

THE POTHOHAR TIMES

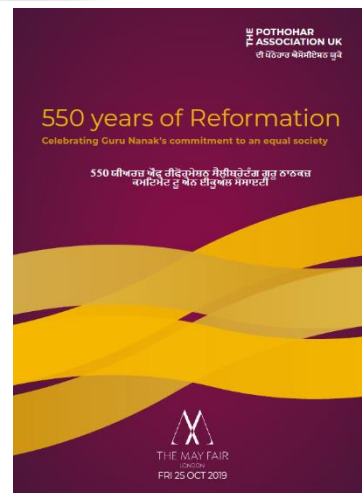
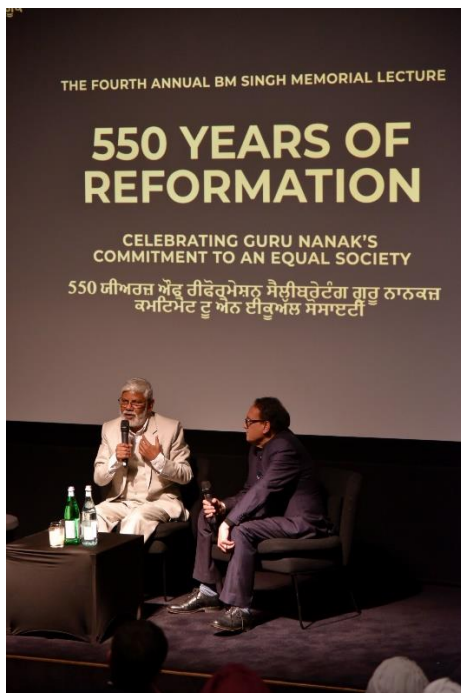
The Quarterly Digital Magazine of

**THE POTHOHAR
ASSOCIATION UK**

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Welcome to the second issue of The Pothohar Times. Thank you to all those that provided valuable feedback after the first issue. I hope that we have found a range of articles of interest to all our readers.

We now look forward to the turn of a new decade and to the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Pothohar Association. As ever we do need volunteers to help run all our events and I encourage you all to get in touch if you can offer help or even organise an event for members of the association.



In October we helped to organise the very successful Annual B M Singh Memorial Lecture at the Mayfair Hotel in London. The Keynote speaker was Dr Rajkumar Hans from Amritsar who spoke eloquently on Guru Nanak's commitment to equality. We also awarded five recipients with Pride of Pothohar Awards. You can find photos and the full text of Dr Hans's lecture at the website link:

<http://thepothohar.com/550-years-reformation/>

Upcoming Events

February: Toxification Screening

April: Vaisakhi Langar

Life in Pothohar Pothohari Proverbs

Kuchhar Kuri te shaer tundora

Someone who is looking for something that he already has

Mullan nee Dor masiti tak

Someone who always goes to the same place and is not ready to explore new horizons

Bille niche gae

Someone who is sulking over a petty reason

Na sadi na blaee mae larre di tai

When an uninvited guest behaves as if they are very important

Miaoon Miaoon Karna

Someone who keeps asking for things irritating others

Nach na jane angan teda

Someone who is not doing a good job, but always blaming his tools

Traditional Recipe

Pothoharis ate well and enjoyed good health. The women enjoyed cooking and producing delicious dishes for their families. No meal is complete without the accompaniment of chutney pickle or rahita.

Following is a recipe of Mango Mixed Pickle handed down by Amrit Bakhshi who was born in Kahuta (Pothohar). This pickle is still served at Panja Sahib Gurdwara in the langar

Ingredients

Wash and dry 2 lemons, 1 medium size raw mango and 2 inch long piece of ginger, cut these into thin slices

2 green chillies split in the centre and cut into halves
spices

1 tbs of split mustard seeds

A pinch of asafoetida

½ teaspoon of haldi

1 tsp of Ajwain and 1 tbs of salt

Mix well the vegetables with salt, ajwain and haldi store in a glass bottle and leave in a warm place overnight. Next day add asafoetida and mustard seeds and leave in a warm place for another day

Pickle is ready, the aroma and freshness of this pickle will tickle your appetite. Serve with Dal and Roti or with Paratha

Inter Religious Dialogue by Guru Nanak Dev ji

by Jagjit K Goel

Guru Nanak was 27 years old, when he proclaimed, "neither is there a Muslim nor a Hindu". The first guru, prophet, philosopher ever to state the oneness of mankind and the significance of all humanity being equal.

