḍī vārs* composed by an old performer associated with the Sikh martial tradition. Reading a few lines he returned the notes immediately and said: 'We people are poets, ours is the way of love'. For him, the *vār* was indicative of situations of political violence and uprootedness, situations which he had to live through twice in the previous decades.

Politicised Choices: Martial, Sacrificial, and Romantic Repertoires

People in Punjab refer to the *ḍhāḍī* tradition (*paramparā*) in the sense of a particular body of discursive and aesthetic knowledge that has been handed down over many generations. So far, I have introduced differences in performative style and aesthetic modalities of Sikh and Sufi *ḍhāḍīs*. Yet, traditions of cultural performance are also defined over discursive knowledge and it is at this level of analysis that we can locate difference with far-reaching implications for the process of identity formation. In the next section, the emphasis is therefore placed on the analysis of *ḍhāḍī* repertories.

In everyday discourse, performers express their consciousness of a particular heritage of *ḍhāḍī* in the reverence paid to the elders (*buzurg*). The latter are knowledgeable about the entire musical and narrative repertoire. Most performers display a self-reflexive stance of 'keeping the tradition alive in modern society'. The idea that 'tradition' has to somehow 'survive' in modernity indicates that tradition is not at all a neutral term, but one that has a specific (Western) historicity within discourses of modernity. For a long time, 'tradition' has been considered as a remnant of the past and thus as a counterpoint of modernity. Such discourses on 'tradition' have been comprehensively discussed in the 1980s. The idea of a fixed category against which modernity defines itself was criticized, the politics of the "invention of tradition" were studied and, in turn, criticized for the implicit assumption that there might be other cultural domains that would be less invented and, thus, in some way 'more real' (Appadurai et al 1991, Ben-Amos 1984 and Shils 1981). When anthropologists currently contemplate 'tradition', they usually have in mind what Appadurai (1991) called the 'pastness' of the present. All societies "do manifest certain configurations because they have come to be shaped in certain ways, not just by values and be-

liefs but by styles and genre conventions" (ibid. p. 18) which are characteristic of inherited narrative or performative traditions. With these qualifications in mind, traditions (in the sense of *paramparā*) must be considered as important fields of cultural production. As can be inferred from the following discussion of narrative repertoires, the *ḍhāḍī* tradition emerged as a key site for processes of collective self-definition and historical imagination.

In the last two decades, scholars of folk tradition have approached the issues of politicisation of performative genres with some analytical rigor (Longinovic 2000, Magrini 2000, Mitchell 1988, Oinas 1978). Moving beyond previous theories of political manipulation, it has recently been observed that images of otherness are entrenched in the representational language of folk tradition. As David Parkin (1996, p. xxiii) has pointed out, 'cultural repertoire may provide ready-made templates for the symbolic complexes around which people may eventually rally' and it seems that folklore repertoires provided a particularly powerful source of political mobilization.[9] Having stated this, a number of questions might be posed regarding the politicisation of narrative repertoires. For that I suggest we better have a glimpse on the full range of the *ḍhāḍī* repertoire, out of which I have selected some of the most representative items.

Martial Virtues

The first example is taken from a transcript of Shareef Ragi's cassette recordings.[10] It is one of the popular ballads of West-Punjab: the story of *Dulla Bhatti*. The plot is set in a context of fading Mughal rule in Punjab. The story tells of the Muslim inhabitants of Rawalpindi and their fight against Mughal intrusion and occupation. Dulla Bhatti, the ambivalent local hero of the story is portrayed as a real villain. In Shareef Ragi's song, he is held accountable for the murder of Kala Khan, paternal uncle of Dulla's own wife Bhuleran. The murder of Kala Khan and the ensuing family feud provides the underlying thread of the story. The family feud is contained at the point when the clan unites against the Mughal forces who (due to the deceit by the local *qazi*) occupied the settlement and abducted local women.[11] The scene that I would like to discuss in some detail is situated against this violation of honour. It depicts Dulla Bhatti encounter with Kala Khan's two sons on the battlefield. It gives voice to a vivid scene of rhetorical contest in the face of violent clash and death. Dulla's voice is staged first. He praises the two young warriors whose identity he pretends not to know.

Kauṇ koyī tussī pīr nā, ikko jaye sirdārāṃ
Kis mā asuwānī ne jān laye, tussī done barkhūrdārāṃ
Karmān wālī māyī toṃ, maiṃ jānā hā balihār

[Who are you pirs, you leaders of similar appearance?
Which mother gave birth to you sons from her tears?
I bow before that mother with her good karma]

Note that this dialogic scene opens with formulaic phrases framed by politeness strategies. Ironically, Dulla is depicted as the debtor of Kala Khan's sons. The image of the protecting mother is a recurrent trope in other narratives as well. As a rhetorical figure, it expresses respect, social proximity and kinship. The pretended unawareness of the cousins' identity gives these words an ironic twist, which in turn is read by the opposite party as hypocrisy. The two sons respond directly to Dulla's praise.

Agyon laṛ ke bolde, te dulle nūṃ gall sunāyī
Kale khān de putt hāṃ, taj bībī sāḍī māyī
Sāḍā dādā buḍhā lāl khān, jinne jār eh phull lagāyī
Lakh lānat tere dulleyā, tainū zarā sharam nā āyī

[Then they spoke aggressively, and told Dulla the matter
We are Kale Khan's sons, our mother's name is Taj Bibi
It was our grandfather Lal Khan, who had grown this flower,
Be cursed one hundred thousand times Dulla, you have no shame]

In these couplets, genealogy matters as a rhetorical device to stake out claims against self-centred and immoral behaviour. The moral implications of the two sons' speech cannot be missed. Dulla is cursed and accused of having violated the norms of the *birādari* as well as the social values of solidarity. Addressing him pathetically as brother (*bhāī* has an ironic undertone here) and evoking his moral obligation (in the face of their own willingness to sacrifice 'eighty heads') the two sons transform victory on the battlefield into a moral defeat of Dulla Bhatti:

Aurat muglāṃ ne bāndā ban laiyā, sāḍī pinḍī sārī ujāṛī
Laī oh bha'ī sāḍeyā, assī sir de nāl nibhāyī
Tū sir vadheyā sāḍe bāp dā, te khuddo phūnī banāyī
Dhāke mār sanū pinḍī vicoṃ kadeyā, sāḍe nāl kītī eh vadhāyī

[The Mughals have caught and tied up our women, the entire village is ruined.
Digest this Brother: We have offered eighty heads for your sake.
And you have taken our father's head to live at our expense,
You have pushed us out of the village, and committed great injustice]

This battle of words provides the ground for settling the feud between the cross cousins. Initially the alliance is forged against a supreme political power. With the defeat of the enemy the old quarrel first resurfaces, but is then transferred to an oral argument. The past deeds are recollected in detail and rhetorically transformed into the moral defeat of the accused, Dulla Bhatti.

In these martial narratives, the dominant theme is that of coercion and resistance. There is something distinctive about the polarization of outside and local

actors. It is also a framework in which various other sub-plots and horizontal fracture lines emerge, as indicated in the tenuous relationship and feud among kinship and clans. Social values of righteousness, kinship solidarity, family, and honour provide the major tropes in these narratives. The dramatic plots can be allegorically applied to contemporary contexts of social and political crisis and dispute, where they function as a reminder of a previous history of conflict and resistance and the various attitudes embodied by local actors.[12]

Sacrificial Acts

Oral epics depicting scenes from the battlefield attribute specific relevance to the issue of sacrifice and martyrdom. The boundaries between martial narratives and those focusing on sacrificial acts are of course not clearly marked (cf. Hiltebeitel 1999, p. 15). Yet, in the case of sacrificial symbolism in *ḍhāḍī* repertoires, it makes some sense to draw distinctions. There are specific sub-genres like the *vār* that is used for heroic, and panegyric forms and the *sākā* that is more closely associated with the issue of martyrdom. The *vār* is a Punjabi verse form that is linked to bardic poetry and panegyrics.[13] When performers say they would perform *Qasur dī vār*, they link poetical meter, musical tune and a particular memory of an event, place or historical figure. Similar is the case of the popular narrative of *Sākā Chamkaur*. Here, the reference is to Guru Gobind Singh's famous battle in 1704 at the locality Chamkaur. Whereas a *vār* can be employed for topics that are not necessarily focused on martyrdom and sacrifice, the genre of *sākā* is unequivocally used for stories about the martyrdom of heroes past and present. The martyrdom of the Sikh Gurus and heroic warriors of the eighteenth century is prevalent. However, martyrs of the Gurdwara Reform Movement in the 1920s and later periods are also remembered.[14] As an example for such a repertoire, let me quote from Sohan Singh Ghukewalia booklet 'Dhadi Tears' (1964 [n.d.], pp. 88-89):

Gaḍḍhi yātrā 'c pair ṭakā'iā,	Set his feet
Srī nankāne nūṃ	Towards Nankana Sahib
Jathedār lachman singh hoyā,	Jathedar Lachman Singh,
dhāro vāli pinḍ jis dā	Whose village is called Dharowali
Jado pās nankāne ā'e,	As he came close to Nankana Sahib
Khabarām pahunc gayāṃ	News reached him,
Kise dassiā singhāṃ nuṃ jāke,	Someone came to inform the Singhs,
Hāl narainū dā	About Narain's character.
Picchhā muṛ jā'u agān nā jā'iu,	You should return and not proceed!
Khatrā jānāṃ dā	Lives are in danger!
Luce saddke mahant baṭhāle,	The *mahant* has called his scoundrels.
Mās te sharāb uḍḍā	He consumes meat and alcohol ,
Ka'iyā hatth pastaul bandūkāṃ	In his hands are many pistols and guns,

Kar morce bandī uh baiṭhā,	He is sitting in an entrenchment,
Khalse de mārāṃ nūṃ,	In order to kill the Khalsa."
Jatthedār ne kihā eh saudā,	The *jathedar* then said,
Karnā sastā e,	'This is no great matter.
Sīs di'ānge duvāre satigur de,	We will bow our head before the true Guru'
Enī aakhde agāh nūṃ call pae,	Saying this, they proceeded forward
Sīs nivā'yā gurāṃ nūṃ	Bowing their head before the Gurus-
Sāḍa sidak sikhi nā jāwe,	The righteous and faithful Sikhs shall not be defeated,
Lāj rakhīm bāzān vāliāṃ	Save our respect, you owner of the hawk.
Khule bār darbār vic vaṛ ga'e,	When entering the open court
Jathedār baithā	The jathedar sat like a humble servant,
Tābiā piāriā piāriā	
Duśt narainū ne lohaṛā māriā	And wicked Narain killed him cruelly.

The *guru kā bāgh* incident at *Nankānā Sāhib* was among the most horrible events to occur in the early 1920s. In the longer version of the composition, this incident and the killings are all portrayed in detail. The scene above describes how Lachman Singh, despite the warnings about the *mahant's* vicious plans, was determined to reach the destination together with the Akali *jatthā*. The piece ends with graphic language on the 'wicked character' of Narayan.[15] As can be seen in the example, the symbolic language that juxtaposes morality of the in-group against the viciousness of the 'intruders' is present here as well. Historical events were thus put in vernacular verse and were transmitted to a larger public through *ḍhāḍī* singing. As indicated in the composition above, performers took direct recourse to these happenings. The songs obviously still contain the historical core narrative and are therefore not merely invented. The scale of suffering and popular unrest of these times resulted in a new proliferation of martyrdom discourses, particularly those that formed the repertoire of Sikh *ḍhāḍī* performers in the nineteenth century.[16]

Romance and Subversion

The recurrent motif of heroic battle in Punjabi epics can be meaningfully interpreted on different analytical planes. Actual battle scenes are sometimes nuanced stories of creativity and subversion. Long bardic performances, particularly those performed by Punjab's Sufi *ḍhāḍīs,* have many sub-plots and characters, so that they can be easily interpreted from alternative perspectives. In this regard, let us come back to the story of *Dulla Bhatti*. One of the marginal characters in this narrative is Dulla's brother, Mehru Posti. The latter is a joker figure, described as a consumer of opium. In one subplot, Mehru Posti fights the Mughal army until the miraculous effect of the narcotic blend subsides.

Mehru khā ke golā hafīm dā, jeṛā saun gayā pair pasār
Caṛheyā dulle dā nūr khān, caṛh ke te wāg sanvārī
Boleyā dulle dā nūr khān, mughaloṃ sun lo bāt hamārī
Ajj wadhūṃ gā wic maidān, mughaloṃ tuhānūṃ varo-vārī

[Mehru, the one who consumed opium and slept with his feet spread apart
When he got high, Nur Khan of Dulla [endearment]
He seized the reigns and said: listen to us, Mughal friends
Today I shall kill you one after the other on the battlefield]

More interesting still, is the fact that, women take up the battle. Female characters are introduced as heroines who cross the boundaries of the *zanānā* (womens' quarters) in masking themselves as men (*zanāne kapṛe lāh ke, mardān wāle bheś kar ke*). Another song of Ragi engenders the image of the two women as heroic fighters, who manage to put the ruler into flight:
Pinjareoṃ chutiyā shīṛīyāṃ, jiwaiṃ mrig lage ne ucāṛī
Ake wic maidān de, tejā bhaundiyā bāro-bārī
Bhaj gayā mirzā nizām dīn, te jāndā pith dikhālī
Battī jawānā nūṃ wadh ke, nau-sas ne namāz utārī

[Like lionesses, released from their cages, who hunt after deer
Arriving at the battlefield, taking turns in swinging their swords
Mirza Nizam Din fled, showing his back
Mother and daughter in law prayed the *namāz* by killing thirty-two soldiers]

Here *ḍhāḍī* singing celebrates the transgression of social and gender norms. Oral epics are ambivalent in this regard – at times, they emphasize the heroic image of the male protector, patriarch and warrior, yet at other times, we find subversions of exactly this male heroic notion – in the mask of the intoxicated clown or the courageous female actor. The stanzas translated above indicate some of the hyperbolic imagery that one finds in many *ḍhāḍī* narratives.

The rhetoric of subversion is a characteristic facet of bardic discourse. Inasmuch as the bards occupy a low social status, the potential for social critique and ironic pun is a clear indication of the power of speech that is traditionally attributed to bards (Nayyar 2000). The witty character and ironic mode of Punjabi oral epics can also be found in ballads that deal with the intimate personal relationships between two lovers. These are, by far, the most revered stories in Punjab. Among them *Sassī Punnū, Sohnī Mahiwāl, Mirzā Sahibān*, or *Hīr Rānjhā* constitute the core of indigenous Punjabi folklore and poetic language, and are also part of a distinctive literary-poetic genre, the *qissā*.

The *qissā* is a narrative poem that has emerged as a synthesis of two ancient narrative poetic genres, the Persian *masnavi* and the Indian *kathā*. Other Arabic

and Persian traditions of storytelling that came with migrants from as far as Iran and the Middle East might have been influential as well. According to Denis Matringe (1988), the most frequent poetic meter is called *baiṃt*. It is also one of the most frequent meters in *ḍhāḍī* performance. Transmitted orally for centuries and disseminated in the form of small booklets with the advent of the printing press, the *qissā Hīr Rānjhā* has thus become a major focus of scholarly attention and popular reception.[17]

Hīr Rānjhā provides the ubiquitous poetic, metaphorical and imaginary repertoire that sustains bardic oral discourse. The sections below are extracted from an oral performance, recorded with *ḍhāḍī* Idu Shareef in Chandigarh. Like Mohammad Shareef Ragi of Faisalabad, Idu Shareef belongs to a hereditary *ḍhāḍī* family. His two sons form the chorus and play the *ḍhaḍḍs*. One of the sections that I liked best is the dramatic encounter between Ranjha and Hir, when the bridal rituals for Hir have started, in the form of the *ḍolī* (the wedding palanquin). The section that I have chosen to translate below portrays Hīr in all her agony. Existential assertions of the heroine stand against the social rules of the *birādarī*. As the marriage preparations continue, an old friend, pretending to weep at Hir's shoulder, informs her about her lover's sorrowful situation and, which increases her agonized memory of unfulfilled love. On hearing her friend talk, Hīr jumps out of the *ḍolī* and requests her companions to help her, if they still considered her a friend. Finally, Ranjha enters the *ḍolī* in the guise of a woman. He taunts the heroine:

Khaṛk kaleje de wic // sūlāṃ wango rarhkugī,
Khaṛkugī, khul ke bhau // hird wic, ishq wichorheyā wāle
Tū tān es gal badle // bānh toṃ phaṛh ke liyāyī sī
Khambe agnī hīre // śuśk de sambhāle
Tū tān aiwaiṃ matiyāre // wic dolī de pā layiyā
Joyuu sāp kī pitārī // bādh āp wangāle
Kasam sugandhā dī // pand bann ke sirte dhardī hai
Terī terī kah ke // qur'ān-sharīf uṭhāle
Baiṭh ke khowaj de utte, // cakkiyān chaṛdiyāṃ cūrīyāṃ
Panje pīr gawāhī // baiṭhe sī ujāle
De jawāb sānūṃ // jhūtheyā kauleyā wāliye
Oh kānū patthar paye // udyār de tuhāde
Ajj tān manjā nī // maiṃ arjān kardā teriyān
Cittā jawāb de sānūṃ // assī takhat hazāre nu sajāyiye

[The pain in your heart will be that of the one facing the scaffold,
The pain in your heart will swell like the broken hearts of separated lovers,
For this matter I am here to hold your arm
I did not even fear the hot pillars of Cucak,
Why do you let your self be put in the doli, young girl?

Like a snake that is trapped in a little box?
I swear with a whole bundle of oaths on my head
Doing nothing else than reciting your name, the holy Qur'anin my hands.
When I see my woman lover (bracelet wearer), I do not even fear the wheel (of torture)
Make to sing the five beloved (holy witnesses), who were sitting in light-
Answer us, are these the eyes of a liar?
Why are there stones in your heart?
Today I beg you to commit yourself.
Give us a true answer, so that we can prepare for *Takht Hazara*]

The dramatic appearance of the hero in disguise is one of the peaks of the narrative. Dido teases his heroine, comparing her position as that of trapped snake. He anticipates the pain of their separation and appeals to her very pious self in order to get her commitment of eternal love. Ranjha calls upon the *panj pīr,* as the witnesses of their socially forbidden love. By doing so, he alludes to the Punjabi Sufi saints as a source of moral reinforcement, to be contrasted with the doctrines of official Islam (epitomized in the figure of the Muslim jurist, *qādī*).[18]

Hir answers Ranjha's challenge in dramatic fashion, saying that she would never accept defeat. If this were to happen, 'the earth would not be able to carry the weight of human beings' (*dhartī ḍaule bail toṃ cakkī nā jāṇī*), and 'rivers would stop flowing' (*vaganu rah jāye, nadiyāṃ dā pānī*). Hero and heroine complain, about the rigidity of kinship conventions and the treachery behind the marriage arrangement. They express a willingness to sacrifice their lives, grounding their decision in a moral concept that is at once spiritual and romantic. The appeal of the *Hīr Rānjhā* ballad rests on this subversive mixing of issues of religious piety and lover's intimacy.

As can be seen in the *Hīr Rānjhā* episode, the dramatic peaks of stories are cast in dialogues between the hero and heroine, in which they commit themselves to particular forms of social conduct and to a particular moral world view that set them apart from kinship norms. At the semantic level, the interaction between these personae is significant for the communication and dramatization of core symbols and morals (Gill 1985: 146). Similarly, in the oral epic *Dulla Bhatti*, *ḍhāḍī* couplets are structured around a battle of words between protagonists on the battlefield. In the Sikh *ḍhāḍī* tracts and public performances that I have studied, the method of contrasting different world-views and moral commitments are also prevalent. They are often explicitly indexed as a question-answer play ('*sawāl-jawāb*') between two opponents, or, between a human and divine figure. While in most of the *ḍhāḍi* compositions, we find a similar dialogic structure of contrast between two world views, each particular repertoire – martial, sacrificial, and romance – incorporates different meaning structures from which to draw a broader picture on how a moral community is allegorised through the rhetorics of heroism and pain. Thus, for instance, the pain of the

Sikh martyr might function as a form of 'ritual unburdening' (Longinovic 2000: 628) of a collective Sikh identity that is located in a past of heroic resistance and territorial belonging, while the pain voiced by Hir and Ranjha seems to move away from such socially defined notions of collective belonging. In this respect, the partitioning of *ḍhāḍī* repertoires along religious and political lines of patronage is indeed indicative of post-Partition processes in which the emphasis is placed on modes of collective identity formation.

Epilogue

I began this article by arguing that, in post-Partitioned Punjab, there have been centripetal forces that led to a revitalization of the remembered links between the Sikh institutions and *ḍhāḍī* performers in terms of patronage and symbolic meaning system. Migration experiences and the changes in the public sphere on both sides of the border led to a situation which resulted in a certain homogenization of *ḍhāḍī* performative practice. I would like to point out in these concluding remarks, however, that members of the *ḍhāḍī* performative community emphasize a notion of difference in relation to the Sikh institutions that function as the main bodies of patronage. This is clearly expressed in the way Sikh performers today relate to their self-image in a language of neglect and social marginality (Nijhawan 2003b). As I could witness in the course of my field research, Sikh *ḍhāḍī* performers have constantly expressed their disillusionment with the political agenda of their patrons, demanding better payment, education, and social recognition. Although, the genre has acquired an unambiguous format to the extent that the self-representation and performance on the stage succumb to the normative values of Sikh religion, processes of self-representation among the Sikh *ḍhāḍī* performers are cast in a language of difference in relation to the representative body of the Sikh community.

This might indicate a significant change to the situation in the 1980s, when, in the context of social and political crisis, *ḍhāḍī* performances on Sikh martyrdom proliferated. As indicated by Joyce Pettigrew (1992), there seemed to be a close relationship between the ḍhāḍī tradition and the Sikh militant movement. Even though Pettigrew is right that many of the *ḍhāḍī* performers supported the militant movement, I would go on to argue that, even in the 1980s Punjab, we find a broader framework of aesthetic receptivity through which *ḍhāḍī* performances acquired meaning – a framework that moves us well beyond militancy and resistance. It must be generally noted that the sonic dimension of the *ḍhāḍī* voice had a particularly strong appeal in translating suffering and pain into collectively shared forms of mourning death. We are lacking here an ethnographical account of actual performances in the 1980s. However, according to what my fieldwork interlocutors told me, *ḍhāḍī* participation in the public clearly transcended the limited framework of the diaspora performers praising Sikh militants. Let me conclude in arguing that Punjab's *ḍhāḍī* tradition has to be

conceptualised as a complex site of meaning production in the post-Partition environment. As I have just indicated, the tradition has been adaptive to changes in the political landscape. Yet, it also embodies memories of an alternative social order. The performance of a particular genre and narrative repertoire, though socially recognized and attributed to a particular collective identity, is never entirely defined by this relationship. I have suggested approaching the relationship between the *ḍhāḍī* genre and the different aesthetic communities of Sikh and Sufi affiliation in non-folkloristic terms; which entails a somewhat sceptical stance against identity claims on the *ḍhāḍī* genre in terms of a particular group 'ownership'. Sikh and Sufi context of *ḍhāḍī* performance still share a sense of commonality: common to them is the transmission of an interpretation of the heroic past and an emphasis of a range of meanings that are associated with shared notions of moral community and civic virtues. Finally, they share an inherited poetic and musical repertoire in the Punjabi vernacular and succeeded, at least to some extent, in retaining the intercultural and transreligious character of Punjabi language against many tendencies toward political and religious homogenisation.

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Notes

[1] For this point see Regula Qureshi's (2000) work on the classical *sārangī*

[2] For the notion of 'taste' as an evaluative category of religious aesthetics see Anna M. Gade (2002)

[3] At this point, we can follow Werbner (1996) who has differentiated between moral and aesthetic community in the context of an Islamic diaspora. Aesthetic community, according to Werbner, "is defined by cultural knowledge, passion and creativity" (p. 91). It has its experts and shared tastes for humour, love and tragedy, and is based on particular genres of expression and performance.

[4]Bonny Wade's (1998) analysis of Mughal paintings reveals that *ḍhāḍī* instrumentation – the *sārangī* and a slightly bigger form of the hourglass shaped drum (*ḍhāḍ*) – was already present at the Mughal darbar. In the Mughal chronicles, *ḍhāḍī* musicians are recorded as 'singers' (Neuman 1980, pp. 86-87). At the Mughal darbar *ḍhāḍīs* were ranked as average musicians below other musicians of Persian origin, such as the *atai* or *huzūrī* and *gunijan* or *darbārī*. It seems that Indian artists were entering the court at the bottom of the hierarchy, but were subsequently capable to replace the previously dominant Persian musicians.

[5] Most of the Sikh performers I worked with referred to Guru Hargobind as the original patron. Sikh hagiography also records this association. In a nineteenth century hagiographic genre, the *Gurbilās Pātshāhī* 6, it is mentioned that Guru Hargobind patronized *ḍhāḍī* bards; two of them are named as Abdullah and Natha. See for instance, Chhabra (1960, p. 200) and Harbans Singh (1992, p. 407).

[6] For a historical perspective, see: Bor (1987), Neuman (1980), Vaudeville (1999), and Wade (1998).

[7] Vahali's writing is concerned with the semiotics of the epic space in Ritwik Ghatak's films. Yet, her description is valid beyond this particular concern with the film genre.

[8] The efficacy of a *ḍhāḍī* performance is based on imagistic notions. Performers are reflexive about a notion of *shabdī tasvīr* which can be best described with the classical rhetorical term, of the *imagines agentes*. Images that are used in bardic performances throughout India often have a deeply religious meaning. In the narrative tradition of *Devnārāyaṇ*, discussed by Malik (1999), the images that are depicted on a *paṛ* (scroll) are understood as 'presences' of deities and people, rather than representations of objects, "it is only through the entire context of the religious cult of *Devnārāyaṇ* that the meaning of the image is revealed to us" (ibid. p. 53). Thus, in the case of devotional bardic discourse the images are the vehicles through which Gods and epic heroes acquire agency. Punjab's *ḍhāḍī* performers do not use scroll paintings. However, their idea of the imagistic character of a performance has similarly to do with the power of visualization through musical and poetical language. It would not be sufficient to say that they employ cultural tropes and metaphors to 'visualize' the narratives. The understanding is quite close to the actual staging of images as if they could be actually seen and felt in a performative event.

[9] Such divisive tendencies, inherited in the narrative representations of folklore, have for instance been analysed in Timothy Mitchell's (1988) work on folk genres in Spain, which is certainly one of the outstanding anthropological studies on the subject. For the case of Sikh *ḍhāḍī* representations note that constructions of the other have historically been oscillating between different enemy horizons. Thus, for instance in pre-Partition Sikh *ḍhāḍī* narratives, a remembered past of 'Muslim oppressors' is linked to a present in which Muslim organizations became opponents in the struggle for political representation. In the context of the Khalistan movement on the other hand, the linkages to the past of oppression were redefined in their linkage to the present and projected on the 'Hindu' as the other (see also Das 1995, Pettigrew 1992).

[10] Mohammad Saddiq and Mohammad Shareef Ragi, *Dulla Bhatti*, Rahmat Gramophones, Faisalabad (commercial tape recording).

[11] There are of course various versions of this oral epic. Bhagat Kirpal Ram composed one of the earliest written tracts I came about. I have traced this text on microfilm in the Library of Congress, Washington. Although, it is not dated,

I assume the text must have been originally published in the 1930s or 1940s. Bhai Chatar Singh and Jiwan Singh at Bazar Mai Seva in Amritsar are mentioned as publishers. The Singh brothers have also issued most of the *ḍhāḍī* tracts.

[12] For a similar argument see Magrini (2000)

[13] There is a current anecdote about a song called *saināṇī vār* (from *senā* – military formation or army), which is traditionally sung to somebody's cortege. The story in question relates to the heroism of a young Rajput woman, who sacrifices her own head as a last gift (*ākhirī niśānī*) to her lover. The lover was on his way to the battlefield but turned back halfway to ask for the gift. She then gives the explanation for her act, in the following verse:
mutiyār de man wic āyā
merā moh innu adh wicoṃ moṛ lai āyā
te maidān wicom chaḍḍ ke nas āyā
- te rājputā de muh dāg lag jāwegā
[It came to the young woman's mind:
'If my love makes him turn
Halfway to the battlefield,
And come to me
Then great will be the shame of the Rajputs.]
(thanks to Surjit Singh Kalra for assistance with this translation)

[14] See also Pettigrew (1992)

[15] Sexual (male) desire and violence converge in the term *lohaṛ(ā)*. I could have also translated 'Narain fucked him up', but according to the actual context (Narain and his gunmen killed the protesters with firearms) I interpreted the meaning of this idiomatic expression in the sense of killing.

[16] Sacrificial repertoires resurfaced powerfully in the pre-Partition decades. The contested status of the *Shahidganj Mosque* among Sikhs and Muslims in 1935 is a particularly compelling incident in which *ḍhāḍī* idioms of sacrifice and war contribute in shaping communalist sentiments of the times. See Gilmartin (1988) and Nijhawan (2002).

[17] The narrative has been differently assessed by historians, politicians and popular opinion, as an allegory of Sufi thought, a text of subversion and social transgression, a love story, or even a text of Punjabi Muslim identity. It is in fact inaccurate to assume the existence of a single narrative. For a discussion about the social and political and cultural world depicted in *Hir Varis Śah*, see Grewal (1984). Grewal suggests that the text cannot be read as a mere allegory of Sufi thought, epitomized in the soul-body dualism. On a similar line, Matringe (1988) locates the distinctive creative impulse in *Hir Varis Śah* in the subversive irony that is based on the sensual relationship between hero and heroine. Pervaiz Nazir (2001) describes, how this narrative has undergone a constant process of

re-editing to make it suitable as a representative text of modern Pakistani Muslim identity.

[18] The *pañj pīr* is a very popular cultural and religious symbol in Punjab. Particularly in rural Punjab, we find that Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs revere the saints. Ranjha's evocation of the *pañj pīr* can be attributed to this fact, although the Qur'an is also mentioned as a source of moral authority. I am grateful to Farina Mir for sharing her thoughts on this topic. I refer to her paper 'Representations of Community in Punjabi Oral Epics' presented at the South Asia Conference, February 16, 2001, at the University of California, Berkeley.

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Southall, Capital of the 1970s: Of Community Resistance and the Conjuncture of April the 23rd, 1979

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Taking the idiosyncratic historical materialism of Walter Benjamin as an inspiration and, method, this paper examines the disturbances that occurred in Southall, West London on April the 23rd, 1979. On that day, a peaceful protest by local residents, organised in opposition to the presence of the fascist National Front, who had been granted permission to hold an election meeting in the town hall, was met by a violent response from the police. This event is examined both in its own terms, as a decisive juncture in the history of this, predominantly Punjabi, diaspora community, and as barometer of the more general political mood of the times. After an account of the disturbances, the following four sections examine in turn the principle actors involved on the day: the Southall community, sections of the British left, the police and media as agencies of elite interests, and supporters of the National Front. The histories of, and interactions between, the four are followed up to the crucible of April the 23rd, 1979. Though not, for the most part, a causal influence on their subsequent fortunes, this date, or 'conjuncture', nevertheless retains a peculiar saliency, heralding the changes that each would undergo in the 1980s and beyond.

Accounts of the police violence, fascist provocation and community resistance that shook Southall, a town in West London and, since the 1950s, one of the most prominent Asian communities in the UK, on April the 23rd, 1979, fall into broadly two camps. The most numerous are those in the annals of post-war history where the disturbances, or 'riots' (depending on the political complexion of the author), are presented as a footnote to the ongoing narrative of race relations. In the second, far smaller, category are accounts from the streets themselves: amalgams of reportage, oral history and archival research such as the report from the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL), the impassioned *Southall: The Birth of a Black Community*, or the feminist perspectives of Southall Black Sisters (SBS).

Between the two poles, those of history from 'above' or 'below', reside the urban myths and collective memories of April the 23rd, 1979. This 'conjuncture' of influences, from the prosaic to the world-historical, which were juxtaposed and fused together at the time, endures even to the present as a parallel, anecdotal record. Hence, it is not uncommon for the recollections of those[1] present on the day to elide spatial and temporal details with other episodes in community life. Memories of April the 23rd often merge with those of other anti-racist struggles in the town[2], the events were a central influence on

the personal and political identity of second generation Asians in Southall an elsewhere, and the day itself offers a snapshot of contemporary politica tendencies, of which right-wing extremism and incipient Thatcherism are onl the most obvious examples.

It is the nature of this conjuncture that I will explore in the course of thi paper, based on the intuition that the events and experiences in this small We London town were uniquely illustrative of among the most pressing politica questions of the day. In particular, I will argue that the solidarity and militanc that arose in the Southall of the 1970s, in response to the collective experienc of racial violence, contributed to the growth of a uniquely progressive politica culture, a 'cosmopolitan modernity' that would sadly be undermined in th 1980s.

Insofar as such a perspective can be adopted as a scholarly method, th idiosyncratic 'historical materialism' of Walter Benjamin offers an encouragin antecedent. Employed implicitly throughout his work, and stated in more detai in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*[3], Benjamin's approach consisted o focussing on peripheral fragments, whether in the form of cultural ephemera o obscure events, of the dominant version of history and, finding in them a distillation of the zeitgeist, particularly from the perspective of the marginalize and oppressed. The relevant fragments could offer a glimpse of a more hopefu modernity. Hence, the approach demands hermeneutic sensitivity, the selectio for study of objects or occurrences that fulfil these exacting requirements[4].

> Materialist historiography...is based on a constructive principle. Thinking involves not only the flow of thoughts but also their arrest as well. Where thinking suddenly stops in a configuration pregnant with tensions, it gives birth to a monad. A historical materialist approaches a historical subject only where he encounters it as a monad. In this structure he recognises the sign of a Messianic cessation of happening, or, put differently, a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past.[5]

Inspired by Benjamin's practice of this method in an essay from 1935 proclaiming the Paris of Baudelaire to be the 'Capital of the Nineteenth-Century', I have chosen to focus on the spatial and temporal environs of Southall, particularly on April the 23rd, as similarly, if in a more modest sense, representing a 'Capital of the 1970s'. I will argue that the conjuncture saw the intersection between prominent political conflicts of the day and the lives of the local residents in a singular historical-phenomenological moment, a 'monad' heraldic of far more than would at first appear. In particular, this monad saw the culmination of tensions between four historical actors that had been in conflict throughout the post-war period, especially in the 1970s: Britain's Black communities, particularly the second generation of Southall's Asian youth who were born in the UK; the radical, mostly extra-parliamentary, left and the Trade Unions (TU), whose attitudes toward ethnic minorities underwent a number of shifts in the post-war era; the elite forces of state, government, police, judiciary, and mass media, whose gradual influence by the 'New Right' was facilitated by

the crises of the 1970s; and, finally, the extreme right, from the Racial Preservation Societies (RPS) to the National Front (NF).

In the first section of this paper, I will present a breakdown of events on the 23rd. I will continue through the next four sections by following the evolution of each actor up to the conjuncture, often reflecting on their fate in the changed climate of the 1980s.

Southall, April the 23rd, 1979

A small town in the South West corner of the London Borough of Ealing, Southall was able by 1976 to boast a population of whom 46% could claim descent from the New Commonwealth and Pakistan against a national average of 3.5%[6].

With a valiant history of resistance to racial discrimination and attack, both from the first generation of settlers and their increasingly militant offspring, it is unsurprising that a decision by the local Tory led council to allow the neo-Fascist NF to hold an election meeting in the local town hall on the 23rd of April, 1979, the incendiary date of Saint George's day, caused anger and dismay to Southall's residents. With no support or prospect of electoral success in the town since the early 1970s, the meeting was clearly intended to promote racial tension.

Yet, the insensitivity of the local council was soon matched by a vigorous, though ultimately unsuccessful, campaign by local community groups to stop the meeting. Among the measures called for by local residents and activists, including those of the Indian Workers Association (IWA), were the decision to hold a protest march for 'unity and peace' on the 22nd of April and, a half day strike and sit-down protest outside the town hall from 5pm on the 23rd. Calls for a protest march on the 23rd made by groups such as the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), Anti-Nazi League (ANL) and Socialist Unity, a group headed by the Tariq Ali[7] which planned to campaign for election in Southall in the coming election, were turned down by local groupings in favour of the sit-down protest. Telegrams were also sent to the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary, and the Chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality emphasising the danger of violent confrontation if the meeting were allowed to go ahead[8].

The Southall Youth Movement (SYM), one of the few groups that declined to participate in the IWA coordinated protests, decided to form its own independent picket near the town hall before the start of the meeting. All of the activities proposed by the various groups were reported to the Police although the latter neglected in turn to convey their exact attitudes and intentions back to community leaders[9].

The unity and peace demonstration of the 22nd proved a success, marshalling five thousand people in a dignified march to Ealing Borough town hall. Yet, despite their apparent acquiescence to the requests of the local residents, the police proved to have a quite different attitude on the day of the NF meeting when they prevented any kind of protest from going ahead.

A portent of the conflict to come was already apparent in the council's crass

decision to fly the Union Jack, a symbol that the NF had claimed for itself as a party badge and one, moreover, that was not suitable for that one day in the year[10], over the town hall. Hours before the planned demonstrations, two and three quarter thousand of the Metropolitan Police force arrived in Southall and proceeded to occupy the whole of the town centre (including the town hall area). A significant proportion of this occupying force were members of the Special Patrol Group (SPG), a quasi-military grouping conceived in the context of the industrial and terrorist violence of the preceding decade, and hence wholly unsuited to the policing of a small, peaceful civilian protest. Eyewitness accounts suggest that the SPG undermined the authority of the local police[11]. Claiming the need to create a 'sterile area' at the centre of the town, rhetoric characteristic of the government's counter-insurgency policies toward public protest since the 1960s, the police prevented the protesters from demonstrating outside of the town hall. They also ensured the passage of the sixty NF members who attended the meeting. Though a nominally 'public' election meeting, NF stewards unlawfully prevented individual members of the local community from attending and, even barred a reporter, Kevin O'Lone, from the *Daily Mirror* on the charge that his paper 'supports these niggers and is a Labour rag'[12].

As the evening wore on, an increasing number of arrests were made, among them many of the demonstration stewards who had been maintaining order and calm earlier in the day. By now, the police had penned the remaining demonstrators between double cordons on each of the four roads leading into the sterile area of the town centre. Arrests continued to be made and accounts from the hundreds of eyewitnesses who gave evidence for the NCCL report suggested that, in the words of clergyman Reverend Theo Samuels, police 'discipline had broken down' by the early evening[13]. At one point, an unmarked coach manned by a civilian driver and a police officer drove toward a particularly large crowd of penned-in demonstrators from behind at approximately 30 miles per hour. Witnesses note that it was miraculous that no one was killed[14], yet further charges by police vans followed[15]. A number of police officers were also hurt, one PC Lavercock actually stabbed[16].

A detailed account of the of the brutality and indiscipline shown by the police toward demonstrators and bystanders is given in the report by the NCCL. Two further events must, however, be taken into account if the full impact of police conduct is to be appreciated.

At about 7.45 pm, Blair Peach, a teacher from East London and, member of the Anti-Nazi league, was struck on the head by an assailant widely believed to have been a member of the SPG[17]. He died from his injuries at 12:10 am in the course of emergency surgery[18]. While the coroners report noted that the head injuries he received were not compatible with the sort of truncheons officially employed by the police on the day, rather being suggestive of a lead waited rubber cosh or similar weapon, searches on June the 5th of the lockers of SPG officers who had been on duty in Southall revealed an arsenal of correspondingly non-standard weapons including crowbars, knives, a whip, a leather encased truncheon, a metal truncheon, a pick axe handle and a brass handle[19]. To this day, no police officer active on the 23rd has been charged with

Blair Peach's murder.

Some of the worst police violence was targeted toward the premises of a local community group, Peoples Unite, the culmination of lengthy campaign of intimidation toward its members[20]. The Peoples Unite premises had been agreed upon as a medical centre and, apparently without the consent of the members, as an unofficial meeting and coordination centre for groups such as the ANL and Socialist Unity. As the day wore on, the house began to fill with local residents and activists unable, due to the police barricades, to get home until the house held in the region of 100 people. Having broken into the house, police wielding truncheons and riot shields proceeded to mount a frenzied attack on the people inside, concentrating significant attention on those in the medical centre and subjecting all occupants to a barrage of blows as they descended the stairs and were ejected from the building. Clarence Baker, a prominent member of Peoples Unite, received a blood clot on the brain from a blow he received and was kept under hourly hospital observation for a week afterwards. Baker noted that the basement storage rooms of the house, locked during the demonstration, were also broken into by the police and that the musical equipment therein, valued at approximately £10,000, had been completely destroyed. The attack on the persons and property of Peoples Unite were to prove so traumatic that activities at the house could not continue afterwards. Adding insult to injury, the Tory led council refused to consider compensation for the destruction of equipment[21]. Of the 37 occupants of the building interviewed about the day's events, 31, including Tariq Ali, testified to incomprehensible levels of violence and indiscipline from the police[22].

The dismay and outrage experienced by the community continued to be felt for many years after the events, not least because of the trials that followed where 345[23] people, the largest number in a single day since the mass Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) sit downs of the early 1960s, were charged. The number was so great that most local residents could claim to have had some connection with one or more of the defendants. The proceedings were also considered to be unfair due to the practice of trying many of the defendants collectively in a 'riot court' and, through the hostile conduct of the stipendiary magistrates chosen to try them who were known in advance to have harsh views on conviction and sentence. Ultimately, the effect of the violence on the day, and the harsh treatment of the accused in the trials that followed, would be to weaken the Asian community's faith in the police and the judicial system which had previously been seen as above reproach[24].

Yet, the events of the 23rd would also serve to strengthen the already formidable levels of solidarity within Asian communities such as Southall. This was immediately apparent on the 28th of April when approximately 15,000 people took part in a march in memory of Blair Peach, and, in solidarity demonstrations organised across the country in the following days. The account of the 28th given by Community Relations Officer Martyn Grubb gives a sense of the occasion.

> Above all...because of its orderliness. Secondly, because of its size...People - ordinary housewives and children, ordinary Southall

> families - were coming out of their front doors as the march passed and joining. They were not just all Indians though the majority were. There were people of every race and colour. It was quiet. Just before it got to the place where Blair Peach died a loudspeaker asked everyone to maintain silence. I left the march for a time at that spot and watched the march go by. That was where I realised it was so big...I felt it was a very healing thing - not just neutral but positively good [25].

In particular, the youth of Southall had begun to display a level of political will and organisation that would see them taking on the task of defending the community in a more assertive style than that of their parents. This determination led to the successful defence of the town, and the final defeat of the skinheads who had periodically menaced residents since the late 1960s, in the 'second round' of clashes in 1981. This time, a fascist rock concert held at the Hambrough Tavern provoked a massive response from the SYM and its allies, who burned down the pub, thereby ridding the town of its last racist enclave. The radical spirit unleashed on the 23rd would also have the effect of galvanising activism in the area, leading to the formation of the Southall Monitoring Group (SMG) in 1979 and, SBS in November of the same year.

Southall: A Public Sphere and its New Social Movements

In the *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*[26], Jürgen Habermas charts the evolution of the bourgeois public sphere, a set of interlinked fora for the open discussion of state policy among 'informed outsiders', from its origins in the coffee houses and salons of eighteenth-century Europe, to its decline in the twentieth-century with the encroachment of organised interests concerned to modulate public opinion. The longevity of this public sphere was assisted to a significant extent by the existence of organs of communication, such as newspapers and letters, to ensure the circulation of ideas. The importance of such media is further illustrated by James Curran and Jean Seaton in their analysis of the rise and decline of the radical working class press in nineteenth-century England, a medium finally eclipsed when, having endured legal measures designed to curtail its influence, it was undermined by the sheer costs of competition and production in an era of the increasing 'industrialisation of the press'[27]. As with the coffee houses of the eighteenth-century, the working class press contributed to the growth of class consciousness and unity, a shared value system, and a sense of the potential power of the inchoate classes, bourgeoisie and proletariat respectively, to conceive and bring about social change[28].

In the truncated time scale of the decades between their post-war arrival and the radicalism of their second generation offspring, a similarly fertile community identity and political consciousness arose in Southall through the growth of a distinct public sphere, complete with the fora for interaction and the

organs of communication on which it was based, and, with the growth of correspondingly innovative forms of political mobilisation.

The latter of these tendencies is conceived of by Gilroy as the movement from primarily socialistic forms of organisation, with the emancipation of each worker's labour as their primary motivation, to the rise of New Social Movements (NSM) more concerned with the symbolic reproduction and autonomy of an ethnic community[29]. Hence, an NSM can be regarded as the reified expression of the political will that arises in a correspondingly cosmopolitan, modern public sphere. As I will argue in the course of this section, the growth of Southall's NSMs was an open ended, and even reversible, process initiated by the IWAs and continued with the youth protest of the late 1970s.

Indeed, the very heterogeneity of influences that came together in Southall, from secular, democratic and socialist traditions to various forms of collective worship, have meant that the community has undergone almost continuous evolution and change, not least in the extent to which it has absorbed English cultural and political influences. This rapid development of community fora and political organisations was given a renewed stimulus with the coming of age of Southall's youth. Hence, the period up to the conjuncture of 1979 was marked by the increasingly direct political action of the second generation in relation to both police and fascist harassment, and, the development of modern forms of political expression and mobilisation concentrated on the notion of black unity and struggle. The latter innovations paralleled those of the New Left in the 1960s and 70s with its youthful demographic composition and, linkage of decolonisation struggles to those of radicals in western urban centres.

Yet, as I will also argue in this section, the very 'porousness' of a public sphere such as that of Southall contributes a vulnerability to corrosive influences alongside an openness to sources of dynamism and renewal. Hence, in the period after the conjuncture of 1979, the incursion of influences such as religious fundamentalism and the neoliberal imperatives of Thatcherism had to a significant extent undermined the modern, secular radicalism that had been built in the previous decades.

In his seminal analysis of the growth of IWAs in the UK, John DeWitt notes how communities of immigrants from the Indian sub-continent had settled in Britain for some decades prior to the arrivals of the 50s and 60s. From as early as the 1920s there had been small communities of Indian seamen in port cities and Indian pedlars in the Midlands and the North. While the seamen were mainly Muslims, the pedlars were Bhattra Sikhs, members of an itinerant merchant community from the Punjab[30]. DeWitt recounts a meeting in the course of his research with quite possibly the first Sikh settler to arrive in Southall:

> I met a man who had lived in Southall...since 1936. He was an ordinary villager who had little education, no English, and came from a family with too many sons and not enough land. After a time in England he saved enough money to buy a house in Southall, since when dozens of men from his village have come to

> England through him; he provided them with food until they found a job and with lodgings until they decided to buy their own houses.[31]

Such a pattern of settlement and support continued into the post-war period. Writing of the mid 1960s, prior to the arrival of Asians from Kenya (1967) and Uganda (1972), DeWitt notes how practically all of the post-war immigrants from India had come from areas in the states of Punjab and Gujarat. Of the, predominantly Sikh, Punjabis, the bulk of immigrants had come from the Jullundur and Hoshiarpur districts in the heart of the state. They were often the younger sons of their families, prompted by rural overpopulation at home, and the promise of higher wages abroad, to make the journey west[32]. Tatla suggests that this Punjabi 'culture of migration', concentrated on a core of sending villages, could in part be explained by developments in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These included family experiences of emigration from central to western Punjab, where colonies arose around the canal systems being developed under the coordination of the British. Army recruitment also played its part. Designated by the British as a 'Martial Race', Sikhs were often inspired to migrate to North America, Canada, Australia and the Far East in the wake of military and police service abroad[33]. Hence, in the early 1950s, the majority of Southall's Asian workers were of rural-peasant origin, along with a steady trickle of white collar workers such as teachers and clerks[34]. This decade or so of migration was checked by the tightening of immigration controls from the early 1960s.

From the late 1940s, the first social and political networks to arise were those of single men. The widespread practice of arranging for the passage of spouses and children from India was yet to come. These men would often be known to one another from their local area, or *Ilaqa*, in the Punjab. Yet two factors soon contributed to the erosion of Ilaqa ties and the growth of a distinct sense of belonging to Southall's Asian community: the arrival of spouses and children, and the solidarity promoted between men by factory work. Settling into a routine of family life with wives and children, Asian men often spent less time in the Ilaqa based boarding houses and drinking circles that they had previously frequented. At the same time, the men met and befriended other Asians in the course of factory work, often building trust in the course of industrial struggles overseen by the local IWA[35].

The IWAs and their sister organisations of Pakistani workers that grew up in Asian communities throughout Britain in the 1950s were vital to their members in satisfying the dual functions as, along with religious organisations, an integral component of growing public spheres, and as central representatives of the interests of Asian workers in relation to employers and Trade Unions alike. The IWAs of the 1950s were actually the 'second wave' of such organisations, the first of their war-time predecessors being formed in Coventry in 1938 from among the Punjabi pedlars and factory workers of the area. Yet these early organisations generally declined with the satisfaction of their central raison d'être: the independence won by India from the British in 1947[36]. The

importance granted to Indian issues relative to those affecting the Asian community in the UK would decline to a general parity with the second and third 'waves' of organisation of the post-war IWAs and the groupings of second generation Asians.

