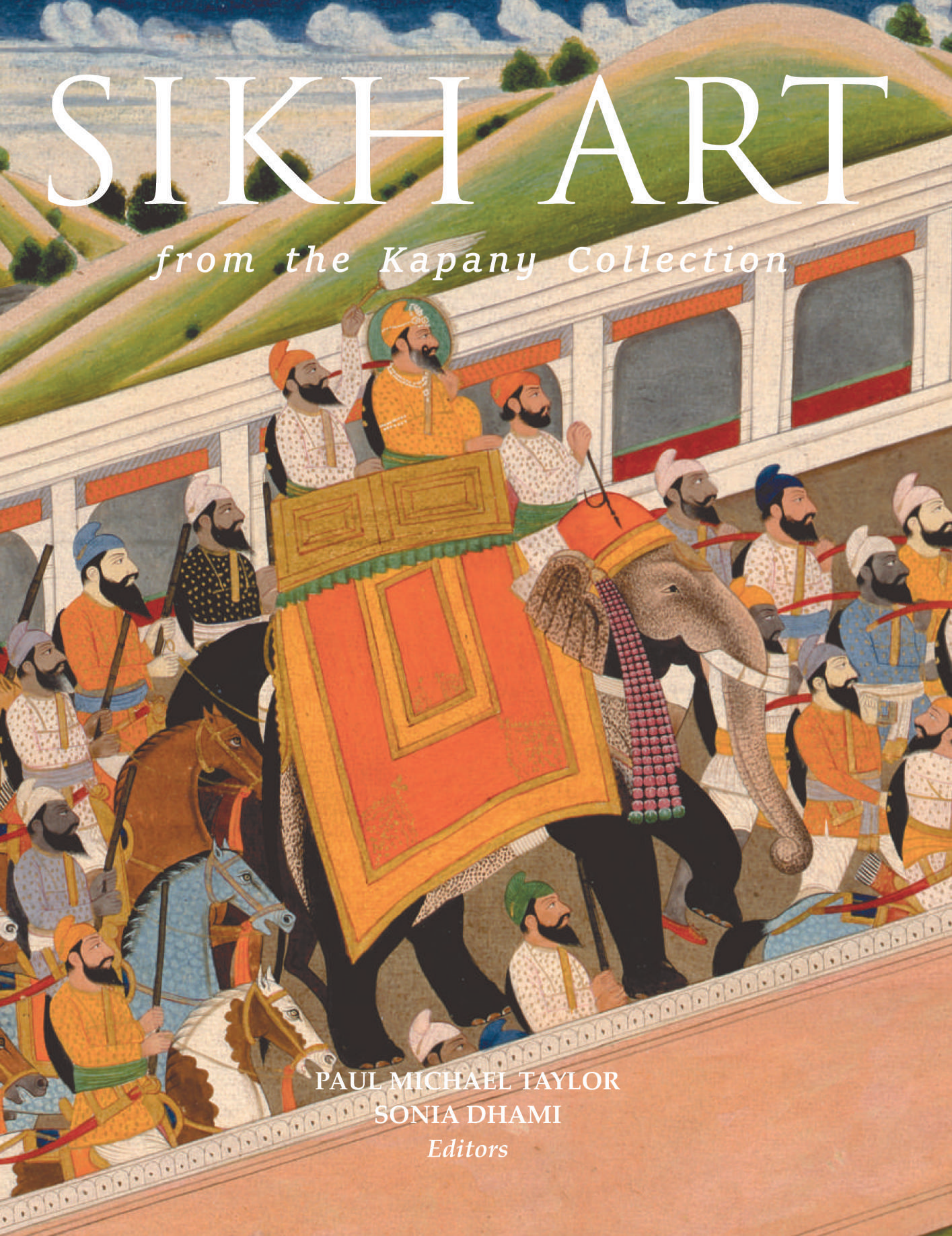

SIKH ART

from the Kapany Collection

PAUL MICHAEL TAYLOR
SONIA DHAMI
Editors

This volume brings together leading scholars of Sikhism and of Sikh art to assess and interpret the remarkable art resource known as the Kapany Collection, using it to introduce to a broad public the culture, history, and ethos of the Sikhs. Fifteen renowned scholars contributed essays describing the passion and vision of Narinder and Satinder Kapany in assembling this unparalleled assemblage of great Sikh art, some of which has been displayed in exhibitions around the globe. The Kapanys' legacy of philanthropic work includes establishing the Sikh Foundation (now celebrating its 50th year) and university endowments for Sikh studies. Through this profusely illustrated book's chapters, scholars examine the full range of Sikh artistic expression and of Sikh history and cultural life, using artworks from the Kapany Collection.

In association with the
Asian Cultural History Program
Smithsonian Institution

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The opinions and ideas expressed within the chapters of this book are those of the authors, and not necessarily those of The Sikh Foundation, nor of the Asian Cultural History Program, Smithsonian Institution.

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Dimensions of artwork from the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco are given as height × width.

Front cover photo: Detail of Fig. 8.24, *Maharajah Narinder Singh of Patiala on an elephant proceeding up the ramparts of a palace,* Kapany Collection

Back cover photos, left to right, top to bottom
(for full captions see these photos in text):
Fig. 11.32 rev., *Moolmantra, a Sikh Prayer;*
Fig. 10.2, *Helmet with chain mail neckguard;*
Fig. 8.27, *Seal Ring of Maharajah Ranjit Singh*;
Fig. 13.2, *Phulkari with vegetal, floral, and jewelry motifs;*
all from the Kapany Collection

Page 5: *Portrait of Maharani Mohinder Kaur of Patiala,* India, Punjab state, former kingdom of Patiala, Ca. 1940–1950, Oil on canvas, 66 × 49.5 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.107

Pages 8–9: *Punjab Zamindars,* Punjab, Ca. 1817, Watercolors on paper, 38 × 28 cm, Kapany Collection

Page 10 (Dedication): *Satinder Kaur Kapany*, by Devender Singh, 2016, Oil on canvas, 40 × 60 cm, Kapany Collection

Page 14: *Narinder S. Kapany*, by Taylor Lewis, Oil on canvas, 60 × 90 cm, Gift of Bank of America

On the occasion of its 50th anniversary, this book is produced and distributed by The Sikh Foundation, in association with the Asian Cultural History Program, Department of Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., USA.

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The editors respectfully dedicate this book
to the memory of

Satinder Kaur Kapany

1928–2016

Introduction: Art By, For, or About the Sikhs

Paul Michael Taylor & Sonia Dhami

This volume honors the remarkable art historical resource assembled by Narinder S. and Satinder K. Kapany on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Sikh Foundation, which Dr. Kapany founded. This compilation honors these achievements in the way we felt would be most appropriate—by bringing together leading scholars of Sikhism and of Sikh art to assess and interpret the Kapany Collection, using it to introduce Sikh art as well as the Sikh ethos to a broad public.

The editors of this book have worked professionally with the Kapanys for many years (Dhami at the Sikh Foundation's main office in Palo Alto, California; Taylor at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.), and the idea of putting together a book about their collection dates at least back to our discussions of this idea in September 2007, finally coming together in recent years as a way of celebrating the Foundation's Golden Jubilee in 2017. Its activities are international, as many contributing authors to this book point out. But we have also heard Narinder Kapany, who is known (both in Silicon Valley, where he lives, and beyond) as "the father of fiber optics," emphasize how, as an immigrant to America, he wanted to be very American but also wanted to contribute something important from his own background to his fellow Americans, through his collecting and Foundation work. Gurinder Mann's chapter within this volume summarizes the centrality of Dr. Kapany's support in developing the academic field of Sikh studies, especially in the United States. And succeeding chapters by internationally recognized art historians and experts in the field of Sikh studies testify to the significance of the Kapany Collection as an unparalleled assemblage of great Sikh art.

The field of Sikh art itself is one that Dr. Kapany effectively defined (at least for purposes of his own collecting) in the Introduction to the 1999 publication of conference proceedings on *Sikh Art and Literature,* which had been hosted at San Francisco's Asian Art Museum. The definition was broader than most, not just on Sikh religious themes and not merely based on Sikh artists, but rather "art that is by, for, and about the Sikhs." Several of the authors in this compilation have remarked on the breadth of the collection that has resulted. Like any working definition, if one thinks too much about this definition it gets problem-

atic at its edges, yet quibbling over such concerns never once seems to have held up the Kapanys' vast collecting—not only of paintings, prints, and sculptures but also of textiles, books, prints, coins, stamps, and historical memorabilia of all kinds. The result could never correctly be called an "eclectic" collection; quite the opposite, this is an intensively focused collection of exceptional breadth. The creativity that developed fiber optics seems to have been poured also into the creation of a new field of study and a collection of art worthy of that field's new definition, the field of "Sikh art." It is hard to remember that before the 1980s, Sikh cultural phenomena were often treated as a kind of subset of Hindu culture; and even the Library of Congress classification of books on Sikh art sometimes listed their subject headings as "Art, Hindu – India – Punjab."

So in assembling a book of essays now about Sikh art from the Kapany Collection, we editors thought it most appropriate to group the invited essays into three parts. We are extremely grateful to the renowned scholars who freely volunteered their time to produce the chapters here. The three chapters in Part I ("The Collectors and Their Vision") seem inseparable from an understanding of the Kapany Collection. They describe the passion and vision of Narinder and Satinder Kapany, explore Narinder Kapany's own early attempts to relate his fiber optic studies to artistic works, and place the couple's collection within the context of their legacy that influenced the development of Sikh studies as an academic discipline. Kiran Kaur Kapany, the couple's daughter, recounts the personal histories of her mother and father, including how they met and their early years in the United States, remembering how Sikh art collecting became their inspiration for establishing the Sikh Foundation in 1967. Professor Gurinder Singh Mann then reflects on both the professional and personal accomplishments of Dr. Kapany, demonstrated through both his groundbreaking work in fiber optics and his incomparable art collection. He explores the relationship between Dr. Kapany's Sikh identity and his philanthropic work, then reviews the creation of the Sikh Foundation, describing the establishment of endowed Sikh Studies professorships, artistic sponsorship, and museum exhibitions that he launched or supported, suggesting that his legacy is built on "the Sikh belief that liberation is not personal but collective."

The editors also asked Gurnam S. S. Brard to write about a little-known period of Narinder Kapany's life during which he experimented with creating his own works of art. His so-called "Dynoptic sculptures" were fused from repurposed fiber optical building material. Brard's own memories of that period illuminate a time when he and other friends of the Kapanys initially developed an informal appreciation of these experimental works, which later began to draw positive critical notice through several invited formal museum exhibitions and published reviews. He concludes with summary descriptions of selected Dynoptic sculptures that were created, before Kapany stopped making them. For the editors and surely for most readers, Brard's chapter provides a window into a "lost" chapter of Kapany's own creativity. After this book was essentially completed, during a discussion of his definition of Sikh art, the editors asked Narinder Kapany if he considered his own Dynoptic sculptures to be "Sikh art." He seemed surprised by the question, but answered that, though he had not thought about it before, "No, I don't think so." Then, after a pause, he added, "Are they art? I would say they were more 'Sikh playthings,' not 'Sikh art.'"

Recounting again the story of how he was invited to exhibit them in museums where he was surprised that hundreds of people came to see them, he remembers primarily that they were quite complicated to assemble and display. "That's why I gave it up," he added; "they just took up too much time." That is a sentiment that we do not recall his ever expressing about his work with Sikh art.

We believe that the illustrious scholars who have contributed chapters to Part II ("The Kapany Collection: A Survey of Sikh History and Ethos") have truly examined and used the artworks within the Kapany Collection for the purpose it was intended to serve—to introduce and examine the culture, history, and ethos of the Sikhs. First, Pashaura Singh begins with his examination of the Sikh Gurus, in a chapter illustrated by Devender Singh's magnificent series of contemporary paintings of the ten Gurus. Laying out the story of Guru Nanak's vision and the Sikh *Panth*, or community, that coalesced around his teachings, Pashaura Singh summarizes how the Guruship and Sikhism would transform within the context of South Asian politics in the centuries to follow, culminating with the establishment of the *Khalsa* by Guru Gobind Singh, as well as by the transfer of authority to the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Nirvikar Singh's chapter returns to this key subject by examining many of the other portraits of the Sikh Gurus in the Kapany Collection, noting the historic and stylistic changes from the Mughal-inspired portraits of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to contemporary portraits such as those by Arpana Caur. Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh then surveys "Guru Nanak at the Asian Art Museum," a richly detailed study of the unbound set of forty-one *Janamsakhi* illustrations donated from the Kapany Collection to San Francisco's Asian Art Museum. She interprets for us all the visual vocabulary and language of these late–Mughal style illustrations that collectively recount the story of the Guru Nanak's life; and she illuminates the ways in which these paintings exhibit the Sikh aesthetic principle of *vismad*, or "aesthetic principle of wonder." Mohinder Singh's chapter then employs a beautiful selection of Kapany Collection images of the *Harimandir Sahib*, colloquially known as the "Golden Temple," to discuss that architectural gem's history and its spiritual significance to Sikhs worldwide.

Jean-Marie Lafont's illuminating chapter on "Arts and Culture in the Punjab Kingdom and the Sikh States, Trans-Sutlej and Cis-Sutlej" examines a vast range of Kapany Collection artworks relevant to his topic. He recounts the political history of the formation of the Punjab kingdom and the Sikh States, around the turn of the nineteenth century, and their relationship to Delhi, the East India Company, and other contemporaneous political entities. Artworks depicting events from the life of Ranjit Singh and other important Sikh figures of the time illustrate Lafont's critical evaluations of this period's art forms, including miniature ivory portraiture and illuminated manuscripts. He concludes by advocating for renewed interest in the "Lahori School of Art" and greater recognition of its significance within the history of Indian art. Peter Bance's chapter on "The Maharajah and His Faith" traces the biography of Maharajah Duleep Singh, who was removed from the Punjab following its annexation to Britain in 1849 and relocated to Europe. Illustrating his story with artworks from the Kapany Collection, Bance paints a sympathetic portrait, examining the maharajah's conversion to Christianity and also the motives behind his eventual return to the Sikh faith. This is followed by Navtej Sarna's chapter on "The Sikh

Narinder S. Kapany

Martial Tradition," colorfully illustrated with images from the Kapany Collection of weaponry, armor, and artworks depicting Sikh soldiers. Sarna argues that a pacific faith developed a militant nature in response to years of political and religious persecution. He describes how the military accomplishments of Guru Hargobind and the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur inspired Guru Gobind Singh to establish the *Khalsa* and change Sikhism forever.

Having set the stage for Sikh art historical studies by Part II's survey of Sikhism's history and ethos, Part III ("Further Studies in the Kapany Collection") invites the reader to examine in more detail specific aspects or media of Sikh artworks within this collection. First, Jyoti Rai's chapter ("The *Nanakshahi*—The Divine Sikh Coinage") surveys the numismatic history of the Sikh kingdoms, such as the silver rupees and copper paisas from the Lahore,

Amritsar, and Kashmir mints, alongside coins from various historical periods of Sikh rule, in addition to "temple tokens" of commemorative medallions marking religious pilgrimages. Henry J. Walker follows with his chapter on "The Kapany Stamp Collection," which chronologically presents the collection's Sikh-themed postage stamps from around the world. Several of these are modern-issue stamps printed to commemorate significant Sikh anniversaries, while others depict great Sikh athletes and writers, recognizing Sikh contributions to many fields. Cristin McKnight Sethi then provides a chapter on textiles in the Kapany Collection ("Faith and Identity in Silk, Cotton, and Wool"), which begins by pointing out the difficulty of placing this material within traditional definitions of "Sikh art," and promoting the more inclusive attitude that the Kapany Collection encompasses. This allows inclusion, within art historical studies, of the numerous examples of meaningful contributions to our understanding of Sikh cultural life that result from analyses like those Sethi presents, of the *phulkari*, *rumal*, and other textiles. Mary-Ann Milford-Lutzker then examines several significant Sikh artists of the twentieth century, including Sukhpreet Singh, Arpana Caur, and Devender Singh. She views their artworks through lenses of "devotion, work, portraits, and play" and emphasizes the importance of considering their art to be expressions of a deeply personal Sikh faith. Paul Michael Taylor provides a different kind of "further study" within this collection by examining ways in which Sikh art is "transformed" by being exhibited within museums. He notes that initial folk concepts of Sikh "heritage" among community members get transformed as the members see that they differ from what museums often select for successful exhibits. In addition, he describes how traditional Sikh modes of treating and displaying objects vary from museum methods, which emphasize long-term preservation. The core Sikh value of *sewa,* or service to community, is particularly relevant in this transformation, because the worldwide Sikh community increasingly views efforts to preserve and collect their own heritage, and to make it available through museum exhibitions, as a new form of this traditional ideal of *sewa*.

Indeed, readers of this volume might well conclude that Narinder and Satinder Kapany's great work of assembling the Kapany Collection, alongside the legacy of the Sikh Foundation they founded, does itself constitute some of their own lifelong *sewa*—or perhaps even their *Gursewa*, service to the Guru—which this volume magnificently celebrates on this occasion of the Sikh Foundation's 50th anniversary.

1

Narinder and Satinder Kapany: The Passion Behind the Kapany Sikh Art Collection

Kiran Kaur Kapany

On February 6, 2014, our whole family gathered at a Japanese restaurant in Menlo Park to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the wedding of my parents, Narinder and Satinder Kapany: Michael, the love of my life; our two beautiful daughters, Misha and Ariana; and my lifelong partner in crime, my brother Raj, and his beautiful children, Tara and Nikki. After dinner, we asked each of our parents to tell us how they had stayed married so long. My mother and father looked at us—all eyes and ears were on them. My father responded first, saying, "It takes a very long-term commitment with a few short-term problems." My mother waited her turn. Her eyes sparkled and, as she winked at us, she said, "Well, I pray to God, and Narinder is still here by my side!"

Ten days later we rushed my mother in an ambulance to Stanford Hospital. She was diagnosed with life-threatening asthma and aspiration pneumonia. Two days after that, a stroke left her paralyzed and bedridden. The next day, the pulmonary team entered her room, followed by the cardiac team and, within minutes, the neurology team, to discuss Mom's treatment. As this rather large team of doctors all conferred quite noisily with each other, my mother spotted my father walking down the hallway to come visit her. When he entered the room, all of her attention focused on him. As her eyes filled with love at the sight of my father, she chastised the doctors for the noise they were making, telling them, "Gentlemen, please, please—the love of my life is here!"

Since her release from the hospital in February 2014, my mother continued to be paralyzed and bedridden, but she also remained a warrior. Her eyes continued to only sparkle with warmth, humor, love, and happiness to us all, but mostly to my father.

In the months since then I have been privy to many wonderful and poignant moments that, for me, define the eternal love between

Left: Fig. 1.1, Narinder Singh Kapany and Satinder Kaur Kapany

my mother and father. Though she could not move, when my beautiful mother caught a glimpse of my father, her eyes would light up with joy, smiles, and love. My father would reassure her that they were in this together and together they would fight until the end.

One day my father read us a letter that *his* father had written to my mother in 1965 in which he praised and credited her for *all* of my father's accomplishments. "Without you," my paternal grandfather wrote, "Narinder would not have been successful." My father, who is usually willing and eager to accept any and all praise, declared that his father was "absolutely right. Your mother deserves all the credit."

Another day, my mother seemed quite anxious and was moaning loudly. Afraid that she was in some unimaginable pain, I summoned my father, who rushed to the room and said, "My Dear, I am here. Do you remember this morning I fed you every bite of your breakfast? I go to work for a few hours a day and come back to you. We are together every day. We have been married 61 years now. Please relax and don't worry. May I sit on your bed?" My mother, who had not spoken a word for months, stunned us all by saying, "Oh, yes. Please do." And in that miraculous moment she stopped shaking completely, content to gaze at my dad adoringly.

Moments like these have convinced me that it is because of my father's love that my mother remained so happy, loving, and content despite the many health issues that had plagued her over her last few years. Her strength came from *his* strength, as earlier in their relationship his did from hers.

Don't get me wrong here: my parents' marriage has not been free of trials and tribulations. Any marriage, as we all know, is work. In that sense their marriage is like many others, filled with not only joy and bliss but also some tears. However, what sticks with me is the way they have always held each other's hand, no matter how severe the challenges they have faced.

It is as a result of their profound love,

Fig. 1.2, Narinder Singh Kapany performing as Lord Krishna during college days

Fig. 1.3, Satinder Kaur and Narinder Singh Kapany, on their wedding day, February 6, 1954, London

depth of spirit, and character—as well as their patience to endure any challenges together—that my mother and father have been able to create the Kapany Collection of Sikh Art, one of the largest such collections in the world. This collection is an exemplary representation of their commitment to Sikhism and the art that flows from its history and culture. I hope anyone who peruses the collection will appreciate and enjoy it with this in mind.

My mother and father met in London in 1950. She was studying dance and English literature. He was pursuing a Ph.D. in physics at the Imperial College of Science and Technology. Her wit and stunning beauty completely took him by surprise. They began their relationship as well as their interest in art, side by side, performing emotional, passionate, marvelous shadow dancing, and they married soon thereafter. With the love of his life by his side, my father found the security and stability that enabled him to develop a revolutionary new idea: in 1951, his curiosity about the nature of light led him to challenge the conventional belief that light could not bend. He wrote a Ph.D. thesis in which he demonstrated that, in fact, it *could* bend, and named his discovery "fiber optics." By virtue of that breakthrough, he has made an impact on the world that has continued to reverberate and has led him to be known as the "Father of Fiber Optics."

Fig. 1.4, Kiran Kaur Kapany, Satinder Kaur Kapany and Rajinder Singh Kapany (left to right)

After completing his Ph.D., my father dragged my seasick mother to Rochester, New York, on a massive cruise ship. There, he continued his research at the University of Rochester, where my brother, Raj Kapany, was born. A year later, the new family of three moved to the University of Chicago, where I came into the world.

Not long after, my father's research created some fantastic, never-before-seen intellectual property that drove the venture capitalists of the day into a frenzy. My father was quickly enticed by colleagues in Silicon Valley to start his first company, the very successful Optics Technology Inc., in Palo Alto. In 1960, my mother and father, with my brother and me in tow, moved to Woodside, California. They have lived on the same street ever since.

When Raj and I were growing up, we served drinks (and drank some!) and passed appetizers at the huge, fabulous parties my parents hosted at our home, mingling amid those who had deep roots in the birth of Silicon Valley, like Don Lucas of the former Draper Gaither & Anderson, and Tom Perkins, of Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers. We experienced the infectious excitement and buzz around the earliest start-up companies, albeit from our own unique vantage point.

Within this environment, my staunch Sikh parents suddenly found themselves raising two very American children. However, my brother and I

Fig. 1.5a, Kundan Kaur Kapany, mother of Narinder Singh Kapany

Fig. 1.5b, Sunder Singh Kapany, father of Narinder Singh Kapany

weren't raised traditionally Indian or typically American; we were very much a part of the budding Silicon Valley culture, yet our Sikh heritage always remained a guiding principle in the household and in all major family decisions.

While my father was busy conquering the world of fiber optics, my mother was breaking out of her traditional Indian role as queen, wife, and mother. She found tremendous success as a real estate mogul, buying properties in need of repair, remodeling them, and then renting or selling them. With huge profits in hand, and the *chardi kalaa* (positive nature or ever-uprising spirit) that has always characterized her, my mother sold our first home and purchased a large property up the hill while my father was on a business trip. My father returned to discover he no longer owned his home, but rather owned a huge lot on which to build their dream house. Fortunately, the home that my parents built, courtesy of my mother's entrepreneurial spirit, is large enough to house some of their Sikh art!

It is no surprise that my father has journeyed into the protection of our rich Sikh history and Sikh art: some scholars have traced our family lineage to Guru Amar Das, the third of the ten Gurus of Sikhism. This lineage was a source of great pride in the family. Ages ago, my father's ancestors from Patna Sahib began to pass down their prize possession: two spectacular *janamsakhi* manuscripts (the birth stories of Guru Nanak, written after his death), each holding forty paintings. When the *janamsakhis* were inherited by my father's paternal grandfather, a Sessions Judge during the time of Maharajah Bhupinder Singh of Patiala, his wife would take the *janamsakhis* and read the stories to the neighborhood with wide eyes and an engaging spirit. Their son, my grandfather, later inherited the *janamsakhis* from them, and the stories continued. He would love to explain the stories to my father. One of his favorite stories follows: "When Guru Nanak went to Mecca on the request of Bhai Mardana, his first follower, of Muslim descent, it was said that when he was sleeping, he pointed his feet toward Mecca. Someone asked him why he was pointing his feet toward God. Guru

Nanak responded that wherever you turn, there is the presence of God. Tell me where to turn my feet where there is no God." Through his lifetime, my father treasured these stories written in the *janamsakhis*, and one day he inherited them from his father. From that point on, my parents surrounded themselves with Sikh art depicting their rich history, which deepened their devotion to their own culture. They traveled back and forth to India, England, and other countries—indeed, all over the globe—to collect Sikh art, working with world-renowned art dealers such as Sotheby's and Christies, to buy both old and new Sikh treasures from various artists and dealers.

They were even artists themselves. My mother painted an oil series: an exquisite and emotional rendition of Guru Nanak Dev Ji's *Barah Maha*, showing the changing moods of Mother Nature. This beautiful love poetry is in our Sikh holy scripture, the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Meanwhile, my father became well renowned for his Dynoptic sculpture, created out of the fiber optic products he had invented for communications systems. However, they noticed that in all of their travels, they did not see much Sikh art. This realization spurred them to make a commitment to try to change that.

Fig. 1.6, *Bara Maha*, Satinder Kaur Kapany, 1980, watercolors on paper, 45.7 × 35.5 cm, Kapany Collection

My mother and father became convinced that the world at large should know who the Sikhs are, and the Sikh people themselves should not forget who they are as they emigrate to other lands far from their original roots. Only as I grew up did I discover how significant a challenge this was, given the social climate of the 1950s and 1960s. There were very few Indians at that time in the Bay Area, not to mention Sikhs.

In this setting, in 1967, my parents, along with my two uncles Janmeja Singh and Gurnam Singh Brard—two of the most kind, sage, selfless, loving, and lovable men in my life—began the Sikh Foundation, a nonprofit, nonpolitical charitable organization. Its mission was to educate others and highlight important issues and people in Sikhism. They all inspired the world with their spirit of *chardi kala*. With the outstanding and indispensable help of the beautiful Sonia Dhami over the years, the Foundation has held numerous Sikh art exhibits; established four chairs at prestigious universities; published numerous books, calendars, greeting cards, and fine art prints; and preserved one monument.

The Sikh Foundation was launched during a tumultuous era for Sikhs: the Khalistan movement, which began in 1980s and was aimed at the creation of an independent state of Sikh Punjab, was a fast-growing movement that gained an increasingly militant edge once its leader, Bhindranwale, was killed by Indira Gandhi's government in 1984. The movement became even more divisive when the Khalistan faction

The Sikhs of India are much like the American colonists of 1776.

Hard-working. Tolerant. Enterprising. Industrious. Charitable. Committed to individual freedoms and a voice in their own government.

Why then, on June 6th, 1984, did their government coordinate attacks on 40 shrines of the Sikh religion—killing untold numbers of men, women and children—and desecrating their most sacred place of worship, the Golden Temple of Amritsar???

The Indian government said it was trying to crush a terrorist/separatist movement.

Why then has the government erected a wall of carefully contrived secrecy around the Sikh homeland—a wall which hides the facts about that bloody day from the eyes of the world???

Why should Americans care...

...about the fate of 14 million people who live 10,000 miles from our shore?

Because we are Americans

And because individual freedoms are just as important in India today as they were here in 1776.

This message is sponsored by the Sikhs here in America. Our intent is to make known the facts surrounding the recent tragic events in India. Our hope is that America will raise its collective voice in protest. And our goal is to preserve that small oasis of independence and peace that was the Sikh homeland until repression was inflicted by the ruling government of India.

Here is our story...

The Massacre: Outrage at the Sikhs' Holiest Temple

The Sikhs: An Admirable People with Progressive Beliefs

The Aftermath: Grief, Anger and Continuing Repression

Righting the Wrongs: Some Immediate Goals

What you can do to help

Fig. 1.7, U.S. newspaper advertisement by the Sikh Foundation in 1984

attempted to raise awareness through terrorist acts. Suddenly, the public knew nothing about Sikhism other than that it seemed to be associated with terrorism. This perception was reinforced in 1985 by the hijacking and bombing of Air India Flight 182 in Canada by Sikh separatist militants.

At a time in history when it was critical to educate the world about Sikhism, the Sikh Foundation's mission was exceedingly important. The Foundation works tirelessly to introduce the world to the progressive ethics, lyrical mysticism, and heroism of the Sikhs. Through its publications and seminars, as well as its resources for the academic and artistic study of Sikhism, it contributes the Sikh perspective to issues of common human concern. Additionally, the Foundation tries to find educational, fun, and inspiring ways to impart the essence of Sikh heritage to the youth as well as to foster Sikh culture in America, a mandate that has become more urgent than ever.

"What a powerful method to communicate our beautiful Sikh stories in a noncontroversial way," my parents said about the Foundation's goals, "and to share our commitment to our religion and our respect for our history!" Art has a way of addressing the concerns of the time, of reminding us of our humanity, all the while inspiring and motivating us. We see through this Sikh art the messages that our artists wanted to convey about themselves, our people, and our history. By spreading knowledge about Sikh art and culture, my mother and father wanted nothing less than to change history.

Fig. 1.8, Dr. N. S. Kapany addressing a meeting of the Sikh Foundation in Palo Alto, CA, 1970s

Therefore, they have displayed their art collection in many museums all over the world, such as The Victoria and Albert Museum in London; the Rubin Museum of Art in New York; the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco; the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto; the Museum of Natural History in Santa Barbara, California; the Fresno Art Museum in Fresno, California; the Institute of Texan Culture in San Antonio, Texas; and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.—a powerful and beautiful way to educate people around the world about our religion, our passion, and our lives.

One of the most celebrated Sikh artists of our time, and the biggest contributor to the Kapany Collection, is Arpana Caur, my cherished teacher and friend. She has depicted many scenes with our Gurus, helped forge the way for emancipation of women, and examined political violence and war through her paintings. When she speaks about the worlds she has created through art, she transports viewers, weaving the threads of each story she has brought to life before our eyes. From Arpana and the works of other Sikh artists like her, I have learned an immense amount about our culture and our souls.

Fig. 1.9, *Satinder K. and Narinder S. Kapany*, artist D. Singh, 1958, Oil on board, 50.8 × 106.6 cm, Kapany Collection

Over the fifty years that my parents have collected and exhibited their Sikh art collection, some crises for Sikhs have occurred that show us that our religion and our faith are still not well understood or known. After the September 11th attacks, some Sikhs living in the United States were mistaken for Al Qaeda terrorists, were attacked, and often lived in terror. In 2001, Balbir Singh Sodhi was murdered while he was planting flowers around the edge of his own gas station in Phoenix, Arizona, by a man who mistook him for an Arab because of his clothing, turban, and beard. In 2012, a white supremacist shot and killed six Sikhs in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, while they were humbly worshipping at their house of God, their *gurdwara*. And in yet another alleged hate crime in May 2013, an 81-year-old Sikh man was brutally beaten with an iron bar as he left his temple in Fresno, California.

These horrifying incidents—which are in no way isolated—show us why it is important to forge ahead and educate communities in the face of lingering misunderstanding, ignorance, and prejudice. The Kapany Collection, with its depictions of *langar* (free meals to all in our temple, or *Gurudwara*), Sikh life and culture, the history of our Sikh Gurus, equality of women, and the maharajahs and Sikhs around the world, communicates our peace-loving history and, above all, our shared humanity.

In today's world, our religious lives are often led in temples or largely focused within our places of worship. Our religions divide us, unfortunately sometimes with violence. The promise of art is to somehow create an understanding of our history, of who we are, so that we can find unity through our common humanity. Thanks to the Kapany Collection, I have been able to view the history and the experiences of my people—both the wonderful and the painful—and have come to understand the spiritual and educational power of art through the wisdom of my parents.

I hope that in the following pages readers can begin to imagine who Narinder Singh Kapany and Satinder Kaur Kapany are—and can experience in some way the love that produced this collection—and can better understand what it means to be Sikh. It is a heritage and a history…a love that I am proud to be a part of, and am delighted to share.

In closing, I would like to quote a letter written in July 2016 by Dr. Shamsher Singh, former Policy Adviser to the World Bank, shortly after my mother passed away. It will give you an unbiased prism into the love and the lives of Narinder and Satinder Kapany.

“It was 1953 London. I was then working at the Consular Department of the High Commission of India housed in a classic, architecturally beautiful small building off Bond Street. I was also studying statistics and economics at the Regent Street Polytechnic (later City University of London). A very handsome young Sikh walked in. One could not help noticing him. We greeted each other. A week later, I saw him again. We chatted a longer while this time. I learnt that he was studying at the Imperial College. One could hardly imagine a Sikh student at the elitist Imperial College! I had a further shock when I learnt that he was experimenting on bending light. Physics had taught me that light cannot be bent. Was he sane? After his third visit, I learnt that Narinder was wooing a beauty who was beyond the reach of anyone's eye. She was perhaps the most beautiful young woman of the time. A mad young Sikh chasing a dream?

Narinder persisted in his pursuits. I met Narinder again in the late fifties in the United States. By then he had proven that light can be bent and that a beauty can be won. Both required devotion and perseverance. Their romance was no less intense than that of Heer-Ranjha or Romeo and Juliet. The divine difference was that it did not end as a tragedy.

Narinder and Satinder cast a charm on each other and made an admirer of anyone who came across them. Depicting Sikh Art on the global canvas is their everlasting legacy.”

Dr. Shamsher Singh

Fig. 1.10, Satinder Kaur and Narinder Singh Kapany, 1960

2

Narinder Singh Kapany: The Man and His Accomplishments

Gurinder Singh Mann

Dr. Kapany (born 1926), as he is known among his circle of friends, is a multifaceted personality. An immigrant who left India, his country of birth, in 1951, he has immersed himself wholeheartedly in the mainstream culture of the West, while firmly continuing to nourish the Sikh religious identity he imbibed in his early years. He loves and cares deeply for his family and, in turn, was adored by his late wife, and is loved by his two children and four grandchildren. He also has a wide circle of friends from whom he seeks advice, and they all believe that his presence and unshakable sense of optimism enrich their lives. For his professional colleagues, he is a physicist with the acclaimed distinction of being one of the key inventors of fiber optics, a concept that revolutionized the world of communication. He is also an entrepreneur, a founder of three technical companies, and a member of the board of directors of several others. His acumen is a source of emulation for many working in Silicon Valley, California. For those interested in Sikh art, he is the leading collector of Sikh material heritage (art, numismatics, manuscripts, rare books, textiles, and weaponry) in the Western world, and has, over time, acquired the wherewithal to engage curators at prestigious museums around the globe in conversations about the significance of Sikh art. Combining his love of science and art, he is also known as the creator of a set of "Dynoptic sculptures," which have been exhibited in several museums in the United States.

I met Dr. Kapany at an event he had organized at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1989, and our shared interests in Sikh studies have kept us in close touch since then. During this meeting, it became amply clear to me that nature had endowed him with a bright mind, a positive disposition, and an unusual openness to new ideas. I also saw in him a person seeking to do something for the Sikh community, with the desired outcome of establishing a place for

Left: Fig. 2.1,
Dr. Narinder Singh Kapany

himself in Sikh history. Over the years, these impressions firmed up further and were validated as I watched him firsthand in a wide array of contexts, ranging from his discussions with the authorities at Columbia University regarding the financial details of establishing a Sikh studies program (mid-1990s) and his attempts to convince his fellow Sikh community leaders to build a Sikh high school in California (in 2004).

Fig. 2.2, Dr. N. S. Kapany with a prototype of a laproscope

In my view, Dr. Kapany profoundly treasures his Sikh religious heritage and feels the need to sustain it. Although I have never heard him publically express it, I know that he is acutely sensitive about his family lineage, which connects him through his grandmother to Guru Amardas, the third Sikh Guru, who guided the Sikh community from 1551 to 1574. This illustrious ancestry, followed by the acquisition of two *janamsakhis* created by his ancestors who were the head of the *Patna Sahib Takhat*, inspires him and imposes upon him the inner obligation to be a "good Sikh," which for him implies working toward a better future for oneself, one's family, the Sikh community itself, and the world at large. Over time, Dr. Kapany has also imbibed the Sikh spirit of cheerfulness (*charhdi kala*) that permeates his multifarious activities and helps him attain a balance between what he considers his personal and professional responsibilities and the need to relax after a day's hard work.