Guru ji had gone to bathe in the river Beins, an estuary of river Bias, when he experienced complete atonement with the ultimate power, the eternal reality. Some chronicles state that he was submerged in water for two days, others more. It is immaterial for how long he was submerged; it was his first words and their significance to humanity, that were important, when he surfaced

This utterance is the basis of sikh philosophy and sikh religion This was the starting point of guru Nanak's teachings and his mission to elevate mankind from sufferings prevalent at the time.

***One Reality
Truth by Name
Primal Creator
Without Fear
Without enmity
Timeless in Form
Unborn Self-existent
The grace of the Guru***

Guru Nanak's experience affirmed that there was one creator and one creation

Manas ki jaat sab eko pechanyo

Guru Nanak defines the creator in Mul Mantar as ***Ik oankar sat naam kartaa purkh nirbhau nirvair akaal moorat ajoonee saibhang gur Prasad***

Guru Nanak saw the human in God and God in human. The religious life that he advocated was primarily social and ethical; his object was to unite men by inspiring to love Him, the creator, and to be one with his will.

To preach his mission he undertook one short and four extensive journeys known as Udasis. He travelled for 30 years and covered 30,000 kilometres. He travelled to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in the south, to Tibet and the Himalayan dwellings of yogis in the north. He went east to Bangladesh and neighbouring areas and then he went west up to Saudi Arabia

Guru Nanak went from country to country, from one cultural region to another and showed people that diversity of religious creeds was not an insurmountable obstacle to human beings living in peace together. In the face of extreme religious and cultural difference, he established good fellowship, brotherly love and a spirit of union, making humanity the meeting point of all. He did not preach mere tolerance because one may tolerate but not accept the truth in it. Guru Nanak advocated the acceptance of the universal truth. This is the premises of interfaith and Guru Nanak was the first initiator of INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOUGE.

Guru Nanak condemned the attempts among different religions to oust one another. He declared that love of god meant love of perfection in men and society. He said you could worship, love god and serve fellow human beings anywhere in any place and that god did not reside in special places only. Guru Nanak said that you could not make it a condition, that the ones you served in the name of religion needed to accept your religion; that would be a gross abuse of your own religion. When travelling in the Middle East, he preached that there was no such thing as chosen people, chosen prophets or chosen religions. In his vast creation. Every prophet was a true son of god and sent

with similar messages of peace love and equality. Guru Nanak said the differences were created by human beings and their different grasp and expression of God's will in their lives.

It was possible for Guru Nanak, to do so because he had the courage wisdom and divinity to impress and inspire the most religious fanatics and move their conscience to accept the truth that there was only one ultimate reality, only one ultimate truth , only one god.

He did not try to demolish the cultural peculiarities of religious groups but revealed the spiritual unity in the diversity of cultural differences. He brought people together by making them aware of the divine truth and human life which was a common heritage of all people from ONE GOD, from ONE TRUTH. He tried to convince people that God offered his love and grace to all men and women irrespective of their race caste and country of their origin and that he judged them by the purity of their mind and sincerity of devotion. God desired the same goodness and same truthful life for all his people

Guru Nanak's message is universal and spiritual. It has the possibility of bonding with every virtuous and theistic faith.

It is through such universal ideals that unity of the human race may be accomplished, and Guru Nanak's religion is the meeting point of all religions, where all conflicts and misunderstandings break down. He binds the various expressions of god into a combined realisation of truth. His religion is a religion of truth.

In his sermons, Guru Nanak did not address natives of his homeland, he did not address Indians his countrymen, he addressed the universal man. a creation of god.