Attracted by the plenitude of unskilled, often monotonous and dirty, work offered in the Southall area by firms such as Woolf's Rubber Co. and Krafts, and unhampered by the, as yet, undiscriminating immigration system, a significant number of first generation Asians arrived in Southall in the 1950s. By the end of the decade a vibrant public sphere had already begun to arise with the formation of the Southall IWA in 1957 and the first Sikh temple, or *Gurdwara*, in 1959[37]. These institutions complemented the community fora that had already grown up around meetings in Southall Park, local pubs and private homes[38].

Yet, the very rapidity of development of Asian public spheres in Britain, in comparison with the bourgeois and working class examples mentioned earlier, can be explained by two factors unique to settings such as Southall: their distinct territorial delimitation and their particularly intense stimulation by, and emission of, flows of communication.

The territorial constitution of communities such as Southall has generally been due, on the one hand, to the solidarity and support facilitated by cultural and language ties, and, on the other, to being pushed together by 'default' by the shared experience of racism. Southall was particularly illustrative of the second territorialisation of the public sphere due to discrimination initially experienced in the realm of housing. An early problem for Asians in Southall was the experience of overcrowding[39]: the pressure to be near sources of work, the expense involved in house buying and the commonplace reluctance of white residents to rent to black and Asian tenants, all conspired to create the situation of excessive numbers of male residents sharing rooms in overcrowded boarding houses. This practice was rapidly exploited by racists such as the British National Party (BNP) candidate John Bean who fought in the 1963 local election in Southall and, the antagonistic white locals who formed the Southall Residents Association (SRA) in the same year, the latter describing the very presence of Asian residents as a 'health hazard'[40]. Yet, at the same time, the SRA[41] actually used such rhetoric as the justification for pressuring the council to buy vacant houses to prevent Asian residents from buying or renting them, particularly on the fringes of Southall[42]. Participation by the local Council in this process of ghettoisation was also expressed by the tendency to neglect the cleaning and maintenance of the built environment, neglect that was further blamed by white residents on the Asian community[43]. The initial territorialisation of Southall's public sphere was also imposed by gangs of racists who menaced Asian residents, particularly at the fringes of the town. Yet, in later years the maintenance of Southall's perimeter would become an expression of defiance and autonomy as militant Asian youth acted to prevent incursions by racists, and hence to protect the integrity of the area.

In a seminal discussion of the causal 'flows' of influence and communication that typically enrich and issue forth from heterogeneous, particularly multicultural, public spheres, Arjun Appadurai encourages a

movement beyond the binary reductionism of centre/periphery or deterministic/vulgar Marxian accounts in favour of a more plural approach. Appadurai posits the mutually symbiotic relationship between five types of global cultural flow - each exhibiting a particular *combination* of base and superstructural features - that act upon each other in unpredictable ways, contributing to the dynamism and fertility of public spheres such as Southall that are formed by them: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes and ideoscapes[44].

Of these, ethnoscapes are perhaps the most obviously associated with Southall in being composed of the persons and cultures of successive waves of immigrant worker and refugee from the developing world, whether Punjabi, East African or, increasingly in the 1990s, Somalian. The importance of letter writing between relatives in the UK and the Sub-Continent to the maintenance of such ethnoscapes cannot be understated[45].

Southall's densely interwoven mediascape has its origins in a number of developments. In terms of film, these began with the organisation of shows by the local IWA in the late 1950s and, progressed in later years to the opening of Indian cinemas. A proliferation of pirate video tapes of recent releases followed in the 1980s. Finally, a supporting literature of magazines, the availability of Indian film and popular music, and the sale of related merchandise have contributed further to the 'Bollywoodisation' of cultural life. The Punjabi language newspapers, *Des Pardes* and *Punjab Times*, both established in Southall in 1965, have also had a significant influence, providing news of developments in the Punjab and in other diaspora communities[46].

As noted previously, the novelty of Appadurai's flows lies in their mutual reflexivity, and particularly in the extent to which influence flows back and forth between Western and Asian contexts in turn. Hence, with a broad definition that encompasses processes of multinational investment and manufacture, the notion of a technoscape might be illustrated by the instance of politico-economic pressures applied from Southall impacting on investment patterns in India. Hence, outraged at the racist murder in 1976 of Gurdip Singh Chaggar and faced with the general indifference of a Labour administration concerned to maintain working class support, Asian leaders in Southall threatened to press for the nationalisation of British owned interests in India if Prime Minister Callaghan were to refuse an invitation to walk at the head of the funeral cortege of the murdered youngster[47]. The ultimate futility of the gesture aside, such actions were indicative of the increasing awareness among Southall Asians of their capacity to influence the Sub-Continent.

The tradition of sending remittances, started by Sikh soldiers and workers based overseas in the late nineteenth century, resurfaced in 50s Southall[48]. Such financescapes, based on the practice of sending money to relatives[49] in the Punjab, also offered a means of influencing events 'at home'. Indeed, notes Tatla, the modernisation of Punjabi agriculture in the 1960s, or 'Green Revolution', was driven to a significant extent by remittances. These allowed experimentation with crops, the purchase of machinery and the installation of tube wells[50].

Finally, ideoscapes too have, from their inception, been subject to a two-way flow between Southall and India. Western political ideologies, such as socialism and communism, enjoyed significant following in India in the post-war period.[51] As a result, it was common for IWA politics across the UK to be bifurcated between rival communist and non-communist groupings, with nuclei of members in the local CPGB and independent groupings (often centred around Gurdwara, Ilaqa or business networks) respectively[52]. Indeed, successive splits within the Communist Party of India (CPI), leading in turn to the breakaway Communist Party of India Marxist (CPM) and the Maoist inspired Communist Party of India Marxist-Leninist (CPML), were to a certain extent paralleled by factionalism in the IWAs[53], including that of the Southall branch, which mirrored specific cleavages in the Punjabi CP[54]. Similarly, anti-colonial traditions of resistance from the Sub-Continent, whether Gandhian or otherwise, had for both first and second generations been a common source of inspiration for mobilisations in Southall, such as in the rallies against British policies toward Rhodesia and, the Vietnam War[55].

DeWitt provides an example of the circular flow of, and merger between, ideoscapes and financescapes when he describes how dedicated members of the CPGB from Southall would often raise funds, and urge their relatives at home to vote and canvass, for the CPI and CPM[56]. Such practices would resurface in the 1980s in the service of militant Sikh demands for an independent state of Khalistan[57].

Ultimately, the combination of territorial concentration and intense stimulation by manifold communicational flows can be sited as the source of the rapidity with which Southall's public sphere developed. To a certain extent, this public sphere constituted an independently evolving 'continuum' between the UK and the Sub-Continent, an 'imagined world'[58] with a distinct phenomenology formed at the intersection between the flows from each of these two locales, yet peculiarly independent of each. As such, it exemplified the growth of what Gäyer referred to as a new diasporic 'politics of space and identity', one capable of challenging the distinction between local and global domains[59]. Taking the example of ideoscapes, DeWitt notes how in the 1950 and 60s the CPGB was inundated with Asian members, a few of whom were previously members of the CPI while the majority were apolitical and joined only to gain influence in the local IWAs. The result, compounded by language problems, was the formation of parallel CPGB branches where meetings were focussed exclusively on South Asian and IWA politics rather than issues in the UK[60]. This concern with an exclusively Southall-India continuum was, however, expanded by second generation Asians concerned to demonstrate their right to acceptance and equality in British society into a more inclusive and developed UK-India continuum. Southall has thus constituted an evolving zone, one that reached a fleetingly autonomous and modern form of life in the wake of the conjuncture of 1979, only to succumb to less progressive influences such as fundamentalism and Thatcherism in the 1980s.

Paul Gilroy develops a compelling account of NSMs as forms of progressive, urban political organisation that have developed among ethnic

minority groups in place of otherwise narrow working class movements which take labour and its emancipation from capitalist servitude as their central aim and source of identity[61]. NSMs have a distinct set of goals such as control over collective consumption, cultural identity and political autonomy that set them apart from socialist concerns such as the conquest of state power[62]. I will continue this section by arguing that the NSMs of Southall's residents actually represented the reified expression of the community public sphere's political will in the form of loose, modern and unhierarchical organisations. In this respect, Southall's IWA, with the participation in industrial disputes as one of its central roles, actually straddles the role of an 'old', labourist and 'new' social movement. Indeed, the growth of community based industrial action to fill the void left by TU indifference was more general than merely that of the IWA, encompassing the extension of credit and the donation of free food from shopkeepers, the waiving of rent for weeks at a time by landlords, and the collections made by the Gurdwara on behalf of strikers, acts that resembled the support given by villages in rural Punjab to their striking kin in nearby industrial centres[63]. Second generation organisations such as the SYM, Peoples Unite, SMG and SBS represent the culmination of this process, particularly in their experimentation with post-traditional forms of life, identity and organisation[64].

1965 was a politically significant year for Southall with the local IWA playing a central role in the life of the public sphere and, to a lesser extent, showing signs of itself through certain of its factions along with individuals and groups such as the CPGB, an early, still significantly labour orientated, NSM.

In the first case, Southall in 1965 was the location of probably the single most impressive, in sheer volume of participation, of the IWA's bi-annual election campaigns that Britain's Asian communities had ever seen. Preparations by rival groups had been in progress for some months prior to the events until five slates and a number of independent candidates emerged each holding rallies and distributing dozens of manifestos. In all, perhaps a hundred men took time off work to participate in the canvassing effort and a total of 3,000 Asians voted, a number constituting about half of the adult male population of Southall and surrounding areas[65].

Yet, along with the aforementioned development of Southall's public sphere, 1965 would also be remembered as an early and decisive test of the community's political solidarity and assertion in dealings with local employers and TUs and thus, as a promising step on the road toward the autonomist aspirations of an NSM. Though Britain's TUs had perhaps more contact with Asians, both as individuals and as members of IWAs, than any other large institution[66], their feelings toward ethnic workers such as those of Southall had evolved from an initial indifference in the early 1950s to considerable resentment as the next decade wore on[67]. Pelling's otherwise competent study of British Trade Unionism itself exemplifies the unease and indifference of Unions at the time toward the issue of race, with only two pages of the book allotted to this issue, and then to offering a defence of the Unions as allayers of popular fears of cheap foreign labour. Pelling continues in this Union friendly vein with the assertion that individuals and not the majority of the membership were to

blame for xenophobic attitudes and, that the lack of Asian recruitment by Unions was merely a sin of 'omission' rather than of 'commission'[68]. Sadly, the experience of Southall's workers was far from resembling Pelling's account.

By 1965, 90% of the unskilled workers at Woolf's Rubber Company in Southall were Punjabi. Indeed, the requirement for cheap unskilled labour to work there had been the main reason for the large-scale settlement of Asian workers and subsequent ethnic composition of the town in later years. The factory made rubber accessories for prams and the motor industry, production that involved the use of sulphur and carbon black. Hence, alongside the low wages and common working week of 60 hours, conditions at the factory for the Asian workers were hard.

Despite the vehemently anti-union stance of the family owners of Woolf's, attempts to organise the workforce had been made in 1958 by the Amalgamated Engineering Union and in 1960 by the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU). Yet these initial attempts failed and the organisers were sacked, their efforts hampered in no small part by the attitude of white workers not keen to join a 'black' TU branch[69], and, by the fact that several of the influential 'touts' at the factory who commonly demanded bribes from fellow Asian workers for hiring and overtime related issues were Punjabis involved in IWA politics, one actually sitting on the IWA executive committee[70].

In light of the latter case of IWA loyalties being divided between radicalism and the Woolf's status quo, Dewitt contests the popular account of the third, successful, recruitment drive of 1963 that attributed its eventual success entirely to the IWA[71]. Rather, in the wake of failures at political mobilisation through the TU movement, the people of Southall began to organise their efforts on a community basis, and only partially through the IWA. In fact, the initial impetus came from two Punjabi members of the CPGB who worked at the factory rather than being official IWA policy. Encouraged by their fellow Punjabi comrades and introduced to trade union representatives by the local Party Secretary, the two Punjabi CPers visited the Southall branch of the TGWU accompanied by two communist members of the IWA executive committee[72]. Ultimately two factors in the Woolf's episode have to be taken into account: (a) the IWA was not monolithic, its factions split along the same kinds of radical and conservative lines as the rest of the community so that its evolution into an NSM was to a certain extent stymied from within; and (b) the importance of the CPGB and other left-wing groups in the Woolf's strike and subsequent Southall history cannot be underestimated, continuing as they did to influence the town's public sphere and NSMs until the conjuncture of 1979.

In 1963 members of the IWA executive, including communists employed at the factory, used their position to recruit intensively for the TGWU outside of the actual shop floor. They did so by going from door to door and by holding community meetings. As a result of these actions, the previously wide spread practice of having to bribe foremen to get and keep jobs and overtime ended and, the factory won Union recognition in 1964. Yet, a number of unjustified sackings from 1964-5 which were greeted with indifference and inaction by the union forced the workers to come out on strike. The TGWU's initial reaction

was confused, pledges of support being made yet accompanied by no strike pay, while TGWU controlled lorries were permitted to cross the picket line. The management also sought to undermine the strike by trying to recruit Pakistani workers from as far away as Bradford, actions that prompted the IWA and Pakistani Workers Association leaders to intervene. As mentioned, community efforts indicative of the growth of a NSM included the extension of credit from shopkeepers, the landlords waving rent for a few weeks and a collection of £1500 to support the strike. Sadly, the strike collapsed after seven weeks resulting in the sacking of union activists and the downgrading of other workers. The factory itself was so badly effected by the loss of orders that it collapsed the following year[73].

Ultimately the Woolf's strike, along with successive struggles such as the one at Perivale Gutterman, attained folkloric status, contributing a particular solidarity, militancy and self-confidence to the community that would help to concretise its distinctive public sphere and to fortify the nascent structures of its NSMs.

In terms of the public sphere, Southall's youth continued with the practice of their parents of mixing political and cultural influences from East and West. Yet, the combination of these was now more evenly divided between the two spheres, while the 'continuum' formed by Southall came increasingly to resemble an autonomous, hybrid zone uniting progressive currents from the UK and Sub-Continent. Always in a dynamic relationship, the balance between these two poles would further shift toward the UK, particularly to the Afro-Caribbean influences found there. An often-painful division between cultures came to be a common experience for youth from Asian communities at the time. Research carried out by the Community Relations Council in 1975 repeatedly illustrated the extent to which, compared to their parents, young Asians were keen to expand their acquaintances with white and Afro-Caribbean youth, to explore unsupervised relationships with the opposite sex, and to experiment with prevalent youth trends and fashions of the day[74]. A dissatisfaction with the political leadership offered by their parents was also a common refrain[75], a depth of feeling voiced by one Asian youth interviewed in the course of BBC Radio coverage on the day following the violence of the 23rd of April 1979:

> This is our future, right...our leaders will do nothing...our leaders wanted a peaceful sit down, but what can you do with a peaceful sit down here...we had to do something, the young people - we don't want a situation like the East End where our brothers and sisters are being attacked every day...I believe that the youth of Southall have left a trademark...they have shown that the National Front is not welcome here[76]

Yet, the youth interviewed also held views close to their parents on issues such as the eventual desirability of arranged marriage[77]. In the case of Southall, the result of these contradictory pulls was the growth of an exhilaratingly progressive youth culture in areas such as militant anti-racism, demands for police and state accountability, and solidarity with broader left-wing struggles

(including those in Northern Ireland), combined with an occasionally stolid illiberalism on issues such gender equality[78] which would be tackled by the 'second wave' of NSMs, SMG and SBS, in the wake of 1979. The former, solidaristic, traditions of the black left grew steadily in the 1970s, beginning with significant episodes of cooperation between Afro-Caribbean and Asian youth such the assistance given by the former when gangs of skinheads attacked Southall in 1970. Such encounters helped to overcome much of the mutual suspicion that had previously existed between these groups. At the same time, Asian youth drew on black music such as Soul and Reggae and, on the urban styles and attitudes of young Afro-Caribbeans in crafting more assertive identities for themselves[79]. Hence a fertile, cosmopolitan and radical culture grew in the Southall of the 1970s, helped on its way by interracial community events such as the Rock Against Racism (RAR) carnival held in 1978.

A corresponding patchwork of interwoven 'myths' was apparent in the wake of the murder of Blair Peach as the traditions of heroic sacrifice held by the White and Black defenders of Southall coalesced for a moment, all communities fleetingly united by their grief. The face of the frail, bearded young martyr no doubt coaxed forth images of Christ in the minds of religiously inclined white sympathisers, and, succeeded Kevin Gately, who died in a June 1974 demonstration against the NF, as an exemplar of heroic anti-fascism for the secular left. Peach's death also had particular reverence for the, predominantly Sikh, Punjabi community, both as a white man who chose to assist them and thereby to defend their right to reside in the country, and as an enemy of tyrannous oppressors whose struggles with the Sikhs are still talked of and remembered in popular *bazaar* calendar art[80]. Indeed, in the wake of the massive demonstration of the 28th of April, where a sombre litany of prayer was dedicated to Peach[81], signifying his admittance to Southall's Sikh congregation through the 'principle of vicariousness' common to its religious martyrs[82], the words of Sikh Scholar, J.P.S.Uberoi come to mind:

> The final lesson of martyrdom then, whether one studies it in history, theology or sociology, is that it marks at once both the limits of power, especially state power, and the limitlessness of self-sacrifice conceived as salvation-in-society[83].

Formed in the wake of Gurdip Singh Chaggar's murder in 1976, the SYM experienced its political baptism in the crucible of April 23rd 1979. Yet the solidarity of Southall's Asian youths had been growing steadily for some years prior to this event. In particular, traditions such as the practice among the older boys of escorting Asian children home from school in areas where they might otherwise experience racial attack were vital to forging such bonds[84]. Along with Peoples Unite, the SYM had built on the history of secular radicalism present in certain factions of the IWA that had existed since the era of Woolf's. This NSM was also encouraged by the example of its Afro-Caribbean allies to identify itself more fully with urban black protest, thereby helping to overcome the often insular outlooks of the older generation[85].

Southall Rights, a free legal advice centre which defended many of those

arrested on April the 23rd, also opened in 1976. The centre was a particularly important addition to the public sphere in the extent to which it contributed a legal dimension to campaigning resources of local NSMs.

Yet, the final maturation of Southall's NSMs into distinctly modern, progressive groupings actually came with the 'second wave' groups SMG and SBS, where the radical spirit was focussed on areas such as domestic violence that were less palatable to traditionalists. Sadly, though SMG and SBS have maintained these elevated traditions to the present day, the era after the conjuncture of 1979 would see the ascendancy of very different currents, in particular those of fundamentalisms perhaps more virulent than among even the most devout members of the first generation.

Gita Sahgal of SBS notes how separatist calls for Khalistan, a theocratic Sikh homeland in the Punjab, in the early 1980s were at times emblematic of this turn to fundamentalism. Indeed, with the gradual decline of the NF after the election of 1979, calls for Khalistan became the rallying cry for segments of the youth that had comprised the SYM. Their sentiments found focus in 1984 when the Indian army stormed the Golden Temple in Amritsar in pursuit of militants[86]. Sahgal points out how fundamentalists were united in their espousal of romantic and utopian forms of anti-modernism, often expressed in calls to scale back the secularist achievements of organisations in Southall such as the autonomy for women championed by SBS. In part, notes Sahgal, the fundamentalist 'turn' had been encouraged by the negligence of multiculturalists toward the illiberalism present in many traditional Asian worldviews, an omission that had allowed conservative community leaders the freedom to cultivate fiefdoms such as Southall by occupying a 'neo-colonial' comprador role in relation to the local authorities[87]. Over caution on the part of multiculturalists had also resulted in the inability to challenge the spread of gang violence among Southall's youth through fears of replicating the kinds of racism shown by the police toward them[88].

Ultimately, Southall's fundamentalist turn also poses problems for the model of NSM put forward by Gilroy. Noting the decline of secular strands of socialist organisation, and foregrounding the Eurocentrism and exclusivity commonly displayed in its dealings with ethnic minority communities, Gilroy welcomes the rise of the concept of race as a mobilising category to replace class among NSMs, encouraging the emulation of feudal movements that sought to resist the onset of capitalist modernisation[89]. Yet, such a perspective risks encouraging precisely the fundamentalist forces mentioned by Sahgal, while at the same time neglecting the centrality of socialist, not to mention communist, contributions to the rise of the most progressive resistance traditions of communities such as Southall. Gilroy appears to present the choice between the forms of 'Utopian democratic populism' traditionally employed in communities such as Southall, and exclusively ethnic formations as simply a pragmatic substitution of new for redundant old inspirations[90]. Such a casual dismissal of secular radicalism can, as the case of Southall shows, have worrying ramifications.

Southall and the British Left

Setting aside the pre-1947 cooperation between IWAs and sections of the left in calling for an end to British rule in India, two distinct stages of interaction between members of Asian communities such as Southall and the left can be identified: that of the first generation's liaisons with, predominantly Stalinist, groupings such as the CPGB; and the more active engagement of second generation Asians with their peers in the post-68 New Left.

As mentioned in the previous section, the widespread sense of separateness felt by first generation Asians toward British institutions, promoted partly by their commonly held expectation of return to the sub-continent once they had saved sufficient funds, was matched by a corresponding sense of bewilderment, and hence neglect of them, by the British left. Homi Bhabha suggests a continuum between such 'benign', essentially sympathetic, forms of neglect and more 'malign' ones when he distinguishes between a 'large trade union internationalism' and an 'ethnocentric little Englandism'[91] as the two attitudes of the old-left toward the subject of race.

The former tendency was exemplified by the openness of the CPGB to parallel Asian branch meetings based on the attitude, shared by the Asians themselves, of an inherent separateness of concerns and, probability of return to the subcontinent that militated against the need for integration.

More malign expressions of neglect and even hostility were confined mainly to those on the right of the Labour Party, such as Bob Mellish, who were particularly enamoured of Powell's opposition to New Commonwealth immigration and membership of the European Community[92]. G.A.Pargiter's sedulous courtship of the Punjabi vote on behalf of Labour during the 1964 election campaign, only to ignore and castigate his benefactors as an expression of solidarity with white residents in the wake of victory, evidenced a similar mentality in the case of Southall[93]. Perhaps the most disturbing expression of these sentiments arose in the late 1960s with the sporadic, yet increasingly common, activism among trade unionists in favour of Powell's views, from the solidarity marches of the London dockers and Smithfield meat porters in 1968 to the protests by white workers in Southall in the same year[94]. Such activities were maintained to a certain extent by the activism of a few cells of 'Strasserite' NF activists within certain quarters of the TU movement, their success prompting them to form the short-lived breakaway National Party (NP) in 1976[95]. Taking their inspiration from the opposition to Hitler among 'left leaning' Nazis such as Gregor and Otto Strasser, this group combined syndicalist economic radicalism with populist ultranationalism[96].

The attitude of the Union leadership tended to reside at the centre of Bhabha's continuum, with a general indifference to New Commonwealth immigration in the 1950s giving way to selectively discriminatory utterances and actions in the hope of placating the working class membership[97].

Levels of cooperation between second generation Asians and members of the heterogeneous, often Trotskyist, New Left were, perhaps unsurprisingly, greater than that of their predecessors. In part, this was undoubtedly due to the

greater radicalism and internationalism of the New Left (and in no way inhibited by the latter's relative absence of working class membership). Yet, perhaps the most obvious reason was the awareness among Asian youths that they would not be making the return journey dreamt of by their parents and hence, that they would have to directly contest the racist aggression that had previously been suffered in silence.

Increasing levels of identification and cooperation in the 1970s between the radical left and Asians in the sphere of industrial action was perhaps most visible in the case of the strike at the Grunswick film processing factory in West London in 1977. Jayaben Desai became the strike's 'unlikely leader' when she walked out in protest at working conditions. Undeterred by struggle, and even a kick in the leg from a policeman at the picket line, she organised a hunger strike outside the TUC's Congress House when the TU Apex withdrew its support[98]. Marwick notes how the strike that arose there among predominantly Asian workers became a *cause célèbre* of the left bringing out not only Trotskyists but members of the mainstream Labour Party and TU movement[99]. Largely ignored by the TU mainstream, the dispute was also significant as an instance of the mobilisation of flying pickets, including Yorkshire Miners[100], which had been a common feature of the tense industrial relations of the decade. Indeed, the extent to which the struggles of Asian workers and communities, regarded by sections of the New Left as a domestic extension of the vanguard role assigned to the forces of revolution in the developing world, were becoming a focal point for radicalism at the time was jokingly summed up by one demonstrator who suggested that 'This is the Ascot of the left...it is essential to be seen here and best of all to get arrested'[101].

Hence, in the political climate of the 1970s, Black and Asian communities were increasingly looked to as outposts of resistance and recruitment by the radical left. In the case of Southall, which by 1979 had become a 'Mecca' for the west London left, the increasing concentration of activism in the area had a distinct impact on the public sphere which was enriched by the a wide variety of contemporary political and cultural currents from Reggae and Soul music to Third World Marxism. While poetry and songs from the Sub-Continent had been employed as means of conveying political ideas from the earliest days of the post-war IWAs[102], the increasing hybridity of Southall's youth culture was a further sign of the burgeoning cosmopolitanism of its public sphere.

Yet this proximity and cross fertilisation also begot tensions between the young Asians and their left-wing peers. Echoing Gilroy's account of the omissions on the part of the labourist left toward ethnic minority issues that had contributed to the rise of NSMs, Bhabha notes that

> Whenever questions of race and sexuality make their own organisational and theoretical ethical demands on the primacy of 'class', 'state' and 'party' the language of traditional socialism is quick to describe those urgent, 'other' questions as symptoms of petty-bourgeois deviation, signs of the bad faith of socialist intellectuals[103].

Such tensions were certainly present in the 1970s in the context of the popular front tactics of the ANL which were criticised by many on the Asian left for marginalizing anti-racist/imperialist, anti-capitalist and direct action tactics in the hope of retaining the support of moderates, including the Labour Party, for their limited anti-nazi activities[104]. A founding member of the SYM, Balraj Puriwal, notes how the contributions to street politics in Southall of the SWP and ANL cadres in the 1970s thus affected a 'colonisation' of local initiatives which were thereby undermined:

> I personally in the SYM did not know at the start what moderate or far left meant...we had the ANL and SWP but I felt they were talking a language of politics I didn't relate to...even now I don't know what left and right in Southall means. Every time we tried to protest and give our own identity the left tried to take it over...they gave us their slogans and placards...our own identity was subsumed, diffused and deflected all over the place. They collectively undermined our development...the SYM and IWA struggled to keep their own identity[105]

The tensions documented above are similar to those touched upon in the previous section. They arise from the need to maintain the delicate equilibrium between the progressive influences of secular, particularly socialistic, modernity, and the reservoir of identity and symbolic reproduction drawn on by the community from its traditional culture. The balance achieved between these tendencies, such as in April 1979 or, more enduringly, through the legacy of 'second wave' NSMs such as SMG, is ultimately vulnerable to the ascendancy of either one, whether that of take over by the socialist left or, attack from the forces of fundamentalism. Sadly, the conjuncture of April the 23rd, alongside the uprising of 1981 that culminated with the incineration of the Hambrough Tavern, evidenced perhaps the last, large scale mobilisations based on the complementary interaction between the two forces.

Race, the New Right and the Remarshalling of Elite Power in the Era of the Ungovernability Thesis

A series of 15 sombre photographs from the disturbances of the 23rd and the march of the 28th form a short lacuna in the text of the NCCL report. Each of them offers a window into different episodes of the momentous two days in the history of Southall. Yet, on closer inspection, photograph number three is marked by a deeper imprint of the times, displaying in its peripheral details the marks of the zeitgeist that Walter Benjamin might have identified as a historical 'configuration pregnant with tensions', a 'monad' on which the manifold conflicts and injustices of the era were inscribed. A hundred or so demonstrators, mainly Asians and a few Afro-Caribbeans, are congregated at a junction a few hundred meters from the town hall. It is 5pm, a couple of hours before the escalation of tensions and police aggression that are to follow. The scene appears good natured, with demonstrators and even a policeman smiling

as steward Clarence Baker requests through a megaphone that protesters remain on the pavement. Yet, one of the three billboards in the background offers a portent of the streams of causation that had been building over the previous decades, soon to reach a point of climax with the Conservative victory in the general election a few weeks from then. 'Labour Still Isn't Working' reads the title to the advert while underneath, against a blank white background, an unemployment queue recedes into the distance. The juxtaposition of this poster and the crowds of demonstrators below together foreground the themes that will be explored in the following section: the poster proclaims an end to the era of Labour and TU hegemony that had begun in 1964; the launch of a 'New Right' politics that would 'work' where labourism did not hints at the ascendancy of neoliberal elites to come; the marshalling of a range of political, intellectual and, as the Saatchi and Saatchi poster itself exemplified, media resources in the service of elite power that had momentarily been wrong-footed by the popular protest of the 1960s; the perceived need for greater public order in the wake of such protest; and the centrality of race to this new political vanguard.

The radical protest and counter cultures of the 1960s had been a significant source of concern to Western elites throughout the decade. A common refrain from amongst establishment critiques was that these movements were evidence of the essential 'ungovernability' brought on as central institutions of governance were increasingly being overloaded by an unreasonably demanding and troublesome public. Hence, protest, alongside other 'crisis phenomena' such as rising crime, was presented as an expression of the multiplying wants and rights that an egoistic public was confronting its government with, overburdening the machinery of the Keynesian state administrative apparatus as a result. The blame for the crises was not levelled at the more deserving target of the economy and state administration themselves[106] which, by the 1970s, were experiencing the disruptive influence of the energy crisis.

From the 1960s, a concerted effort by the inchoate New Right to contest the gains made both by radicals and reformists was initiated on three mutually reinforcing fronts: the mobilisation of intellectual, media and ideological resources against the protest movements and their perceived allies in the Keynesian state administration under the encompassing banner of anti-communism; the promotion of monetarist, laissez-faire policies in the economic sphere; and the neo-authoritarian militarisation of the police force as the means of defending the aforementioned policies from opponents on the left. Indeed, the mobilisation of police forces would be a central means by which forces critical of the New Right project such as TUs were to be broken up and their members disciplined. Perhaps the first, large scale, implementation of these policies was to be seen in Chile where the American backed coup by General Pinochet against the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende led swiftly to the implementation of economic policies based on the monetarist prescriptions of the Chicago school.

Blumenthal notes of this movement in the United States which culminated in the Reagan administration, that the radical right sought to undermine the 'Liberal Establishment' through channels such as think tanks and greater

prominence in the press[107]. William Simon, Treasury Secretary under President Ford, also exemplified this tendency with his calls for the formation of a 'counter-intelligentsia' to attack America's perceived East Coast 'liberal fortress'[108]. Ultimately, notes Blumenthal,

> [t]o counteract this Liberal Establishment, which conservatives believed encompassed both political parties, they deliberately created the Counter-Establishment. By constructing their own establishment, piece by piece, they hoped to supplant the liberals. Their version of Brookings [the liberal US think tank] would be bigger and better...The editorial pages of the *Wall Street Journal* would set the agenda with more prescience than *The New York Times.*[109]

A similar remarshalling of beleaguered elites by the New Right, in this case evolving from the Powellite elitism of the 1960s into the populism of the Thatcher era, occurred in the UK in the fertile environment of the energy crisis: the decade of the 'oil shocks' would offer numerous instances of crisis phenomena which, in light of their often remote causation by distant and abstract processes in the global economy, could conveniently be blamed on scapegoats such as Southall's Asian community.

A significant juncture in this process was the setting up in 1974, the year when the industrial and racial conflict symptomatic of the 'ungovernability thesis' brought down the Heath government, of the monetarist, anti-collectivist Centre for Policy Studies by Thatcher and former Cabinet Minister Sir Keith Joseph[110]. The cultivation of leading right-wing journalists and intellectuals was a central plank in this project with considerable cross fertilisation of ideas and even personnel occurring between the Think Tanks and learned journals, the broadsheet newspapers and the tabloids, the latter receiving their broadly Powellite brief from the more 'elevated' agenda setters. A favoured theme of these publications, once again indebted to Powell's paranoid theses, was that of the left, anti-racists and immigrant communities as a 'dangerous minority' of 'enemies within' who threatened to undermine the British state and society[111].

The subject of race was a constant point of reference for the forces of the New Right. Indeed, the peculiar combination of authoritarianism, anti-immigration rhetoric and laissez-faire economics that had been espoused throughout the 1960s by agenda setters such as Enoch Powell, and even in right-wing Labour Party circles, would prove to be a potent weapon against the left in years to come[112]. The saliency of race in the public mind had actually been increasing since the 1950s when disturbances such as those of 1958 in Notting Hill began to receive attention in the media[113], developments prompting Marwick to suggest that by the time of the 1974 election race had become the single most significant cleavage in British politics, outdoing even class in importance[114]. Perhaps paradoxically, the mass politicisation of race coincided with the era of Labour Party and TU hegemony that lasted from approximately the Labour election victory of 1964 to the defeat of 1979. The first conspicuous signpost of this era was the imposition of controls on immigration from the New

Commonwealth in 1962 in the face of mounting public pressure, a trend that has continued unabated to the present day. Prior to this, a universal open door policy had operated from 1948 with regard to Commonwealth immigration, a policy maintained due to an attachment to Old, rather than New, Commonwealth entrants, and which was reluctantly curtailed only due to the public, and often elite, aversion to the latter[115].

The election in 1964 of a Conservative candidate in the safe Labour seat of Smethwick, which proved an exception to the otherwise leftward swing of the day, was the second decisive sign of the turbulent times to come. Perhaps best remembered for the frequently misquoted remarks of children in the municipal elections of 1963, whose claims that 'If you want a nigger for a neighbour, vote Labour' were tacitly condoned by the Conservative candidate[116], the outcome of Smethwick in 1964 sent shockwaves through the Labour and the TU movement[117], heralding their nervousness and vacillation toward issues of race in years to come. Yet, as mentioned previously, perhaps the single most significant contribution to the 'racialisation' of political debate came with Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech in 1968 which, notes Suresh Grover, changed the political atmosphere 'overnight', providing the catalyst to the rapid success of the far right in the early 1970s and, the era of 'Paki Bashing' inaugurated by it[118].

Powell was significant in the extent to which he personified the intersection of xenophobic and authoritarian nationalism, and liberal economics that characterised much of the New Right project in Britain. As a tendency within the Conservative Party, this movement also regarded the liberalism of Heathite Toryism, rather than merely the left, as contributing to the problems of the early 1970s captured under the umbrella of the 'ungovernability thesis'. More turbulent than the Winter of Discontent that would form the context of the disturbances in Southall of 1979, the era of ungovernability, roughly taken to coincide with the Heath government's term in office, saw the intersection of a number of distinct crisis tendencies. The wild cat strikes of the 1960s were replaced by mass industrial action, instigated to a significant extent by the radical left operating in the TU movement, in which 'flying pickets' were commonly employed and which were characterised by worrying levels of violence and intimidation from both strikers and the police. Ultimately, TU militancy culminated in the Miners Strike of 1973-4 which brought down the Heath Government, hence stymieing its attempts to control industrial violence through the Industrial Relations Act of 1971. The same Unions would be bound in the next decade by the stricter legislation of the Thatcher era. Draconian legislation was also prompted by the IRA bomb attacks of 1974 in which twenty-nine people were killed and more than two-hundred badly injured, leading to the Prevention of Terrorism Act in the same year. Hence, unsurprisingly, crisis tendencies had contributed to the increasing levels of state surveillance, control and militarisation against the public called for by the New Right.

Black communities, already menaced by racist violence at the time, were a particular target for new styles of policing whose development had been

nformed by the anxieties of the ungovernability thesis, making them the ınfortunate inheritors of much of the New Right project. A central component)f police strategy was the belief in the need to prevent conflict before it)ccurred, a change in emphasis from traditional concerns with 'law and order' o those of 'public order'[119]. Hence conciliatory innovations such as Community ?olicing and draconian, 'neo-colonial'[120] approaches of forces such as the SPG were united in having originated from the desire to extend state control and urveillance into the everyday lives of citizens. At the core of these initiatives vas the elision of crime with any sort of public protest[121], policies that would esult in police violence, mass arrests and criminalisation of a whole community vhen the people of Southall attempted to protest at the provocations of the NF)n April the 23rd, 1979.

By the time of the Winter of Discontent, of which the 'Southall Riots' ormed an integral episode, the manifold contingencies that would culminate in Thatcher's election victory were on the verge of fruition. Although actual nstability had declined since the era of the ungovernability thesis, January 1979 aw more workers out on strike than since the General Strike of 1926[122] rompting Marwick to note that

> [t]he situation was not nearly as bad as that of 1974, but in the inventive stories of the right-wing press it sounded bad, on television it looked bad, and for the millions of discomfited citizens it felt bad[123].

Aedia coverage of events in Southall was similarly informed by the resuppositions of New Right ideology. Setting aside the unanimous ondemnation of the demonstrators and the unreserved praise for the police, a ıumber of other familiar Powellite themes were apparent. Anti-fascist lemonstrators were presented as extremists little different to the NF against vhom they had come to protest. The overwhelming picture presented was of utsiders coming to the town to make trouble, an account that obscured the argely home-grown mobilisations of the community on the day. Similarly, nterviews with participants were concentrated on the members of the ANL and SWP, while community representatives were almost completely ignored. The xtent of this denial of any autonomous political agency among the citizens and rganisations of Southall was captured in a Daily Telegraph cartoon. Depicting three tier platform of the sort mounted by athletes at Olympic medal resentation ceremonies, a triumphant member of the NF occupies the top level, vhile injured members of the ANL and the Police Force occupy second and hird place respectively[124]. In no sense does the image convey the fact that outhall's Asian community were the worst affected of all. Ultimately, it would all to television coverage to unwittingly offer a more balanced picture: while ommentaries on the events followed a predictably establishment line, the actual ootage indicated the extent of the police violence and its impact on local eople[125].

Southall and British Fascism

Contemporary television footage of the 1979 election meeting in Southall shows a trickle of NF supporters arriving at the town hall, a morbid procession that pauses fleetingly at the entrance to shake their fists, shout insults and offer truculent looks to the small group of demonstrators that had managed to assemble outside a shop across the road. Despite the conspicuous absence of a skinhead contingent on the screen, those in attendance were typical of the third generation of British fascists mobilised by the NF in the late 1970s, groups of predominantly working class young men whose party would face oblivion in the wake of the 1979 election. Hence, as for the people of Southall, the British Left, and the remarshalled New Right, April the 23rd of that year would also be a moment of conflict followed by a definitive change of fortunes for the far right. Indeed, though the encounter of the fascists with Southall in 1979, and again in 1981, could in no sense be regarded as a *causal* factor in their eventual decline, which had actually begun in the wake of the Heath government's collapse, it can in retrospect be taken as symbolic of the changing zeitgeist, a monad encapsulating the conflicts of the age before their imminent dissolution.

The tortuous history of British fascism in the twentieth-century, from its origins amongst groupings of monarchist, imperialist and conservative ultras, through its dalliances with Mussolini and National Socialism, to its final incarnation in the NF, is particularly difficult to chart as its subject matter are numerous obscure, short lived and often mutually antagonistic sects with rapidly fluctuating memberships. Nevertheless, three distinct tendencies had endured since the interwar years as the inspiration for the second and third generation activists of the 1970s: the legacies of Oswald Mosley, Arnold Leese and A.K.Chesterton[126].

Mosley began his parliamentary career in 1918 as a Conservative MP, yet his idiosyncratic election programme of 'socialistic imperialism' already hinted at the volatile combination of economic radicalism, social Darwinism, Eurocentrism, and militarism and that would see him crossing the floor to join the Labour Party in 1924 only to subsequently form his own movement in the early 1930s. Though his abiding concern to alleviate unemployment led him to an early interest in the works of Keynes, Hobson and a number of Independent Labour Party figures, he grew increasingly enamoured of the anti-democratic, corporativist[127] principles of Italian Fascism, forming his own British Union of Fascists (BUF) in 1932 with substantial assistance from Mussolini himself[128]. At the outset, Mosley fashioned a vitalistic 'culturalist' perspective based on Lamarckian evolutionary theories and Spengler's morphology of cultures, which emphasised culture rather than biological origins as the basis of his political prescriptions[129]. Yet, in common with the influence of Nazism on his hero Mussolini, Mosley would progress from his initial elitism to racism and anti-Semitism of the most virulent kinds in the later 1930s. After his wartime imprisonment, Mosley formed the Union Movement (UM), a grouping that played down its earlier fascist rhetoric, to meet with some initial success in its campaigns against East European and, particularly in Brixton and Notting Hill,

West Indian immigrants[130]. Yet Mosley's grandiose plans for a unified fascist Europe under the command of a single party (ironic given the rapid growth of EC at the time) were radically out of step with the British public, and he passed into relative obscurity in the increasingly xenophobic atmosphere of the 1960s, although his organisational and oratorical styles, and personal example would have an indelible impact on the 'second generation' of fascists, particularly John Tyndall.

Arnold Leese's political career was in many ways the opposite to that of Mosley: although his Imperial Fascist League (IFL) was at the fringe of British politics in the 1930s, his fanatical anti-Semitism, racism and penchant for conspiracy theories and violent paramilitary tactics were to have more of an influence than Mosley on second generation fascists in the post-war period. In particular, Leese's Hitler worshipping disciple Colin Jordan was to be a leading figure in a number of the groups antecedent to the NF and in the British Movement (BM) contemporary with it[131].

A scion of the establishment like Mosley and a leading member of the BUF, A.K.Chesterton, second cousin of writer and anti-Semite G.K.Chesterton[132], was evidence of the extent to which fascist ideas and support merged into the Conservative mainstream. Though fractionally more moderate than Leese, Chesterton was to have the most direct influence on the second generation fascists through his League of Empire Loyalists (LEL) of which Colin Jordan, John Bean, John Tyndall and Martin Webster were members in the 1950s[133]. Yet, it was as the founder of the NF in late 1966 and early1967 that Chesterton would crown his achievements: a muddy fusion of the LEL and BNP along with individual members of the Racial Preservation Societies (RPS) and Greater Britain Movement (including its founders, Tyndall and Webster), the NF could be viewed as the final synthesis of Mosley's mass politics and economic programme, Leese's anti-Semitism and racial populism, Chesterton's sentimental imperialism, and the further shores of native conservatism[134].

Yet the finer ideological distinctions between second generation followers of the three tendencies were of little interest to the public who were exclusively concerned with halting non-white immigration[135]. The network of local RPSs, to which the SRA was affiliated, that grew up in the 1960s to press for such aims was the organic expression of this, largely apolitical, racist foment. Hence, popular opposition to New Commonwealth immigration along with Powell's incendiary outbursts provided a fertile environment for the growth of the NF in the late 1960s, while the liberalism of the Heath government and the Ugandan Asian crisis helped membership to reach its peak at around 17,500 in 1972[136]. Indeed, research conducted between 1979 and 1982 into the attitudes of fifteen and sixteen year olds, noted Husbands, showed 'a remarkable reservoir of sympathy for the ideas of the far right, specifically the repatriation of blacks'[137].

The fascist heyday of the early 1970s was important in two other respects: instances of 'paki bashing' became increasingly prevalent at the time, and sympathy, as well as direct support, from bastions of Toryism such as the Monday Club[138] also increased. Indeed, the movement's decline began soon after Thatcher acceded to leadership of the Conservative party in 1975 and

proceeded to coax recalcitrant Tories back into the fold with her own anti-immigration rhetoric. At the same time, a rift between the populist conservatives in the movement and the more openly fascistic elements under Tyndall and Webster weakened the NF further, many of the former defecting to the smaller Strasserite NP[139]. These internal tensions would have a significant impact on the orientations of the movement as a whole. In particular, the violent street politics of the BM would have an increasing influence on the NF with the waning of its conservative and 'left' wings and, especially with elitist, Tyndall's ejection in the wake of the 1979 elections and the corresponding ascendancy of pro-skinhead Webster[140]. Thereafter, the remaining strands of the NF largely turned away from the ballot box, drawing variously on a fusion of Strasserism, 'bucolic and ruralist' values and Italian fascism, or, a renewed urban hooliganism for inspiration[141].

Alongside the Tory swing to the right, Thurlow identifies anti-fascist/racist militancy and state surveillance as the main causes of the NF's decline after the conjuncture of 1979[142]. Yet, for the residents of Southall, perhaps no keener image of fascist defeat exists than that of the burning Hambrough Tavern of 1981, a Bastille like symbol of oppression that had finally been overcome.

Conclusion

Rather than accepting the linear, dynamic accounts of history from 'above' that were commonly espoused by his historicist contemporaries, Benjamin sought to freeze time in order to reflect upon the meaning of the apposite moment or detail. Such a fragment, rescued from the relentlessly blowing winds of history, might then be looked to by the historian as a means of empathising with, perhaps even redeeming, the memory of the nameless multitudes otherwise swept away by the 'storm of progress'[143]. It has been the attempt to practice this unorthodox method that has given this paper its peculiar structure and style. Indeed, without Benjamin's example and, a long obsession with the 'meaning' of April the 23rd, 1979, on the part of the author, there would scarcely have been a rationale for pulling together the disparate themes of the preceding pages. Hence the essay itself endures as a monad, a point of intersection and conjuncture where time can be made to stand still so that the people of Southall can finally take their place as makers of, and not bystanders to, the drama of the 1970s.

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List of Abbreviations

ANL	Anti-Nazi League
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BM	British Movement
BNP	British National Party
BUF	British Union of Fascists
CND	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
CPI	Communist Party of India
CPM	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CPML	Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)
EC	European Community
IFL	Imperial Fascist League
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IWA	Indian Workers Association
LEL	League of Empire Loyalists
MP	Member of Parliament
NCCL	National Council for Civil Liberties
NF	National Front
NP	National Party
NSM	New Social Movement
RAR	Rock Against Racism
RPS	Racial Preservation Society
SBS	Southall Black Sisters
SMG	Southall Monitoring Group
SPG	Special Patrol Group
SRA	Southall Residents Association
SWP	Socialist Workers Party
SYM	Southall Youth Movement
TGWU	Transport and General Workers Union
TU	Trade Union
UM	Union Movement

Notes

[1] This article draws on interviews with local residents and activists collected in the course of producing a video documentary on the disturbances of 1979. *Remembering Southall April 23rd 1979* was produced by Ross Dalziel and Shivdeep Singh Grewal in 1998 for Chok Deh Media.
[2] A typical example of this was the comprehensive and compelling, yet desultory, account given by Peter Alexander, a long time Southall resident of Afro-Caribbean descent, which seamlessly merged into a single day the community resistance of 1979 with that of 1981.
[3] Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', Illuminations, (Fontana Press, 1992).

[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., p.254.
[6] *Southall, 23 April 1979: The Report of the Unofficial Committee of Enquiry*, Published for the Committee by the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL), p.21.
[7] Several local activists interviewed in the course of this research suggested that the arrival of Mr Ali and Socialist Unity, a group with little previous association with Southall, was regarded as a somewhat opportunist electoral strategy, and one, moreover, indicative of indifference to local organisations such as the IWA and the SYM. As noted later in the essay, this was not untypical of the attitude of local organisations toward groups on the radical left which were often perceived to be working in Southall for the good of their own organisations.
[8] *Southall: The Birth of a Black Community*, (The Institute of Race Relations and Southall Rights, 1981), pp.43-4.
[9] *Southall, 23 April 1979: The Report of the Unofficial Committee of Enquiry*, Published for the Committee by the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL), p.7.
[10] Ibid., p.7.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., p.45.
[13] Ibid., p.49.
[14] Ibid., p.38.
[15] *Southall: The Birth of a Black Community*, (The Institute of Race Relations and Southall Rights, 1981), p.3.
[16] *Southall, 23 April 1979: The Report of the Unofficial Committee of Enquiry*, Published for the Committee by the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL), p.48.
[17] Arthur Marwick, *British Society Since 1945*, (Penguin, 1990), p.221.
[18] *Southall, 23 April 1979: The Report of the Unofficial Committee of Enquiry*, Published for the Committee by the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL), p.77
[19] Ibid., pp.77-82.
[20] Ibid., p.55.
[21] *Southall Gazette*, Friday, May 18, 1979.
[22] *Southall, 23 April 1979: The Report of the Unofficial Committee of Enquiry*, Published for the Committee by the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL), pp.54-64.
[23] This was the number quoted by the Home Secretary. The Southall Defence Committee referred to a figure of 342.
[24] *Southall, 23 April 1979: The Report of the Unofficial Committee of Enquiry*, Published for the Committee by the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL), pp. 10-2, 108-9. *Southall: The Birth of a Black Community*, (The Institute of Race Relations and Southall Rights, 1981), pp.60-1, 35-6.
[25] *Southall, 23 April 1979: The Report of the Unofficial Committee of Enquiry*, Published for the Committee by the National Council for Civil Liberties

:CL), p.71.

'ürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, ndon: Polity Press, 1989).

loam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, *Manufacturing Consent*, (Vintage, 4), pp. 3-4

iid., p. 3.

aul Gilroy, "Urban Social Movements, 'Race' and Community", Williams Chrisman (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, rvester Wheatsheaf, 1994).

ohn DeWitt, *Indian Workers' Associations in Britain*, (Oxford University s, 1969), p.4.

iid., p.19.

iid., p.6-15.