After completing his degree in physics from Agra University, India, he earned a Ph.D. at Imperial College, London, and continued his cutting-edge research at the University of Rochester and I.I.T. Chicago before reinventing himself as a Silicon Valley entrepreneur. By the late 1960s, both he and his wife, Satinder Kaur Kapany (born 1928), whom he had met in London and married at the *Gurdwara* in Shepherd's Bush in 1954, were firmly established in their respective businesses of Optics Technology Inc. and real estate. Their children, Raj (born 1956) and Kiki (born 1957), were by then old enough not to need constant attention. With some spare time and energy at their disposal, the Kapanys established the Sikh Foundation in late 1967, and forged ahead to pursue their interest in the welfare of the community. Until that time, Sikh organizations in the United States had generally been registered to build *gurdwaras*, but the Kapanys pioneered the trend of setting up a private organization that flourished in the subsequent years.

The goal of the Sikh Foundation was "to initiate and participate in such activities that would promote the Sikh tradition and culture within the Sikh community; to develop educational programs such as grants, scholarships, awards and prizes for the purpose of promoting scholarship in the Sikh tradition; to provide a headquarters to serve as a center of communications in religious, social and cultural functions of the Sikh community; and to foster better understanding between the Sikhs and the non-Sikhs in the Americas." A look at the organization's early activities helps us understand Dr. Kapany's vision. Through

Fig. 2.3, Dr. N. S. Kapany at the opening of his first company,
Optics Technology Inc., at Stanford Industrial Park, Palo Alto, 1963

the Sikh Foundation, the journal *Sikh Sansar* ("The Sikh World") was started in 1972 and published through 1977**.** The foundation also created opportunities for stalwarts such as Gopal Singh Dardi (1917–1990), an eminent Sikh historian and translator of the *Guru Granth Sahib;* Ganda Singh (1900–1987), an important historian of the Sikhs; and many other leading figures in the Punjabi Sikh community, to lecture to the Sikhs in the San Francisco Bay Area. This initiative rose from Dr. Kapany's wish to grasp the content of Sikh heritage and then reflect on how to sustain it both in the Punjab and in places to which the Sikhs had migrated in the twentieth century, such as the United States.

In the mid-1970s, Mark Juergensmeyer, who had studied in the Punjab in the 1960s and had a joint appointment at that time at the Graduate Theological Union and the University of California–Berkeley, suggested that Dr. Kapany work with the local institutions of higher learning. This initiative had the potential of helping mainstream Americans to learn about the Sikhs as well as to advance scholarly understanding of Sikh issues. Dr. Kapany welcomed this collaboration, and its first fruits came in the form of a conference sponsored by the Sikh Foundation in 1976, in which a dozen or so scholars gathered to assess the state of Sikh studies and how the field could be developed in North America. At this event, Juergensmeyer declared that the Sikhs have a great deal to offer to those who are interested in how religious communities originate and evolve over time. Continuing developments in the field of religious studies itself, the tumultuous developments in the Punjab in the 1980s, and the expansion of Sikh numbers in the Western world further added to this impetus of bringing the Sikhs into the broader study of religion. A substantial volume titled *Sikh Studies: Comparative Perspectives on a Changing Tradition* (Berkeley Religious Studies Series, 1979) emerged from the proceedings of this event, and the questions raised there had a significant bearing on the shape of the field. As a sequel to this,

another large conference was organized by the Sikh Foundation at UC Berkeley in 1987.

In the meantime, Dr. Kapany's interest extended to Sikh material heritage, and he began to build a personal collection. Working with Forest McGill, the curator at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, he helped organize "Splendors of the Punjab: Art of the Sikhs," a major exhibition there in 1992. He also reached out to Susan Stronge, the curator at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and her welcoming response resulted in the organization of a large exhibition from March to July 1999. His interests in expanding his collection brought in the works of contemporary Sikh painters such as Sukhpreet Singh, based in Ludhiana, Punjab; Arpana Caur, living in Delhi; Devender Singh, in Chandigarh; and the Singh Twins, who were born and brought up in England. Meeting these people also resulted in the Sikh Foundation's sponsorship of illustrated books for children and the releasing of calendars every year that used paintings on themes related to Sikh history and culture.

In 1997, the creation of the Kundan Kaur Kapany Chair in Sikh Studies at the University of California–Santa Barbara, was a landmark in the ongoing Juergensmeyer–Kapany collaboration. The teaching position came from the university system itself, the first of its type in North America, and the Kapanys attached an endowment that added to its programmatic potential. The position began to function in 1999, and its success encouraged Dr. Kapany to help develop more positions along these lines. In the following years, he successfully convinced the Sainis of Phoenix, Arizona, the Sabharwals of the Bay Area, and the Aroras of San Antonio, Texas, to help start positions at UC Riverside (2006), California State University–East Bay (2007), and UC Santa Cruz (2010), respectively. Both Drs. Juergensmeyer and Kapany worked tirelessly with the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley to create a Sikh Studies program, which commenced in fall 2015. This latest development will have significant implica-

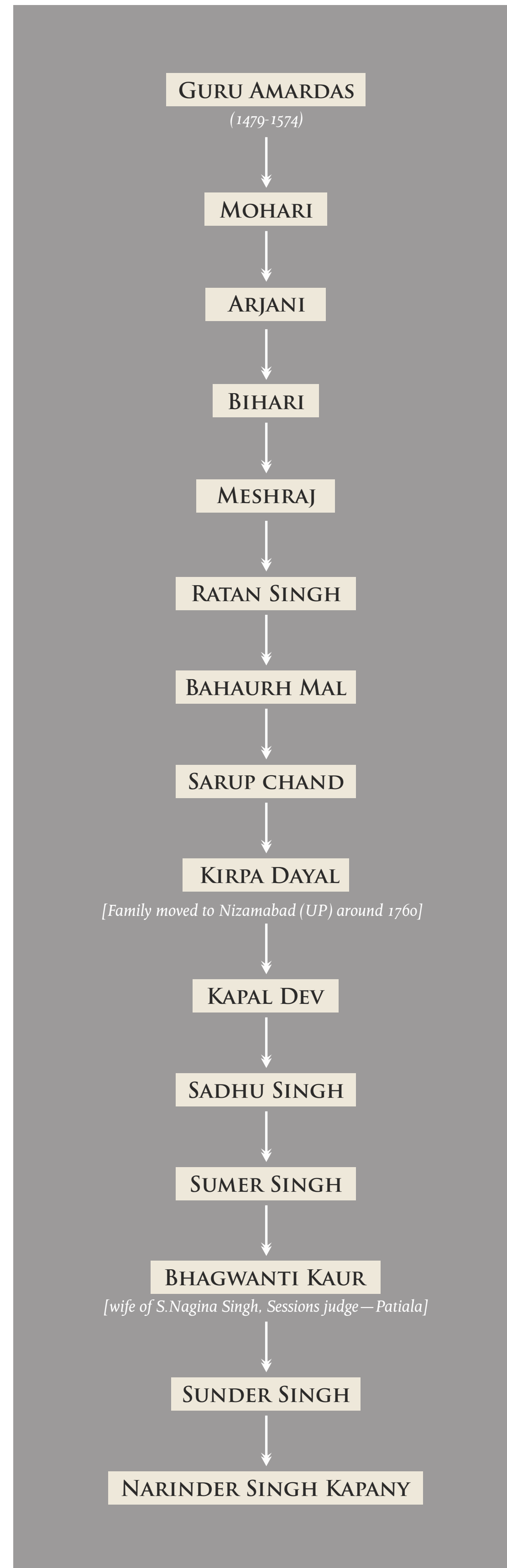


Fig. 2.4, Kapany family lineage traced to Guru Amardas, the third Sikh Guru

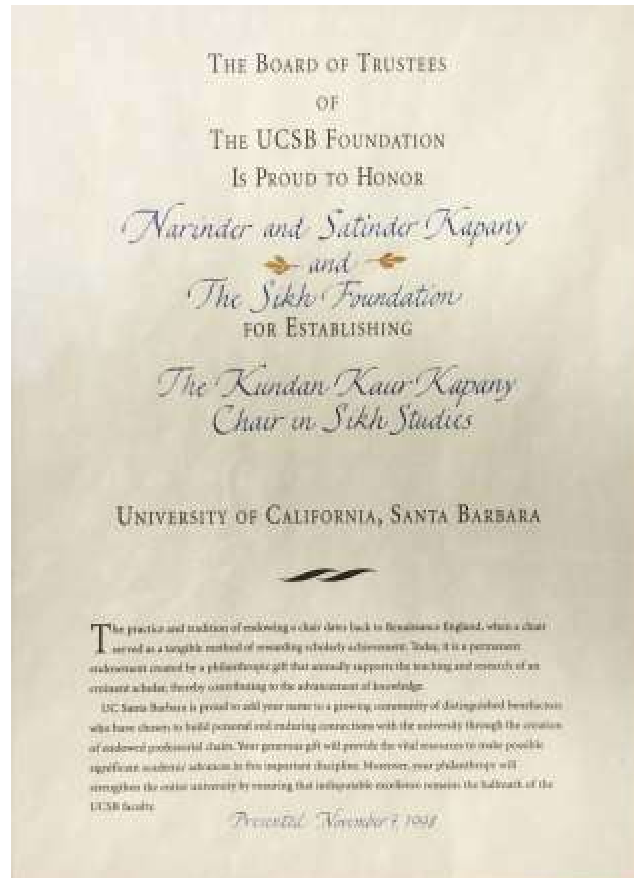
tions for the Sikh community of the Bay Area.

In the area of technology, Dr. Kapany started his work in fiber optics in 1952 and has pursued its development in medicine, in image intensifiers, and in communications. In this field, he has published four books, authored some 120 publications, and registered more than 100 patents. He endowed a Chair in Optoelectronics at UC Santa Cruz. In the late 1970s he was professor of "Innovation and Entrepreneurship" at that university for seven years. During that period he taught a large number of students, held a number of conferences, and gave testimony to the U.S. Congress. A number of his former students as well as a number of persons that worked in his companies are now leaders of their own companies and have been eminent venture capitalists—for example, Tom Perkins of Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers and Irwin Federman of US Ventures. Dr. Kapany also endowed a Chair of Entrepreneurship at UC Santa Cruz.

How does one understand Narinder Kapany's vision and accomplishments? First, I would like to emphasize that his interests and activities are diverse in nature. They seem, however, to fall into three clusters. The first reflects his efforts that ranged from the publication of *Sikh Sansar* and sponsoring the publication of books of various kinds and calendars around Sikh themes, to underlining the need for a school for Sikh children, and working for a Sikh museum in Washington, D.C. This activity toward improving education on Sikh culture helps a historian understand how substantial people like Dr. Kapany have put to use the financial resources at their disposal toward what they believed to be the welfare of the Sikh community—a subject itself deserving further study.

Second, Dr. Kapany's interest in Sikh artistic heritage resulted in his building an impressive personal collection, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, investing significant energy in developing Sikh material heritage as an area of importance in its own right. As for the former, thanks to him, the

Fig. 2.5, Kundan Kaur Kapany



THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF
THE UCSB FOUNDATION
IS PROUD TO HONOR

Narinder and Satinder Kapany
and
The Sikh Foundation
FOR ESTABLISHING
The Kundan Kaur Kapany
Chair in Sikh Studies

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA

The practice and tradition of endowing a chair dates back to Renaissance England, when a chair served as a tangible method of rewarding scholarly achievement. Today, it is a permanent endowment created by a philanthropic gift that annually supports the teaching and research of an eminent scholar, thereby contributing to the advancement of knowledge.

UC Santa Barbara is proud to add your name to a growing community of distinguished benefactors who have chosen to build personal and enduring connections with the university through the creation of endowed professorial chairs. Your generous gift will provide the vital resources to make possible significant academic advances in this important discipline. Moreover, your philanthropy will strengthen the entire university by ensuring that indisputable excellence remains the hallmark of the UCSB faculty.

Presented November 7, 1998

Fig. 2.6, Acknowledgment from University of California, Santa Barbara

Fig. 2.7, Satinder Kaur Kapany Gallery in the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco

Fig. 2.8, Sikh art on display at the Satinder Kaur Kapany Gallery in the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco

collection of Sikh artifacts that are stored in his vaults are no doubt safer there than when they were out in the field. In this effort, he deserves the gratitude of the Sikh community for preserving this heritage. He has also been generous in making the objects from his collection available for display at exhibitions at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. (1999–2007) and at other venues. In 2003, Dr. Kapany's negotiations with Forest McGill resulted in the establishment of the Satinder Kaur Kapany Gallery in the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco. In the process, the Kapanys donated a set of valuable pieces from their personal collection, along with an endowment of $500,000 to support their permanent display. Although relatively small in size, this is the first permanent exhibit of Sikh art in a leading Western institution.

Dr. Kapany also invested significant time and energy in involving the curators of several established museums in the West to exhibit Sikh art. This initiative started with the 1992 conference and exhibition at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, and reached its climax in the organizing of the exhibition held at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, in March 1999. The posters of the exhibition in the London subway system infused much-needed pride in the Sikhs living in England, and I remember seeing Sikh schoolchildren coming from all over the country to see the exhibit. The credit for curating this exhibition goes to Susan Stronge, and the catalogue that emerged from this, titled *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms* (Victoria and Albert Publications: 1999), is a reference work of considerable value. Dr. Kapany later played an important role in bringing over the truncated version of this exhibition to the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco and the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto in subsequent years.

Fig. 2.9, Dr. N. S. Kapany at University of California, Santa Cruz graduation ceremony 2008

Finally, Dr. Kapany's work with universities in North America bore significant results for the field of Sikh studies. As mentioned earlier, in 1997 he helped establish the position that now goes under the name of the Kundan Kaur Kapany Chair in Sikh Studies at UC Santa Barbara. In my view, this constitutes the central piece of Dr. Kapany's legacy in Sikh studies. I have several reasons to justify this assessment. As a result of the endowment coming from his family funds, the Sikh tradition is represented as a full-fledged member among other major religious traditions. The teaching of Sikhism will continue in what is currently a leading department of Religious Studies in the country and the Department of Global Studies, a new discipline that is developing rapidly and is of critical significance for the Sikhs as the community spreads around the globe.

Dr. Kapany's decisive action in the 1990s in helping establish this

position overcame a history of rather aggressive opposition among the Sikh community to studies of Sikh history and beliefs within the realm of Western academia. The Sikh studies programs created at various other universities could not be maintained due to the community's inability to raise the requisite funding. By temperament a noncombative person, it was not easy for Dr. Kapany to quietly but firmly withstand the hostility within a segment of the community opposing the establishment of university positions in Sikh studies. In one of his recent communications, Dr. Kapany wrote about this enterprise in pragmatic terms: "we have to have chairs in the universities; some will do brilliant work, some will be mediocre, and some will fail."

At UC Santa Barbara, Dr. Kapany also set the model of a gracious patron appreciating the freedom of the university to select a person of its own choice, and willing to work closely with the appointee. I was fortunate to be selected to establish the program, and I worked at UC Santa Barbara from 1999 to 2015. During this time, I developed profound admiration for Dr. Kapany's affection in dealing with me. He was always there when I needed his help, he made time to come and participate in all the events I organized there, and he never tried to interfere in my work.

With his mother's name, Kundan Kaur Kapany, associated with the Sikh studies program at UCSB (1999), the plate carrying the name of his wife, Satinder Kaur Kapany, at the Asian Art Museum (2003), the establishment of a Chair on Optoelectronics (1999) at UC Santa Cruz, and the Chair of Entrepreneurship at UC Santa Cruz (2013)—four major jewels in his legacy—I hope that Dr. Kapany is satisfied with the results of his hard work in

Fig. 2.10, Dr. Pashaura Singh, Dr. N. S. Kapany, Prof. Mark Juergensmeyer, Dr. Gurinder S. Mann, and Dr. Rahuldeep Gill (right to left)

Fig. 2.11, Trustees and staff of the Sikh Foundation (right to left), Pritinder S. Arora, Sardool S. Samra, Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence—Canada), Dr. N. S. Kapany, Sonia Dhami, Dilmohan S. Chadha, Dr. Ratinder S. Ahuja, and Dr. K. J. S. Anand during the minister's visit to the Foundation in 2015

Fig. 2.12, Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh (left), with Dr. N. S. Kapany and others at a dinner for the Royal College of Engineering, London

the areas of his deep dedication to Sikhism, Sikh arts, optoelectronics, and entrepreneurship. With these accomplishments alone, he has carved for himself an important place in the history of the Sikh community in the United States. Many Sikh families came to this country and were fortunate enough to achieve substantial financial success, yet Dr. Kapany's dedication to doing something for the Sikh community puts him in a category of his own. In May 2014, he drove 350 miles to attend a conference at UC Santa Barbara and in the process availed himself of the opportunity to listen to the latest research in the field and also meet the younger generation of scholars who had gathered there. Half a century down the road from when he established the Sikh Foundation, his energy and commitment to this cause continues to be as strong as ever.

In conclusion, I would like to make a few observations about the nature of Dr. Kapany's legacy. In his life, he has closely followed the Sikh belief that liberation is not personal but collective (*"api tarahi sangati kul tarah tin safal janamu jagi aia,"* M1, *Guru Granth Sahib*, 1039). Other Sikh leaders concerned about the welfare of their community could consider following this model. For the Sikhs, working for the welfare of the Sikh community—and for that matter the community at large in their new homelands—is a religious imperative. I believe that the Sikh Foundation was the first private organization of Sikhs, and this pioneering trend proliferated in the subsequent decades, as individual Sikhs or small groups created a large number of organizations. I believe that Sikhs in the United States should study the activities of the families such as that of the Kapanys and attempt to incorporate them into the future vision of community.

3

Artistic Gifts and Creations of Dr. Narinder S. Kapany

Gurnam S. S. Brard

The mind of an artist can see the potential of beauty in an object that may appear ordinary to a casual observer. Poets can describe a rainbow or dewdrops, in words that common people can relate to, who may wish they could have expressed such thoughts themselves. So it is only a gifted mind whose perceptions go beyond the routine and that thinks of possibilities of which ordinary people may not become aware. Such was the case years ago when Dr. Narinder S. Kapany saw the possibilities in a twisted clump of discarded optical material lying in a trash bin, which he later transformed into a piece of art he called *The Caged Serpent*.

Even from a young age, Narinder had the gift of thinking beyond the conventional rules and accepted principles. In his college days, when one of his professors asserted that light travels in straight lines and cannot be made to go around corners and bends, he asked himself if there could be conditions under which light *could* be made to bend. In fact, that is exactly what he was able to do—that is, to bend the rays of light by using optical fibers, and thereby to deserve his worldwide notoriety as the Father of Fiber Optics.

As he described in some conversations with me in the past, Narinder had founded Optics Technology Inc. in the early 1960s. This was the company that pioneered the manufacture and uses of optical fibers in industry and inventions of devices and procedures for correcting serious eye problems. It also explored many other uses of lasers and optical fibers. One day as he was walking through the manufacturing areas of the company, he saw in a waste bin some discarded optical material that was twisted in a peculiar shape, and thought by the technicians to be worthless. Narinder retrieved that material and visualized the possibilities of combining that interesting shape of fiber with selected light plus additional parts to make a piece of art, later titled *The Caged Serpent*. At first glance, the piece

Left: Fig. 3.1, "*Caged Serpent*" Narinder S. Kapany, 1970, Fiber optics and Lucite

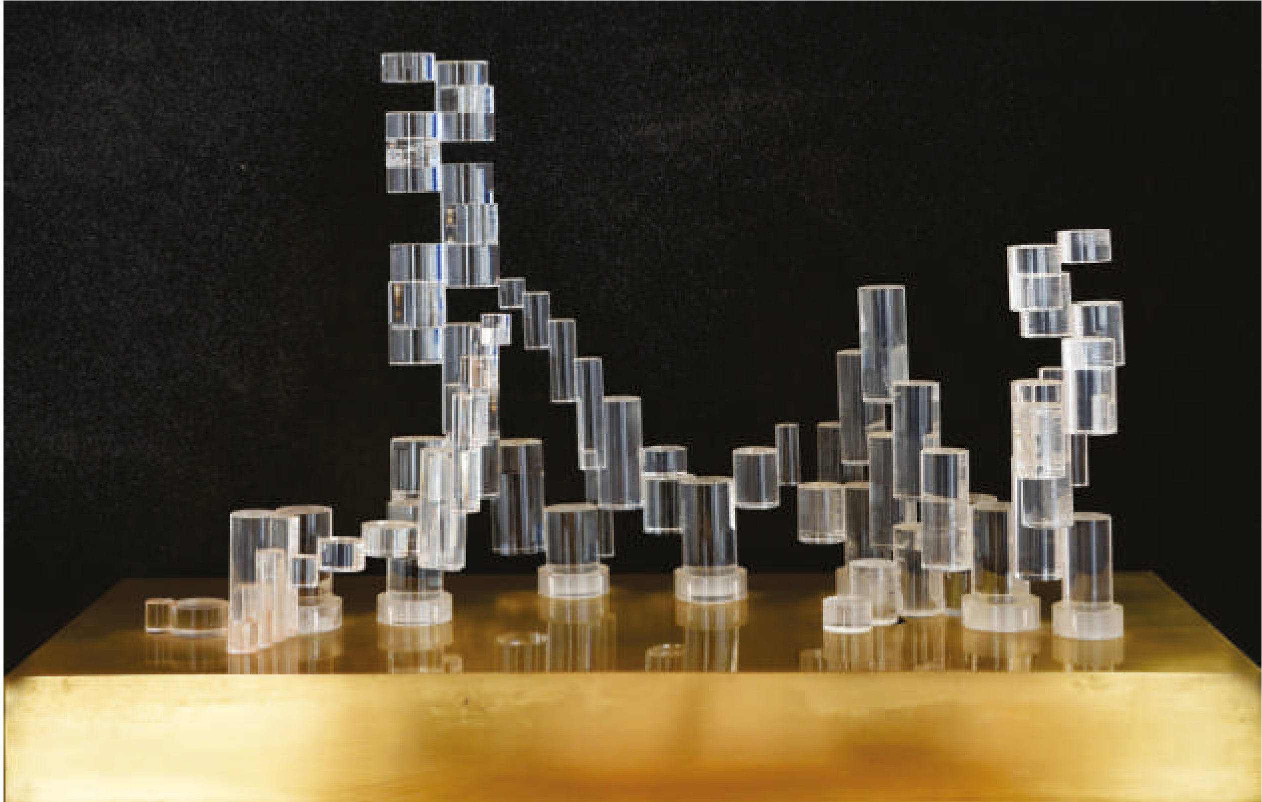


Fig. 3.2, "*Metropolis*," Narinder S. Kapany, 1971, Fiber optics, Lucite, and brass

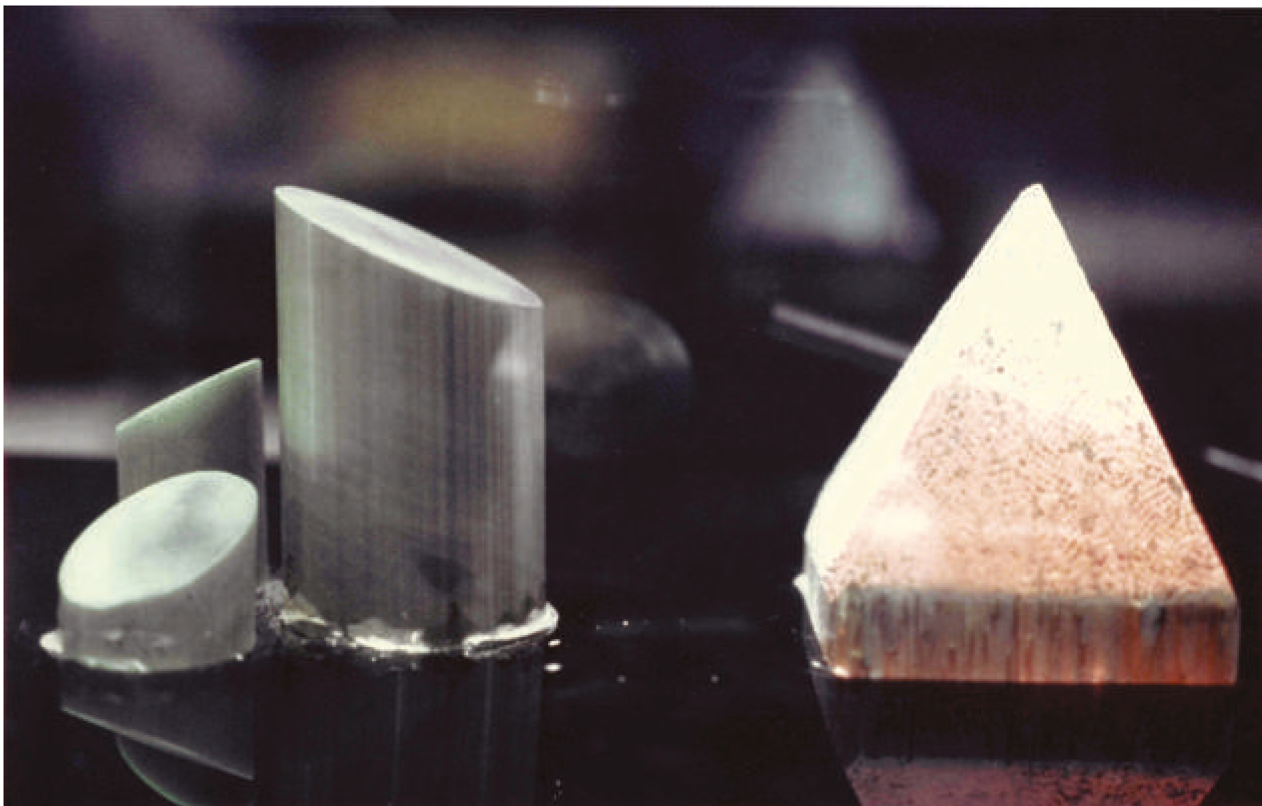


Fig. 3.3, "*Opyramid*," Narinder S. Kapany, 1970, Fiber optics and Lucite

OPYRAMID

1970

The dynamics of changes on the timeless monuments;
the pyramid and the truncated columns,
depicting chromatic and spiritual changes
on their passage through time--------

TECHNIQUE: A black lucite box consisting of a light source and rotating color and pattern wheel is mounted on a ground lucite slab. Pyramidal and cylindrical shapes are cut from "boules" of fused fiber optics and placed on holes in the box. The images of the rotating wheel with the filters and patterns underneath are transmitted through the fiber optics with astigmatic elongation along the oblique cut of the fibers. The bottom ground lucite slab produces a halo effect by the diffusion of light.

SIZE: 10" x 13" x 6" (h)
PEDESTAL SIZE: 15" x 18" x 36" (h)
POWER REQUIRED: 110 volts A.C.
EXTERNAL LIGHTING: None

Fig. 3.4, *Opyramid*, poster displayed alongside the Dynoptic sculptures, calligraphy by Eric Hutchinson

Galleries
Scientist's sculpture reflects his reliance on theme

Exhibits optical

Into the Work

ENTERTAINMENT

Science museum to exhibit ingenious optical art forms

Left: Figs. 3.5 and 3.6 ***(Opposite page top)*** Newspaper clippings of "Dynoptic Sculpture" exhibits

***Opposite page bottom*:** Fig. 3.7, Brochure of the Museum of Science & Industry, Chicago

was visually exciting and impressive, and that event sparked the beginning of his artistic endeavors. *The Caged Serpent* inspiration could have been just a case of beauty in the eye of the ordinary beholder, yet Narinder envisioned the possibilities of creating a variety of art pieces made with the materials that people in his company used every day.

As he was the president of Optics Technology, and the chief inspiration behind most of its research and fabrication, he had many kinds of materials available for his creation of more such art objects. Those pieces included materials like Lucite or glass in the form of fibers, rods, cylinders, and other shapes, sometimes coated to guide the light on to desired locations. He also employed optical filters to produce and select the colors he desired, lasers producing different colors of lights, hidden miniature motors to create changing lights colors and shapes, and other suitable materials to produce the desired effects. He started combining those optical fiber materials with lights of various colors, using lasers and interference filters hidden in opaque or translucent materials, and additional materials of various shapes to create works of art that appeared at once visually pleasing and, frankly, somewhat astonishing.

Inspired by the results of his discoveries, he created many pieces of art. The first few of these pieces he displayed in an area of his first house on Greenways Drive, in Woodside, California, starting in about 1970. Those of us who happened to be his friends were occasionally invited to his house for dinners and parties, in the days when he and his wife, Satinder Kaur Kapany, entertained quite frequently. Their parties also resulted from his planning for the Sikh Foundation, which covered religious, cultural, publishing, educational, artistic, and other community issues. After such organizational and planning matters and the dinner were concluded, we would think of some entertainment. So, after Narinder had created some of these pieces of optical art, they became objects of fascination and another source of entertainment for us. It was our delight to inspect and marvel at those objects of art, as they were so visually exciting and futuristic. At first I thought he was only playing around with things that were related to his field of work. But some of his friends, having an eye for art, wanted to take advantage of the opportunities to display them. One such early admirer of this work was Frank Oppenheimer (brother of the famous nuclear physicist Robert Oppenheimer), who was then the director of the San Francisco Exploratorium. Since that popular institution was in the business of displaying science in action, such visually thrilling pieces of art and

technology would make a perfect display for Narinder's purposes of both entertainment and scientific education.

Narinder was first invited to display his creations at the Exploratorium. These artworks thrilled both young and old to see the results of light and technology used with great imagination. Following their exhibition there, the art works went to places like the prestigious Museum of History and Industry in Chicago, the Monterey Peninsula Museum of Art, and the Syntax Gallery in Palo Alto.

After their critical reception, Narinder went on to produce many such works of optical art and eventually coined the word "Dynoptics"—combining the components used for these assemblies with various optical technologies and products in a dynamic mode. In fact, the title he chose for each work of art indicates where his imagination led him as he created that work. For example, in *The Caged Serpent*, light travels from an opaque base along a glass rod of decreasing diameter and curved shape, with optical coating to reflect and confine light so that the light comes out of the mouth of the "serpent." Additional light is guided through several optical rods to create the impression of a cage, hence the title.

Another creation that I distinctly remember in his house in the early days was the piece titled *Night Sky*, a more complex work. To describe it simply, a hidden light went through various slowly moving filters to create changing colors projected onto a translucent dome, thus simulating the Aurora Borealis or the Aurora Australis (the lights in the north and south polar regions at night), which gradually went from green to blue to pink. I thought the creation of those beautiful colors, with a slow variation in time, was extremely beautiful and so realistic that it seemed to evoke the cosmos. In that art work, there were also lights that went through thin fibers projected onto a dome to create the effect of stars in the sky.

It is amazing that these optical materials, handled by a creative mind such as Narinder Kapany's, can produce such dazzling and impressive works. They should be an inspiration to others with a creative streak.

Narinder went on to create several dozen pieces of optical art that he decided to display, with very expressive titles to match each piece. Some of them had a futuristic and even psychedelic quality, appropriate to the "space age" and extravagant thinking of those times, inspired by the moon landing in 1969 and the Free Speech movement in California. Other than the two pieces described above, others of note are called *Metropolis, Opyramid, Habitat, Aquatown, Agaricus,* and so on. Some of his works, displayed at various museums, with the original captions and descriptions, appears below.

Tempo

Futuristic sculpture exhibit in Palo Alto

Prophet of techno-art shows work at Syntex

MUSEUM OF SCIENCE & INDUSTRY

SPECIAL EXHIBITS AND PROGRAMS

JULY/AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

Through Aug. 31 "The Design Science of R. Buckminster Fuller" Exhibit

Through July 29 "Optical Sculptures" Exhibit

Through Aug. 19 "Historic Samplers" Exhibit

Through Sept. 3 "500th Anniversary of Copernicus" Exhibit

Aug. 8 to Sept. 9 "Olmsted/USA" Exhibit

Aug. 11 to Sept. 9 "The Bauhaus Years: 1928-1944" Exhibit

Aug. 23 to Sept. 9 "Chicago Ethnic Communities" Exhibit

Sept. 18 to Oct. 18 "IR 100" Awards Exhibit

Sept. 1-30 "Porcelain Chess Set" Exhibit

The Works of Dr. Narinder Singh Kapany

"A marriage of technology and art providing a commentary on the problems of man on spaceship Earth"

Dynoptic Artwork

1. ***Agaricus***

Subliminal image of the timeless process of evolution reflected in the complex synthesis of the lowly mushroom.

A number of circular all-dielectric interference filters of different colour characteristics are mounted at different heights on a circular cross sectional mirror. The change in colour characteristics of the reflected and transmitted light at different angles of the illuminating beam is employed by the use of the filters.

(1970) *Size = 20″ × 25″ × 6″ (d), Pedestal Size = Hang on wall or 12″ × 12″ × 40″ (h), Power Required = None, External Lighting = Intense White light on the white panel area at an oblique angle so as to cast elongated shadows. Preferably, a slow change in angle of the illuminating beam.*

2. ***Ballet Africain***

The agony and the ecstasy of two souls on a single body—rhythm and poise of the awakening of the oppressed.

The light box consists of fluorescent lights and a diffusing front screen. Affixed to the diffusing screen in an array of small diameter interference filters commonly used as the Fabry-Perot reflectors in a Helium-Neon gas laser.

(1970) *Size = 20″ × 25″ × 5″ (d), Pedestal Size = Hang on wall or 12″ × 12″ × 40″ (h), Power Required = 110 volt A.C., External Lighting = None*

3. ***Caged Serpent***

A combination of poise and the poison cunning and captivity and curvilinear and the rectilinear… Grace in a cage.

A white light source is placed in the black Lucite box and the light is conducted through curvilinear cone and straight columns to their tips. The cone is made of two types of glass—core and the coating—in order to protect the surface at which the total internal reflections occur: the principle used in Fiber Optics. The truncated ends of the columns produce prismatic effects and disperse the light conducted to the tips.

(1970) *Size = 13″ × 13″ × 21″ (h), Pedestal Size = 15″ × 15″ × 30″ (h), Power Required = 110 volt A.C., External Lighting = Dim collimated light to cast elongated shadows on walls*

4. ***Ecstasy***

Chromatic transformation simulating the subtle fragility of man's fleeting escape from a corporeal dimension.

The light box consists of fluorescent lights and a diffusing front screen. Affixed on the diffusing screen is a collage of interference filters with opaque coating between them. The change in colour produced in an interference filter when viewed at different angles is most vividly exploited in this panel.

(1970) *Size = 20″ × 25″ × 5″ (d), Pedestal Size = 12″ × 12″ × 40″ (h) or hang on wall, Power Required = 110 volts A.C., External Lighting = None*

5. ***Futility***

A homo sapiens ascending from light into darkness and approaching the edge of a precipice. He holds a tool of aggression in one hand but no defence (moral) in the other—a commentary on the path of mankind today.

The black Lucite box consists of a white light and is mounted on a ground Lucite slab. The sculpture consists of numerous chunks of high-quality optical glass chipped into approximate shape and epoxied together. Light from the box is conducted to the sculpture through a number of holes and is scattered in all directions, producing a luminescent glow. The bottom Lucite slab produces the effect of a halo by the diffusion of light.

(1970) *Size = 18⅜″ × 18⅜″ × 20½″ (h), Pedestal Size = 20″ × 20″ × 30″ (h), Power Required = 110 volts A.C., External Lighting = None*

6. ***Habitat***

The urban dilemma…a need for human habitat to meet not only material but also intellectual, cultural, and spiritual needs, and provide for different perspectives and points of view.

The black Lucite box has a circular fluorescent light and a diffusing screen on the top. Above the diffusion screen is mounted a large circular interference filter on a slowly rotating shaft. Viewing the rotating filter from different angles produces changes in colour. Mounted on the interference filter disc are cubes of a special quality optical glass which selectively scatter laser light and make visible the shaft of the beam. The glass cubes are cemented together, and the rotational motion changes the path and shapes of the shafts of light beams by multiple reflections and refractions.

(1970) *Size = 15⅜″ × 15⅜″ × 11¼″ (h), Pedestal Size = 18″ × 18″ × 30″ (h), Power Required = 110 volts A.C., External Lighting = Light from a CW laser is directed on the sculpture from the top at an appropriate point to produce patterns of shafts of light as the rotation takes place*

7. ***Monument***

Man's monument to himself—and his individualized view and perspective of it.

The black Lucite box consists of a circular fluorescent light and a diffusing screen on the top. Above the diffusing screen is mounted a large circular interference filter on a slowly rotating shaft. The monument is a solid quartz piece with numerous holes drilled ultrasonically in different directions.

(1970*) Size = 15⅜″ × 15⅜″ × 11¼″ (h), Pedestal Size = 18″ × 18″ × 30″ (h), Power Required = 110 volts A.C., External Lighting = None*

8. ***Neptune***

The extraterrestrial seascape with fluorescent lava waves, meteoric space objects, and inhabitants.

The black Lucite base consists of fluorescent lights with tubular colour filters rotating around them. On top of the box are affixed numerous plastic slabs of different sizes and cross sections which are insulated from one another by black Lucite sheets. The light is trapped in these slabs and diffused at the ground ends. High-quality optical glass pieces are chipped into the desired shape, placed on top and illuminated by light conducted through holes in the Lucite slabs.

(1970) *Size = 14½″ × 19½″ × 12¼″ (h), Pedestal Size = 16″ × 21″ × 30″ (h), Power Required = 110 volts A.C., External Lighting = None*

9. ***Opyramid***

The dynamics of changes on the timeless monuments; the pyramid and the truncated columns, depicting chromatic and spiritual changes on their passage through time.