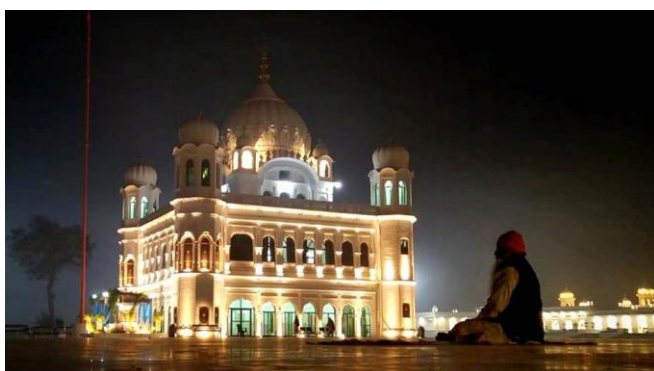
As Sikhs, in today's world, we should fulfil the obligation of the moral and spiritual legacy handed down by our gurus starting from Guru Nanak Devji to Guru Gobind Singh ji and promote understanding between communities and religious groups. This should be our gift to Guru Nanak Dev ji on his 550th birthday.

Kartarpur Karta Vassay Santan Kay Pass

Guru Granth Sahib page 816

Sikhs all over the world are indebted to Pakistan for their generosity and goodwill in providing Sikhs with uninterrupted access to their holy shrine in the Kartarpur Corridor. Sikhs have campaigned for over seven decades to access their historical Gurudwaras in Pakistan. At the opening ceremony of the Corridor, the Pakistani Prime Minister acknowledged that Nankana Sahib is the equivalent of Mecca for Sikhs and Kartarpur, their Medina. He further assured Sikhs that no matter how adverse the relationship between India and Pakistan, Sikhs will never be stopped from visiting their holy shrines.

The 550th birth anniversary of the Sikh religion's founding Guru, Guru Nanak Dev Ji, gave the perfect celebratory opportunity to allow Sikhs & others to come and visit Kartarpur where Nanak spent the last 18 years of his life. It was also here, that he announced that Guru Angad Dev Ji was to succeed him.



All over the world people have found inspiration in Nanak's thoughts and his revolutionary thinking that humanity as a whole is one.

Ek Pita Ekas Ka Hum Baarik

There is one father; we are all his children

Nanak believed in the equality & the inclusiveness of the human race, rejecting Manusmriti, which divided society in a ranked structure. Fifteenth Century Indian society, was neither fair nor tolerant. Untouchables were not allowed to worship; if they even accidentally heard the word of God lead metal would be poured down their ears. Widows had to prove themselves as

good and devoted wives by performing Sati; an act of self-immolation on their dead husband's funeral pyre. In the patriarchal society women were treated as inferior but Nanak questioned this, "so why call her bad? From her Kings are born. From woman, woman is born; without woman, there would be no one at all," (Guru Nanak Dev Ji Raag Aasaa Mehal 1, Page 473). He condemned female infanticide. Guru Nanak refused to accept this social status quo and was critical of these practices and rituals. He empowered people and said you don't have to leave your home and family and travel to remote places to find God.

He resides within people:

Sab Kuch Ghar Mein Bahar Nahi

Everything is inside the home, not outside

Nanak believed that one can worship God whilst doing their worldly chores and thus rejected celibacy and 'Sanyas', where individuals left their family and worldly possessions to wander off into the wilderness.

India & Pakistan have their roots in the dynamic Indus valley civilization. The Vedas were written in Punjab which is now an integral part of Pakistan. The Pandavas, five brothers and sons of King Pandu of Hastinapur from the epic Mahabharat are believed to have spent part of their time in exile in the Pothohar region. Lord Rama's son Luv derives his name from Lahore. Prior to Partition, we jointly endured invasions by Alexander the Great, the Persians, Afghans and Mughals. We share poetry of Sufi Saints Farid & Waris Shah. Amrita Pritam's poem "Ajj Akha Waris Shah Nu" depicting the atrocities of Partition in 1947, touches a chord in every Punjabi's heart. Texila (home to the first university in the world) is a witness to our shared heritage.

We worked together during Maharaja Ranjit Singh's reign in Punjab and made it the 'Golden Sparrow,' where people from Western Europe sought employment and refuge. Punjab under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was prosperous, literate and the envy of other states. Seven decades of isolation has not been able to erase those fond memories in the minds of displaced communities. In the frenzy of communal riots, we

forgot we are the creation of one God. We took pride in being Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs; most of all, we were proud Punjabis!.We all suffered on either side of the Radcliffe line. We can feel the pain of Pakistanis, longing to visit Ghalib's tomb in Nizamudin in Delhi or Ajmer Sheriff.