)arshan Singh Tatla, *The Sikh diaspora: The search for statehood*, iversity College London Press, 1999), pp. 43-44. Darshan Singh Tatla,)0), 'Rural Roots of the Sikh Diaspora', *International Journal of Punjab lies*, No. 2, Vol 7.

uthall: The Birth of a Black Community, (The Institute of Race Relations Southall Rights, 1981), p.7.

in DeWitt, *Indian Workers' Associations in Britain*, (Oxford University s, 1969), p.54-5.

id., p.45-7.

uthall: The Birth of a Black Community, (The Institute of Race Relations Southall Rights, 1981), p.10-1.

ennis Morris, *Southall - A Home From Home: A Photographic Journey ugh Little India*, (Olympus Cameras, 1999), p.44.

uthall: The Birth of a Black Community, (The Institute of Race Relations Southall Rights, 1981), p.8.

id., p.25.

ie SRA was affiliated to the nationwide Racial Preservation Societies (RPS) arose across Britain in the early sixties, Ibid., p.40.

id., p.25-6.

een to counteract this image of themselves as inherently unclean and rderly and, to compensate for the progressive neglect of refuge services by ocal council, the Asian residents of Southall initiated a 'Tidy the Town' itive in 1966. This project was successfully imitated by an Asian resident started the Southall Environment Group in 1978. He was later elected as a cillor on the strength of his 'Clean Up Southall' events. *Southall: The Birth Black Community*, (The Institute of Race Relations and Southall Rights,), p.29-30.

rjun Appadurai, 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural iomy', Williams and Chrisman (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-nial Theory: A Reader*, (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), p.328.

hn DeWitt, *Indian Workers' Associations in Britain*, (Oxford University s, 1969), p.60.

[46] Darshan Singh Tatla, *The Sikh diaspora: The search for statehood*, (University College London Press, 1999), p. 71.
[47] *Morning Star*, Monday, June 7, 1976.
[48] Darshan Singh Tatla, *The Sikh diaspora: The search for statehood*, (University College London Press, 1999).
[49] Shinder S Thandi, (2000), '*Vilayati Paisa*: some reflections on the potential of diaspora finance in the socio-economic development of the Indian Punjab', *International Journal of Punjab Studies*, No. 2, Vol 7.
[50] Darshan Singh Tatla, *The Sikh diaspora: The search for statehood*, (University College London Press, 1999).
[51] Viewed over the course of the twentieth century, ideoscapes can be tracked from their Western origins, to a cross fertilisation with indigenous Indian traditions, and finally to a return and rebirth among diaspora communities. Gayer (2000) and Tatla (1999) give the example of the revolutionary, *Ghadr*, movement. Formed in response to the racist immigration policies of America and Canada in the first decade of the twentieth century, this movement promoted the cause for Indian independence among, mainly Sikh, diaspora Indians. On their return, the revolutionaries contributed to the growing popularity of socialist and communist thought amongst the Punjabi peasantry. As this paper demonstrates, such ideas resurfaced years later in Southall.

[52] John DeWitt, *Indian Workers' Associations in Britain*, (Oxford University Press, 1969), pp.70-2.
[53] Kalra, Hutnyk and Sharma, 'Re-Sounding (Anti)Racism, or Concordant Politics? Revolutionary Antecedents', Sharma, Hutnyk and Sharma (eds.), *Dis-Orienting Rhythms: The Politics of the New Asian Dance Music*, (Zed Books, 1996), p.130. Such factionalism did not necessarily reflect as deep a level of ideological commitment as Kalra, Hutnyk and Sharma suggest, particularly if DeWitt's accounts of the extent to which many IWA CPers were in fact apolitical opportunists is taken into account.
[54] Darshan Singh Tatla, *The Sikh diaspora: The search for statehood*, (University College London Press, 1999), p. 95-6. Allegiances among non-communist IWA members were also tested by events in India. Tatla (1999: p.96) notes how the Indian emergency of 1975-7, instigated by Indira Gandhi, was greeted with dismay by many in IWA circles, prompting founding member Vishnu Sharma to label such doubters 'CIA dupes'.
[55] John DeWitt, *Indian Workers' Associations in Britain*, (Oxford University Press, 1969), p.3.
[56] Ibid., p.67.
[57] Shinder S Thandi, (2000), '*Vilayati Paisa*: some reflections on the potential of diaspora finance in the socio-economic development of the Indian Punjab', *International Journal of Punjab Studies*, No. 2, Vol 7. Darshan Singh Tatla, *The Sikh diaspora: The search for statehood*, (University College London Press, 1999).
[58] Arjun Appadurai, 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural

Economy', Williams and Chrisman (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader,* (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), p.329.

[59] Laurent Gayer, (2000), 'The Globalisation of Identity Politics: The Sikh Experience', *International Journal of Punjab Studies,* Vol 7. No. 2.

[60] John DeWitt, *Indian Workers' Associations in Britain,* (Oxford University Press, 1969), p.66-71. One Asian member of the CPGB remarked 'We say in India it is easier to get into the IAS (India's elite service corps) than into the Communist Party...You can join the Communist Party in this country just by filling out a blank in the *Morning Star*', pp.66.

[61] A term originally coined to encompass anti-industrial/bureaucratic/nuclear, women's, youth, peace, ecology and ethnic minority movements, Gilroy concerns himself most strongly with the latter groups in the UK. In light of such a focus, the territorial dimension mentioned earlier in this article is of particular salience. Paul Gilroy, 'Urban Social Movements, "Race" and Community', Williams and Chrisman (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader,* (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), p.405.

[62] Ibid., p.410.

[63] *Southall: The Birth of a Black Community,* (The Institute of Race Relations and Southall Rights, 1981), p.12.

[64] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: The Critique of Functionalist Reason,* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987).

[65] John DeWitt, *Indian Workers' Associations in Britain,* (Oxford University Press, 1969), p.48.

[66] Ibid., p.136.

[67] Randall Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-War Britain,* (Oxford University Press, 2000).

[68] Henry Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism,* (Penguin, 1987), pp.259-60.

[69] *Southall: The Birth of a Black Community,* (The Institute of Race Relations and Southall Rights, 1981), p.13-4.

[70] John DeWitt, *Indian Workers' Associations in Britain,* (Oxford University Press, 1969), p.139.

[71] Ibid., p.144. Accounts differ between DeWitt and the writers of *Southall: The Birth of a Black Community* on the extent to which the IWA contributed to the organisation of the Woolf's strike, with DeWitt very sceptical of claims by the IWA that it was the main recruiter and mobiliser.

[72] Ibid., p.140-41.

[73] *Southall: The Birth of a Black Community,* (The Institute of Race Relations and Southall Rights, 1981), p.14-5.

[74] *Between Two Cultures: A Study of Relationships between Generations in the Asian Community in Britain,* (Community Relations Commission, 1976).

[75] Ibid.

[76] BBC Radio Interview, April 24th, 1979.

[77] *Between Two Cultures: A Study of Relationships between Generations in the Asian Community in Britain,* (Community Relations Commission, 1976).

[78] Gita Sahgal, 'Fundamentalism and the Multi-Culturalist Fallacy', *Against the Grain: Southall Black Sisters 1979-1989*, (Southall Black Sisters, 1990).
[79] Gilroy notes how in 'black cultures, the themes of bodily control and care emerge most strongly in relation to dance and martial arts'. 'Urban Social Movements, "Race" and Community', Williams and Chrisman (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), p. 408. Such was equally the case with the, predominantly Punjabi, youth culture of seventies Southall, particularly in light of the inspiration provided by stars such as Bruce Lee. Gauging the true extent to which this charismatic action hero influenced British Asians at the time would be a fruitful avenue for future research. Alongside the town's burgeoning martial arts scene, notes Suresh Grover (Interview 14/2/99), a number of weight-lifting clubs opened to serve its militant youth in the 1970s.
[80] J.P.S.Uberoi , *Martyrdom*, A paper presented at *The Sikh Spirit: A Symposium on the Issues Facing the Khalsa at 300*, New Delhi, April, 1999, p.52.
[81] *Southall, 23 April 1979: The Report of the Unofficial Committee of Enquiry*, Published for the Committee by the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL), p.71.
[82] J.P.S.Uberoi , *Martyrdom*, A paper presented at *The Sikh Spirit: A Symposium on the Issues Facing the Khalsa at 300*, New Delhi, April, 1999, p.53.
[83] Ibid., p.53.
[84] Interview with Balraj Puriwal 14/2/99.
[85] In the 1970s, 'black' was commonly adopted as the umbrella term for all ethnic minority communities, both in Southall and elsewhere. *Against the Grain: Southall Black Sisters 1979-1989*, (Southall Black Sisters, 1990), p.10.
[86] Laurent Gayer, (2000), 'The Globalisation of Identity Politics: The Sikh Experience', *International Journal of Punjab Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 2, p.236.
[87] Gita Sahgal, 'Fundamentalism and the Multi-Culturalist Fallacy', *Against the Grain: Southall Black Sisters 1979-1989*, (Southall Black Sisters, 1990), pp.22-23.
[88] Ibid., p.44-5. Sahgal illustrates the fragile balance involved in retaining an awareness of police racism while attempting to address instances of violence by men against women.
[89] Paul Gilroy, 'Urban Social Movements, "Race" and Community', Williams and Chrisman (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994).
[90] Ibid. p.140
[91] Homi Bhabha, 'Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition', Williams and Chrisman (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), p.112.
[92] *Morning Star*, Wednesday, May 26, 1976.
[93] *Southall: The Birth of a Black Community*, (The Institute of Race Relations and Southall Rights, 1981), p.40.
[94] Ibid., p.41.
[95] The NP won two council seats in Blackburn and its secession almost cost the

NF its pre-eminence. Christopher T. Husbands, (1988), 'Extreme Right-Wing Politics in Great Britain: The Recent Marginalisation of the National Front', *West European Politics*, April 1988, p.67.
[96] Richard Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain: A History, 1918-1985*, (Basil Blackwell, 1987), p.296.
[97] Randall Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-War Britain*, (Oxford University Press, 2000).
[98] Interview with Jayaben Desai by Dee O'Connell, 'What happened next', *Observer Magazine*, 4th of May 2003.
[99] Arthur Marwick, *British Society Since 1945*, (Penguin, 1990), p.223.
[100] Henry Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism*, (Penguin, 1987), p.276.
[101] Ibid., p.223.
[102]Kalra, Hutnyk and Sharma, 'Re-Sounding (Anti)Racism, or Concordant Politics? Revolutionary Antecedents', Sharma, Hutnyk and Sharma (eds.), *Dis-Orienting Rhythms: The Politics of the New Asian Dance Music*, (Zed Books, 1996), pp.129-31.
[103] Homi Bhabha, 'Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition', Williams and Chrisman (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), p.112.
[104] Kalra, Hutnyk and Sharma, 'Re-Sounding (Anti)Racism, or Concordant Politics? Revolutionary Antecedents', Sharma, Hutnyk and Sharma (eds.), *Dis-Orienting Rhythms: The Politics of the New Asian Dance Music*, (Zed Books, 1996).
[105] Interview with Balraj Puriwal 14/2/99.
[106] Jürgen Habermas, *The New Conservatism*, (Polity Press, 1994), p.25.
[107] Blumenthal is quoted in William Keegan's, *The Spectre of Capitalism: The Future of the World Economy After the Fall of Communism*, (Vintage, 1993), p.57.
[108] Ibid., p.57.
[109] Blumenthal is quoted in Ibid., p.57.
[110] Ibid., p.61.
[111] Nancy Murray, 'Anti-racists and other demons: the press and ideology in Thatcher's Britain', *Racism and the press in Thatcher's Britain*, (Institute of Race Relations, 1989), pp.1-7.
[112] Ibid., pp.1-6.
[113] John DeWitt, *Indian Workers' Associations in Britain*, (Oxford University Press, 1969), pp.34-5.
[114] Arthur Marwick, *British Society Since 1945*, (Penguin, 1990), p.216.
[115] Randall Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-War Britain*, (Oxford University Press, 2000.
[116] Paul Foot, *Immigration and Race in British Politics*, (Penguin, 1965), p.44.
[117] Randall Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-War Britain*, (Oxford University Press, 2000), p.26.
[118] Interview with Suresh Grover 14/2/99.
[119] Policing Against Black People, (Institute of Race Relations, 1987), p.viii.

[120] Paul Gilroy, "Managing the 'underclass': a further note on the sociology of race relations in Britain", *Race and Class*, Vol:XXII, No.1, Summer 1980, p.48.
[121] Martin Kettle, 'The Drift to Law and Order', Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques (eds.), *The Politics of Thatcherism*, (Lawrence and Wishart, 1987), pp.226-31.
[122] Arthur Marwick, *British Society Since 1945*, (Penguin, 1990), p.213.
[123] Ibid., p.271.
[124] *The Daily Telegraph*, Wednesday, April 25th, 1979, p.2.
[125] *Southall, 23 April 1979: The Report of the Unofficial Committee of Enquiry*, Published for the Committee by the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL), pp.98-100.
[126] Richard Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain: A History, 1918-1985*, (Basil Blackwell, 1987), p. 251.
[127] This term is used by Giner and Sevilla to distinguish democratic corporatism from its fascist, though still corporatist, cousin. S. Giner and E. Sevilla, 'Spain: From Corporatism to Corporatism', *Southern Europe Transformed: Political and Economic Changes in Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain*, A. Williams.(ed.) (1984).
[128] Richard Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain: A History, 1918-1985*, (Basil Blackwell, 1987), pp.26-36.
[129] Ibid., pp.16-8.
[130] Ibid., pp.245-6.
[131] Ibid., 70-7 and 252-7. Jordan had actually been in disgrace for some time due to his prosecution for stealing ladies underwear, Ibid., p.282. His return to politics with the BM was short lived as younger enthusiasts, under the leadership of Michael McLaughlin, took over the movement.
[132] Ibid., p.104.
[133] Ibid., p.263.
[134] Ibid., p.277.
[135] Ibid., p.xvii.
[136] Ibid., p.290.
[137] Christopher T. Husbands, (1988), 'Extreme Right-Wing Politics in Great Britain: The Recent Marginalisation of the National Front', *West European Politics*, April 1988, pp.74-75.
[138] Cross membership between the NF and the Conservative Party, such as that sought by Councillor R. Tonge, Mayor of Stafford, was increasingly common at the time, *Morning Star*, June 1, 1976.
[139] Richard Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain: A History, 1918-1985*, (Basil Blackwell, 1987), p.290.
[140] Ibid., 282-4.
[141] Christopher T. Husbands, (1988), 'Extreme Right-Wing Politics in Great Britain: The Recent Marginalisation of the National Front', *West European Politics*, April 1988, pp.69-70. Interestingly, in the 1980s the youthful new leadership of the NF supported, albeit cautiously, a number of nationalist and fundamentalist movements, including those of militant Islam and, black and pan-Arab nationalisms. The Iranian Revolution was greeted with enthusiasm

and members of the NF travelled to Libya to request financial assistance from Colonel Qaddafi's regime. Such developments were greeted with horror by John Tyndall who regarded them as a sort of 'right wing Trotskyism' (Husbands, 1988: 72). Further, they presaged an increasing emphasis on occultism and mysticism, including that of Indic, Islamic and oriental extraction, among such groups. For a magisterial account of this 'esoteric turn' on the radical right, see Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke's *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism, and the Politics of Identity* (NYU Press, 2002).

[142] Richard Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain: A History, 1918-1985*, (Basil Blackwell, 1987).

[143] Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', Illuminations, (Fontana Press, 1992), p.249.

The Region and Empire: Interaction between Ranjit Singh and the Kangra Hill States

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Against the grain of the dominant historiography, which is empire centric, this paper represents a shift in perspective, highlighting the region in the process of empire formation. An attempt has been made, therefore, to understand some aspects of interaction between the hegemonic empire and the peripheral region, limited here to economy. The assumption is that the building of empire required resources - in services, material and money - and the interaction with the hill States, and their integration with the empire, was geared to garner such resources. Yet, it was not a relation of dominance only. Such interaction not only opened new markets to the hill products and services that had cultural and economic implications, but also alienated revenue to the process of empire formation. While new markets were welcome, the alienation of revenue was not. Therefore, there was an uneasy alliance with the hill chieftains, under-girded by an aspect of protest - by the Rajas as well as the people. The protest was that of a weak against the strong - indirect, meek and symbolic. However, when the strength of the empire dwindled, such protests became a reality. The process of such protests is vital for our understanding the decline of the empire, barely a decade after the death of the Maharaja.

The historians of Panjab have largely occupied themselves with the formulation of empire centric theory. In the process, they have dwelled largely upon the 'systematic aggrandisement' which made Ranjit Singh 'the master of an empire in less than a quarter of a century'.[1] They have detailed the conquests of the Maharaja and the vital role played by his cavalry, its training on the western lines by French generals, the relative strength of army and artillery, effecting expansion of dominions[2] along with the 'time honoured institution of vassalage'.[3] As the empire consolidated there was a 'revival of cultivation and trade',[4] growth of cities and town,[5] revival of art activities,[6] secular literature,[7] and the fashioning of a composite culture in the court and society.[8] The focus is primarily on the core area of the empire. In such a formulation however, the dynamics of a culturally alien conquered region - territory, people and culture - remain marginalised. The relationship between such regions and the hegemonic empire has been understood only in terms of dominance - the suzerain and tributory. The region is only represented in terms of annexation, tribute, revenue and a hinterland of men and armour to the war effort of the empire.[9] One reason for such insensitivity is the paucity of source material, particularly on the hill states, barring the travelogues and the diary of events chronicled by the court. However, this source has also been used to conjure a picture of Maharaja as a 'skilful diplomat', 'a better judge of horses, swords and matchlocks', 'a wary politician' or 'a sagacious and skilful architect'.[10] This paper too relies exclusively on such evidence. It, however, intends to shift the perspective from

empire to region. It is an exercise to understand the empire from the vantage point of region, bearing in mind the distinct cultural, economic and political aspirations of the people. The paper is spatially restricted to the Kangra hill States; the implication for other constituent regions of the empire is, however, intended.

The paper tries to understand some aspects of interaction, limited here to economy, between the hill population and the emerging 'empire'. The assumption is that the building of empire required resources - in services, material and money - and the interaction with the hill states, and their integration with the empire, was geared to garner such resources. Yet, it was not a relation of dominance only. Such interaction not only opened new market to the hill products and services that had cultural and economic implications, but also alienated revenue to the process of empire formation. While new markets were welcome, the alienation of revenue was not. Therefore, there was an uneasy alliance with the hill chieftains, under-girded by an aspect of protest - by the Rajas as well as the people. This paper explores such a relationship in the context of emerging empire of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

The study is conceived in three broad sections. Section one provides the context to the annexation of the region by the Maharaja. It tries to briefly state why it was essential to control Kangra to make inroads into the larger hill economy, a ruse that was effected by the Mughals and the earlier Sikh chieftains. Section two works out the characteristics of hill economy. It tries to understand how an access to mutually exclusive market was vital to the local economy and for the nascent empire. Section three conceives the various positions thrown by the conception of a tributary state. It tries to formulate a passive protest by the weak, the conquered Rajas, against the dominant monarch. It also tries to understand various strategies employed by the paramount ruler to contain the weak. The last section concludes why the hill States could not pose a threat to the paramount empire of Ranjit Singh as they themselves were divided and often at war with each other. However the protest, manifested indirectly and symbolically during the times of Ranjit Singh, was always simmering within various regions of the empire and as soon as the paramountcy ceased to exist, the empire crumbled.

I

After the decline of Durranis in the Panjab plains, the Kangra hill states came under the influence of the Sikh *Misaldars* - particularly Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and later Jai Singh Kanhiya, who controlled Kot Kangra by 1783. These hill states consisted of Kangra and its kin-states - Guler, Datarpur, Siba and Jaswan. The western Himachal hill states that paid tribute to the Sikhs also included Nurpur, Kulu, Kahlur or Bilaspur, and Mandi-Suket. The Sikh influence over Chamba, which was never a part of Ranjit Singh's empire, was also significant, who addressed grievances, sought intervention and assurance against neighbours - Kangra, Basholi, Jammu or Kishtwar.[11] These hill states were bound in close kinship ties, as agnates - as in the case of Kangra, Guler, Datarpur, Jaswan and Siba - as well as affines. Notwithstanding such close ties, the limitations imposed by the terrain and resources necessitated certain flash points, which

were the areas of conflict, to bolster productivity, revenue and economy.[12] Thus, rice producing area of Rilhu and Pathiar was the bone of contention between Kangra and Chamba;[13] the irrigated 'rice bowl' of Baijnath among Kangra, Mandi and Banaghal; salt mines of Gumma between Banaghal and Mandi, among others, were certain such areas and arena of contest which kept the state boundaries perpetually fluid and flexible.[14] The bounties afforded by such regions attracted attention from the plains as well, Durranis making land grants in these regions as well as the Sikhs later.[15] It is against this background, of attempts to control these prominent areas of agricultural and mineral productivity that the political developments may be understood. The political developments were significant for they impinged upon the celebrated 'isolation' of the hill terrain and the constant internal reorganisation within the confines of the western Himalayan ranges. Like the Mughals or Durranis, these developments started a wider interaction among these 'isolated territories', people and resources, with the Panjab of Ranjit Singh in the early nineteenth century.

While deliberating upon the inroads made into the hill society and economy, there is invariably an attempt to control the region of Kangra. Kangra became a focus of such strategic designs because of its topography and proximity of its boundaries to the plains of Panjab, apart from it being one of the largest hill states. The 'still waters' of river Beas were navigated quite early on and the foothills surrounding it provided little impediments for the large scale movement of army, armoury and cavalry, since the days of Mahmud of Ghazni.[16] The control of Kangra fort virtually gave control to the significant resources of the Palam areas or the fertile irrigated plain areas of the largest valley in the hills. Garrisoned, at various periods by the Mughals, Durranis, Gurkhas and Sikhs, it became the base camp, as it were, to penetrate and control the surrounding hill states.[17] It provided access to the trade routes from Tibet, Kashmir, Panjab and the British India. It is due to the centrality of Kangra and its proximity to the plains that it attracted invasion from within and outside the hills. As the relationships among the hill states were fluid, engaged as they were in perpetual war, the outside forces intervened to control these states directly or covertly.[18] Compared to the states in the Indo-Gangetic plains, the hill states were small and weak. Therefore, irrespective of the nature of hegemony extended over them, they were subordinate to the larger, mighty and resourceful states of the plains. Hegemony over the hill states was not always direct but was disguised by forging alliances or extracting tribute in money, kind and service. In the early nineteenth century, the Gurkha forces under Amar Singh Thapa made such an attempt in 1803, who besieged the Kangra fort and controlled the Kangra plains.[19] While the neighbouring hill states accepted the vassalage of the Gurkhas instead of direct confrontation, yet Kangra negotiated a treaty with Ranjit Singh in 1809 against the Gurkhas. Ranjit Singh became eventually, in 1809, the master of the Kangra fort. Though Kangra State was integrated into the empire of Lahore seven years after the death (in 1823) of Sansar Chand Katoch - the reduced vassal Raja of Kangra, who held briefly the territories of Hoshiarpur and Bajwara in the Panjab plains - the fertile regions of Kangra were controlled by Ranjit Singh after 1809.[20]

II

At one level, the reason to control the hill states, particularly by Ranjit Singh, were economic. The economic significance of the hill states to the wider economy of the Panjab cannot be underestimated. Such significance presumes the underlying motive to control these regions by the predecessors of as well as Ranjit Singh. The economic viability of these territories, in terms of revenue expected, the agrarian and mineral productivity and trade, apart from men of war, held considerable significance particularly in the context of empire formation in the early 19th century Panjab.

As early as 1783 when Forster crossed the Hill State of Bilaspur, the revenue exceeded twelve lakh rupees, and the army comprised of 300 cavalry and 8000 infantry - a fighting force armed with matchlocks, swords, clubs and spears. At the same time, the revenue of Nurpur was estimated at four lakh rupees, while those of Kangra at seven lakh rupees.[21] Further, Jacquemont calculated the revenue of three lakh rupees from the 45 *taluquas* that Ranjit Singh was sovereign of.[22] Similarly, Moorcroft was also told that formerly Kangra yielded 35 lakh rupees in revenue, but after occupation by Ranjit Singh most of it was alienated such that the Raja had only 70,000 rupees for his personal expense after paying his troops.[23]

Controlling certain strategic towns and passes that gave access to the trade routes further enhanced the revenue. The township of Nadaun was one such prominent checkpoint. It was situated on the brisk shawl trade route from Kashmir to Najibabad and Saharanpur and was farmed at Rs. 27, 000 per annum in the late eighteenth century. The Gosains of Jwalamukhi particularly profited from this trade. They functioned through the agency of their 'pupils or *Chelas*' who 'traversed the whole of Hindustan' for this purpose.[24] This trade, however, received a setback due to the Gurkha invasion and consequently the traders and shopkeepers of Nadaun deserted the township or were 'listlessly employed.' The town, which had a population of 300 houses, lost the trade and traders, frequented only by the pilgrims and ascetics.[25]

Nurpur too was famous for its steel and iron industry in the eighteenth century, and had a population of 6,000 in 1830s. In 1840s Vigne acccounted for 15,000 people in this town. The sharp rise in population was due to the Kashmiri Shawl weavers, who settled Nurpur as it provided a 'comparative security.' Haripur was one of the earliest conquests of the Sikhs on the shawl trade route to Kashmir, where they built a fort. Sujanpur Tira was the capital of Katoch Rajas and housed 3,000-4,000 people. It was famous for 'manufacturing of carpets', though for the Rajas' personal use. Later Raja Sansar Chand also established a small 'manufactory of arms' here. Sultanpur, the capital of Kulu, was famous for its trade in coarse chintze, blankets and woollen clothes and had an exclusive market in opium and musk.[26] In the foothills, Hoshiarpur was the major township inhabited mainly by the weavers, dye, confectioneries, grain-sellers and 'turners of wood'. It not only tapped the hill produce and exports, but in turn exported white clothes to Delhi; white and red textile to Jaipur and Bikaner; coarse clothes to other townships of Panjab and Kabul; and fine textile to Herat, Balkh, Bokhara and Yarkhand.[27]

The temple towns of Jwalamukhi and Kot Kangra were not only religious but also economic centres. By the 1780s, the shrine of Jwalamukhi had a burgeoning hinterland. Forster informs that it was a 'favourite resort among the people of Panjab', particularly from Hoshiarpur and Jalandhar. The popularity may be judged from the fact that the Sikh rulers Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh visited the shrine in 1807.[28] The ruler of Nepal donated a large bell.[29] Hugel observed that the golden roof of both the large and small buildings of the Jwalamukhi temple were 'most tastefully and richly executed and were the gifts of Ranjit Singh, in testimony of his gratitude to the Devi, the Goddess, to whom he ascribes his recovery from a dangerous illness'. Hugel met a *naik* or a corporal in the army of the East India Company 'who had obtained six months leave of absence from his corps in Ludhiana, which he meant to pass as a *faqir* at Jwalamukhi'.[30] Sometimes, one who did not want to serve the king but could not refuse for the fear of life, escaped by becoming a *faqir*, to serve the Goddess. The shrine was popular for curing skin diseases and goitre. There was a strong tradition that the water of its springs effected cures by both drinking and external application.[31] Hugel estimated the population of Jwalamukhi around 500-600 houses, largely consisting of Gosains, Jogis, Jats and 'penitents of all sorts'. In addition, 'female dancers' were attached to the temple. The bazaar catering to the needs of pilgrims and local population was also growing. Moorcroft observed that the bazaar of Jwalamukhi had shops of grain dealers and sweetmeat vendors; as well the 'stores selling images, chaplets and amulets, etc'.[32]

Mineral ores also added to the wealth of the region. Iron ores were found at Sujanpur. In Mandi, iron was farmed as blue slate stones. The extracted ingots were sold at rupees 3-½ per *pakka maund*. Vigne inspected these mines and found them 'very rich' particularly in sparkling iron or glanz. However, Mandi was famous for its salt mines at Gumma and Darang. Rock salt was extracted from Gumma at the profit of rupees 16000/year, although in winters only three trenches were used yielding 200 *maunds* of salt every third day. Similarly, Darang salt mines yielded annual profit of Rupees 8000. Though the salt produced in Mandi was 'less pure than Attok', still it found a ready market 'in the principal bazaars of the Panjab'.[33]

There was also a demand for natural products, particularly wild, forest products, and mineral ores, particularly in the Panjab. The article that was profitably exported was paper, made of indigenous *Sitabharua* plant. Though this paper was coarse and of 'dirty white colour' it was particularly in demand for the 'manufacture of paste board and *papier mache*'.[34] Wax and honey was another popular produce sold in bazaars for 4-6 *seers*/rupee. Fir timber and bamboo were exclusive exports, while hemp for ropes, tar, resin, turpentine were other forest produce eyed by the market. From Kulu, there was a constant demand particularly in Panjab for rhubarb, poppy and opium. Kulu exported walnuts, quince and apricot; as well as produced peach, pomegranates, peas, figs and grapes. Kulu also produced exclusive forested timber-- ceder, pine and fir, rhododendron and oak. In the lower hills, mulberry and cotton was reared which furnished 'the material for Hoshiarpur textile.'[35]

Against the backdrop of the economic viability of the region, the occupation of Kot Kangra and 66 fertile revenue villages to maintain the garrison at Kangra

by Ranjit Singh opened up tributary relationships with the cis-Sutluj hill states. Desa Singh Majithia was appointed as the *Nazim* or Governor of the hill administration and the Katoch rulers of Kangra were forced to rule from Sujanpur Tira. The tribute not only alienated revenue but also was a symbol of subordination. The chiefs of Chamba, Mandi, Kulu, Bilaspur and Suket also accepted such a status and paid regular tribute to escape war. Since tribute was a significant contribution to the income of the empire, it was increased with the passage of time. For instance, Mandi paid 30,000 rupees as tribute in 1810, which was increased to 50,000 after a couple of years and 75,000 by 1839. Chamba similarly paid 30,000 rupees in 1807, which was increased to 40,000 by 1816. Not only tribute was accepted, these states were also constrained to provide arms and army when called upon. For instance, Raja Sansar Chand sent on demand 400 musketeers in 1813 and the force of 1000 cavalry and footmen for the planned expedition of Kashmir.[36] In addition, the Rajas were forced to rest upon the court of the Maharaja in person at least once a year and maintain their *vakils* in the royal court throughout the year. *Nazrana* was paid on every meeting with the Maharaja, which added to his earning, who also extracted money on the succession of the new Raja. Thus after the death of Raja Sansar Chand his son paid one lakh twenty thousand rupees (120,000) on succession and Zalim Sen of Mandi paid a lakh of rupees (100,000) in 1826.[37] Extraction was fine-tuned by imposing huge fines on non-compliance of the royal orders or wishes. For instance, the Raja of Kulu was fined rupees 80,000 for 'granting refuge' to Shah Shuja, who reportedly fled to the British dominions 'through the mountainous regions'. Again, he was fined rupees 50,000 for helping the British against the Gurkhas in 1815.[38] Similarly, a fine of rupees three lakh was imposed upon Kangra for allowing Shah Shuja to traverse through his territories, even though the state feigned ignorance, stating that Shuja had been in disguise.[39]

Although the contribution of the tributary States was significant, the consideration of the empire formation demanded more revenues. Ranjit Singh, therefore, annexed certain territories that were economically significant. Apart from annexing the 66 revenue villages in Kangra for the maintenance of his garrison in 1809, he captured Kotla and Mangarh fort by 1811 and annexed the entire state of Guler in 1813.[40] The Raja was arrested and later conferred a *jagir* of 20,000 rupees. Datarpur was similarly annexed in 1818 and Nurpur by 1815. Mandi and Kulu were annexed however after the death of Ranjit Singh.[41]

The economic dimension of annexation cannot be overlooked. The point in case is the annexation of Nurpur, a home to the shawl and iron industry. In 1812, Nurpur was asked to pay a tribute of 40,000 rupees. In February 1813, even while the Nurpur regent was honoured with a robe, as was customary, on his departure, a conspiracy was hatched to annex the fort of Nurpur. Thus, the Raja was given the choice of either surrendering the fort or else making an additional payment of rupees fifty thousand.[42] It seems that the Raja of Nurpur, Bir Singh, realising the designs of Ranjit Singh tried to defy the authority by not paying the revenue from his territory.[43] It also seems that Nurpur and Jaswan did not lend their army summoned to assemble at Sialkot. Resultantly, Nurpur was asked to pay rupees 31,000 as fine for his absence.[44] Simultaneously, furthering his annexation designs, Ranjit Singh tired to allure Nathu, the *wazir* of

Chamba,[45] and Sansar Chand of Kangra in order to isolate Nurpur.[46] A few days later Nurpur was 'evacuated' and annexed. The *thanas* of Ranjit Singh were established in the territory of the Raja of Nurpur. A booty of 100,000 *maunds* of grain, 50,000 *maunds* of gun-powder and ammunition, 200 swivel guns, 10 canons, two elephants and 200 hundred horses were also 'seized'.[47] Subsequently, the state of Jaswan was also annexed and the Raja was conferred a *jagir* of 12,000 for his maintenance.[48] The Raja of Nurpur was imprisoned for seven years, when Chamba effected his release on the payment of 85,000 rupees.[49]

III

The process of 'empire' formation involves various strategies employed by the subordinate and the victor. While the subordinate tries to subvert and discredit the ruler, particularly when the victor cannot be challenged militarily, the victor adopts the strategy to legitimise the rule by appealing to the sentiments of people and or dangling a carrot to ensure compliance.[50]

In order to firm up the annexation and to legitimise his claim over the new territories, Ranjit Singh also manipulated the sacred-ritual space. When Maharaja Ranjit Singh visited Kangra in 1813, he was particular to worship the main Goddess of the territory he had acquired in 1809. In the context of expansion, that he was engaged in at that time, the significance of the ritual worship aimed at gaining legitimacy and co-opting the popular consent to rule cannot be undermined. The chronicle of his court reads that Ranjit Singh,[51]

> … took a sacred bath and changed his clothes. When the day had advanced four hours he rode out and went to the temple of Devi Nagarkot. On approaching the temple he alighted from his horse, entered it on foot… enjoyed a sacred sight of the Devi, performed some rites peculiar to the place, and made offering of his gold staff, a gold threaded suit of clothes, one huge canopy, several necessary articles which he carried with himself, and twelve hundred rupees in cash. He remained standing for full four hours, and with his own hands distributed sweetmeats and five hundred rupees among the Brahmans. After this he received some sacred gifts from that place…At nightfall...he ordered for the preparation of "*hom*" (*yajna*-sacrifice) that had to take place the following day. After that he ate something and then listened to the "*katha*"(the lore of the Goddess)…

However, the interaction between the 'empire' and region conflicted. While the 'empire' sought to exploit the resources, co-opt the territories even while maintaining societal differentiation, the region resisted subtly by misrepresentation, false-compliance, feigning ignorance, slander, and on occasion by open revolt – refusing to abide by the dictates of the paramount power.[52] This is evident from the trivial but significant ramblings made in the official court recordings, or in the insights offered by various travellers who visited the area in this period. For instance, when Raja Bhup Singh was asked to lead an expedition in 1813, he deliberately deferred it for a fortnight. Then,

thinking this an opportune time he tacitly reminded Ranjit Singh that he was his subordinate and that his territory was in his possession. On his part the Maharaja assured that his territory would be restored soon. Similarly, the Raja of Jaswan excused himself awhile so that he 'may get time to make proper arrangements before proceeding on a military exercise'.[53] In continuance of the invisible resistance, Bhup Singh on promise of his land co-operated in establishing control over Haripur and Mangarh,[54] a promise that was not kept. Understanding that passive resistance and counter-promises would not fructify, he decided to conspire and revolt openly. Therefore in October 1814 it was reported that Bhup Singh had conspired with the officials within the fort of Kangra and had fomented internal dissension.[55]

This is not an isolated case. It seems that Ranjit Singh understood that the hill chieftains could be kept quiet by keeping them hopeful and thus disciplined-subordinates, by promising certain vital territories though rarely making them over. The loss of prominent territories not only impoverished the hill states, but also squeezed and confined them to narrow domains, cutting the linkages with the larger regional society that they represented.[56] By such divisions, the Maharaja also de-legitimised the claims of the ruling chief. Yet, at the same time the hill chiefs tried to extract reward, though largely in vain, for their co-operation. When they failed to win favours, they subtly showed their displeasure or protest. Thus, Raja Sansar Chand reminded Ranjit Singh that he had promised that the forts of Jhirka and Kohtas would be handed over to him after their conquest.[57] Subsequently, the *vakil* of Sansar Chand reminded the ruler that Sansar Chand expected that the villages belonging to the fort of Jhirka, which were confiscated, would be restored, a request that too was assured.[58] However, when the Raja realised that his requests were not going to be realised, he tried to show his displeasure by quitting without approval. Thus, his representative informed the Maharaja that the Raja had to depart as fever and small pox with the change of season afflicted his people. A subtle statement that the Raja 'also felt the strain of their expenses', incurred by his stay at his court, reminded the Maharaja of the displeasure of the chieftain whose revenues had declined.[59] This also subtly circumvented the paramount authority that asserted dominance by refusing the Rajas to depart; rather insisting on their presence along with troops.[60] It seems that this was a regular game that the Rajas and the Maharaja played to defy and defend the royal authority. On occasions, therefore, the mountain chiefs through the agency of the *Nazim*, Desa Singh, informed the Maharaja that they wanted to return as they had incurred debt by their stay, or that there was shortage of straw etc. for their cavalry. The Maharaja had his way as he expected them to send their troops in such circumstances. The Rajas had to usually wait on the king in person before they were allowed to depart.[61]

The foothold in the hill terrain also meant that there was Sikh presence in the region. The Sikh warriors had, however, alienated the local society even earlier than the occupation of Kot Kangra by Ranjit Singh. For instance, Forster, refers to the merchants being pillaged and looted by the Sikh mercenaries of Kangra. He informs that the Sikhs were likened to be 'licentious' and 'plunderers' particularly in the 'foreign service'.[62] Such attitudes were hardened when the 'empire' started interacting with the population. Therefore, at the popular level,

the protest was manifest in various quarters, by adopting varied strategies. For instance, it was virtually impossible to collect revenue from hill populace and the local Rajas. Keeping in view the larger goal, Ranjit Singh, for instance asked Desa Singh Majithia in May 1813 to 'realise whatever revenue he could' and not to quarrel with the Rajas of the 'foot of the mountain'. It was reminded that the Rajas could be dealt with later.[63] Even Sansar Chand sent messages to Ranjit Singh that troops 'in that direction be appointed to realise the revenues from the Rajas of the mountainous regions'.[64] Sometimes a token amount was sent, as in September 1814 a *hundi* of 5000 was sent by the revenue collector of Sujanpur. Evidently, the papers for annual contribution were sought.[65] When the *vakil* of Mandi was returning he was reminded that the revenue tax had not been paid.[66]

That the revenue collection was a big exercise is clear from various dispatches to the Rajas and the *Nazim* of the hill states. Force was also resorted to though without yielding the desired results always. For instance, in May 1815 forces under Majithia were sent towards Kulu and adjoining region to collect revenue-tax.[67] In February 1816 the revenue collector of Kangra was ordered to pay the revenue tax for the autumn crop.[68] In December 1846, Diwan Moti Ram reported that rupees 25000 were realised as tax from Mandi, though the Raja of Kulu procrastinated. He was assured however by the Raja of Mandi with respect to the revenue tax of Kulu, for which Mandi had offered to act as a surety, requesting further to 'march away from that place and leave only a small force there'.[69] The point in case is that the people were impoverished and could ill afford the taxes. The Rajas too failed not to point out their economic plight. They requested loans, instead of revenue payment, from the Maharaja himself. Thus, Raja Sansar Chand through his representative sought a loan of rupees 2000 from Ranjit Singh personally. The Maharaja was quick to read the message. He sent rupees 1000 immediately with a promise of the rest of the thousand subsequently.[70] Such documents reflect the attitude of the rulers, the subjects and the vassals. The irony of one is compounded by the helplessness of the other. In the above case the personal difficulty of the Raja - a hereditary ruler of Kangra - projecting the hopelessness of his financial health owing to the occupation of his territories and financial binding, is helped by the understanding Maharaja who himself is restrained by the demands arising from various quarters of his authority including the Rajas, who contributed little and demanded more.

IV

The perspective that emerges is that while the region was integrated in stages with the process of 'empire', particularly economically, the regional co-operation was in itself a strategy, which could breakaway as soon as it realised that the 'empire' no longer exercised paramount power. In the context of the empire building, consisting of and balancing the diverse regions - territories, chieftains, people, clans, communities, cultures - the perspective may be used to locate the precise tension between the region and the empire which led to the breaking down of the structures of 'empire' soon after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Though being largely unsuccessful during the lifetime of Ranjit Singh, such a strategy, however, corroded the basis of authority of the 'empire',

even if it was loosely asserted. It may, however, be pointed out that since the protests were led by powerful regional chieftains, they could not succeed as their goals were limited, and the scale of mobilisation, whenever, could not transcend the divisions of caste, community and geography.

The hill chieftains were themselves divided and were often at war with each other.[71] Therefore, they were subjugated by a power above regional consideration, as the 'empire of Lahore' was, but they in turn were used against each other to territorially expand, consolidate or even maintain the structure of the 'empire'. In return, the 'empire' exercised a paramount power to counterbalance the internal dynamics of the region, the interests of individual Hill State against other hill States, and therefore sought legitimacy from such arrangements. The hill chieftains by being recognised by the paramount power constructed legitimacy by co-operating with the 'empire'. The paramountcy was further exercised as well as legitimacy to rule asserted by issuing land grants within the territories conquered, ceded and annexed.[72] The 'empire' however could not integrate and counter-balance the diverse regions and conflicting interests within it. Against the insurmountable military power, these interests made a territorial empire, challenged only by rather invisible protests. Such protests were significant reflection of the different trajectories obtained by the 'empire' and 'region', a pointer towards the alternative centres of power within the 'empire'. These protests took different dimensions once the paramount power ceased to exist, with various chiefs trying to control the nucleus and the periphery trying to assert independence. Consequently, the empire collapsed from within. It was annexed to the dominions of the East India Company barely a decade later, after the death of the Maharaja.

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Constructing Sikh Identities: Authorit*ies*, Virtual and Imagined

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This paper addresses the issue of 'authority' within Sikhism, particularly within the context of the digital domain. It gives a brief overview of traditional loci of authority, the *Adi Granth*, the *Sikh Rehit Maryada*, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), the Akal Takht, as well as local gurdwaras and attempts to contextualize these traditional institutions from the perspective of postmodernity and the digital landscape. Based on Ray Oldenburg's notion of the 'third place', the space of communication and socialization of equals, my paper questions whether given the general mistrust of traditional institutions by many Sikhs making themselves heard on the internet, the WWW has become perhaps the most important 'third place' for Sikhs, particularly for young, disaffected Sikhs? What are the consequences for this 'shift' in understandings of authority? Given the proliferation of web sites devoted to Sikhism and very specific claims make on the internet, can their creators be designated as the 'new authorit*ies*' of Sikhism.

Introduction: The Context

The question of authority within Sikhism has become very real to me personally since I began teaching a course on Sikhism at Renison College, at the University of Waterloo. If we look to the most influential scholars of Sikhism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Punjab – their focus, though honing on varied aspects, has primarily been historical.[1] The most recent publications from contemporary scholars of Sikhism in the Diaspora have also, by and large, followed their lead. Indeed, the focus on the historical framework goes beyond the interests of historians of Sikhism, it is also the framework of choice for non-academic works (Bhogal 2001, 73). Thus, where does one direct a student who wishes to find information that can stand up to the at times harsh light of contemporary issues and concerns of young Sikhs in the Diaspora? Let me turn briefly to some of the very poignant, profound and stimulating concerns and questions raised within my Sikhism course.

For instance, the question was raised by students that given that the very *raison d'être* of the creation of the Khalsa was that the brotherhood be constantly armed and ready for battle against unrighteousness, and given that the requirements of Guru Gobind Singh included the weaponry of the day, how are those particular weapons of antiquity, including the *kirpan*, representative of

warfare in today's nuclear age. Are these symbols, of steel, of a readiness to fight, simply outmoded for this day and age?

This level of inquiry leads simply to more questions regarding the very pertinence of the Khalsa initiation, given that it was situated in a very particular time and that it answered the needs of that very specific time and place. For instance, the addition of the name 'Singh', the Rajput warrior identity appropriated by Guru Gobind Singh, was initially a central component of the Khalsa initiation ceremony. Today, the appellation is instead given at time of birth. Thus, if one already is a 'Singh' or 'Kaur', if one already wears the 5 Ks, then why be initiated? What these questions point to is a very distinct re-conceptualization of Sikh identity. Moreover, these questions come from Sikhs themselves, not from outsiders who can easily be accused of meddling in 'others'' sacred affairs.

Further, questions regarding inconsistencies within Sikh ideals and Sikh practices concerning the status of women and prejudice rooted in caste appear to be of the greatest concern for young people. For example, statements upholding gender equality and the elimination of caste within Sikhism were greeted with overt cynicism by students. And, not surprisingly, platitudes blaming both the society and culture surrounding Sikhs in Punjab, namely Hinduism as being responsible for these inconsistencies, no longer appear to convince many young people. Notwithstanding the obvious and apparently common practice of amniocentesis and the abortion of female foetuses that is highest in Punjab in comparison to other Indian states, the awareness also extends to more subtle differences *vis-à-vis expectations* of males and females among Sikh families. Most pointedly, this concerns caste rules with regard to dating and marriage practices, but also appears to be consistent within the wider arena of gurdwara politics. According to one observer the issue rests firmly on what he labels as 'the Punjabi mentality':

> At this time the Sikh religion is firmly in control of the older generations from Punjab and its religious institutions around the world are run as virtual extensions of Punjab and the Punjabi mentality. Many issues are not dealt with because they never had to be dealt with in the past and it is always easier to maintain the status quo rather than try to find new answers (Brar 1998a).

But where do students turn who are disaffected by the status quo?

Perhaps the most obvious answer would appear to lie within local gurdwaras and their respective leadership. But this only spawns new questions concerning the specific training necessary for *granthis*, many lacking basic English language skills. English is, needless to say, the language of choice and even necessity for many students born and raised in Canada. This is not to belittle the position of *granthis* within the Diaspora. They are the custodians of gurdwaras as well as being responsible for the carrying out of the religious service, one that

has as its focus the recitation and singing of hymns from the *Adi Granth*. Yet according to my students, few youths could relate to them

Further, does one direct students instead to the administrative unit responsible for the affairs of gurdwaras? S.S. Kalsi notes however that this too is fraught with difficulties. While in theory everyone present in the congregation is empowered to make decisions, most gurdwaras in the Diaspora are managed by committees elected annually by the approved membership according to the constitution of the gurdwara: [2]

> Different factions of Sikhs make every effort to control the gurdwaras through these annual elections. In the case of disagreement, use of physical force is frequently employed; the local police are invited to intervene in the fights and disputes are taken to the courts. Usually, such disputes...take place in the main congregation hall where the Guru Granth Sahib is installed. It may be argued that the real authority lies in the capacity of a faction to muster large number of voters at the annual elections and the backing of a hard core of supporters (Kalsi 1995).

It would also appear that many Sikhs in the Diaspora are disheartened by these disputes (Anonymous 1999).[3]According to a well respected scholar from within the Sikh community, 'more than 1 in 5 gurdwaras have been, or currently are, in the throes of litigation or civil war' (Singh 2002). Perhaps the responsibility for addressing these concerns lie outside of the Diaspora, specifically with the *Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee* or SGPC as it is known, which is responsible for Gurdwara management in Punjab? Or, is it the Akal Takht, the temporal centre associated with the Golden Temple in Amritsar that is responsible for all affairs of the Sikh community? Or, even the office of *Jathedar*, the chief officials of the various Takhts in Punjab? These may *well be* the traditional institutions and individuals of authority within Sikhism, yet, there is little indication that many concerns that are either specific to Sikhs of the Diaspora or controversial in nature have been addressed in any significant way by these authoritative bodies. According to Alice Basarke:

> [P]rogress brings changes...the questions that were not necessary before, must be answered today.[However], the inability to get consistent answers to [contentious] ...questions is a most serious problem. Over the years, I have written to the Akal Takht and the S.G.P.C. asking answers. Not only were my questions left unanswered, but not once did I receive acknowledgement of them having received my letters. Locally, Sikhs have tried to rationalize that my letters were in English, and no one in Punjab could read them. Valid point? I had my questions translated to Punjabi and again sent them to the above stated institutions Again, no answer . . not even an acknowledgement of my existence (Basarke 1999).

Further, many Sikhs in the Diaspora seem to view both the SGPC and the offices of Jathedars with suspicion, given the scandals that have rocked both institutions in recent years (Tribune News Service 2000, 2002).[4] Moreover, simply in terms of logistics, the authority of the SGPC does not legally extend beyond Punjab.

Moreover, to what *textual authority* does one turn when faced with difficult questions, particularly with regard to conflicting views of Sikh identity and practice? The *Adi Granth* as the central and utterly authoritative 'timeless Guru' immediately comes to mind. Notwithstanding the spectacular beauty and timeless truths embodied within these hymns, it is nonetheless difficult to find specific answers to the very difficult questions posed earlier. The Sikh Gurus, or any of the *Sants* of North India, were less interested in challenging the mores of the society that surrounded them, than they were in proclaiming the way of liberation, *nam simaran*, to all who they came in contact with (Schomer and McLeod 1987).