A black Lucite box consisting of a light source and rotating color and pattern wheel mounted on a ground Lucite slab. Pyramidal and cylindrical shapes are cut from "boules" of fused fiber optics and placed on holes in the box. The image of the rotating wheel with the filter and patterns underneath are transmitted through the fiber optics with astigmatic elongation along the oblique cut of the fibers. The bottom ground Lucite slab produces a halo effect by the diffusion of light.

(1970) *Size = 10″ × 13″ × 6″ (h), Pedestal Size = 15″ × 18″ × 36″ (h), Power Required = 110 volts A.C., External Lighting = None*

10. ***Solar Panel***

The ultimate vessel for harvesting the everlasting crop of energy from the sun—sustainer of life in the Solar System.

A number of 2" × 2" all dielectric interference filters of different colour characteristics are mounted at different heights above a rectangular mirror. On the bottom left are mounted four colour separators (dichroic filters similar to the ones used in colour t.v. systems) at an angle of 45 degrees. The change in colour characteristics of

the reflected and transmitted light at different angles of the illuminating beam is used.

(1970) *Size = 20″ × 25″ × 6″ (d), Pedestal Size = Hang on wall or 12″ × 12″ × 40″ (h), Power Required = None, External Lighting = Intense white light on the white panel area at an oblique angle so as to cast elongated shadows. Preferably, a slow change in angle of the illuminating beam.*

11. ***Space Ecology***

The spectacle of a permanent transformation cycle between energy and matter in outer space.

The black Lucite box consists of a number of fluorescent lights. Clusters of thousands of optical fibers are fused and drawn into conical shapes and placed on appropriate sized holes on top of the light box. The light is transmitted through the conical fibers and produces a glow. Affixed on top of the fiber optics cover are circular shaped interference filters which transmit different colours depending on the angle of viewing. These interference filters also are used to support sculptured pieces of optical glass. The entire sculpture changes colour on viewing it from different angles.

(1970) *Size = 16½″ × 24¼″ × 13″ (h), Pedestal Size = 24″ × 30″ × 30″ (h), Power Required = 110 volt A.C., External Lighting = None*

12. ***Aquatown***

The dreams of an imaginary city under water—the darkness in ocean depths penetrated by internal lighting of the underwater Architecture, producing in the currents a gradual change of shape and colours. As yet an untapped potential.

The black Lucite base, consisting of a light and rotating colour wheel, is placed on a ground Lucite slab. The top surface of the base consists of numerous holes through which light of gradually changing colours emanates. Lucite cylinders of widely varying lengths & diameters are placed on top of the holes in the base and affixed end on one another. The ends of the Lucite cylinders are ground in order to diffuse the light of changing colour. The ground Lucite slab at the bottom also diffuses the light, thus producing a halo effect.

(1971) *Size = 13⅜″ × 13⅜″ × 13⅝″ (h), Pedestal Size = 20″ × 20″ × 28″ (h), Power Required = 110 volt A.C., External Lighting = None*

13. ***Metropolis***

Depicting the grandeur of a sprawling metropolis during night time. The spiralling skyscrapers and stepped landmarks gradually change their hue and brightness from dusk to dawn. A focus on the urban dilemma facing mankind today.

The scrubbed brass base consists of numerous lights placed behind three rotating interference filter wheels. Light with gradually changing colours emerges from the holes on top of the base. Lucite cylinders of different diameters and lengths are attached to each other along the cylindrical surface and affixed on top of the holes in the base. The light is transmitted through the cylinders, and the roughened ends of the cylinders produce a diffuse glow which gradually changes colour and intensity.

(1971) *Size = 18¼″ × 36⅜″ × 22½″ (h), Pedestal Size = 23″ × 48″ × 28″ (h), Power Required = 110 volts A.C., External Lighting = None*

14. ***New Beacon***

From the star will come the answers to the oldest question mankind has asked…
The New Beacon—a means of communication with extraterrestrial intelligent life…

This sculpture consists of three optical components, viz., a toroidal infrared dome, a parabolic "cold mirror" with two parabolic cuts, and a hyperbolic cone of fused fiber optics consisting of many thousands of fibers. The toroidal dome is cemented on a black Lucite base and the cold mirror is further cemented onto the dome. The long fiber optics cone projects vertically through a hole in the cold mirror.

(1971) *Size = 10″ × 10″ × 20″ (h), Pedestal Size = 12″ × 12″ × 28″ (h), Power Required = None, External Lighting = A spotlight with irregular grid placed in its path*

METROPOLIS

1971

Depicting the grandeur of a sprawling metropolis during night time. The spiralling skyscrapers and stepped landmarks gradually changing their hue and brightness from dusk to dawn.
A focus on the urban dilemma facing mankind today.

TECHNIQUE: The scrubbed brass base consists of numerous lights placed behind three rotating interference filter wheels. Light with gradually changing colors emerges from the holes on top of the base. Lucite cylinders of different diameters and lengths are attached to each other along the cylindrical surface and affixed on top of the holes in the base. The light is transmitted through the cylinders and the roughened ends of the cylinders produce a diffuse glow which gradually changes color and intensity.

SIZE: 18-1/4" x 36-3/8" x 22-1/2" (h)
PEDESTAL SIZE: 23" x 48" x 28" (h)
POWER REQUIRED: 110 volts A.C.
EXTERNAL LIGHTING: None

Fig. 3.8, *Metropolis*, poster displayed alongside the Dynoptic sculptures, calligraphy by Eric Hutchinson

15. ***Sunflare***

The splendid flaring of profuse energy,

ever-changing and uncontainable

Monarch of the solar system....

Three discs of glass of increasing diameter are mounted eccentrically at different heights from each other. Deposited on the glass discs is all-dielectric interference coating with different patterns and colour characteristics. On the top glass disc are cemented a number of fiber optics discs helically rotated at a constant angle with respect to each other. Interspersed between the fibers is an absorbing medium limiting the acceptance angle of the fibers. When viewed head-on, the fibers demonstrate a speckled pattern.

(1971) *Size = 20″ × 25″ × 6″ (d), Pedestal Size = Hang on wall or 12″ × 12″ × 40″ (h), Power Required = None, External Lighting = Intense white light on the white panel area at an oblique angle so as to cast elongated shadows. Preferably, a slow change in angle of the illuminating beam.*

16. ***Tranquility***

Elegance with simplicity and depth,

without flamboyance =

tranquility—a frame of mind

The light box consists of fluorescent light and a front diffusing screen. An array of filters partially coated with neutral density coatings are mounted at different distances away from the diffusing screen by cementing to plastic rods of different lengths. The spacing and depth of the filters is chosen to produce a three-dimensional effect so that the different compositions are presented at different viewing angles.

(1971) *Size = 20″ × 25″ × 5″ (d), Pedestal Size = Hang on wall or 12″ × 12″ × 40″ (h), Power Required = 110 volt A.C., External Lighting = None*

17. ***Night Sky***

The drama of the polar night sky...

An interaction of cosmic and terrestrial forces...

The continuum of change....

A hemispherical Lucite dome is ground in order to diffuse light projected on it from two sources. One source consists of a Helium-Neon laser and the other is a white light high-intensity bulb. Both light sources are placed on a cage below the Lucite dome. The light from the laser is diffracted on the dome by a rough crystal mounted on a rotating shaft, thus producing a random, slowly changing pattern. Superimposed on this pattern is the diffracted light from the white light source with a rotating filter wheel in its path, thus producing a slowly changing — in shape and colour — background of clouds.

(1972) *Size = N/A, Pedestal Size = Not required, Power Required = 110 volts A.C., External Lighting = None. The laser incorporated in this sculpture must be turned on or off.*

18. ***Pleaful Prayer***

The dedication and longing of the naive; the dominance and exploitation of the cunning—

......a pleaful prayer

The light box consists of fluorescent lights and a diffusing screen. Affixed on the diffusing screen is a collage of interference filters whose colour changes, depending on the viewing angle. Superimposed on the interference filters is a metal screen in which the pictorial composition is produced of selectively removing material using the photo-etching technique. Thus a modern stained glass window effect is produced, with higher clarity and change in colour composition by varying the viewing angle.

(1972) *Size = 20″ × 25″ × 7″ (d), Pedestal Size = Hang on wall or 12″ × 12″ × 40″ (h), Power Required = 110 volt A.C., External Lighting = None*

19. ***Energy Reservoirs***

The everchanging transformation of the energy sources…servant turned master

A black Lucite box consisting of a light source and rating colour and pattern wheel is mounted on a ground Lucite slab. Pyramidal and cylindrical shapes are cut from "boules" of fused fiber optics and placed on holes in the box. The images of the rotating wheel and patterns underneath are transmitted through the fiber optics with astigmatic elongation along the oblique cut in the fibers. The bottom ground Lucite slab produces a halo effect by the diffusion of light.

(1974) *Size = 12⅞″ × 12⅞ × 9⅝″ (h), Pedestal Size = 15″ × 18″ × 36″ (h), Power Required = 110 volt A.C., External Lighting = None*

20. ***Escherators***

A confusion of perspective

Causing men to "ascend"…

from the ceiling to the floor

Glass substrates of different sizes and cross sections with vacuum-deposited silver coating are cemented together on a black Lucite disc of circular cross section. The black disc is affixed to the white background panel with four piano wires hinged at four white pillars.

(1974) *Size = 14″ × 4″ × 20¼″ (h), Pedestal Size = Hang on wall or 12′″ × 12″ × 40″ (h), Power Required = None, External Lighting = Diffuse illumination by external light source*

21. ***Hystrix***

Omnidirectional weapons

aimed by an insecure species

Two hemispherical domes of infrared glass are cemented to a glass tube with a reflection coating deposited on it. The top hemispherical dome is coated with an aluminum layer on the concave surface. A number of fiber optics cones of different lengths are cemented around a Lucite pillar affixed to the center of the top dome to produce a diffusing, ray-like foundation.

(1974) *Size = 9″ × 9″ × 18″ (h), Pedestal Size = 8″ × 8″ × 36″ (h), Power Required = None, External Lighting = Diffuse light illumination producing contrast of fiber optics cones against a dark background*

22. ***Natrolite***

A crystalline monolith—awe-inspiring for man over the centuries

Two hemispherical domes of infrared glass are cemented to two toroidal cylinders of infrared glass. A glass rod is affixed vertically to the center of the top hemispherical dome.

(1974) *Size = 5¾″ × 5¾″ × 18″ (h), Pedestal Size = 8″ × 8″ × 36″ (h), Power Required = None, External Lighting = Intense beam of light at an angle to cast shadows of the glass needle*

Fig. 3.9, *Ek Onkar (God Is One)*, J. Steinfeld, 2016, mixed media, 30 × 22 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 3.10, *Parasol* (*Chattri*), *Punjab*, 19th century, Silver, 18.5 cm high, 261g, Kapany Collection

4

The Sikh Gurus: Works of Art in the Kapany Collection

Pashaura Singh

In recent studies there has been an attempt to complement historical data and explore new ways of knowing the past with ethnographic studies that illuminate the lived experience of the Sikh *Panth* ("community"). In addition to documentary evidence, scholars have begun to show keen interest in the works of art and material culture—artifacts of all sorts such as the weapons of the Gurus, coins, clothing, Guru Ram Das's chariot, and kitchen utensils preserved with the descendants of famous Sikh families—as they try to make sense of the religious life and cultural context of early Sikh communities during the canonical period of Sikhism. Most instructively, religious communities create memory through the practice of rituals and symbols, as well as through works of art. In particular, rituals and recitals could bridge the gap between the past and the present where recitals of past events are not just intellectual exercises but both an invocation and an evocation in which historical remembrances produce subjectivities and create mentalities (P. Singh, 2014, pp. 32–33). In this context, the works of arts in the Kapany Collection acquire special significance in our analysis. The present paper, therefore, intends to explore the depiction of collective memory of the Sikh Gurus in some of the rare paintings collected by Dr. Narinder Singh Kapany—who is widely acknowledged as the father of fiber optics and a connoisseur of Sikh art. It is instructive to note that the early portraits of the Sikh Gurus were painted in the courtly Mughal style. With the cultural expansion under Mughal rulers, artists from the Punjab plains and the Pahari areas became trained in the Mughal style of painting and portraiture. Consequently, in such portraits of the Sikh Gurus, their physical features, as well as their outfits, turbans, and poses, end up looking very much like those of Mughal princes and nobles (N-G. K. Singh, 2014, p. 423).

The crystallization of the Sikh tradition took place under the agency of the ten Sikh Gurus. It is rooted in a particular religious experience, piety, and culture and is informed by the unique inner revelation of its founder, Guru Nanak (1469–1539), who was born to an upper-caste family of professional *khatris* (merchants) in the

Left: Detail of Fig. 4.7
Guru Har Rai attending to the wounded and sick
Devender Singh, 2014
Oil on canvas, 91.4 × 61 cm
Kapany Collection

village of Talwandi (present-day Nankana Sahib in Pakistan). Much material concerning his life comes from the *janam-sakhis* (life narratives), idealized biographies written during the century after his death that drew heavily on legend and oral tradition. His life may be divided into three distinct phases: his early contemplative years, the enlightenment experience accompanied by extensive travels, and a pivotal climax that resulted in the establishment of the first Sikh community in western Punjab.

His story begins when a local Muslim nobleman employed the young Nanak, a professional accountant of the *Khatri* caste, as a steward at Sultanpur Lodhi. Nanak worked diligently at his job but his mind was deeply absorbed in spiritual concerns, and he spent long hours each morning and evening in meditation and devotional singing. Early one morning, when he was bathing in the Vein River, he disappeared without leaving a trace. Family members gave him up for dead, but three days later he stepped out of the water with the cryptic words, "There is no Hindu and there is no *Musalman*" (*Puratan Janam-sakhi*, p. 18; H. Singh, 1969, p. 97).

This statement, made during the declining years of the Lodhi sultanate, must be understood in the context of the religious culture of medieval Punjab. The two dominant religions of the region were the Hindu tradition and Islam, both claiming conflicting truths. To a society torn with conflict, Nanak brought a vision of a common humanity and pointed the way to look beyond external labels for a deeper reality. After his three-day immersion in the waters—a metaphor of dissolution, transformation, and spiritual perfection—Nanak was ready to proclaim a new vision for his audience. In one of his own hymns in the Sikh scripture, the *Guru Granth Sahib* (GGS), he proclaimed, "I was a minstrel out of work; the Lord assigned me the task of singing the divine Word. He summoned me to his court and bestowed on me the robe of honoring him and singing his praise. On me he bestowed the divine nectar [*amrit*] in a cup, the nectar of his true and holy Name" (GGS 150). The hymn is intensely autobiographical, explicitly revealing Nanak's own understanding of his divine mission, and it marked the beginning of his spiritual reign. He was then thirty years old, had been married to Sulakhani for more than a decade, and was the father of two young sons, Siri Chand and Lakhmi Das. He set out on a series of journeys to both Hindu and Muslim places of pilgrimage in India and elsewhere. During his travels he came into contact with the leaders of various religious persuasions and tested the veracity of his own ideas in religious dialogues. He was accompanied by his lifelong companion Mardana, a Muslim musician, who used to play the *rabab* (plucked rebec) while he sang the praises of *Akal Purakh* ("Eternal One").

Declaring his independence from other worldviews of his day, Guru Nanak established a foundation for teaching, practice, and community from the standpoint of his own religious ideals. Among the religious figures of northern India, he had an especially strong sense of mission, compelling him to proclaim his message for the benefit of his audience and for the promotion of socially responsible living. The development of the religious life of the Sikh *Panth*, however, cannot be understood simply in itself, but only if seen within the context of the religious universe of North India, in whose history it was an active participant. Indeed, it was a religious universe marked by a lively atmosphere of interaction and debate between different groups. Thus the Sikh tradition that developed from Guru Nanak's teachings was faced with the problem of defining itself over and against the existing and known religious traditions in the Punjab. Mostly, these traditions were of Hindu, Muslim (particularly Sufi), or Nath origins, although from the beginning there seems to be an awareness of the existence of other major religious texts, as well. Throughout his works, Guru Nanak made a very clear distinction between his own teachings and practices and the teachings and practices of *other* paths.

A careful study of Guru Nanak's works reveals his thorough familiarity with the religious texts, beliefs, and practices of *other* traditions. In his critique of those traditions lies his quest for self-definition. For instance, note the following critical description of Muslims, Hindus, and Yogis:

> The Muslims praise their law (*shari'at*)
> and they read and dwell upon it;
> But [God's] true servants become the
> slaves to see the vision (*didar*) of the
> divine Beloved.
> The Hindus praise the infinite forms to
> see the Divine (*darasan rup apar*);
> They bathe at the holy places (*tirath*),
> make flower offerings to the idols
> (*puja*), and burn incense before them.
> The Yogis dwell on the void (*sunn*) and
> name the Creator as "Ineffable" (*alakh*);
> [Yet] to the subtle form (*sukham murat*)
> and the divine Name (*nam niranjan*),
> they give the form of a body.
> …
> Says Nanak: the true devotees (*bhagats*)
> hunger to praise [the divine]; the true
> Name is their only support;
> They abide in everlasting joy day and
> night: May I obtain the dust of the feet
> of such virtuous ones!
> (M1 [Guru Nanak], *Var Asa*, 1 (6),
> GGS 465–66)

Here, Guru Nanak clearly distinguishes between the two categories of contemporary Muslims. On the one hand, there were people who strictly followed the path of orthodox Muslim law (*shari'at*) as promulgated by the learned class (*'ulama*). On the other hand, there were people who followed the path of the Sufis to experience the vision (*didar*) of the divine Beloved. Clearly, Guru Nanak shows a preference for Sufi Islam over those who strictly follow Muslim orthodoxy. In the case of the contemporary Hindus, most of them offered their worship (*puja*) to the images of the deities in a conventional way through external rituals. Similarly, the Nath Yogis performed psycho-physical techniques (*hattha yoga*) to experience the "void" (*sunn*) in their own bodies. Thus in contrast to these *other* paths, Guru Nanak defined his own path of liberation in the last two lines of this *Asa shalok* ("verse of two or more lines" in *Asa* measure), a path based upon the interior discipline of the meditation on the divine Name (*sach nam*) that the "true devotees" followed to experience everlasting bliss (*anand*).

Much of the scholarly debate has already taken place on the issue of Guru Nanak's attitude toward the Hindu and Islamic traditions of his day, and it need not detain us here (McLeod, 1989, p. 29; P. Singh, 2006, pp. 177–79). One cannot fail to notice his famous remark that "neither the Veda nor the Kateb know the mystery" (GGS 1021). On the whole, Guru Nanak adopted a typically classic approach toward Hindu tradition and Islam, an approach through which he condemned the conventional forms of both religions such as ritual and pilgrimage, temple and mosque, brahmin and mullah, Vedas and Qur'an. By defining the "true Hindu" and the "true Muslim" as opposed to the false believers who continue to follow the conventional forms, he was in fact offering his own path of inner religiosity to the followers of both religions. The very requirements of the universality of his teachings involved his drawing upon a far wider range of available linguistic resources. For instance, Guru Nanak was able to reach out to his Muslim audience by addressing Islam through its own concepts, and he encountered the Yogis through the use of Nath terminology. But in each case the message of the divine truth revealed in those terms reflected his self-understanding. In this context, W. Owen Cole aptly remarks, "Guru Nanak accepted the religious language of Islam and Hinduism when it suited him, but the truth which he wished to express was his own" (Cole, 1984, p. 96).

The motif of self-definition can be seen to be at work in Guru Nanak's *Dakhani Oankar* (with respect to the Hindu tradition), *Siddh Gost* (with respect to the Nath tradition), *Var*

Asa (with respect to both Hindu and Muslim traditions), and various other compositions. In particular, this motif is quite evident in his treatment of the verses of Shaikh Farid (1173–1265), a poet representing the Sufi line of thought in the Punjab. In his comments on the verses of Shaikh Farid, Guru Nanak rejected the ideals of self-mortification and asceticism held by the Sufi poet, and emphasized that one must seek the divine Beloved within one's own heart by following the discipline of meditation on the divine name (*nam simaran*), and exhibit the spirit of optimism toward life as well as toward death. He made the assertion that the life of spirituality is a matter of divine grace, which occupies a position of primacy over personal effort (P. Singh, 2003, pp. 54–64). Guru Nanak's intention was to define clearly what it means to be a Sikh in relation to commonly held Sufi beliefs. By making a contrast with the ideas of Shaikh Farid, he was marking the outlines of the new Sikh community growing around him at Kartarpur in the Punjab in the early years of the sixteenth century. Unsurprisingly, Guru Nanak even wore Sufi dress at times to move among the Sufi circles in order to have dialogue with them on spiritual matters.

It should be emphasized here that Islam in medieval India took on a Sufi coloring. Sufi presence was already well known in the Punjab during the Ghaznavid period. However, with the establishment of the Delhi sultanate, Sufis of the Chisti and Suhrawardi orders began to settle throughout North India. Two other formal Sufi orders, the Naqshbandi and Qadiri, were established during the Mughal period. Mostly, the Sufis vied with the more orthodox Islamic scholars (*'ulema*) for status and influence within the court of Muslim rulers. In this context, Guru Nanak's observation of contemporary Sufi practices is very significant. Although he sometimes shows his appreciation for the Sufi path of love, he did not give the Sufi *shaikhs* his unqualified approval. Through his analysis of the Persian loan-words, J. S. Grewal has aptly shown how Guru Nanak condemned the dependence of the Sufis upon government grants. The key term used in this context is *mahadudu* (Persian/Arabic, *mahdud*), which refers to an "official document setting a limit to revenue assessment" (Shackle, 1981, p. 230). Many a *shaikh* subsisted on revenue-free land (*madad-i-ma'ash*) granted by the rulers (Grewal, 1990, p. 34). There is a direct reference in Guru Nanak's *Malar shalok* where he ridicules a common practice among the contemporary *shaikhs* to distribute "caps" (*kulahan*) among their disciples to initiate others into the Sufi path. Indeed, presuming to be sure of his own place of honor with God, the *shaikh* gave assurance to others, as well. Guru Nanak likens such a *shaikh* to a mouse that is too big to enter a hole and yet ties a winnowing basket to its tail (GGS 1286). Thus we find a general rejection of the Sufi notion of *wilayat* (saintship, sanctity) and *khanqah* (hospice for Sufis) in Guru Nanak's works.

Moreover, Guru Nanak was strongly opposed to begging. He considered it degrading and denounced those self-styled religious leaders of both Hindu and Muslim persuasions—*Gurus* and *pirs*—who used to live by alms. For instance, note the following remark:

> Those who call themselves Gurus
> and pirs but go about begging for alms;
> Never fall at their feet to show
> them reverence.
> They who eat what they earn
> through their own labor and give some
> of what they have in charity;
> Nanak says: they alone know the
> true way of life.
> (M1 [Guru Nanak], *Var Sarang*, 1
> (22), GGS 1245)

Here, Guru Nanak defines his own understanding that the true way of spiritual life requires that one should live on what one has labored to receive through honest means and that one should share with others the fruit of one's exertion. The necessity of balance between meditative worship and righteous living in the world is summed up in Guru

Guru Nanak's message of righteous living is aptly demonstrated in the story from the Janamsakhis when he visits the town of Saidpur and chooses to stay and eat with the poor but honest carpenter Lalo instead of the rich and the powerful Malik Bhago. The Guru proves his choice by squeezing the bread offered by both men—Bhai Lalo's drips milk symbolizing honest labor while that of Malik Bhago oozes blood, symbolic of wealth amassed by ill means.

Nanak's triple commandment: earn your living through honest labor, adore the divine Name, and share the fruits of your labor with others. This is strikingly illustrated in Figure 4.1, depicting the story of Guru Nanak's visit to the town of Saidpur where he stays with the poor and honest carpenter Bhai Lalo and refuses the invitation of the rich Malik Bhago, who makes money by exploiting others.

In contrast to Guru Nanak's view of righteous living based on honest labor, however, Kabir shows a preference for mendicity as a means of acquiring merit in spiritual life. In his own *shalok* he says: "Kabir, it is pleasant to beg (*madhukari*), you receive grains of many kinds. None has a claim over you, and you enjoy a great country, a great kingdom" (GGS 1373). These ideas on mendicity have social implications that place Kabir among the "monks" and "renouncers" of Indian tradition, thereby setting the religious elites apart from the laypeople. There is no place for mendicity in Guru Nanak's thought, which clearly sets him apart from the protagonists of the *Sant* tradition of North India.

Further, the *Sants* did not have a sense of social mission or the idea

Fig. 4.1, *Guru Nanak with Bhai Laloo and Malik Bhago,* Devender Singh, 2015, Oil on canvas, 91.4 × 61 cm, Kapany Collection

of an organized religious community. They were individuals "working out their own problems towards achieving their personal religious and spiritual aims and aspirations" (Ray, 1975, p. 40). For Kabir, the way of devotion is a solitary one. That is perhaps why he never assumed the position of a "guide" in his life. For instance, he cautions the devotee not to take anyone along while following the saintly path to union because that would delay his or her own spiritual progress: "Kabir, if you start off to join the Sadhu, take no company with you. And never retrace your steps, whatever may come in your way" (GGS 1370). This implication is that although Kabir believes the way of devotion should be pursued with determination in spite of the difficulties it entails, he stresses individual liberation as the goal of the spiritual endeavor.

Guru Nanak, by contrast, places much more emphasis on collective emancipation as the goal for the seeker than individual liberation. For this purpose he assumed the position of a "guide" in his life, and he started on his journeys to preach his message of "the divine Name, charity and purity" (*nam-dan-ishnan*) in the beginning of the sixteenth century. In his *Japji*, for instance, he says: "Those who meditate on the divine Name, their toiling journeys are rewarded. With redeemed faces, Nanak, they take along to liberation many more" (GGS 8). It seems evident here that individual liberation is not Guru Nanak's ideal. Rather, his stress is on altruistic concern for humanity as a whole (*sarbat da bhala*), a concern that is repeated every day in the Sikh congregational prayer (*Ardas*) as the cherished ideal of the Sikh community. Indeed, the question of self-definition makes sense only with a community; the *Sants* who seemingly lacked communities did not engage in a quest for self-definition. Moreover, the lack of institutional settings may also explain why so many religious figures of North India failed to conform to the pattern of normative self-definition.

It is instructive to note that at the end of his travels, in the 1520s, Guru Nanak purchased a piece of land on the right (west) bank of the Ravi River in western Punjab and founded the village of Kartarpur ("Creator's Abode"). There he lived for the rest of his life as the "spiritual guide" of a newly emerging religious community. His attractive personality and teaching won him many disciples, who received his message of liberation through religious hymns of unique genius and notable beauty. They began to use the hymns in devotional singing (*kirtan*) as a part of congregational worship. Indeed, the first Sikh families who gathered around Guru Nanak in the early decades of the sixteenth century formed the nucleus of a rudimentary organization of Nanak *Panth*, the "Path of Nanak," referring to the community constituted by early Sikhs who followed Guru Nanak's path of liberation. In his role as what the sociologist Max Weber called an "ethical prophet" (Weber, 1963 [1922], p. 46), Guru Nanak called for a decisive break with existing formulations and laid the foundation of a new, rational model of normative behavior based upon divine authority. The authenticity and power of his spiritual message ultimately derived not from his relationship with the received tradition but rather from his direct access to Divine Reality through personal experience. Such direct access was the ultimate source of his message and provided him with a perspective on life by which he could fully understand, interpret, and adjudicate the various elements of tradition. Throughout his writings he conceived of his work as divinely commissioned, and he demanded the obedience of his audience to divine will (*hukam*) as an ethical duty.

As founder, Guru Nanak was the central authority for the early Sikh *Panth* and the definer of tradition for his age. He prescribed the daily routine, along with agricultural activity for sustenance, for the Kartarpur community. He defined the ideal person as a *Gurmukh* (one oriented toward the Guru), who practiced the threefold discipline of "the divine name, charity, and purity" (*nam-dan-ishnan*). Indeed, these three features—*nam*

(relation with the divine), *dan* (relation with the society), and *ishnan* (relation with the self)—provided a balanced approach for the development of the individual and the society. They corresponded to the cognitive, the communal, and the personal aspects of the evolving Sikh identity. In addition, service (*seva*), self-respect (*pati*), truthful living (*sach achar*), humility, sweetness of the tongue, and taking only one's rightful share (*haq halal*) were highly prized ethical virtues in the pursuit of liberation. At Kartarpur, Nanak gave practical expression to the ideals that had matured during the period of his travels, and he combined a life of disciplined devotion with worldly activities set in the context of normal family life. As part of the Sikh liturgy, Nanak's *Japji* ("Meditation") was recited in the early hours of the morning, and the *So Dar* ("That Door") and *Arti* ("Adoration") were sung in the evening.

Guru Nanak's spiritual message found expression at Kartarpur through key institutions: the *sangat* (holy fellowship), in which all felt that they belonged to one spiritual fraternity; the *dharamsala,* the original form of the Sikh place of worship; and the establishment of the *langar,* the dining convention that required people of all castes to sit in status-free lines (*pangat*) in order to share a common meal. In fact, the establishment of a community kitchen (*langar*) at Kartarpur was the first reification of Guru Nanak's spiritual concerns to reorganize the society on egalitarian ideals. In this setting of the partaking of food, anyone could be sitting next to anyone else, female next to male, socially high to socially low, and ritually pure next to ritually impure. The institution of *langar* promoted the spirit of unity and mutual belonging, and struck at a major aspect of caste, thereby advancing the process of defining a community based upon Sikh ideals. The Nath Yogis and the *Sants* did repudiate the caste system and removed themselves from its authority, but they could not organize a communal situation of open commensality in direct opposition to this convention. Evaluating the rejection of caste by members of the *Sant* tradition, for instance, Jagjit Singh concludes that the "anti-caste movements like those of Kabir and other Bhaktas, whose departure from caste ideology had been confined only to the ideological plane, remained still-born in the field of social achievement" (J. Singh, 1985, p. 46). The egalitarian ideal of the institution of *langar* was the decisive factor in breaking the traditional order in which the society was organized on the basis of the taboos of pollution and purity within the hierarchical caste system.

Finally, Guru Nanak's decision to designate a successor was the most significant step in the development of the early Sikh *Panth*. Although the idea of appointing a spiritual successor was not an entirely unique phenomenon in the North Indian context of the day (for instance, spiritual lineages were frequently established in the Sufi and Nath circles), in the Sikh tradition this idea of succession took on special significance. In Weber's sense of the term, Guru Nanak created the "charisma of office" (O'Toole, 1984, pp. 162–65) when he transferred his authority to his successor. Notably, Guru Nanak passed over his two sons and decided to promote his disciple Angad (1504–1552) to the status of "Guru" within his own lifetime, and he bowed before his own successor, highlighting the fact that it was necessary for the charismatic authority to become radically changed. In this act of humility, and his assumption of the role of "disciple," Guru Nanak was making a clear statement of the primacy of the "message" over the messenger. In so doing, he was asserting the objective independence of the power behind divine revelation, thus establishing the idea that the Guru is "one," even if its expression takes several forms. The idea that the revealed Word is to be assumed as an objective abstract—in no way a personal affect—had far-reaching implications in the development of Sikhism, both in terms of the consolidation of authority and in terms of the evolving scriptural tradition. It is in this sense that Guru Angad claimed the exclusive status of the *bani* (divine utterance) that delivers

Fig. 4.2, *Guru Angad Dev teaching Gurmukhi to Children,* Devender Singh, 2014, Oil on canvas, 91.4 × 61 cm, Kapany Collection

Guru Angad Dev introduced the *Gurmukhi* script, wrote the first *Gurmukhi* primer, and established the first Sikh school at Khadur Sahib. He prepared the first *Gutka* (Prayer Book) by recording the compositions of Guru Nanak in *Gurmukhi*.

Devendersingh

people from the shackles of *karma* and from the discriminatory aspects of the caste system through divine grace. By stressing the inspired nature of the *bani*, he laid down doctrinally the requirement of the compilation of Sikh scripture similar to the Vedas (GGS 1243; P. Singh, 2000, pp. 9–10).

Guru Angad consolidated the nascent Sikh *Panth* in the face of the challenge offered by Guru Nanak's eldest son, Baba Siri Chand, the founder of the monastic Udasi sect. Some of the most significant developments of his times must be noted in the context of the evolving Sikh identity. First, during his reign the importance of the institution of the Guru was firmly established. In fact, Guru Angad mentions his predecessor as "Guru Nanak" for the first time: "The disciples of 'Guru Nanak' do not require any further instruction" (GGS 150). He emphatically declares the necessity of the institutional Guru in the spiritual growth of his audience (GGS 463). Second, Guru Angad made the early-morning bath obligatory for the practice of meditation on the divine Name (*nam simaran*): "During the fourth watch [of the night, in the early] morning [hour], intense longing springs within the consciousness [of true disciples]. [And then they show] their affection for rivers, that is, they go to the rivers for a bath, with the true Name within their hearts and on their lips" (GGS 146). Third, Guru Angad established a new Sikh center at his native village, Khadur, because Guru Nanak's sons made the legal claim as the rightful heirs of their father's properties at Kartarpur. It confirmed an organizational principle that the communal establishment at Kartarpur could not be considered a unique institution, but rather a model that could be cloned and imitated elsewhere. Similarly, the sons of Guru Angad inherited the establishment at Khadur, forcing his successor to move to Goindval ("City of Govind," an epithet for God) on the right bank of the river Beas. The geographical location of this new place was on the main route from Lahore to Delhi. It soon developed into a flourishing town. At Khadur the community kitchen (*langar*) was run by his wife Khivi (Fig. 14.5) who used to serve sweet pudding of rice boiled in milk and butter (*amrit khir ghiali*) to the congregation (GGS 967). In fact, Guru Angad had to appoint a storekeeper (*bhandari*) and a chef (*rasoiya*) for the purpose of looking after the needs of the *Panth* (*Varan Bhai Gurdas* [*VBG*] 11: 14).

Finally, Guru Angad refined the *Gurmukhi* script for recording the compilation of Guru Nanak's hymns. The original *Gurmukhi* script was a systematization of business shorthand (*lande/mahajani*), of the kind Guru Nanak doubtless used professionally as a young man. This was the script that was certainly familiar to *Khatri* merchants of the Punjab, suggesting that the idea of institutional and spiritual overlap could not have struck the early Gurus as any kind of inconsistency. Its use in early Sikh literary tradition was an emphatic rejection of the superiority of Devanagari and Arabic scripts (along with Sanskrit and Arabic and Persian languages) and of the hegemonic authority they represented in the scholarly circles of the time. The use of *Gurmukhi* script added an element of demarcation and self-identity to the Sikh tradition (Fig. 4.2).

To the Punjabis, therefore, the idea of a spiritual truth inscribed in their own native language must have created a sense of empowerment that had been conspicuously absent until Guru Angad popularized the *Gurmukhi* script among the masses. In a certain sense the development and systematization of vernacular language might be seen as creating a bridge between different sectors of society. In his *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson theorizes that the development of vernacular languages has been one of the primary factors in breaking the grip of entrenched sacral authority, and as such has been instrumental in creating unique group identities based on linguistic continuity (Anderson, 1991 [1983], pp. 67–82). The two main languages of Islam, the Arabic of the Qur'an and the highly sophisticated Persian of the literati and officials, were unknown to the

non-elite, who were thus excluded from higher religious instruction (Schimmel, 1982, p. 136). Similarly, Sanskrit was the language of the privileged few in the Hindu society. In this context, the development of the Punjabi vernacular can be seen as both laying the groundwork for an alternative administrative order and creating a sense of spiritual empowerment to classes of people who had been excluded by the prevailing traditions. In fact, the Punjabi language in *Gurmukhi* script is the single most important factor for the preservation of Sikh culture and became the cornerstone of the religious distinctiveness that is part and parcel of the Sikh cultural heritage.

Like his predecessor, Guru Angad passed over his sons and appointed his elderly disciple Amar Das (1479–1574) as his successor before his death in 1552. Notably, a major institutional development took place during the time of the third Guru, who introduced a variety of fresh measures to provide greater cohesion and unity to the ever-growing Sikh *Panth*. These included the establishment of the city of Goindval on the bank of the Beas River, where the three regions of Punjab (Majha, Doaba, and Malwa) meet, the biannual festivals of Divali and Vaisakhi that provided an opportunity for the growing community to get together and meet the Guru, the creation of a well-knit organization by setting up twenty-two seats of authority (called *manjis*, literally "string beds or cots") for attracting new converts, and the preparation of the Goindval *pothis*, collections of the compositions of the first three Gurus and some of the medieval poet-saints. This early move toward the establishment of a more comprehensive administrative system speaks of the rapidity with which the spiritual appeal of Guru Nanak's message was gaining ground, and also of the practicality of those to whom the tradition had been entrusted in dealing with this broadening appeal. For the second and third generation disciples it becomes necessary to turn what were initially emotional truths into written standardized concepts, to objectify them into rituals and ceremonies. This development is imperative for socialization, especially as time removes new converts further and further from the lives of the original founder and immediate disciples.