Kartarpur is mentioned in the Sikh holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib and has a special place in our hearts; one can feel it the moment one enters the perimeter of the Darbar Sahib. On 28th October 2019 Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan laid the foundation stone of the Baba Guru Nanak University. Sikhs are looking forward to being a stakeholder in this university. Mr Khan is right in saying that previous governments had neglected education, and he wanted to redress this problem. In medieval India, members of the Shudra caste had no access to education. Education resonates with Sikh philosophy, Guru Nanak said that it is the birth right of each person to have basic education regardless of caste. The word 'Sikh' itself means to learn.

Baba Guru Nanak University needs to be a centre of excellence, which must meet the aspirations of its students. It needs to offer affordable education not only to Pakistanis but also to people from across the world. As Nanak was an innovator and visionary, let this university be a leader in Artificial Intelligence & Information Technology, fit for the 21st Century.

The Kartarpur Corridor offers challenges and opportunities; however as Guru Nanak Dev Ji showed us, nothing is insurmountable. As both India & Pakistan have spent considerable sums of money in developing infrastructure on either side of the corridor, a peace dividend from this change of heart will be a befitting tribute to Guru Nanak Dev Ji's legacy. He was one of the greatest sons of the soil.

We hope and pray for peace for both the neighbours.

Chan S Chowdhry

KARTARPUR CORRIDOR LAND-PORT TERMINAL BUILDING AT DERA BABA NANAK

"This dream project is visualised as a physical homage to the great Guru Nanak Dev ji and also to create the sensitivity of Art & Architecture in symbolizing the universal message of oneness and humanity." – Prof Charanjit Shah

We are proud to report that this land port terminal was designed by a Pothohari Prof Charanjit Singh Shah & his team at Creative Group based in New Delhi. The project was built by well-known builder Shapoorji Pallonji and covers an area of 50 acres with built up area of 21653 Square metre at a total cost of Indian Rupees 177.49 Crores (Approximately £20 million)

This is a step towards spreading universal message and the teachings of great Guru Nanak in terms of creating peace, harmony, unity amongst particularly between the two nations.



The design is idolised through various elements of visuals, dimensions, space and volume, particularly in creating State of the art & architecture thus establishing an environment which is spiritually empowered, emotionally bonded and soul connected.

The building form originates from Khanda, of Sikhism symbolizing unity, peace, and sending out a universal message of global brotherhood and coexistence. The gateway crowning the port with the composition of 5 petals symbolizes the 5 vows of Sikhism.



The frame of the building is entirely constructed out of steel, with use of trusses and various steel sections to achieve large open spans. The cladding on the roof is of Aluminium Standing Seam while some areas also use zinc cladding. Double glazed glass units used in the façade enable natural lighting within the building while use of Aluminium composite panels reflect the contemporary aspirations of the project.

The Guru Nanak's universal message of oneness of God and truthful living is conceptualised by the Mool Mantra (Ek Onkar Satnam) and has been very exhaustively expressed within the Land port building and into the landscape through contemporary art & architecture. The Wall of Fame will be showing the journey of Guru Nanak Dev ji since his birth, episodes of his understanding, his realizations and his journey towards enlightenment. His various Udasī's or travel covering more than 40,500km across the globe where he preached the message of truthfulness, brotherhood and oneness of God, while criticizing and protesting against the rituality and fanaticism of religion is depicted in the form of Modern Art. The artwork also depicts certain other profound figures in Sikh history. The Guru's philosophy of Mool Mantra's essence is felt by the kinetic art which is unique in the world and is seen as sending the message of peace across the world.

The Corridor was inaugurated on 9th November, in lieu with Guru Nanak's 550th Birth Anniversary by Shri Narendra Modi on the Indian side and his counterpart Mr. Imran Khan on the Pakistan side. This project showcases engineering capability of a Pothoharis migrated from Kahuta, Dist. Rawalpindi in developing India. Our Congratulations to Prof



Charanjit Singh Shah & all his team at Creative Group, a leading architects in India.

Bittersweet memories of Kahuta

Where Pakistan shelters its atomic arsenal in caves at the outskirts of Kahuta, were once a Sikh gurdwara, a Nihang Singh Akhara?

We children would go watch Nihang Singhs practising martial arts when high on Bhang!