While many of these great poet-saints indeed criticised many of the evils in society, they did it within the context of religious life. For many of the Sants, caste and gender were simply not factors in determining one's relation to the Divine. These poets were not attempting to reform the social order per se, but had as their focus devotional integrity vis-à-vis religious practices and attitudes. It was only much later, particularly during the fervour of the nineteenth and twentieth century reform movements, that the medieval poet-saints came to be seen as the *forerunners* of these later movements. Reformers began to criticize social practices that were no longer deemed acceptable, and eventually, the criticisms toward religious institutions of the poet-saints 'were extended to the larger social order. Today, most...think of saints like Kabir who challenged traditions, as social reformers' (Shattuck, 94). The distinction between the intent of Sants, and the later concerns and designs of the twentieth century reformers must be kept in mind when attempting to find answers to contemporary controversies and questions within the sacred scripture of the Sikhs.

The *Sikh Rehit Maryada*, the Sikh Code of Conduct, also comes to mind as a resource for coming to terms with these issues. However, the *Rehit* addresses few of these concerns. It is in and of itself not an exposition of theological questions, but instead focuses on the specifics of Sikh conduct, be that in the context of the Gurdwara, or, the proper maintenance of life cycle rituals. Moreover, given the rapid pace of technological advancement since that point in time, or, feminist concerns that have had a profound influence on society, or the new and pervasive awareness of the ecological crisis facing all manner of species and the earth itself, the *Sikh Rehit Maryada* formulated in 1951, but based on the concerns and worldview of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, does not attempt to answer many of the issues and concerns of the twenty first century, particularly those outside of Punjab. Also, the *Maryada* is intricately intertwined with the needs and concerns of the British inspired reform movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, thus also infused with the polemics, needs and passionate politics of the day that it too needs to be

questioned with respect to its very presuppositions, at least in terms of today's society. According to Sandip Singh Brar, the creator of a highly sophisticated website on Sikhism, the *Maryada* simply does not represent the concerns and questions of non-Punjabi society:

> It must be realized that unlike Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the Rehit Maryada is a dynamic document of Panthic consensus. As such it must be fully representative of the changes in society and take into account the Sikh Diaspora. The current Rehit Maryada contains such comments as: 'A Sikh's daughter must be married to a Sikh', and 'A baptized Sikh ought to get his wife baptized.' What does this mean? Does this mean that a Sikh's son may freely marry a non-Sikh? Does this mean that a baptized Sikh wife should not encourage her husband to also become a Khalsa?

The Maryada further enjoins with regard to funeral practices:

> 'Nor must a lit lamp be placed beside or a cow bestowed in donation...' How realistic is such a scenario ever occurring outside of rural Punjab? Not very likely... [Also, w]hat is the Sikh view on homosexuality? What is the Sikh view of abortion? What is the Sikh view on divorce? What is the Sikh view on euthanasia? What is the Sikh view on contraception and birth control? The current Rehit Maryada does not contain any answers to any of these questions (Brar 1998a).

Postmoderns, 'Authorit*ies*' and the WWW

These are questions and opinions that are easily accessible on the internet; it is here that they are most thoroughly posed, as well as answered. According to one young Sikh, 'I'm trying to find so many answers - and with resources on the internet it is marginally easier...' (Anonymous 2000). It is on the web that people from all over the world can meet and can shrink the vastness of physical distances between them simply by the click of a button. I am here writing specifically within the context of the Diaspora, particularly the university setting, where all students by and large have access to computer technologies (Basher, 1996).[5] Nonetheless, if one peruses the Web under the topic 'Sikhism' it becomes quickly apparent that it is not only Sikhs of the Diaspora who have embraced computer mediated communication, or, CMT (McRobbie 1989, 169). Certainly any search conducted will identify hundreds of thousands of sites devoted to Sikhs and Sikhism.

And it is on the WWW that questions of caste, gender, abortion, Sikh identity, premarital sex, homosexuality, to name only a few, can be found almost on a daily basis. The anonymity of the Web is particularly conducive for stances taken on these often controversial issues. I can recall a dialogue taking place on one particular Sikh-based website where a practicing *kes-dhari* Sikh openly admitted his sexual orientation as a gay man (Anonymous 2001).[6] Upon

his disclosure, he was subjected to an inordinate amount of malicious response. But the conversation also opened doors to others who were truly interested in discussing the issue of homosexuality within Sikhism. In discussing this scenario with my Sikh students, they insisted that it would be difficult to imagine the same dialogue between a gay and straight Sikh taking place in the local gurdwara.

The phenomenon of instant access to novel, often radical perspectives that are formed on the web is indicative of a shift in what constitutes truth and how one discovers that truth. This can be contrasted with how information was received even fifty or one hundred years earlier. By and large this took place through one's parents, and from one's immediate community. The only outside frame of reference came from books; those books were provided by parents or by the school community.

> Parents and adults were respected because they were the ones that controlled access to information about the world. They were in authority because they possessed more knowledge than the child. The child adopted the parents' worldview because it was the only world-view available…[Y]ou accepted the basic assumptions of the community concerning what is true and false (Miller 1996, 51).

The breadth of that conduit of information came to be extended through travel, radio and television. This led to what Walter Truett Anderson characterizes as a series of culture shocks, as humans discovered that there was more than one worldview or perspective on life (Anderson 1995, 5). The WWW has simply pushed the ability to hear, experience, and understand different perspectives to an almost limitless degree. In Gary Bunt's words, the realm of the internet provides an 'electronic democracy' within which numerous voices can make themselves heard (Bunt 2000, 3). The Web, more than any other tool of communication, opens up the possibility of experiencing and living in an 'ocean of truths'. According to Leonard Swidler, this has naturally led to a process of dialogue *between* truths:

> Up until almost the present just about *all* were convinced that they alone had the absolute truth. Because all were certain that they had the truth - otherwise they wouldn't have held that position - therefore others who thought differently necessarily held falsehood. But with the growing understanding that all perceptions of and statements about reality were - even if true - necessarily limited…the permission, and even the necessity, for dialogue with those who thought differently from us became increasingly apparent (Swidler 1996).

Thus, while each individual is without doubt still rooted in a localized and particular worldview, individuals with access to the Web can discover, across neighbourhoods, cities and even continents, beyond their own set of 'truths', the

'truths' of others, each with a myriad of manifestations (Miller 1996, 55). According to Anderson, this notion of swimming in an ocean of truths is perhaps the foremost characteristic of the postmodern condition. The postmodern is utterly aware that different people have different concepts of what the world is like (Anderson 1990, 7). Moreover, one is often actively engaged with worldviews other than her or his own. And, Anderson notes, coming to an understanding of technological change is central to making sense of the postmodern world (Anderson 1991).

Sikhs and Virtual Community as the 'Third Place'

The sociologist Ray Oldenburg has written extensively on the notion of the 'third place'; the first two he defines as home and the work place (Oldenburg 1999). The 'third place' is, I believe, a useful framework to come to an understanding of the proliferation of web-based relationships and virtual dialogue taking place. Oldenburg's 'third place' generally denotes a location where people come together to congregate and socialize, a space where informal interaction can take place regularly. While he is referring to these places in a more traditional sense, cafés in France, piazzas in Italy, teahouses in Japan, local parks, or, one could add, the Sikh Gurdwara as a social centre, the 'third place' can also be *virtualized* to include web spaces on-line. Howard Rheingold's ground breaking volume *Virtual Communities: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier* insists that

> [p]eople in virtual communities use words on screens to exchange pleasantries and argue, engage in intellectual discourse, conduct commerce, exchange knowledge, share emotional support, make plans, brainstorm, gossip, feud, fall in love, find friends and lose them...To the millions who have been drawn into it, the richness and vitality of computer-linked cultures is attractive...(Rheingold 2000).

Virtual communities may also fulfill many of the mandates of Oldenburg's 'third places'. These include their accessibility, have as their primary activity the exchanging of ideas and conversation in general, and provide affiliation to a group or organization (Bruckman 1996).[7] For many Sikhs, the proliferation of chat room discussions, opinion lists, and general opportunities for discussions appended to most Sikh websites attest to this sense of 'belonging', especially in light of some of the difficult and honest conversations taking place in these virtual spaces. If 'third places' exist because it is there that honest engagement with peers, particularly over contentious issues take place rather than somewhere else, then it is feasible that the web has indeed become that 'third place' envisioned by Oldenburg, albeit as a virtual manifestation. This is especially significant given that the 'third place' for Sikhs has traditionally been the local gurdwara, not only as a place of worship, but also as a central space for community, especially for elderly Sikhs.

Perhaps most importantly for the purposes at hand, Oldenburg notes that 'third places exist on neutral ground and serve to level their guests to a condition of social equality' (Oldenburg 1999, 86). It is this characteristic that can perhaps best be explicated within the context of postmodernity. Jean Francois Lyotard has written extensively about the deep-seated suspicion of postmoderns vis-à-vis what he labels as the meta-narrative. Any claims to universality, according to Lyotard, is a 'meta-narrative, referring to anything that represents a final, universal truth' (Lyotard 1992, 19). In other words, meta-narratives have long decided who and what constitutes legitimacy, authenticity and power. Postmoderns however, no longer simply legitimate a statement by referring exclusively to one authoritative source. They are instead eclectic 'gatherers' who stand on equal footing and collect their beliefs from a variety of sources. But they are at the same time rooted within the narratives of their own communities. This, notes Anderson, is the 'central part of a new global culture which is, in a sense, a culture about cultures. The world around us has become a more human world' (Anderson 1995, 241). Thus, instead of turning immediately to the meta-narrative, or authority figure, to determine what one's view should entail, the postmodern instead actively engages others, his or her equal, to come to her or his own understanding of right and wrong.

For many Sikhs, particularly, young, educated and often disenfranchised Sikh 'gatherers', in other words, postmoderns, it is within these virtual 'third places' on the Web that this essential and utterly valid discourse is taking place. Moreover, it is precisely because of the *need* for active engagement within communities that these places exist. Members of these virtual communities, instead of turning to the meta-narrative, be that the Akal Takht, the SGPC, or gurdwara administrations for validation, are exploring the multitude of truths readily available to them to come to their *own* truths, truths that are nonetheless rooted in their own tradition. This rooted-ness may manifest itself in a deep engagement with Sikh scripture, the *Adi Granth*. Yet the traditional biases and assumptions of this sacred text are easily reconstructed according to contemporary needs.

The 'New' Authorit*ies*

It must be underscored that the lack of claims to universality has not led to a secularization of postmodern society. In fact, one social scientist insists that a significant aspect of the postmodern is the 'unsecularization of the world' (Huntington 1993).[8] New religious movements are proliferating and most traditional religions are in a process of revitalization (Adams 1997-1998).[9] For many Sikhs, much of this revitalization process is taking place on-line; in essence then, revival and renewal have gone virtual. Moreover, the instigators of this process are not traditional authority figures within Sikhism. Instead, the discourse is taking place between individuals who feel utterly at home within the boundlessness of high tech. Ironically, given the power that comes with

technical knowledge, they have in essence become the 'new authorities' within the digital domain.

Another characteristic of the postmodern phenomenon is of particular interest to the academic community, who, along with the religious and political elite in the past, have controlled and disseminated both cultural and religious knowledge. Those responsible for the diffusion of knowledge were necessitated to undergo years of specialized training and education. In essence, knowledge was and is power and it was thus strictly regulated. According to Daniel Adams, postmodernity brings with it a momentous change in this regard. Cultural and religious knowledge can no longer effectively be controlled by the intellectual and political elite.

> The so-called information superhighway is changing the way knowledge and value are diffused throughout society... Through the Internet and other computer networks one can access virtually every possible form of knowledge and value that is available...one does not have to be a member of the intellectual and political elite (Adams 1997-1998).

In short, notes Eli Noam, 'in the past people came to the information, which was stored at the university...In the future, the information will come to the people, wherever they are' (Bereano 1995). And certainly if one peruses the most popular sites on Sikhism in particular, one realizes that they are not the handiwork of academics within Sikh Studies, the traditional intermediaries of knowledge transmission. Nor are they associated with the traditional loci of religious authority among the Sikhs. While there are indeed official sites of the SGPC, the Golden Temple, the Akal Takht, and varied gurdwara managements around the world, it becomes quickly evident that many of these sites lack the sophistication, reliability, and ease of interchange of those constructed by deeply engaged Sikhs *outside* the bounds of traditional authority. Indeed, a fascinating on-line 'Authority Home Page' maintains that traditional structures are simply

> not able to fully take hold on the Web. Authors who could never be published in the restrictive print publishing world are published on the Web. And the success of a Web page is largely determined not by elitist literary standards, but by popularity, as determined by web counters (White, a).

One could say that by the very act of publishing, whether that be written text or on-line, authority is created (Bolter 1991, 147-148).[10] The Authority Home Page asserts that 'the monument of the text and the authority that [is] extended to the author rests in the technology' (White, b). The more sophisticated and appealing the web site, the more 'authority' is accrued. Thus

> the real question is not, What can electronics do? But rather, Who will control the keys? Who (or what) will capture the all-important

> role of trusted intermediary in the digital domains? How transparent will their mediation be? (Brown 1998, 14)

Sikh technocrats, computer engineers and specialists within technical fields, in aptly taking up the challenge to present and define Sikhism on-line, have, by virtue of their technical knowledge and profound interest in their tradition, become the new digital intermediaries (Landow 1992, 52, 207, 184, 178-179).[11]

A recent web posting attests to the growing movement towards cyberspace organizations among the Sikhs.

> In recent years...there has been a flurry of Sikh organization popping up all over the U.S. Organizations like Sikh Coalition, Sikh Communications, Sikh American Association, SMART, SikhWomen.com, Sikh Heritage Foundation and so on. Students, young professionals and technocrats started many of these organizations, separate from the Gurdwaras. Again, understandably so. The political problems at many of our Gurdwaras have put a stranglehold on our young people, a valuable resource of our community. Gurdwara officials are not prepared to initiate these kinds of activities either, because they just don't think about issues beyond Gurdwara affairs. Perhaps, that is all a Gurdwara can be expected to do given the limited qualifications of most Gurdwara officials. (Kaur 2002)[12]

Many of these organizations are either partially or entirely web based. Given their accessibility to the public at large, one must consider the consequences of the dissemination of particular belief systems, in this case Sikhism, by non-specialists who have by virtue of their technical abilities become the 'new authorities' within their tradition. The issue of representation, objectivity and bias, according to Gary Bunt's study on cyber Islamic environments, allows for the possibility of views that would otherwise be marginal, to be presented as normative (Bunt 2000, 8). I believe the consequences are far-reaching.

This question has become very significant to me personally through a recent web-based course that I teach on World Religions. Among countless other examples that could be listed, one of my students writing about the Sikh tradition noted that Sikh women are unequivocally equal to men, particularly since the Gurus sent women onto the battlefields of the day. Her source? The most popular internet resource on the Sikh religion called 'The Sikhism Home Page'. She based her observations on this statement:

> In such a climate Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of Sikhism shocked the entire society by preaching that women were worthy of praise and equal to men. Five hundred years later, the rest of mankind is only now waking up to this fundamental truth. The Gurus actively encouraged the participation of women as equals in worship, in society, and on the battlefield. They encouraged freedom of speech and women were allowed to participate in any

> and all religious activities including reading of the Guru Granth Sahib. (Brar 1998b)

Did Guru Nanak insist that women were unequivocally equal to men? Did the Gurus actively encourage women as equals in worship? In society? On the battlefield? Did they encourage free speech? As an historian who specializes on gender issues in Sikhism, these statements are highly problematic. Yet they stand as authoritative simply because they stem from a highly innovative and widely touted web site devoted to the dissemination of Sikhism. Needless to say, the critical analysis that is indicative of academic writing is largely non-existent on many of these web sites. And, while apologetics are of course not unique to the WWW, the *accessibility* of these web sites is of immense consequence. Scholarly analysis still tends to be limited to the 'hallowed halls' of university libraries. By and large, most academics are reticent to post their own scholarly analysis within their respective areas of specialization, on-line. Or, if their scholarly contributions are on the Web, they are often within restricted academic journals. Yet, particularly in the realm of the undergraduate, students are much more inclined to spend hours perusing the web than spending the same amount of time poring over tomes that are found in university libraries. Given the pervasiveness of the internet and its usefulness as a research tool, the answer cannot simply lie in disallowing students to make use of the web. How one teaches students to critically evaluate web sites, and, question the source of a particular site is of central importance. However, this too is fraught with difficulties. For, many of these 'new authorities' do not identify themselves as non-specialists. Moreover, one can spend hours scrutinizing a particular web site without ever knowing even the identity of its source.

Conclusion

Needless to say, this paper begs more questions than it answers. While touching on varied aspects of virtual reality, postmodernity, the Web as 'third place' among the Sikhs, and most particularly, the phenomenon of new authorities on-line, it is not of the scope to decide or even begin to discuss the merits or detrimental out-workings thereof. But suffice it to say, in an effort to return to the active process of dialogue and discussion that is taking part with in the 'age of virtual *sangats*,' postmodernism offers a useful framework for understanding *how and why* it is that many issues that have hitherto remained censured and even off limits within the specific religio-cultural meta-narrative that is the Sikh tradition, have within the virtual milieu instead become important exchanges (Mandair 2001, 69). It also sheds light onto the proliferation of what I have called the 'new authorities' among the Sikhs. This is of course not to say that the traditional seats of authority, the aforementioned Akal Takht, SGPC, or gurdwara managements have been replaced. Yet, while they exist, it is my contention that there is a significant shift away from these traditional sites of authority toward the 'new authorities', the intermediates of cyberspace. It is

perhaps this aspect of the Sikh experience that brings with it the most profound challenges and, most importantly, a need to *bridge* the postmodern individual, 'Sikh tradition' intertwined and legitimated by the meta-narrative, and the proliferation of new authorities who have become intermediaries of Sikhism on-line, by virtue of their expertise within the digital domain.

Notes

[1] I am referring to scholars such as Ganda Singh, Fauja Singh, Harbans Singh, J.S. Grewal, W.H. McLeod. Certainly this list is not exhaustive. Each of these scholars operated within the framework of historical research.

[2] It must be noted that while the majority of gurdwaras are managed by elected committees, this is not always the case. A number of gurdwaras instead revere a specific 'holyman' or *sant* as authoritative in the daily affairs and vision of their gurdwara. See Kalsi 1995.

[3] On this web site devoted to Indian culture and youth, one anonymous young writer commenting on the infighting taking place in gurdwaras exclaimed: 'What ever has been happening in gurudwara is total stupidity! Can't believe people can fight over silly things...'

[4] The latest SGPC President, Bibi Jagjit Kaur, elected in March, 1999, was recently accused of the murder of her daughter, Harpreet Kaur, who secretly married a man of a lower caste. *Tribune News Service*, 2000. Further, the Jathedar of the Damdama Sahib Takht, Giani Kewal Singh, has also been accused in the dowry death of his daughter-in-law. *Tribune News Service*, 2002.

[5] Yet, as Basher has reminded readers, computer owners are primarily northern, white, middle-class males. In many parts of the world, particularly the southern hemisphere, the infrastructure simply cannot support computer mediated communication, or CMC.

[6] Sikhs who may or may not observe the Khalsa Rahit (manual of belief and discipline) but who do not cut their hair and are not initiated into the Khalsa (military order) are known as *Kes-dhari* Sikhs. Those who have undergone initiation into the Khalsa order are commonly known as *Amrit-dhari* Sikhs (McLeod, 114-115).

[7] See Amy Bruckman's site known as the 'Tuesday Café' to observe how Oldenburg's notion of the 'third place' has been adapted to virtual interaction.

[8] Huntington is quoting George Weigel.

[9] Interestingly, a recent CNN poll suggests that religion has trumped porn sites in terms of their popularity. See Jacobson 1999.

[10] Bolter notes, 'Works of literature are monuments, and the author who creates monuments is, as the etymology suggests, an authority. . . . it is important to remember that the values of stability, monumentality, and authority have always been interpreted in terms of the contemporary technology of handwriting or printing.'

[11] I am aware and agreeable to the notion that the boundaries between the author and reader are blurred within the realm of hypertext. See especially George

Landow who argues the fluidity and multicentredness of hypertext. For Landow, it is impossible to be a passive reader of hypertext.
Yet, hypertext is still determined by the author; it is the author who chooses the links, lexias (the short story lines within a hypertext), and where those choices lead. Thus, despite Landow's understanding of the reader's collaboration with the author, I present the creator of a specific web-site, here on the subject of Sikhism, as a 'new authority'.
[12] Sikhe.com is a web site devoted to Sikhism. Anju Kaur has a regular column there entitled 'Kaur Values'.

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Sikh Pilgrimage: a study in ambiguity

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paper discusses the apparent contradiction between Guru Nanak's insight that ition cannot come from external practices, but only from interior religion, and the inuing popularity among Sikhs of pilgrimage. While the Golden Temple is whelmingly the principal attraction, Sikhs make pilgrimage in great numbers to ıcs associated with the Gurus, to other places of historical importance to Sikhism, to ing and sant camps, to non-Sikh centres of pilgrimage (both great centres like dwar and more local shrines), and finally to village and clan-ancestor shrines. The ed evidence suggests that in the countryside the overwhelming motive is the seeking rect religious merit, but that for the more educated pilgrim the purpose is to bring a e of God's presence, and a closer understanding of and empathy with the Gurus and iistory of Sikhism. Guru Nanak himself used deliberately ambiguous language, for he and his successors wanted to stress the uselessness of pilgrimage without inner ition. They realised, as have even the most orthodox Sikhs ever since, that external image can enhance and support the believer's inner pilgrimage.

'Why should I bathe at sacred shrines of pilgrimage?
The *Nam*, the Name of the Lord, is the sacred shrine of pilgrimage.
My sacred shrine of pilgrimage is spiritual wisdom within,
and contemplation on the Word of the *Shabad*.
The spiritual wisdom given by the Guru is the True sacred shrine of
pilgrimage…
Constantly bathe in such a true shrine of pilgrimage'
(Guru Nanak, *Guru Granth Sahib*, p 687)

e first shrine along the marble walkway is *Dukh Bhanjani Ber*. Built around a jujube tree, it marks the spot where, it is said, a dip in the sacred pool niraculously cured a crippled youth. Since many consider their visit to the nple incomplete without bathing at this spot here and enter the water, hoping to shed their afflictions and troubles'.
(Patwant Singh, 1998: A Day at Darbar Sahib)

oduction

s paper[1] will argue that pilgrimage plays the same variety of important roles iin Sikhism as in other religions. Very many Sikhs go on pilgrimage, and r motives and practices are closely similar to those of Hindus and others. ile Sikhism has always stressed that salvation cannot come from external tices, the religious journeys of even the most orthodox fall within any useful

definition of the term 'pilgrimage', and I shall argue that any attempt to forbid the term to Sikhism is unhelpful.

I shall begin by discussing what 'pilgrimage' is, and suggest that the key to a definition lies in the varied motives of pilgrims. I shall then examine the practice of pilgrimage within both the orthodox *Khalsa* and the unorthodox *Sanatan* traditions[2], before analysing attempts by 'orthodox' Sikhs to oppose pilgrimage.

There appear to be no studies of Sikh pilgrimage as such. Dhanjal (1994), on Sikh sacred places, comes near, and there are a handful of helpful studies of individual pilgrimages, of which the most ambitious and useful is Michaud (1998). I have therefore largely relied on studies of historical shrines, Punjabi society and Sikh history and arts. This contribution is thus inevitably exploratory, and future research will surely transform the picture. One major need is for more fieldwork, especially to clarify the pattern of pilgrimage in the countryside today. How far have traditional patterns survived? What have been the effects of prosperity, of urbanisation, of the impact of the diaspora, and of civil unrest? This study has been supported by no original fieldwork. Another area for future work is the history of Sikh pilgrimage. This study draws together snapshots taken at various times; we need to fill in the gaps, to understand the historical processes by which pilgrimage evolved within Sikhism, especially in the earlier centuries. For this, research in Punjabi-language sources will be essential: the present study is limited to those in English. Above all, though, there is a need for more theoretical analysis, from the anthropological and psychological perspectives, of the worldwide phenomenon of pilgrimage, of which Sikh experience forms a part.

The Function of Pilgrimage

For a phenomenon that has been so insistent and important throughout human history, pilgrimage has attracted less modern scholarly attention than one might expect. Among anthropologists, Morinis offers one of the most interesting recent discussions. In his 1984 work on pilgrimage in West Bengal (Morinis 1984, p 238*ff*) he includes an invaluable discussion of the overarching theories of pilgrimage so far advanced in the literature. He reports three types of social function attributed to pilgrimage:

- pilgrimage as a force in national or regional social integration,
- pilgrimage as a means of maintaining and developing values and ideas held by the group of pilgrims themselves,
- pilgrimage as itself an enactment and replication of relations among various groups within society, reinforcing existing patterns of social relations[3].

More recently (1992: 1*ff*), Morinis has proposed a definition of pilgrimage, and proposed typologies of the sacred journey and of the pilgrim's goal. Pilgrimage, he suggests, 'is a journey undertaken by a person in quest of a place or state that he or she believes to embody a valued ideal'[4]. Pilgrim destinations are an 'intensified version of some ideal that the pilgrim values but cannot

achieve at home' and embody intensified versions of collective ideals of the culture - most typically, religious ideals.

A useful approach might be to examine the different motivations of pilgrims themselves. Building on the theories of individual motivation identified by Morinis, we might list the following:

Spiritual, or 'Religious'

- a sense of personal duty
- to revere a saint or deity
- a search for religious understanding
- to ask for blessing
- to gain merit/earn indulgences
- to expiate a sin
- to fulfil a vow
- to gain mystical or supernatural powers
- as a public ideological statement
- to show solidarity with a group or faith community

Material, or 'non-religious'

- to ask for a benefit, whether a child, a spouse, success in business or law-case, a cure etc.
- to gain prestige on return
- to escape from difficulties at home, eg taxes or family troubles
- to act as proxy for another's pilgrimage
- for adventure and holiday
- to reinforce friendships and acquaintances

In a study of pilgrims to the shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Lourdes in France, Uden and Pieper (1990: 174) draw attention to the importance, especially for younger pilgrims, of the 'twilight zone between religious and non-religious motives. Here the feeling of "communitas" belongs: feeling close to one another through shared experiences.'

Many, perhaps most, pilgrims are inspired by a mixture of motives, which we may see as ranging from the most selflessly spiritual to the most grossly materialistic, but which the pilgrim him or herself often does not particularly distinguish.

Pilgrimage Today: the goals

One might classify places to which Sikhs make pilgrimage thus:

- The Golden Temple,
- Shrines associated with the Gurus,
- Other places of historical importance to Sikhism,
- *Deras*: *Nihang* and *sant* camps,

- Non-Sikh centres of pilgrimage,
- Local non-Sikh shrines,
- Village and clan-ancestor shrines

The Golden Temple, the Harmandir Sahib, is regarded by Sikhs all over the world as their holiest shrine (Nikki-Guninder Kaur Singh, 1999, p 39). As a pilgrimage site it is for Sikhs in a class of its own, attracting millions of visitors every year, on whom it has an enormous emotional impact:

> 'As the golden silhouettes of these domes and kiosks emerge in the early morning light and glow throughout the day in the intensity of the Punjab sun, they are an unforgettable sight for the thousands who come daily to worship at the Darbar Sahib. When they step into the waters of the holy pool, and see the Harmandir's shimmering reflection, Sikhs feel as if they have been touched by the sacred'. (Patwant Singh, 1999, p 57)

The origins of the Golden Temple are shrouded in legend, but it appears to have been deliberately developed as a major pilgrimage centre by Guru Amar Das in the late 16th century, perhaps as a deliberate rival to Goindwal. From a very early date the tank seems to have been credited with healing powers.

It was further developed by the later Gurus, and was enhanced and respected even during the period of warring *misls* (Patwant Singh, 1999, p 53). As we see it today, however, the Golden Temple is architecturally very largely the creation of Maharaja Ranjit Singh[5] (Arshi, 1986, p 90).

In the late 19th century the Maharaja of Patiala commissioned a *Nirmala* scholar and Sikh historian, Pandit Tara Har Narotam, to make a survey of *Guru tiraths*, - places consecrated by the visits of the Sikh Gurus. He published a description of 508 of them (Narotam 1884, cited in Michaud, 1998, p 56). Some, at least, of these historic gurdwaras remain major centres of pilgrimage today, and it is these shrines associated with the Gurus that are for *Khalsa* Sikhs the only legitimate venues. Many have been managed since 1925 by the *Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee* (SGPC).

Five of these shrines today are *takhts*, ascribed panthic authority by the *Rehat Maryada*. There is no information available on which shrines are today the most popular centres of pilgrimage; indeed, descriptions in print concentrate on their history and architecture, and scarcely mention their present role.

The most popular shrine after the Harmandir Sahib itself is probably Anandpur Sahib, where Guru Gobind Singh first launched the *Khalsa*. Indeed, if shrines commemorating Guru Gobind Singh are the most common and popular, this is very likely because many of those commemorating Guru Nanak are now in Pakistan[6]. Though his birthplace at Nankana Sahib is still visited by *jathas* from India, access is both difficult and controversial[7].

Another popular shrine is Baba Bakala, where the 9th Guru was recognised. 'People gather there in thousands on every *Amavas* (dark-moon night) and an annual fair is held on *Raksha Bandhan* day when about one lakh people visit Baba Bakala' (Mehar Singh 1975: 18). A very different one is Hemkunt, a site

high in the Himalaya foothills where in a former life Guru Gobind Sigh went to meditate and perform penance (Michaud, 1998, p 102); the site was 'rediscovered' by Sikhs only in 1936.

An interesting aspect of these shrines is how many of them preserve items belonging to or associated with the Gurus. None of these items apparently attract any notable veneration as relics, but are cherished as the heirlooms of venerated persons, just as, for example, John Wesley's 'relics' are in London[8].

Sikhs also visit other places of importance in the history of their religion. One example is Panja Station at Hassan Abdaal in Pakistan, where in 1922 two protesters died attempting to stop a train, as part of the *Gurdwara Guru Ka Bagh Morcha*. Another is the grave of Maharaja Dalip Singh at Elvedon, which on the anniversary of his birthday in 1993 attracted 15,000 visitors (Axel 1996: 81)[9].

McMullen (1989, p 47) notes Sikh villagers mentioning pilgrimages to several *deras*, camps or headquarters of the *Nihangs* and *sants*. Nesbitt (1997, p 23) gives examples of Sikh children from Coventry visiting *sants* in Midland cities in search of healing, and in an earlier paper (1985) describes how the Nanaksar movement has created imposing and much-frequented centres.

It is clear that many Sikhs, particularly villagers from the Punjab, visit the great Hindu *tiraths*, notably perhaps Haridwar. We do not, however, have any information on the numbers of Sikhs who go, nor which shrines they favour, nor whether their pattern of visiting or behaviour there differs from that of their Hindu neighbours.

At the village level the distinction between Sikh, Hindu, Muslim and even Buddhist often almost disappears. Sikhs form a substantial part of the devotees attending shrines of Gugga *Jahir Pir*[10] or the goddess, while *Baba Balaknath* attracts thousands of Sikh pilgrims, including hundreds from Britain, to his *guffa* in the foothills of the Himalayas; pilgrims who also often visit Siva and Durga temples and a Sufi tomb on the way (Geaves, 1998). The principal shrine of *Sakhi Sarvar* at Nagaha includes a gurudwara and a Siva temple (Bhatti, 2000, p 120). Even more remarkable is the Buddhist shrine at Rewalsar, which at *Baisakhi* sees substantial numbers of Hindus and Sikhs (Bhardwaj, 1973, 122).

> ...it was common convention among Sikhs in the countryside, alongside local Hindus and Muslims, to frequent khanakas (major shrines of Muslim pirs), pirkhanas (minor shrines of Muslim pirs), *jatheras* (cremation sites of village ancestors), *mazars* (Muslim tombs), *kabars* (graves), and *samadhis* (tombs associated with Sikh and Hindu holy men). These visits were undertaken to heal illness, procure a son, cure cattle of disease, and quite often make propitiatory village rites (Oberoi, 1994, p 198).[11]

Here we are at the level of folk religion, of what Oberoi calls 'the enchanted universe'. But Ballard argues powerfully that 'this dimension of Punjabi religion is better understood as being grounded in a highly sophisticated – although manifestly symbolic – conceptual framework, whose central purpose is to make sense of the trials and tribulations of everyday life'. It is entirely sensible that

> ...all saintly figures will find themselves pursued by devotees seeking assistance in the resolution of their *kismetic* problems; and since those powers are held to be directly proportional to the intensity of their spiritual commitment, it follows that the further they retreat to inaccessible deserts, remote jungles or the depths of the Himalayas, the more vigorously sought-after they will tend to become. It is on this basis that wonder-working Pirs and Yogis, as well as *mazars* and *samadhis* of their long-dead predecessors, still attract huge flocks of devotees to this very day (1999, p 19).

Pilgrimage Today: the journey

The journey itself is an essential element of any pilgrimage. The majority of Sikh pilgrimages, it seems, are organised by 'travel agents', whether these are large companies with their own websites, a local bus company, or the traditional pilgrimage-leaders of the Punjab countryside. This group travel enables pilgrims to experience, even in modern conditions of travel, the communality that Turner points to as a crucial contribution of pilgrimage. The luxury bus, with flags flying and *kirtan* cassettes playing, has largely replaced the band of walkers.

Only at Hemkunt, these days, does the pilgrim have to walk a long way on foot, and that is surely one of the main reasons for the huge increase in the popularity of this shrine. Michaud (1989, p 41f) describes the spirit of devotion, enthusiasm and mutual support that the walk evokes. The journey itself is an act of devotion, and some increase its difficulty by walking barefoot up the rocky, icy path[12].

When are pilgrimages made? Clearly secular holidays are a major factor today, but the traditional festivals are still of great importance: 127 major fairs (*melas*) were noted in the Punjab in 1872 (Oberoi, 1989, p 188). Many of these have been replaced in *Khalsa* Sikhism by the 40 *gurpurbs*[13], but there is still a two-day fair at Anandpur at Holi, for example. *Amavas* (dark-moon) days are a common occasion for *melas*, as for example at Tarn Taran. The great season for pilgrimage to the historic gurdwaras, however, is *Baisakhi*, when for many pilgrimage is marked as much by feasting, singing, dancing and general fun as by 'religious' activities. Guru Nanak's birthday is the principal time for visits to Nankana Sahib.

What do pilgrims do when they get to their goal? Seeing is the first thing, which is why Sikhs are able to blur the line between *darshan* as a Hindu would understand it and sightseeing as a western tourist would understand it. Michaud (1998: 71) notes that 'Whenever I asked any Punjabi pilgrim why he or she was going to Hemkunt Sahib, the word *darshan* was invariably in the answer. Pilgrims go for *darshan* of the holy lake, of the *gurduara*, of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, and even, for those fortunate few, of Guru Gobind Singh himself'.

In many of the historical gurdwaras, a dip in the sacred tank is a normal part of the visit[14]. Dhanjal (1994, p 167) suggests that formerly there was greater emphasis on *isnan*, bathing, the third element of the trinity *nam, dan, isnan.* Certainly the first specifically Sikh centre of pilgrimage was the *baoli* - well - with eighty-four steps, dug at Goindwal by the third Guru. Pilgrims there still

recite the *Japji* at every step as they descend, believing that this will give liberation[15].

Isnan has always been important to Sikhs. 'After bathing, the Muslims recite their prayers, and after bathing, the Hindus perform their worship services. The wise always take cleansing baths' (1st Guru, *Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 150). From the earliest days, the Gurus used deliberately ambiguous language referring to both external and internal cleansing.

> However, on the level of popular belief, theological distinctions between the Hindu concept of *yatra*, *darshan*, and *ishnan* and the corresponding Sikh views have little relevance for the pilgrim.... The pilgrimage process is primarily a folk tradition that spreads by word of mouth without interpretive dogma. (*Khalsa*, 1996)

Water is important at a number of pilgrimage places, for example at Bangla Sahib in New Delhi, the gurdwara on the site where Guru Har Krishnan cured sufferers from smallpox before he himself died. At *Gurudwara Dukh Nivaran Sahib* at Patiala five consecutive baths on the nights of *Panchmi*, the fifth day of the month, are believed to cure barrenness (Bhatti, 2000, p 195). At Hemkunt, after bathing in the icy lake, many pilgrims change into brand new clothes, and many collect water from the lake, and place their plastic bottles in the gurdwara, near to the *Guru Granth Sahib*, during *Ardas*. This holy water is later used to cure and bless[16].

Many other souvenirs are brought away by pilgrims: *malas*, books, pictures and statuettes. At Retha Sahib in Uttar Pradesh, pilgrims take away soapnuts from the tree whose fruit Guru Nanak turned sweet for Mardana to eat.

Another 'souvenir' is dust: it is a common Sikh habit to touch the dust of a gurdwara's steps to the forehead, and the same is done at shrines. 'Wherever my True Guru goes and sits, that place is beautiful, O Lord King. The Guru's Sikhs seek out that place; they take the dust and apply it to their faces' (4th Guru, *Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 450). One of Michaud's Hemkunt pilgrims took the next step: 'Where the Guru sits, meditates, and prays, the water and the soil connected with that place becomes holy enough to cure all human ills' (Michaud 1998, p 67).

As well as taking things away from shrines as souvenirs, Sikh pilgrims take things to give to the shrine. Foremost among these are *rumalas* to cover the *Guru Granth Sahib*, but also given are silk flowers, brass ornaments, blankets, *ghi*, or *parshad* (Michaud, 1998, p 46)[17]. At the *Gurudwara Dukh Nivaran Sahib* in Patiala visitors offer salt, despite official discouragement (Bhatti, 2000, p 197).

Not all gifts are in the form of objects. The giving of money is normal in almost all gurdwaras, and many pilgrimage centres make very substantial incomes from the direct gifts of individual pilgrims. One popular form of donation is the purchase of an *akhand path*; at the *Harmandir Sahib* there is a waiting list of 13 years, and credit card donations can be made at the Golden Temple website.

At the historical gurdwaras, the specifically Sikh pilgrimage centres, *prayer* is undoubtedly the most important offering the pilgrim makes.

Pilgrimage Today: the pilgrims

Who goes on pilgrimage? The answer has to be: the great majority of Sikh adults, though the most orthodox may sometimes try to avoid the English term 'pilgrimage' as they may avoid the terms *tirath* and *yatra*. In the Punjab countryside, pilgrimage is (or was until very recently) universal. Virtually every Sikh McMullen (1989, p 48) interviewed had visited one or other of the great Sikh shrines[18].

Do different castes frequent different centres of pilgrimage? There is so far little evidence, and that contradictory. Morinis (1984, p 263f) found no evidence for ranking Hindu shrines in West Bengal by caste[19], but Bhardwaj (1973, p 180) shows that different castes frequented different festivals at Naina Devi[20]. Michaud (1998, p 41) notes that 'Sikhs from every place within India and the Diaspora, from every social strata, and from every religious background, whether *sahijdari, kesadhari,* or *amritdhari*, make the journey' to Hemkunt.

There is no available information on the proportions of men and women who go on pilgrimage, though McMullen (p 80) notes that 14% more women than men do so for religious reasons. He notes also (p 92) that many more younger men go on pilgrimage for 'sociological' reasons, and older men for 'theological' reasons, though there was no age difference in their proclivity to go.

There seems to be no information on exactly how many visits are paid, even to the greatest shrines. The literature is full of references to crores or lakhs of pilgrims, even millions, crowding the shrines. Michaud (1998, p 62) reports that Hemkunt attracted 516 visitors in 1977, 6,050 in 1980, and 189,340 in 1990. It seems likely that other shrines have seen similar growth, particularly after Operation Bluestar, but surely the largest ever gathering of Sikhs must have been the Baisakhi celebrations at Anandpur in 1999 (Guruka Singh Khalsa, 1999).

Pilgrimage Today: why they go

In this review of Sikh pilgrimage, I have left to the last the key question of *why* Sikhs go on pilgrimage.

McMullen's villagers overwhelmingly (64%) gave 'to seek religious merit' as their reason for visiting pilgrimage centres, though 17.8% went 'due to their historical importance', 8% 'happened to be in the vicinity' and 7% gave 'festival' as their reason. It is worth noting that only 2% of McMullen's interviewees ascribed a feeling of the presence of God to specific religious activities such as gurdwara attendance, prayers or pilgrimage, while 87.2% felt it all the time (*ibid* p 56). This is perhaps interesting in the light of Morinis' emphasis on the psychological experience of pilgrims.

Although 'the true Sikh doctrine does not approve of any tradition of belief which seeks to tie up theophany with geography' (Kapur Singh, 1995, cited in Michaud 1998, p 66), it is clear that a great many, even of educated *Khalsa* Sikhs, do regard places like Amritsar and Hemkunt as imbued with sacrality, and not merely because of the presence of the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Some sites, for example Kiratpur or Hazur Sahib, are visited by people wishing to scatter the ashes of a dead relative in a river at a place associated with a Guru.

Much more work is needed to identify the pattern of different shrines visited for different purposes. A major motive is the request: the desire to gain some benefit, very often a cure. There is some hint (Geaves 1998) that different shrines specialise in answering different prayers; thus for example Gugga specialised in curing and preventing snake-bites, Devi Sitala ('the Cool One') in pustular diseases (Oberoi, 1989, p 162)[21]. This specialisation among shrines has long been a feature of Christian pilgrimage (see for example Finucane, 1977).

We have no similar evidence for the reasons Sikhs from the cities, or those from the diaspora, go on pilgrimage. However, a key finding of McMullen's study for our purpose is that the more educated a person is, the less likely he or she is to go for religious reasons (*ibid* p 96). It does indeed seem that more educated Sikhs take notice of the teachings of normative Sikhism, that pilgrimage does not of itself bring benefit. Many educated Sikhs, certainly ones from Britain, claim that their visits to the shrines are to bring them a sense of God's presence, and a closer understanding and empathy with the Gurus and the history of Sikhism.

> It's one thing to read about a religion and its history, it's quite another to experience it. Visiting the Gurdwaras of Punjab really made the religion come alive for me. Suddenly I felt transported back in time, walking in the same place where the great Sikh Gurus walked. The experience had a very profound effect on me, both emotionally and spiritually (Brar, 1998).

The interviews carried out by Michaud (1998) at Hemkunt give a valuable insight into the motives of pilgrims. For the majority of pilgrims "It is to seek the Guru that people go there". One among many 'hoped he could benefit from the Guru's blessings and learn from the Guru's example'. Another 'explained that what kept her moving up towards Hemkunt was the thought that the Guru had walked the same paths and might, in some sense, still be at Hemkunt in spirit. 'You have that experience that he is moving with you' said a first time visitor. 'I could feel something, I was closer to something', he continued, 'I felt totally changed after that'.

Many described feeling the presence of God while they were on pilgrimage:

> God is everywhere, in everything, but it is true that you feel closer to God at Hemkunt, or, rather, closer, more in touch with, His creation. And more in touch with yourself.

Not all Michaud's interviewees, however, gave such an orthodox response. One group of Sikhs from England explained their visit not only as 'To see the place where our Guru was', but 'If you go there, if you bathe in the holy *sarovar*, all your sins are washed away and you don't go to hell'. 'It's a blessing', 'you can pray for anything'.

> But for the vast majority of Sikhs I spoke to, travels to historical gurdwaras were made for religious reasons. They expressed feelings of expectancy and devotion, of spiritual seeking. Theirs was a language of divinity, faith, miracles and mysticism more often than it was a language of leisure and sightseeing (Michaud, 1998, p 32)

It is clear that there is the same ambiguity and variety in Sikhism as in other religions. One pilgrim may be motivated by historical interest or a desire to experience the places hallowed by the Gurus, another may seek a cure or need to fulfil a vow, a third may be searching for a more real and intimate experience of God.

The creation of the orthodox view

Pilgrimage has been as characteristic of Sikhism as of most religions, and remains a crucial element today. Throughout Sikhism's five hundred year history, however, there has been an undercurrent of opinion that pilgrimage, as an external activity, was a danger to the inner spiritual life. This view, clearly held by Guru Nanak himself, has resurfaced from time to time through Sikh history, and has become increasingly associated with normative teaching.

> Pilgrimages, fasts, purification and self-discipline are of no use,
> nor are rituals, religious ceremonies or empty worship.
> Nanak, emancipation comes only by loving devotional worship'
> (1st Guru, *Guru Granth Sahib*, p 75).

But was Nanak really so very opposed to pilgrimage? He was certainly concerned to emphasise, as had many a *sant* predecessor, the superiority of the inner pilgrimage, and the uselessness of works without faith. But in all his many sayings about pilgrimage, he never condemns pilgrimage as such, only pilgrimage without inner devotion. Nanak himself visited both Hindu and Muslim places of pilgrimage, for 'Godly men of great piety congregate at centres of pilgrimage' (McLeod, 1980, p 83) - though he found none who could teach him. Indeed, Nanak even speaks of Hindu *tiraths* in terms that suggest that spiritual journeys to them can be valuable *if* they are undertaken in a spirit of spiritual search and devotion:

> Jewels created by You, together with the sixty-eight places of pilgrimage made sacred by You, sing Your praise' (1st Guru, *Japji Sahib, Pauri* 27).

It is the common experience that founders and reformers preach a pure, spiritual religion, which very quickly becomes 'corrupted' (on one view) or incorporated (on another) by activities and externals. This was certainly true of Sikhism. Nanak may have taught the importance of the inner experience of God, but he himself founded *dharamsalas* as places of worship, and he had a certain ambivalence about pilgrimage. His ambivalence has lasted in Sikhism to the present day.

Nanak may have said that 'Hearing is equivalent to bathing at the sixty-eight places of pilgrimage' (*Japji Sahib, Pauri* 10), but his successors, as Oberoi (1994: 4) put it, 'faced with a rapidly expanding constituency and changed social forces, found it hard to sustain his minimalist teaching'. So it was the third Guru who founded the specifically Sikh bathing-place of Goindwal, the fourth who added a *sarovar* specifically as a place of pilgrimage, and the fifth who wrote:

> Bathing in the nectar tank of Ramdas,
> the residues of all sins are erased.
> One becomes immaculately pure, taking the cleansing bath.
> The Perfect Guru has bestowed this gift...
> In the *Sadh Sangat*, the Company of the Holy, filth is washed off.
> (5th Guru, *Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 625)

From the earliest days of Sikhism, there have been efforts to create boundaries around the faith[22]. Perhaps the greatest of these attempts, certainly the most famous, was Guru Gobind Singh's creation of the *Khalsa* as the normative model of Sikhism. Fresh efforts were made throughout the 18th and 19th centuries[23].

The campaign has had very considerable success in the urban, 'modern' sector, much less in the 'pre-modern' countryside. It has had three principal effects on the practice of pilgrimage among Sikhs:

1. Every effort has been made to ban pilgrimage by Sikhs to holy places regarded as Hindu or Muslim. For example, Oberoi (1994, p 318) quotes the leading Sabha activist Sardul Singh as calling for Sikh withdrawal from sacred sources belonging to others, including pilgrimage to sacred rivers.
2. New distinctly Sikh sites have been created - some of which, like Anandpur, specifically celebrate one particular 'boundary-creation' campaign. Two and half centuries ago the Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama required that 'If a Gursikh goes on pilgrimage [*udasi* – retreat] he should visit places associated with the Gurus' (McLeod, 1987, p 160).
3. An effort, only partly successful, has been made to make Sikh pilgrimage different.

As Oberoi (1994, p 141) put it:

> the project of modern Sikhism...entailed scripture as a channel of communication between man and God, the reordering of sacred space and pilgrimage destinations, a new religious calendar.

Conclusion

When is a pilgrimage not a pilgrimage? A Sikh pilgrim might well argue that his or her aim is much less than the liberation from *samsara* that a Hindu pilgrim might be seeking, and that his or her religious journey is therefore not at risk from the dangers the Guru attributes to 'pilgrimage'.

Khalsa (1996) and Michaud (1998) both conclude that what was forbidden by the Gurus was *tirath yatra*, the Hindu sacred journey which, if correctly

performed, automatically brings merit. They see the English word pilgrimage and the Indian word *yatra* as having a much wider application, and including those journeys undertaken by Sikhs which have as their goal the reinforcement of their faith, and of their inner spiritual journey.

> My reading is that *yatra* as a Sikh spiritual practice is distinguishable from the Hindu goal of *tirtha* [sic] which Guru Nanak criticized. The Sikhs do not believe that they will achieve liberation through pilgrimage or that their sins will be erased. They go to Hemkunt Sahib to commune with Guru Gobind Singh as their sacred exemplar, and to other sites for the inspiration and remembrance of their Gurus (Khalsa, 1996, p 29)

> A *tirath*...is indelibly associated with a body of beliefs in the merit-giving efficacy of austerities, rituals, vows, purifications, and other practices...It is important to note, however, that all pilgrimages are not *tiraths*...A *tirath*, so the Sikh Gurus taught is an outer sacred journey whose beliefs and practices distract the seeker from the inner sacred journey. It is, therefore, empty of any utility. Because a pilgrimage is an outer sacred journey, it is, in and of itself, also empty. But such an outer journey may guide the seeker to the inner sacred journey. If it does, it is of some utility. (Michaud, 1998, p 8)

The principal difficulty with this distinction between *tirath* and pilgrimage is that - as we have seen above - the dividing line is very difficult to define, even conceptually, let alone in the individual pilgrim. Khalsa (1996, p 30) points out that Hemkund pilgrims behave in a very similar way to pilgrims to Badrinath, and that 'on the level of popular belief, theological distinctions between the Hindu concept of *yatra*, *darshan* and *isnan* and the corresponding Sikh views have little relevance for the pilgrim'.