It is no wonder that Guru Amar Das provided distinctive ceremonies for birth and death. He added his composition *Anand* ("Bliss"; GGS 917–922) to the Sikh liturgy, to be recited on happy occasions. With the advent of the *manji* system, Sikh preachers needed texts to which they could refer and worshippers needed a common frame of reference for communal services. As the geographical base of the *Panth* was rapidly expanding, there was a growing demand for copies of the *bani* in various Sikh congregations (*sangats*). Bhai Gurdas has given the names of Pandha and Bula as the singer and scribe of the third Guru who made copies of the hymns of the Gurus for distribution among Sikhs. It should be emphasized that reforms that Guru Amar Das instituted regarding women were even more significant (Fig. 4.3). He abolished the wearing of veil and the practice of *sati* (self-immolation of wives on the funeral pyres of their dead husbands), permitted widows to remarry, approved women's appointment to positions of authority (*manjis*), and gave all Sikh women rights equal to those of men to conduct prayers and other congregational ceremonies.

Guru Amar Das made the decision to bequeath his spiritual leadership to his devoted son-in-law Ram Das (1534–1581), passing over his own two sons. This was the first time that the office of the Guru remained within the Guru's family, to avoid the possibility of a disputed succession. Most instructively, the portrayal of Guru Ram Das in the Mughal style of nobility marked a departure from the portraits of early Gurus. The fourth Guru founded the city of Ramdaspur in central Punjab, where he constructed a large pool for the purpose of bathing. It was named Amritsar, meaning "the nectar of immortality." These projects required considerable financial and logistical mobilization for which the appointment of territorial "deputies"

(*masands*) became necessary to deal with increasingly complex administrative demands. By now the *Panth* was equal to such an endeavor of expansion, confirming the point that the appeal of Guru Nanak's message had gained wider support and validation.

In addition to his administrative concerns, Guru Ram Das contributed 679 hymns to the growing corpus of scriptural tradition, expanding the musical modes from nineteen to thirty. In particular, the musicality and emotional appeal of his hymns had tremendous impact on his audience. It was Ram Das who explicitly responded to the question "Who is a Sikh?" with the following definition: "He who calls himself Sikh, a follower of the true Guru, should meditate on the divine Name after rising and bathing and recite *Japji* from memory, thus driving away all evil deeds and vices. As day unfolds he sings *gurbani* [utterances of the Gurus]; sitting or rising he medi-

Fig. 4.3, *Guru Amar Das condemning Sati practice (burning of the wife on her husband's funeral pyre)*, Devender Singh, 2014, Oil on canvas, 91.4 × 61 cm, Kapany Collection

Guru Amar Das established the city of Goindval on the banks of the River Beas. He disapproved the social customs of *purdah* (veil) for women, strongly condemned the practice of *sati*, and supported the remarriage of widows. He accorded equality to women and included them in administration of the growing Sikh community. To spread the teaching of Sikhism, the Guru trained 146 *manji*-holders of which fifty-two were women.

Fig. 4.4,
Guru Ram Das and Baba Siri Chand,
Devender Singh, 2014,
Oil on canvas, 91.4 × 61 cm,
Kapany Collection

The life of Guru Ram Das inspires us to lead our lives without *haumai* (self-centered pride) and follow the path of humility. It is recorded in Sikh chronicles that when Baba Siri Chand, the eldest son of Guru Nanak, asked him why he had such a long beard, the Guru replied: "To wipe the dust off the feet of holy men like yourself." The Guru established the town of Ramdaspur (now Amritsar) around a sacred pool (*sarovar*).

tates on the divine Name. He who repeats the divine Name with every breath and bite is indeed a true Sikh [*gursikh*] who gives pleasure to the Guru" (GGS 305–306). Thus, the liturgical requirements of the reciting and singing of the sacred Word became part of the very definition of being a Sikh. The most significant development was related to the self-image of the Sikhs who perceived themselves as unique and distinct from other religious communities of North India. In this context, Guru Ram Das proclaimed that "loyal Sikhs of the Guru" (*gursikhs*) were spiritually greater than the *Bhagats*, *Sants*, and *Sadhs* (GGS 649). The new status of the word "*Gursikh*" points to a greater cohesiveness of the Sikh community. Indeed, the distinction between *us* and *them* was complete during the period of Guru Ram Das.

Guru Ram Das composed the four wedding hymns, *Lavan* ("Circling"), for the solemnization of

Fig. 4.5,
Guru Arjan Dev with Mian Mir laying the cornerstone of the foundation of Sri Harimandir Sahib,
Devender Singh, 2014,
Oil on canvas, 91.4 × 61 cm,
Kapany Collection

Guru Arjan Dev invited Mian Mir, a Muslim saint of Qadiri order from Lahore, to lay the cornerstone of *Sri Harimandir Sahib (Darbar Sahib*), the present-day Golden Temple. The doors on the four sides of the structure signified its acceptance of all humankind. Guru Arjan Dev compiled the *Adi Granth* and installed it ceremonially in the inner sanctum of the *Darbar Sahib* as the scripture of the Sikhs. He is revered as the first martyr in Sikh history after his execution in 1606 on the orders of Mughal Emperor Jahangir.

Sikh marriage (GGS 773–74). His lyrical wedding songs (*ghorian*) were meant to be sung on days before the actual day of marriage. All these wedding hymns are part of a rite of passage into deeper and deeper circles of existence, while the four marital vows reflect the ideals that the Sikh tradition considers essential for a blissful life. With the growth of the town of Ramdaspur, more and more people decided to take up residence there. Some pilgrims used to visit the town during the two annual festivals of Vaisakhi and Divali. Once, there was a special visitor, Baba Siri Chand, the eldest son of Guru Nanak, who was greatly impressed by the disarming humility of Guru Ram Das (Fig. 4.4). This meeting helped to bring his Udasi followers closer to the mainline Sikh tradition.

During the period of Guru Ram Das, a convention was established that hereafter the succession should be limited to his direct descendants. In other words, within the Guru's family of Sodhi *Khatris* the most suitable person was to be chosen. Thus Guru Ram Das designated the youngest of his three sons, Arjan (1563–1606), as his successor because of his humility and devotion. It is no wonder that the very beginning of Guru Arjan's ministry was marked by the determined enmity of his eldest brother, Prithi Chand, who openly challenged his right to succeed their father. Paradoxically, this factionalism became the main impetus behind creative developments within the Sikh community. For Guru Arjan, it was the defining moment in his chartering of a future course of both accommodation and competition. He inherited a vibrant religious community that had rather quickly developed around the model and tenets of Guru Nanak. His twenty-five years of reign were marked by a number of far-reaching institutional developments. First, he built the *Harimandir Sahib* (later known as the "Golden Temple") in the sacred pool of Amritsar, a shining monument to the Sikh faith that remains a central symbol to the community until this day. There is a persistent tradition in Sikh literature that Guru Arjan had fraternal relations with Mian Mir, a Sufi saint of Qadiri order at Lahore. The discourse of religious pluralism during Emperor Akbar's reign might have been responsible for Guru Arjan's invitation to Mian Mir to come to Ramdaspur on the happy occasion of laying the foundation of *Harimandir Sahib/Darbar Sahib* (Fig. 4.5).

The evidence of Guru Arjan's compositions clearly state that the Guru laid the first brick, and the Sufi saint Mian Mir probably laid some additional bricks for the masonry foundation of the *Harimandir Sahib* (P. Singh, 2006, pp. 112–14).

Second, Guru Arjan inherited a rich and substantial scriptural corpus that he took upon himself to systematize and organize into what became the *Adi Granth* ("Original Book"), the key marker of Sikh identity for the generations to come. Indeed, the making of Sikh scripture was a massive editorial undertaking that ended in the establishment of a canon. The *Adi Granth* has always served as the definitive statement of Sikhism's unique spiritual stance. Third, Guru Arjan established the "rule of justice and humility" (*halemi raj*) in the town of Ramdaspur, where, according to the *Adi Granth*, everyone lived in comfort (GGS 74). He proclaimed, "The divine rule prevails in Ramdaspur due to the grace of the Guru. No tax [*jizya*] is levied, nor any fine; there is no collector of taxes" (GGS 430, 817). The administration of the town was evidently in the hands of Guru Arjan, although in a certain sense Ramdaspur was an autonomous town under the Mughal Emperor Akbar. By the end of the sixteenth century the Sikh *Panth* had developed a strong sense of independent identity, which is quite evident from Guru Arjan's assertion, "We are neither Hindu nor *Musalman*" (GGS 1136). In this context, W. H. McLeod fittingly remarks: "The *Panth* now possessed a line of Gurus, a growing number of holy places, distinctive rituals, and its own sacred scripture. There could no longer be any question of vague definition nor uncertain identity" (McLeod, 2006, p. 55).

It is instructive to note that the epilogue

of the Sikh scripture contains the utterances of eleven *Bhatts* ("Eulogists") who composed 123 panegyrics (*savayye*) in praise of the first five Sikh Gurus (GGS 1389–1409). These contemporary bards were trying to make sense of what was happening at the Sikh court at Ramdaspur in light of their own background knowledge. Combining magnificently eulogistic poetry with ancient Hindu mythology, they were offering their particular interpretation of contemporary events to strengthen the faith of the newcomers and already committed members of the *Panth*. They moved immediately to give Guru Arjan and his predecessors a mythological genealogy worthy of the new social order at Ramdaspur. For the *Bhatts*, Guru Arjan reestablished the "Golden Age of Truth" (*satiyug*) in the age of ultimate degeneracy and brought the rule of the mythological king, Raja Janak, back on earth. It is no wonder that their use of regal imagery must have irritated the agents of the most powerful Mughal authorities in the Punjab at that time. The *Bhatts* used the past to ground the present and found the future, but in the process Guru Arjan's spiritual reign became incomparably greater than any earthly kingdom. Thus the main strategy behind the eulogistic compositions of the professional bards has always been to underline the point that the spiritual prowess of Guru Nanak and his successors exceeds that of mythological gods, legendary sages, mythical kings, and historical *Bhagats*. It was part of the ancient triumphant (*digvijay*, "conquest of directions") tradition, meant to proclaim one's cultural and spiritual supremacy over others. The compositions of the Sikh bards, therefore, become meaningful only when understood within the discourse of courtly poetry (P. Singh, 2006, pp. 88–89).

In this context, it is quite significant to mention an early painting of Guru Arjan in the Mughal style in which he is holding a hunting hawk on his hand. In those days a hawk was regarded as the symbol of the aristocracy. Also, Guru Arjan had encouraged his Sikhs to participate in the trade of horses. All these developments clearly indicate that the office of the Guru provided both spiritual and temporal authority. As a matter of fact, the seeds of Sikh militancy were already sown during the period of Guru Arjan, which blossomed during the period of the sixth Guru, Hargobind.

Another development met by Guru Arjan was the dissension within the ranks of the Sikh *Panth*, which became the source of serious conflict. A great number of the Guru's compositions focus on the issue of dealing with the problems created by "slanderers" (*nindak*), who were rival claimants to the position of Guru. The Udasis and the Bhallas (the latter formed by Guru Amar Das's eldest son, Baba Mohan, and his followers) had already established parallel seats of authority and had paved the way for competing views of Sikh identity. The rivalry of these dissenters had been heightened when the younger Arjan was designated for the throne of Guru Ram Das in preference to his eldest brother, Prithi Chand (1558–1618), who even approached the local Mughal administrators to claim the position. At some point Prithi Chand and his followers were branded with the epithet "*Mina*" (meaning "dissembling rogue"). The author of *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* ("The School of Religions"), a mid-seventeenth-century Persian historian called Maubad Zulifkar Ardastani, attests that the number of Sikhs had rapidly increased during Guru Arjan's time and that "there were not many cities in the inhabited countries where some Sikhs were not to be found" (G. Singh, trans., 1967, pp. 57–58). In fact, the growing strength of the Sikh movement attracted the unfavorable attention of the ruling authorities because of the reaction of Muslim revivalists of the Naqshbandi order in Mughal India. There is clear evidence in the compositions of Guru Arjan that a series of complaints were made against him to the functionaries of the Mughal state, giving them an excuse to watch the activities of the Sikhs. The liberal policy of the most accomplished Mughal emperor in Indian history, Akbar (reigned 1556–1605), may have

Fig. 4.6, *Guru Hargobind and Baba Buddha,*
Devender Singh, 2014, Oil on canvas, 91.4 × 61 cm, Kapany Collection

sheltered the Guru and his followers for a time. But within eight months of Akbar's death, Guru Arjan was tortured to death on 30 May 1606, by the orders of the new emperor, Jahangir. The Sikh community identified his death as the first martyrdom, and it became a turning point in the history of the Sikh tradition.

Indeed, a radical reshaping of the Sikh *Panth* took place after Guru Arjan's martyrdom. The sixth Guru, Hargobind (1595–1644), signaled the beginning of this process when, at his investiture, he is said to have donned two swords, symbolizing spiritual (*piri*) as well as temporal (*miri*) sovereignty. The revered Sikh savant Baba Buddha performed his investiture ceremony to the office of the Guru (Fig. 4.6). At the conclusion of this ceremony Guru Hargobind sent out an edict to his followers that from now on they should bring offerings of arms and horses as well as money.

Guru Hargobind's portrait in the Mughal style of nobility portraiture clearly depicted his dual role. He also built the *Akal Takhat* ("Throne of the Timeless One") facing the *Harimandir Sahib*, to represent the Guru's newly assumed temporal authority. Under his direct leadership, the Sikh *Panth* took up arms in order to protect itself from Mughal hostility. Sikhs held that this new development was not undertaken at the cost of their original spiritual base. Rather,

After the martyrdom of his father, Guru Hargobind is the first Sikh Guru to bear arms against the tyranny of the Mughal rule. During this ascension ceremony the young Guru asked Baba Buddha to adorn him with two swords of *miri* and *piri*, symbolizing his dual role of upholding both spiritual and temporal authority. He constructed the *Akal Takhat*—the seat of temporal authority and also the fort of Lohgarh at Amritsar. The Guru fought numerous battles with the Mughals. His release from imprisonment at the Gwalior fort after securing the release of fifty-two Hindu *rajas* ("chieftains") is celebrated as *Bandi Chhor Divas* ("The Day of Release from Imprisonment") by the Sikhs on the festival of Divali.

it was meant to achieve a balance between temporal and spiritual concerns. A Sikh theologian of the period, Bhai Gurdas (1558–1637), defended this martial response as "hedging the orchard of the Sikh faith with the hardy and thorny *kikar* tree" (*VBG* 25.25). After four skirmishes with Mughal troops, Guru Hargobind withdrew to the Shivalik Hills, and Kiratpur became the new center of the mainstream Sikh tradition. Amritsar fell into the hands of the Minas, who established a parallel line of Guruship with the support of the Mughal authorities.

Guru Hargobind had six children—five sons and a daughter—as follows: Gurditta, Ani Rai, and the daughter Bibi Viro were born to Mata Damodari; Suraj Mal and Atal Rai to Mata Marvahi; and Tegh Bahadur to Mata Nanaki. Three of his sons, Baba Gurditta, Atal Rai, and Ani Rai, died in his lifetime. It is important to note that Guru Hargobind designated his grandson Har Rai (1630–1661), Baba Gurditta's younger son, as his successor before he passed away on 3 March 1644 at Kirartpur. This was most probably done in response to Mughal interference in Sikh affairs because Dhir Mal, Baba Gurditta's elder son, had already established a parallel seat of authority at Kartarpur with the help of a revenue-free grant given to him by Emperor Shah Jahan on 29 November 1643 (P. Singh, 2006, p. 77). With the Kartarpur Pothi (1604) in his possession, Dhir Mal laid claim to the office of the Guru. Unsurprisingly, the Mughal emperor had thought of bringing the Sikhs under control by supporting the claims of Dhir Mal and his followers.

During the time of the seventh Guru, the emphasis on armed conflict with the Mughal authorities receded, but Guru Har Rai held court and kept a regular force of Sikh horsemen. He was a man of peace and opened the first herbal medicine dispensary at Kiratpur to take care of the sick and the wounded (Fig.4.7).

Guru Har Rai was popularly known as the "tenderhearted soldier Guru" because of his compassion for wild and domestic animals. He would go hunting but would return with the wild animals alive to keep them in his zoo. A Pahari painting of Guru Har Rai (Fig. 5.6g) depicts him, walking with his dog, in the background of a flowery tree. He encouraged his disciples to plant as many shrubs and trees in the garden as possible. Today, environmental issues are coming into prominence both in the Punjab and in the diaspora. Unsurprisingly, the celebration of Guru Har Rai's birthday in March has been fixed as "Sikh Environment Day."

There are a number of anecdotes concerning the interaction of Mughal authority with Guru Har Rai, particularly his favorable relations with Dara Shikoh (eldest son of Emperor Shah Jahan and heir apparent to the Mughal throne), who sought the Guru's help while he was fleeing in front of the army of his younger brother Aurangzeb, after his defeat in the battle of Samugarh on 29 May 1658. According to the author of an eighteenth century text, *Mahima Prakash Vartak*, Guru Har Rai deployed his own troops at the ferry at Goindval to delay Aurangzeb's army, which was pursuing Dara Shikoh at his heels (Bajwa, 2004, p. 161). When Mughal courtiers reported to Aurangzeb that Guru Har Rai had helped the fugitive prince Dara Shikoh, Aurangzeb asked Raja Jai Singh of Amber to have Guru Har Rai summoned to Delhi. The Guru sent instead his eldest son, Ram Rai, along with his minister, Dargah Mal, who escorted him. At the Mughal court he was asked to explain a verse of Guru Nanak's found in the *Adi Granth:* "The dust of a Muslim is kneaded by a potter into clay and he converts it into pots and bricks which cry out as they burn" (GGS 466). The original context of this verse is a discussion of cremation and inhumation in which Guru Nanak expresses the view that the choice is unimportant. The Muslim remains may find themselves part of the potter's clay, so, in a sense, the one who practices burial may be accidentally cremated in the kiln! Ram Rai answered that a scribal error had been responsible for the use of the word "*Musalman*"; it should have been "*beiman*,"

faithless (Cole and Sambhi, 1978, p. 32). In addition, Ram Rai also played some miraculous tricks in the court. Thus, in order to please the Mughal emperor, Ram Rai deliberately misread one of the lines from the *Adi Granth* and strayed away from the teachings of the Gurus against the performance of miracles. When Guru Har Rai came to know about his son's moral lapse he immediately banished Ram Rai (d. 1687), who ultimately became a Mughal courtier and retired to Dehra Dun. Guru Har Rai designated his younger son, Har Krishan, to be his successor before he passed away at Kiratpur on 6 October 1661. This decision was a direct challenge to Emperor Aurangzeb, who had kept Ram Rai as hostage in Delhi on the assumption that Ram Rai would be the heir apparent of Guru Har Rai and could be manipulated into bringing the Sikhs under control.

Fig. 4.7
Guru Har Rai attending to the wounded and sick,
Devender Singh, 2014,
Oil on canvas, 91.4 × 61 cm,
Kapany Collection

The seventh Guru of the Sikhs was known as a "tender-hearted soldier Guru." He was a man of peace. He lived at Kiratpur, near Anandpur Sahib, and established a herbal medicine dispensary, a garden, and a community kitchen to serve people of all faiths. The Guru traveled extensively in the Malwa and Doaba regions of the Punjab, spreading the divine Name and teachings of the Sikh Gurus. He commanded the Sikhs against any alteration in the original verses of the Sikh scripture.

The eighth Guru, Har Krishan (1656–1664), was barely five years old when he assumed the office of the Guru. His elder brother, Ram Rai, who was passed over in favor of his younger brother, approached the Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707), to seek redress for the injustice done to him by his father. The emperor summoned the young Guru to Delhi through Raja Jai Singh of Amber. Accompanied by his grandmother (Mata Bassi) and his mother (Mata Sulakhani), Guru Har Krishan left for Delhi, instructing his disciples who came to call on him en route. He stayed at Raja Jai Singh's bungalow (*bangla*) where present-day Gurdwara Bangla Sahib is situated. There are some anecdotes about Raja Jai Singh's concealed attempts to authenticate the young Guru's spiritual powers at the bidding of Emperor Aurangzeb. The Guru was fully aware of how his father had banished his elder brother, Ram Rai, for misreading a scriptural verse and for showing miraculous feats in the Mughal court. Anticipating that the emperor would insist that he demonstrate miraculous feats, the Guru refused to meet with him in person. Meanwhile, an epidemic of smallpox was raging in the city of Delhi, and the Guru came out of Raja Jai Singh's bungalow to tend the sick (Fig. 4.8).

During the service of healing the sick Guru Har Krishan was himself afflicted with the disease of smallpox, which ravaged his tender body. He made the pronouncement of designating his successor as "Baba Bakale," meaning that the next Guru would be

found in the town of Bakala, in effect referring to his grand uncle, Tegh Bahadur (youngest son of Guru Hargobind), who lived in the town of Bakala at that time. Guru Har Krishan passed away on 30 March 1664. Most of the paintings of the child-Guru Har Krishan reflect his pious innocence as described in the Sikh Prayer (*Ardas*): "Dwell on Sri Har Krishan, he whose sight dispels all pain."

Fig. 4.8
Guru Har Krishan healing the sick in Delhi,
Devender Singh, 2014,
Oil on canvas, 91.4 × 61 cm,
Kapany Collection

The youngest Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Har Krishan, ascended to the Guruship at the tender age of five. He was a precocious child with a soft and kind heart. During his visit to Delhi, there was an outbreak of smallpox. The young Guru blessed and selflessly tended and healed the sick at the site where Gurdwara Bangla Sahib stands today. During this healing service he himself succumbed to the disease.

During the period of the ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur (1621–1675), the increasing strength of the Sikh movement in the rural areas of the Malwa region of the Punjab once again attracted the hostility of Mughal authorities. The Guru encouraged his followers to be fearless in their pursuit of a just society: "He who holds none in fear, nor is afraid of anyone, is acknowledged as a man of true wisdom" (GGS 1427). In doing so, Guru Tegh Bahadur posed a direct challenge to Emperor Aurangzeb, who had imposed Islamic laws and taxes on non-Muslims. According to an earliest narrative, when a group of Hindu *pandits* (scholars) from Kashmir asked for the Guru's help against Aurangzeb's oppressive measures, he agreed to do whatever was necessary to defend their rights to wear their "sacred threads and frontal marks" (*tilak janju rakha prabh tan ka*, DG 70). A message was sent to the emperor saying that if Guru Tegh Bahadur could be persuaded to accept Islam, the Hindus would convert, as well. Accordingly, the Guru was summoned to Delhi, and when he refused to abandon his faith he was publicly executed on 11 November 1675 (Fig. 4.9).

If the martyrdom of Guru Arjan had helped to bring the Sikh *Panth* together, this second martyrdom helped to make "human rights and freedom of conscience" central to its identity. In this context, Wilfred Cantwell Smith has tellingly remarked that "the attempt forcibly to convert the ninth Guru to an externalized, impersonal Islam clearly made an indelible impression on the martyr's nine-year-old son, Gobind, who reacted slowly but deliberately by eventually organizing the Sikh group into a distinct, formal, symbol-patterned, boundaried community" (Smith, 1981, p. 191). Tradition holds that the Sikhs who were present at the scene of Guru Tegh Bahadur's execution shrank from recognition, concealing their identity for fear they might suffer a similar fate. In order to respond to this new situation, the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh (1666–1708), resolved to impose on his

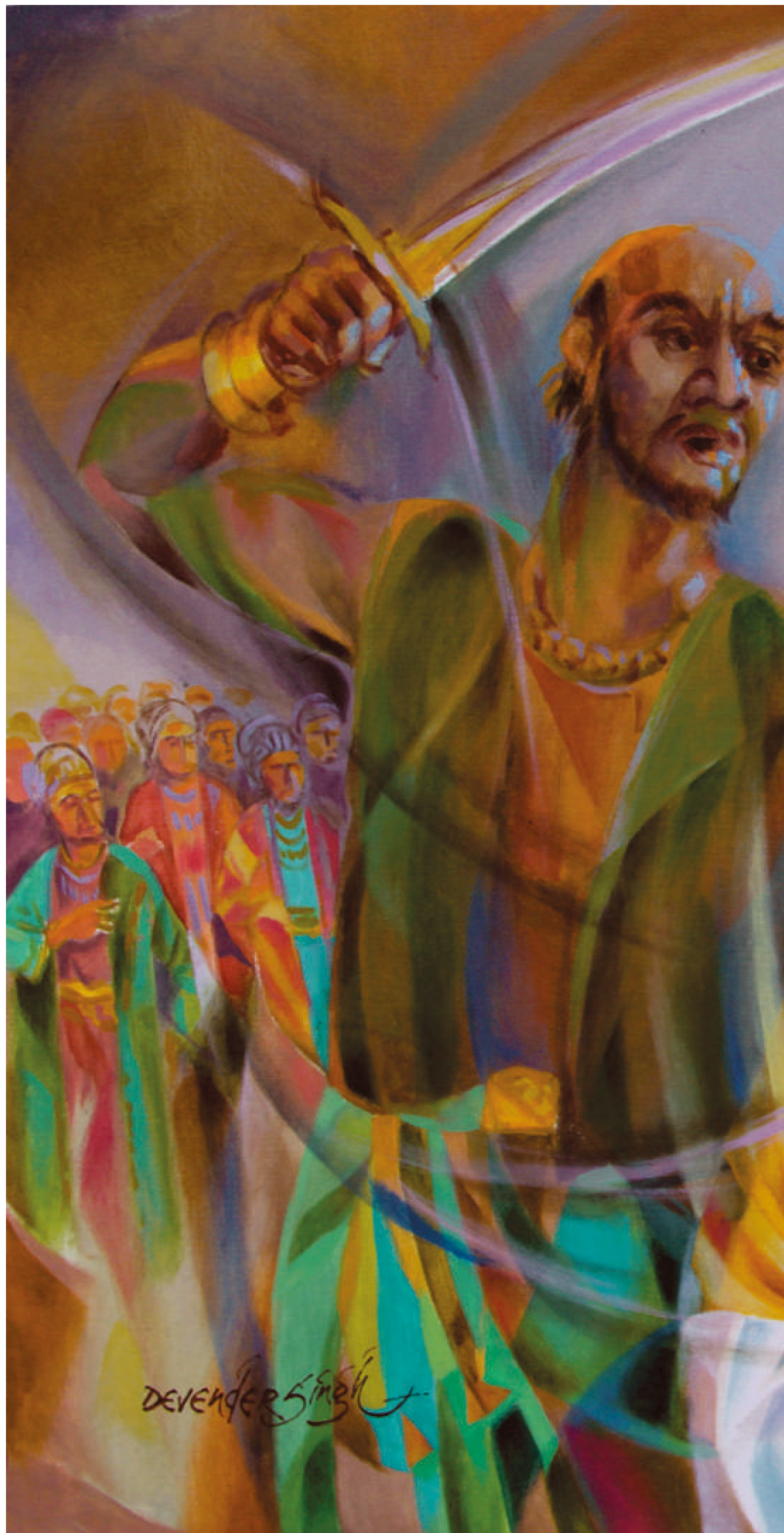


Fig. 4.9,
Guru Tegh Bahadur's Martyrdom,
Devender Singh, 2014,
Oil on canvas, 91.4 × 61 cm,
Kapany Collection

The ninth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Tegh Bahadur, is popularly known as "Hind di Chadar" (the protector of Hindustan) with reference to his supreme sacrifice to protect the religious freedom of all faiths during the tyranny of the Mughal rule of Emperor Aurangzeb. When the Guru refused to accept forcible conversion to Islam, he was tortured and beheaded publicly at Chandni Chowk in Delhi. Gurdwara Sis Ganj marks the site of his martyrdom. The Guru traveled extensively to spread the Sikh teachings and founded the city of Anandpur Sahib.

followers an outward form that would make them instantly recognizable. He restructured the Sikh *Panth* and instituted the *Khalsa* (pure), an order of loyal Sikhs bound by common identity and discipline. On Vaisakhi Day 1699 at Anandpur, Guru Gobind Singh initiated the first so-called "Cherished Five" (*panj piare*), who formed the nucleus of the new order of the *Khalsa*. These five volunteers who responded to the Guru's call for loyalty, and who came from different castes and regions of India, received the initiation through a ceremony that involved sweetened water (*amrit*) stirred with a two-edged sword and sanctified by the recitation of five liturgical prayers. The *Panj Piare*, in turn, administered the *amrit* ceremony to the Guru himself, after which vast crowds are said to have joined the order that day (Fig. 4.10).

Three doctrinally and historically significant issues were linked with the first *amri*t ceremony. First, all who chose to

Guru Gobind Singh created the fraternity of the *Khalsa* ("pure") at Anandpur Sahib during Vaisakhi of 1699. The *Panj Piare* (Cherished Five) were the nucleus of the *Khalsa* to receive *Khande di Pahul*, the rite of the two-edged sword. These were: Bhai Daya Singh, Bhai Dharam Singh, Bhai Himmet Singh, Bhai Muhkam Singh, and Bhai Sahib Singh. Guru Gobind Singh's wife Mata Jito added sugar crystals into the *amrit*, symbolizing courage tempered with sweetness. The Guru ordained the Five Ks for all Sikhs—*kes* (uncut hair), *kangha* (a wooden comb for topknot), *kara* (iron wristlet), *kirpan* (short sword), and *kachha* (undergarment breeches). To remove divisions of caste, all Sikh men were given the name "Singh" (Lion) and women were given "Kaur" (Princess). With the distinct *Khalsa*, Guru Gobind Singh gave all Sikhs opportunity to live lives of courage, sacrifice, and equality.

Fig. 4.10, *Guru Gobind Singh and the Panj Piare* , Devender Singh, 2014, Oil on canvas, 91.4 × 61 cm, Kapany Collection

join the order of the *Khalsa* through the ceremony were understood to have been "reborn" in the house of the Guru and thus to have assumed a new identity. Male members all were given the surname Singh (Lion), and female members were given the surname Kaur (Princess)—likely, in part, to create a parallel system of aristocratic titles in relation to the Rajput hill chiefs of the surrounding areas of Anandpur (Mann, 2004, p. 42). Second, the Guru symbolically transferred his spiritual authority to the Cherished Five when he received the nectar of the double-edged sword from their hands and thus became a part of the *Khalsa Panth* and subject to its collective will. In this way he not only paved the way for the termination of a personal (human) Guruship but also abolished the institution of the elite appointed deputies known as *masands*, who were becoming increasingly disruptive. (Several of the *masands* had refused to forward collections to the Guru, creating factionalism in the Sikh *Panth*.) In addition, Guru Gobind Singh removed the threat posed by competing seats of authority when he declared that the *Khalsa* should have no dealings with the followers of Prithi Chand (*Minas*), Dhir Mal (Guru Har Rai's elder brother, who established his seat at Kartarpur, Jalandhar), and Ram Rai (Guru Har Krishan's elder brother, who established his seat at Dehra Dun). Finally, at the inauguration of the *Khalsa*, Guru Gobind Singh planted the seeds of what would eventually be systematized as the Sikh *Rahit Maryada* ("Code of Conduct"). By sanctifying the hair with *amrit,* he made it "the official seal of the Guru," and the cutting of bodily hair was thus strictly prohibited. The Guru further imposed a rigorous ban on smoking. In essence, he required of the *Khalsa* that they regularly bear the most visible symbols of Sikh identity that would eventually be known as the Five Ks, namely *kes* (uncut hair), *kangha* (a wooden comb for topknot), *kara* (iron wristlet), *kirpan* (short sword), and *kachha* (undergarment breeches).

It is instructive to note that Guru Gobind Singh lived like a prince at Anandpur. In Hew McLeod's words: "Dressed in gorgeous raiment with a plume in his turban, seated on his horse and armed to defend his *Panth*, his is a regal figure which shines brightly in the memory of his Sikhs and gives rise to noble traditions" (McLeod, 1997, p. 61). Indeed, Guru Gobind Singh was the ruler of a spiritual empire in the hearts of his people and they brought the richest presents when they visited him, and were always ready to make any sacrifice at his command. He was certainly the source of envy for both the local Rajput chiefs of the Shivalik area and the Mughal authorities. It is no wonder, then, that the Sikh *Panth*'s collective memory of Guru Gobind Singh is of a regal figure in richly ornamented garments, as he is depicted in the available paintings (Figs. 5.7a and 5.7b). Following the earlier *miri-piri* tradition of Guru Hargobind, Guru Gobind Singh assumed characteristics of a spiritual leader as well as a temporal ruler who had specific responsibilities to protect righteousness (*dharam*). Not surprisingly, waging battle was part of the *dharmic* responsibility of the Guru. The majority of the narrative of his life is devoted to detailed description of a series of battles. Indeed, Guru Gobind Singh was an able spiritual and political leader who maintained a court at Anandpur, and who led an army in many battles throughout his life.

It should be emphasized that the inauguration of the *Khalsa* was the culmination of the canonical period in the development of Sikhism. Guru Gobind Singh also closed the Sikh canon by adding a collection of the works of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, to the original compilation of the *Adi Granth*. Before he died in 1708, he terminated the line of personal (that is, human) Gurus, and installed the *Adi Granth* as the eternal Guru for Sikhs. Thereafter, the authority of the Guru was invested both in the scripture (Guru *Granth*) and in the corporate community (Guru *Panth*).

In sum, the very survival of Guru Nanak's spiritual message largely depended on the superior nature of his compositions (*bani*), both aesthetically and philosophically.

It is difficult to imagine that a less profound doctrine could have withstood the test of time. Just as ideology represents a discourse of meaning in a society, so Guru Nanak's spiritual message became the principal motivating factor in the process of institutionalization. The sober integration of his thought facilitated and lent authority to the efforts of the subsequent Gurus to institutionalize his message. Based initially on religious ideology, however, the distinctive Sikh identity was reinforced by introducing uniquely Sikh liturgical practices, ceremonies, and holy sites, and by the compilation of an authoritative scripture. Sikh community self-consciousness was further heightened by the in-group conflict created by dissenters and slanderers (P. Singh, 2006, pp. 198–99). The successful resisting of the challenge posed by Prithi Chand and his followers involved a heightened loyalty on the part of those who adhered to the mainline tradition. Thus, the conflict created within the Sikh *Panth* by dissidents paradoxically aided the process of crystallization of the Sikh tradition. Further, external conflict afflicted the *Panth* when a series of complaints were made against Guru Arjan to the functionaries of the Mughal state, giving them an excuse to watch the activities of the Sikhs that led to the Guru's martyrdom. Thus, both internal and external pressures on the Sikh *Panth* were largely responsible for the crystallization of the Sikh tradition. The creation of the *Khalsa* by the tenth Guru was unique in two senses: first, it invited all Sikhs to join the Order of the *Khalsa* regardless of their background, and second, it had a coherent vision of political sovereignty. All Sikhs were encouraged to become warriors of righteousness (*dharam*) engaged in a struggle against tyranny. It is no wonder that Guru Nanak's fundamental message of cultivating in life the values of human equality, self-respect (*pati*), dignity, and fearlessness found its practical expression in the lived experience of the *Khalsa*. Some of the cherished moments from the lives of the Sikh Gurus are represented in the works of art in this chapter. These works assist us with fragmentary traces of memory in building an interpretive framework, and creating a coherent and meaningful narrative in this whole process of understanding the Sikh past.

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5

Portraits of the Sikh Gurus

Nirvikar Singh

Introduction

The Sikh tradition takes a somewhat nuanced position with respect to the visual representation of the Sikh Gurus, the founders and spiritual preceptors of the faith. While N. G. K. Singh (2011, 2014) characterizes Sikh art as aniconic—not displaying images of the Divine—she and others (e.g., McLeod, 1991; Goswamy and Smith, 2006; Mann, 2008; Murphy, 2012) note both the existence of and the limits on the representation of the Sikh Gurus, these limits aiming to separate these portraits from contexts where the images might become objects of worship. Therefore, the Sikh perspective is different from that of core Islamic tradition in particular, which would never countenance visual representations of the Prophet Muhammad, and which in many cases frowns upon any depiction of the human form. In the mainstream Sikh faith, one will typically not find portraits of the Sikh Gurus inside the congregation hall, where reading and singing from the *Guru Granth Sahib*, the sacred text, dominate the worship service.

Nevertheless, a robust tradition of depictions of the Sikh Gurus and their lives has emerged over the centuries. This chapter focuses on portraits of the Sikh Gurus from the collection of Dr. Narinder Singh Kapany, using this selection of paintings to provide some indication of the range of such portraiture, in both style and chronology. The remainder of this introduction gives a brief account of the earliest available portraits of the Sikh Gurus. The next two sections turn to early historical portraits found in the Kapany collection, followed by portraits that illustrate the transition to more modern representations. The penultimate section considers some examples of contemporary artists' depictions, and a concluding section summarizes the chapter.