Many Pothohar Sikh families in the UK originate from Kahuta. I write in memory a brief history of this formerly an illustrious, largely a Sikh town in Pathohar.

The Pothohar Plateau, currently, forms the northeastern part of Pakistan Punjab. It borders the western parts of Azad Kashmir and the southern part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Most of the Pothohar hills and rivers are dissected by ravines. Kahuta is in a small valley, surrounded on three sides by hills and on the fourth a ravine, mostly dry during dry months.

Punjab suffered the most in the partition of India The massacre that preceded and followed its partition counted for the loss of millions of lives.

The Muslim League in India threatened to make Panjab ungovernable unless its wishes were met to assign Panjab to Pakistan.

The Pothohar riots in March 1947 were a demonstration of the power of its threats. Apart from a few towns with mainly Sikh populations, most of

Pathohar was surrounded by a sea of Muslim villages and hamlets.

There was no warning of any imminent threat to life or limb, though political tensions were high and mass demonstrations a daily occurrence.

Yet, Kahuta was surrounded before the early morning of 7th March 1947 and beating of drums could be faintly heard in the distance.

It was not long before the outskirts of the village were set on fire.

Freedom at Midnight by Collins and Dominique Lapierre gives an eloquent account of the agony of Kahuta that day:

“On 7th March 1947, a Muslim horde had surrounded the village since dawn, and descended on Kahuta like a wolf pack, setting fire to the houses in its Sikh and Hindu quarters with gasoline. In minutes the area was engulfed in fire and entire families, screaming pitifully for help, were consumed by the flames. Those who escaped were caught, tied together, soaked with gasoline and burned alive like torches.”

Despite these desperate events, hundreds of Sikhs in Kahuta were able to escape the massacre, our fore-parents surviving against all odds.

Those who lived in the centre of the town made their escape to the Sikh Gurdwara, a solidly constructed building with cast iron doors.

We were incarcerated for two days without food and water. On the evening of the second day, we could see plumes of fire and smoke through the skylights of the Gurdwara. We could hear the frequent thud of bullets against the walls and occasionally with thundering echoes when the bullets hit the cast iron doors.

I was to learn later that the congregation was ready to be immolated when the gurdwara caught fire and burnt down.

There was a grace of 2-3 hours before it all happened.

There then was a mighty crashing down of the doors, and before us were Sikh soldiers covered with soot and dust, as surprised to see us alive, as we were to see them there.

Our families were to spend many months in various refugee camps, and it speaks to the spirit of the Pothoharis, that it was all soon put down behind them, Pothohari Sikhs picked themselves up, made their way in the world, and like phoenix, rise from the smoke and dust of the partition, make themselves whole again.

A new beginning!

Dr Surinder Singh Bakhshi is a retired physician and writer.

Kids Corner

What is God?

I think God is A big super power, god is super energy everywhere, it is all around us

By Sahiban Bains 7 years old

A Pothohari Kid's visit to Tottenham Hotspur Club

I felt like I was in a dream when I entered the training centre of Tottenham Hotspur I could not believe I was there. I felt as if I was Charlie from Charlie and the Chocolate Factory because there were 5 people out of 35,000 junior members who won this competition, and I was one of them!

As soon as we got there I received a brand new Spurs home kit and I was so excited as I was taken to my own changing room to get changed and ready for the photo shoot. It was a real football changing room with a whiteboard and benches.

The training centre was unbelievably large, and had 11 pitches. They were all replicated to be like other team's



grounds. This is so that the team can practice in the right conditions for away games. We were then taken to a balcony where we could see the setting for our photo shoot and we were given a choice of drinks of tea, coffee, blackcurrant juice, sparkling water, still water and orange juice, I chose sparkling water. Then we went to the astro turf, sheltered, all weather pitch where we were going to have our photo shoot. While we waited for the players to arrive we did a quiz.

The photographers wanted us to sit where the players would exactly sit to test the lighting to make it picture perfect. I was really excited as the bright light flashed in my eyes.

I was thrilled to find the players entering onto the big pitch right before my eyes. I couldn't believe what I was seeing they are so much taller in real life! The players came in bit by bit when they were ready, and I found it funny that some of the players that came in last were slow clapped by those who came in first.