One way of downplaying the ambiguity is to stress the similarity of pilgrimage centres and other gurdwaras, emphasising the key significance of the defining presence of the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Thus Khalsa (1996, p 30): 'The presence of the *Guru Granth Sahib* embodies the sacrality of the site and confirms its association with the eternal Guru'.

We have seen that in their motives, journey, choice of goal, and practices, most Sikhs conform to the norm for pilgrimage, and Punjabi Sikhs in particular conform to the norm of the rural Punjab. Even orthodox *Khalsa* Sikhs both practice pilgrimage and share in many of the motives of pilgrims.

From the writings of Guru Nanak and his successors, one might assume that Sikhism, like some forms of Protestant Christianity, is a religion without pilgrimage. In fact, very many Sikhs go on pilgrimage, and most call it by that name[24]. This ambiguity has lasted from the earliest days: Guru Nanak himself used deliberately ambiguous language, for both he and his successors wanted to stress the uselessness of pilgrimage *without inner devotion.* They realised, as have even the most orthodox Sikhs ever since, that external pilgrimage can enhance and support the believer's inner pilgrimage.

Most Sikhs, like most religious people throughout the world, live quite happily with what to outsiders seem like ambiguities. Pilgrimage is an essential and vibrant aspect of Sikhism.

Notes

[1] I am grateful for his encouragement to Dr Ron Geaves, now of Chester College.

[2] This is a crude distinction; there is not space here to examine the development and relationship between the various traditions of Sikhism. Oberoi (1992, p 383) recommends the term *sanatan* for the culture of 19th century rural Sikhism - but see Murphy's (2000, p 53) sharp critique. The way in which Sikhism was still embedded within Hinduism in the first half of the 19th century is elegantly illustrated by a delightful 1835 picture of Maharaja Gulab Singh of Jammu taking his bath surrounded by the paraphernalia of Hindu worship (Khushwant Singh et al. 1991, p 48) and by two Sikh battle standards captured by the British at the battle of Gurjarat in 1849, which are embroidered with Durga on her tiger (*op cit* 65; Poovayah-Smith 1997, p 157).

[3] None of these functionalist approaches seem to have been found satisfactory by fieldworkers. Nor have the psychological explanations advanced by Turner and Turner (1978, Eade & Sallnow 1991) and Eliade (1959): the first that the pilgrim goes 'from a Familiar place to a Far place', and thereby psychologically renews him/herself, the second that sacred places (gateways between earth and heaven) are created by mankind's nostalgia for paradise.

[4] Morinis identifies six principal types of sacred journey:

1. *devotional*: 'To worship at the place where the feet of the Lord have stood is the task of faith' (St Jerome, quoted by Morinis 1992, p 10)
2. *instrumental*: to accomplish worldly goals, for example a cure for illness, success in business, a child or any other request.
3. *normative*: as part of a ritual cycle, relating to either the life cycle or annual calendrical celebrations. Pilgrimage is undertaken to mark key changes in the year or in life.
4. *obligatory*: pilgrimage imposed as a requirement of religion, for example the hajj, or pilgrimages imposed as penance.
5. *wandering*: eg the wandering hermit: 'a dying to the world to inherit heaven'.
6. *initiatory*: all pilgrimages that have as their purpose the transformation of the status or state of participants.

[5] There is a real need for a study of Ranjit Singh's cultural policy. He modelled himself on Shah Jehan and used the deliberate revival of the Moghul style as a political instrument (Melikan-Chirvani, 1999, p 70). He seems to have paid equal respect to what today might be called 'Hinduism':

> 'One reads again and again about the widespread reverence paid to the Sikh Gurus and Sikh shrines by Hindus and Sikhs alike, about the maharaja and the Sikh nobility paying homage to Hindu shrines and texts, the many devout pilgrimages to Haridwar, the gifts made

> to the Brahmins of Kashi and Gaya, the offering of silver doors at the shrine of the goddess, and so on' (Goswamy, 1999, quoting especially Suri, 1961).

In the same way he helped preserve Muslim relics (Singh 1987, p 287). A very different view, however, sees him as 'that wily, one-eyed, hard-drinking genius Ranjit Singh, one of history's great despoilers' (Allen 2000, p 59).

[6] See Quaiser (n.d.) and Chowdhary & Choudry (1985).

[7] 2% of Punjabi villagers in the survey by McMullen had been to Nankana Sahib (McMullen 1989, p 74). Recently, attempts by the SGPC to impose a boycott of shrines in Pakistan, in response to the creation of a *Pakistan Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee*, appear to have failed. See indiaexpress.com, 4th November 2000.

[8] A few examples include Kandh Sahib at Batala, where is preserved a mud wall that, despite the rain, did not fall on Guru Nanak when he came to collect his bride, while Khadur Sahib preserves the loom over which the later Guru Amar Das stumbled in the dark. The weaver's wife uttered a blasphemy against Guru Angad 'and suffered in consequence'. Sis Ganj in Old Delhi preserves the trunk of the tree beneath which Guru Tegh Bahadur was beheaded. *Cholas* (cloaks) of Guru Nanak's are preserved at Dera Baba Nanak and Nankana Sahib (Qaiser n.d.: 52), while Panja Sahib, at Hassan Abdal in Pakistan, preserves the rock thrown by a Sufi and the print of the hand with which Nanak stopped it. Among surviving possessions of Guru Gobind Singh are his cradle, childhood sword, four iron arrows, a pair of ivory sandals, a signed copy of the *Granth Sahib*, and a number of weapons, including that used to stir the first *amrit*.

[9] Another observer at this event noted that visitors seemed to be there as a mark of respect, 'rather than to make merit or avoid pollution'. As he put it, they were finding a place which serves as a focus of tradition and history, and thus while *theologically* they were not engaged in pilgrimage, *sociologically* perhaps they were. He saw no one doing *namaste*, in contrast to the Gunnersbury Park Museum exhibition of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's throne some years earlier, where many Sikh visitors were clearly taking *darshan* (David Jones, *pers com*). It will be interesting to see whether and how centres of pilgrimage develop in the Sikh diaspora.

[10] The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama specifically banned worshipping at shrines dedicated to Gugga Pir (McLeod 1987, p 181).

[11]Oberoi is apparently describing the 19th century (it is a weakness of his fascinating study that it is not always clear to what period he is referring), but McMullen (1989, p 72, p 123) reports that 30% of his interviewees ascribed supernatural powers to *marhis, pirs* and *mazars*, and 28.6% felt they can fulfil people's wishes. There are still today many thousands of *marhis* and *mazars*, where spirits are believed to reside, and 'it is common for people to light earthen lamps and present offerings at these places'. In most Punjabi villages one will find a number of shrines, probably including one to the *Bhoomia*, or village godling who protected the land on which a village was settled (Oberoi 1994, p

166), as well as shrines to the *jathera* or common ancestor of the clan (Ibid 165). These too attract pilgrims, who may include former villagers settled far away.

[12]Pilgrim routes seem to have been largely absent in the Punjab; indeed, pilgrims to the Baba Balaknath shrine at Dandi are said to have traditionally followed a consecrated goat released at random (Geaves, 1996). Oberoi, though, mentions (1992, p 370) two traditional routes to the Sakhi Sarvar shrine at Nigaha. Today virtually all pilgrims travel by the obvious route. A modern road, *Guru Gobind Singh Marg*, has been built to connect the shrines associated with the tenth Guru during his own travels in 1705.

[13] These are listed on the SGPC website.

[14] Bathing at the *Atsath tirath* in Amritsar is said to be as effective as bathing in all sixty-eight pilgrimage sites (Dhanjal 1994, p 162).

[15] In the 1970s a notice was displayed: 'This is the first great Sikh centre of pilgrimage which Sri Guru Amar Dasji himself got built in Samvat 1616. He blessed that whoever, with a pure heart, has a holy bath in the *baoli* and recites the *Japji* 84 times will obtain release from the cycle of births and deaths. Guru Amar Das himself put in manual labour at the time of its construction' (Singh 1975, p 27).

[16] Nesbitt (1997) shows how holy water in various forms continues to play a real role in the lives of young Sikhs in the UK. Singh et al. (1980, p 106) show that cures can be medically validated.

[17] An interesting former practice is the giving of *tankas*, tokens, minted in the last century in direct imitation of those given to Hindu temples (Stronge, 1999).

[18] The most senior Sikhs go on pilgrimage. The tradition of Sikh rulers going on pilgrimage lasted as long as they did; in 1921, for instance, the 'corrupt and tyrannical' Maharaja Bhupendra Singh of Patiala went on pilgrimage to Fatehgarh at the time of the annual *mela* there (Mehta and Trivedi, 1930, p 86). In the 1980s his grandson continued to honour the 'old pieties' (Naipaul, 1990, p 462).

[19] Morinis shows that the Hindu shrines of West Bengal cannot be ranked in such a way that higher-level shrines are associated with the 'great tradition', nor by caste, nor indeed in any other way: 'the regional sub-cultural patterns of India stringently limit the possibility of developing fixed typologies based upon groups of characteristics' (1984, p 269).

[20] The majorities at both principal festivals were Sikhs, although this is a shrine of the goddess.

[21] Anon (1899) illustrates how decisions must often have been made: 'At last they consulted the Prohit, who summed up the case to everyone's satisfaction. 'All remedies have failed because no one has hitherto discovered the cause of the illness. It is not fever, but an evil spirit which clings to the lad. Now the best way to remove such a cause is to take Khazan Singh to a holy place where no evil spirit can live'. 'Yes, Maharaj!' said Bhola Singh submissively. 'Where shall I take him?'. The Prohit thought for a moment. 'I would advise Govindwal,' he said.'

[22] According to one legend Karma, a devotee of Guru Nanak, stopped his wife Dani from worshipping *Sakhi Sarvar* (Bhatti 2000, p 105).
[23] Ballard (1999, p 28) emphasises how recent this process was: almost entirely the achievement of the later 19th and 20th centuries. Much more research is needed to discover the mechanics of this effort, and how individual campaigns related to the struggle against Moghul and British occupation, to purely political objectives, to encouragement by a British military and Protestant ethos, and to reaction against Hindu and Christian mission.
[24] The SGPC website refers to both 'pilgrimage' and '*yatra*'.

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Central Asian Context of a Muslim Shrine in the Punjab: Rauza Sharif in Sirhind

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Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624) was a Muslim leader and thinker who was born and spent much of his life in Sirhind, now in the Indian Punjab. He is best known for having imparted a strict Sunni interpretation of the *Naqshbandi* order's teachings to the Mughal administration. Scholars have long asserted that Sirhindi's teachings, which he disseminated in numerous letters to Mughal officials as well as to his followers, exercised significant influence on the shift from Akbar's eclecticism to Aurangzeb's much more narrowly pro-Muslim policies. Sirhindi's shrine in Sirhind, known as *Rauza Sharif* ('Noble Garden') is a prominent Muslim site in the region. Custodians tend the shrine year-round, and ceremonies commemorating the anniversary of the shaykh's death are held annually.

Introduction

Recently, several important studies have called into question the monolithic nature of Sirhindi's thought. Damrel (2000) has presented intriguing arguments for Chishti influences on Sirhindi's views, and I have elsewhere taken a similar tack in examining possible Kubrawi influences (2002). Principally, however, debates have focused on Sirhindi's political motivations and the extent of his influence. In any case, his reputation as advocate of the *Shari'ah* - the implementation of Islamic law - is formidable. As Friedmann (2000) notes:

> It has been a near consensus of modern historians that Sirhindi brought about major changes in the development of Islam in the subcontinent. He is said to have reversed the heretical trends of the period of Akbar and restored the pristine purity of Islam. His work is credited with inspiring the orthodox reforms of Awrangzeb, whose main objective is thought to have been the imposition of the *shari'ah* on the state (p xiii).

Sirhindi began his career of teaching and writing after 1600, when he was initiated into the *Naqshbandi* order of Sufism (Islamic mysticism) by a shaykh by the name of Baqi Billah (1563-64 to 1603), who had reached Delhi late in life after travels through Central Asia and Kashmir. The order to which Baqi Billah and his disciple belonged originated in Central Asia in the 14th century with Abu Ya'qub Yusuf al-Hamadhani (d. 1140).

The order took hold in the early 15th century under the leadership of Khwaja Baha'ud-Din Naqshband (d. 1389), who lent the order his name, meaning roughly 'the image [of God] bound [to the heart].' The order gained particularly popularity among the settled Persian-speaking populations of Central Asian cities such as Samarqand, Tashkent, and Herat, but it appealed to Turkish elements as well. The largely Turkic Yasavi mystics, who claim spiritual descent from Ahmad Yasavi of Turkmenistan (d. 1166), share common origins with the Naqshbandis (Trimingham, 1998, 62-63).

The Naqshbandis are known as a 'sober' order, eschewing ecstatic practices such as dancing and minimizing the importance of miracles. On the other hand, as in many other Sufi orders, living shaykhs are held to have great authority over their disciples; the tombs of Naqshbandi 'saints' are revered, and certain forms of inner visions are pursued. Moreover, the order has wielded more political power than most Sufi groups.

Under the leadership of Ubaidallah Ahar, 1404-1491, born near Tashkent, the order began to gain political influence. In the 16th c., Naqshbandis in Bukhara and Samarqand enjoyed prestige, wealth, and influence under Uzbek rule, and Babur, through his lifelong reverence for Ubaidallah Ahrar and his family, brought the Naqshbandi order into the courts of the Mughal administration (Nizami, 1965 pp 42-4; Algar, 1990, pp 13-6; 19-20).

Until Sirhindi began to promote his teachings, the influence of the Naqshbandis in India was largely circumscribed to the rulers' personal attachments, such as when Babur invited a Naqshbandi Khwaja to a lavish feast (Nizami, 1965 pp 43-4). In contrast to the Chishtis, who held great popular appeal while generally eschewing politics, the Naqshbandis acquired no significant popular following through the 16th century. Up to 1600, the Mughal rulers' attachment to the order served to reinforce their Central Asian heritage, which was in turn associated with their identity and authority as heirs to the Timurid legacy. The first Naqshbandi known to have visited the Indian Subcontinent was a certain Shaykh Baba Wali, who came to Kashmir, but it was Sirhindi's teacher Baqi Billah who established the order as a dynamic force within the court at Delhi (Nizami, 1965 p 44; Algar, 1990 pp 19-20).

Ahmad Sirhindi was the first prominent Naqshbandi leader to be born in the Indian subcontinent. The core of his teachings can been understood as the aspiration to reform Indian Islam in accordance with the principles of Qur'an and the model of the early Muslim community under the Prophet Muhammad. But the range of his thought is more complex. Implicit in his own writings and explicit in the title established by his followers, is Sirhindi's claim to be the Mujaddid-e Alf-e Thani - the Renewer of the Second Millenium that began in A.H. 1000/ C.E. 1591-92 (Friedmann, 2000 pp 13-21). He was also known as the 'Qayyum'; the 'upholder' [of Islamic values]. Three of his male descendants also held that title and further promoted his teachings. The second and fourth Qayyums, Sirhindi's son Ma'sum (d. 1668) and his great-grandson Zubayr (d. 1740), are reputed to have spread (or, in Zubayr's case, perhaps brought) Sirhindi's brand of teachings to Central Asia and Afghanistan, respectively. The family eventually left India and became influential in Afghanistan,

establishing a distinct line of Naqshbandi Sufism known as 'Mujaddidi,' after its founder's title.

Historians of the Mughal period often limit their observations to events and dynamics within the boundaries of the Indian Subcontinent. But the Punjab, where Sirhindi spent almost his entire life, also represents the southern extent of Central Asian and Afghan cultural zones. As has been discussed, the Mughal administration generally was strongly attached to the idea, at least, of a Central Asian connection. Sirhindi's legacy perpetuates that northward attachment in distinctive ways, involving Sirhind's local history as well as the history of the Naqshbandi order and of the Punjab.

Sirhindi's Shrine: Rauza Sharif

In May 2002, I visited Sirhind to attend the *'urs* ceremonies that commemorates Ahmad Sirhindi's death each year on the anniversary of his death, 27-28 Safar in the Hijri calendar. Following *'urs* tradition, which is particularly popular in the Indian Subcontinent, the ceremonies were held at the mosque/shrine complex surrounding Sirhindi's tomb, on the outskirts of the modern city of Sirhind. I would estimate that about a thousand people attended, almost all from India.

Although there are several ruins from the Sultanate and Mughal periods nearby that may surpass it in architectural importance, Rauza Sharif is among the most visible and distinctive Muslim sites in the vicinity of Sirhind; indeed, in the Indian Punjab. The shrine complex is also apparently the only place in Sirhind where Muslim devotions are still performed. The precincts, which are located about a kilometer northeast of the Fatehgarh Sahib gurdwara, comprise an area of about 0.25 km^2 almost entirely bounded by an outer wall that is more or less square. The wall, like most of the newer buildings, is covered with painted stucco. As one enters through the large main gate, the first buildings are a pair of old *khanqahs*: structures with small dwelling rooms that are now used for storage. Further along, a system of gates, lower walls, and inter-connecting buildings grows denser and more complex on the approach to Sirhindi's tomb.

Upon arriving, one can hardly fail to be impressed by the generous and open bearing of the shrine's custodian, Khalifa Sayyid Muhammad Yahya and his son, Sayyid Zubayr. They are not family descendants of Sirhindi, but are proud of their descent from a Bukharan family. In addition to the welcome, one is struck by the relatively good condition of the buildings in the shrine complex, particularly considering that only a tiny Muslim population remains in the area.

The most visible building in the complex is a mausoleum located on the back (east) side of the complex, just across the wall from the Morinda railway line. Although constructed in a much older style, it is evidently quite new, although none of the histories is clear on this matter. Some seem mistakenly to identify it with Ahmad Sirhindi's tomb - exactly what one would assume, looking at the complex from outside. I understood Sayyid Yahya to say that the elaborate mausoleum was built in the 1920s, but I was unable to determine the identity of the deceased person within. (If it was constructed considerably after

his death, it could be the mausoleum of Shah Zaman's grandson, mentioned below.)

Sirhindi's own tomb, so modest in appearance as to be almost inconspicuous, is located just in front of the taller and more elaborate mausoleum. One enters that sanctuary from the mosque area, wending through something of a labyrinth, reminding visitors that this is the architectural as well as the spiritual heart of the complex. The nature of the entryway, as well as the modest appearance of this building from outside, suggests that there has historically been a need to protect it from intrusion.

Alongside the enclosures of Sirhindi's tomb, in more open structures, are the tombs of several prominent Afghan figures, most notably those of Shah Zaman (r. 1793-1800) and his wife. A separate mausoleum houses the tomb of Muhammad Ya'qub Khan, Shah Zaman's grandson (Singh, 1984, p 139). Another separate structure is a modest mausoleum of an Afghan that the custodian's son, Sayyid Zubayr, identified as that of 'Abd al-Rahman, ambassador of an Afghan khan of the same name.

Near the outer walls of Rauza Sharif are the most distinguished historical structures on the site: the domed mausoleums of the second and fourth Qayyums, which probably date from around the times of their deaths in the early 17th century. The mausoleum of the third Qayyum, Khwaja Naqshband stands alone in a field outside the walls, evidently as the punishment for his contentiousness in life (Singh, 1984, p 62).

When I visited the 'urs, I was told there were few, if any others from outside India, owing to the political conflicts that had begun the year before. But reports of previous 'urs attendance - not only from the custodian and his son, but from scholars familiar with the site - indicate that thousands of pilgrims have come, with significant numbers of Afghans, as well as Pakistanis and probably residents of other countries as well. Fauja Singh (1984) has noted the number of pilgrims to be about 2,000 (Singh, 1984 p 132), which corresponds to what I would have estimated, although another author in his volume cites a figure three to four times as large (Singh, 1984, p 63). Fauja Singh, in his original preface (1972) also notes that 'of all the tombs, big and small, of Sirhind, the mausoleums of the Mujaddid and his successors are undoubtedly the best maintained. They are regarded as very sacred by the Muslims in general and the nobility of Kabul in particular' (Singh, 1984, p 138). The evidence of the shrine's continuing connection to the north, nearly a half-century after the Partition, raises the question of the geographic, biographic, or ideological factors - or combination thereof - that may have promoted this connection.

Situation of Sirhind

The town of Sirhind, located almost exactly halfway between Delhi and Lahore, is among the oldest settlements in the Punjab with a continuous history, almost certainly well over one thousand years (Singh, 1984, pp. 1-6). Modern-day Sirhind, centered a few kilometers away from the original site, where Rauza Sharif stands, is located in the present Fatehgarh Sahib district of the Indian

province of Punjab, at approximately 30.5 north latitude and 77 east longitude. The Delhi-Amritsar railway line runs through the town, as does Highway 1, which roughly follows the route of the old Grand Trunk Road. The Sirhind Canal runs about three km to the west of the railroad and highway, more or less parallel to them.

In various phases of its history, Sirhind has prospered owing to its location at the hub of important road-networks, to Delhi and Lahore as well as to Kangra, Saharanpur, and Dipalpur (Singh, 1984, p viii). The proximity of rivers and canals, their beds shifting over time, have enhanced the area's importance. Not least important the flat plains of the area have been opportune sites for numerous battles (Singh, 1984, p 5). In times when Delhi has been threatened by invasions from the northwest, Sirhind was often a strategic site of defense (Singh, 1984, p 42).

The name of the town is often understood to derive from the Persian 'Sar-e Hind,' 'boundary of India,' but this is almost certainly a folk etymology. There is good evidence that the name predates Persian influence in the region by almost 1000 years; perhaps even more. One plausible etymology is 'Sairh Rind,' from the Hindi for 'Lion Forest.' (Singh, 1984, p 1).

For most contemporary Punjabis, the cultural site of greatest significance in the Sirhind area is the gurdwara of Fatehgarh Sahib. One of the most sacred of sites for Sikhs, it was constructed above the spot where the two young sons of Guru Gobind Singh were bricked alive and then executed at the command of a local Muslim governor, Wazir Khan, at the behest of Aurangzeb, in 1704. From 1710 to 1764, the Sikhs exacted retribution in sacking the city three times (Singh, 1984, p 115).

Sirhindi's shrine stands less than a kilometer from the Fatehgarh Sahib gurdwara, yet relationships between Muslims and Sikhs at Rauza Sharif nowadays are strikingly cordial. It is not unusual for a Sikh neighbor to come to the Khalifa for a *ta'wiz*, a small piece of paper with writing that is intended to help with one or another type of problem. At the 'urs, Sikh guards chatted amiably with Sayyid Yahya, the *sijda nishin* ('honored custodian').

Even in the Indian Punjab, a largely agricultural region with relatively few cities, Sirhind cannot be considered much more than a secondary center now. Historically, though, its location provided considerable strategic importance. Sirhind stood on the major trade route reaching as far as Peshawar to the north and the Indo-Gangetic plain to the south. In addition to Delhi and Lahore, good roads connected it with cultural centers to the east and west, including the major Hindu shrine-center of Kangra, in the Himalayan foothills. About two centuries prior to Mughal rule, the Turkic Tughlaq sultan Firuz constructed the Firuzpur fort in Sirhind, upon whose foundation the Fatehgarh Sahib gurdwara now stands (Singh, 1984, pp 5, 14).

From the beginnings of Muslim rule in the region, Sirhind proved rather resistant to central control. Under Trilochanpal (r. 1012-1021), Sirhind had become a Hindushahi capital, and the city apparently put up considerable resistance, at least, to Ghaznavid rule after Trilochanpal's death (Singh, 1984 pp 8-9). Later, in the 15th century, Sirhind became the headquarters of Bahlol

Lodhi, who struggled against both rivals and his own kinsmen in the attempt to secure Delhi (Singh, 1984, pp 17-8).

On the eve of Mughal rule, in the early 1500s, Sirhind ranked among the three most strategically important cities in the eastern Indian Subcontinent, comparable in status to Lahore and Multan in the western part (Singh, 1984, p 20). The city achieved a peak development around Sirhindi's lifetime, in the early Mughal period. A report from the time of Jihangir (r. 1605-1627) notes that the city comprised some 360 significant structures: mosques, tombs, sarais, and wells within the confines of its strongly fortified walls, mounted with towers (Singh, 1984, 38-42). Chinese goods were traded in this 'opulent town' (Singh, 1984, p. 33). Akbar made it a 'mint town' for copper coins-one of only 28 such places in his domains (Singh, 1984, p. 32). The town was then on the banks of the river Hansala, whose overflow in spring enriched the soil, no doubt contributing to the renown of the mangoes produced there (Singh 1984, pp 44-47).

Historical evidence indicates that the town was much more watered and favorable to plant life than is the case now. The emperor Jihangir built gardens in and around Sirhind, several of which, in ruins now, can still be visited. Shah Jihan (r. 1627-1658) adorned the town with fine buildings and saw to the proper functioning of reservoirs. He appreciated the many game-birds who lived there; perhaps the eponymous lions still prowled, too. In this peaceful period, it was gardens and pools that expressed the city's significance to rulers, rather than fortifications (Singh, 1984, 38-42).

From the perspective of the early Mughal administration, Sirhind appears to be securely situated within the cultural and geographic domains of the Indian Subcontinent. But the city's history gives evidence of a more ambiguous situation.

Provincial or Cosmopolitan?

Owing to its location, Sirhind has long stood in geographic relationship to regions to the north: to Lahore and beyond to Afghanistan, which has historically been in the cultural realm of the Transoxus region of Central Asia. But examination of Sirhindi's accomplishments and legacy suggests that the nature of the northward connection changed in the course of the Mughal administration.

From the ninth through the fifteenth centuries, the rise of Turkic, local Persian, and Turco-Persian dynasties - enabled by profits from long-distance trade - made the Trans-Oxus region a center of cultural and economic power, reaching into India with the Ghaznavid conquests around the year 1000. This phase of Central Asian power culminated in the reign of Timur (Tamerlane) between 1370 and 1405. Subsequently, although weakened by competition with the Ottoman Empire to the west, Transoxus influence persisted through the 15th century, under the Chaghatayids and at the court of Husayn of Bayqara at Herat. In the 16th century, further schisms were introduced with the rise of the Uzbeks under Shaybani Khan and, more divisive, of the Safavids in Persia, with their

assertion of Shi'ism as state doctrine. It was in part these tensions that pushed Babur, himself a Chaghatayid (Timurid), from Central Asia into the Indian Subcontinent.

From the perspective of Mughal rule, Central Asia, and more specifically the Transoxus and Ferghana regions, remained a fertilizing influence in northern India, in Kashmir and the Punjab, through the 16th century. The careers of Naqshbandi saints and teachers, among other Muslim mystics, give evidence of the extent to which people traveled throughout these regions, sharing ideas as well as trading in goods. In the early 17th century, however, transregional cultural exchange appears to become significantly curtailed. Local, tribal powers emerge in the regions of Afghanistan and northward, influencing similar movements in northern India.

The thought of Ahmad Sirhindi and the evolution of his influence give evidence of change from generative exchange to increasing provincialism. Scholars of Sirhindi's work have argued for and against characterization of his ideas as 'provincial,' arguing that his anti-Hindu rhetoric was limited, or contextualizing the instances where he made such statements (e.g. Nizami, 1965, pp 50-1; Friedmann (2000) should be consulted for a thorough understanding of the issues involved). Here, I would like to consider several distinctive aspects Sirhindi's thought, suggesting how they may be connected to the socio-geographic situation of the place where he lived and how that in turn may have shaped his legacy.

Communication with Central Asia prior to Sirhindi

Through the 16th century, Naqshbandi shaykhs, among other mystics, tended to travel widely from Central Asia to the south and west. A notable example is Sirhindi's teacher, who was born around the same year as he, in 1563 or 4. Baqi Billah was born in Kabul, where he studied with an eminent scholar from Samarqand. Subsequently search for enlightenment led Baqi Billah to Lahore. Disappointed in love for a beautiful girl there, he directed his passions toward asceticism. As his biographers describe it, his crazy wanderings through the mud of Lahore and frequenting of graveyards, induced the prayers of his devoted and pious mother for his spiritual fulfillment (Rizvi, 1965, pp 185-6).

Later Baqi Billah traveled to Kashmir, where Shaykh Baba Wali (himself from Khwarazm, by the Aral Sea) convinced him of virtues of the Naqshbandi order. After the Baba Wali's death in 1592, Baqi Billah went to the village Amkana, near Samarqand, and became a disciple of another Naqshbandi sheikh, Mawlana Khwajgi. Both men were said to have dreamed beforehand of the other's advent. Khwajgi directed him to return to India and teach the principles of Naqshbandiya there. Baqi Billah went to Lahore then Delhi, taking up residence in the Firuzi Fort, where he ultimately died, leaving many disciples, including Ahmad Sirhindi (Rizvi, 1965, pp 186-188).

The pattern of the peripatetic career was not restricted to Naqshbandis. Another example in the history of Islam in the Indian Subcontinent is Sayyid Ali al-Hamadani (1314-1385), who traveled from his native Hamadan (Persia),

ultimately to establish the Kubrawi Sufi order in Kashmir. But, among the notable Naqshbandi figures in Mughal history, Baqi Billah, who died in 1603, seems to have been among the last to travel to seek wisdom in Central Asian domains.

Ahmad Sirhindi was the son of a certain Shaykh 'Abd'ul-Ahad, who traced his ancestry back to the second caliph of Islam, 'Umar bin Khattab (r. 634-644). One biography traces the family lineage back sixteen generations to Farrukh Shah Kabuli, said to be a distinguished noble and *wazir* of the Sultans of Kabul. Shaykh Farid ul-Din Ganj-I Shakar (d. 1265), the renowned Chishti saint, is also supposed to have belonged to this Kabuli line (Rizvi 1965, p 202 and n. 4). The Punjab States Gazetteer (1904) notes that Rafi' ud-Din, an ancestor to Ahmad Sirhindi in this paternal line by six generations, has a tomb in the complex of Rauza Sharif (p 209). This would be an interesting structure, almost certainly dating to the pre-Mughal period, but I have not identified it.

Shaykh 'Abd ul-Ahad traveled as far as Bengal in pursuit of spiritual wisdom before settling in Sirhind. In the course of his studies, he was initiated into the Qadiri and the Chishti-Sabiri orders, as well as gaining knowledge of the Naqshbandiyya (Rizvi, 1965 pp 202-5; Damrel, 2000 p 181). He took great concern for the education of his son, instructing him personally and then sending him to study in Sialkot, about 100 km. north of Lahore, under the tutelage of a Kubrawi shaykh from Kashmir, Maulana Kamal Kashmiri (Rizvi, 1965, p. 206). Around 1599, Sirhindi set out for the pilgrimage to Mecca, but, stopping in Delhi, he became so involved in study with Baqi Billah that he gave up his initial objective and never resumed the journey (Rizvi, 1965, pp 208-9). Except for a few later trips to Delhi and a brief imprisonment in the prison at Gwalior (at the command of the emperor Jihangir, for reasons that are still debated), Sirhindi appears to have stayed in Sirhind.

Disincentive to travel comes through in some Naqshbandi teachings, although this aspect of the order's principles is difficult to reconcile with the energetic movements of some of the order's prominent figures. One study relates the teaching of Baha ad-Din Naqshband's endorsement of *safar dar vatan* (Persian for 'journey within the homeland') to the warning of much earlier Sufi figure, Bayazid Bistami, 'against the perils of ceaseless travelling from the presnce of one shaykh to another' (Algar 1990, p 6). Another study, however, interprets this dictum as endorsing inward, visionary journeying (Trimingham, 1998, p 203). As it turns out, both understandings are relevant to Sirihindi's career. More immediately related to Sirhindi's career is a report from later biography, according to which the peripatetic Baqi Billah encouraged his initiate to focus on the cultivation of inner rather than outward awareness: 'Keep your *nisbat* [spiritual relationship] to yourself...You should remain occupied with your studies and with the correction of manuscripts' (Rizvi, 1965, p 209).

Several scholars have remarked on geographic factors that may have influenced the development of Sirhindi's thought. Fauja Singh (1984), makes an argument for the irritant effect of Sirhind's proximity to places where Hindu practices flourished:

> The swing toward eclecticism in Agra had undoubtedly hardened Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi all the more in his religious ideology, but his reaction had its genesis in his very birth-place of Sirhind, which was an Afghan centre not very far removed from from Kurukshetra and Kangra, prominent centres of Hindu pilgrimage, which enjoyed complete religious freedom during the reign of Akbar (Faauja Singh, 1984, p 54).

Rizvi (1965) notes that '...[Ahmad Sirhindi] in particular did not see eye to eye with Akbar's policy of 'peace with all.' The Afghan population, which was a majority there [in Sirhind], had not reconciled itself to Mughal rule' (Rizvi, 1965, pp 213-4).

Considering Sirhindi's thought from the point of view of his 'reformist' role - advocating a pure Sunni ideology against the abuses of both a corrupt state (exemplified in Akbar's syncretistic 'Din-e Ilahi) and of heterodox Sufism - allows for easy association with modern Muslim reformers. From that abstracted perspective, Sirhindi's thought is cosmopolitan, in that it harmonizes with an understanding shared by Muslims throughout the world in the modern era.

Yet several significant components of Sirhindi's thought are idiosyncratic and, moreover, constitute a considerable break with tradition. Most often cited is the role he defined for the 'Mujaddid,' the 'renewer' (the root of the Arabic word also denotes 'new'), who was needed to revitalize the faith for the second millennium of the Islamic calendar, at the end of the 16th century in the Christian calendar. While the conception does have precedent in Islamic tradition, Sirhindi's view of the Renewer's role (implicitly arrogated to himself) suggests a certain superiority to the role of the Prophet Muhammad himself (Friedmann, 2000, pp 15-21). Yet, for whatever reason Jihangir may have imprisoned Sirhindi, he pardoned him. And whatever dislikes some of his contemporaries bore him, none is known to have denounced Sirhindi for his heretical views.

In addition to his views on millennial renewal, Sirhindi wrote in detail of the intellectual and spiritual guidance he had received through the inner experience of a complicated ascent and descent through the levels of divine inspiration. In a letter to his teacher Baqi Billah, he wrote of his achievement of successively higher *maqamat*, (plural of *maqam*, 'spiritual station':

> ...Similarly two other *maqamat* above the present one, now being recounted, are the maqamat of [perfection and guidance]. When I reached that maqam, it appeared that it belonged to Faruq ['Umar, second caliph of Islam]; other caliphs have also traversed the maqam in question. Above that maqam came to view the maqam of Siddiq-I Akbar [the Prophet Muhammad]...Amongst the *mashaikh* [saints] I found Khwaja Naqshband with me at each maqam....Opposite to the maqam of Siddiq, I saw another maqam which was extrememly luminous, and similar to that maqam none had ever been seen. This was a bit higher than the former one in

> the same manner as a dais is constructed above the ground...That maqam was graceful and brilliant. I found myself coloured and painted with the reflection of that maqam' (*Maktubat*, v. 1 no. 11; cited by Rizvi, 1965, p 211).

Later, in a letter to a trusted disciple, Sirhindi wrote:

> I am both the disciple of God [*murid Allah*] and His desire [*murad Allah*]. The chain of my discipleship is connected with God without any mediation. My hand is a substitute for the hand of God. I am a disciple of Muhammad connected with him through many intermediaries: in the Naqshbandi order there are twenty-one intermediaries in between; in the Qadiri, twenty-five; in the Chishti, twenty-seven; but my relationship with God as a disciple is not subject to any mediation ...Though in the Naqshbandi order my instructor is 'Abd al-Baqi [Baqi Billah], yet the One who has undertaken my instruction is the Everlasting One [al-Baqi]. His glory is great and His munificence all-pervading. I have received my instruction through (His) grace and I have gone the way of the elect. My chain of mystical instruction [silsilah] is that of the Merciful... (Maktubat v. 3, 145^{10}-146^{7}, cited by Friedmann, 2000, pp 27-28).

A translation of another of Sirhindi's letters, in a self-published pamphlet apparently produced in Turkey (judging by the characteristically Turkish transliterations) describes a vision in which he ascended to the uppermost stations, passing by the line of Naqshbandi *shaykhs*. (The pamphlet was given to me by Sayyid Muhammad Yahya, but I have not yet located the original Persian.) Whether or not this more extreme vision is authentic, documented sources indicate that, while he did not entirely break with the Naqshbandi tradition of exalting *silsilahs* - 'chains' of teachers, he regarded them as secondary to his own spiritual experience. Indeed, the very conception of the 'renewer' involves the necessity of breaking from previous tradition, to return to origins.

Aspects of supersession of tradition are visible at Rauza Sharif today. While the traditional Naqshbandi *silsilah* was recited during the closing ceremony of the 'urs, there was little other reference to the order. During an earlier visit I made to the complex in 2001, Sayyid Zubayr noted the correspondence between the four Qayyums - Sirhindi and his three descendants-- and the Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs following the Prophet Muhammad. He hastened to add, however, in response to my question, that no further similarity applied, such as between personalities or accomplishments.

More notably, Sayyid Yahya pointed to a square area enclosed by a low fence, easy to step over or enter through an opening, in the back of the mosque courtyard. That, he said, was the 'Kaaba,' from which Sirhindi ascended, on his own Mi'raj, as I understood. In another area of the complex, near the tombs of Shah Zaman and his wife is a fountain called 'Zamzam,' after the sacred spring

in Mecca. The father and son are doubtless well aware of the difference between the precincts they tend and the Haram ul-Sharif of Mecca. But the transposition of sacred geography seems significant, probably dictated by a combination of necessity (the difficulty many would have in making the Hajj pilgrimage) and desire to link the land to Islamic tradition.

Posterity of Sirhindi and the Mujaddidi line

Much more work needs to done to establish how Sirhindi's legacy was transmitted, not only based on his letters (most of which remain untranslated from the original Persian), but through the efforts of his followers and descendants, particularly his son, grandson and great-grandson who became his successors as Qayyums. Schimmel notes the particular importance of studying the Qayyums' contributions (Schimmel, 1975, p 370).

Based on what is known, much of the work establishing the Mujaddidi legacy was done by Sirhindi's third son by birth, the second Qayyum, Ma'sum (1599-1668). The favorable relations that Ma'sum established with Aurangzeb while the latter was still a prince apparently continued after he acceded as emperor in 1658. Ma'sum sent his son Sayf al-Din to Aurangzeb's court, where he was favorably received and spent quite some time. From his letters, it appears that Aurangzeb accepted the principles of the Naqshbandi order and observed many of these, presumably through the influence of Ma'sum, at least in part (Nizami, 1965, pp 49-50). The material legacy of Rauza Sharif suggests further evidence for the Mughal administration's attachment to Ma'sum. The current custodian's son, Sayyid Zubayr, indicated that the emperor Shah Jihan's daughter, Jihanara, provided for the construction of Ma'sum's tomb (personal conversation).

Algar (1990) has taken particular interest in Ma'sum's role as the figure through whom the 'initiatic' tradition of the Mujaddidi line passes; that is, transmission of authority along through connections that are not familial. He notes that Ma'sum's followers introduced Mujaddidi conceptions to Sind, 'where it waged an unrelenting struggle against popular syncretic mysticism,' and to Kabul, Qandahar, and Badakhshan, resulting in its ultimate transmission to the Trans-Oxus region of Central Asia (Algar, 1990, p 49). But there are other accounts of the transmission of Mujaddidi influence to Afghan domains: the history has not been well consolidated.

Some of the difference between the accounts may depend on whether biological descent or on the extra-familial transmission between teacher and disciple is emphasized. In either case, precisely what was transmitted as 'Mujaddidi' is not clear. Indeed, without further study, it remains difficult to determine whether 'Mujaddi' denotes unified phenomenon in the widely dispersed cultures where it took hold, as distant as the Ottoman Empire and Arabia (Algar, 1990, pp 27-28; Damrel, 1990, 270).

In Afghanistan, the situation is somewhat clearer, as the familial/ initiatic link to Sirhindi is indeed remembered, as attested by the ethnicity of pilgrims and the background of figures buried at Rauza Sharif. With 'Afghan' loosely

defined so as to include Pathans as well as other tribal groups, such as those of 18th century leaders such as Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah, it appears that the Mujaddidi legacy consisted of a fairly simple way to link *shari'ah* with either tribal leadership or kingship. This means of integrating political and spiritual authority appears to have proved distinctively effective in Afghan local and regional politics from the 18th century onward. Sayyid Muhammad Yahya said succinctly, 'Mujaddidis in Afghanistan were kingmakers.' Speaking of the spiritual aspect, David Damrel has observed: 'Sirhindi's example was particularly instructive to these [Naqshbandis of the 18th century]: namely, that a *shaykh* with impeccable spiritual grace could confront and attempt to correct a degenerate and corrupt Muslim regime' (Damrel, 1990, p 274).

If Ma'sum's role in transmitting Mujaddidi conceptions and modes of authority has been insufficiently studied, even less is known about the lives and influence of the following Qayyums, Sirhindi's grandson and great-grandson, respectively. Ma'sum's son Khwaja Naqshband assumed the title of third Qayyum upon his father's death in 1668, after conflicting over succession with his own brother and cousins. Like Ma'sum, however, he established favorable relations with Aurangzeb (Nizami, 1965, p 50). When he died in 1702, Naqshband was succeeded by his son Zubayr, the fourth and last Qayyum, who died in 1740. Zubayr did not draw much allegiance, and followers became factionalized (Singh, 1984, p 62).

Several important and related questions regarding Sirhindi's legacy remain open: when and under what circumstances the family left Sirhind and how they came into the role of 'kingmakers' among Afghan sovereigns. Sayyid Yahya told me that Nadir Shah (1688-1747) sent for one of Ahmad Sirhindi's great-grandsons. By the dates, it could have been Zubayr or another descendant of them generation, but further evidence is needed to confirm this piece of the history.

Algar notes that, at some point in the mid-19th century, a branch of the Mujaddidi family was established in Kabul (Algar, 1990, p. 40). The founder of this branch was Mian 'Abd al-Baqi (d. 1870), who was separated from Sirhindi by 'six generations of spiritual and physical descent.' His offspring evidently retained their influence until the Soviet invasions of Afghanistan. Sayyid Yahya noted that Zahir Shah visited Rauza Sharif in the 1950s (conversation). In January 1979, the Mujaddidi family was targeted in massacres in Kabul, Qandahar, and Herat (Algar, 1990, p 40).

The affinity of Afghan leaders for the Mujaddidi line may have been reinforced by alliances made by Shah Wali Allah (1703-1762), a Naqshbandi leader and one of the most prominent Muslim reformers in India of the pre-modern period. Initiated into both the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi and the Qadiri orders, his spiritual link to Sirhindi was though a Shaykh Adam Banuri, who established the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi line among the Pathans (Algar, 1990, p 26).

Shah Wali Allah (1703-1762) grew exasperated when his calls to reform abuse and corruption fell on deaf ears in the Mughal court. He therefore turned to leaders outside the administration, finally succeeding in inviting the Afghan

leader Ahmad Shah Durrani (ca. 1723-1773) to battle against the Sikhs and Marathas (Schimmel, 1975, p 372). Ahmad Shah's conquests in India, exceeding his predecessor Nadir Shah's in extent, included most of the Punjab. Taking Sirhind from the Sikhs in 1762, he placed it under the control of a governor named Zain Khan. Ahmad Shah and Zain Khan treated the Sikhs ignominiously, massacring them near sacred sites in the Himalayan foothills to the east and blowing up the Golden Temple, in 1762. The Sikhs retaliated by decimating Sirhind and killing Zain Khan the following year (Singh, 1984, p 110-3).

One can imagine the appeal of Sirhind to Muslim invaders from the north in this period. It was an established city, whose location on a broad plain and at considerable distance from the major centers of power, Lahore and Delhi, made it fairly easy to conquer, if not necessarily to hold. The same factors, no doubt, made the city strategically important to the Sikhs, for whom the association with the tenth guru and his martyred sons also reinforced strong emotions - both positive and violently negative. By the early 1700s, Sikh antagonism against the Mughal administration was entrenched, but they were more ambivalent toward the Afghans, with whom they sometimes forged alliances.

It would seem likely that, once the Mujaddidi line had been transmitted to Afghan domains and Shah Wali Allah had voiced support of Ahmad Shah, the presence of Sirhindi's legacy, embodied in his tomb, clinched the Afghan-Sirhind connection. It also seems significant that the Mujaddidi line originated and continued to be remembered as rooted in Sirhind, a place that had held significance for both Mughals and Afghans since before Sirhindi's time.

Conclusion

The conception of the Mujaddid, a mediator between the long-absent Prophet, God, and the beleaguered *'umma,* implied the beginning of a new millennial cycle that abrogated the need to trace authority back through the previous one. Similarly, the stages of Sirhindi's 'inner journeys,' compressed the lineage of the order into a single visionary moment. And it was Sirhindi who beheld and then reported the vision.

When Naqshbandi influence entered Mughal India, with Babur's reverence for Ahrar's sons, its legacy was one of almost unquestioning support of Sunni leaders and their regimes. At that stage, the authority of the silsilah, back to Yusuf al-Hamadani and, indeed to the first caliph, Abu Bakr, was of paramount importance. As established in Central Asia, the Naqshbandi order drew on both cosmopolitan and tribal elements, thus serving the needs of Timurid rulers and their descendants, notably Mughal sovereigns through Akbar, particularly well. Because of their backgrounds and constituencies, these rulers needed to balance Persian and Turkish cultural legacies; personal charisma and subordination to the Mongol legacy; fierceness and patronage of the arts; Islamic and tribal loyalties (Manz, 2002, pp. 2-3). After 1500 they also had to counter Safavid Shiism. In an increasingly sectarian context, Naqshbandi Sufism proved an effective means of balancing Sunni ideology with Perso-Turkic political power

What the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi line transmitted back from India to Afghanistan and Central Asia was of course related to the old Naqshbandiya, but in many ways it was fundamentally different. Its teachings were more narrowly centered on the *shari'ah*, but also on the authority of the living shaykh, rather than on his position as a link in a long chain. Owing to Sirhindi's philosophical bent (and perhaps the contributions of the subsequent Qayyums, about whom less is known), the Mujaddidi teachings provided some room for intellectual speculation, but little for other aspects of culture beyond the circles of shaykh and follower; *murshid* and *murids*. .

Mujaddidi conceptions seem to have been particularly well suited to the needs of tribally oriented leaders who sought power more for its own sake than as a means of pursuing a larger cultural agenda. The geographic situation of Sirhind - securely established, yet on the periphery of political and cultural zones; endowed with an imperial heritage but by the 17th century beyond easy control from state centers, seems to have shaped the streamlined package of Sufism that Sirhindi and his descendants promoted.

Many aspects of this history merit further study, and among them is the shrine of Rauza Sharif itself. How the shrine has survived; indeed, thrived, in contrast to other Muslim monuments in the area, merits further study. As a starting point, evidence from *vaqif-namas* (registers of Muslim pious endowments) might provide clues as to how the shrine endured the violence of the Partition of India and Pakistan that bloodied the region in 1947. One would like to know, too, how and when Sayyid Muhammad Yahya's family came to tend the shrine, and what resources have enabled them to accommodate to a neighborhood with such a complicated history.

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Review Article

Making of Sikh Scripture

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Gurinder Singh Mann, *The Making of Sikh Scripture*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) xi and 193 pp. (hb), £44.95 ISBN 019-565-0824.

Textual studies of Sikh scriptures have been marked by protracted and sometimes bitter controversies, revolving round the authenticity of some important manuscripts, notably the Kartarpur Pothi which is generally believed to have been compiled by Guru Arjan to be virtually equated with the Adi Granth. These controversies spring essentially from conscious views or unquestioned assumptions held by scholars about the making of the Sikh scripture. However, only a few attempts have been made to reconstruct the story on the basis of empirical evidence. The book under review is one such attempt. For this season alone it should receive a longish review, but we might discover in the process that this is not the only reason.

Perhaps the best way to approach this book is through its second chapter, an overview of writings on Sikh scripture. Most of the eighteenth and nineteenth century Sikh writers trace the creation of the Adi Granth to the decision of Guru Arjan and attribute a key role to Bhai Gurdas in its compilation. They hold essentially two views on the reason for Guru Arjan's decision: one, that he wanted to protect the purity of the sacred Sikh writings from the interpolations of the Minas, the family of Prithi Chand, as the rival claimants to Guruship; two, that Guru Arjan wanted to give a new holy book to a new community. An important variation on the second is that Guru Arjan wanted to liberate the world by providing it with the essence of all Hindu sacred texts in the Sikh scripture as the 'fifth veda'. Some of the writers refer to Goindval Pothis as a source used by Guru Arjan but do not attach much importance to them. Only a few writers refer to the authoritative text prepared by Guru Gobind Singh, either at Anandpur or at Damdama, carrying the implication that the Kartarpur Pothi was transcended as the scripture. The inclusion of Guru Tegh Bahadur's hymns in this Granth was not the only difference between the Kartarpur Pothi and the authoritative text prepared by Guru Gobind Singh. Much more important was the status of the Guru bequeathed by Guru Gobind Singh to the Granth. For all the Sikh writers of the period the Adi Granth is Guru Granth. Only one writer

refers to the Book of the Tenth Master (*dasven patshah ka granth*) but clearly assigning to it a lower status than that of the Adi Granth, and explicitly stating that Guruship was vested in the Adi Granth alone. The form and content of the Adi Granth henceforth was regarded as fixed and final. The Sikh accounts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries refer to a variant recension known after Bhai Banno.