The earliest portraits of the Sikh Gurus with a confirmed date were of the first two Sikh Gurus, Guru Nanak (1469–1539) and Guru Angad (1504–1552), but these appeared only in 1658 in the Bala *janamsakhi* (McLeod, 1991), over a century after either Guru had lived.[1] However, nineteenth century traditions, as documented by

Left: Detail of Fig. 5.8
From Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh: The Ten Sovereigns
Pahari, from the workshop of Purkhu of Kangra
Early 19th century
Opaque watercolors on paper
42 × 41 cm
Kapany Collection

Fig. 5.1, *Guru Tegh Bahadur, The Ninth Sikh Guru,* Northern India or Pakistan, Ca. 1670, Opaque watercolor on paper, 22.2 × 16.5 cm (image); 27.3 × 20.9 cm (overall), Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.94

Macauliffe (1909) and Randhawa (1970), suggest that contemporary portraits were painted of the sixth and ninth Gurus, Guru Hargobind (1595–1642) and Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621–1675), with the former predating the Bala *janamsakhi*. Mann (2008), based on his own more recent research, suggests that these portraits still exist in private collections. Mann also provides evidence for contemporary portraits of the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh (1666–1675), including one from his childhood, in private collections.

Another early source of portraits of the Sikh Gurus is the set commissioned by Ram Rai (1646–1687), the older brother of the eighth Guru, Har Krishan (1656–1664). Ram Rai was disowned by his father, Guru Har Rai (1630–1661), the seventh Guru, for misrepresenting Sikh teachings to the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb enabled Ram Rai to establish his own following in Dehra Dun, in the Himalayan foothills in modern-day Uttarakhand. These portraits were painted as murals in Ram Rai's residence there, and are dated to about 1685. They include all the first seven Gurus acknowledged by Sikhs today (Kamboj, 2003), as well as of Ram Rai, though obviously not the last three (including his younger brother), whom Ram Rai would have rejected. The portraits clearly constitute an aspect of Ram Rai's attempt to assert his claim as successor to Guru Har Rai, a claim that met with little success even in the short run. This set in Dehradun may therefore be the earliest source of known as well as extant portraits of Guru Amar Das (1479–1574), Guru Ram Das (1534–1581), Guru Arjan (1563–1606), and Guru Har Rai.

Portraits of the Sikh Gurus become more common in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. If we connect this tradition of portraiture to more explicit assertions of temporal—in addition to spiritual—sovereignty, with these assertions themselves responding to imperial oppression, this increased commonness is understandable, given Sikh history. In particular, after Guru Arjan was martyred at the hands of Mughal authorities in 1606, Guru Hargobind is said to have worn two swords, representing joint spiritual and temporal authority. Furthermore, he had the *Akal Takht* built in the precincts of the *Harimandir*, or *Darbar Sahib*, in Amritsar, to serve as a location for this more explicit temporal authority. In this historical context, along with the diffusion of Mughal styles of visual representation and symbolism of authority, it is understandable that the earliest known painting of a Sikh Guru is that of Guru Hargobind. From this perspective, portraiture was not about providing a material object of worship (although this may be difficult to separate from remembrance, as described by Macauliffe, 1909), but rather was a means of representing sovereignty. As Sikh sovereignty expanded in the eighteenth century in particular, portraiture became more common.

Early Historical Portraits

The Kapany Collection contains a large number and variety of portraits of Sikh Gurus, mostly from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including some particularly fine paintings, as well as a modern copy of a significant set of portraits of all ten Gurus, from the early nineteenth century. This section treats this collection roughly chronologically.

The oldest portrait in this selection is of Guru Tegh Bahadur (Fig. 5.1) and is dated to approximately 1670. It is unusual in its simplicity of background and composition. There are no attendants, and there is little ornamentation, with the exception of the falcon and the halo (or nimbus). These signs of sovereignty, temporal and spiritual, respectively, are common both in Mughal miniatures and in Sikh portraiture of the period. The style of clothes and turban worn by Guru Tegh Bahadur also fit the portraiture of Mughal emperors, although their simplicity distinguishes the representation of the spiritual leader. The style of this portrait is likely influenced by the fact that, as was often the case, the artist would have been trained in or inspired by the painters of the Mughal

court or those of vassal states.[2] If the dating is accurate, it would mean that the portrait was done in the Guru's lifetime, although that is no indication that the Guru modeled for it.

The next portrait (Fig. 5.2) is dated about 1750, and is from the Punjab plains.[3] A later inscription in Devanagari identifies the figure as Guru Hargobind, but this has been called into question (Goswamy and Smith, 2006, p. 138) because it lacks any of the symbols normally associated with that Guru (weapons and falcon in particular), which had become fairly typical by that time. Guru Hargobind was also viewed, and usually portrayed, as more robust in physique than this depiction. It is possible that the artist was relying on his imagination, or that the labeling is a later and inaccurate naming of the figure.[4] Indeed, some aspects of the composition, such as the staff and prayer beads, are reminiscent of depictions of Guru Har Rai, yet there is no labeling or claim to this effect. In any case, the colors and patterns of this piece are distinctive and beautiful. The nimbus is missing, though this is a feature that does not appear consistently in portraits of the Sikh Gurus. The attendant with the fly-whisk is a typical part of many such compositions, and indicates the Guru's high status, and, contrary to the doubts expressed above, is consistent with Guru Hargobind's assertion of temporal authority.

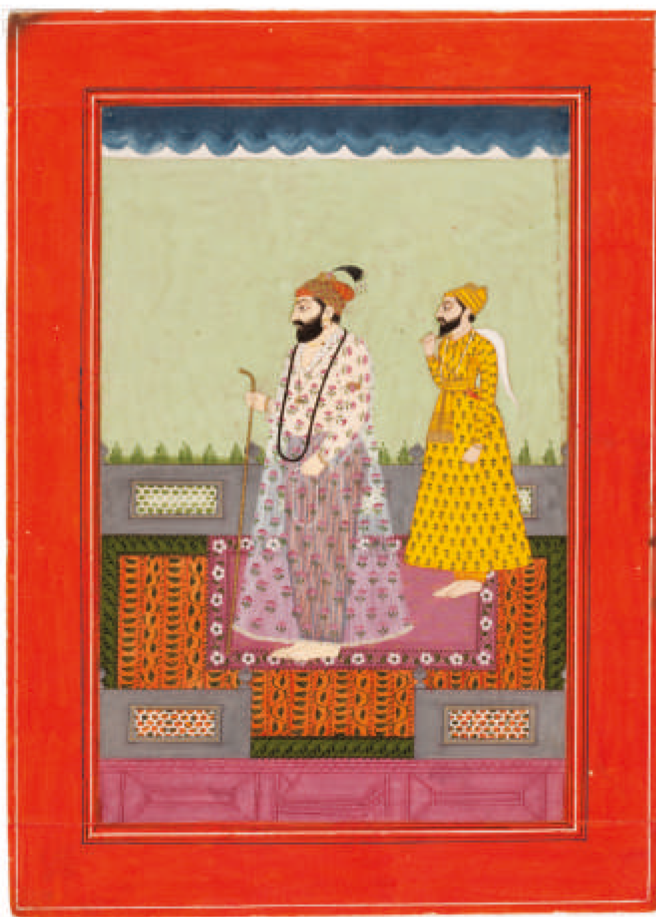

Fig. 5.2, *Guru Hargobind on a terrace, accompanied by an attendant,* Northern India or Pakistan, Ca. 1730–1750, Opaque watercolor on paper, 25.4 × 18.4 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.59

The painting of Guru Nanak (Fig. 5.3) is dated at about 1770. It is distinctive in being from a workshop outside the Punjab region, possibly the cities of Lucknow or Faizabad (both in what is now the state of Uttar Pradesh), based on the style and dating. There is some uncertainty about whether it is a portrait of the Guru or of a devout follower, but the manner of dress, as represented in the turban, robes, and scarf—early on, Guru Nanak was described as dressing to stand out from followers of existing religious traditions of his time—may favor the former identification. The colors and composition are delicate and compelling, and the red *pothi* (book) also fits with the special place of Guru Nanak in Indian tradition, as having collected his own divinely inspired verses in such a book.[5]

The next portrait of Guru Nanak (Fig. 5.4) provides a nice comparison to the previous one. It is also eighteenth century, but it is in a style consistent with the painters of the Punjab hills (now Himachal Pradesh). The composition, with a canopy, the Muslim minstrel Mardana playing the rabab, and Bala holding a peacock-feather whisk, is found in other paintings of Guru Nanak.[6] The Guru's dress is also common in many portraits of him from this period or slightly after. The robes and turban are similar to the previous portrait, but here he also has prayer beads and a staff. The diagonal of the figures, balanced by the green plant, and the different

Fig. 5.3, *Guru Nanak,* India, probably Lucknow or Faizabad, Uttar Pradesh state, Ca. 1770–1800, Opaque watercolor on paper, 49 × 33.7 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.60

Fig. 5.4, *Guru Nanak and his companions Mardana and Bhai Bala* India or Pakistan, Ca. 1700–1800, Opaque watercolor on paper, 21.6 × 17.8 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.93

colored clothes provide an appealing visual composition.

The set of five portraits in Figure 5.5 is dated to the first decade of the nineteenth century, and includes Guru Nanak (Fig. 5.5a), Guru Amar Das (Fig. 5.5b), Guru Ram Das (Fig. 5.5c), Guru Hargobind (Fig. 5.5d), and Guru Tegh Bahadur (Fig. 5.5e). The depiction of Guru Nanak is atypical, outside of *janamsakhi* portraits, in showing him as a young man, although not unique.[7] Consistent with the earliest Sikh traditions, his only companion in this picture is the Muslim minstrel Mardana, while Bala, who was inserted later in *janamsakhi* accounts (cf. endnote 6), is absent. The other four Gurus are depicted in ways that are quite familiar, in terms of represented age, symbols, and status. The falcon held by Guru Tegh Bahadur echoes the depiction in Figure 5.1, but here there is also an attendant and clothing that is more indicative of sovereign status. Like the earlier portrait, and standing out from the other four pictures in this set, the Guru is shown standing, but in a more dynamic stance than the seventeenth century painting in Figure 5.1. This set is particularly distinguished by its bold use of color, from the red and black borders, to the red and dark green carpets in three of the paintings, and to the careful contrasts in the colors of the Gurus' costumes. However, while the color composition of this set is striking, it does not seem to allow any more specific inference about location or traditions.

The portraits in Figure 5.6 represent a rare collection of a complete set of individual paintings of all ten Sikh Gurus. The images

Fig. 5.5a, *Nanak the First Teacher, 1800–1810,* Northern India or Pakistan, Ca. 1800–1810, Opaque watercolor and gold on paper, 15.4 × 23.6 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 5.5b, *Guru Amar Das,* Northern India or Pakistan, Ca. 1800–1810, Opaque watercolor and gold on paper, 17.6 × 25.8 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 5.5c, *Guru Ram Das,* Northern India or Pakistan, Ca. 1800–1810, Opaque watercolor and gold on paper, 17.4 × 25.6 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 5.5d, *Guru Hargobind,* Northern India or Pakistan, Ca. 1800–1810, Opaque watercolor and gold on paper, 17.5 × 25.9 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 5.5e, *Guru Tegh Bahadur,* Northern India or Pakistan, Ca. 1800–1810, Opaque watercolor and gold on paper, 17.4 × 25.6 cm, Kapany Collection

shown here are actually late-twentieth century copies of the original set, which is attributed to the workshop of Nainsukh of Guler, and dated to about 1815, shortly after that small hill state was absorbed into Maharaja Ranjit Singh's territories (Aijazuddin, 1977, p. 35). The original collection of ten portraits is split between the Lahore Museum in Pakistan and the Government Museum and Art Gallery in Chandigarh, India, making this unified set of copies more significant. Compared to the previous set (Fig. 5.5), the colors are more subdued or even subtle, but there is still variety and strength in the compositions. Many elements of the previously discussed portraits are present in this set, including symbols of sovereignty and spirituality. One can point out a few features of note, without coming close to exhausting the visual and symbolic elements of this beautiful collection. Guru Nanak's depiction shows commonalities with Figure 5.4, with the addition of a third figure (presumably a spiritual seeker), in addition to Mardana and Bala. As in Figures 5.3 and 5.4, the Guru holds a book, which, according to early Sikh traditions, would be of his original compositions (Mann, 2001). Somewhat atypically, both Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan are depicted with gray in their beards. Guru Arjan is shown with what is likely the Sikhs' sacred text,[8] but the presence of a semi-naked sadhu is unusual.[9] Guru Hargobind is typical in that the Guru is shown as physically robust, and holding a falcon, though he is not on a horse or holding a sword as is common in other portraits (compare the depiction in Goswamy, 2000, p. 46). In the portrait of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the Guru carries a sword and shield, emphasizing his warrior status in a way consistent with historical accounts of him as an active defender of the Sikh faith in the face of Mughal oppression. Guru Har Rai's portrayal is emblematic of his association with nature, as he is portrayed with an animal, a bird, and a flowering tree. Inexplicably, only the seventh Guru is depicted with the nimbus (here a thin red circle) in these portraits. Interestingly, the depiction of Guru Har Krishan shows him as being a little older than the young age at which he is recorded to have died. A musician, typically found only in paintings of Guru Nanak, also makes his way into this picture of the boy Guru. Finally, Guru Gobind Singh is shown familiarly astride his horse, with sword, bow and arrow, and a plumed turban.

Figures 5.7a and 5.7b display two more portraits of Guru Gobind Singh, who, along with Guru Nanak, is depicted most often among the ten Gurus in Sikh art. Both the paintings are from the first decades of the nineteenth century, and are variants of the most typical depiction of Guru Gobind Singh, showing him astride his horse, with attendants and royal accoutrements. The horse in the series of Figure 5.6 seems to be the most common representation (piebald or pinto),[10] but variant colors are depicted in the examples in Figure 5.7. Finally, an early nineteenth century painting, this time from the Kangra workshop of Purkhu (Fig. 5.8), shows all ten Gurus in a careful arrangement of panels. Many of the composition elements seen in earlier examples in this discussion are present in these portraits. For example, the picture of Guru Nanak in this arrangement can be compared to that in Figure 5.3. As pointed out by Goswamy and Smith (2006, p. 118), Guru Nanak, Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjan, and Guru Tegh Bahadur—the six Gurus whose compositions are in the *Guru Granth Sahib*—are the only ones shown with folios or books representing the sacred text. The composition in Figure 5.8 also echoes Mughal-style paintings that feature multiple generations of the emperors from the house of Timur and Babur. While there are similar themes of sovereignty, unity, and destiny in those paintings, the depiction of the sacred text in this Sikh variation is a particularly important contrast from Mughal representations.

Transition to the Present

By the end of the nineteenth century,

Fig. 5.6a, *Guru Nanak*, India, 20th century, Opaque watercolor on paper, 16.5 × 21 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 5.6b, *Guru Angad,* India, 20th century Opaque watercolor on paper, 15.2 × 19.1 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 5.6c, *Guru Amar Das,* India, 20th century Opaque watercolor on paper, 15.2 × 19.1 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 5.6d, *Guru Ram Das,* India, 20th century Opaque watercolor on paper, 15.2 × 19.1 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 5.6e, *Guru Arjan,* India, 20th century
Opaque watercolor on paper, 15.2 × 19.1 cm,
Kapany Collection

Fig. 5.6f, *Guru Hargobind*, 20th century
Opaque watercolor on paper, 15.2 × 20.3 cm,
Kapany Collection

Fig. 5.6g, *Guru Har Rai,* India, 20th century
Opaque watercolor on paper, 15.2 × 18.8 cm,
Kapany Collection

Fig. 5.6h, *Guru Har Krishan,* India, 20th century
Opaque watercolor on paper, 15.2 × 19.1 cm,
Kapany Collection

Fig. 5.6i, *Guru Tegh Bahadur,* India, 20th century
Opaque watercolor on paper, 15.2 × 20.3 cm,
Kapany Collection

Fig. 5.6j, *Guru Gobind Singh,* India, 20th century
Opaque watercolor on paper, 14.6 × 17.8 cm,
Kapany Collection

paintings of the Sikh Gurus continued to be based on traditional themes and elements, but also with incorporation of European forms of representation, such as greater use of perspective, as well new materials, like machine-made paper (Goswamy, 2000, pp. 38–41).[11] Lithography and woodcuts[12] became popular means of democratizing access to images of the Gurus, in addition to the elite art of painting. McLeod (1991) speculates that the output of art depicting the Sikh Gurus dwindled in the first half of the twentieth century, because of the influence of Singh Sabha reformers who were concerned about idolatry, especially in the context of a mass movement to remove Hindu idols from the precincts of historic Sikh gurdwaras. These claims still need to be assessed more systematically, along with other aspects of this period of Sikh history. It is also likely that traditional patronage mechanisms for the production of art with religious themes had been disrupted by this period.

The case of Sobha Singh, the preeminent Sikh artist of the twentieth century, seems to bear out the idea of a complex set of determinants for the production of paintings of the Gurus.[13] Sobha Singh was born in 1901, and showed an early affinity for art. Beginning his career as a draftsman in the British Indian Army, he studied European painting as well in this period. He began his career as a freelance painter in 1923, and was inspired to paint the Sikh Gurus after witnessing Sikhs attempting to wrest control of gurdwaras from corrupt caretakers (the mahants) at that time. Though he initially worked as a commercial artist, he painted portraits of Guru Nanak as early as the 1930s. According to Randhawa (1985), "The earliest portrait of Guru Nanak Dev [by Sobha Singh], entitled 'Nam Khumari Nanaka Charhi rahe din raat,' was painted in 1937. Here the Guru, with his half-closed eyes, is shown in a mystic trance. No wonder, this painting reached many Sikh homes and was worshipped as an icon."[14]

Left: Fig. 5.7a
Guru Gobind Singh
Northern India or Pakistan
1840
Opaque watercolor on paper
19.2 × 25.5 cm
Kapany Collection

Below: Fig. 5.7b
Guru Gobind Singh on horseback with his attendants
Northern India
Ca. 1830
Opaque watercolor on paper
18.5 × 15.2 cm
Asian Art Museum of San Francisco
Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.95

Left: Fig. 5.8
From Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh: The Ten Sovereigns
Pahari, from the workshop of Purkhu of Kangra
Early 19th century
Opaque watercolors on paper
42 × 41 cm
Kapany Collection

Fig. 5.9, *Guru Nanak,* Sobha Singh, 1969, Oil on canvas, 56 × 71 cm,
Gifted by Dr. R. K. Janmeja Singh to the Kapany Collection

Perhaps the best-known painting of Guru Nanak is one with his hand raised in blessing, painted in the 1950s. Sobha Singh painted numerous portraits of other Sikh Gurus, as well, especially Guru Gobind Singh, and the 1960s were a time of high demand for the artist's original work. Figure 5.9, a painting of Guru Nanak from the Kapany Collection, was completed in 1969, the 500th anniversary of Guru Nanak's birth.[15]

Contemporary Artists

The twentieth century saw the incorporation of Western modes and techniques of representative art into portraiture of the Sikh Gurus. This process involved absorption of European styles into Sikh art, but, arguably, not any innovation in content, especially with respect to religious themes. More recent decades have seen a liberation of styles in Indian art overall, perhaps catching up, to some extent, with trends that began over a century ago in the West. This broadening of perspective has also influenced paintings of the Sikh Gurus.

The most striking example of this development is the work of Arpana Caur. Born in 1954, Caur has an instantly recognizable style. Her many paintings of Guru Nanak share a basic representative form drawn from

Fig. 5.10, *Guru Nanak,* Arpana Caur, 2006, Oil on canvas, 83.4 × 121.4 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 5.11, *The Golden Saint*, Arpana Caur, 2001, Oil on canvas, 147.3 × 200.7 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 5.12, *Guru Gobind Singh*, Arpana Caur, 2010, Oil on canvas, 20.3 × 28 cm, Kapany Collection

many influences. The shape of the headdress can be found in nineteenth century paintings of the Guru, while the eyes are an extreme, almost haunting version of the "half-closed eyes" and "mystic trance" found in Sobha Singh's representations. Beyond that, however, is a unique vision, attempting to go beyond the physical representation to convey the depths of spiritual experience. The diptych *Immersion/Emergence* (Figs. 14.1a and 14.1b) seeks to capture the Guru's revelatory experience from which his teachings began. In the green "Nanak" (Fig. 14.2), the Guru's body encompasses natural imagery as well as human conflict: the variety of existence and actions in the world. Black is a common color in these works, and the untitled portrait in Figure 5.10 shows an almost wistful Guru Nanak, draped by color beneath what might be a shooting star or comet.[16]

Caur's treatment of Guru Nanak extends to more traditional themes, but again presented in unique ways, as in *Endless Journey* (Fig. 14.3) with its striking image of his travels to teach and spread his spiritual message. In Figure 5.11, the painting titled *The Golden Saint* shows Guru Nanak stopping with his hand an enormous boulder thrown on him at Panja Sahib, in present-day Pakistan. This is an image that echoes older illustrations of the tale, but with the evildoer, Wali Qandhari, as a dark, wraithlike presence.

Finally, Caur has also depicted other Gurus, as in the delicately colored sketch of Guru Gobind Singh (Fig. 5.12). There is some semblance of the heroic pose of the Guru found in representations by Sobha Singh, but Caur evokes an altogether more ethereal or gentle look overall. Indeed, the Guru is shown with pen rather than sword, composing verses praising the Divine, perhaps.

Devender Singh (b. 1947) is another contemporary Sikh artist with a unique style, using geometric patterns of varied colors, often dominated by golden shades, to create a lightness and dynamism in his compositions. This is particularly apparent in Figure 5.13, from his Bara Maha series, representing the summer month of *Asaarh*.[17] The artist does not explicitly identify the figure as Guru Arjan, but since the Guru died on the first day of that month, meditating while undergoing torture in extreme heat, this is a plausible interpretation.

A major contribution of Devender Singh has been to create a series of paintings of important Sikh women

Fig. 5.13, *Barah Maha – Asaarh,* Devender Singh, 2012, Oil on canvas, 91.4 × 61 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 5.14, *Bebe Nanaki*, Devender Singh. 2011, Oil on canvas, 91.4 × 61 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 5.15, *Mata Sahib Kaur*, Devender Singh, 2011, Oil on canvas, 91.4 × 61 cm, Kapany Collection

from the times of the Gurus. These women are shown participating fully in the life of the nascent community, in the company of the Sikh Gurus. The two examples here are particularly significant: Bebe Nanaki gives Mardana his *rabab* while her brother Guru Nanak looks on, marking the beginning of his spiritual journeys (Fig. 5.14); and Mata Sahib Kaur completes the *amrit* for the ceremony initiating the Khalsa and presents it to her husband, Guru Gobind Singh (Fig. 5.15).

Finally, Devender Singh has also produced a full series of paintings illustrating scenes from the lives of the Sikh Gurus. Two examples with historical significance are shown in Figures 4.2 and 4.5. In the first, Guru Angad, who is credited with systematizing the Gurmukhi script in which the *Guru Granth Sahib* is written, teaches the alphabet to young Sikh children. In the second, Guru Arjan looks on as the Sufi *pir* (holy man) known as Mian Mir lays the foundation of the *Harmandir Sahib* at the Guru's request.[18]

Conclusion

The examples from the Kapany Collection used in this essay allow us to see the variety and evolution of depictions of the Sikh Gurus over the centuries. Sikh and non-Sikh painters alike have brought different sensibilities, different emphases, and different influences to bear on their work. They have produced this art for the elites and for the masses. They have shaped how the Sikh Gurus are perceived and represented in other media. They have tried to capture the power of the message of the Gurus, as well as their struggles and challenges both as human beings and as leaders of a minority community. For Sikhs, *gurbani* is the ultimate guide to living well and connecting with the Divine, while visual representations of the Gurus have also found a place in the life of the community.

I am grateful to Sonia Dhami, Trevor Merrion, and Paul Taylor for guidance and for detailed comments. Any remaining shortcomings are my sole responsibility.

Endnotes

[1] *Janamsakhis* are accounts of the life of Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith, and were typically illustrated with scenes from his life, including his anointing his successor, but would not contain illustrations of later successors to the Guru's seat. The Bala *janamsakhi* of 1658 is not the first manuscript of this nature, but older manuscripts, from a somewhat different tradition of accounts of Guru Nanak's life, do not have portraits of the Sikh Gurus. See Mann (2010) for a fuller account of the different *janamsakhi* traditions and their significance.

[2] The profile view also accords with Mughal imperial portraits. The complex semiotics and multiple influences on Mughal portraiture, which underlie the portraits of the Sikh Gurus from this period, have received numerous scholarly treatments, and are well beyond the scope of this brief chapter. See Gonzalez (2015) for an excellent recent analysis, including a discussion of the significance of profile views. One example of complexity is the use of the nimbus in imperial Mughal portraits, along with the question of European influence, which predated the earliest known portraits of the Sikh Gurus.

[3] It may seem odd to use specific years for approximate dates, but here I am following the practice of art historians on whose work I have drawn for this chapter. An alternative phrasing, "mid-eighteenth century," could seem too imprecise by comparison. For other examples of early eighteenth century portraits of the Gurus, see Goswamy (2000).

[4] Significantly, the same collection of Goswamy and Smith (2006) also includes another portrait of Guru Hargobind (p. 143) which fits the physical characterization, but also lacks a falcon and swords: indeed, the Guru in that portrait is shown holding prayer beads. This suggests that the representation issue is more complex and nuanced than is at first apparent. This might be observed with respect to the Sikh tradition overall, which can tend to be straitjacketed by simple pairings such as "warrior-saint," a common epithet, perhaps most strikingly used in Madra and Singh (1999).

[5] This was the Guru Harsahai *pothi*, described in Mann (2001). Other Indian "saints" of this period, such as Kabir, typically did not collect their own verses in written form.

[6] Mardana is Guru Nanak's companion in all *janamsakhi* accounts of his multiple spiritual journeys, going back to the earliest ones. Bala, of the *janamsakhi* tradition that bears his name, is a later addition to these accounts. As a Hindu companion, he may have been introduced to balance the Muslim companion for Guru Nanak. See the discussion in Mann (2008, 2010).

[7] For example, see a possible portrait from the second quarter of the eighteenth century, in Goswamy and Smith (2006), p. 123.

[8] This interpretation fits with Guru Arjan's central role in preparing what became, a century later, the *Guru Granth Sahib* of the Sikhs.

[9] While Guru Nanak is recorded as having debated with *sadhus* and *yogis* in his extensive travels, and they appear in some *janamsakhi* paintings, there is no similar account pertaining to Guru Arjan.

[10] See also Goswamy and Smith (2006), p. 149, and Stronge (1999), p. 36.

[11] Much of the influence of European art styles is seen in portraits of Sikh princes, and in depictions of everyday subjects that would not have merited attention in an earlier period.

[12] For example, see the woodcut depicted in McLeod (1991), Figure 3, showing all ten Gurus together in a group.

[13] This discussion is based on an article written by M. S. Randhawa, Sobha Singh's contemporary, in 1985, originally published in the *Tribune* newspaper on November 24, and now available at www.123himachal.com/sobhasingh_gallery.html.

[14] Interestingly, McLeod (1991, p. 31) provides a different perspective, saying that Sobha Singh would not appeal to a Western audience because "the spiritual emphasis…easily cloys." Randhawa's characterization of the painting as "an icon" illustrates the complexities in Sikh views of portraits of the Gurus, which were alluded to in the chapter's introduction.

[15] Another influential Sikh artist of the twentieth century was Kirpal Singh. Being born in 1923, he was almost a generation younger than Sobha Singh. His first exhibition was in 1955 (Randhawa, 1990), and he became well-known for depicting scenes from Sikh history, including battles fought by Guru Gobind Singh, rather than

"spirit-imbued portraits" of the Sikh Gurus (McLeod, 1991, p. 31). His contemporary, Phulan Rani, also painted a broad set of themes, producing an acclaimed set of paintings of Guru Nanak for the fifth centenary of his birth (N. G. K. Singh, 2014, p. 427), plus other portraits of the Gurus (www.phulanrani.com/gallery_Gurus.html).

[16] For examples of these, and further discussion of Caur's work, see Milford-Lutzker (2011).

[17] Bara Maha means "twelve months," and refers to either of two compositions by Guru Nanak and Guru Arjan, included in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, each of which uses the cycle of the year to convey a spiritual message. The quote incorporated in the painting is from the composition of Guru Nanak in Raag Tukhari.

[18] Milford-Lutzker (2016) discusses other contemporary Sikh artists, including the Singh Twins, Amrita and Rabindra Kaur. Their best-known work shows Sikh life in modern Britain, and their painting *1984* is a moving rendition of the horrors of the attack on the Darbar Sahib in June of that year; but they also have a number of paintings of the Sikh Gurus, showing the enlightenment of Guru Amar Das, Guru Angad destroying the five vices, *janamsakhi* scenes, and more, each playfully combining different artistic and iconographic sensibilities into something uniquely their own vision.

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6

Guru Nanak at the Asian Art Museum: A Biography in the Language of Colors

Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh

Through looking at paintings we can learn to step outside the mode of being that is ours and to open ourselves to modes of being that are other.
Nigel Wentworth, *The Phenomenology of Painting,* p. 246

The opening of the Satinder Kaur Kapany Gallery of Sikh Art at the Asian Art Museum (AAM) in San Francisco in 2003 was a historic moment. For the 25 million Sikhs worldwide, this permanent display of their artistic legacy in a major U.S. museum was an affirmation of their personal and collective identity. For the diasporic community, the Satinder Kaur Kapany Gallery brings together contemporary realities that anthropologist Arjun Appadurai categorizes as "mediascapes"and "ethnoscapes"(Appudurai, 1991, 295–310). This visual site in San Francisco (*mediascape*) offers diasporic Sikhs an access to their cultural and religious heritage (*ethnoscape*), which not only brings their past dynamically alive, but also makes their distant homeland seem close. The synergy between the "home" and "host" countries in this Sikh imagery reproduces an authentic sense of being and belonging. For those outside the faith, the materials introduce some of the fundamental aspects of a vibrant North Indian tradition. They open up new horizons for the Western imagination. This chapter focuses on the unbound set of forty-one *Janamsakhi* illustrations from the Kapany Collection at the AAM.[1] In a symphony of colors and compositional elements, these late–Mughal style illustrations record the life of the founder Guru Nanak (1469–1539). While strengthening the devotion of the Sikhs, the material quality of these paintings makes it easier for the general public to get a feel for the relatively unknown tradition of the Sikhs. As we *see* the Guru's life, we gain an *insight into* the central Sikh theological and ethical message.

Fig. 6.17, *Guru Nanak visiting his sister Bibi Nanaki, from a manuscript of the Janam Sakhi (Life Stories),* Lahore, Pakistan, Ca. 1800–1900, Opaque, watercolors on paper, 20.3 × 17.5 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.58.24

This exquisite collection is a part of the rich tradition in which the biography of Guru Nanak has come down through the generations. Shortly after he passed away, mythic narratives (*sakhis*) about

his birth and life (*janam*) began to circulate and have since been very popular in the collective Sikh imagination. Many of the oral accounts were written down, and some even illustrated. Over the years, several renditions, such as the Bala, Miharban, Adi, and Puratan, have surfaced. Despite the personal loyalties and proclivities of their various authors, the *Janamsakhis* invariably underscore the importance and uniqueness of Guru Nanak's birth and life. Several narratives construct concrete scenes to contextualize Guru Nanak's verse recorded in the *Guru Granth*, creating a symbiosis between his person and word. Contemporary artists such as Arpana Caur and Arpita Singh are continuing this tradition through their unique postmodern aesthetic. Professor Hew McLeod quite rightly said that Sikh art has its genesis in the *Janamsakhis* (McLeod, 1991, p. 4).

Wherever sizable and influential communities of the Sikhs developed, the familiar *Janamsakhi* stories were put in easily identifiable images. These happened to be not only in the religious centers in the Punjab like Amritsar, Anandpur, and Damdama, but also in Patna in Bihar where the Tenth Guru was born, and in Nanded in Maharashtra where he died. Patrons from these centers commissioned local artists, who were able to use templates with sketches of episodes from the Guru's life. A creased sheet outlining seventy-four events in Guru Nanak's life was recently discovered, proving the speculation of scholars that templates were in circulation (Goswamy, 2006, pp. 36–37). Consequently, numerous *Janamsakhis* were produced in myriad regions and at various periods. In a fascinating variation, Guru Nanak is depicted in Guler and Kangra styles of North India, just as he is in the Eastern Murshidabadi or Southern Deccani styles. The collapse of Mughal sovereignty in Delhi and Avadh quickened the dispersal of artists all across North India—ranging from the Punjab to Bengal. The artists who painted him were Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, or Jain, and they presented the Sikh Guru through the lens of their respective religious beliefs; much of their interpretation depended on their personal interest and individual talent.

This wide dispersion makes historical documentation difficult in many cases. For the Kapany Unbound Set, we do not know the artist or the date or place of production. The AAM dates the paintings between 1800 and 1900, and sometimes identifies Lahore, Pakistan, or Murshidabad (Bengal) as their region of origin. Discerning an Awadhi style, Robert J. Del Bonta places the paintings toward the end of the nineteenth century (Del Bonta, 1999, p. 68). B. N. Goswamy at one point dates them to the early nineteenth century (Goswamy, 2006, p. 34); however, the six folios reproduced in his volume are dated to 1755–1770, with Patna or Murshidabad as their locus.[2] In a personal conversation with Dr. Kapany, I learnt that a manuscript with these folios came down through his family, and that his ancestor was the *jathedar* of the *Gurdwara Sahib* in Patna. It is possible, then, that the collection was produced in Patna. A distinct stylistic difference within the elusive set complicates matters even more. The folios of the Guru with Datatre, Bhagat Dhru, Prehlad, King Janak, robber Sajjan, and disciples of Bal Nath have a very different hue and air. Their brown, swirling, rocky terrain is quite distinct, and much more seems to be happening compositionally in their frames. These are less geometric, and they lack the discipline of the mainstream paintings where delightful yellows and reds prevail. Evidently, at some point in their history, two different manuscripts were combined.[3]

The religious background of the artist or artists has also puzzled scholars. Professor Goswamy suggests that the painter might have been a Muslim (Goswamy, 2006, p. 52). But in spite of the beautifully executed Mughal tropes throughout the set, the artist betrays ignorance of basic Muslim experience. The scene of Guru Nanak in Mecca (Fig. 6.1) is striking. Here the Guru is sitting in the courtyard of the mosque with his companion beside him. In the inner center of the mosque

Fig. 6.1, *Guru Nanak and his disciples converse with Muslim clerics, from a manuscript of the Janam Sakhi (Life Stories),* India, probably Murshidabad, West Bengal state, Ca. 1750–1800, Opaque watercolors on paper, 20.3 × 17.1 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.58.22

Fig. 6.2, *Bhai Bala recites the life story of Guru Nanak to Guru Angad and onlookers, from a manuscript of the Janam Sakhi (Life Stories),* India, probably Murshidabad, West Bengal state, Ca. 1755–1770, Opaque watercolors on paper, 20.6 × 17.8 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.58.1

Fig. 6.3, *Guru Nanak meeting with his brother-in-law Jai Ram, from a manuscript of the Janam Sakhi (Life Stories),* India, probably Murshidabad, West Bengal state, Ca. 1800–1900, Opaque watercolors on paper, 20.3 × 16.5 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.58.5

Fig. 6.4, *Guru Nanak meets the poet Kabir, from a manuscript of the Janam Sakhi (Life Stories)*, India, probably Murshidabad, West Bengal state, Ca. 1800–1900, Opaque watercolors on paper, 20.3 × 17.1 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.58.28

appears a Shiva *linga* flanked by two images, and a stream (of milk?) flows from the *linga* across the courtyard into a bowl on the left of the frame. This sacred space is a metonymy for Islam, and no Muslim would ever have represented it with a *linga* or images. This painting is the work of a hand accustomed to Shiva worship; it does not belong to Muslim imagination.

What we know for sure is that the set belongs to the Bala tradition, because in most of the scenes, a bearded Bhai Bala, in a characteristic Hindu outfit, appears with the Guru. Bhai Bala, a Sandhu Jatt from Guru Nanak's village of Talvandi, is popularly believed to have been the Guru's playmate, and subsequently his companion during his extensive travels.[4] We repeatedly see Bhai Bala in a pleated *dhoti* tucked around his waist with one end draping from his right shoulder down his bare chest. Actually, in the very first scene (Fig. 6.2), Guru Nanak is absent; instead, Bhai Bala is reverently bowing to the second Guru, who is seated on a cushioned pedestal outdoors. Two more people activate the pictorial narrative. The man is Paira Mokha, remembered in the Bala rendition as the copyist who recorded the narrative as he heard it from the lips of Bhai Bala. The other is a woman dressed in pink and red, confidently looking in the direction of Guru Angad. She is fashionably dressed, has henna on her feet and hands, and wears pretty bracelets, necklace, earrings, and anklets. Her scarf embracing her face and upper body is drawn back just enough for us to see her dark hair and earrings. A small water pot rests beside her, but we do not get the sense that she is "attending to household work" as noted by Goswamy (2006, p. 98). Rather, just like the three male figures, her hands are gracefully folded together. Clearly, she is greeting Guru Angad and the Guru is greeting her in turn. She comes across as an authentic participant in early Sikh history. Unfortunately, few women are heard or seen in the *Janamsakhis*, so her presence at the very outset is significant. The composition intimates that Bhai Bala will orally rewind the past and move it forward for Guru Nanak's successor, his contemporaries, and future generations of men and women. Thus mnemonics of sight and sound are put in motion.