Now it was time for the main event, I was sat in front of the entire squad, along with the other four children and not to forget Chirpy and Lily the mascots.

Then we were asked to take a photograph with England Captain Harry Kane. I had a nice chat with him and I told him I was his biggest fan, and he agreed!

The players then had to get changed into their smart Hugo Boss suits for a formal photograph. The photographers will edit the photos and they will make it look like it is in our brand new stadium.



Merrisa With Harry Kane

We then had our big chance to talk to the players and get some of our goodies autographed. I met my sister's favourite player Deli Ali and my dad's favourite player Hueng Min Son.

I got lots of autographs on spurs books and t-shirts.

I became a Tottenham supporter because of my dad. He is the biggest Tottenham fan I know and goes to watch all of the games, even some games abroad.

This year has shown me how great women can be at football and I love watching Spurs men's football, I really want to be part of the first ever mixed team and being so close to the players and the pitches has made me even more determined! I hope you enjoyed reading my experience as much as I enjoyed being there.

Merissa Walia , age 9

Pothoharis raise funds for Parkinson's UK

Branch member Mrs Gurdeep Chadha , a prominent and active Pothohari and Southall Lions Club organized a very successful evening of Bollywood song and dance, with a meal and raffle, at Denham Village Hall on Saturday, October 19th. The event was sold out and raised £1,373 for the branch.

Nearly 100 people gathered in Denham Village Hall at 7pm for an evening of Indian food, music and dance. Gurdeep Chadha and the Chair of Southall Lions Club welcomed everyone to the entertainment, and thanked them for supporting the Branch and Parkinson's UK.



Those attending were entertained with songs from Dr Suru Chande, a Southall Lions Club member, and were able to dance to upbeat Bollywood music. There was a two course Indian meal, followed by tea and coffee, with a bar.

Every hour, 2 people in the UK are told they have Parkinson's. We estimate the number of people diagnosed with Parkinson's in 2018 in the UK is around 145,000. That's around 1 adult (ie people aged 18 or over) in every 350. Most people who get Parkinson's are aged 50 or over but younger people can get it too.

Choice between Rawalpindi wale chole paturay versus Mir Gulshan's karahi in Quetta?

A travelogue from Balochsitan and Pakistan, 2018 – by Shammy Puri

After two professional missions to Pakistan in 2018 I am still weighing up in my mind which of the two were superior – Rawalpindi wale chole paturey or the karahi of Mir Gulshan in Quetta. Both were mouth-watering experiences and required repeat tasting to reach a conclusion... but let me tell you a part of the full story.

My roots are in Kallar Syedan, Rawalpindi but never expected to go there. The reading of my parents' autobiographies , were the only rich sources of information on our family history. But all of that changed when I was assigned by the EU Commission (yes! The EU, we in UK, are exiting from!) to carry out a couple of high-level advisory missions to the province of Balochistan, Pakistan.

Apart from my professional work in Balochistan, my completely unexpected travels to Potohar took place in the heat of June and the cold of October of 2018. My travels changed my appreciation of our family "history" and brought to life bitter sweet experiences of the times then, and of reality today.

A Mahal or a dungeon in Kallar-Syedan??

First of all to Kallar Syedan a small bustling agricultural town now – a busy main road, with colourful shops and malls on the N38, but the historic part of the village is in the back streets to the north of the highway. Akeel, my young, very personable and agreeable driver from Rawalpindi, and my Dutch Colleague, who wanted to accompany me to visit my roots, drove around to the back deserted lanes, having missed the Mughal Bazar Road in the hot June sunshine, and past the dry desiccated fields, with a few acacia trees dotted along the roads. "Where is Jaini Mohalla?" we asked people on the street, as that was where my family lived.

Being a Saturday afternoon, not many people were around and not many of them could recall such a mohalla. With the help of good old Google Maps, we searched for and found the “Bedi Mahal”. That was a good marker, as the Bedi mahal was mentioned in the autobiographies. On both the maternal and paternal sides the Puris had a very close association with Baba Gurbakhsh Singh Bedi, and fate would bring me closer to one of his sons, Daya Singh, who was appointed the colonial Political Agent to Quetta, Pishin and Loralai (where I worked).