Mann refers to several important developments in the twentieth century writings. The view that Guru Arjan's work was the pinnacle of a process begun by Guru Nanak clearly emerges in the works of Teja Singh and Sahib Singh. They base their arguments on the internal evidence from the hymns of Guru Nanak and Guru Amar Das. Teja Singh looks upon the Goindval Pothis as the main source for Guru Arjan but Sahib Singh rejects them as a source. However, his contention that Guru Arjan received a manuscript from his father, Guru Ram Das, which included the hymns of the first four Gurus, is not supported by any documentary evidence.

G.B. Singh described nearly forty manuscripts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in his *Sri Guru Granth Sahib dian Prachin Biran* (The old manuscripts of the Adi Granth), published in 1944, and registered an acute awareness of the importance of the early manuscripts in reconstructing the process of expansion. He was unable to see the Guru Harsahai Pothi, the Goindval Pothis, and the Kartarpur Pothi; his assessment of these three manuscripts was completely off the mark. His view that the Kartarpur Pothi was not the Granth prepared by Guru Arjan provoked Bhai Jodh Singh to prepare a page-by-page description of the Kartarpur Pothi to establish its authenticity. Bawa Prem Singh Bhalla prepared notes on the contents of the Goindval Pothis to be published as *Baba Mohan Valian Pothian* (The volumes of Baba Mohan), and Giani Gurdit Singh described the Guru Harsahai Pothi as well as a Goindval Pothi in the *Itihas Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Bhagat Bani Bhag* (The history of the Adi Granth, The section on the saints). Three Sikh scholars – Randhir Singh, Kundan Singh, and Gian Singh Nihang – published a book to list textual variations in the early sacred manuscripts and the printed versions of Guru Granth Sahib, containing important textual detail in the early scriptural manuscripts. Issues related to the history of the Sikh scriptural text were further clarified by traditional Sikh scholars like Mahan Singh, Harbhajan Singh, and Piara Singh Padam.

Among the immediate predecessors of Mann are Piar Singh and Pashaura Singh. Piar Singh builds on G.B. Singh's work. In the opening section of his *Gatha Sri Adi Granth* (The story of the Adi Granth) he summarizes the information found on this theme in Sikh sources, and critiques each one of them. In the main body he takes notices of forty-four manuscripts, thirty of these coming from the seventeenth century. The Goindval Pothis in his view were not compiled in the time of Guru Amar Das and they were not used by Guru Arjan. He argues in detail that the Kartarpur Pothi is not the manuscript believed to have been prepared by Guru Arjan. In the concluding section of the book Piar Singh analyzes the issues involved in constructing a history of the text, coming up with several interesting suggestions. He also points out a number of

anomalies in the text of the Adi Granth and stresses the need to remove them. This indeed was his professed purpose for writing the book. Despite its title, it does not deal with the compilation of the Adi Granth itself.

Pashaura Singh's doctoral dissertation, 'The Text and Meaning of the Adi Granth' (published recently as *The Guru Granth Sahib: Canon, Meaning and Authority)*, was the first full-length study of the compilation of Sikh scripture in English. He tends to assume that Guru Arjan was primarily responsible for conceptualizing Sikh scripture. The text was important in crystallizing the Sikh communal identity and for keeping Sikh sacred literature untainted by interpolations. Guru Arjan had access to the Goindval Pothis as a source, among others available within the Sikh community. Concerned primarily with MS 1245, Pashaura Singh suggests that Guru Arjan's elaborate editorial policy needed the compilation of a number of drafts. Assuming that the printed text of the Adi Granth is identical with that of the Kartarpur Pothi, he compares the text of MS 1245 with the printed text of the Adi Granth to talk about Guru Arjan's 'editorial policy' for the Kartarpur Pothi. Pashaura Singh argues that Guru Arjan selected hymns of the earlier Gurus, among others, and then made editorial changes wherever he thought it was necessary. The hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur were added to the contents of the Kartarpur Pothi under the supervision of Guru Gobind Singh at Anandpur. According to Pashaura Singh, various dissenting groups within the Sikh community continued to challenge the Adi Granth; the text attained a canonical form and its present status only in the nineteenth century.

Mann refers to controversies about the Sikh scriptural texts, especially about the Kartarpur Pothi. A significant dimension of the situation is the intervention of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabhandhak Committee through the Akal Takht. Piar Singh appeared before the Akal Takht on April 1, 1993 and performed religious penance for forty days for offending the religious sentiments of the Sikhs. Pashaura Singh appeared before the Akal Takht on 25 June 1994 and accepted the required penance for hurting the feelings of the Sikh community. Many of the issues related to Sikh scripture remain sensitive issues.

For Gurinder Singh Mann, the emergence of the Sikh community and the origin of the Sikh scriptural text go together. He modifies W.H. McLeod's view that Guru Nanak was a participant in the medieval *sant* tradition, with the implication that he rejected all external forms of religious life including scriptural texts. In the case of Guru Nanak, meditation on the divine name was 'one critical piece in an otherwise larger vision of life' in which commitment to hard work, honest living, charity, service, and self-respect figure as socially-oriented values. The appointment of a successor by Guru Nanak reflects his seriousness about the institutional authority associated with the office. The three daily prayers and the community kitchen he promulgated confirm the great importance he attached to institutionalization. Mann underlines the significance of Guru Nanak's claim that he had been assigned by God the vocation of singing his praises. He urged his followers to regard his writings as truth, and to follow the *guru's* word. Furthermore, he stressed the merit of inscribing the divine word. His Sikhs possibly were involved in inscribing the words he

uttered. Very relevant in this connection was his attitude towards existing scriptures. Mann rightly points out that Guru Nanak did not accept the authority of existing scriptural texts because he perceived himself as having access to a higher and more complete truth. This truth was manifested in his own hymns. Thus, the divine message for the Sikhs ensconced in the hymns of Guru Nanak was for them the 'counterpart to the Vedas and to the Kateb' (the holy books of Islam, Christianity and Judaism). Incidentally, as Mann states elsewhere, the Sikhs would take their conception of the sacred book farther than that of Jews and Muslims by according to it the status of 'the manifest guru (Guru Granth Sahib)'. At any rate, 'both the text of Sikh scripture and the authority accompanying it began to take shape during Guru Nanak's own lifetime'.

The Sikh scriptural tradition begins, for Mann, with the Guru Harsahai Pothi which is now inaccessible and on which only partial information is available. Writing in the second half of the seventeenth century, Harji claims that Guru Ram Das gave a *pothi* to his younger son Guru Arjan who gave it to his elder brother Prithi Chand. It became the central component of the ceremony of succession (*dastarbandi*) among the descendants of Prithi Chand. Claimed to have been prepared in Guru Nanak's lifetime, it was held in great reverence. In *a var* of Bhai Gurdas there is reference to a book in Guru Nanak's possession. A *Janamsakhi* states that a *pothi* was given to Guru Angad as a part of the ceremony of his accession. The photographs of the opening section of the Guru Harsahai Pothi show that its script is of extremely early origin. The invocation on its opening folio, *Oankar sachnam kartar*, corresponds very closely to the usage of these terms in the hymns of Guru Nanak. The original text of the Guru Harsahai Pothi contains only the hymns of Guru Nanak which are quoted in the works of the sons of Prithi Chand. These hymns are not yet organized on the *Rag* principle. All these features suggest a very early origin for the opening section of the Guru Harsahai Pothi. It was prepared probably in the 1530s. Mann suggests further that different segments were appended to the original document at various points of time and the document served as the source for the preparation of the Goindval Pothis which later went into the possession of Baba Mohan while this document came into the possession of Guru Ram Das whose hymns eventually were added to it. That the second part of the Guru Harsahai Pothi was completed sometime after the Goindval Pothis and before the Kartarpur Pothi is suggested by the fact that the *Anand* composition of Guru Amar Das has 38 hymns in the Goindval Pothis, 39 in the Guru Harsahai, and 40 in the Kartarpur Pothi. The last two are the hymns of Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan.

Mann has studied the two extant Goindval Pothis in great detail. On the basis of internal and external evidence, he suggests that the original number of the Goindval Pothis was four, and they were compiled before the death of Guru Amar Das in 1574. A close examination of the extant Pothis shows that they were written continuously and serially. Their actual corpus and their arrangement in a particular order show that they could serve as the basis for further elaboration in the Kartarpur Pothi. There are a few problems about the Goindval Pothis. There is a note of 1595 which is clearly sectarian, and there are

hymns of Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan which carry the implication that the Bhallas of Goindval recognized them as Gurus. These later additions possibly reflect two different phases of Bhalla-Sodhi relations. There are also fourteen compositions recorded in the Pothis under the name of Gulam Sadasevak which are placed between the hymns of the Gurus and the Bhagats as clearly a part of the original writing. The signature "Nanak" appears in the closing verse of each composition. Mann is inclined to identify Gulam Sadasevak with Jetha or Jeth Chand (the later Guru Ram Das). He suggests that Guru Amar Das possibly permitted Jeth Chand to use the authoritative signature of 'Nanak' because Guru Amar Das had decided to make Jeth Chand his successor. The entire group of these compositions stands crossed out in both the extant Pothis. This could have been done by Baba Mohan in rivalry with Guru Ram Das. The really problematic part is the signature 'Nanak' which apparently infringes the principle of unity of the Guru's office.

Expansion of the scriptural text began with MS 1245, an undated manuscript without a history, but extremely neat in its general layout and penmanship. Written primarily in the hand of a single scribe, it contains the complete corpus of the hymns of the first four Gurus and approximately fourteen hundred of Guru Arjan's hymns, that is, only a dozen hymns less than what we find in the Kartarpur Pothi. MS 1245 contains the compositions of the Bhatts but not of the Bhagats with the exception of Kabir's couplets in some *vars* of Guru Amar Das and Guru Ram Das. The structural features as well as the contents of MS 1245 suggest its compilation between the birth of Guru Hargobind in 1595 and the compilation of the Kartarpur Pothi in 1604. It is closely linked with the Goindval Pothis on the one hand and the Kartarpur Pothi on the other. Piar Singh and Balwant Singh Dhillon regard MS 1245 as an independent manuscript prepared after the Kartarpur Pothi. Pashaura Singh regards it as the work of Guru Arjan. Mann agrees with Pashaura Singh in this respect but rejects his hypothesis of 'drafts'. Mann suggests that change in Guru Arjan's attitude toward Bhagat Bani might account for the preparation of this manuscript and its later replacement.

Mann supports the view that the Kartarpur Pothi was compiled in 1604. The presence of 'the attestation of the sixth-Guru' in this manuscript does not present a serious problem. Just as Guru Arjan had succeeded his father so his only son, Hargobind, was expected to succeed him. Therefore, the scribe could have requested Hargobind to inscribe his *nishan* which was entered in the table of contents as the *nishan* of the sixth Guru. Similarly, the presence of the death dates of the first six Gurus and Baba Gurditta on folio 25 can be explained without straining the evidence. The death dates of the first five Gurus, which are in the same hand, were inscribed together after the death of Guru Arjan, and the other two dates, in a different hand, were inscribed after the death of Guru Hargobind. This stands confirmed by the insertion of reference to the death dates in the table of contents on folio 2 in a different ink and with a different pen. Yet another problem is that of reconciling Bhai Jodh Singh's description of the Pothi with an earlier report by Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha. According to the latter, the Kartarpur Pothi contained in its concluding section the *Ratanmala*

(The garland of jewels), the *Hakikat Rah Mukam Raje Shivnabh Ki* (The route to the abode of Raja Shivnabh), and some other entries. All these items are missing in Bhai Jodh Singh's description. His assertion that Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha had given a false report is not easy to digest. An entry in the table of contents indicates that these items were there in the Pothi. Some other early manuscripts, professedly copies of the Kartarpur Pothi, contain these items. Mann points to the flaws in the last three gatherings of the Pothi to suggest that changes were made toward its end. His argument leads to the logical conclusion that these items were removed from the Pothi after Bhai Kahn Singh's report and before Bhai Jodh Singh's description. The discrepancies between the contents of the Kartarpur Pothi and the Adi Granth cannot be regarded as valid evidence for rejecting the authenticity of the Kartarpur Pothi. Nor can the religious issue of sanctity and the integrity of the contents of the Sikh sacred text be applied to the Kartarpur Pothi.

The existing understanding of the history of Sikh scripture is constructed around the belief that seventeenth century manuscripts fall into three groups: the copies of the Kartarpur Pothi, representing the authoritative line, and two groups linked to the Kanpur Pothi (Banno) and the Lahore Pothi. On the basis of close examination of a large number of seventeenth century manuscripts, Mann argues in detail that there were only two branches of manuscripts in the seventeenth century: the so-called Lahore Pothi branch based on the Kartarpur Pothi as it stood in 1605, and the so-called Banno branch based on the Kartarpur Pothi as it stood after 1606. The latter contain some additional matter. The hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur were added in his lifetime, as in MS 1192 which belongs to the second branch. Distinct from the manuscripts of the time of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the Adi Granth was compiled in the early 1680's leaving out some compositions present in the second branch. The manuscripts compiled between 1700 and the middle of the nineteenth century fall into two groups: copies of the Adi Granth, and a version of seventeenth century manuscripts to which the compositions of Guru Tegh Bahadur are added. In the central places like Anandpur and Damdama the extant manuscripts are almost always the Adi Granth. There are no substantive variations in their contents, and they bear no date. The manuscripts outside this group bear dates. Mann suggests that these manuscripts were prepared at those places where the tradition of the Adi Granth becoming the Guru Granth Sahib was either unknown or rejected. It is reasonable to infer that the Adi Granth achieved relative hegemony in the Sikh scriptural tradition at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

The structure of the Sikh scriptural text evolved through a slow yet steady development of the arrangement of its contents from the Guru Harsahai Pothi in the 1530s to the Goindval Pothis in the 1570s, to the Kartarpur Pothi in 1604, and to the Adi Granth in the 1680s. With *kirtan* at the centre of Sikh congregational worship from the very inception of the community, *raag* became the most important principle of organization of the contents of the Adi Granth. Mann discusses the structure of *raags*, including both the southern and northern *rags*, the favourite *raags* of the Vaishnavas and the Sufis, the gender distinction between *raags*, and the musical category of *ghar*. Internal arrangement of

contents in the *Rag* sections was systematically evolved. The final product manifests the care that went into the conception and development of the structure with all its complexity in terms of sequencing of *rags* and the placement of hymns of varied length and authorship within each *rag* section. No other religious compilation of the time reveals such regularity or complexity. In the context of the Vedas and the Quran the framers of the Adi Granth epitomize the meeting of sacred texts of the India and Semitic religious traditions. The result is something completely new. For Sikhs, the Adi Granth as a repository of God's word is distinct from both the Vedas and the Kateb, and the Gurus took great care to clothe this revelation in Gurmukhi, a script that is distinct in its own place.

The Adi Granth consists of approximately 3,000 hymns. More than 2,400 of these were composed by six Sikh Gurus. The bulk of the remaining hymns comes from non-Sikh saint-poets known as Bhagats in the Sikh tradition. Prominent among them in terms of the corpus of their compositions in the Adi Granth are Kabir, Farid, Namdev and Ravidas. The first two came from a Muslim background, and the last two as well as the first came from a background outside the four *varnas* of the traditional social order, and lower than the lowest Shudras. In all probability, Guru Amar Das decided to incorporate their hymns into the Sikh scriptural text. Indeed, *bhagat bani* is seen in his hymns as a manifestation of the revealed word. Their affinity with the Gurus was indicated by their monotheistic vision and their recognition of social and ethical obligations. On these criteria, a distinction was made among the *bhaktas* : the *bani* of the '*bhagats*' was deemed to be divinely revealed, and of the rest to be 'unripe'. All the time the supremacy of the content of Sikh revelation was asserted. Significantly, the hymn of Mirabai, which now stands struck off in the Kartarpur Pothi, was not included in the Adi Granth. It is important to underline that Guru Amar Das makes a clear distinction between the *bhagat* and the *guru*. By virtue of the divine gift bestowed upon him, the *guru* possesses a special status and 'bhagathood' is open to all and can be attained by serving the *guru*. The Sikhs are the most fortunate of the four categories of holy people (*bhagats, sants, sadhs*, and *sikhs*) mentioned by Guru Ram Das. Bhai Gurdas asserts that the Sikhs attained the same bliss as received by Beni, Dhanna, Kabir, Namdev, Ravidas, and Sain. Whereas there is no difference between the *bhagat bani* included in the Adi Granth and the *bani* of the Gurus for the majority of the Sikhs, some important Sikhs have refused from time to time to give parity to Bhagat Bani with Gurbani.

We have gone through the essential points of all the eight chapters of *The Making of Sikh Scripture*. The first serves as a kind of introduction and the second provides the context and the background. The core of the story is given in chapters three, four, and five in which the Guru Harsahai Pothi, the Goindval Pothis, MS 1245, the Kartarpur Pothi and a large number of seventeenth and eighteenth century manuscripts are analysed with considerable rigour. The emerging structure of the Adi Granth, its Bhagat Bani, and its deepening authority from the eighteenth to the twentieth century are discussed in the last three chapters. Hardly anything in these eight chapters is irrelevant for the main

theme. To this rare kind of coherence in exposition is added lucidity by the economy of expression. The intellectual integrity of the author is compromised neither by the fear of reaction nor by the hope of favour. Controversies may not end with this book but it is bound to remain a milestone on the road to textual studies.

Review Article

McLeod's Sikhs of the Khalsa

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W. Hew McLeod, *Sikhs of the Khalsa: A History of the Khalsa Rahit*. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), xvi and 482 pp. $44.00 (hb). ISBN 019-565-9163.

Sikhs have been struggling with contentious issues of identity, religious faith, and politics for over a century. As in the case of other Indian religions and sects, the institutions and ideas associated with the British and an accompanying Western presence in India helped generate new Sikh concern over history, tradition, and cultural boundaries. A persistent sense of being a minority community under attack from without and divided within stimulated public debate and action, a pattern that persists today in the Punjab and within the world-wide diaspora.

The patterns of discourse and public confrontation often revolve around competing claims about authority and legitimate interpretation of the past. Despite ongoing debate over the cultural context influencing early Sikhism and specific events during the lives of the Gurus, most Sikhs agree on fundamental doctrines, the authenticity and centrality of the *Adi Granth* or holy scriptures, and norms influencing daily and family life. However, many Sikhs either leading or wishing to lead community activities and institutions disagree sharply over elements of Sikh identity, who has the understanding and the right to speak for the *panth*, and the basic boundaries of conduct and ritual.

One term frequently appears in that context, *rahit*. Rahit refers to stipulated conduct or a way of life, but in most contemporary debates, usage focuses on a code of belief and conduct primarily of the Khalsa, or those Sikhs either initiated with *khande ki pahul* (a ceremony involving a two-edged sword) or who at least marginally maintain some important strictures (most notably, the maintenance of hair or *kesh*). The broad outlines of rahit and many specifics are drawn from a variety of recorded documents (*rahitnamas*), which stretch from approximately 1720 C.E. to the present version, sanctioned by a leading Sikh organization (the SGPC) and promulgated in 1950 (the Sikh Rahit Maryada).

Although virtually all the *rahitnamas* have been published in various forms, the conflicting assumptions and details in the documents have led to confusion and conflict over what constitutes 'orthodoxy' or correct practice. Professor

W.H.McLeod now has addressed the development of rahit over three centuries as well as presenting in a coherent and scholarly fashion the most important of the documents for reference purposes. Beginning with his critical evaluation of the *janamsakhi* literature (hagiographic narratives of the life of Guru Nanak) in 1968, McLeod has helped spark a broad discussion of many themes in Sikh history and religion. This volume, however, probably is his most important contribution because the narrative and scholarly presentation of the documents address central issues relevant not only to the past but to many facets of contemporary Sikh public life.

McLeod's methodology of studying historical texts and the context within which they were framed should be familiar not only to those acquainted with his other studies on Sikh history, but also to a general audience of academics and laypersons who share a common assumption about comparative religion and the evolutionary nature of doctrines and religious practice. He argues convincingly that each rahitnama must be evaluated in terms of the background of the times and the assumptions of the authors. At the same time, he notes parallels and themes, patterns that frame and underline the specifics of each document as well those within a particular period.

The narrative also underlines two other general points. First, rahit primarily is a code of belief and conduct for members of the Khalsa, not the wider universe of Sikhs. Some broader themes and injunctions are relevant for all, but most pertain to those who have undergone initiation and its consequent discipline. Secondly, the rahitnamas were seen at the time as presenting ideas and norms, and not necessarily reflecting actual practice. As in other religions, Sikhs have to confront the difficulty of squaring their current practices with real or perceived models for devout living.

Before evaluating the history of rahit, McLeod differentiates between his understanding of how religions evolve, especially in the light of textual analysis, and a traditional view of rahit that became institutionalized through the efforts of Sikh intellectuals since the 1880s. Sikh publicists and leaders connected with the Singh Sabha movement believed that despite the variation in documentary evidence found in rahitnamas, in fact Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa and charged it with maintaining specific doctrines and actions. No matter what historical rahitnamas say, the oral tradition had persisted and should be primary. Documents were considered supplementary, important to use as evidence to support particular doctrines but also to be modified if they did not meet contemporary understanding of 'orthodoxy'. McLeod does not question the faith and the honest intent of those holding such beliefs, but his historical analysis and explanation of the marked variations in the documents stand in sharp contrast with the traditional interpretations of the past.

The first section of the book deals with definitions, the nature of documents, dating of rahitnamas, and related matters. McLeod then examines ideas about conduct and belief in the 'proto-rahitnama' period (primarily material in the Adi Granth and the Dasam Granth attributed to Guru Gobind Singh). The teachings of the Gurus focused largely on devotion and meditation, and except for occasional opportunities to extrapolate an orientation toward an issue (such as

drinking and smoking), they throw little light on many of the problems addressed in later documents. Similarly, the various *hukamnamas* or orders from the Gurus are useful on the changing structure of the Sikh panth and provide an understanding of a worldview and emerging issues, but they too lack specificity on matters of rahit.

McLeod then devotes a detailed chapter to six major documents written from approximately 1720 till the end of the eighteenth century: Nasihat Nama (also referred to as the Tanakhah Nama), Sakhit Rahit Ki, and works by Prahilad Rai (Singh), Chaupa Singh , Desa Singh, and Daya Singh. Each receives attention in terms of authorship, general themes, and comparisons of issues ranging from reaction to Muslims to Brahman influence, food, views of women, and the five Ks. The documents are strikingly different although there are some consistent themes that reflect conflict with Muslims and the Mughal empire during the period. Khalsa Sikhs are warned about Muslim food, women, and in general, social contact. Similarly, the writers probably registered the cultural ethos of the period that incorporated a view of male superiority and a general acceptance of ambiguities and differing rules and boundaries.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the cultural and social context affecting both preparation and application of rahitnamas began to change. Several, most notably Sausakhi and Prem Sumarag, suggest continuing Hindu influence among Sikhs, with support of two initiation forms (use of the two edged sword and a foot washing ceremony, *charan amrit*, clearly reflecting ties to Hindus and Brahmans). The mixture of elements in such rahit documents gradually was challenged by two new sects, Namdharis and Nirankaris, who began to reformulate approach to authority and correct action. Namdharis, for example, emphasized male-female equality and a simple approach to daily life and rituals, such as marriage, that eliminated Hindu elements. Both remained on the fringes of what soon emerged as a concerted reform effort headed by the Singh Sabhas.

Rahit became part of a broader conflict between two major camps in the Singh Sabha movement. The 'Sanatan' group, championed by Khem Singh Bedi and provided intellectual guidance by Avtar Singh Vahiria, believed that the Sikh faith could encompass a variety of practices. Although the Khalsa tradition was scattered throughout its major rahit document, the *Khalsa Dharma Shastra* (2 major editions, 1894 and 1914), he argued that Sikhs were part of a broader universe of Hinduism and that local practices (particularly in the rural areas) should be accepted as legitimate. The 'Tat Khalsa', on the other hand, led by the major Sikh intellectual of the period, Kahan Singh Nabha, stressed that Sikhs were not Hindu and proceeded to push an agenda of reform and revival resting upon reinterpretation of tradition. Central to that effort was recasting rahit, pruning it of any material judged 'unSikh' and attempting to create a fresh document that incorporated the Singh Sabha agenda. In Kahan Singh's major collection of rahitnamas (*Gurumat Prabhakar*, for example, he excised material on Muslims, edited out injunctions that seemed to be superstitious, and also changed sections on social matters. To him and the Tat Khalsa around him, rahit

was eternal and unchangeable, and thus existing accounts had been sullied and manipulated by Brahmans and ignorant writers. Scholars now had the mandate to strip away and 'purify' the documents and return them to their fundamental state.

McLeod presents a careful analysis of the content of the documents of the two groups and argues that the ultimate victory of the Tat Khalsa helped set the agenda and cultural boundaries associated with Sikhism in the post-1900 period. He also is sensitive to the reluctance of the Singh Sabhas and their central organization, the Chief Khalsa Diwan, to address many issues judged controversial. In the heated battles over Sikh identity and boundaries, rahit became a symbol used by competing political groups. The Diwan championed *amritdhari* and Khalsa centrality in Sikh public life, but sensitive to the danger of alienating large groups of supporters (*sahajdharis*, or clean shaven Sikhs, among others), it compromised and tried to accommodate as many Sikhs as possible. Its contribution to the rahitnama literature (*Gurumat Prakash Bhag Sanskar*, 1915) thus primarily highlighted rituals distinctively Khalsa and did not discuss individual behavior.

As McLeod notes, the resulting document pleased few. The complex rituals were too demanding and read 'curiously like Christian orders of service in terms of format, combining ritual action with scriptural quotation, exhortation, prayers of petition, and congregational responses.' Moreover, the more radical Tat Khalsa network, centering on Babu Teja Singh and the Bhasaur Singh Sahba (later the Panch Khalsa Diwan), made fun of the publication and charged the Diwan with being anti-Khalsa. They mobilized large meetings and generated a flood of harsh, controversial tracts that insisted on a more radical view of Sikhism. Only the Khalsa were Sikhs, the 5 Ks were mandatory, caste must be totally rejected, males and females were equal (with women wearing turbans and undergoing the same rituals as men), and total rejection of anything remotely associated with Hinduism. With the support of Sant Attar Singh, Teja Singh issued his own version of rahit (*Khalsa Rahit Prakash*, 1911) based on earlier compilations by Kahan Singh Nabha.

Neither Teja Singh nor the Chief Khalsa Diwan produced a broadly acceptable version of rahit. That task remained for the SGPC, an organization given broad control over most Punjab gurdwaras and shrines by the 1925 Sikh Gurdwaras Act. A subcommittee, headed by Professor Teja Singh, prepared a draft which finally was ratified by the SGPC in 1945 and published in 1950 (*The Sikh Rahit Maryada*). This was definitely a Singh Sabha document emphasizing Khalsa ideals but continuing the pattern of trying to accommodate differences. Clear norms were set out in certain areas, but in other matters, such as governance of organizations, definitions of who is a Sikh, and matters affecting much of Sikh daily life, little if anything was set forth. As in the case of Kahan Singh and his group of colleagues, the authors synthesized material from the past, eliminated many earlier injunctions, and streamlined procedures. Even that rahit document remains challenged today, either by critics within the diaspora who question its applicability and lack of specificity in meeting modern

demands facing Sikhs or by sects and organizations such as the Akhand Kirtani Jatha who champion variations and changes in the 1950 document.

In addition to a systematic evaluation of how rahit and its presentation have changed over time, the volume makes two other major contributions to Sikh studies. First, the 140 pages of translations of documents, with extensive notes, constitute an invaluable set of source materials that deal with a wide range of historical and contemporary issues. All major rahitnama and supplementary materials are reproduced with the exception of the Chaupa Singh edition which McLeod published earlier in a separate volume. Secondly, a concluding section examines how the sources address many controversial topics, including the order of service, the content of the Adi Granth and its relationship to the Dasam Granth, initiation, the 5 Ks, *tanakha* or penalties, women, *langar*, tobacco, dietary constraints, 32 issues in all. McLeod succinctly wraps up the volume with personal observations and comments on the role of education, Punjab versus diaspora interests, and the unforeseen responses to rahit that reflect social and political changes within the worldwide Sikh community.

How do the Sikhs view this benchmark work? Except for occasional arguments over dates and emphases, *Sikhs of the Khalsa* has received little if any published review. Earlier McLeod books drew fire from publicists and activists determined to protect what they understood to be Sikh tradition. Does that mean that no one is reading the book? That seems unlikely in light of the steady sales in India and the international market. Rather, I would suggest that several related developments among Sikhs probably account for the paucity of vigorous discussion.

First, the carefully worded and analytic narrative makes clear McLeod's scholarly intent. He does not shy from questioning often widely held beliefs about dates, individuals, and events in the evolving and changing approaches to rahit, but the tone is sympathetic and the arguments based on a wide array of documents constituting the second half of the book. Even some of his vehement critics in the past have applauded related collections of material and supplementary notes in such standard works as *Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism* (1984) and the *Chaupa Singh Rahit-nama* (original and translation, 1987). Possibly more importantly, McLeod's use of textual criticism as a means of reconstructing history and evaluating material has become more acceptable in academic networks both in Punjab and abroad. Critics abound, but the tone of criticism and the earlier charges that McLeod was a Christian bent on injuring Sikhism and/or somehow an agent of anti-Sikh forces seems to have moderated.

The very subject matter of the book also plays a role in the Sikh response. Sikhs almost always have been cautious in wholesale declarations about rahitnamas. The 1950 Sikh Rahit Maryada, for example, frequently receives lip service as a 'constitution' or normative guide, but Sikhs generally realize that the document cannot be applied easily to resolve current issues of governance, identity, and authority. As in the case of its predecessors, the SGPC version reflects the time and concerns of a particular group of Sikhs in 1930 Punjab. The critical discussions underlying its preparation, between 1928 and 1932, never

have been examined, and explanations about validation by representative organizations and leaders cannot be taken at face value. Probably Professor Teja Singh had a major hand in the organizing and editing of the document, but even if we never know the details, the underlying assumptions are clear. The authors represented the dominant view of Sikhism that had been highlighted by Singh Sabha movement, and skirted controversy such as carefully delimiting 'who is a Sikh' and in general avoided drawing sharp boundaries that might have weakened the solidarity of a community already feeling its minority status.

In addition, while claims about religious tradition were and continue to be central elements in Sikh political manoeuvring, the major rahitnamas including the 1950 version do not throw definitive light on matters such as who should control elections or institutions, how Sikhs should sit in langar, the role of women and even the nature of the Akal Takht and its leadership institutionalized during the 1920s Gurdwara Reform efforts. As in the case of Singh Sabha activists, contemporary Sikh politicians and debaters in societies or on the internet pick and choose elements to emphasize, weaving an interesting mosaic of arguments built on quotations from the Adi Granth, historical sources, and general references to tradition or *maryada* (literally the acceptance of boundaries, but generally used as rules or customs that seem to have historical roots).

One of McLeod's persistent themes, the importance of a historical context in understanding the intellectual and social dimensions of Sikh life, also comes into play when evaluating the Sikh response to his research. Perhaps the specifics of rahit are not really that important in the present phase of Sikh cultural and political life. Certainly there is variation in applying rules, with specific groups holding divergent views as exemplified by those identified with Damdami Taksal or Bhai Randhir Singh. One would suspect until the time that Sikhs feel endangered (as in the period 1984-1996), insistence on what constitutes 'orthodoxy' and correct practice will remain only a small part of public discourse. In such a benign context, McLeod's research will continue to be, as he wishes, part of an ongoing exploration and widening understanding of the historical roots of modern Sikhism.

Shiv Kumar Batalvi: A Debate

From: Sukhbir Garewal

Apologia

This rejoinder is not meant to hurt anyone. Its modest aim is to express a dissenting view. I may state that that I have the deepest personal regard for the excellent work that Safir Sahib has undertaken to promote Punjabi Literature and Culture

Rejoinder

These comments are in reference to an essay entitled *Shiv Kumar Batalvi (1936-1973) – Life and Poetry* written jointly by Mr Safir Rammah and Ms Manu Sharma for *IJPS Volume 9, Number 2*, July-December 2002. The authors begin by claiming to write 'a reliable and coherent study of his life' that would bring together 'detailed review of relevant published material, by interviewing a number of his contemporaries and family members and by conducting background research on people and places and the social and literary environment that shaped Shiv's life and poetry'. They further purport to 'present an overview of Shiv's poetry, highlighting its versatility and deep roots in Punjabi literary traditions'.

This, one would have thought, was an ambitious agenda of intent and required rigorous scholarship and undivided focus over a vast field of study. I must salute the authors' courage in attempting to undertake such an enormous responsibility as manifest in the introductory declaration of intent. And now let me share, in all honesty, my sense of profound dismay at what I have just finished reading.

I begin, first of all, by complimenting the authors for preferring Ms Suman Kashyap's translations to those of Sant Singh Sekhon's rather staid renditions. Ms Kashyap has internalised Shiv's work to a degree where it begins to appear in itself as an independent creative act while at the same time also retaining the resonant core of the original work. Kudos!

I would also like to state at the outset, lest I should be misunderstood, that Shiv is a highly fascinating cultural phenomenon though not necessarily a poetic genius of a commensurate significance as he is so often, and definitely in the present case, made out to be. But that is my view and I do believe it is a fairly complex one to be dismissed quite simply as either a Marxist vituperation (since I am nowhere near being a Marxist of any hue) or a case of the pseudo-Modernist's cry of 'sour grapes'. I do believe that it is possible to cogently argue from the positions of cultural historiography; literary histories and even aesthetics to show how overrated his reputation as a poet is. But once again this is not to detract from his significance as a performative icon in the public arena.

To put him without any reflective effort alongside of the Sufi saints of Punjabi literature is, to put it mildly, unjust.

One does not have a major quarrel with the duo's introductory remarks, which are more in the nature of unabashed hero-worship. They do give an indication, however, that one should not expect any conventionally objective or seriously ideological or even idea-oriented discussion about Shiv Batalvi's work in what is to follow. There is a hazy aestheticist insistence but the parameters of such aestheticism remain to the very end ill-defined and woefully underdeveloped.

Shiv Batalvi and the Classical Literature/s

The duo begins by invoking the 60s as 'a turbulent decade of 1960's', a dynamic, exciting and controversial time for the youth around the world, who rose to challenge and redefine the established boundaries of politics, culture, literature and art of their societies' but one which remained 'primarily a phenomenon of western societies'. This is indeed a very facile reading of the period whose turbulence went a long way in changing the cultural histories and art practice on the sub-continent. In fact towards the end, the writer duo makes a bold and blatantly wrong formulation when they assert : 'At a time when many of his contemporaries were looking towards the western and, in particular, the progressive literature from around the world to learn new techniques of writing poetry, Shiv Kumar Batalvi took his inspirations from the classical literature of his own land.' Shiv Batalvi's inspiration from classical literature of his own land was nowhere near as profound as that of Dr Harbhajan Singh, Dr Jaswant Singh Neki or even Tara Singh Kaamil.

Here we need to understand two kinds of classicity – one which is specific to Punjabi literature and the other which has to do with the antecedence of classicity prior to the known body of Classical Punjabi literature itself. Thus we deal with two different periods of classicity – one which comprises quite directly the works of Baba Farid, Guru Nanak, Guru Arjun, Shah Hussain and possibly Sultan Bahu and indirectly, because of the inclusion of a large body of Bhakti poetry from outside Punjab in the Guru Granth, the works of Kabir, Raidas, Namdev etc. The other register of classicity, or rather proto-classicity, is the one which looks at Punjab's cultural memory dating back to the Vedas, its encounter with Buddhism, the pre-Christian Greek literature and much else besides. In all these respects, both Harbhajan and Neki are way way ahead of Shiv. But, of course, with all the burden of classicity, you may still fail to create a soul-stirring poetic image. So I am not proposing this as an aesthetic canon. The naxalite poet, Lal Singh Dil, is an eloquent contradiction of such overwhelming adherence to classicity. He rises from the margins and rises glowingly. But in the case of both Harbhajan and Neki, classicity works seamlessly and wonderfully and brings to their work astounding depth of feel.

Concerning the 1960s in Punjab

It may be brought within the knowledge of the learned scholars, Mr Rammah and Ms Sharma, that the sixties in India meant many things – Vietnam, for one; the break-up of the Communist Party; the rise of the ultra-left Naxal movement – none of these had anything to do with western societies, either at a primary or a secondary level. The other ideas to invigorate some of the poets were the emergence of a new, free, postcolonial India – supposedly ushering in a just, equitable, socialist, democratic order. Nehruvian model of India's leap into the temples of modernity was greatly inspiring for some and was blindly lapped up by a number of poets, photographers and filmmakers. The lead India took in establishing the movement of non-aligned countries under the collective leadership of Nehru, Tito and President Nasser and its avowed adherence to Anti-nuclear and pacifist ideology also resulted in the production of a lot of literary and other art work. The left's disillusionment with the left-of-centre but largely centrist politics of the Congress was the focus of another strong literary drive. India's colossal defeat at the hand of the Chinese resulted in the first definitive signs of the souring of the post-Independence romance. The unprecedented famines, the rise of coalition politics were other significant indicators.

Popular Culture and Sub-cultures in the 60s

In terms of popular culture, the era of Saratchandra Chatterjee's & Dilip Kumar's *Devdas* (which is where at least some of Shiv's creative drive is traceable) had come to a decisive end and a new cinema of fluidity – road cinema, touristy cinema [local tourism in Shammi Kapoor; road cinema in Dev Anand; and, international tourism as in Raj Kapoor's] – and cinema of strident patriotism - as in Manoj Kumar's *Upkaar, Poorab aur Paschim* had taken over. In fact, it will very interesting to know what kind of film songs was Shiv Kumar singing while being a popular crooner in his college.

The 1960s also witnessed the largest diasporic move from Punjab to not only UK but to Canada as well. In a sense this was the decade of the great desertion – desertion as in the transformation of a green land into a desert. Today, as we turn around in utter surprise to look at some of the villages that have declared themselves collectively bankrupt and put themselves up for sale or villages that are haunted because of people who left en masse, we begin to reflect and seriously analyse the socio-economic fall-out of these culturally shifting spaces as a result of the Punjabi diaspora.

This was also the period of narcissism – the Green Revolution – only recently beginning to go sour with a rapidly shrinking water table – having established Punjab as the granary of India and gradually having put small land-owning farmers from Punjab under tremendous pressure demanding an ever increasing produce from the peasantry. This was also the time of the lure of new technologies: the tube-wells, tractors, the tyre-tube cart-wheels, the Jeepaas.

And it was also the time of the chemicals such as urea and pesticides that began to virtually dope our fields. Punjab will have to be imagined a lot differently and without an aggressive machismo.

I am not overly dismayed if nothing of this – largely rural Punjab – finds any space within Shiv's poetry. After all, poetry has a much larger and enduring life than the ordinary and mundane business of day-to-day lived. The point I am making, however, is that the 60s is far too complex a phenomenon to be facilely tucked away with self-congratulating one-liners.

This was also the time when a transition from b/w to coloured photography was taking place silently.

At the level of creative writing, a miniscule section of university-based students and teachers were looking upto Jean Genet, Albert Camus, Jean-paul Sartre, Merleu-Ponty, Allen Ginzberg – TS Eliot and WB Yeats and WH Auden having been forgotten long since. This is also the period when Eliot, Richards and Leavis are decisively banished from the field of literary criticism in Punjab. The new avatars on the horizon were all non-anglo-saxon savants such as Roland Barthes, Claude Levi-Strauss, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, A-J Greimas, and later Derrida, Lyotard, Baudrillard. For the Marxists, the focus had similarly shifted from the classical Marxist positions to those of the Frankfurt School, Benjamin, Brecht, Della Volpe, Louis Althusser. The theoretically well-aligned critiques of Shiv Batalvi's poetry are not as easy to ridicule as those the writers of this essay have tried to mimic. For instance, sentences such as 'for some his poetry is an unwelcome distraction from the true goal of poetry as a tool to identify and expose the fault lines in the society and people's reaction to them' are nothing short of trivialising the issue of critical discourse. We need to respect the history of our own critical discourse a little more than the writers of this essay seem inclined to.

And it is not as if, the entire gamut of critical reference is outside of the sub-continent. For instance, the earliest and genuinely indigenous modernist poet of the Punjabi language, Harnam, had absolutely no grounding in literary or cultural theory. He was as ill or well read as Shiv Batalvi was and started his poetic career with some highly charged lyrics in the late 50s. However, there were two problems with him: He could not sing to save his life. And, he looked like an understudy of a bantamweight wrestler. But he too drank heavily. But, then, amongst the Punjabi writers in East Punjab who didn't? Like the Bengali novelist Kamal Mazumdar, Harnam apparently severed an active linkage with what is passed off as the 'authentic Punjab', even if the river Jehlum never deserted his creative conscience. He declared Mohammad Ali, the pugilist Pele and Maradonna, the soccer stars and even actress Rajshree to be his inspirations while openly making fun of the Urdu poetry. Once in a while, he would drop his defenses and speak of both Prof Puran Singh and Guru Nanak with irreverent passion.

Such was the 60s in Punjab. It was far far too complex culturally for me to exhaustively sum it up here.

And this is precisely why I am mildly amused by the duo's attempt to create a highly romanticised and idyllicised image of Shiv's village Bara Pind Lohtian in the undivided Punjab. This is what the French thinker Andre Bazin has described as the 'mummy complex'. In their attempt to apotheosize Shiv Batalvi right from the tender age of 7 to 10, he is reported to be a malang or a wandering faqir. I am surprised that the writers have not invoked celestial configurations to herald the birth of a seer and a saint. And I am not getting into smaller issues of wrong translations of *raas-dhaaris* or the misspellings of *shaidaai* or *shudaai* and innumerable sic sentences.

And thus begins the process of apotheosis in right earnest. For instance, Shiv Batalvi is reported to have 'extensively studied Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu and English literature'. The fact remains, however, that all such claims about Shiv's knowledge of English literature are not only exaggerated but largely unsubstantiated. The same holds true for his so-called 'extensive study of Hindi poetry'. It all depends upon who the certifier is.

Likewise, the claim that 'many who had listened to Shiv's recitations of his poetry found it as one of the most memorable experiences of their lives' qualified further by Balwant Gargi's – given to hyperbole as he was – description of the Guru Nanak Kavi Darbar attempts to instal Shiv in a larger than life mould.

That indeed is almost every bit a statement of fact. But let me also point out that, apart from Shiv Batalvi, there were at least two other Punjabi poets who could hold an audience of thousands into a mesmerized silence. These were the *sarkari* poet, the late Inderjit Singh Tulsi (the man who penned *Beshak mandir masjid tordo* for Raj Kapur's Bobby) and the revolutionary Sant Ram Udasi (the authentic people's bard who could sing his ballads at times for a gathering of 50,000). All three could sing and all three had their respective constituencies.

Although Shiv's poetry may be in the folk idiom, his constituency today is largely urban middle-clas; Rajkavi Inderjit Singh Tulsi had become resigned to his own success and chosen a path where he would earn lots of money and be forgotten; Sant Ram Udasi remained a poor bard till the very end and was murdered while travelling to Maharashtra. Needless to say that Sant Ram Udasi's constituency is the subaltern and the unlettered, marginalised, deprived human being. I wonder if it would be right to say that Sant Ram's imagery springs from the kind of functional physicality that Shiv's largely static and distantiated imagery does not. I am just wondering and not passing a judgment. It is quite clear that both Balwant Gargi and Kartar Singh Duggal had absolutely no time or taste for the likes of Sant Ram Udasi. Their judgment, to that extent, is inadequately based upon knowledge of how the folk idiom functioned on ground. I am raising this issue because it has been raised by the writer-duo who have taken special pains to underline the importance of folk idiom etc in the effective dissemination and communication of the major literary works to the people at large. How do we ignore a Sant Ram Udasi and pedestalize a Shiv Batalvi? That is the question.

Furthemore we have to realize that the magic of recitation in question needs to be further qualified as recitation in tarannum. Shiv's non-musical recitation

of his own poems was, for instance, bland and unimpressive. It should be understood that, even if it opens up a window for irresolvable misunderstandings, that the people who swooned over Shiv's performances would qualitatively respond in much the same way listening to utterly spurious stuff from a Pankaj Udhas and ilk and that the college girls hysterically demanding the recital of a certain poem were not always moved by the reasons of poeticity.

The article that claims to be 'a reliable and coherent study of his life', completely ignores the nature of exploitative appropriation to which Shiv was subjected by the nouvau riche traders' lobby of Batala and Amritsar. He was cruelly fetishized by them and bandied around as an object worthy of possession. This is where and how he was mindlessly goaded to drown himself in alchoholic stupor. Given his poetic sensitivity, there was no way he would have encouraged an ordinary and normal relationship with these iron-scrap-traders.

More importantly, however, disregarding Shiv's involvement with alchohol as something inconsequential or dismissing it as something that appeared only towards the last part of his life is like weaving the ultimate yarn in the service of hero-worship. In Punjab, we suffer from selective amnesia when it comes to the consumption of alchohol and resist every attempt at stating 'how much is too much'. Absolutely no point would be served by invoking 'harsh criticism' of his poetry as the cause of his fatally plunging health. The kind of adulation Shiv enjoyed is unparalleled in the history of recent literatures of the world and he was nowhere near as harshly attacked as say, Mohan Singh or Harbhajan Singh by the ultra-leftists. And, Shiv wasn't a weakling in any conceivable sense of the term....

Shiv Kumar's shift to Chandigarh wasn't as innocent as it is made out to be. It was a move consciously encouraged and supported by a number of his influential and well-connected friends. There is no way Shiv would have survived in a State Bank job where he was more of an absentee employee if he did not have support at the highest level.

The writer-duo also cites from an interview which Mr Rammah conducted with the Punjabi poet Amarjit Chandan. Chandan is reported to have said:

> There is neither any scientific social understanding nor any spirituality in Shiv's poetry. He represents adolescence emotions. Very few people have bothered to read all of his poetry. He has become famous on the basis of just a few of his poems. He has copied the lyricism and diction of Harbhajan Singh. [Chandan. Int. 2002].[20]

It is most unfortunate that Amarjit Chandan should be making such a sweeping statement. It belittles the poetic genius of both Harbhajan Singh and Shiv Batalvi. There are hardly any similarities between the two even when one looks at Harbhajan's lyrical poetry which starts somewhere around 1955 and first appears in *Laasaan* in 1957. His third book of lyrics *Adhraini* appeared in 1962 but the lyrics were mostly written over a period of 4 years – 1957-1960 - and

there is no question of him having been influenced by Shiv as your 'famous Punjabi poet and critic' – one Darshan Gill - seems to suggest. Having confirmed with Harbhajan's family, I wish to put it on record that the family is not aware of even an 'acquaintance-level' relationship that may have existed between Harbhajan and the 'famous poet-critic'. Much to their dismay, they seem like many others, to be almost embarrassingly unaware of Mr Gill's literary eminence. It should be borne in mind that Harbhajan was nowhere near as popular as Shiv – which incidentally does not, contrary to what you may like to propose as an aesthetic yardstick, make him a lesser poet - and had obvious difficulties in getting his work published. In fact the cover design of Adhraini designed by the legendary Pakistani painter Abdul Rehman Chughtai remained with the poet for well over two years before the book finally made it in print. ...

Quite interestingly, the duo states that 'Shiv's popularity has now reached a point where ignoring it as a yardstick to measure the significance of his poetry will amount to a contempt of the collective mind of Punjabis.' This is almost like a false aesthete's threat – 'if you are not with us, you're against humanity at large' It is like the VHP claiming to represent all the Hindus; and the admirers of Shiv Batalvi's poetry menacingly claiming their right to represent 'the collective mind of the Punjabis'. This is a scary prospect, to say the least...

I am offering my remaining comments very briefly since the rejoinder has become too long.

The duo's formulation that 'in both the Sufi and Qissa poetry, utmost sacrifices and willing acceptance of death, as the pinnacle of one's struggle for an ultimate goal, are celebrated' is a highly debatable formulation. In reference to Shiv's '*Bhatthi Waliye Chambe Diye Daliye*', they assert that 'the dominant mood of the poem is very similar to the spiritual journey of a Sufi travelled in stages where each stage of spiritual purification demands new sacrifices.' This is highly debatable analogy. A sufi's journey is woven around at least seven stages of remembrance - *zikr* - and these are in no way comparable to anything Shiv Batalvi may have undertaken as a poet as the highly emotional interpretation of the poem being offered here seems to suggest.

Their next formulation that 'most of the classical Punjabi poetry was written in a lyrical form with the intention of singing. Many of the classical Punjabi poets expressly set their lyrics in well-known ragas of Indian music' refutes their earlier thesis of 'communicating in the folk idiom with common people.'

They next opine that 'classical Punjabi poets extensively, and in the case of many important poets exclusively, used the imagery, metaphors and symbols that were taken from everyday life and scenery of rural Punjab.' Just one example from Shah Hussain – his sub-continental poem *Saaloo* - is enough to refute this formulation. Puran Singh is another example: even though he speaks with such intense passion about Punjab – far more intensely than Shiv, if I may add – his poetry also carries resonances of a much larger topography that he spiritually experienced while travelling through Bengal, Gorakhpur or even Japan.