In keeping with the basic *Janamsakhi* pattern, this set of paintings unfolds the life of Guru Nanak from an endearing little boy going to school with curls peeping from his turban on either side of his face, through a mustached youth getting married, to a bearded middle-aged person traveling to various places and interacting not only with holy men but also with political figures (such as Emperor Babur), robbers, demons, gods, and humble folk like the carpenter Bhai Lalo.[5] Missing is his gray and white beard that has become the Guru's iconic portrait. In keeping with the basic *Janamsakhi* pattern, the paintings evoke Guru Nanak's inclusive personality that transcended religious stereotypes current in his milieu. The Guru wears the vertical red *tilak* associated with Vaishnava Hindus on his forehead, just as he wears the robes and turban associated with Muslim Sufis. These motifs from two different traditions do not reproduce some sort of a "composite" or a "hybrid" model; rather, they convincingly convey to the viewer a figure beyond the either–or religious categories prevalent in medieval India. As we see Guru Nanak engage in his multiethnic, multireligious, and multicultural cosmos, we become sensitive to the multifaceted sensory richness of human existence.

The overall impulse is to portray the Guru's spirituality in his human form. Frequently we see Guru Nanak with a halo, a motif derived from the late Mughal period. But even without such an external marker, Guru Nanak's simple pose, whether standing, sitting, or lying down, and his gentle gestures, addressing people from various strata of society, spell out his intrinsic sensitivity and strength. The Guru shows deference to his elders—to his brother-in-law Jairam (Fig. 6.3) and to Bhagat Kabir (Fig. 6.4), and yet in his humble bowing gesture this sagelike reservoir

Fig. 6.5, *Guru Nanak at School*, India, probably Murshidabad, West Bengal state, Ca. 1755–1770, Opaque watercolors on paper, 20.6 × 16.5 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.58.2

Fig. 6.6, *Guru Nanak and the holy man Sant Ren, from a manuscript of the Janam Sakhi (Life Story)*, India, probably Murshidabad, West Bengal state, Ca. 1750–1800, Opaque watercolors on paper, 20.3 × 16.5 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.58.4

of spiritual wisdom and personal peace radiates enormous force.[6] He fights no battles. He shows no anger. He is not dramatic. No matter what the setting may be, there is a perpetual calm and at-homeness in the world about him.

Guru Nanak's respect for the human body emerges as a major theme. With one exception (the scene of the graveyard), the Guru is always dressed in a robe coming down to his ankles with a sash neatly tied around his waist, and a matching turban over his head. Even as a little boy on his first day at school, he is formally dressed and turbaned, displaying a maturity beyond his years (Fig. 6.5). Subsequently, he appears as an antithesis to the scantily dressed Yogis, Naths, and other ascetics with their long uncovered hair, often unkempt (Figs. 6.6, 6.7, and 6.8). Asceticism was popular in Guru Nanak's milieu; to feel nothing that the body feels has been the ideal of spiritually oriented saints across traditions. The *Janamsakhis* highlight Guru Nanak's stress on a different mode of ethics. When the father gives young Nanak some cash to start a business, he opts to spend it on feeding ascetics and so we see him seated in their midst (Fig. 6.6). Nanak's red turban and matching robes fully draped over his teenage body form a striking contrast with the minimally covered, some even ash-smeared, mendicants. There is nothing schematic or abstract about the Guru and the mendicants; nor are they being symbolically substituted. In their intrinsically powerful pictorial juxtaposition, they are before us in flesh and blood—sending visceral messages that we show respect for the human body. The philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer famously defined hermeneutics as a singular process constituting interpretation, understanding, and application (Gadamer, 1989, p. 309). His theoretical reflections are enlivened by the *Janamsakhi* illustrations. They offer us a visual hermeneutics of scriptural verses: rather than "smear the bodies with ashes, renounce clothes, and go naked—*tani bhasam lagai bastar chodhi tani naganu bhaia*" (*Guru Granth Sahib*, or GGS: 1127), we must "wear the outfit of divine honor and never go naked—*painana rakhi pati parmesur phir nage nahi thivana*" (GGS: 1019) (Singh, 2004, pp. 284–302).[7]

The colorful frames continue to validate the

secular world, and to reject hegemonies of caste or class. Guru Nanak sitting by the well (Fig. 6.9) captures a profound spirituality rooted in the daily rhythms of life. This vibrant scene offers a triple perspective. In the far back-left sits a man beside a fire beneath a lush tree. He has a slate-blue turban, but his chest is bare, and so are his legs below the knees. Parallel to him on the right sits an operator of a Persian wheel, fully robed and turbaned—in the same slate-blue color. He holds the central drive shaft, while two oxen turn the wheel as they walk around the well. In the middle ground are two more oxen sitting beside each other, with their backs to another well. In contrast, the Persian wheel is not in motion here, and it seems as though the animals are taking a break. In the foreground Guru Nanak, dressed in a yellow robe, is seated on a lighter yellow carpet. He forms the midpoint of a vigorous diagonal with a Hindu Bala in pink behind him, and a devotee in white bowing at his feet in front (identified in the literary texts as the son of Guru Nanak's Muslim companion and *rabab* player Mardana). The whole pictorial horizon brims with the Guru's spirituality. The fact that he has no halo does not diminish his radiance. With him, the speech of the protagonists, the flickering flames, the rustling leaves, the gurgling Persian wheel, the mooing or snoring cows, along with the silence of the inactive well, all artistically come together to whisper the beauty, mystery, and sacredness of everyday life. For a Sikh spectator, the Persian wheel with its buckets of water draws up scriptural verses that celebrate the Divine in mundane activities. The third Guru praises "the melodious language of the Persian wheel, for it too says, You! You!—*harhat bhi tun tun karahi boleh bhali ban*" (GGS: 1420). The scene is saturated with Guru Nanak's melodious verse in Rag Prabhati, giving us a taste of the ambrosial waters coming out of that infinite well:

Mera prabh rang ghanau at rurau
Din daial pritam manmohan at ras lal sagurau
Upar kup gagan panihari amrit pivanhara (GGS: 1331)

My Beloved is utterly glorious,
brilliantly crimson!
Compassionate, beneficent,
beloved, enticer of the hearts.
The well is up high, the skies
draw out the waters,
So we drink the divine
ambrosia…

The lingering impact of the painting endows every act with enchantment—be it cooking or drawing water, be it work or rest. Animate or inanimate, all beings participate equally in the web of creation, as do people of various professions, classes, and religions. The illustrations enable spectators to receive the Guru emotionally and absorb his teachings at that subconscious level where they simply morph into their attitudes and activities.

Even when the Guru works as a grocer, he is fully in tune with his religiosity. There are two rather similar depictions of Guru Nanak as a teenager seated in the *modikhana*, and both are spectacular. As in Rajput and royal portraits he is presented in partial profile. His seating and framing imply his royal status. He is placed in *jhrokha,* or a throne window, where Rajput and Mughal kings typically sat to give audience. In Figure 6.10, Guru Nanak is engaged in dialogue with a Sufi saint (Khwaja Khidr) while his relative Jairam appears behind him. In Figure 6.11, Bhai Bala replaces Jairam, and the yellow and orange colors worn by the protagonists are reversed. In these visually compartmentalized scenes, a haloed Guru is regally seated indoors with a sash, his supplies neatly arranged on a verandah-like platform outside. Echoing the repertoire of Persian painting, the architectural space is latticed with intricate geometric designs that border the architectural structure and even show up on the woven baskets. Bright crimson is reiterated in the frames of the windows and doors. In Figure 6.10 the artist chooses to embellish the surface of the

Right: Fig. 6.8, *Guru Nanak encounters a group of ascetics at Kurukshetra, from a manuscript of the Janam Sakhi (Life Stories),* India, probably Murshidabad, West Bengal state, Ca. 1755–1770, Pigments on paper, 20.3 × 17.1 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.58.37

Fig. 6.7, *Guru Nanak meets Nath Siddhas at the village of Achal Batala, from a manuscript of the Janam Sakhi (Life Stories),* India, Ca. 1800–1850, Pigments on paper, 20.9 × 17.8 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.58.31

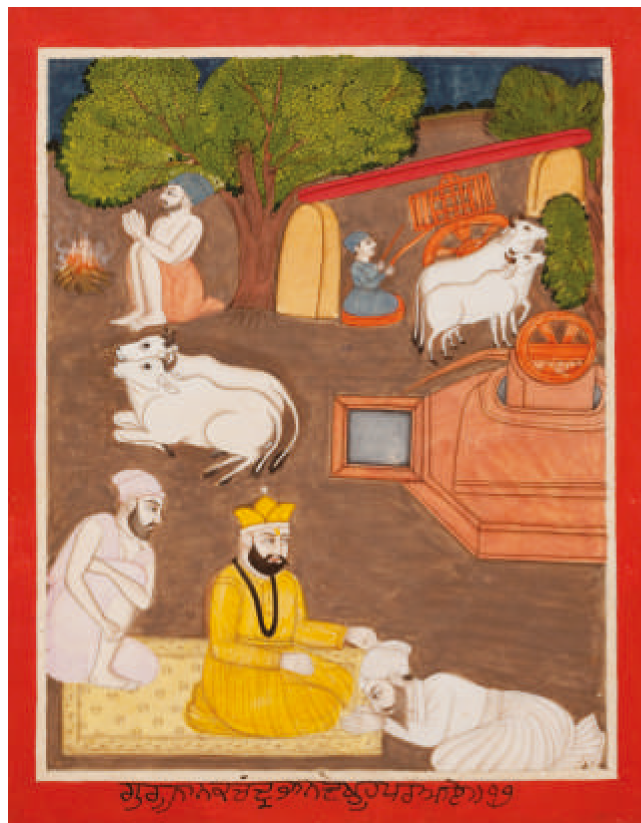

Fig. 6.9, *Guru Nanak's meeting with Mardana's son, from a manuscript of the Janam Sakhi (Life Stories),* Lahore, Pakistan, Ca. 1800–1900, Opaque watercolors on paper, 20.3 × 16.8 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.58.40

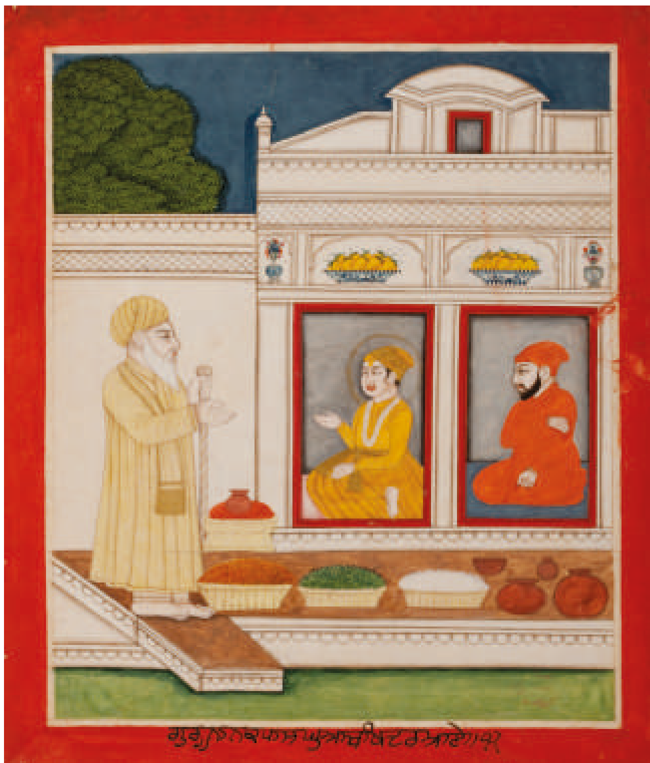

Fig. 6.10, *Guru Nanak in the provision house, from a manuscript of the Janam Sakhi (Life Stories),* Lahore, Pakistan, Ca. 1800–1900, Opaque watercolors on paper, 20.3 × 17.8 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.58.11

Fig. 6.11, *Guru Nanak in the provision house, from a manuscript of the Janam Sakhi (Life Stories),* Lahore, Pakistan, Ca. 1800–1900, Opaque watercolors on paper, 20.3 × 16.5 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.58.6

exterior wall with symmetric bowls of luscious fruit and vases of flowers. In Figure 6.11 the bird perched on the terrace and a second soaring into the skies enhance each other's beauty. An acid-green tree against a nocturnal sky constitutes their natural landscape. Enticing for the spectator is the merchandise! Rectangular containers flamboyantly display hearty grains, rice, and spices; the earthenware pots and jars enigmatically conceal nutritious products. The ladle popping out from one of the pots makes it all the more realistic. Is there butter in it? Mustard-seed oil? Buttermilk? Flitting from one commodity to the next, our hungry eyes come to rest on the Guru's hand extended so delicately. His gesture of generosity leaves us with a feeling of delicious fullness.

The young Guru looks at the audience, who would be shoppers, not courtiers. His gentle gaze reproduces a mesmerizing encounter. Amidst it we spot a scale encircled by several weights in different sizes, and realize what the grocer Nanak is really up to:

Man taraji cit tula teri sev saraf kamava

My mind is the scale, consciousness the weights, and service to you, my assessed value (GGS: 731)

In his business transactions, Guru Nanak is solely dedicated to serving the Divine. So no matter how much he gives away, the containers continue to overflow. In the *Guru Granth* we hear him say that the weights, scales, balance, and the weigher are but that One Itself (*ape kanda tol taraji ape tolanhara*, GGS: 731). The merchandise seen in the shop and the

Fig. 6.12, *Guru Nanak and the cobra's shade, from a manuscript of the Janam Sakhi (Life Stories),* Lahore, Pakistan, Ca. 1800–1900, Opaque watercolors on paper, 20.3 × 16.5 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.58.3

work surrounding it are imbued with metaphysical significance.

These simple commercial scenes provide viewers a rich understanding of the Guru's hymns. As they materialize his textual motifs and metaphors, they inspire celebration of every bit of this world—by weighing our consciousness ever with the Divine.

The repertoire of paintings exuberantly continues to affirm the different phases of his life. Temporality is validated as we see Guru Nanak go through the various rites of passage. The image of him in school exhibiting phenomenal dignity is strikingly similar to the first illustration in the B-40 *Janamsakhi* (Singh, 2013, pp. 28–65).[8] In a conventional manner, we find him asleep with a cobra shading the young lad (Fig. 6.12).

Unique to this collection are the four lovely depictions of Guru Nanak's wedding. The festivities are relayed in the entrancing language of pinks, yellows, oranges, and golden-brown. In Guru Nanak's wedding procession (Fig. 6.13), the young groom with only a mustache (no beard yet!) is confidently riding a white horse. The minuscule detailing of designs on the horse heightens its ornamental vigor. Men walking beside the groom on horseback are all in a festive mood. Some blow trumpets, some play the drums, some light fireworks while others sparklers, and some dance excitedly. The groom in a golden brown outfit is decked in an ornamental turban with a plume, and he has his halo. His marriage and divinity are not antithetical by any means. Though the procession is moving forward, several protagonists are turning back to see the groom, the center of the festivities. The closest to him turning back is perhaps Bhai Bala—attending to the needs of the groom-Guru. We also recognize the turbaned Jairam in a red outfit with a golden sash. Sadly, no women are present. This is in keeping with the custom of the wedding party (*barat*): only males accompany the groom to the bride's house.

Next in the sequence captures a prenuptial moment (Fig. 6.14), but once again, only men are present. The young groom sits across a white-bearded gentleman in pink who perhaps is Bhai Chona, the father of Sulakhni, the bride. He is not the priest who officiates at the wedding, as suggested by Professor Goswamy (2006, p. 52). We see the priest in another frame (Fig. 6.15) where he is dressed in pink like Bhai Chona, and also has a beard, but his chest is bare, and he wears a *dhoti* typical of a Brahmin priest. Face to face in Figure 6.14, the bride's father (I think) and the groom each has own attendant waving a fan, though the Guru's appears more fervent because of the way he stretches out and arches over him. Stylistically, the painting is extremely refined. The son-in-law and the father-in-law are greeting each other in an interior space made up with *qanats* (tent panels) under a bright red canopy. The bilateral symmetry of their reception extends to other members on each side, and is rhythmically repeated beyond the enclosure into the garden reaching outside the main gate. The central carpet is made up of red and pink stripes that run diagonally across, and as these stripes strike the green hexagons with red circles on the yellow panels of the surrounding tent, they fill the air with tremendous joy. This space is ideal for the acoustical effect of trumpets, tablas, *dholaks*, *rabab*, and cymbals of the enthusiastic performers. Between the enclosure and the outside gate is thick foliage from which emerge four elegant horses. Though we actually see only one rider we get the impression that many more guests are arriving. The galloping sounds merge with the musical melodies. The lively visual and aural tones amplify our anticipation for the wedding ceremony.

Finally we see the bride Sulakhni, her name meaning "Beautiful." She is not wearing any veil. Her eyes are open. Long and fish-shaped, they show her beauty, and they show her as an authentic observant. Sulakhni has a distinctive red scarf on her upper body, but the rest of her dress is golden brown, just like her groom's outfit. So when they are sitting together, their matching attires create a warm

Right: Fig. 6.14, *Guru Nanak's marriage—the reception of the wedding party, from a manuscript of the Janam Sakhi (Life Stories),* India (Lahore), Ca. 1800s, Pigments on paper, 20.3 × 16.5 cm Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.58.7

Fig. 6.13, *Guru Nanak's wedding procession, from a manuscript of the Janam Sakhi (Life Stories),* Lahore, Pakistan, Ca. 1800–1900, Opaque watercolors and gold on paper, 20.3 × 16.5 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.58.8

Fig. 6.16, *Guru Nanak's marriage—departure of the Doli, from a manuscript of the Janam Sakhi (Life Stories),* Lahore, Pakistan, Ca. 1800s, Pigments on paper, 20.3 × 16.5 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.58.10

Fig. 6.15, *Guru Nanak's phere (wedding ceremony), from a manuscript of the Janam Sakhi (Life Stories),* Lahore, Pakistan
Ca. 1800–1900, Opaque watercolors and gold on paper, 20.3 × 17.8 cm (image); 50.8 × 40.6 cm (mat),
Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.58.9

intimacy. Even the plume on her head ornament matches his. In the ears of a Sikh spectator echoes the verse from the *Guru Granth:* "*ek joti dui murti*—same light, two bodies" (GGS: 788). The artist touchingly relays the spiritual light shared by the husband and the wife.

Both are sitting on a pedestal beside the nuptial fire. The traditional Indic marriage custom is in place. The priest with bowls of grains, butter, and water is officiating the ceremony. Men, women, and children are witnessing it with their hands joined together. This somber atmosphere, however, quickly changes as our eyes move up the architectural space to the three windows, which give us a glimpse of several women. In the extreme left, a group is enthusiastically looking below at the cermony —even though the canopy may be in the way. Like us, they are spectators! The other two windows open into scenes of dancing and clapping. The bodice of one of the performers is quite revealing. None of them are veiled. Through this vertical juxtaposition, we simultaneously get to participate in the rite of passage and in the ensuing entertainment.

Fig. 6.17, *Guru Nanak visiting his sister Bibi Nanaki, from a manuscript of the Janam Sakhi (Life Stories),* Lahore, Pakistan, Ca. 1800–1900, Opaque, watercolors on paper, 20.3 × 17.5 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.58.24

The finale in this sequence is the return of the husband with his newly wedded wife (Fig. 6.16). He is out in the front, between the charioteer steering the oxen and the carriage occupied by female passengers. Conventionally, on the Indic horizon, the departure of the bride from her parental home is a sorrowful rite of passage. But in this instance, the bright colors, the lively gestures of the protagonists, the bounce of the oxen and the bells around their necks, and the spirited horizontal momentum of the composition are all so delightful. The crimson of the carriage is picked up by the varied decorative motifs on the oxen and the shoes of the two men who lead the party—only to be complemented by their dazzling white outfits and the white of the oxen. Bride Sulakhni is amidst her companions; an older figure is beside her, and two young women sit across from her in relaxed poses. What is she experiencing as she makes her journey from her natal to her married home? What lies in front of her? What did she leave behind? What does she feel

for her husband, the beloved Guru? We can't read her mind; we question, we wonder. This is what the *Janamsakhi* illustrations are about.

Another delightful scene from the Kapany Collection captures the meeting between Guru Nanak and his sister Nanaki (Fig. 6.17). Affection pours out as their arms reach out to greet each other. In this equilateral triangular scene, the viewer moves briskly from the wide floral designs along the rhythmic designs of the 60-degree interior angled walls to the ever-narrowing distance between the brother and sister. The floor has the same pattern we witnessed on the tent panels in the wedding scene. The two are facing each other: Guru Nanak is with his companions the Hindu Bala and the Muslim Mardana; Nanaki is with her female relative. The architectural backdrop and the physical setting of the protagonists reinforce the emotional union between the siblings. The divine nature of the Guru becomes ever so visible through these human encounters. In this way his lovely hymns, like "*mori run jhun laia bhaine savan aia*—peacocks have burst into melody, O sister, the monsoon has arrived" (GGS: 557), are tangibly accessed. Flowing from his deep unconscious, Guru Nanak's verbal embrace—"O sister"(*bhain*)—is perfectly translated into the language of colors.

In a different context, Guru Nanak (on his travels in the Bengal region) is shown conversing with a group of young females in dignified long robes and covered heads (Fig. 6.18). There is something curious about the positioning of the protagonists and the setting overall. Bhai Bala is a step behind the Guru as they stand across seven women under a tree—the only bit of foliage in the scene. The background is a white cityscape against blue skies. This panoramic configuration devoid of interstitial space consists of intricate architectural designs, pavilions, and domes. In the entire set this is the sole cityscape. In the foreground are a *rabab* and a cheerful ram beside the women, while two small dogs are on the side of the Guru. The story is about the country ruled by women. With the exception of the Miharban, this ancient story with Nath antecedents has enjoyed immense popularity among the *Janamsakhi* traditions. In a way it is a feminist utopia, much like the one dreamed by the Bengali writer Rokeya Hossain, for the women govern all spheres of private and public life, and are highly successful as manifested by its urban landscape (Hossain, 2005). Since Hossain herself was Bengali, it is possible that this pioneer Muslim feminist got her story from the same ancient source. The Sikh Guru–Bangladeshi feminist link goes to prove that *Janamsakhis* are an untapped source that can be useful to researchers in various fields.[9]

What is entirely missing in Hossain's text but is critical to the ancient story is the misogynistic twist: the women are actually temptresses and sorceresses. In this case they lured Mardana as he was searching for food, and turned him into a ram with their magic thread. In the illustration, Guru Nanak has come in search of his companion. Though the Guru sees through everything, his half-open questioning hand gestures "where?" The women give no clues—in fact, two have their faces turned backward, pretending to look for the lost fellow. The ram, however, is absolutely thrilled! His front right hoof is raised in excitement as he approaches the visitors. Mardana's love and devotion—in any embodiment—overflows. Its playfulness continues to abide, sensitizing viewers to their own living, feeling, communicative corporeal self.

As the story goes, Guru Nanak's hands untie the string so the ram turns back into Mardana, and the women praise the Guru for his supernatural powers. The Guru does not take on the dramatic persona of a magician. His unobtrusive act—a touch of the hand—brings about consequential changes. The *Janamsakhis* are full of narratives about the Guru performing such miracles. He can make empty containers full with grain, he can turn a mosque around, he can cool a monster's boiling cauldron of oil, he can be delicately shaded by a cobra, and so on and on.… In his study of the *Janamsakhis*, Professor McLeod categorized the narrative anecdotes into

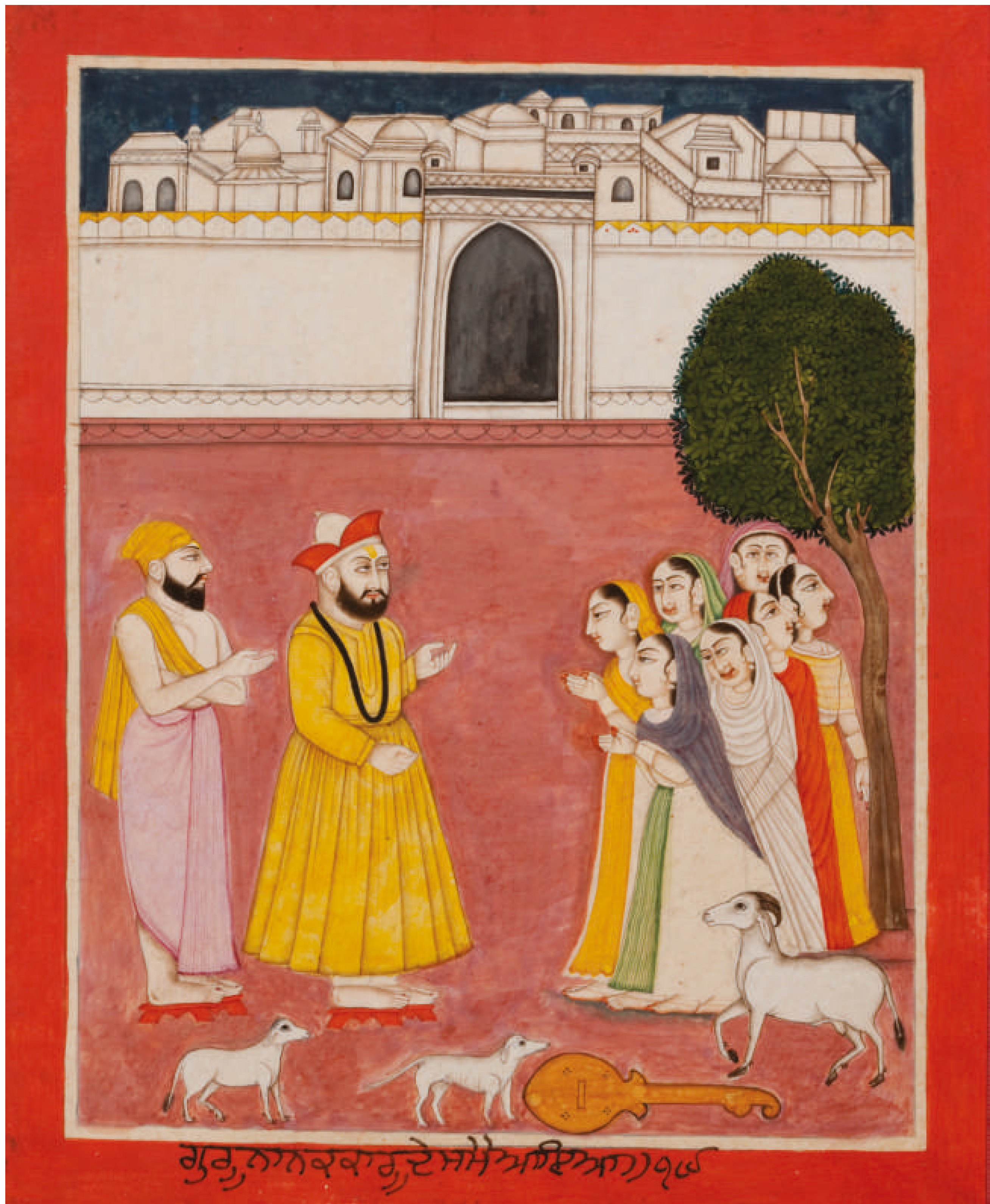

Fig. 6.18, *Guru Nanak in Kamarupa, the land ruled by women, from a manuscript of the Janam Sakhi (Life Stories),* India, probably Murshidabad, West Bengal state, Ca. 1755–1770, Colors on paper, 20.3 × 16.5 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.58.15

moralistic, chimeric fairy tales, as well as devotional and etiological legends (McLeod, 1980, pp. 82–105). It is a highly sophisticated and useful typology.

We must not, however, overlook the element of wonder shared by them all—the fundamental Sikh aesthetic principle of *vismad*. Without it, we miss out on the beauty and force of the *Janamsakhi* narratives. From the Sanskrit root *smi*, the word is etymologically related to the Greek *meidian*, to smile, and Latin *miraculum,* to wonder (Davis, 1998, p. 4). Rather than miracles displaying or communicating Guru Nanak's supernatural grandeur, the Guru's performances strike upon the inner eye and play upon our imagination. These are not miracles in the Western semantic sense. Full of wit and amazement, they wander from the protagonist to the wonders of our own bodies and those that surround us—human or natural—and incite us to expect the extraordinary events in the daily rhythms of ordinary life. Sikh scripture regards "*vismad*" (wonder) as the supreme aesthetic mood, and these narratives seek to reproduce its somatic response. In Guru Nanak's own words, "*vismad roop vismad rang…vismad dharti vismad khani*—wondrous are the forms, wondrous the colors…wondrous is the earth, wondrous the species" (GGS: 463–64). Rather than steer us to some otherworldly sphere, Guru Nanak's miracles—just like his verse—animate us so we too can see, smell, touch, taste, hear, and *be* the wondrous, singular Divine here and now. By choreographing the Guru's performance, the delightful paintings put us in touch with our own authentic self, and orient us to a powerful ontological experience in this temporal world.

They substantiate the universal scriptural message, and concretize the Guru's aural verses into actions and reactions. Initially these *Janamsakhi* paintings would have been lodged in homes of devotees and shared at their religious gatherings. The encounter with sacred articles of any religious tradition is daunting for those outside. But their access in the secular space of a cosmopolitan museum generates a collective sense of belonging. By acquiring a home at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco in the heart of the city's civic center, the Sikh Guru's visual representations have gone beyond religious insularity; they have become a part of our human heritage. In our dangerously polarized society, they help us "open ourselves to modes of being that are other" (in the words of the painter and philosopher of art Nigel Wentworth, 2004, p. 246). Since the AAM attracts viewers from around the globe, and because these paintings offer a Sikh understanding of the universe that is simultaneously familiar and quite unfamiliar to many, they have the potential to promote pluralism in an essential way. The scenes expose cultural variations just as they reinforce cross-cultural constancies. Acquaintance with cultural motifs belonging to the *other* (the ubiquitous turban, for example) can erase stereotypes scratched on our modern minds and can pave avenues for mutual empathy. The different tropes, characters, landscape, and human interactions widen the imaginative and emotional horizons of the audience and help us enjoy our common humanity. Indeed, this display of paintings from the Kapany Collection can serve the global society in important ways.

It holds much significance for the academy, as well. The illustrations do not conform to the elite art or glamorous court paintings popular with audiences of Indian art. In the language of colors, they vividly depict Guru Nanak within the simple, everyday scenes of rural Punjab. Thus they provide a unique lens into the historical, social, cultural, economic, and political forces as they played out in his milieu. Further research into this subject could offer insights into our knowledge of South Asia. From a wider angle, then, the paintings can provide useful information to scholars engaged in various fields of research; more narrowly, they form a fascinating archive that documents the processes of Sikh identity formation and construction.

This paper was originally presented at the Sikh Conference held at the University of California, Riverside on May 11, 2013, and later published in a special issue of Sikh Formations: Religion, Culture Theory, *vol. 11:1–2, 2015, 61–82.*

The captions for these illustrations were provided by the Asian Art Museum.

Endnotes

[1] The Unbound *Janamsakhi* paintings were made to accompany the *Janamsakhi* manuscript, which in itself is bounded. The forty-one paintings set, called the "Unbound Janamsakhi," are gifted to the Asian Art Museum while the text part (which is bounded and covered with a cloth covering) is with the Kapany Collection. Asian Art Museum catalog link: http://searchcollection.asianart.org/view/objects/asimages/search@/0?t:state:flow=de9d2956-2e9e-4025-9449-23a2bee126b0. Number forty-one is missing at the Asian Arts Museum. I am grateful to Qamar Adamjee, and her colleagues Cristina Lichauco and Jeff Durham, for showing me the forty paintings from the Kapany Unbound Collection at the AAM.

[2] The paintings from the Unbound Collection reproduced in this volume: Guru Nanak on his first day at school, p. 46; in carpenter Lalo's house, p. 54; in Kurukshetra, p. 92; asleep in Mecca, p. 88; in conversation with Emperor Babur, p. 94; and the painting without him—that of Guru Angad, p. 98. They are all dated to 1755–1770.

[3] Personal conversation with Qamar Adamjee of the AAM.

[4] We have no firm historical documentation about Bhai Bala. Sikh historians frequently cite the fact that the early theologian and historian Bhai Gurdas does not mention him.

[5] Actually, there are quite a few similarities with the B-40 illustrations. For details see my article "Corporeal Metaphysics: Guru Nanak in Early Sikh Art" in *History of Religions*, August 2013.

[6] Guru Nanak respectfully bowing to his brother-in-law Jairam (1998.58.5) goes unnoticed by Professor Del Bonta: "The depiction of the meeting with this saint [Bhagat Kabir] is significant, because, although the young Nanak's halo is larger, it shows him deferring in namaskara to the older saint, an attitude that occurs nowhere else in the Unbound Set…" in "Guru Nanak in Narrative Art," p. 63.

[7] I have explored it in detail in my article "Sacred Fabric and Sacred Stitches," *History of Religions*, 43:4 (2004), 284–302.

[8] Again, for details see my "Corporeal Metaphysics: Guru Nanak in Early Sikh Art" in *History of Religions*, August 2013.

[9] *Sultana's Dream,* by Rokeya Hossain, was published in 1905. The narrative takes place during Guru Nanak's visit to Bengal, and Hossain herself was Bengali, therefore the possibility of a common literary source. Of course, *Sultana's Dream* is an entirely positive narrative about women taking over all spheres of life with the men sitting in purdah.

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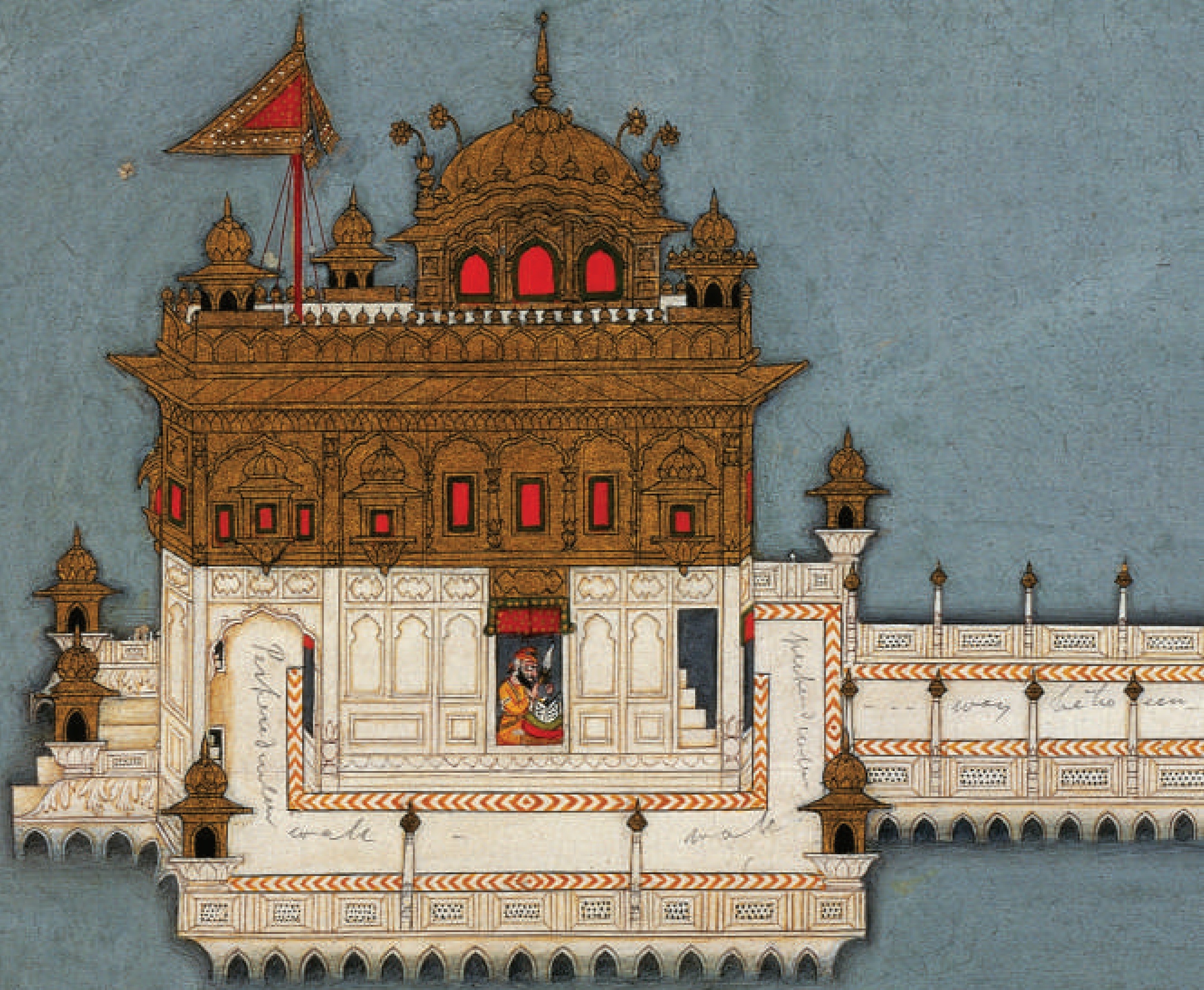
walk
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7

Golden Temple: Spiritual Capital of the Sikhs

Mohinder Singh

Harimandir Sahib, internationally renowned as the Golden Temple, has enraptured artists for the past two centuries. This fascination began in the early nineteenth century with the beginning of the "gilded era" in the history of the temple. Piety and splendor have been the focus in the accounts of many foreigners who visited the Golden Temple, including Emily Eden and Fenny Eden, two sisters of the then-Governor General George Auckland, who were accompanied by Maharajah Ranjit Singh. Artists such as William Carpenter, August Schoefft, Imam Bakhsh Lahori, Kapur Singh, and B. S. Malhans have created beautiful paintings of the Golden Temple (Fig. 7.1).