Google faithfully took us along the back dusty lanes, along partially cultivated fields, a few desolate peepul trees, above the banks of now dry river Kanshi (where my parental families went each morning for bathing & laundry), and up a slight incline towards

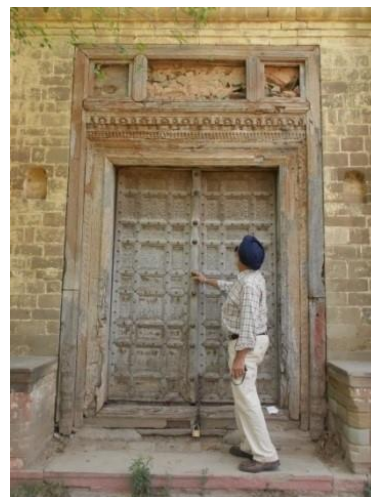
the older parts. We parked at the edge of the town passed an old brick lined water well, with a lone tree standing over it, and some small enclosed courtyards, with a few cows and goats in them, chewing the cud, and then we came upon solid and high red block sandstone walls.

The Bedi Palace walls, dominatingly high – with boarded up windows – and their curved lintels in the upper floors, looking outwards. From our view at street level below, we could just see that the structure we were looking at was clearly huge and imposing.

Even from the outer walls one could see the majesty of the place, and in the distant past (the 1800s), service doors that would have opened out onto the lane had been bricked in. But today, trees and bushes have taken root partway up the massive walls, Despite the lack of any maintenance, the walls and the brickwork was in good shape – the mortar holding the large sandstone blocks firmly in place.

The mahal, a handsome five storey structure, surrounded with what might have been lush gardens in the past, but with its windows now barred and boarded

up, faced us. In the upper floors, the windows were missing leaving gaps in the structure. The red-grey sandstone, making up what must have been the rear of the mahal, has withstood the test of time for the most part – but deterioration was at once obvious.



The gateway to an eerie silence of today

Outside I looked at this entrance in some awe – after all this was probably the doorway through which my Dadaji, Master Hara Singh, would have passed to tutor the sons of Baba Gurbakhash Singh. This was also the door through which my Mother’s Lalaji (Kharak Singh Puri) would have passed as the prime minister to the Baba. In the entrance structure there were the traditional alcoves, where no doubt divas would have burned at night, and below them were the pedestals, where perhaps flower pots stood. The door into the mahal was locked.

Punja Sahib

On another day off I visited Hasan Abdal and Panja Sahib. Another heart wrenching experience – we arrived to the place that Google said was a Gurdwara - fronted by concrete barriers placed at the entrance, security scanners and armed guards in the front. To enter, a passport has to be shown and the guards refuse anyone who is not a Sikh from entering – they said it was to prevent terrorist attacks. My Dutch friend and Akeel were not allowed in – till I spoke harshly to them, and a Sikh lady who was entering told the guards not to be ridiculous. We went in, but Akeel was not allowed.



In my life I have never been to a Sikh Gurdwara that lies silent and empty – that was the first shock as I went into Panja Sahib. Where I had hoped find a feeling of inspiration I felt disheartened... no one was around...just a few jathedars, and one or

two people cleaning the exterior – a total and complete contrast to, say Harminder Sahib. I stood at the sarowar and said a small ardas. I went to the ‘punja’– looked at the incredibly clear water flowing out from the stone and filling the sarowar – at least this place was still well maintained and not a ruin.

I asked the jathedar to say an ardas. We went to the langar hall and, even though there were no devotees, the jathedars gave us langar and I gave grateful thanks to the Gurus, recalling that over 80 years ago, my mother and her mother would have visited this gurdwara many a time.

Chole or Karahi ??– that is (not) the question.....

Well, after my experiences, I say never mind the difference – look for the similarities... they are both mouth-wateringly good and nourishing too.

And this is also the lesson for Potharis of Punjab – whether in Pakistan or in India. There is more that is similar than is different. The similarity extends to Balochistan – for me there is another personal connection, as I only discovered after my return and while doing the research for this article, that Daya Singh, pupil of my paternal grandfather, and Prince in the House of Bedi’s where my maternal grandfather was Prime Minister, had been the Political Agent of Pishin, Loralai and Quetta. Almost a century later, I arrived in these same areas to help the local population for their wellbeing, looking ahead to the 2020’s and beyond. My father had worked on the botany of the hinterlands of Peshawar three quarters of a century

earlier – his hope had been that his son might follow in his footsteps – I hope I have fulfilled his wish, though my work has been in water, agricultural livelihoods and people. I hope I have closed the earthly circle of the Puris and their inter connections through time and place.