Their belief that 'the classical Punjabi poetry is a panorama of the whole vista of common and popular culture of Punjab' is too vast and unverifiable. No

poetry can make such a pompous claim – 'the whole vista is far too dynamic to be reducible to any single field of poetry – classical or otherwise.

And finally, in the name of critical discourse the two writers only make a long inventory of village artefacts to which Shiv's poems refer. This, if I may point out is only indexic excitement, for it judiciously eschews any discussion about how in Shiv's poetry the aforementioned list of 'things and words' or even images is phenomenologically enlivened and reinstalled except as fetishized exotica.

The poetic discourses are constituted in terms of indexic, iconic and symbolic layerings. The last two at least work through a process of condensation and displacement; through metaphor and metonymy. In Shiv's poetry, the discourse barely moves beyond the first level of description. No wonder that Shiv's poetry is held out as an apt example of a string of static images without any inner growth.

On Shiv as a Postmodernist???

Finally, in their zeal to establish Shiv as a poet of our times, the writer duo invokes terms such as modernity, post-modernity, feminism etc. I am left not a little perplexed. I wonder what theoretic parameters the writes have in mind while using such loaded terminology. Who do they have in mind when, for instance, they use the term postmodernity: Jean-Francois Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*; Fredric Jameson's The Cultural Turn; or, Perry Anderson's *The Origin of Postmodernity*? My humble submission is that we should resist the temptation of using these terms in a loose sort of oral tradition.

Why do they give both 1965 and 1967 as the years in which Shiv won the *Sahitya Academy* award which as per the rules and statuette of the academy is given only once in a writer's lifetime?

Safir Rammah replies.......

There already has been quite a lively discussion, including by Garewal on Batalvi on the APNA web site in the Discussion Forum. I find almost nothing of any substance in the above comments, except author's personal and and unsubstantiated opinions, as far as criticism of Shiv's poetry is concerned. The main complaint of the author seems to be nothing more than why anyone is praising Shiv's poetry when the author considers him just an interesting 'cultural phenomena'. The insistence on bracketing Shiv with Sant Ram Uddasi is quite amusing and shows that the author has absolutely no grasp on Shiv's poetry. Apparently, the author believes that if Shiv was less presentable and didn't have a good voice, no one would have paid any attention to his poetry. The article is more of 'kill the messenger variety' - discredit the writers on the lack of detailed discussion of the 60's in Punjab or post modernism and other

irrelevant points to discredit Shiv's poetry. It is an impressive effort to dazzle the readers with author's superior intellect and knowledge.

Just for your clarification:

1) We never mentioned that Shiv received Sahitiya Academy award in 1965. *Loonan* was first published in 1965 and received the award in 1967. I had very carefully checked both the dates.
2) We did not try to cover Shiv's drinking problem. After talking to a number of people who had known him well during different periods of his life we concluded that Shiv was not an alcoholic (as in medical terminology) before 1970. Which is another way of saying that he became alcoholic after 1970. Prior to that he was a regular drinker, mostly in the evenings, and did engage in heavy drinking occasionally.
3) Quite remarkably, during research on Shiv's place of birth, a number of old people came forward who remembered Shiv and his family quite well even 55 years after Partition. That he was called a *shedai* and *malang* was a direct quote from the village folks, as duly noted in the article, and not a creation of our imagination. I will check if a recording of the interviews was made. One of the villagers even pointed towards a boy and remarked that Shiv looked just like this boy. Many of the details provided by the old folks about Shiv's family and childhood were verified by other sources. The interviews were conducted by someone who is very well versed in this type of research and had a good judgment of the quality of oral history. I have sent a copy of the article to Shiv's wife and have requested her to point out any factual errors.

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Harjeet Singh Gill, *Baba Nanak* (New Delhi: Harman Publishing House, 2003) 188pp. (hb). Rs. 600. ISBN 81-86622–58-6.

'Oh no!' I thought as I opened Harjit Singh Gill's *Baba Nanak*. 'Not another of these attempts to retell the story of Guru Nanak in what is meant to be English poetry.' These, it seems, almost invariably consist of dreary prose dressed up as flowery poetry. But I was wrong. I was very wrong. *Baba Nanak*, far from being cast in the style which one normally associates with the 'poetry' of English translations of the Adi Granth, is in fact an excellent piece of work. The works that it paraphrases are some of the finest of Guru Nanak's works, set in the context of his life story and supported by passages from the *janam-sakhis*. *Japuji* naturally appears, as do portions of *Siri Ragu*, and the whole of *Barah-maha*, and *Siddh Gost*.

The style in which the life and travels of Baba Nanak is recorded makes exceedingly pleasant reading and those who wish to have the story well told as simple but effective English poetry will find Gill's work a delight. Very rarely he fails. Occasionally one comes across passages that fall short of the ideal.

in every cosmos
is His abode
in all spheres there is even mode
the Creator is merged in His Creation
Nanak, His Truth
saturates every diction (p 53)

This occurs in stanza 31 of *Japuji Sahib*. Stanza 32, however, restores the balance.

many a step lead[s] to His path
but only a few reach His abode
the tales of Heaven
lure many a lowly rogue
Nanak His grace alone
can lead us there
all else is false
and delusion ! (p 53-4)

Or consider the following passage.

in this vast universe
under the canopy of the sky and the stars
in this endless wilderness of mind and body
we reflect on the destiny of the beings
lost in the search of the self
of the unknown
of the Other
of love and hate
of life and death

of rise and fall
of heart and hearth
in these moments of reflection
in these rhythms of sublime music
there is no life
no death
no love
no separation
there is eternal union
there is eternal serenity (pp 176-77)

At times his usage of certain Punjabi terms must be questioned as far as their spelling is concerned. Why, for example, is 'Vaisakh' spelt 'Waisakh' (p 120)? The English pronunciation of 'Vaisakh' is much closer to the original. Here too, however, the difference is only occasional. Set against his interpretation of the meaning of words such as *shishya* (p 166) or *shabad* (pp 167-72) slips of this kind pale into insignificance.

For the janam-sakhi background Gill has used a style which corresponds to the *Puratan* version. Nanak's constant companion is Mardana. Bhai Bala is never mentioned. The absence of Bala does not mean, however, that Gill has opted for a narrowly historical account, and that Guru Nanak is led only to those places or events that can be defended on strictly historical grounds. The life of Baba Nanak is told according to tradition, not history. Mardana strays into Kamrup and is there 'transformed into a sheep' by 'the charms of the fair maidens' (pp 158-9). It would perhaps be possible to argue that this means that Mardana became only a metaphorical sheep who behaved in a sheep-like manner. Kamrup is followed, however, by a visit to Mecca and there the holy Kabah rotates as the offended mullah drags Nanak round by the feet (p 159-62). Gill is perhaps a little hard on Mardana, frequently being mildly rebuked for his simplistic beliefs or his inclination to despair. Mardana though is the Guru's 'dear friend' and always they remain the best of companions.

There is only one feature that warrants serious criticism. God is unmistakeably a man. In fact he is an *old* man, 'a splendid old man with long white beard clad in red robes' (p 8). Always God is referred to as 'He' or 'Him'. This is not the *Akal Purakh* of the *Adi Granth*, for Akal Purakh is neither male nor female. It is true, of course, that this makes translation or paraphrase into English considerably more difficult. The languages that relate to Sant Bhasha use the same words regardless of whether the reference is to male or female, whereas English has a definite male or female orientation. Yet it can be done. The works translated in the Appendix to my *Sikhism* are all of neutral gender, a hard task yet not one that was ultimately impossible. It is a task that should be undertaken, for the penalty otherwise is to sustain the wholly mistaken notion that God is a man.

In other respects the book is a delight. Extracts from an eighteenth century

manuscript of the Adi Granth provide illustrations, with coloured *phulkaris* on the reverse side. With the one exception of gender the contents of the book are highly recommended.

Hew McLeod
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Tariq Rahman, *Language, Ideology and Power. Language-Learning among the Muslims of Pakistan and North India,* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002) xix+689pp. (hb). Rs.725. ISBN 0-19-579644-6.

In an earlier book *Language and Politics in Pakistan* (1996), now available in paperback, Tariq Rahman wrote on ethnicity and the pursuit of power. In his most recent study, *Language, Ideology and Power*, he recapitulates the work of his earlier study, but here moves on to analyse the teaching and learning of languages as a means of giving the reader insights, as he puts it, 'into the way power is distributed and operates in Pakistan.' (p 1)

In order to achieve his aim, Rahman has produced a book ambitious in scope and highly successful in execution. It is at once a historical handbook of language-teaching and learning in Pakistan, complete with a lengthy appendix containing the results of Rahman's fieldwork in the subject, and at the same time a highly readable narrative that never loses sight of the themes Rahman has distilled from his years of research on the subject of language and its relation to power. These themes are set forth in an early chapter on the theoretical framework of his study, followed by chapters devoted to all of the major and minor languages of the country. In his conclusion, Rahman argues for a national policy on language-teaching that offers a substantive alternative to the present relationship between language, ideology and power in Pakistan.

Rahman begins his chapter on the theoretical framework of his book with remarks on the elitist languages of power. Although they are minority languages, English and Urdu are the major languages of wider communication in Pakistan. English was established by the British, and continues to be important in elitist circles in part because it is also the major language of international communication. Urdu is even more in use than English because it is also an important language of jobs, schooling, trade, media, and interprovincial communications (p 9). Both are formally taught in schools. Rahman observes that 'for the Muslims of South Asia, the language of the domains of power was generally a foreign language,' and notes that 'in all ex-colonial countries, the local languages are devalued vis-à-vis the language of the former masters.' (p 47) A complementary theme pursued by Rahman is the paradox of simultaneous valuation of and resistance to a language that devalues indigenous tongues, yet is essential to the acquisition of economic and political empowerment. Although there is much resentment in the Pakistani middle class against English as 'an

elitist preserve', everybody who can afford it has their children educated in English-medium schools (p 49). In short, he concludes,

> Although states may not appear to impose languages - indeed they may appear to ration and give them only as a rare privilege - it is their policy which increases or decreases the demand for them. The mere fact of using them in the domains of power creates the demand...The decision as to which language will be used in the domains of power is very much a political decision. (pp 56-57)

Using his own extensive field research, Rahman also analyses the manner in which language is used to propagate ideologies in Pakistan. School language-teaching textbooks help to construct social reality by means of their choice of emotive terms and the presentation of 'ideology-laden' items. One cluster of such terms promotes the concept of martydom (*shahadat*) in a holy war (*jihad*), applying the term *shaheed* even to Christian army officers who die in wars, and to all officers who die in accidents. In the cluster of political terms, Rahman writes,

> secularism has been translated as *ladiniyat* (literally speaking "not having a religion" or "lack of faith") in Pakistan. This makes the readers of Urdu feel that those who support secular politics are atheists or, at least, not good Muslims. (p 66)

Words associated with honour, such as *izzat*, 'all refer much more saliently, much more seriously, to female waywardness than to male'(p 66). Thus, Rahman observes, in language-teaching texts, these clusters reinforce a world view contingent upon male-dominating, sexuality-denying and aggression-validating values in the social sphere; religious and nationalistic values in the political sphere and a definite bias towards the sacramentalization of war and the military in the sphere of foreign policy. (p 67)

To spread one's language, Rahman concludes, 'is to spread one's world view, to empower one's culture, one's apprehension of reality, one's definition of what is valuable and what is not' (p 67).

The succeeding chapters of Rahman's book are largely devoted to a comprehensive historical survey of the languages of Pakistan, and their present status in the country. In the case of Arabic, Rahman charts the rise of the Madrassa in British India as a means of resisting the Western world view, and the consequent use of pre-modern Arabic texts to promote Arabic 'not only as a language but the major linguistic symbol of orthodoxy, Islamic identity, and resistance to modernity' (p 85). In 1971, Arabic was proposed as the national language by those who saw Pakistan as primarily an Islamic state and society, and as a language it became a pawn in the ongoing struggle between religious and secular views of Pakistani identity.

For centuries, Persian was the vehicle of Islamic culture in India, the language of command and cultural elitism, and, in Rahman's view, a symbol of

Muslim identity rather than of Islam itself. Persian literature was poetic rather than theological. Its most revered works were in the *sufi* tradition, in which love stood for divine love, and the beloved stood for an immanent deity. Persian's decline began during British rule, when it ceased to be the language of the courts, and was replaced by vernacular languages in the late 1830s. Today medieval Persian texts are still used in some Madrassas, intended only 'to reinforce the *ulema's* world view, not disrupt it' (p 154). It is, in Rahman's view, virtually dead in Pakistan.

Urdu, first taught formally by the British, had by late Mughal times already become the language of verse and a necessary accoutrement of the gentleman, and by the 19th Century had displaced Persian as the dominant literary idiom of Muslims in north India. It also became the leading language of publication, and by the 20th century had become accepted even by the *ulema* as 'the quintessential language of Indian Islam' (p 230). In Pakistan, the use of Urdu as a language of national integration faced stiff resistance from ethnic nationalists who argued that such a policy helped both the Punjabi and Mohajir elites to consolidate their power. The use of Urdu also furthered the dominance of the urban elite culture, and undermined indigenous vernacular-using rural cultures. According to Rahman, during the sixties Urdu became more and more closely associated with Islam, Pakistani nationalism and support of the military. Urdu, Rahman concludes, 'is very much at the centre of three highly explosive issues in Pakistani politics: ethnicity, militant Islam, and class conflict' (p 286).

The primacy of English as an elitist language has already been noted, and Rahman devotes a chapter to explicating the nature and extent of the parallel system of elitist schooling fostered by a government that chooses not to subject its own chosen clients to vernacular education. Not only the federal government but also the military support an extensive network of English-medium schools. The only redeeming feature Rahman sees in this situation is that English-medium schools foster liberal-humanist and democratic values. The students of such schools, Rahman writes,

> hold the products of the government vernacular-medium schools in open contempt. Indeed, to be 'Urdu-medium' or 'Paendoo' [rustic] is a term of derision among them. The English schools, then, produce snobs with only one redeeming feature - some of these snobs, because of their liberal-humanist values, support human rights, democracy and freedom. (p 309)

Rahman also devotes individual chapters to Sindhi, Pashto and Punjabi, and a composite chapter of Balochi, Brahvi and minor languages. Readers of this journal may find his remarks on Punjabi especially interesting, and in particular his discussion of the ongoing attempt to dispel the myth of its unsuitability for serious discourse.

In his conclusion, Rahman argues that schooling should be in the six major mother tongues of most Pakistanis - Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, Balochi, Brahvi

and Urdu - and that these languages 'should also be the languages of the domains of power in newly created linguistic provinces' (p 540). Such a policy would put paid to 'the erroneous notion that Pakistan is a monolingual and uni-ethnic country' (p 540). He also urges that English be taught to all children 'so as to give them access to the liberal-democratic view and the possibility of international mobility...To keep the windows of the world open for Pakistan, it is essential that English is taught as a subject.' (541)

Thus far, Rahman concludes, Pakistan has chosen to produce a very small elite proficient in English, a larger elite who use Urdu, and a vast majority of people either illiterate or self-taught in basic Urdu, Arabic script, and, perhaps, their own vernacular language. This 'experiment in privileging languages' has, in his view, played an important role in persuading people to accept high defence spending, to view India only as a security threat, and to show little concern for human rights. The present language-teaching policies, in his view, 'were meant to make people support the present power structure and probably contributed towards doing so' (pp 542-543).

Rahman's study, based as it is on solid research and persuasively argued, makes the relationship between language, ideology and power in Pakistan vivid and concrete. It is an important book.

Harold Lee
Grinnell College

Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley, CA: University of Californian Press, 2001), xvii and 316 pp. (pb). £11.95. ISBN 0-520-232062.

This is a paperback version of a book first published in 2000. The preface is dated just one week after the Al Qaeda attacks of 11 September 2001 and the text has not been revised or updated. This does not detract from the main thrust of the book, but it does mean that the reader is to some extent in a different historical period from the writer. Thus, whilst the reader can bring to mind the horror of those images of the planes striking the World Trade Towers, the author observes that the blowing-up of the Air India flight off the coast of Ireland on 23 June 1985 with the loss of 329 lives incurred the largest number of casualties in a single terrorist incident. Whatever the differences in scale, however, both were acts of terror against innocent people which brought into horrifying relief the pernicious relationship that can exist between religion and violence.

For the organisers and perpetrators of such slaughter the targets were not innocent victims. As Juergensmeyer makes clear, religious conviction can legitimise the most horrendous murders insofar as they are seen as a necessary dimension of a cosmic struggle between good and evil, between the sacred and the profane, the divine and the devil. Herein lies the awful paradox: whilst many

find in religion a transformative vision of human potential and a fount of healing and hope, others find the spiritual justification for bloodshed and hatred. It is to the author's credit that he acknowledges this before proceeding to address the core concern of the book - the socio-political and cultural contexts that produce acts of faith-driven violence.

The first part of the book is devoted to case studies of contemporary religious violence around the world. It is written in a lively and accessible style, drawing on interviews with key participants within the different movements. He starts off with a review of some of the Christian fundamentalists in the USA associated with attacks on abortion clinics and clinicians. Like other religious extremists they can justify their actions as defensive - defending the lives of unborn children and defending the way of God against social and moral evils such as abortion. Juergensmeyer then proceeds to profile such Jewish extremists as the murderer of Yitzak Rabin in 1995, who claimed that the Israeli prime minister was guilty of treason for considering the relinquishment of Jewish control of land that was sacred and which Jews were required by God to occupy. There then follows a review of the complex relationship between Islam and violence in pursuit of justice before the author turns his attention to the violence associated with Sikh nationalism, which caused the death of thousands in the Punjab and beyond between 1981 and 1995. Specialists in Punjab studies may not gain much new insight into the motivation of such leaders as Bhindranwale, whose life and death have continued to be commemorated by radical Sikh nationalists to this day. The final case study is of the Aum Shinrikyo movement in Japan, whose poison gas assault on the Tokyo underground railway system in 1995 resulted in a number of deaths.

In the second half of the book the author turns to theorising about the phenomena of religiously driven terror. He views such acts primarily as 'performances', emphasising that they must be understood as symbolic *events* as well as instrumental *acts*. Thus, when the Punjab Chief Minister Beant Singh was blown up with a car bomb on 31st August 1995 outside the secretariat building in Chandigarh the perpetrators hoped that their actions would make a difference, but perhaps more importantly they were aware that they were creating an enormous spectacle - one which proclaimed to the world that Sikh militancy was not dead.

Some of the author's generalisations are rather weak, particularly when he seeks to present universalistic statements about the psychology of religious terrorists. Thus we read,

> What they have in common, these movements of cowboy monks, is that they consist of anti-institutional, religio-nationalist, racist, sexist, male-bonding, bomb-throwing young guys. Their marginality in the modern world is experienced as a kind of sexual despair that leads to violent acts of symbolic empowerment. It could almost be seen as poignant, if it were not so terribly dangerous. (pp 206-7)

Despite this, Juergensmeyer knows his subject matter and his humanitarian concern is always apparent. As he explains early on in the book, 'What puzzles me is not why bad things are done by bad people, but rather why bad things are done by people who otherwise appear to be good - in cases of religious terrorism, by pious people dedicated to a moral vision of the world.' (p 7) It is this expertise linked with his human concern about the causes and consequences of acts of religious terror that enables him to make some very pertinent observations - especially when so many of us will be unable to escape the consequences of the United States' current 'war on terror'.

He makes clear that it is not religion itself that leads to violence, but religion can legitimate the violence of those whose social and political aspirations have been frustrated. He also points out that acts of religious terror invariably require considerable degrees of organisation, and the perpetrators themselves depend on networks and communities for material and moral support and affirmation. From this it follows that the line between 'terrorists' and 'non-terrorist' supporters can be very thin and far from clear-cut. People only become 'terrorists' after they have committed the acts of terror. The conclusion that needs to be drawn from this is that terror does not exist because there is a particular class of socio-pathic 'terrorists', and the corollary of this is that you cannot eliminate terror by eliminating 'terrorists'.

Andrew Rigby
Coventry University

Veena Talwar Oldenberg, *Dowry Murder: The Imperial Origins of a Cultural Crime* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002) xviii + 261 pp. (hb) $30 ISBN 0-19-566461-2.

Almost three years ago the story of Jyoti Dhawan had hit the headlines (*Outlook*, May 29, 2000). The emaciated twenty-two year old was confined to a room for two years by her husband and in-laws for being unable to provide them with an additional Rs. 50,000 as dowry. She slept, defecated and ate in that room, surviving on the two *rotis* and water provided to her every alternate day. At the time of her rescue she weighed all of twenty kilos. Jyoti was perhaps lucky that she was not doused in kerosene and roasted alive, but the cruel treatment meted out to her and to countless others compels us to peep into the psyche of a society that treats its women thus. When one looks at sundry other indices, besides the rising scale of domestic violence against women, including selective female foeticide, the dismal situation beckons serious investigation. The sex ratio figures provided by the 2001 Census point that the relatively prosperous states of Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Delhi have shown a steady decline in the number of females per thousand males in the zero to six age group. More shocking still is the fact that selective foeticide aimed

against the girl child is more pronounced in urban areas than in rural, and among literate than illiterate women. Though sociologists have written consistently on what dowry is, and how it is related to various kinds of discrimination against women, relatively fewer historians have dwelt on the issue. What is remarkable about Veena Talwar Oldenburg's book is that she turns her considerable skills as a historian to the question of the changing nature of dowry in the colonial period, and links it to the politico-economic structures put in place by the colonial state and its 'ersatz modernity.' Oldenburg, however, does not stop there, but goes on to comment extensively on the present-day dowry malaise. She delves deep into her own experiences, as a volunteer in *Saheli*, a women's resource center, for a ten month stint in the mid-eighties, and astonishingly also as a young bride thirty-five years ago in Delhi in a short-lived (non) marriage, to uncover the nuances of the myriad emotions and experiences in marriage for women, all straight-jacketed as 'dowry problem.'

Oldenburg begins by studying the many definitions of dowry. From Manu's *stridhan*, or woman's property given to her by her family and her husband, over which she had complete control to use and dispose, to the more confused picture that appears in the 1970s feminist document *Towards Equality*, that set out to calibrate the status of Indian women. In the process many understandings of dowry appear, including S.J. Tambiah's pre mortem inheritance of a daughter, to seeing dowry as a woman's right, gift, safety net, and a demand or a pay-off. According to Oldenburg, almost all of these notions are with us today, colouring especially the interpretation of laws like the Hindu Code Bill of 1956. Oldenburg rightly takes umbrage at the structural functionalist proclivity of looking at dowry as compensation paid by the natal family to the conjugal one for a daughter who is an economic burden. This warped view not only blanks out women's drudge domestic labour, but also ignores the enormous labour expended by women in agriculture. Dowry is also often seen to be the mirror opposite of bride price, especially as there has been a tendency to switch from bride price to dowry in large parts of India over the last hundred years or so. Oldenburg contends that bride price cannot be taken as a compensation for the loss of a woman's labour, as the amounts involved are fairly small. She also forcefully posits that dowry has many advantages over bride price, the latter signifying a total degradation of a woman, with the money going to her natal family, whereas in a marriage involving dowry, the dowry is, at least traditionally, under the control of the woman, and may enhance her position in her conjugal family. Given the reality of virilocality, i.e. a woman's dislocation from her natal residence to her conjugal one upon marriage, dowry is seen to have many beneficial advantages for the woman as it is her property and works as a safety net in times of adversity. It is in this sense that Oldenburg looks at dowry as historically a feminist institution in a patriarchal society whose laws are generally framed to ensure the rights of men over those of women.

The focus of Oldenburg's work is colonial Punjab, the vast region that incorporates today's Indian Punjab and Pakistani Punjab, Haryana and Himachal

Pradesh, some of the areas that have recently been given the acronym of DEMARU, or daughter-killing states (*The Times of India*, April 25, 2001). Oldenburg shows how the lop-sided workings of the colonial state led it to analyze the question of female infanticide, pinning it to the cultural practices of the high castes of Punjab. The practice was linked by the state to concerns about dowry, hypergamy (marrying up), and large wedding expenses, and sumptuary laws to control such activities followed. The colonial state not only stultified caste practices, but also ignored infanticide among Muslims and Jats, as it wished to woo these groups for its own political and material reasons, especially the collection of timely revenue. None of the laws passed to curb infanticide had any effect, Oldenburg notes, as the economy became more 'masculinized' in a primarily agrarian Punjab, and the society thus had greater need for male progeny. The blind eye that the state turned towards the effects of its own revenue policies, paradoxically defeated its social programme of saving infant daughters of the Punjabis.

Oldenburg rummages through many archival sources to show what dowry meant to Punjabis around the time the British established control over it. Looking especially at the customs accompanying the *kanya dan* marriage she observes that for most Punjabis dowry was neither a burden nor was it something that they were willing to negotiate with the government, when the latter insisted on signing agreements to cut wedding costs. Mothers normally collected dowry over a long period of time, and the many customs surrounding marriage (*nanki shak, neonda*) ensured that the kin group shared costs. In pre-colonial times wedding costs did not escalate because of state munificence in maintaining communal *chaupal* etc., practices withdrawn by the British on the pretext of avoiding wasteful expenditure. By the twentieth century wedding expenses did begin to rise, but this was also attributable to monetization of the economy, and the influx of goods from industrial Britain that now entered dowry inventories. However, wedding expenses in themselves are not enough to explain the selective killing of female infants according to Oldenburg, as high expenses were incurred for sons' weddings too. There was evidence in this period of inflation in dowries, their public display, and control shifting from brides to their husbands and in-laws. Oldenburg also notes that among some groups like the Lahoreen *Khatris*, dowry 'demand' starts to make an appearance.

The changing dowry praxis is firmly grounded by Oldenburg in the political economy created by the Raj in Punjab. The growing indebtedness of the Punjab peasantry was not due to the improvidence of the Punjabis in spending on weddings and dowries, but due to the inflexible revenue policies adopted by the state. The introduction of the *ryotwari* system, high revenue demand, fixity in its collection in two annual installments, and above all, creating proprietary rights in land in the name of a male head, all had deleterious effects in different ways. While on the one hand it became easier to alienate land for the peasant in order to pay timely revenues in a system that favoured the moneylenders, on the other, many others (especially women) with entitlements in land suffered, as their

rights were steamrolled by the colluding patriarchies of the state and the native society. Some British officers, like S.S. Thorburn recognized the faults of the new system and advocated adopting some measures of the erstwhile Sikhs, but to no avail. The Land Alienation Act introduced by the state at the turn of the century only tried to deflect peasant unrest into a Hindu (moneylender) – Muslim (peasant) problem rather than change the basics of the revenue system. In this context, according to Oldenburg, dowries began to be inflated, as they became familial safety nets to see peasants through in bad times, or purchase land in better periods. Concomitantly, women's control over this resource began to decline, as men came to have increasing interest in the material value of dowry.

Unlike other regions of India, where particular communities came to be governed by their 'personal laws,' Punjabis came under the sway of codified customary laws, as Punjab was seen to be an agrarian society dominated by tribes (the obsession with castes giving way by 1870s). Tribes were, in the ethnographer-bureaucrat's imagination, bent upon protecting the interests of the agnatic kin group in land. Thus occurred, according to Oldenburg, the erasure of all rights and entitlements of women in land. Widows, daughters and wives suffered the intolerance of the colonial state in relation to 'women as the focus of heritable rights' (p 141), and it came to be that 'wives did not have any special or ordinary wealth, and daughters could not inherit' (p 148). Thus sons came to be important for the purposes of sheer survival, encouraging further, specific gender-targeted families. The urgent need of the state for more Punjabi men - to clear forests and scrubland, work on the gigantic irrigation projects that led to the building of the Canal Colonies, and seminally, to fill the ranks of the Army (as Punjabis were seen to be martial races) - pushed to an extremity the skewed gender statistics of Punjab. The policies of the colonial state, therefore, whether related to revenue collection or the needs of the army, came to center upon the Punjabi male, notes Oldenburg, making Punjabi women's situation more fragile than ever before.

Zeroing on to the post-colonial situation, Oldenburg endeavours to study how laws meant to protect women's position in society may not necessarily be achieving that, but certainly contribute towards complicating the manner in which society and its women engage with the law of the land. The populace circumvents the Hindu Code of 1956 that guarantees women equality in inheriting their father's estate along with their brothers in urban areas, though rendering vulnerable the absolute rights of sons hitherto enjoyed by them. Similarly the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 has not stopped the exchange of dowries, despite the amendments to the Act in 1985. On the other hand, this legislation has compelled women, and society in general, to frame various marital problems around the rubric of dowry. The nature of discord may in fact be embedded in sexual dominance over women, the fear of their sexuality, the play of power between genders, poverty and upward mobility (as Oldenburg shows through many examples), and many such problems visible in most

societies. At the same time women's own interest in claiming dowry has not declined, and could have increased, as this still remains the only cushion they may ever expect from their families.

Oldenburg's book is very important in reminding us that cultural practices of a society cannot be disassociated from its material matrix; and though patriarchy might seem timeless in its tyranny, it adapts its practice according to the needs of an age. Her nuanced appraisal of the changing face of dowry, from its pre-colonial shape through the distortions of the colonial period to its present horrific format, underscores the significance of good historical research in order to come to grips with a maligned institution that needs to be understood. One may quibble with her over questions she does not address or answer. Why, for instance, urban Punjab and its high caste Hindus continue to discriminate against the girl child, when as Oldenburg has argued, it was the agrarian society that became more male-centered? The marriage rituals associated with these very Hindus have been used by Oldenburg to make a case for shared wedding costs by kin groups. Were these then equally applicable to all sections of society, even those who practised bride price? Why has she not discussed exchange marriages and the rituals involved in those, as well as the situation of women in such instances, when there is enough evidence of this form of marriage being practiced widely in Punjab? Trafficking in women and escalating bride price is also visible in the period under discussion, along with the growth of dowry, though Oldenburg does not take up these issues. Also, she concentrates on Punjab and Delhi, regions where historically exogamous marriages were practiced, yet the question of dowry has come to plague societies in large parts of the country that traditionally adhered to cross-cousin marriages. Yet these are small matters in a book that scripts a major rethinking on dowry, both in its historical context and its present form. If one has grown up condemning dowry yet seen its invidious and clandestine operation, indeed its amazing ability to persist in spite of legal criminality associated with it, one will pick up Oldenburg's book to unravel this conundrum. And one may not even squirm when she calls it a feminist institution, given that we live in a society heavily loaded in favour of men.

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Roderick Cavaliero, *Strangers in the Land. The Rise and Decline of the British Indian Empire*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), xvi+280pp. (hb). ISBN 1 86064 797 9.

'Years of apologizing for the Raj have encouraged Britons to want to forget the whole experience,' Roderick Cavaliero, historian and former Deputy Director-General of the British Council, has written (p xv). However, Cavaliero, who

lived in India for a number of years, has now added his voice to an enlarging chorus of writers who have in recent years reopened in books and on television a public dialogue on the nature and consequences of the British imperial experience. A recent example of this resurgence occurred in July of 2003 when a conference of teachers addressed itself to the question of whether the study of empire should be brought back into the secondary curriculum, and invited distinguished historians to give their views on the subject. The conclusion of these luminaries was in the affirmative, with the caveat, as Linda Colley expressed it, that the subject be approached 'in a complicated, nuanced and well-rounded way (*Guardian*, 5 July, 2003), a recipe that is appropriate for anyone approaching the subject of empire. Cavaliero, writing primarily for the general reader, certainly chooses a middle way between the pro- and anti-imperial camps in his study of the British in India, viewing the experience as 'not all good and not all bad, but, whatever it was, "an astounding phenomenon (p xv)"'.

The central theme of his study is that although the paternalist British imperial ideal was claimed to be justified by 'a commitment to the toiling millions rather than a ruling caste (p xv)', it nevertheless inhibited political change and social development. Furthermore, in Cavaliero's view,

> the real indictment of empire is that Britons remained strangers in the land and never really understood or properly appreciated what they called the jewel in the crown. Thus they could never fill the role of Platonic guardians they had assigned themselves. Despite the high commitment to service and the public good, they could not accept that the ruled were fit to rule. (p xv)

The simple fact of their being strangers in the land is perhaps in itself a sufficient indictment of empire, but Cavaliero's theme provides an effective controlling vehicle for his account of the rise and decline of the Indian empire, punctuated as it is by special emphasis on British attitudes toward India, and on the relationships of the rulers and the ruled towards each other. Cavaliero writes well, and constructs a fluent narrative enhanced by perceptive and often ironic commentary on British perceptions of, and occasionally sheer puzzlement at, the world into which their rule plunged them.

Cavaliero's narrative of the beginning and progress of East India Company trade weaves trade statistics usefully and seamlessly into an informative account of its early success, and paints an engrossing picture of Company life in its early years. Its commercial heart lay in the factory, or trading post, an institution that 'combined the features of a monastery, an Oxford college and a large country house (p 26)', and which, in its business and social life, was much more tolerant and inclusive than it would be in later times. However controversial his reign, Warren Hastings' years saw the beginnings of Orientalist study that culminated in the achievements of Sir William Jones and others, and an era in which the Company was already in transition from the role of merchant to that of ruler.

As the century drew to a close, Cornwallis began to set new directions with the Permanent Settlement of the system of land revenue in Bengal, the suppression of corruption in trading practices, and reforms that promoted the emergence of a high-quality professional civil service. His successor, Arthur Wellesley, established Britain as the paramount power in India with his victories over the Maratha states, established an ICS college, and fostered the age of Malcolm, Munro and Elphinstone. This new breed of soldier-administrators ruled Wellesley's expansionist empire largely in the indirect mode, content to exercise minimal intervention in the day-to-day governance of the new provinces. However, they viewed British hegemony as tenuous, a fear that would be vindicated in 1857.

The advent of Bentinck's administration brought with it utilitarianism, evangelicalism, and a renewed sense of dedication to the uplift of India. The Company officially became rulers rather than merchants . 'Bentinck's arrival marked the end of an era dominated by Munro and Elphinstone,' as Cavaliero writes, and 'Theory rather than practice now dictated policy, as progressives of various kinds...urged government action (p 109-110).' Sleeman's campaign against thuggery, and Government's condemnation of suttee were its showpiece causes. In 1835, Macauley's minute on education brought the triumph of Anglicisation over Orientalism, the consequent denigration of Indian culture, and the self-imposed isolation of the 'superior' British community from the 'inferior' Indians.

To Cavaliero's account should also be added the advent of the revenue survey, and the creation of the *mahalwari* revenue system to serve the newly-enshrined 'village republics'. There was more pragmatism than theory in revenue, however, and the legacy of Munro, Elphinstone and Malcolm bequeathed a tradition of individualist paternalism to Henry Lawrence and his Young Men that would only give way grudgingly to the administrative model of John Lawrence and Dalhousie, both of whom sought to contain the romantic adventurism of men such as Henry Lawrence and John Nicholson within an increasingly controlled structure of direct rule.

By the mid-nineteenth century, British rule 'was accepted, but not with pleasure (p 120),' Cavaliero writes, and observes that the rule of the 'new paragons' would be 'paternalist, autocratic, military, Anglican and superior (p 123).' He also notes trenchantly some ironies in the British perception of the good work they had accomplished:

> They were pleased by the fairness of their revenue system, but it was based on Indian models that had worked, and would have been less onerous if the taxpayers had not had to meet the costs of their own conquest. They were boastful of British justice, forgetting that it was now so slow and expensive that victims of its delays would turn to dacoity. They were proud of the suppression of suttee and female infanticide, their opposition to which caused both to revive just as the practices were quietly dying out. They were flattered by

> the numbers [learning] English, unaware that they were acquiring a weapon with which to match themselves against the British (p 123-24).

The mutiny of 1857, that time when, as Cavaliero quotes a Muslim , '"...men looked upon the English government as slow poison, a rope of sand, a treacherous flame of fire (142)"', brought in its aftermath the demise of the Company, the institution of direct rule by the Crown, and two major themes: the new relationship with the princes, and the growing and increasingly inflexible bureaucracy of an ICS that was becoming further removed from touch with the people.

The perceived post-mutiny necessity to elevate the princes to a direct feudal relationship with the Crown helped to spawn a theme of Anglo-Indian social history that persisted until independence, and which Cavaliero chronicles with charm in his chapter entitled 'The Great Chiefs and Landowners of India.' By the turn of the century, princely visitors to England were, he writes, 'as indispensable to Edwardian society as orchids and champagne (p 161)', and he describes the arrival of the Rajah of Kolhapur, the first such visitor, to the Queen's Ball dressed 'like a fairy prince, all cloth of gold tissue, necklaces and strings of pearls.' When the Maharajah of Jaipur embarked by sea to attend the Golden Jubilee, he carried with him a large quantity of Jaipur soil in order to feel that he had never embarked on water, and a six month's supply of Ganges water for his religious rituals (p 161). In India, unfortunately, the British, Cavaliero writes, were 'too committed to their survival to press them too hard to engage in better farming or in social change (p 160).'

By the turn of the twentieth century, the life and work of the ICS and its dependents had also settled into generally fixed social and intellectual patterns, also lasting until independence, to which Cavaliero devotes a perceptive chapter. Having sifted through memoirs, anecdotes, and novels from such personages as Kipling and John Strachey in the nineteenth century, through Leonard Woolf, E.M. Forster, George Orwell and Malcolm Darling in the twentieth, Cavaliero illustrates the complex and often contradictory attitudes even of dedicated civil servants as they faced the rigours of life and work in their chosen service. In particular, he focuses in detail on his prefatory theme of the perception that Indians were unfit to rule themselves, or to perceive that at best, they could only participate in the civilizing process as junior partners. Keeping a distance by virtue of superiority was simply a given for many. 'You must not forget', Fitzjames Stephens once remarked to a viceroy, 'that nineteen civilians in twenty are the most commonplace and the least dignified of Englishmen. They are in India ten times more fidgety and peppery about their dignity and independence than they are in England.' (p 170) Cavaliero also makes the illuminating observation that 'the arrogance with which British administrators were accused stemmed partly from their inability to enter into the sort of friendship an Indian might demand. When Malcolm Darling, himself an enlightened civil servant in the Punjab, asked a Madrassi pleader what fault he found with the English, the

pleader answered quite simply: '"you do not treat us as equals and you do not trust us. (p 176)"'

After a chapter that encompasses the origins of the Indian National Movement and the viceroyalty of Lord Curzon, 'a reincarnated Great Mughal', in Cavaliero's felicitous phrase, the author proceeds to his penultimate chapter, which summarizes the course of the Raj from World War I to its termination in 1947. He notes the British bafflement over Gandhi's doctrine of *ahimsa*, or non-violence, as well as his ascetic lifestyle. 'To them', Cavaliero writes, 'he was either a mendicant saint or an astute politican who took refuge behind religion, the one thing with which the British rulers had tried not to tangle throughout their contact with India' (p 205). As the nationalist cause - fuelled most spectacularly by the massacre at Amritsar in 1919 - prospered under the leadership of Gandhi, by 1926 it had become apparent to the new viceroy, Lord Irwin, that India 'was set irreversibly on the road to self-rule' (p 208), a road whose twists and turn are navigated ably by Cavaliero.

I did find it disappointing, however, that Cavaliero gave so few lines to the final drama of Mountbatten's decision to transfer power in August of 1947, and made so little mention of partition and its consequences. He had a vast amount of material to synthesize, of course, and he chose to highlight the themes of inevitability and speed in the British endgame in India:

> The speed of departure bewildered everyone…Though many questioned the wisdom of advancing the date of the transfer of power, regretted the desertion of the princes, deplored the haste in which the borders were drawn, there was never any doubt that the British were going to leave. (p 220)

Anita Inder Singh, in *The Origins of the Partition of India*, argued that the short-term tactics of the English against the Muslim League actually undermined their long-term aim of preventing the partition of India. If so, it is an irony which certainly fits Cavaliero's theme, and provides an appropriate conclusion to these remarks on this well-researched, well-written and stimulating account of the British experience in India.

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Moin Ashraf, *Come Brother, Lie Down - Multicultural Short Stories,* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999), xiii and 101pp. (pb). US$7 ISBN 0-19-577977-0.
Javaid Qazi, *Unlikely Stories: Fatal Fantasies and Delusions*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 146pp. (pb). US$10. ISBN 0-19-577896-0.
Bina Shah, *Animal Medicine*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 104pp. (hb). US$9. ISBN 0-19-579103-7.

The common factor in these three volumes of short stories is that their authors are either expatriates, or have lived in North America for extended periods. Unlikely to set the literary world on fire, one wonders which readership they had in mind. Perhaps OUP Pakistan is able to indulge in the gentle act of grace and favour which in today's brash publishing world is now, alas, a nostalgic memory. With the possible exception of Qazi's work, in India certainly, manuscripts of this quality would find it hard to excite the interest of editors, who must be strenuously wooed with originality of style, content and above all marketability.

Qazi is the most accomplished writer, with an awareness of modern idiom, but betraying the self-consciousness that is a by-product of creative writing classes. He manages an impressive range of background and character moving from sub-Rushdie political farce in Pakistan to the countryside of the Minho in Northern Portugal. He portrays the hollowness of the capitalist dream and the emptiness of consumer culture. He writes about furtive, guilt-ridden sex with kinky undertones - with a dwarf, with a nut case - though he is also capable of describing tenderness. The style is terse and punchy in a Raymond Carver sort of way - deliberately crude at times - but too inconsistent to be notable. He could be a candidate for the bad sex scene award. In 'Las Vegas Confession' the narrator's lover (a dwarf) is likened to a computer:

> I open all her files; explore every nook and corner of her database. My fingers go tap-tap-tapping on her keyboard trying to read the code on her secret sections ...

and so on.

Writers like Jhumpa Lahiri and Bharati Mukherjee are able to phrase their insights into people and situations through sympathetic observation, which make their narratives about South Asian exiles in the States completely credible. Qazi's macho swagger tries hard but fails, at the last count, to carry conviction.

At least Moin Ashraf's Come *Brother, Lie Down!* is stylistically unpretentious, although the author is not exactly modest about his talents. In his introduction he says:

Padam Shri Sir Gopi Chand Narang, Chairman of the Urdu Department, Delhi University, wrote me a letter saying 'You have a God-given ability...you have a powerful pen. You will commit cruelty to yourself if you do not write.' etc. etc. I am sure it sounds less inflated in the original Urdu in which many of

the stories were written.

Ashraf's binding theme is the simpleton Punjabi immigrant Jafri (Geoff) who puts his foot into everything and somehow emerges from the misunderstandings and resulting chaos that follow his determined foray into Canadian life. The best one can say about the stories is that despite a certain heavy-handedness, they can exhibit touches of wit and dry humour.

The third collection, *Animal Medicine*, by Bina Shah brings in a creature into every plot - a crow, a snake, a yellow dog; but a boy hero with elephantiasis is probably stretching it a bit. The writer is not afraid to touch on the seamier side of life, but her gaze is clinical and it is difficult to engage with her characters. The faux-naif style is perfect for 'If Cats Could Talk' and the tale of the teenage rebel in 'Going Fishing' is touching, but would have been even better told at a more leisurely pace with space for greater detail.

The short story is probably the most difficult challenge for any writer. As someone once said, one would willingly listen to a master short story writer in a pub, under the open sky, or on a train journey. On the other hand, to be able to lead the listener/reader into an imagined self-contained world needs attentiveness to form, content and timing that goes beyond mere plot or a glib ending.

Pratima Mitchell
Oxford

Flora Annie Steel, *Tales of the Punjab Told by the People*. Notes by R.C. Temple. Foreword by Harold Lee with an Introduction by Tariq Rahman (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002), xviii and 320pp. (hb) Rs 750. ISBN 0-19-579789-2.

In his introduction to the reprint of this well-known and loved collection of folk stories, Dr Rahman explains that oral literature came to be collected as a curiosity, and one that was bound for extinction. As he puts it, ' Modernity brought in the feeling that a phase in human development had ended' and so needed preservation. 'Thus there was a desire for preserving some of its cultural artefacts…'

But the 19th century interest in ethnography and obsessive desire to catalogue was compounded by a passionate search for transcendental and ideal values. A Romantic yearning to re-enter the pre-industrial rural and historical past was the inspiration of much art and literature. The Victorians extolled the Noble Savage, the Lost Tribe and peoples unspoiled by civilisation even as they missionized them.

Flora Annie Steel (1847-1929) did what no other Memsahib had any interest in doing - she toured the Northern provinces with her Indian Civil Service husband observing the lives of ordinary villagers and small townsfolk at first

hand, making friends with them and listening to their stories. She was a truly remarkable woman, possessed of catholic tastes and interests and astonishing energy. She has, surprisingly, not yet been the subject of a major updated biography, because she is in the first ranks of Victorian/Edwardian women adventurers and writers.

She was praised as the 'female Kipling' but was mercifully free of the latter's jingoism. She revealed India in physical detail to the English reader, including every class of Indian womanhood; in her best-selling novels she tackled a wide variety of national issues - terrorism, clash between races and communities and ideological problems. Indeed the *Times of India* compared her to Annie Besant and in 1947, when her daughter contributed royalties from her mother's books to the Red Cross, the Bishop of Lahore said, 'Your mother's name is still one to conjure by in the Punjab.'

Steel was a suffragette, an excellent cook and needlewoman, an educationist, honorary inspector of schools, brilliant linguist, and passionately interested in the people and customs of India. She was a champion of *phulkari* embroidery, enthusiastically describing a piece thus: 'a veil which has been worn and washed for over 200 years, and is still a glorious piece of colour, reminding one of the russet and gold millet stalks amongst which it was embroidered by some stalwart *jatni* woman.'

In Kasur, where her husband was posted, the Landlords invited her to become their Begum - 'Madr Meherban'. She came to know Punjabis as few people then knew them, and when she left for good (although she returned to India to research her best-selling novel about the Mutiny, *On the Face of the Waters*) 300 veiled women came to see Mem Steel Sahiba off at an emotional farewell at the railway station. She departed with a trunkful of stories painstakingly recorded during her twenty years in India.

In his illuminating introduction, Dr Rahman distinguishes between folk tales that have been bowdlerised for child audiences and earthy, erotic tales for adults. Another sub-category was created by Sufi mystics, who appropriated the romances as metaphors for esoteric and spiritual quests. All the stories rely on magic, prayers and invocations and answer an atavistic longing to see justice in an unjust world. As Rahman says, 'There is a moral order but eventually redemption is through the grace of God - that, essentially, is the philosophy' (of these stories).

Very many readers of South Asian origin will have heard at least a few of these stories, in one form or another (for the essence of folk tales is their mutability) from an older relative. Borders are fluid and a story heard in Kashmir will have resonance with a story in eastern Uttar Pradesh.

Major Temple, who followed the guidelines laid down by the Folklore Society of England, categorised the tales in great detail according to theme (Tricks, Deus ex Machina, Son of Seven mothers, Temporary Death etc.) but would have liked to investigate their origin according to

> an historical plan of comparing those occurring in all the known

> collections of fixed eras: e.g. suppose separate compared collections were made of those now current, of those current in the middle ages, the Purânas, the Plays...of those current in earlier times as in the Mâhabhârata, Râmayana....the Jâtakas; would not thus be established data on which a conclusive history of the various notions could be based and by which the first appearance could be detected?

With a scientific perspective in mind, Temple broke down each tale in detail according to its dramatis personae, thread of story, incidental circumstances, where published, nature of collection, original or translation and narrator's name. Temple's scholarship harmonises with the point made by Dr Rahman about dutiful recording. On the other end of the spectrum are the stories themselves - touching, playful, witty and humorous - ringing with exuberant life. They speak for themselves, and one can imagine the Romantic impulse in Flora Annie Steel's desire to capture their magic for posterity.

Pratima Mitchell
Oxford

Hugh Beattie, *Imperial Frontier. Tribe and State in Waziristan* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2002), xiii+352pp. (hb). £65.00. ISBN 0-7007-1309-3.

When, as Hugh Beattie writes, a British presence was established along the eastern fringes of Waziristan in 1849, the country was 'a largely independent "land of insolence"'(p1). Today, although most of its territories now lie in Pakistan, it still retains considerable independence, has never been a political or administrative unit, and still possesses a border that in places remains ill-defined. In this well-researched and thoughtful book, Beattie describes the country and its peoples, and sets forth the history of British and - more briefly - Pakistani attempts from 1849 to the present to try to impose upon or cajole from its turbulent populace successful strategies of management and control. Because recent events have brought the region and its adjoining territories and states into the international limelight, the subject matter of this study confers upon this historical survey a heightened timeliness.

The region in question is a rough parallelogram about sixty miles across at its widest point, bordered by the Bannu basin and the Derajat on the east, and extending to the Afghan plateau on the west. At its northern edge lies the Peshawar Valley, and to the southeast Dera Ismail Khan. The southern half is mountainous, the north sprinkled with valleys surrounded by hills. Among its principal towns, scattered along a roughly north-south axis, are Kohat, Bannu and Tank, all names familiar to students of the Punjab frontier in British times. The almost entirely Pashtun inhabitants of Waziristan in the nineteenth century

consisted of a number of tribes, of which the Mahsuds, Wazirs, Dawars and Bhittanis were the most important. Some were committed to agriculture and trade, others to nomadic pastoralism, and all to the code of customary law called *pashtunwali*, which emphasised honour and the avoidance of shame. Their fundamental social structure was based on segmentary lineage, but their political groupings, or alliance networks, were mostly based on *tarburwali*, the system of enmity and competition between fathers' brothers' sons.