Revered also as the *Darbar Sahib* (Fig. 7.2) amongst the devout, it is a symbol of the spiritual and historical heritage of the Sikhs, to whom it is more than an architectural wonder or a place of worship, since they have their roots in the immortal water of the sacred tank surrounding the temple. According to popular accounts, when Emperor Akbar was returning to his capital after a military campaign, he halted at Goindwal to have an audience with the third Guru, Amar Das. The emperor was so impressed by the Guru's teachings of equality and the institution of *langar* (free community meal) that he made a gift of land on which the Guru's successor, Guru Ram Das, built the town of Ramdaspur, later known as Amritsar.

Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru, further widened the sacred pool of water existing on the land and built a temple in the center (Fig. 7.3), calling it *Harimandir*, or the Abode of God. At the Guru's request, Mian Mir, a Muslim saint of Lahore, laid the foundation of the *Harimandir* in 1588. The Guru purposely provided four doors, one in each direction, signifying its accessibility to people from all the four directions, irrespective of caste and creed. Construction of the *Harimandir* and the sacred tank witnessed the first-ever *kar-seva* (voluntary service) performed by the Sikhs under the guidance of the Guru, assisted by two devout Sikhs, Bhai Gurdas and Baba Buddha. The *ber* (jujube) tree, popularly known as *lachiber*, near the

Left: Detail of Fig. 7.3, *The Golden Temple, Amritsar,* Amritsar, 19th century, Opaque watercolor on paper, 27.6 × 24.8 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 7.1, *The Holy Temple,* "Original Sketches in the Punjaub by a Lady," 1854, Color-tinted lithograph, 36 × 27 cm. Kapany Collection

Darshani Deohdi, under which the Guru sat while overseeing the construction, stands witness to the great project conceived and completed by the Guru. The waters of the sacred tank arise from a natural reservoir near the Dukh Bhanjani Beri (the *ber* tree) and are believed to have healing properties.

To ensure that the tank does not dry up or stagnate, arrangements were later made for an uninterrupted supply of fresh water through a tributary of the river Ravi called the Hansli Canal. Aided by the constant flow of cash contributions made by the followers of the Guru from various parts of the country, construction work was carried out with speed and enthusiasm. This also provided the impetus for the development of the surrounding town of Amritsar.

In keeping with the Sikh Gurus' philosophy of humility and living pure amongst the impurities of life, the *Harimandir* was intentionally built at a low level, floating like a lotus in a pool of water. According to Dr. J. S. Neki, the spirit behind the architecture of the Golden Temple is that of spiritual enlightenment, while the lotus is the symbol employed to express this spirit. This flower remains closed with its stem bent down till the sunlight falls on it, when it becomes upright and opens up to blossom. This symbol has been appropriately incorporated in the architectural design of the temple. The main dome of the temple has the form of an inverted lotus flower. The same flower is depicted in the arches and designs of the pillars.

It was in 1604 that the fifth Guru, Arjan Dev, compiled the Sikh scripture, the *Adi Granth*, and installed it in the sanctum

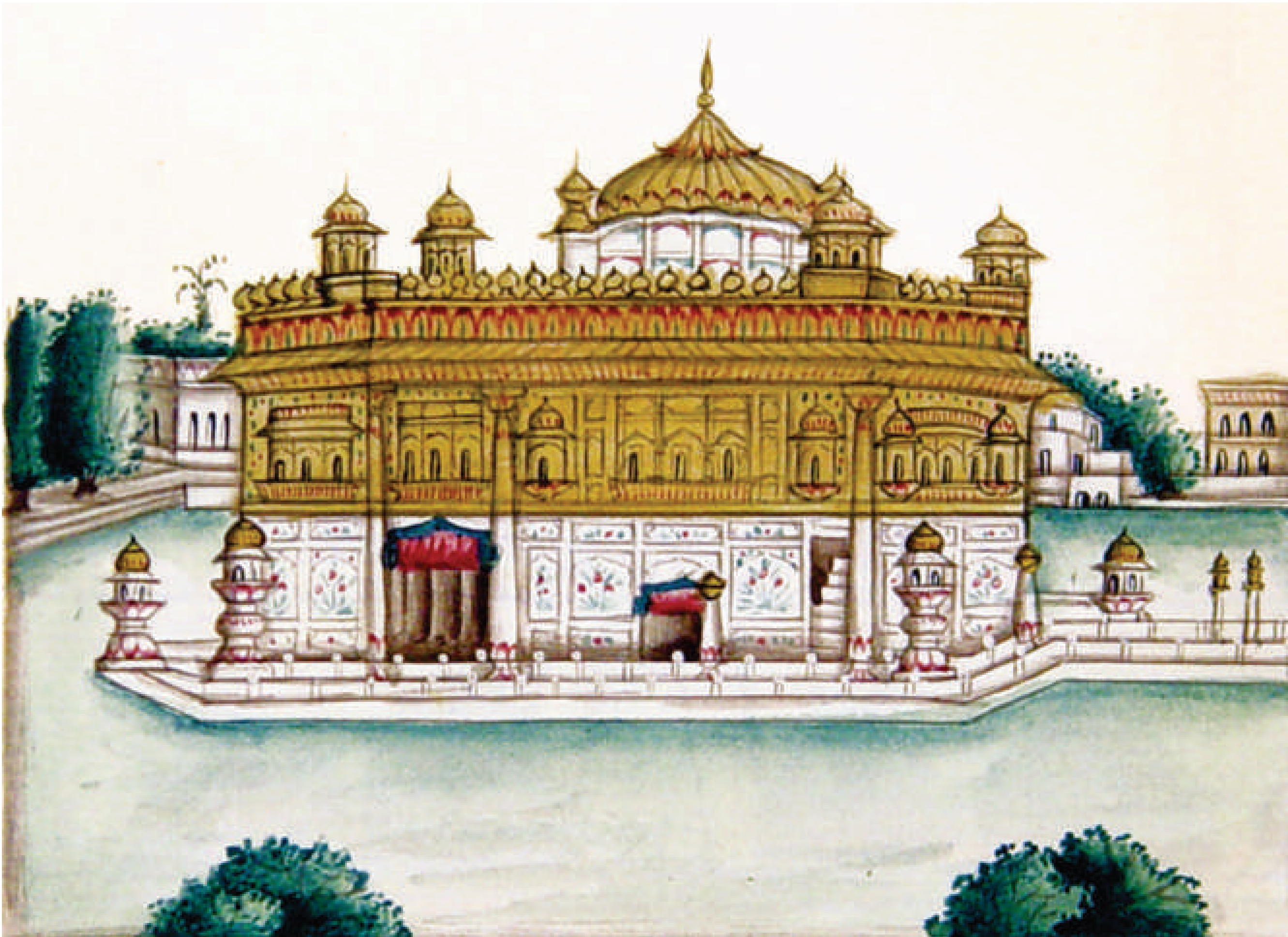


Fig. 7.2, *Golden Temple in Amritsar,* Northern India or Pakistan, 19th century, Opaque watercolors on paper, 21.6 × 17.8 cm, Kapany Collection

sanctorum of the *Harimandir* (Fig. 7.4). He appointed Baba Buddha as the first *granthi*. According to contemporary sources, the *Holy Granth*, wrapped in silk *rumalas* (coverings for the Holy Granth), was carried into the sanctum sanctorum in a palanquin, with Guru Arjan Dev waving the *chavar* (fly-whisk) as a mark of respect and with barefooted devotees following in a procession. The *Holy Granth* was placed in the sanctum sanctorum on a cot with Baba Buddha in attendance and the congregation sitting all around in devotion. Guru Arjan then asked Baba Buddha to open the *Granth* at random and read out a hymn to the assembled congregation, setting the custom popularly known as *vak* or *hukamnama*. The Guru also introduced the practice of *kirtan*, the singing of the holy hymns set to music.

In 1606 the Mughal Emperor Jahangir executed Guru Arjan Dev. His son Guru Hargobind ascended to the Guruship. To discuss temporal affairs, Guru Hargobind built a tower (Fig. 7.5) known as the *Akal Takhat*—Throne of the Timeless One—which overlooked the sanctum of the *Harimandir*. The Guru later moved to Kiratpur, leaving the management and control of the temple in the hands of the local community leaders, called *mahants*. Taking advantage of the Guru's absence, the latter became disobedient and introduced many practices that were not in keeping with the Sikh tradition.

Following the creation of the *Khalsa* in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru, focused his attention on the management of the Golden Temple. He deputed his trusted childhood friend, Bhai Mani Singh, to take charge of it and to carry out the much-needed

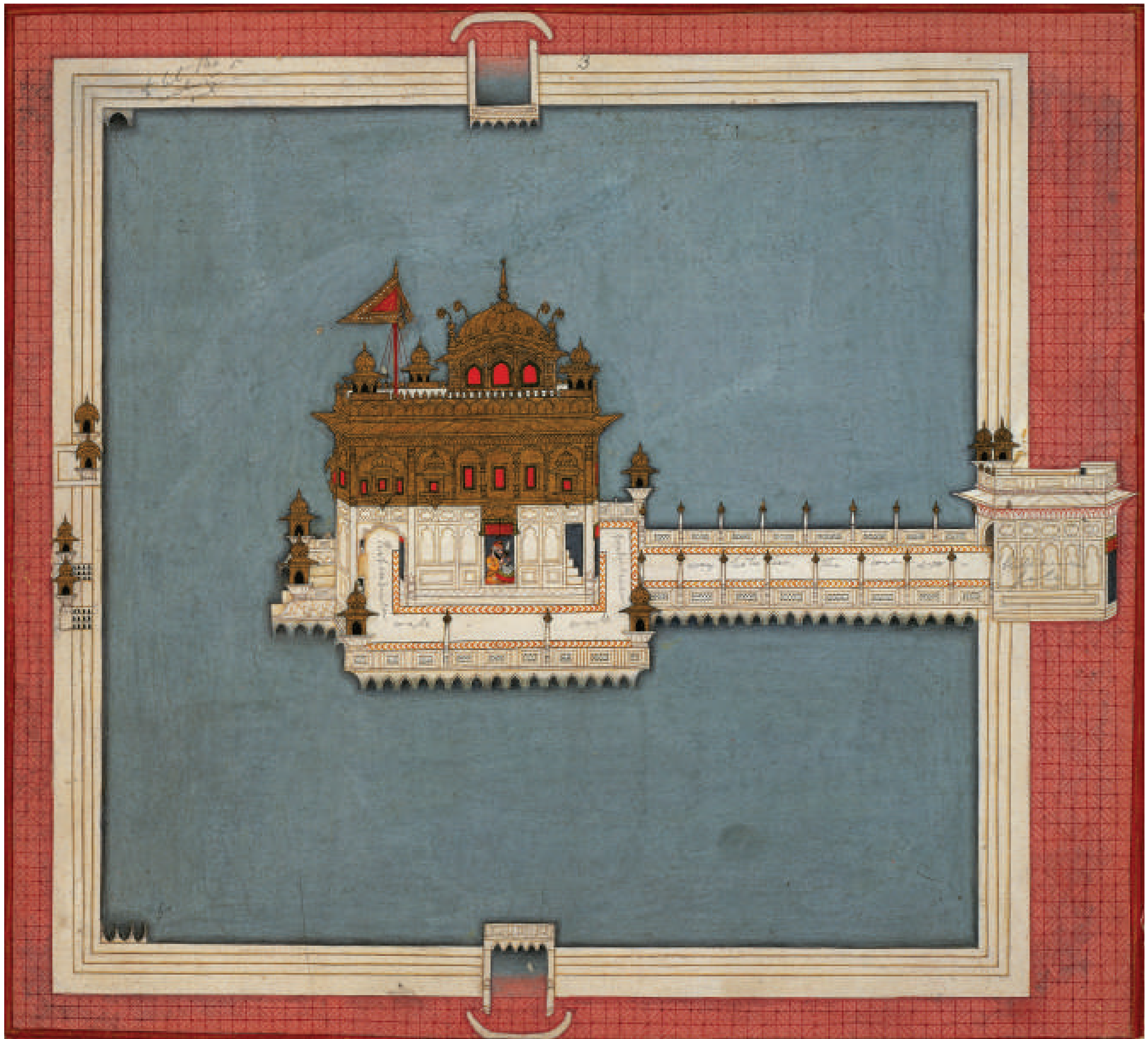


Fig. 7.3, *The Golden Temple, Amritsar,* Amritsar, 19th century, Opaque watercolor on paper, 27.6 × 24.8 cm, Kapany Collection

restorations. The Guru also issued *hukamnamas* (written orders by the Guru to the congregations) to the Sikhs to assist Bhai Mani Singh and his associates as they attempted to restore all the traditional ceremonies.

However, after the death of Guru Gobind Singh in 1708 and the persecution of the Sikhs during Banda Singh Bahadur's leadership, the management of the Golden Temple (Figs. 7.6 and 7.7) suffered a serious setback once again. When most of the Sikhs retreated to the jungles or other hideouts, control of the Golden Temple and other historic *gurdwaras* passed into the hands of the *Udasis* (followers of Baba Sri Chand, son of Guru Nanak)

Since the *Harimandir* and the sacred tank at Amritsar were the main source of inspiration for the Sikhs, the Afghan invader Ahmad Shah Abdali, after having attacked Delhi in 1757, desecrated the temple and defiled the

sacred tank by filling it with waste and the entrails of slaughtered cows. However, the Sikhs, led by Baba Deep Singh, the legendary Sikh general, attacked the Afghan soldiers, defeated and captured them, and had the holy tank cleansed by the captured Afghan soldiers. Five years later, when Ahmad Shah Abdali invaded India for the sixth time in 1762, the *Harimandir* again became the subject of attack when he had the sacred shrine blown up with gunpowder. The Sikhs did not allow this subjugation to dampen their spirits as they gathered at *Harimandir* to celebrate the traditional festival of Diwali. Two years later, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, commander of the *Dal Khalsa*, gave a call for a collection of funds and the rebuilding of the *Harimandir*. During the seventh invasion of Punjab by Ahmad Shah Abdali, the *Harimandir* and the *Akal Takhat* were yet again leveled to the ground. As soon as the Afghans left Amritsar, the Sikhs started reconstructing the two sites. Money collected was kept with the bankers of Amritsar, while Bhai Des Raj was entrusted with the work of supervising the construction and collecting additional funds, if needed, for the project. To assist the work of the reconstruction of the *Harimandir*, several of the Sikh chiefs constructed their own *bungas* (towers) around the temple where they could stay while volunteering time and money toward the construction of the temple.

Fig. 7.4
Portable Palki with miniature holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib
Northern India or Pakistan
Ca. 1914–1918
Silver, ink on paper
13.3 × 6.4 × 6.7 cm (*palki*);
2.3 × 2.5 × 2.5 cm (holy book)
Kapany Collection

With the weakening of the authority of Ahmad Shah Abdali and the gradual disintegration of the Mughal Empire in India, the Sikhs organized themselves into twelve *misls* (confederacies) and established their supremacy over the territories conquered by each *misl*. They all assembled at the *Akal Takhat* to take important decisions. They evolved consensus on important issues through the system of *gurmatta* (resolution passed in the presence of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, indicating collective wisdom and considered to be the will of the Guru). Decisions taken at

Fig. 7.5, *Entrance to the Holy Temple at Umritsar, from the Gate of the Kutwallee,* "Original Sketches in the Punjaub by a Lady," 1854, Color-tinted lithograph, 36 × 27 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 7.6, *Darbar Sahib,* Late 18th century, Painting on ivory, 33 × 22 cm, Kapany Collection

these meetings are by tradition binding on each and every member of the community.

Keeping in mind the central role that the *Harimandir* played in Sikh history during their turbulent days, the Sikh chiefs paid special attention to rebuilding and beautification of the *Harimandir* and the *Akal Takhat*—the center of spiritual and temporal authority of the Sikhs. When Ranjit Singh, one of the Sikh *misldars*, became the maharajah of Punjab, he donated rupees five lakhs for the gilding of the shrine in 1803. He also commissioned artisans to redecorate the shrine with precious stones and floral marble inlay work. The inscription to commemorate this act can be seen at the main entrance. The floral decoration work was accomplished by Muslim artisans from Chiniot (now in Pakistan).

Fig. 7.7
Golden Temple
Sukhpreet Singh
2005, Oil on canvas
39 × 49.5 cm (with frame)
Kapany Collection

On the first floor is installed a handwritten rare *Guru Granth Sahib Bir* in a small square pavilion, surmounted by a low-fluted golden dome and lined at its base with a number of smaller domes. It was here that Guru Arjan Dev used to sit in meditation. Their mirrors and pieces of glass are of different shapes and sizes, work known as the *jaratkari* technique. The walls of the two lower storeys, forming parapets, terminate with several rounded pinnacles. There are four *chhatris,* or kiosks, at the corners. The combination of dozens of large and medium domes of gilded copper creates a dazzling effect, enhanced further by the reflection in the water below. The arches and alcoves of the central hall have been ornamented with floral designs, along with the verses from *Gurbani.* Beautiful borders around the mural paintings enhance the aesthetic aura in the temple. The walls of the *Harimandir* were inlaid with gold provided by the maharajah, who also contributed much of the white marble. Due to the maharajah's efforts to make the *Harimandir* an object of unique beauty created out of gold and marble, the temple also came to be known as the *Swaran Mandir,* or "The Golden Temple."

With the rise of the Sikh chiefs to political power during the second half of the eighteenth century, a large number of *gurdwaras*

were built to commemorate the Gurus' visit to myriad places or other important events of Sikh history. The Sikh ruling chiefs endowed most of the *gurdwaras* with liberal grants and tax-free lands. There are over three hundred historical shrines in various parts of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. The Kapany Collection contains a set of striking pen-and-ink drawings (Figs. 7.8 and 7.9) done by the artist B. S. Malhans, while visiting historic *gurdwaras* at Anandpur, Chamkaur, Damdama, Fatehgarh, Paonta, Dina Kangar, Machiwara, and Rewalsar.

Since the Golden Temple and the *Akal Takhat* enjoyed unique reverence amongst the followers of the Sikh faith, the British authorities, after taking control of Punjab in 1849, paid special attention to these shrines. Endowments made to the Golden Temple by Maharajah Ranjit Singh and other Sikh chiefs were not resumed by the British. Rather than controlling the management of the temple complex directly, they exercised indirect control through a Sikh *sarbrah* (manager), appointed by the British Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar. It was not surprising, therefore, to find the *sarbrah* and the priests of the Golden Temple complex promoting the imperial interests and condemning popular peoples' movements.

In the early 20th century, a group of Sikhs called *Akali* reformers launched a movement for reform in *gurdwara* management that came to be popularly known as the *Akali* Movement (1920–1925). During their five years' struggle, the *Akali* reformers were able to oust the corrupt *mahant*s and set up a central body for management of the historic Sikh shrines. This body, known as the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, controls the Golden Temple and other historic *gurdwaras* in the Indian states of Punjab, Haryana, and Himachal. The *Akali* reformers made the Golden Temple the nucleus of their religio-political agitations. During this time, a historic *kar-seva* was also undertaken in 1923. The cleaning of the sacred tank was started by the *Panj Piaras* (five priests chosen to undertake ceremonial functions), who did so by lifting the sludge with gold spades and silver pans after offering prayers, with the maharajah of Patiala and other Sikh chiefs joining in this labor of love. These spades and pans are preserved in the *toshakhana* (treasury of the Golden Temple on the top of the Darshani Deorhi) along with the other valuable relics.

In independent India, it was from the Golden Temple complex (Fig. 7.10) that the Shiromani Akali Dal, an organization founded in 1920 for liberating the historical Sikh shrines from the control of the *mahant*s, which later became a dominant political party in Punjab, launched its agitation for the creation of a Punjabi-speaking state. During the two decades of agitation, the complex remained the hub of political activities and the focus of attention of media at home and abroad till the Indian government conceded to their demands in 1966.

Again, when the *Akali* leadership launched another power struggle against the Indian government for getting greater autonomy for the newly created state, the Golden Temple became an arena of conflict. With the militant groups entrenching themselves in the Golden Temple complex, the government attempted to flush them out through a military operation called "Operation Bluestar" in June 1984, resulting in the tragic loss of hundreds of lives and a portion of the priceless tangible heritage of the Sikhs.

Kar-seva was performed in 1985 to cleanse the holy tank after the tragedy of the previous year. To mark the tercentenary of the creation of the *Khalsa* in 1999, the Sikh *sangat*, under the supervision of Bhai Mohinder Singh of Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha of Birmingham, United Kingdom, completed the *kar-seva* of fresh gold plating of the Golden Temple. Artist Sukhpreet Singh beautifully captures the last *kar-seva* done to clean the temple in 2004, in an impressive canvas (Fig. 7.11). Looking down from the roof of Langar Hall, he paints a panoramic view of the devotees working to remove the silt from the floor of the tank. In the middle of the painting is the

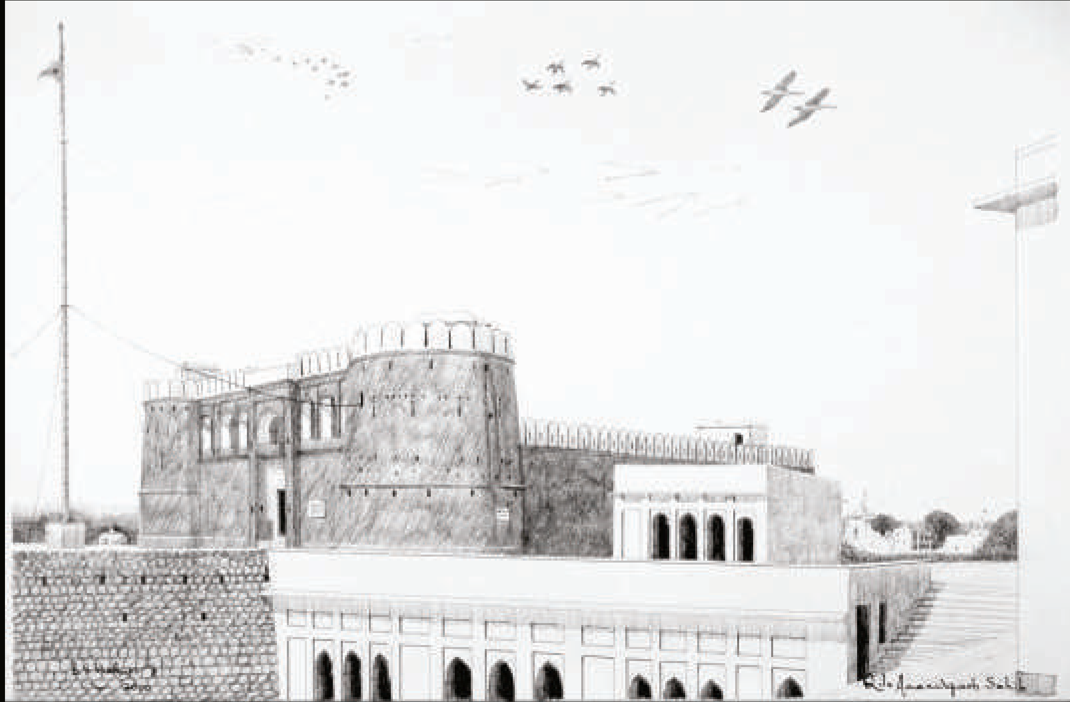


Fig. 7.8, *Qila Anandgarh Sahib,* B. S. Malhans, 2000, Pen and ink on paper,
56 × 38 cm (image); 68 × 52 cm (with mat), Kapany Collection

Fig. 7.9, *Takht Sri Damdama Sahib, Talwandi Sabo,* B. S. Malhans, 2000, Pen and ink on paper,
56 × 38 cm (image); 68 × 52 cm (with mat), Kapany Collection

Previous page: Fig. 7.10, *The Golden Temple of Amritsar,* Kapur Singh, 1886, Oil on canvas, 75.6 × 52.8 cm, Kapany Collection

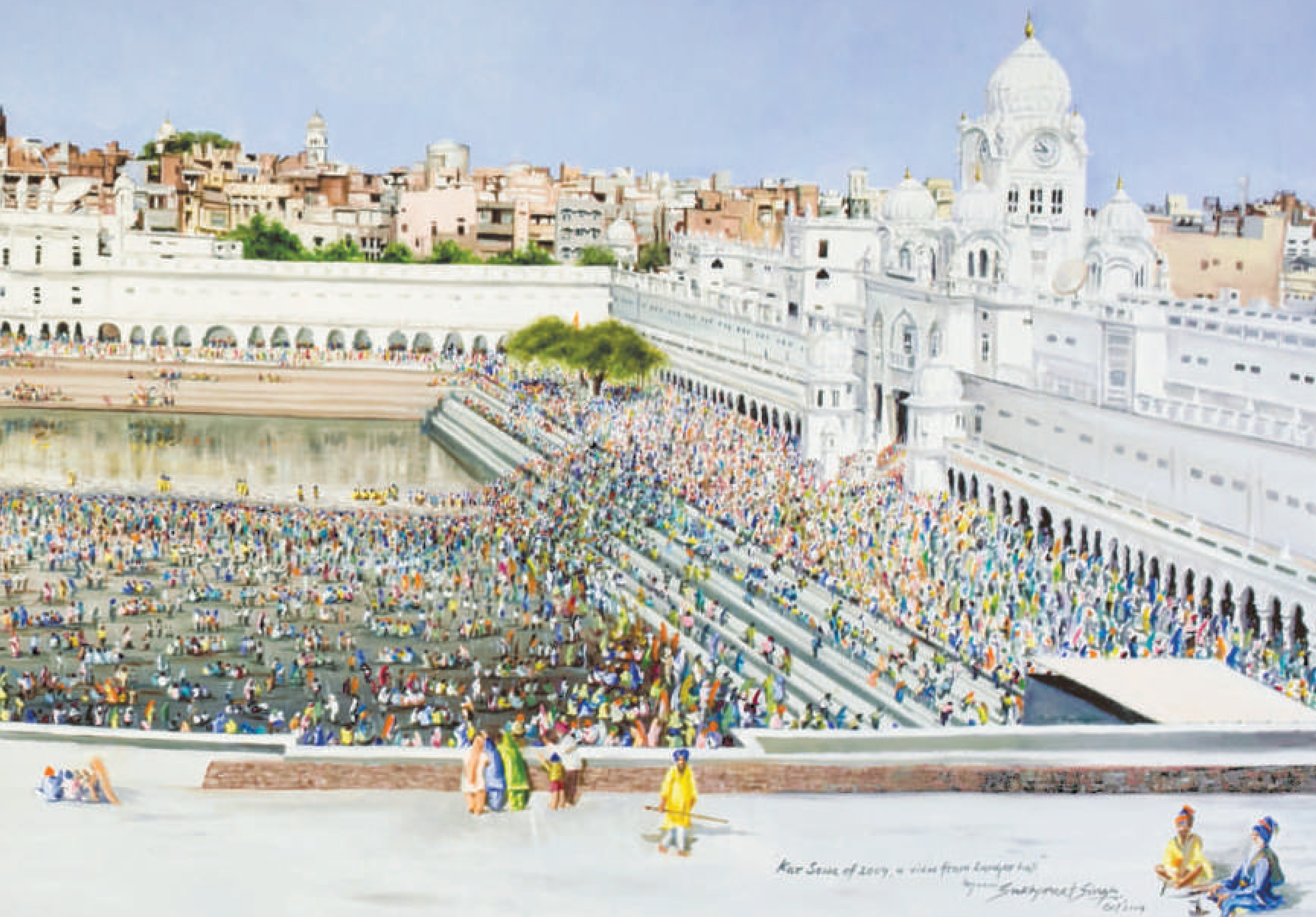
Above: Fig. 7.11, *Kar-Seva View from Langar Hall,* Sukhpreet Singh, 2006, Oil on canvas, 182.9 × 91.4 cm, Kapany Collection

area where the fish are cordoned off while the rest of the tank is cleaned. This painting also provides a glimpse of the foundation of the main building, which is hidden from view most of the time. In the background rises the cityscape of the Sikh community's spiritual capital, called Amritsar**.**

Special Celebrations and *Jalao*

When the Sikhs gained political supremacy in Punjab, the Sikh chiefs took great pride in offering priceless gifts to the house of the Guru. The Golden Temple, being the most prominent of the Sikh shrines, received many valuable presents and offerings. When Ranjit Singh became the maharajah of Punjab, he presented to the Golden Temple whatever items in his opinion were rare and valuable. Popular stories mention how the maharajah was once given a canopy made of pure gold, weighing about twenty pounds and studded with emeralds, diamonds, rubies, and pearls. The maharajah found it to be too precious to be used by any human being and therefore offered it to the Golden Temple. On seeing the costly pearl and bejeweled *sehra*, or headdress, prepared for the marriage of the maharajah's grandson, Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh, the maharajah chose to offer it to the Golden Temple.

On special occasions like the birthday of Guru Ramdas, the founder of the town;



Diwali, which is celebrated as *Bandichhor Diwas* (Day of liberation of Guru Hargobind from the captivity of Emperor Jahangir); the first *Parkash Utsav* of Guru Granth Sahib; and various anniversary celebrations, the entire complex is illuminated. *Guru Granth Sahib* installation day is also celebrated with gaiety and enthusiasm as precious relics in the *toshakhana* (treasury) of the Golden Temple located on the top of the *Darshani Deohdi* are displayed for public viewing. This celebration is known as *jalao*, meaning a "show of splendor." Some other important relics that are also displayed during the *jalao* are: four golden gates with engraved floral patterns and episodes from the Gurus' lives; gold *chhatris;* golden frills; golden hand fans; a gold sword of Maharajah Ranjit Singh studded with jewels and rubies; and a fly-whisk made from sandalwood presented to the maharajah by a Muslim saint.

From the inception of the faith, Sikh Gurus and Sikh temples occupied a place of special reverence for the followers. This reverence felt by Sikhs toward the *Harimandir* continues till contemporary times. Bhai Vir Singh, father of the modern Punjabi literature and the "Saint-Poet of India," started his day only after having paid floral tributes at the Golden Temple. Today, thousands of devotees and tourists enthusiastically visit the temple and come away with a feeling of having shared in the divine presence of the one God for all humanity.

Fig. 7.12, *The Akalee Temple, "Original Sketches in the Punjab by a Lady,"*
1854, Color-tinted lithograph, 27 × 36 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 7.13, *A Sikh Temple in honor of Baba Atull Raee, youngest son of Har Govind,,*
6th in descent of the Sikh Gooroos, "Original Sketches in the Punjab by a Lady," 1854,
Color-tinted lithograph, 27 × 36 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 7.14, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Fakir Charan Pareeda,* 2014,
Bronze, 22 (w) × 79 (h) × 56 (l) cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 7.15, *Decorated box owned by Maharaja Ranjit Singh,* India,
Gujarat state; or Pakistan, Sindh province, Ca. 1660–1700,
Wood inlaid with ivory and tortoiseshell; overlaid carved ivory panels;
interior compartments of sandalwood and velvet,
Asian Art Museum of San Francisco,
Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.61

8

Arts and Culture in the Punjab Kingdom and the Sikh States, Trans-Sutlej and Cis-Sutlej

Jean-Marie Lafont

Origins and Development

The Sikh religion and community, which arose in the Punjab after Guru Nanak's birth (1469), has a fascinating history leading to important political and cultural transformations in Northwestern India. Among them was the emergence of states with Sikh leaders or sovereigns. The most durable were the ones called "Phulkian States," located to the south of the river Sutlej.[1] Patiala (Fig. 8.1), Jind, and Nabha were the big ones, while there were a few others which the English declared to be the "Minor Phulkian States."[2] Between 1803 and 1809, these states came within the orbit of the East India Company through various treaties, and later they found themselves bound to the Indian British Empire by the same treaties, a situation which lasted until 1947. The most brilliant, though the shortest, of these political formations was the Sikh kingdom (or Empire) of Punjab. Founded in 1799 by Maharajah Ranjit Singh (r. 1799–1839), it was annexed to the territories of the East India Company in 1849 after two bloody Anglo-Sikh wars, and it survived in the state of Kapurthala, which also lasted till 1947 with an extremely interesting cultural and political history.

Much before these states emerged,[3] the Sikh community had, by all estimates, already extended well beyond the Punjab, past Delhi, and up to Bengal (Fig 6.18). Since this extension was much before Guru Govind Singh created the *Khalsa* in 1699, most of these Sikhs did not have the surname of "Singh," because they were not "baptized Sikhs." Their identification, therefore, can be difficult. Law de Lauriston, who was in Delhi in 1758–59, devoted a few paragraphs to them.[4] A little later, Modave, in Delhi 1773–75, wrote about "several persons of this nation (the Sikhs), people of good sense and educated enough in their affairs,"[5] and with knowledge about Sikh culture and religion. He observed: "Up till now, these Sikhs were little known to Europeans. We do not find their names in any of our relations.[6] It is because these peoples, at that time submitted to the Mughal emperors, were indistinguishable from the other Hindus. Their fame is of the same date as their freedom."[7] François-Xavier Wendel, a French-

Left: Detail of Fig. 8.27
Seal ring of Maharajah Ranjit Singh
1812–1813
India, Amritsar, Punjab state; or Pakistan, Lahore
Emerald and gold
Kapany Collection

(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

(e)

(f)

Left: Fig. 8.1, *Set of portraits of six maharajahs of Patiala,* Northern India or Pakistan,
Late 19th century, Opaque watercolours on photograph print (with mat), Bound set, 16.2 × 22.2 cm, Kapany Collection

A similar set of portraits kept in the Himachal Pradesh State Museum (Shimla) was published by B. N. Goswamy in *Piety and Splendour* (pp. 156–57, no. 119 a–f) with the remark: "Some works on paper, in the royal collection [of Patiala]… seem to have been made the basis of paintings in a large format by some visiting European artists commissioned for this work by the state; and then, on those, the miniature forming this group seem to have been based in turn." He also observed that "[the portrait] of Maharaja Mohinder Singh seems to draw upon a photograph." The Kapany set, though less elaborate (with no background) than the Shimla set, has indeed a photograph, not a miniature painting, of Maharajah Mohinder Singh proudly wearing, as Goswamy had noticed on the Shimla painting, "the decoration that he received from the British in 1871, GCSI.…"

a. "Maharaja Ala Singh, founder of Patiala state ruled still A.D. 1765"

A contemporary of Baba Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, founder of the Kapurthala state, Baba Ala Singh is represented here with a golden halo. One usually dates the foundation of the State "from 1762, in which year Ahmad Shah Durrani conferred the title of Raja upon Ala Singh" (*Punjab State Gazetteers*, vol. XVII. A., Lahore, 1904/1909, p. 46), a unique distinction among the Sirdars of the misls.

b. "Maharaja Amar Singh till 1782"

With no halo around his head (but with a halo in the Shimla set), Raja Amar Singh, grandson and successor of Baba Ala Singh, also had difficulties in asserting his authority over other Sardars, especially Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. Just like Ala Singh, he turned to Ahmed Shah Abdali for comfort in his position. He met the Shah during his last invasion of Punjab in 1767, and he received from him the title of Raj-i-Rajagan Bahadur.

c. "Maharaja Sahib Singh till 1813"

Sahib Singh was 6 years old at the death of Amar Singh in 1781, and he had the difficult task to deal first with his own relatives, against whom he called the Marathas, then with the Marathas, against whom he called George Thomas, and ultimately with George Thomas against whom he called General Perron and received the assistance of the 3rd Brigade of Hindustan commanded by Louis Bourquien. Feeling threatened by young Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh, he turned for help to the British in 1803, warmly receiving Lord Lake at Patiala in 1805. Patiala came "under the protection of the British Government" in 1809, and Sahib Singh received the coveted title of maharajah in 1810 from the Mughal Emperor Akbar II, at the request of (then Colonel) David Ochterlony.

d. "Maharaja Karam Singh till A.D. 1845" [r. 1813–1845]

A different portrait from the one in the Shimla set, where the maharajah sits on a European chair against a typical background, which B. N. Goswamy rightly analysed as "strongly reminiscent of so many portraits…by painters at the Lahore court." The Lahore influence was strong at the court of Patiala, with a mixture of admiration (Punjab was a "Sikh" state) and fear (Ranjit Singh was a powerful threat). The portrait of Karam Singh in this set is not reminiscent of the one influenced by the Lahore school. In 1845, Karam Singh chose to side with the British against the *Khalsa*. He died on 23 December 1845, the day after the battle of Ferozeshah.

e. "Maharaja Narinder Singh G.C.S.I. till A.D. 1862"

Age 23 at the death of his father, Narinder Singh was faced with the prospect of the Anglo-Sikh war(s). As stated by the *Patiala State Gazetteer*, "the Patiala chief knew that his interests were bound up with the success of the British, but his sympathies were with the *Khalsa*. However, Patiala provided the British with supplies and carriages, besides a contingent of men. At the close of the war Patiala was rewarded with certain estates resumed from the Raja of Nabha." At the break of the so-called "Mutiny" in 1857, "the conduct of the Maharaja is beyond praise" (ibid.). Narinder Singh was "widely regarded as the most enlightened ruler of Patiala" (B. N. Goswamy), and we discussed his cultural policy in the text. According to the *Punjab State Gazetteer*, "the *Punjab Gazette Extraordinary* recorded that he administered the government of his territories with exemplary wisdom, firmness and benevolence. He was one of the first Indian Princes to receive the K.C.S.I." He died in 1862 at the age of about 40.

f. "Maharaja Mahinder Singh G.C.S.I. till A.D. 1876"

This is the photograph of Maharajah Mahinder Singh, instead of the miniature painting in the Shimla set. Under his reign Patiala developed considerably with the construction of the Sirhind canal (decided by his father, opened in 1882), the partial financing of the University College at Lahore, and the foundation of the Mohindra College at Patiala during the visit of the Viceroy Lord Northbrook in 1875. He had received the G.C.S.I. in 1871.

speaking Austrian Jesuit of the so-called "mission of Agra," prepared a report on the Sikhs that gives more precision than Modave on the political development of the community.[8] He also gives us information on the diffusion of the Sikh scriptures, from those he had in hand: "I have seen a few of these books written in verse, in Persian characters and in Indian Punjabi language such as it is spoken in the vicinity of Lahore. Baba Nanak is expressing himself quite nobly and with a high spirit on the essence of God and His divine attributes…. It seems that he had knowledge of the doctrine of the old Magi or of these famous more modern Sufis who are their descendants. His other books on Morals are not less intelligent. Many people read them, few understand them without an interpreter, because of the way he expressed himself, as well as of the language he used, which is only a patois greatly corrupted from that of Hindustan, which has much changed since the death of Guru Nanak."[9]

Colonel Polier left us his testimony on a particularly learned and cultured Sikh who served him as a guide not only for his research on Sikhism, but more generally on Hinduism and the great Hindu texts, *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, *Purana*, stories of Krishna, and others. In 1790, Polier wrote about his teacher in Indian studies:[10] "By a happy coincidence a man came to me who had all the necessary qualities to make up for my ignorance of Sanskrit and to fill the desire I had to be instructed thoroughly concerning the primitive and fundamental beliefs of Hindu mythology. This man, named Ram Chand, had been the teacher of the famous Sir [William] Jones, my friend. He lived in Sultanpur, near Lahore. He had travelled a lot and he visited all the provinces of Northern and Western India. He was a Sikh by religion, and of the noble tribe of the Kattris…. Gifted with a prodigious memory, with a lot of intelligence, order and sharpness of mind, he was highly versed in the poetries and *Pouram* [*Purana*] which contain the mythological system of the Hindus. Moreover Ram Chand had two Brahmins, constantly attached to his suite, and he consulted them on the difficult points and they, by their explanations, enabled him to answer all my questions and assure my complete education, not only in the religion and history of the Sikhs, but also in the mythology of the Hindus who are attached to this people [the Sikhs] by so many ties.