Member News

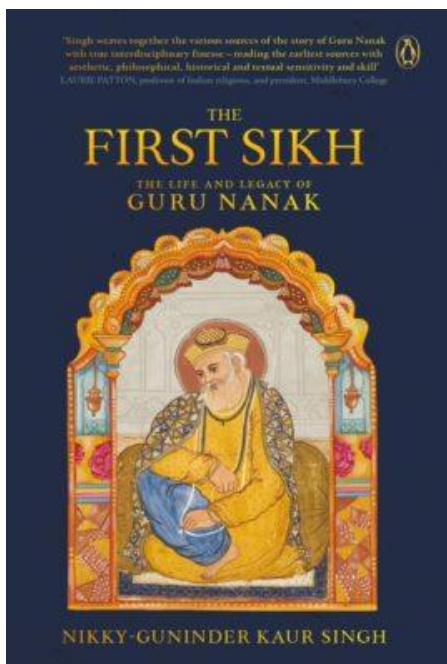


Congratulations to to Mr Gurdarshan Singh Bedi & Ms Bubbi Kaur Sawhney on the wedding of their daughter Dr Jasmeet Kaur Bedi to Dr Sameer Vivek Donge at Brent Sikh Centre in November.



Congratulation to Mr Bhupinder Singh & Mrs Jaswant Kaur on celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary at Ealing Gurdwara

Book Review



The First Sikh – The Life & Legacy of Guru Nanak

Author Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh

Pages : 255 , ISBN 9780-670-08862-1, Penguin Random House 2019

I was excited to read Nikky Singh's latest book "The First Sikh - The Life & Legacy of Guru Nanak" on the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. It is exactly 50 years since the author's late father Prof. Harbans Singh celebrated 500 years of the Guru, with his book "Guru Nanak & origin's of the Sikh Faith." Nikky Singh's book is about the journey of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, from his childhood anecdotes to the doctrines of Sikhism and its relevance in the 21st Century. Reading through the book one realises the impact of Guru Nanak Dev Ji's vision is far greater now than it was even appreciated during his own lifetime, and his contribution to mankind will continue for many centuries beyond ours.

The journey of 41000 miles takes us from his birth place- Talwandi (with his companion Bala & Mardana) to various parts of the world and finally settling down in Kartarpur.

The author dwells on the growing of the Guru and notices that he is not one for rituals, he believes in equality and considers humanity as one. He has an excellent relationship with his sister Nanaki and his mother. He draws the attention of his contemporaries when they are offering water to the rising sun. She looks at sketches from janamsakhis and appropriately attributes relevant verses from the Guru Granth Sahib.

The initiation of Nanak as Guru is explained first as a separation when he leaves his clothes behind to go to the river Bien(Vien) and comes out of the river after three days having received Nam Da Payala (Amrit) and it is through this immortal drink he gets to know the Divine. He does not see, he only hears. Soon after this encounter he becomes an accomplished poet and spreads the message of humanity and being together as one.

Jasay Main Avaey Khasm Ki Baani , Tesra Kare Gyan Vay Lalo SGGGS 722. The book covers spirituality, philosophy, social work & his concern for the environment. In the book we learn about Barha Mah and its link with 12th century style of writing showing romantic & devotional suffering of solitude.

It is intriguing the way the author has dealt with five realms of the Divine namely: Dharam, Gyan, Saran , Karam and Sach Khand. She describes Anahad shabad as an uninterrupted timeless sound and Sidh Ghost- a conversation with elderly sages as lucid. The author has used extensive quotes from the Guru Granth Sahib to explain various aspects of the Gurbani.

However when it comes to explaining who is considered Sikh she refers to the Sikh Gurudwara Act 1925. We can also look to the verse

Satgur ka jo sikh akhai so bhalke uth har Naam dhiawai Guru Granth Sahib Page 305

The book is a must read by those interested in exploring Sikhism. It is an invaluable treasure for all people as well as scholars, educational institutions & libraries worldwide.

Chan S Chowdhry