In Chapters 2 through 9, Beattie recounts in considerable detail the history of the British engagement with the tribes, a history punctuated by the changing fortunes of close border versus forward policies, and moments of crisis such as the raid on Tank in 1879. Beattie traces British relations with each major tribe within a series of chapter-by-chapter time frames which, although their detail sometimes makes rather heavy going for the reader, constitute the building blocks for his subsequent analysis, and are carefully cross-referenced throughout his narrative. Chapters 10 and 11 are broadly analytical, devoted to 'Influences on British Tribal Policy' (Ch. 10), and 'Methods of Tribal Management'(Ch. 11). His penultimate chapter, characterised as an epilogue, deals with the twentieth century.

Beattie discerns four major influences in the British decision to manage rather than simply repress the border tribes, as was practised in neighbouring Sind. These influences were (1) the location of the tribes along a strategically critical frontier abutting Afghanistan, (2) the strain on military, financial and administrative resources available to deal with the vast frontier area, (3) the ideological and cultural questions raised concerning the appropriate stance an imperial power should adopt in its relations with tribes, and (4) the continuing sociological effort to discover how knowledge of tribal behaviour could make tribes easier to manage. Beattie's analysis of these strands is perceptive and nuanced, taking the reader beyond lists and labels. For example, in the matter of the British penchant for using the idea of collective responsibility in managing tribes, Beattie observes that treating the tribe as a corporate group produced some successes in the policy of *barampta* (forcible seizure of men and property) and *bandish* (forbidding entry to British territory). However, he also notes that 'colonial administrators in general often attached greater importance to patrilineal descent than tribespeople themselves (p 174).' It was always difficult if not impossible (1) to determine which level of tribal organisation was most important in enforcing collective responsibility, and (2) to sustain collective responsibility within the shifting alliances of tarburwali and *gundi* (factionalism). Similar problems also arose in attempts to work through the tribal *jirga*, and through headmen or *maliks*.

In his extended survey of tribal management in Chapter 11, Beattie returns to a historical framework (1849-83) in assessing the success of British policies with specific tribes, and points out further complexities and ironies in the ongoing attempt to balance the four basic influences noted above. With respect to the tribal organisation the British attempted to define, as discussed above, Beattie

turns to the other side of the border to observe that the tribes themselves attempted to organise themselves in different ways in different circumstances. Consequently, Beattie writes,

> The difficulty for the government officer was that both the segmentary lineage model and the factional model (and sometimes even the chiefly one) to some extent corresponded to reality. Each reflected a different aspect or potentiality of tribal organisation. Sometimes tribal politics were shaped by clan and lineage membership, at other times they revolved around factional nuclei, or even maliks; occasionally they expressed some kind of territorial identity. Usually all these influences played some part, and as a result the Mahsuds especially demonstrated an ability to coalesce and dissolve in a way that was extremely difficult to predict. (p 197)

In his penultimate chapter, Beattie takes us into the twentieth century, and outlines developments on the frontier since 1947. During the 1950s and 1960s, the Government of Pakistan encouraged the tribes to establish closer links with the administered areas, and were successful in offering incentives for some of them to move to Tank and Dera Ismail Khan, and to take some role in government and the military. Beattie also sketches the development of the Taliban movement, noting that they have been more influenced by the Deobandi rather than the Sufi tradition.

In his conclusion, Beattie notes that 'the British tendency to dismiss…opposition as the result merely of fanaticism obscured the extent to which the relationship between the GOI [Government of India] and the trans-border tribes was influenced not only by the imperial as well as tribal ideology but also on both sides by religious values and beliefs'. (p 227) This chimes with the observation of Robert Nichols in his study of the Peshawar Valley (*Settling the Frontier*, reviewed in *IJPS* 8:2) that the ascription of tribal revolts to fanaticism meant that 'instances of nuanced, differentiated individual and clan involvement in events remained little understood or recalled' (Nichols, p 224). Beattie's work on Waziristan, as with Nichols' work on Peshawar, has taken us much further in our understanding of the British encounter with the North West Frontier.

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Barbara Harriss-White. *India Working: Essays on Society and Economy.* Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003, xviii+316 pp. (pb) £16.95 (US $ 22.00), 0 521 80979 7 (hb) £45.00 (US $60.00) ISBN 0521 00763 1.

Barbara Harriss-White is Professor of Development Studies at Queen Elizabeth House, and Fellow of Wolfson College, University of Oxford. She brings an anthropologist's training in fieldwork and her own eye for detail to an examination of aspects of India's economy that are often neglected by economists themselves. By her own telling, 'The project required an interdisciplinary approach and draws on anthropology, economics, gender studies, geography, politics and the sociology of law.' (Preface, p x) The book itself is an outgrowth of the Cambridge Commonwealth Lectures (with a similar title) given by Harriss-White in 1999, but it clearly has an enormous amount of additional material that draws on Harriss-White's extensive field research in India.

To get a sense of the ambitious scope of the book, here are the topics covered: the workforce and its social structures, the role of the 'intermediate classes' (an important term discussed later in this review) in Indian development, the local State and the informal economy, gender and family businesses, India's religious pluralism and its economic implications, the role of caste in 'corporatist capitalism', and the geographic clustering of economic activity in the country. Tying these topics together is the theme that the book is about the 88 per cent of India's population that lives in rural areas or towns with less than 200,000 people. This theme is vividly illustrated in picturesque language:

> We will pass through the corrugated iron gates set in the high walls that conceal the industrial compounds...We will stoop under low-thatch awnings and adjust our eyes to the gloom of traders' and money lenders' offices...We will see local businessmen stuffing rolls of banknotes into the hands of election candidates, visit an agricultural extension officer moonlighting in his pickle firm (pp 1-2)

and so on. This focus, along with the writing style, certainly makes for an intriguing and interesting book, one that is packed with detailed observations. These observations are the book's strength, and make it worthwhile for professional economists as much as for other social scientists and for general readers.

The best known Indian economists' relative neglect of the kinds of issues – especially at the empirical level – raised by Harriss-White is illustrated by the scarce examples of their work in the 32 pages of references listed at the end of the book. Pranab Bardhan, Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen each get several mentions in the reference list, but it seems that there is little in common between the topics in this book, and the writings of most (what this reviewer would call)

mainstream economists, including development economists of any nationality. However, this lack of overlap also illustrates a different facet of the book, which points to what this reviewer sees as a major weakness.

The weakness of the book is that Harriss-White's conceptual framework appears to be based largely on some version of Marxism, to the neglect of modern analytical economics. Harris-White is not an unquestioning true believer, nor is the argument in this review that Marxist analysis is useless or invalid. Nevertheless, it leads to a tendency to personify collections of interests, whether the 'State' or 'Capital', or 'the intermediate classes', as well as a tendency to use words such as 'quiddity' and 'viscosity' to describe economic and social phenomena in ways that mystify rather than elucidate. In contrast, the work of economists such as George Akerlof, Kaushik Basu, Abhijit Banerjee, Esther Duflo, Michael Kremer, Dilip Mookherjee, Debraj Ray, and Joseph Stiglitz (to name just a few who have contributed to modern development economics) barely gets any mention. These economists have dealt with incentives, information and inequality in ways that give us deep insights into the workings of governments and societies, as well as markets, in developing countries.

The next part of this review turns to the individual chapters in more detail. Chapters 1 and 2 provide some standard discussion of aspects of the Indian economy, including the informal sector, the 'black' or unofficial economy, corruption, caste, class, gender and so on. Each of these chapters ends with some cheap shots at a straw man of 'liberalization'. What Harriss-White criticizes is not necessarily something that modern development economists would recognize as an accurate characterization of the motivation for, and scope of, economic reform in India.

Chapter 3 provides an extended discussion of the idea of 'intermediate classes' and their role in India's economic development. Harriss-White traces the roots of the term to Michal Kalecki, who viewed them as a grouping of the self-employed and small farmers, and a 'class force' distinct from Marxian Labor and Capital. This concept has been amended and applied to the Indian case by Prem Shankar Jha, and Harriss-White appears to rely heavily on his ideas. Jha appears to have conflated 'intermediate' with 'intermediary', and emphasizes the role of certain groups in taking advantage of, and exacerbating, scarcities in the economy. In this conception, Harriss-White's observation that these groups resist liberalization is unsurprising, since they stand to lose their scarcity rents. She then criticizes the rise of crime and corruption in the era of liberalization. It seems to this reviewer that much of this reasoning is backward. The forces the author describes were already developing in the early 1970s, at the same time that the economy was being put under greater and greater personal control of politicians and bureaucrats, and democratic politics itself was being debased. They are not the result of liberalization, but have merely been laid bare by the process of moving toward a more transparent system of resource allocation. India certainly needs control of crime and corruption, modern

regulatory systems, and a fairer and more efficient tax system. However, the shortcomings on these fronts are certainly not the *result* of liberalization.

Chapter 4 considers the connections and interactions between the 'local State' and the informal economy. Harriss-White is accurate in her portrayal of the deficiencies of local government. She criticizes the World Bank for its conception of the State as an enabler and partner of the market. In particular, she criticizes the Bank for recommending more effective regulatory mechanisms and better information systems as part of the government apparatus. The basis for her critique appears to be that the State has been co-opted by nasty elites for their own self-interest. That is probably true. Also true is the fact that the World Bank is better at rhetoric than reality, ideas than implementation. Nevertheless, Harriss-White misses the point. The morbidity of local government in India is a symptom of the same centralizing tendencies and compulsive, case-by-case control that have marked other aspects of the Indian economy and polity. In joint work with M. Govinda Rao, this reviewer has argued that the local government reform that has been inching its way forward in India since 1993's constitutional changes actually has conceptual parallels to the contemporaneous process of economic reform, and, if implemented effectively, promises some real improvement in the delivery of local public services. These positive developments will, in fact, need more effective control mechanisms and information systems. The Bank's fault was in not realizing earlier in its efforts that it needed to deal with actual populations at the local level, and not the high-level bureaucrats with whom they felt comfortable.

Chapter 5 provides a more interesting discussion of gender roles in business families and family businesses. While Harriss-White continues to implicitly treat large numbers of Indians (in this case women) as somewhat helpless and unwitting victims of oppression, this chapter does offer some fresh data, and raises important issues. In particular, the escalation and distortion of the dowry system, and its connections to marriage patterns, sex selection, and other gender-based well-being and resource allocation issues deserves intensive analytical and empirical study.

Chapter 6, continuing the ambitious scope of the book, provides a sweeping overview of India's multiple religions. Harriss-White's main concern is to highlight the lack of research on the implications of religious pluralism for the economy. Her views are illustrated by her characterization, borrowed from others' writings, of production and exchange in Punjab as being 'almost neatly compartmentalized on religious and caste lines' (p 156, quoting A. Singh's PhD thesis from Jawaharlal Nehru University). Such characterizations tend toward caricatures. Here, also, the author's conceptual discussion is somewhat limited, and does not get to grips with issues of identity, the possible benefits of ethnic networks (which exist even in advanced capitalist economies such as the United States) and the fundamental difference between traditional, decentralized religion in India, and the nationalistic, politicized variety that has culminated in the *Hindutva* axis of the BJP, VHP, RSS, and similar organizations. Again,

Harriss-White seeks guilt by association: 'liberalization has been accompanied by a *heightened* religiosity'. (p 172) In this reviewer's understanding of Indian political history, it was the Congress Party under Indira Gandhi, and then her son, which began to exploit religious sentiments quite nakedly, independently of what they might have been pursuing in terms of economic policies.

In Chapters 7 and 8, Harriss-White provides some more observations of the detailed, microeconomic variety, on caste, corporate capitalism, and the location of economic activity. Again, the author is at her best when she describes phenomena that may escape the standard economic lens. The book is weakest when it attempts to put these detailed observations into an analytical framework. This weakness emerges again in Chapter 9, titled 'How India Works'. Ultimately, the author's prescription is for

> mechanisms that might make capital more accountable to the State, and the State to other parts of civil society. These are urgent questions that are *prior* to exercises of technical choice, prior to the listing and evaluation of policy options and sequences that are the stock-in-trade of development policy. (p 247)

While one can be sympathetic to the need to take account of political and institutional obstacles to reform, this book neglects the nature of reform in a country such as India: the need to proceed in a piecemeal fashion, the need to carefully define and compare different options, the need to debate and discuss. For example telecommunications reform in India has been enormously important, and quite successful. Yet it has proceeded with plenty of false starts, mistakes and changes in course. It remains messy, subject to lobbying and corruption, and imperfect. Yet what has occurred is better than if India had done nothing to reform telecommunications, instead waiting for the kind of (unspecified) moral and institutional regeneration that Harriss-White appears to wish for.

Having spent much space critiquing Harriss-White's analytical approach and biases, a fitting balance is to conclude this review with a reminder of the book's positives. This book is extremely ambitious in scope. It raises many important issues, and challenges conventional wisdom, forcing the reader to pause and evaluate. It provides a wealth of detail from the author's extensive fieldwork in India. Finally, Harriss-White's trenchant criticisms (particularly in her postscript) of the divisive and destructive forces that seem to be in the ascendance in Indian politics are right on target. However, clearly separating these negative political forces from what needs to be done on the economic front (while recognizing that they do interact) is essential.

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Michael Dummett, *On Immigration and Refugees* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001) 160pp. (pb). UK £7.99, US$ 12.95. ISBN 0-415-22708-9. (hb). ISBN 0-415-22707-0.

Professor Dummett's incisive reflections on the plight of refugees bring forth the urgency of the need to challenge the anti-immigrant ethos fast developing across Europe. Published as a part of an aptly named series 'Thinking in Action', this book is a timely reminder of the racist underpinnings of some of the policies of the State on immigration. In no uncertain terms this little gem of a book shows how the clarity of a philosopher's arguments can remove the cobwebs of muddled thinking that often obscure a proper understanding of political and social problems. It informs us, stimulates us and inspires us to act on behalf of some of the most ill treated of all peoples: the much maligned asylum seekers.

The book takes us through the principles that ought to govern attitudes to immigrants and refugees. These include: the right to be a first-class citizen and its complement that 'no state ought to take race, religion or language as essential to its identity.' The first principle enjoins upon the state the duty of protection of all citizens and the responsibility to ensure that no citizen is persecuted, oppressed or discriminated against. Everyone has a right, argues Dummett, to live in a country in which one can fully identify oneself with the state under whose sovereignty that country falls. The question of whether he [sic] lives under such a state 'is ultimately decided by whether that individual feels that he belongs'. (p 10) This is a stringent criterion and it rests the burden of proof of non-persecution and non-discrimination upon the state from which the individual may flee to a safer country. The second principle prohibits the use by a state of race, religion or language as essential to the identity of its citizens, because otherwise it will risk reducing some of those living under its jurisdiction to second class citizens. This general principle is a useful tool with which to challenge the Home Secretary, David Blunkett's present policy of continuing to press for making proficiency in English a test of British citizenship.

With due regard to the rights of those already living in the host country, Dummett grants that there ought to be 'a right not to be submerged'. It is important not to misread this important point. Several examples from across the world where oppressive regimes attempted to submerge existing populations with mass intake of peoples from other countries show how colonial authorities made a bid to submerge local populations. In Malaya and Fiji, in East Timor and Tibet, the governments systematically tried to obliterate minorities. Given that such a danger of being submerged may be true and present in some places, we need to make a considered judgement about its existence in a particular host country in the light of facts about migration. Britain, however, does not face

such a danger.

The general point that emerges and is worth reflection is that while any country has the right to limit immigration, if its indigenous population has the serious danger of being *rapidly* overwhelmed, gradual influx is not a threat. Balancing a consideration for the legitimate fears of the citizens of the host country with the needs of the refugees is the next step. Underscoring the right of every human being to refuge from persecution, which is an accepted ground for asylum according to the 1951 Geneva convention, Dummett provides a bold interpretation. He argues that all conditions that deny someone the ability to live where he is in minimal conditions for a decent human life ought to be grounds for claiming refuge elsewhere (p 37).

His powerful argument is based on the premise that to refuse help to others suffering from or threatened by injustice is to collaborate with that injustice, and so incur part of the responsibility for it. Thus, he supports a presumption in favour of freedom of entry i.e. each state ought to admit refugees unless it can give valid reasons for refusal.

Very few reasons for refusal are valid. Contrary to popular perception, shamelessly laced with racist propaganda, demographic profiles show that the EU needs 5, 300, 000 people of working age from outside to compensate for the changing ratio of working to elderly populations. The current ratio of working to elderly population of 4:1 will fall to 2:1 by 2050, jeopardizing the welfare system based on calculations of the ratio 5:1. So there is actually a *need* for an intake of working people.

Countering yet another common misperception that Britain takes too many refugees, Dummett reminds us that countries that have taken most refugees are Pakistan, Ethiopia and Sudan. He also highlights the appalling rate of acceptances of asylum applications (%) by the UK in 1996:

From	Sri Lanka	Zaire	Somalia
UK	0.2	1	0.4
Canada	82	76	81

If the same international criteria are used, clearly these variations between the UK and Canada show a difference in the subjective judgement of immigration officials.

As many readers will concur from personal experiences of friends and family, even brief visits are often turned down. In 1997, 30% of would-be visitors from Ghana were refused entry in the UK compared to 0.18% from Australia. However, a U-turn is possible, just as it was for Canada. Like Australia, with its White Australia Policy, Canada too had racist immigration policies before the 1970s.

Britain also attempts to use the device Dummett aptly describes as 'the most morally squalid' of all devices of discouraging refugees by inciting prejudice against them. This attitude is manifest in the constant labeling of asylum seekers as 'bogus', or merely, 'economic migrants'. The book traces how deeply rooted

in the history of British racism are today's attitudes to asylum seekers.

Professor Dummett's arguments pave the way for demanding radical changes in the institutions that govern and control the movement of people fleeing from persecution. This little book deserves wide reading by the general public, as well as campaigners for human rights, specifically the supporters of the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. Asylum seeking is a limiting case in a continuous history of migration that is undeniably an important part of any study of the political economy of Punjab. The Punjabi diaspora in the UK is now a part of the 'host' community. Taken together these facts make this book relevant for scholars in Punjab studies. Academics, not persuaded to pick it up on the merits of its impeccable logical reasoning and laudable political motivations, might consider drawing inspiration on how to write on an urgent practical issue of public interest lucidly, succinctly, persuasively and courageously.

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Christophe Jaffrelot, (ed) *Pakistan: Nationalism without a Nation.* (London: Zed, 2002), 352pp, (pb). £14.99. ISBN 1 84277 117 5.

Christophe Jaffrelot has compiled an edited collection of thoughtful and insightful contributions on the nature of Pakistan's society, ethnic relations, foreign policy and economy. Several themes emerge through the chapters written by Ian Talbot, Yunas Samad, Mohammad Waseem, V N Nasr and Sumit Ganguly among others. Most of the chapters focus on the role that religious or linguistic identities have played in internal and external conflicts. In this they are following Jaffrelot's introductory chapter, which traces the development of the Pakistan state's strategy to integrate its divergent ethnic groups since independence. Jaffrelot, in common with the other authors, argues that ethnic conflict is not inevitable or 'natural' and that ethnic differences can be managed and accommodated within the state. His starting point derives from his identification of the difference between Pakistani nationalism which is external, and negative – defined against India - and the concept of a Pakistani nation. Jaffrelot argues that Pakistan lacks a positive conception of itself as a nation – the Muslim identity not being sufficient to promote an identity that rises above the different ethno-linguistic communities within the state. But he asserts that the lack of a single nationhood is not the result of immutable ethnic hatreds. Jaffrelot starts from the perspective that ethnic conflict can be explained by inclusion of groups within the state rather than identity conflict. Jaffrelot questions Kohli's assertion that Pakistan has not managed to accommodate its ethnic groups because it is not a democratic federation. He notes that periods of discontent of specific groups with the centre have not been consistent, but have risen and fallen depending on their inclusion in the institution of state.

These discussions of the construction of an internal identity are extended by Talbot and Samad who respectively discuss the 'Punjabisation' of Pakistan and the role of the Muhajirs - of particular interest to readers of this journal. Talbot traces the extent of Punjabisation of the state institutions, despite the fact that Punjabi domination was not rooted historically within the movement for Pakistan. However, Talbot questions the reality of Punjabi unity. As with all inter-ethnic relations, what is important to the other groups is their *perception* of Punjabi unity. Talbot agrees with Jaffrelot that institutional design can address these perceptions, and gives the example of the proposed division of the Punjab into more than one province. Samad charts the reasons behind the demise of Muhajir prominence and the corresponding rise of the Punjabi-Pathan nexus. Both chapters work within the same framework as Jaffrelot – the ways that the major ethno-linguistic groups within the state have interacted with the centre is affected by access to resources and inclusion within the important institutions of the state.

The role that identity politics has played in Pakistan's relations with its neighbours is forcefully illustrated in the chapters discussing Pakistan's relationship with India and Afghanistan. The papers were completed over a year before the events of September 11th 2001. Yet the security and identity politics behind Pakistan's support for the Taliban is a theme that recurs in the papers of Roy and Dorronsoro. At that time, as now, the identity politics were of vital importance in understanding other issues such as 'the geopolitics of Pakistan's energy supply', discussed by Grare. Although many of the papers concerning relations with the Taliban have been superseded by the change of regime in Afghanistan they serve to remind us of the historical links Pakistan possessed with the administration. The chapters also point to the fact that the 'war against terror' has had domestic implications for Pakistan – specifically in terms of the limited democratisation seen in October 2002. The US requirement for stability in the region as well as a coalition partner in its war against the Taliban reduced the pressure on Musharraf to democratise. An example of the changes is given in Shafqat's chapter. Shafqat concluded that despite the proliferation of Islamic movements within Pakistan, Islamic political parties were unlikely to convert these changes into a vote bank. The US war in Afghanistan, and the perception that the US was soon to invade Iraq, increased their support and unity. In the October 2002 elections a coalition of Islamic parties (the MMA) confounded all expectations in their increased vote and seat share.

Although the international and strategic environment in which Pakistan's foreign policy has to be understood has changed radically since the book went to press, the important point remains. The linkage between the internal and external identity politics is a vitally important one. An example of this is analysed by Nasr who points out that the Pakistani state funded the Sunni Madrassas after the Iranian Revolution to form a barrier against Iran – being on the borders of Baluchistan and NWFP. The conflict over Kashmir, the subject of three of the fourteen chapters and central to many others, confirms the centrality of this

contested territory for Pakistanis and the way in which the conflict impinges on many areas of Pakistani life. Ganguly's chapter questions the centrality of Islam to understanding the insurgency, arguing that its roots are to be found in the politics of exclusion of the state. The extent to which the army is prepared to allow the elected politicians to determine the outcome of the conflict is discussed by Talbot in the penultimate chapter in the volume.

Edited collections often lack coherence. However this collection successfully portrays the linkages between the themes of importance to Pakistan at the beginning of the twenty first century, although some of the chapters overlap. Whilst this collection may have been overtaken by events it is extremely valuable precisely because it serves to remind us and to illustrate the changes that September 11th wrought on Pakistan. The comments on the internal notion of national identity and inclusion remain as valid as ever. As the contributors make amply clear external threats contribute to nation formation but they are not sufficient to build a nation in the absence of efforts by the state elites to articulate an inclusive national identity, including representation in state institutions.

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Carol D. H. Harvey (ed) *Maintaining our Differences: Minority Families in Multicultural Societies* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001) 101 pp. (hb) £36.50. ISBN 07546 1246 5.

Some sociologists would have us believe that the family as a social unit is redundant and that it no longer serves a useful purpose. Certainly the familial structure has been undergoing profound change in post-modern society, but for some communities the family still serves as an important part of their lives. This edited book by Carol Harvey has a particular focus on the centrality of the family and its role in maintaining religious and cultural heritage.

The book provides five case studies beginning with one entitled, 'The Old Order Mennonite: Application of Family Life Cycle Stages' by John E. Peters. This draws on research of Old Order Mennonites located in central Ontario, Canada. The chapter clearly explains the family life cycles of this group from childbearing, child raising, and adulthood, to the restrictive years of old age. Very importantly the paper highlights the rights and responsibilities of all members of the family during these stages of life. The chapter stands apart from the others in this collection in that the role of the family within this particular group is probably more demanding than in any of the other case studies, and the close ties mean that there is financial and emotional dependence of all members, and often little geographical movement to distance themselves from these commitments.

For me the most interesting contribution to this edited collection is that by Fatima Husain and Margaret O'Brien on 'Muslims in Britain: Faith, Family and Community', and one which may be particularly useful to those interested in Punjab studies. The importance of family, faith and community are explored with reference to South Asian Muslims living in Britain, particularly those of Pakistani background. The authors note that important differences exist among diverse South Asian groups, and in the construction of families after immigration. For example, marriage traditions and practices are highlighted with reference to Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus and in some cases, the perpetuation of closed and isolated communities. What is also interesting in this chapter is the developing notion of not just dual but multiple senses of identity, particularly among younger generations; and the re-thinking of identity along ethnic and religious lines, so much so that religious identity can supersede national and ethnic allegiances. The challenge to the concept of essentialist, ossified cultures comes across clearly, and a new 'hybridity' of identity which also challenges what it means to be British or English.

In Darren E. Sherkat's chapter, '"That they be Keepers of the Home": The Effect of Conservative Religion on Early and Late Transitions into Housewifery', labour force participation and religious affiliation are the central theme of the discussion. The research approach here was to use materials circulated widely in Protestant communities, and trace the early transition to becoming a housewife, as influenced by 'fundamentalist orientations'. Although the case study is that of Protestantism, the issue is easily transferable to other religious groups in which the fundamentals of religion are used to justify that women be 'keepers of the home'. Cultural orientations we are told, are sustained in tight knit communities and reinforced by strict socialisation, and again there is applicability to other religious and cultural groups. Interestingly the author concluded that while 'fundamentalist' women were significantly more likely to choose home as their career in early life, they are likely to re-enter the workforce when their children are older.

The next chapter by Susan C. Ziehl, entitled 'Class, Culture and Household Structure – A View from South Africa' was I thought the weakest. This is possibly because the author was attempting to do justice to the complexity of social class within a limited space. Socio-economic factors rather than cultural predispositions are explored to explain the differences between black and white communities, using South Africa as a case study. The author attempts to present two models of the relationship between class, culture and household structure from family patterns of an ethnically divided white South African community and to also engage with the findings of American and South African literature relevant to the topic. What does emerge strongly from the discussion is the importance of the inter-relationship between class and culture, and the significance of the extended family in mediating economic concerns.

The fifth chapter by Rachel Lawrenchuk and Carol D.H. Harvey, entitled, 'Cultural Adaptation and Change: Aboriginal Peoples in Manitoba Maintain

their Differences' demonstrates the breadth of this book, and for European readers would probably serve as a unique introduction to family and cultural tradition of First Nations in a Canadian context. The chapter reviews Canada's 'Indian Policy', and the internal colonisation of daily life and children's education. The use of residential schools has been documented as a feature of Canadian living for indigenous peoples in Canada, as in Australia, and the discussion notes the undermining of family life and aboriginal culture. Interestingly, the revitalisation of cultural heritage highlighted in this chapter, has now been evidenced as a social phenomenon on a global scale as minority ethnic groups are resisting cultural domination and paternalism. Finally, the book concludes by exploring the themes which unite all five chapters, and which are relevant to Punjab studies: the importance of community, the effects of belonging to a visible minority, and the central role of religion in family life.

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Vishwa Mittar, Sukhwinder Singh, Jaswinder Singh Brar, *Changing Structure of Education in Punjab: Some Issues and Policy Recommendations* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 2002) 74pp, (pb). Rs. 150. ISBN 81-7380-830-9.

Those who have been closely watching Punjab's developmental orbit have felt considerably concerned about the nose-dive taken by the educational sector over the last few decades. Notwithstanding the fact that the State has made enormous economic strides as reflected in achievement of high per capita income, education related indicators have faltered and seem rather unimpressive in comparison to the performance of many other less rich states of the country. The study by Vishwa Mittar, Sukhwinder Singh and Jaswinder Singh Brar is a timely attempt at diagnosing what has gone wrong and what possibly could be done to revive the ailing educational sector in Punjab.

The introduction to the book raises vital issues about the failure of the country as a whole to achieve the much acclaimed and often repeated goals of providing 'within a period of ten years from the commencement of the Constitution, for the free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years' and also allocation of 6% of GDP to the education sector. Concern about the deteriorating quality of education in the face of a plethora of government schemes such as the National Literacy Mission, ALP etc., lack of proper manpower planning and a resultant rise in unemployment amongst educated youth, has been well articulated by the authors.

The book forcefully brings home the point that a progressive state like Punjab with an impressive economic record has failed to pay attention to the crucial sector of education and has 'neglected it in terms of resource allocation,

administration, people-participation and above all political priority.' That the State attaches little importance to this sector is evident from the fact that it does not so far have a State Education Policy. It is not surprising, therefore, that the growth and expansion of education in the State is tardy. Much of it is attributable to rampant political interference and administrative mismanagement. There is an absence of properly thought out policy initiatives and the decision-making is ad hoc and arbitrary, and not always in the best interest of the stakeholders viz. students, parents, employers and society. The end result is widespread chaos and confusion.

The book contains brilliantly selected data, gathered mainly from secondary sources and analysed to afford the reader an informed comparative perspective - where does Punjab stand in comparison to other states and also in comparison to the rest of the world? The State's educational trajectory over a period of time has been traced both through use of data and feedback obtained through interviews with the stakeholders. It is clearly brought out that Punjab indeed has made much progress in expanding access in terms of the number of educational institutions, teachers, student enrolment, improved retention and the participation of girls and disadvantaged sections of society. However, the growth of public spending in education in the State has not been encouraging and is lower than in many other poorer states. The share of education in the State budget has been on the decline particularly during the last decade and compares rather unfavourably with many other states. Worse still, the educational budget is largely non-plan, indicating a failure to allocate resources to the creation of new infrastructure and programmes in education. The book thus effectively drives home the point that though, in the country as a whole, education receives much less attention and resources compared to many other developed and developing countries, Punjab's educational scenario is much more dismal when viewed even in the national context.

As already stated the book comes across as an incisively diagnostic study of the status of education in Punjab. The same however cannot possibly be said about the measures recommended to deal with the problems. The policy recommendations made by the authors to rectify the situation appear over-simplistic and fail to take into account the myriad complexities and difficulties in practically implementing many of the suggested courses of action. The book would have made a much better reading with a more careful editing. Errors of language and grammar abound throughout the book and could put off many readers.

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In Remembrance

Ahmed Rahi 1923-2002

'The Spinning Wheel' is silent

When one of the major Punjabi poets of the 20th century and lyricist Ahmed Rahi passed away on September 2, 2002 after prolonged illness at the age of 79, preparations were being made to celebrate the 50th anniversary of his sole collection of poetry *Tarinjan*. In fact, a few days earlier, he came to attend what was to be the last function in his honour. Well, 'came' is hardly the word, for he was literally carried there in a state which prevented him from speaking or even understanding what was going on.

The extreme misery in which he passed the last years of his life, and the agony that marked his last few weeks, indicated that it would be nothing short of a miracle if he lived long. Maybe what sustained him was his unalterable adherence to Marxism from his very youth, his life-long mission for the salvation of humanity and his faith in the ultimate release of the working classes from exploitation.

Ahmed Rahi was born on November 12, 1923 in Amritsar, a cradle of revolution in Punjab, only four years before the holocaust of Jallianwala Bagh took place in that very city. His real name was Ghulam Mohammad and he adopted Ahmed Rahi as his pen name. He was eight when Bhagat Singh and his companions were hanged in jail. The Amritsar of his childhood was a centre of political activity. He would be in the second or third grade of school when processions demanding the release of Saifuddin Kitchlew and Sheikh Hissamuddin would wend their way through the locality where he lived. His own maternal uncle was in prison for his political poems, one of whose verses wailed: 'Kitchlew, my brother, don't ask us what we are going through?'

As he grew up, he began to attend meetings of political workers that were a feature of Amritsar and where he heard for the first time the names of the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress. It was in these meetings that he heard Kunwar Muhammad Ashraf whose words influenced him even more than the speeches of Kitchlew. This was the time in Amritsar when Mahmud-uz-Zafar, Rashid Jehan and Faiz Ahmed Faiz were organising the Progressive Writers' Association. When he was in tenth grade, Rahi had started writing poetry in Urdu. Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan criticized his very first poem. This poem he read out at a rally of the Majlis-e-Ahrar. In college he found the literary atmosphere that he craved for, and it was here that later Saifuddin Saif who was to become a famous poet and who, long afterwards, produced that immortal film *Kartar Singh*, made him adopt the poetic name Rahi. Among his friends of that time Sahir Ludhianvi, Saifuddin Saif and Anjum Roomani were notable, while he held Bari Alig as his mentor.

It was during the 'Quit India movement' when Ahmed Rahi shifted to Lahore in 1942. By that time he was an active member of the Progressive Writers' Association. After some time he went to live in Delhi where, adjoining

his place of residence was the office of the All-India Trades Union Congress from where a comrade used to send him Communist literature. Not far off, in Urdu Bazaar, was the office of the Communist Party itself where he came into contact with Comrade Sibte Hasan. In Delhi his attitude towards the Communist Party was like that of a thirsty man craving for water and he formally registered himself as a member in 1946.

After his induction into the party, Rahi came back to Amritsar where, in addition to organising the progressive writers he began working for the welfare of carpet-weavers and their union. He had planned a conference of progressive writers in Amritsar and this took up much of his time. The conference was held at the end of 1946, and Rajinder Singh Bedi came all the way from Bombay to preside over one session. Under the auspices of the Amritsar chapter of the Progressive Writers' Association he began to publish a literary journal called *Mehwar* whose very inception created a sensation. In 1947 when he was busy with the second issue of the journal the riots began and took a serious turn. The whole of Punjab was engulfed in this conflagration. On 11 August, when Rahi was coming back from Lahore, where he had gone to get the title of the journal printed, the situation was so explosive that he was not able to return home.

A few months earlier Rahi's mother had died and was buried in Amritsar. When he was obliged to give up the city of his birth to go and live in Lahore he felt as if he had left her mother's grave in a foreign country. This was a terrible loss for him and somehow he was never able to reconcile with this reality all his life. 'My mother's grave was abandoned by me in Amritsar, and when I went to that city in 1954 I could find no trace of it there,' he once wrote. But it was as if the grave was engraved in his heart.

At the instance of Saadat Hasan Manto he wrote the songs for his film *Beli* (Friends) in 1948. This somehow set off a new fountain of tragic and heart-rending poetry in him and he started writing in Punjabi. Soon the fire of blood and hatred in Punjab and the wailing of the people inspired him to compose the poem *Tarinjan* which became as well-known and as well beloved as Amrita Pritam's famous 'Aj aakhan Warris Shah noon.' He felt that with the words of the poem 'O my bereaving mother, how can I spin, how can I weave?' he had himself been transformed into that girl whose words and image remained an almost palpable element of his life afterwards. In 1952 when his collection was published under the title *Tarinjan* (which is the place in the village where girls gather with their spinning wheels) Manto, commenting on it, saying 'This book had to have this name and no other.'

The year 1948 was a milestone for Ahmed Rahi in another way too. He was appointed editor of *Jareeda* (Journal), the repository of progressive literature. This period also marks his companionship with a bright galaxy of writers and poets comprising Sahir Ludhianvi, Hameed Akhtar, Fikr Taunsvi, Safdar Mir, Zaheer Kashmiri, Qateel Shifai, Ibrahim Jalees, Ibn-e-Insha, Mumtaz Mufti, Ashfaq Ahmed and A.Hameed. Two of them, Sahir and Fikr, left for India soon afterwards.

The Communist Party of Pakistan was banned in 1955. Till then Rahi was as active in it as anyone could be, and had become a whole-timer, a term that has a

special connotation in the party. However, he was pained and disappointed by the undemocratic influence of 'orders from above' and 'the hidden hand' that had crept into the party during this period. He used to refer to these manifestations with great grief. The ban on the party made no difference to his participation in its cultural aspects and its labour front. However, the martial law of October 1958 put an end to everything.

During the next two decades Rahi achieved unmatched fame as writer of songs for Punjabi movies. He had written about 1,900 lyrics out of which 1,700 songs were sung by late Malka-e-Tarannum Noor Jehan that would forever enrich the Pakistani films. The practical side of his political life took a back seat, but he continued to remain in the forefront as a leading poet of the country. He had compiled his second collection of poems, which he named as *Tand-Tand* (Strands), but it could not be published in his lifetime, though a collection of his film songs did come out.

Talking to friends on some occasions, Rahi gave out that his next collection of poetry would be different from *Tarinjan*, but somehow his obsession with his mother's grave and the terrible happenings of the partition never left his mind free, and maybe this was one obstacle in the publication of *Tand-Tand*. It is possible that if the second collection had appeared Rahi would not have remained the Ahmed Rahi of the past. As he once said, 'After all I cannot recite poetry as a woman all my life as I did in *Tarinjan*, but what am I to do? That girl creeps up in my heart again and again.

A few years before his death, he had once admitted that when he wrote songs for the films it was always as if he was unconsciously attracting and calling that girl. Now, when he is no more, it is difficult to say whether in his death we have lost Ahmed Rahi or the *Tarinjan* girl.

As I see it, Ahmed Rahi encapsulated the whole tenor, style and thought of his life in one couplet. Its pathos cannot be adequately conveyed in English, but I think it can best be translated in the following words:

> 'I did arrive at some place, but what an arrival it was! Every stage of my journey wept for me. May God never burden any traveller with such a journey!'

(It may be noted that the name Rahi means traveller).

Ahmed Rahi alias Ghulam Mohammad, poet and film lyricist; born 12 November 1923 Amritsar; died 2 September 2002, Lahore.
Ahmed Salim

Devinder Satyarthi 1908-2003

The quest for people's soul

Devinder Satyarthi, the wandering dervish of the Punjab and a folklorist, died at the age of 95 in Delhi on 12 February. A legend in his own lifetime, he was born in a Hindu mahajan family in 1908 in Bhaduar in the Sangrur district of undivided eastern Punjab. While a teenager, he came under the influence of

Gandhi and Swami Shradha Nand, an Arya Samajist and changed his family name from Batta to Satyarthi (Seeker of truth) after the title of a controversial book *Satyarth Prakash* (The Enlightenment of the Seeker) by Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883), the founder of the sectarian Arya Samaj movement, which played a detrimental role in the development of Punjabi nationality.

Satyarthi joined DAV College Lahore in 1926, but left his studies the following year to start collecting folk - earlier known as 'village'- songs and travelled for a couple of decades all over India with a Rolleiflex in his bag. Though the pioneering work of collecting Punjabi folklore had originally been undertaken by the British weekend anthropologists - padres, British colonial bureaucrats and their wives - besides Ram Saran Das and Bawa Budh Singh; no other person, before or after him, could match his dedication and commitment; notwithstanding the fact that the research methodology of folklore has changed for the better recently. He boasted to have collected 300,000 folksongs in all the languages of the Indian sub-continent, but published just three books in Punjabi on the subject. The first ground breaking collection *Gidha* (Punjabi women's folkdance) was published in 1936. A flood in his Delhi house in 1957 is said to have destroyed his unpublished rich treasure of Indian folklore and photographs. A bohemian in life style and with a long Tagore-like flowing beard, he attracted a lot of admiration as well as ridicule. One of the numerous jokes made about him sums up his popular image: On the day of Judgment, he will be called to the divine Court as Devinder Satyarthi, *lokgeetanwala,* the folksong-collector i.e. not as a writer.

With such a vast and rich experience of travelling with the word, what he could produce was obscure poetry and anti-fiction, which was alien to the Indian literary tradition. His most controversial abstract novel in Punjabi *Ghorha Badshah* - The Knight and the Castle - (1965) is perhaps the only masterpiece of the genre in the whole Indian literature. In the background of the disoriented narrative indifferent to social reality lies the loss of his first beloved daughter. His creative style was unique. His tools of the trade were - paper, pen, a pair of scissors and homemade flour-glue. He could read his laboured draft to even strangers and incorporated willingly the suggested revisions, usually more incomprehensive, by pasting up pieces of paper on top of each other. His manuscripts were described as the graveyards of words.

Satyarthi published 45 books of folklore, poetry, fiction and non-fiction in Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu. *Meet my People,* an anthology of sketches of Indian folklore, was his only book published in English in Lahore in 1945. It is interesting to note that he published more books in Hindi (25) than in Punjabi (15). Though he wrote four books in Urdu, he is acknowledged, in Qurtul Ain Haidar's words, as 'a writer who kept the Urdu culture alive'. The Hindi world thinks of him as the one `who added to the treasure of Hindi literature'. On his wanderings, he had made acquaintances with national leaders like Gandhi and Tagore and Hindi literary stalwarts like Prem Chand (who was also an acknowledged master of Urdu prose), Hazari Prasad Dwivedi and Jai Shankar Prasad. His rivalry with Saadat Hasan Manto, the Urdu author, who

never acknowledged his literary worth, is legendry. They caricatured each other without malice in their short stories.

He was friends with all the big names of socialist-realist Punjabi authors writing in Punjabi, Hindi-Urdu and English, but unlike them he never took any stance on any socio-political issue, as east Punjab went through grave crises more than once in its post-1947 history. The massacre of Sikhs in Delhi in 1984 was the darkest period. He showed the same streak of his character in his personal life. His wife Shanti eked out her existence stitching dresses to bring up their three daughters. He was away in Assam when his first daughter Kavita was born in 1931 and was not there to perform her last rites, when she died in 1961. For this he never forgave himself.

Satyarthi did regular jobs briefly. Mohinder Singh Randhawa, the builder of modern East Punjab and an Indian Civil Service officer of the time, offered him the editorship of his magazine *Indian Farming* in 1946. The following year, he was appointed the editor of a state-run Hindi literary magazine *Aajkal* (The Present Times) published by Publications Division of Government of India. Its namesake sister publication in Urdu was edited by Josh Malihabadi, one of the major Indian-Pakistani poets of the last century. In 1956, Satyarthi resigned from *Aajkal* and travelled around northern Punjab collecting Pahari folksongs later published in 1961 under the title *Punjabi Lok Geet* (Punjabi Folksongs) co-edited with Randhawa.

He declined an offer to head a folklore unit in All India Radio thought out especially for him. In 1959, he visited Lahore and Nanakana Sahib, the birthplace of Guru Baba Nanak, in a *jatha* group of Sikh pilgrims. Manto was no more; Bedi, Krishna Chander and Upendra Nath Ashq had gone to the other side long before. Satyarthi was welcomed with open arms by all the writers and they all reminisced about the good old days, though none of them had opposed the dismemberment of the Punjab. Ustaad Daman, Punjabi people's poet, is said to have lifted Satyarthi up on his shoulders and made seven rounds in the hall. He did it again, when Satyarthi expressed his inability to take his turn and lift the heavy weight on his shoulders saying: This time I do it on his behalf; now I'm Satyarthi and he is Daman. Satyarthi had to return to Delhi reluctantly after some months after his wife had approached the Prime Minister Nehru to find her missing husband in Pakistan!

In 1949, Mehkma-e-Punjabi, the Punjabi Department of east Punjab included the name of Satyarthi in its honours list on the behest of other four distinguished Punjabi recipients - Teja Singh, Gurbakhsh Singh, Nanak Singh and Ishwar Chander Nanda. In 1977, the same department honoured him as the best Hindi writer of the Punjab. A year earlier, he was awarded the title of Padma Shree by the Government of India for his contribution to Indian folklore.

A soft-spoken person, Satyarthi was known for his austerity, self-effacement and compassion. For this reason, his friends had given him another name - *Sharanarthi* (asylum seeker). Sahir Ludhianvi, the Urdu poet, said about him: 'He is a *sanyasi* (ascetic) and a thinker. Through him we see the soul of Hindustan'. Satyarthi never hankered after power or prestige and did

not think that it was below his dignity to do translation and proof reading jobs for the bare survival.

Teja Singh, the Punjabi prose writer, said of him: No body can tell from his appearance which religion he belongs to or where he comes from. He looks like a Punjabi, but when you have a close look, he seems to be a Bengali, Avadhi, Madrasi, Gujarati, Sindhi and a Balauchi as well. When I see him, I see the soul of Indian folksongs.

Satyarthi is survived by his wife Shanti and two daughters Alaka and Parul. His eldest daughter Kavita predeceased him in 1961.

Devinder Satyarthi, Punjabi folklorist and writer, born 28 May 1908, Bhadaur district Sangrur, Punjab; died 12 February 2003, Delhi.
Amarjit Chandan

BC Sanyal 1902 – 2003

An honorary Punjabi

Bhabesh Chandra Sanyal, who died at the age of 101 in Delhi on 9 January 2003, was a doyen of India's contemporary art world. As a veteran painter, sculptor and teacher, he was held in high esteem and admiration in the subcontinent. The Punjab owes a great deal to its honorary citizen for establishing an infra structure of art and craft education and inspiring a whole generation of its artists.

The Lahore Session of Indian National Congress brought Sanyal to Punjab in 1929 from Calcutta, to prepare a bust of Lala Lajpat Rai, who had died in a police *lathicharge* a year earlier. His Punjabi sponsor intended to cash in the popularity of the martyred Lala with his bust in every Punjabi home. Sanyal stayed on in Lahore for 18 long creative years till the partition in 1947.

Soon after his arrival in Lahore, Sanyal was appointed on the faculty of Mayo School of Art (now National College of Art). Later he opted to set up his own school, Lahore School of Fine Arts in 1937 and made a substantial contribution in imbibing the interest for art among the young and talented aspirants in the Punjab. From 1938 to 1947 his school was an *adda* meeting place of all the artists, writers and leftist intellectuals. In his two-volume memoirs *The Vertical Woman* (National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, 1999), Sanyal chronicles the cultural and political history of pre-1947 Lahore. The book reads like who's who of the times.

In the great upheaval of 1947, he had to flee from Lahore with his Punjabi wife Snehlata, a theatre actor and their little daughter Amba 'with just the clothes that they were wearing'. Mohinder Singh Randhawa, who was then the Commissioner of Delhi looking after the rehabilitation of the partition-stricken, helped him to set up his studio in 26 Gole Market (now Gallery 26). As the life became normal many national groups and organisations in the capital sought his association. Together with other artists he formed the Delhi Shilpi Chakra in 1950 of which he was the first chairman. His inexhaustible source of energy,

tremendous capability and the abiding will to preserve, promote and project India's contemporary art is truly reflected in his capacity as professor, artist and art administrator during his stint with several institutions, universities and academies. While he was secretary of the Lalit Kala [National Fine Arts] Akademy, Sanyal with its chairman Mulk Raj Anand's initiative for the first time organised Triennale India - an exhibition of World Contemporary Art in 1968, thus providing India's contemporary artists to see their own artistic expressions in an international perspective. With the best of teachers viz Sailoz Mookherjee, Dhan Raj Bhagat, Dinkar Kowshik, Harkrishen Lall, Pran Nath Mago, Biren De, Somenath Hore, Jaya Appasamy at his behest, Sanyal was able to evolve the model pattern of art education by assimilating the best of both East and West.

In the art of painting and sculpture this artist spent his life either in Delhi or Andretta in Himachal, where Norah Richards (d 1970), his Irish friend from Lahore days and the *nakarhdadi* grandmother of modern Punjabi theatre lived. He believed that there is, on one hand, the essential nature of objects - which the artist must respect. On the other hand there is the form, which is always in flux and in which the variations of representation depend much upon the experience and imagination of the individual artist. Sanyal did not believe in waiting for inspiration. His entry into the studio and conversing with paper, canvas, colours and brushes always served as a stimulant for his inner guiding force. His world of art is by nature a wellspring of delight and highlights the innate humanism of his artistic sensibility. He did profit by Amrita Sher-Gil's passion for rich colours but continued to sculpt with equal facility.

Sanyal toured almost all the erstwhile socialist countries including China and UK, France, Belgium, Italy, Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Japan, USA, Canada and represented in international art exhibitions in Venice, Sao Paolo, Paris and Tokyo. Among his honours were Padma Bhushan, Gagan-Abani Award, Vishwabharti University Santiniketan and Honorary Citizenship, City of Baltimore, U.S.A.

Handsome grand old man Sanyal played the role of a reticent old Sufi music guru in a film *Song of the Winds* (1997) made by the son of his pupil Khosa. When I met him at his Nizammudin residence a couple of months before his death, there was hardly any loss of his zest for life, art and the Shawian wit (he was a GB Shaw look-alike!).

Sanyal is survived by his wife and daughter.

Bhabesh Chandra Sanyal, painter, sculptor and art teacher; born 22 April 1902 Dibrugarh, Assam; died 9 January 2003, New Delhi.

Prem Singh

(Prem Singh, painter and teacher, won Triennale International Award in 1994 – The Editors).

[*Editorial Note: In the last issue, Harbhajan Singh's obituary was written by Tejwant Gill. Due to an error on our part, his name was not mentioned. We apologise for this error. The other obituaries in the issue were Amarjit Chandan's contribution*]

The Punjab has been one of the most important regions of the Indian subcontinent and has played a pivotal role in its political and economic development from ancient times. The International Journal of Punjab Studies provides interdisciplinary and comparative research on the historical pre-1947 Punjab, the Indian and Pakistani Punjab after 1947, and the Punjabi Diaspora. The Journal carries articles from an international list of contributors, with an interdisciplinary base that includes history, language and linguistics, literature, political science, economics, social anthropology, geography and theology.