"Satisfied with the idea of having a teacher capable of giving me all the help required for the various researches I endeavoured to start, I took Ram Chand with me. He never left me anymore. I started my work, and I wrote under his dictation a precise résumé of the three epic poems....[11] When I completed the work, I submitted it to the revision of Brahmins and doctors whom I knew or who were my friends. They unanimously confirmed the accuracy and faithfulness of the information provided by Ram Chand, whom I left only at the time when, having managed to collect a large part of what was due to me in India, I embarked on the ship that took me back to Europe, where I arrived in July 1788, after thirty-two years of absence, out of which I had spent thirty years in India."[12] One should not be surprised that the *Adi Granth* in the collection of the National Library of France comes from Colonel Polier's oriental library.[13]

These are rare, but concurring, instances of the high cultural level of a number of "non-baptized Sikhs" who lived, worked, studied, and wrote in the second half of the eighteenth century from Sultanpur to Bengal. The miniatures representing Guru Nanak that are executed in Avadh, Faizabad, or Lucknow are an excellent illustration of the diffusion of Sikhism in what was the richest cultural region of Northern India in the 1770s (Fig. 5.3).

In the meantime, Guru Govind Singh founded the order of the *Khalsa* in 1699, intended to protect the Sikh shrines and populations from the repeated *jihads* launched against them by various Muslim authorities, be they the Mughals, the Iranians, or the Afghans. These Sikh horsemen, mostly dressed in blue, formed the troops engaged by the Indian states for their personal use. Modave saw them in

Delhi, while Wendel reported on their actions in the country of the Jats. All of them describe their peculiar style of warfare. Guru Govind Singh's militarisation of the Sikh community was not a new fact.[14] But with the *Khalsa* it became so important a factor that many previous sects of Sikhism (Guru Govind Singh was the tenth and the last of the Gurus) are

Fig. 8.2, *Assembly of Sikh soldiers or chieftains on a terrace,* Punjab, Ca. 1830, Opaque watercolours on paper, 19 × 25.5 cm, Kapany Collection

One of them, in blue dress and blue turban, is an Akali. They hold locally made muskets, the best ones being manufactured in Lahore in the late eighteenth century, and swords. These are the traditional Sikh soldiers who at the time of Ranjit Singh formed the Punjab irregular army composed of Irregular levies, Garrison troops, and so on. In 1844 this irregular army was almost 45,000 strong, plus 5,000 Ramghols and Akalis: a little bit more than the 42,000 men of the 60 regiments of infantry of the regular army (J. D. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, reprint New Delhi, 1972, Appendix XXXIX, pp. 387–88). Note the slightly divergent perspective of the blue lines of the carpet.

today a tiny minority. In miniature paintings of the late eighteenth century, each time people wanted to represent the Sikhs, one could only see the all-new *Khalsa* represented with their characteristic dress and their peculiar turbans. B. N. Goswamy has brought together several paintings showing Sardars in the Himalayan foothills, dating from the same time as the creation of the first Sikh States in the plains after the destruction of Sirhind in 1763.[15] There are also a few interesting representations of Sikhs and Sikhnis on Indian miniatures kept in French collections, for example in a compendium entitled *Théogonie indienne,*[16] or in a *Recueil de peintures illustrant les costumes indiens*.[17] The map of the "Souba de Lahore," drawn for Colonel Gentil in Avadh in 1770, shows in the lower right-hand corner a "Cavalier Senk."[18] Gentil also had in his personal library a manuscript of 352 pages recounting Guru Nanak's life, now in the National Library in Paris.[19] It should be noted that one of the first European maps with a mention of the Sikhs seems to be that of Rigobert Bonne, published in 1771,[20] reprinted to illustrate the *Histoire politique et philosophique*…of Abbé Raynal in 1780,[21] and this map is practically contemporary to that of Thomas Jefferys.[22]

Stabilization—The Sutlej River as Border

By the end of the 1790s the question arose of Sikh political hegemony extending from Lahore to the limits of the boundaries of Delhi and Agra territories (Fig. 8.2). Delhi was then under Maratha domination; their elite military units were the "French" brigades of Hindustan raised for Sindhia and commanded by General de Boigne, and then by General Perron, from their headquarters at Aligarh. After several difficult campaigns, De Boigne had submitted the major states of Rajasthan to Sindhia.[23] By 1797, Perron, his successor, was consolidating De Boigne's conquests[24] when he received an embassy (1801) from several Phulkian States, among them Patiala and Jind. This embassy was asking for the assistance of his brigades against George Thomas, an Irish adventurer

already known to Perron.[25]

Having carved a small independent principality in Haryana for himself, George Thomas had started attacking the Sikh States to the south of the river Sutlej, particularly Patiala and Jind. Unable to resist him, they appealed to General Perron, who summoned Thomas to Bahadurgarh, near Delhi. The latter accepted the meeting with Perron (August 1801), but refused the proposals made to him, and on his way back, began to plunder the territories under Maratha protection in the region of Panipat. Perron then detached his 3rd Brigade to eliminate Thomas. It took four months of a difficult campaign (Thomas had field artillery and British officers in his service) to do that, through the joint operations of the 3rd Brigade and the forces of the concerned Sikhs States.[26] After Thomas's capture,[27] Louis Bourquien, commanding the 3rd Brigade and charged by Perron to stabilize the region between Punjab and Hindustan, accomplished a remarkable administrative and political task, seconded both by the Sikh States south of the Sutlej River and by General Perron, under the orders of Sindhia.[28]

Bourquien's first action was to reach agreements with the cis-Sutlej States, as they were then, and safeguard their existence within the borders they had reached, protecting each one against the aggression of the others. This was done during a tour in the Punjab of the 3rd Brigade accompanied by the Sikh troops who had participated in the war against George Thomas. During a whole month, Bourquien and his brigade encamped in Ludhiana. He intervened in Pinjore for the dismantling of the ramparts, and the Raja of Patiala offered a great reception for "Louis Sahib," with diplomatic gifts for Perron that Bourquien sent to Aligarh. Although Bourquien, as well as Perron, refused to intervene in the long quarrel between Raja Sahib Singh (Fig. 8.1c) of Patiala and his sister, Bibi Sahib Kaur, he acted through emissaries to calm certain aggressive inclinations of the leaders of Malerkotla and Kasur. The treaty Bourquien negotiated between Patiala and Perron was ratified by the French General on 26 January 1802, and in recognition Bourquien received the *jaghir* of Gorakhpur.

Bourquien then had to address the growing threat posed to these cis-Sutlej States by the diarchy of Lahore-Kapurthala. This diarchy was already in place since 1799, and before Ranjit Singh exchanged turbans with Fateh Singh in 1802. Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh at that time had formed the project of unifying the entire Sikh States, trans- and cis-Sutlej, into one single large political entity which would extend from the Indus up to Delhi. Nothing could be more threatening for the "Phulkian States" than such a policy, and Bourquien had to start negotiating with Ranjit Singh to ensure the security of his Sikh allies. The negotiations went from April to July 1802 through Raja Bagh Singh of Jind, Ranjit Singh's maternal uncle for whom the maharajah had a deep reverence and great affection. In August 1802, Bagh Singh was at the head of a diplomatic mission to Lahore, which included the ambassadors of the raja of Patiala, General Perron, and "Mr. Louis" [Bourquien].[29] The agreement was that Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh should from now on be allowed to conquer whatever they could of Punjab on the north of the Sutlej River. The states south of the river had their independence and security guaranteed by the Brigades of Hindustan under General Perron's orders. The mission offered the maharajah a treaty of friendship, to be ratified by him and Perron in 1803 on the Sutlej border.[30] The English greatly feared such a political operation.[31] Perceiving their fear and seeing that a confrontation was brewing between the Marathas and the English, which might give him and Fateh Singh the possibility to accomplish their designs to the south of the Sutlej, Ranjit Singh accepted the terms of the treaty, but postponed the meeting with General Perron to a later time.[32]

We need now to point out a link which hardly seems to have been underlined, or even observed, between Perron, Bourquien, and Ranjit Singh. For his political actions cis-Sutlej

in 1800–1803, Bourquien had not been working alone. In his Indian staff he had a remarkable young political secretary, Ganga Ram, member of a Kashmiri Pandit family eminently versed in political and diplomatic affairs of Northern India. We have the certitude that it was Ganga Ram who negotiated the agreements and wrote the draft treaties with all the rajas of the cis-Sutlej Sikh States, on the instructions and under the direction of Colonel Bourquien. We guess that he represented Bourquien in Lahore during the embassy conducted by Raja Bagh Singh of Jind to Ranjit Singh in August 1802. Ganga Ram was the brain behind the balanced policy devised by Perron and Bourquien to protect the Sikh States south of the Sutlej River from the Sikh kingdom of the Punjab that Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh were in the process of creating to the north of this river, in the direction of Attock, Multan, and Kashmir. We will soon find Ganga Ram again in this brief presentation.

In August 1803, the English started their offensive in the Doab, Lord Lake defeating Perron at Aligarh, defeating Bourquien at Patparganj, capturing Delhi and then Agra. In twelve weeks, they claimed to have "freed" the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II from the clutches of the "Maratha occupation" and eliminated their fear of a "French State" in Northern India.[33] Holkar, a Maratha general, tried to take back Delhi in 1804–1805, but had to seek refuge in the Punjab of Ranjit Singh to escape being captured by the British. Hindustan had turned red, the colour of British territories on some English maps of India. Ganga Ram returned to Delhi. Until 1807 the British were so absorbed in assimilating their new conquests that they did not really care about their northwestern border. They gave the responsibility of protecting the Doab against the Sikhs of Lahore and Kapurthala to Colonel Skinner, a cavalry officer of Perron, who had joined the British forces with his regiment well before the invasion of 1803,[34] and to Begum Sumroo, or Sombre, with her elite brigade based in Sardhana. After Perron's exit, Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh had quickly resumed their initial project of a Sikh empire extending up to Delhi, and their cavalry started operating in the Doab to the point that they began to threaten Delhi. The Sikh States south of the Sutlej River, which had appealed to Perron and had been supported by Bourquien, turned now to the British for protection.

The latter did not care much about these repeated requests until they learnt the clauses, including the secret ones, of the treaty of Finckenstein between France and Persia (May 1807) and the treaty of Tilsit between France and Russia (July 1807).[35] This sparked the embassy of Elphinstone to Caboul[36] and of young Charles Metcalfe to Lahore. Metcalfe was easily tricked by Ranjit Singh, whose threatening movements became more and more disquieting for British authorities of India, up to the point that General Ochterlony was sent to support Metcalfe's negotiations at the head of a flying column. David Ochterlony's military capacity was well-known, as was his visceral fear of a French repeat in India in 1803 of what they had done in 1781 in America, his birth country.[37] But everyone also knew that he was devoid of any commitment to the niceties of a diplomatic policy and approach, which is why Calcutta appointed Ganga Ram, called back from his home, as his political assistant. I do not have to repeat here what I have developed in many of my previous studies. Let me only reaffirm that Ganga Ram, under the authority of General Ochterlony this time, ultimately managed to implement the balanced policy between the Sikhs States of trans- and cis-Sutlej that he had devised and had started to implement in 1801–1803, according to the instructions of Louis Bourquien, and under the authority of General Perron.[38] After the signature of the Treaty of Lahore between Metcalfe and Ranjit Singh on 30 May 1809, Ganga Ram once more went back to his private business,[39] but we will find him again in Lahore, called by Ranjit Singh in 1813 to create his own ministry, the *Daftar-i-Ganga Ram*.

Fig. 8.3, *Maharajah Ranjit Singh with Raja Hira Singh,* Punjab, Ca. 1830, Opaque watercolours and gold on paper, 23 × 29.6 cm, Kapany Collection

Hira Singh (1816–1844), son of the Prime Minister Raja Dhyan Singh, was the great favourite of Ranjit Singh, who allowed him to be seated in his presence, while his father was not allowed to do so. He is always represented sitting near the maharajah along with the royal princes. He had a brief political career after the Sandhawalias murdered Maharajah Sher Singh and Raja Dhyan Singh in 1843. Appointed Prime Minister to the young Maharajah Dalip Singh (1837–1893), he first sought General Ventura's assistance to rule Punjab. But the three French generals had resigned from the *Darbar* and had left Punjab soon after the murders of Sher Singh and Dhyan Singh. Ventura refused to come back. Hira Singh then turned to his guru, Pandit Jalla, who followed a disastrous policy resulting in the death of both of them in 1844. It has been rightly observed that Maharajah Ranjit Singh is unusually and splendidly attired in this miniature.

The Sikh Kingdom of the Punjab, 1799–1849

From 1803 to 1849 the Phulkian States, now "protected" by the East India Company, continued on cruising speed, monitored by British Political Agencies established at Karnal, Ambala, Ludhiana, and Subathu; it was going out from the last one that Captain Kennedy was to "discover" Shimla in the early 1820s.

Fateh Singh, caught between Ranjit Singh, his "brother of turban" who became the maharajah of Punjab, and the Sutlej border increasingly controlled by British authorities, found himself isolated at Kapurthala with a growing fear that his territories would be annexed someday by Lahore, something that Ranjit Singh probably never considered.

Prevented from any ambition, if not anxiety, on his southeast border now called the Anglo-Sikh frontier, the maharajah embarked on a series of military campaigns to clear the Punjab of any foreign military occupation, and then to ensure its security by the conquest of Muslim adjacent areas, eternal sources of *jihads* (Fig. 8.3). We must remember his main victories: Kasur (1807), Attock (1813), Multan (1818), Kashmir (1819), Mankera (1821), and finally Peshawar (1834).

It would be well to remember that at this period the maharajah began the modernization of his armed forces by hiring former officers and soldiers of the "French" brigades of Hindustan. The gun-founders he established at Idgah, near Lahore, came from the foundries of De Boigne and Perron in the Ganga-Jamuna Doab, and the officers who commanded these "special forces" very naturally retained their title of *Kumedan*, from the French "Commandant." Even Sheikh Basawan, commander of the *Khas* Regiment and among the best, was proud to take that title too, though he came from the troops of the East India Company.[40]

The army's modernization was accompanied by a corresponding one of the administration thanks to the action of Ganga Ram, whom Ranjit Singh invited to Lahore with the

Fig. 8.4, *Diwan Dina Nath*, Northern India or Pakistan, Mid-19th century, Painting on ivory, 5.08 × 6.35 cm, Kapany Collection

Dina Nath (?–1857) was a nephew of Diwan Ganga Ram, former political adviser of Colonel Louis Bourquien (1801–1803) and later Minister of Maharajah Ranjit Singh (1813–1826). He was also the cousin of Diwan Ajudhya Prasad, *bakhshi* of the *Fauj-i-khas* under Generals Allard and Ventura (1822–1843), and later on General commanding the *Fauj* from 1843 to 1846. They belonged to a cultured Kashmiri family which had to leave the Valley in the eighteenth century because of repeated Islamic persecutions in the state. A branch of the family was among the ancestors of the Kaul-Nehru family (Jawaharlal Nehru, *Autobiography*, 1936, reprinted OUP 1982, pp. 1–2). Ganga Ram and Dina Nath were among the chief protectors of Kashmiris settling down in Lahore and Amritsar. Besides their numerous political and military activities, they sponsored poets, artists, and miniature painters, among them Imam Bakhsh Lahori. Dina Nath, "whose splendid abilities soon made him distinguished in the political world" (L. H. Griffin), had two beautiful *havelis* built in Lahore, where he also constructed a splendid *Shivala* with a golden dome and decorated with paintings of *Devatas* and *Avatars*. His garden on the road to Shalimar "was once unrivalled for its beauty, its fertility and elegance" (S. M. Latif). And he also contributed to the renovation "of the Matt of Dhoonisahab in Gujrat district. He also built a big tank in the temple premises of Bhawani Devi in Kangra, now in Himachal Pradesh, and a big Dharamshala at a place known as Devipura near Shalimar for pilgrims" (B. N. Sharga). Dina Nath is omnipresent on the paintings showing the *Darbars* of Ranjit Singh. His son Amar Nath, a poet in Persian and an educationist of high standing, wrote a *Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh*, which is "an important original source of information concerning the reign of the Maharaja up to 1835–1836" (Ganda Singh), and which was presented in the *Calcutta Review* in 1857.

Fig. 8.5, *Maharajah Ranjit Singh and members of his court*, Punjab Province, Ca. 1825, Opaque watercolours on paper, 19 × 23.5 cm (image), 20.3 × 25.4 cm (overall), Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.97

aim to introduce reforms on the model of those made by De Boigne and Perron from 1784 to 1803 in Hindustan. Ganga Ram's induction into the Punjab government was immediately reported to the Maratha authorities of Poona by their ambassadors in Lahore in these terms: "Ganga Ram…who had been previously a *diwan* to Louis [Bourquien] Sahib."[41] And when he was officially received by the maharajah at the Court of Lahore, "The noble Sarkar [Ranjit Singh] inquired from him [Ganga Ram] about the General Sahib [Perron],[42] Louis Sahib [Bourquien] and other English Sahibs[43] and was told that the English Sahibs had taken the country by the sword."[44] Ganga Ram accomplished major administrative reforms in Lahore.[45] However, the greatest service he rendered to the Punjab was perhaps to call two of his nephews. The first one, Ajudhya Prasad, arrived in 1814 and was trained in military affairs; in 1822 he was placed under Generals Allard and Ventura on their arrival in Lahore and the constitution of the *Fauj-i-Khas*. Dina

Two great paintings have survived which give us a rich view of the Lahore court: the large painting *Der Hof von Lahor* by August Shoefft (1841–1855), and the Lahore *Darbar*, undated, by an anonymous artist (Muhammed Bakhsh?). Then after Ranjit Singh's death (June 1839), sets of the Lahore court were produced showing only a few prominent persons: the maharajah (Ranjit Singh or Dalip Singh) and the main courtiers of the time. This miniature painting shows four maharajahs only: Ranjit Singh, Kharak Singh, Nao Nihal Singh, and Sher Singh. Standing in front of Ranjit Singh with folded hands are Raja Dhyan Singh (Prime Minister) and behind him either Jamadar Kushal Singh (the former Prime Minister), or his nephew Tej Singh, Commander in Chief of the Punjab army during the First Sikh War. Standing behind Sher Singh could be Raja Gulab Singh, while sitting in front and covered with a yellow shawl is Raja Dina Nath, the famous Finance and Intelligence Minister of Ranjit Singh (see Fig. 8.4), sarcastically nicknamed "The Talleyrand of the Punjab" by the British because of his clever, almost cunning, resistance to the occupying forces in 1846–1849.

Fig. 8.6: General Court states in his unpublished *Mémoires* that Imam Bakhsh was an artist of Lahore whom he employed ca. 1830–1843. He sent him up to Kafiristan ("Famille kafériennne") to make paintings for his collections. Among these paintings, two soldiers: one Sikh and one "Pourpié" (French spelling for *Purbia*), belonging to the *Fauj-i-khas*. This soldier wears on his shako a plummet with the French tricolours, the colours of the *Fauj-i-khas*. The figure "2" on the copper plate on his chest shows that he is a soldier of the 2nd Company of the Gurkha Regiment of the *Fauj*. We published Imam Bakhsh's original painting first in 1997, and more recently in 2007. Honigberger states in his Memoirs covering the years 1829–1849 that all the engravings in his book come from one single artist of Lahore, and we find in Plate VI of his *Thirty-Five Years in the East* exactly the same two soldiers as in Court's collection, with the same unit number "2" on the chest plate, and identified as "Gorekhee Sipahee (Napaulese Sepoy)." The present illustration from the Kapany Collection shows the last evolution of this painting in Lahore: colours of the plummet have changed, the bayonets are awkwardly drawn and bent, but a number "2" is still visible on the cross belt of the soldier, correctly called a Gurkha. The *Fauj-i-khas* had one regiment of Gurkhas (with shako and plummet) and four regiments of Sikhs with turbans. Each regiment of Sikhs had a specific colour for the turban, yellow in the case of Court's *Mémoires*, white in the present case, red in the case of the unit on duty on the large painting of August Schoefft, *The Court of Lahore*.

Fig. 8.7: As we have shown in several of our publications, miniature paintings representing soldiers of the *Fauj-i-khas* were standing productions of the workshop of Imam Bakhsh, who was attached to the French Generals and their friends like Dr. Honigberger and Diwan Ajudhya Prasad. We find them in the miniatures of General Court (1827–1843 in Lahore and Peshawar), in the engravings of Honigberger's book (1829–1849 in Lahore: the original paintings have apparently disappeared), in some albums of the British Library, and in the albums of the Kapany Collection. Here is a Sikh drummer of the *Fauj-i-khas* with a white turban, and a Najib of Avitabile's brigade, most of the time stationed at Peshawar. The Najib is the same we find in Honigberger's *Thirty-Five Years in the East*, plate VI, along with the Sikh and the Gurkha soldiers of the *Fauj-i-khas*. He is mentioned in Honigberger's *Memoirs* as "Mooselman Sepahee." It is worth mentioning at this point that the "View of the City of Lahore" engraved by W. and N. Hanhart for Honigberger's *Thirty-Five Years in the East*, Plate XV, and so often reproduced and displayed today, was originally drawn "by a local artist of Lahore" whom we can almost surely identify as Imam Bakhsh.

Fig. 8.8: From 1833 to 1836 the regular units of the *Kampu-i-Mualla*, or "Great Army" (Grande Armée), were reorganised on the pattern of the *Fauj-i-khas*, and Ranjit Singh created eight "Générals de division" [Lieutenants-general] in December 1836. He offered the post of General commanding the new *Kampu-i-Mualla* to Diwan Adjudhya Prasad, *bakhshi* of the *Fauj-i-khas*, who refused on the ground that he wished to remain with the *Fauj*. Then the maharajah appointed Tej Singh to that post. It is probable that officers and drill-sergeants of the *Fauj*, especially from the Dragoons regiments (trained to fight as both horsemen and infantrymen), were transferred to the *Kampu* for the training of these units. The dresses of the officers of the *Kampu* were similar to the ones of the *Fauj*, and this officer could belong to any of the two. One can find paintings of these regular units in various miniature paintings and frescoes (e.g., T. S. Randhawa, *The Sikhs: Images of a Heritage*, New Delhi, 2000, p. 99, painting in a *haveli* in Amritsar—as far as I know, the *haveli* no longer exists). The *Fauj* maintained its discipline and steel till the battles of Ferozeshah and Chillianwala, and its reputation and fame survived in miniature paintings till the 1870s, as shown in albums of the Kapany Collection.

Fig. 8.6, *Sikh and Gurkha soldiers of the Fauj-i-khas (Album 3, page 56),* Lahore or Amritsar, 19th century, Opaque watercolours on paper, 21.6 × 17.8 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 8.7, *Sikh drummer of the Fauj-i-khas and Najib of Avitabile's brigade (Album 3, page 37),* Lahore or Amritsar, 19th century, Opaque watercolours on paper, 21.6 × 17.8 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 8.8, *Officer of the Fauj-i-khas and a Punjabi woman (Album 1, page 39),* Lahore or Amritsar, 19th century, Opaque watercolours on paper, 21.6 × 17.8 cm, Kapany Collection

Nath, Ganga Ram's second nephew, arrived in 1815, and was to succeed to the leadership of the *Daftar* of his uncle in 1826 as keeper of the seals and intelligence Minister (Fig. 8.4). In 1834 he also became director of the *Sarishta-i-Bhawani Das* (Department of Finance). The English officers of the Political Services called Raja Dina Nath the "Talleyrand of Punjab," because of the underground, but implacable, opposition he led against them during their first occupation of the Punjab in 1846–1849.

It is evident that by 1820, and for the first time in history, Ranjit Singh had established a Punjabi sovereignty on the whole territory of Punjab. He had formed a government that included the skilled Punjabis of all ethnic groups and religious denomination, and he had engaged in the service of the state several personalities external to it (Fig. 8.5). This led to what we can today call the second phase of his reign, leading toward the apogee of his power and influence in 1830.

In the military field, the arrival of two former officers of Napoleon, Allard and Ventura in Lahore in March 1822,[46] was to cause a significant addition to his military power with the creation of the *Fauj-i-Khas* (Fig. 8.6).[47] In 1827 the arrival of Court and Avitabile triggered a renewal of the artillery of the kingdom, and Avitabile became one of the best civil administrators of Punjab (Wazirabad, then Peshawar) (Fig. 8.7). As Ranjit Singh officially stated several times in full *darbar*, all four were to be of irreplaceable assistance for the conquest, the annexation, and then the integration of Peshawar and its province into the Punjab kingdom (Fig. 8.8). Peshawar and its area remained practically under "French" command from 1835 to 1843,[48] but these French officers also participated fully in the cultural life of the kingdom. It is Maharajah Ranjit Singh's cultural policy during the forty years of his reign that I am now going to consider.[49]

On taking possession of Lahore in 1799, Ranjit Singh launched an ambitious program of restoration and renovation of the great imperial monuments: first the Fort, with the redecoration of the Shish Mahal and the building of the *baradari* with its graceful silhouette in the Hazuri Bagh, then the Shalimar Gardens, with the rehabilitation of the canal built by Ali Mardan Khan that Ranjit Singh extended up to Amritsar and along which the old Mughal gardens were resurrected and the new "Sikh" gardens were laid.[50] The walled city was the object of a general cleaning, with the rehabilitation and modernization of the ramparts and the gates. New constructions appeared everywhere in the Punjab, and more particularly in Lahore where the Hindus and the Sikhs for the first time in centuries were able to freely build their temples and decorate them both internally and externally as they wished, since the strict restrictions of the *Sharia* on places of worship and residences of non-Muslims in the *Dar ul-Islam* became ipso facto obsolete in the Punjab kingdom.

Even more than Lahore, Amritsar grew remarkably well, with the program of renovation, ornamentation, and gilding of the *Harmandir*, which now became popularly known as the Golden Temple. This program of beautification of the *Harmandir* was probably the most important in all the Indian subcontinent between 1800 and 1850 (Fig. 8.9).[51] Ranjit Singh rebuilt and considerably modernized the Fort of Govindgarh (Fig. 9.10), erected the ramparts all around the city, developed the bazaars, and built a palace in the Ram Bagh. After he was named civil governor of Wazirabad and Peshawar, General Avitabile cleaned and embellished both these cities. Allard and Ventura developed the area around Anarkali in Lahore, creating the "Garden of the Soldier" along an arm of the Ravi River. They also ensured the development of the new Anarkali Bazaar, which extended from the new cantonments of the *Fauj-i-Khas* to the fortified city of Lahore. In *Char Bagh-i-Punjab*, a remarkable book written well before the annexation of the Punjab in 1849, Ganesh Das gives a global vision of the cultural resurrection of the country with the list—*doab* after *doab*, small towns after major

Fig. 8.9, *"Durbar Umritsir" (Album 2, page 6),* Lahore or Amritsar, 19th century, Opaque watercolours on paper, 19.7 × 15.2 cm, Kapany Collection

cities—of the Mughals monuments restored and the "Sikh" and Hindus monuments erected in the whole country.[52] This book also indicates the level of peace and prosperity of the kingdom in the years 1830–1840 (Fig. 8.10), with the populations leaving the shelter of the ramparts of their cities and villages to spread in the countryside, build new residences, and develop new gardens (Fig. 8.11). A happy observer of a pacified Punjab and aware of what formed the framework of a civilized society in a country, Ganesh Das also compiled a list of personalities and men of talent, heads of families of note, and great administrators. But he also listed the *hakims* (physicians) (Fig. 8.12), the poets, the mathematicians, and the astronomers, as well as the men of law and the calligraphists who lived in each region described in his *Char Bagh-i-Punjab*.

One of several similar representations of the *Shri Harimandir*, or *Harmandir Sahib*, probably the greatest architectural project realised by an Indian state in the 1810–1840s. Guru Arjun founded the Temple in 1589, and the *Adi Granth* was formally installed in it in 1604. Destroyed thrice by the Afghans of Ahmed Shah Durrani, its last refoundation was done by Sardar Jassa Singh, the founder of the Kapurthala royal house, in 1765. As soon as Maharajah Ranjit Singh took control of Amritsar, he set up a committee to look after the affairs of the *Harmandir*, and he started a great program for beautifying the Temple and the buildings around. Covered with gold and marble, it became known as the *Swaran Mandir*, or Golden Temple. As Mandajit Kaur stated in her *Golden Temple Past and Present*, "For this 'service' in gold and marble, the Maharaja contributed over 16,00,000 rupees, amounting to one quarter of the total estimated cost" (p. 54). Maharajahs Kharak Singh and Sher Singh did their best to implement Maharajah Ranjit Singh's program. And it must be noted that though under the authority of the Lahore *Darbar* till 1849, all the other Sikh sovereigns of the cis-Sutlej States participated in its beautification, erecting their *bungas* all around, as Ranjit Singh had done for himself, as well as participating in the running expenses of the Temple complex, especially the *langar*.

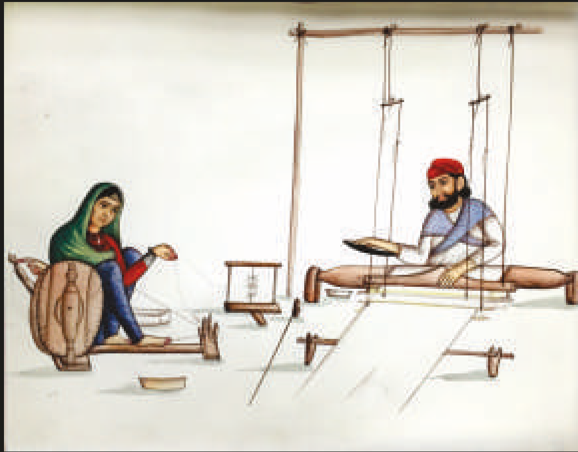


Fig. 8.10, *Spinneress [sic]; weaver (Album 3, page 27),* Lahore or Amritsar, 19th century, Opaque watercolours on paper 24.5 × 19.7 cm, Kapany Collection

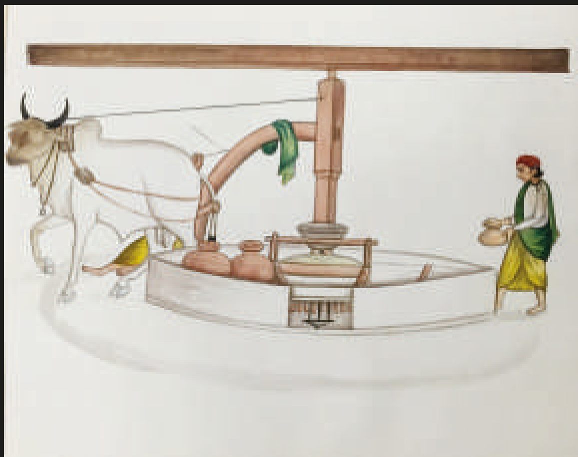


Fig. 8.11, *Oil expresser and his crushing machine (Album 1, page 28),* Lahore or Amritsar, 19th century, Opaque watercolours on paper, 21.6 × 17.8 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 8.12, *Native doctor (Album 2, page 45),* Lahore or Amritsar, 19th century, Opaque watercolours on paper, 19.7 × 15.2 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 8.10: Textiles, mainly shawls and carpets, were among the prime products of the Punjab kingdom. The main centres of productions were in Kashmir, Lahore, and Amritsar. In his remarkable *Woven Masterpieces of Sikh Heritage* (2010), Frank Ames has published extremely interesting documents showing the extent of exchanges between Lahore and Paris concerning the shawls, with mutual influences through the French Generals of Ranjit Singh. It is no surprise, therefore, to find many miniature paintings representing fabrication of textiles in the Punjab: cleaning cotton, cloth merchants, woman spinning, weaving cotton cloth, cleaning the raw cotton from the seeds, cotton sellers, "spinneresses" and weavers, wool spinners and a Kashmiri woman, silk dyer and ornament maker, silk spinner and spinner of gold thread, and the like. In this context it is worth remembering the small catalog (8 large paintings) entitled *Kashmiri Shawls: A unique collection of Indian drawing illustrating the production of Kashmir shawls, commis-sioned for the 1867 Paris Exposition*, by Veronica Murphy, Kyburg Limited, London, 1988.

Fig. 8.11: "Firanghi" paintings, as they were originally called in India before becoming "Company" paintings because of British hegemony in the subcontinent, made a large place for everyday life in the country: "Moeurs et coutumes des Indiens," tribes and castes, trades, productions (industrial as well as agricultural), habits, customs, and religious practices in the various areas of the subcontinent. That was done either for illustrating books published in Europe and illuminated manuscripts commissioned by Europeans, or as mere souvenirs to take back home. The cloth trade served both the functions. The oil trade was more specific of European curiosity concerning life in the villages of the country.

Fig. 8.12: Dr. Johan Martin Honigberger, an Austro-Hungarian physician from the city of Kronstadt/Brasov (in present-day Romania), reached Lahore in 1829. He was introduced by General Allard to Ranjit Singh, who gave him employment as physician and manager of a gunpowder factory. Returning to Europe in 1835, Honigberger learnt homeopathic medicine in Paris from Dr. Hahnemann himself, and then lived in Lahore from 1839 to 1849. He published his *Memoirs* in London in 1852 (*Thirty-Five Years in the East*), of which volume 2 contains information on medicinal plants and products of Punjab and Kashmir under the title *Materia Medica*. To illustrate his *Memoirs*, he used his "Portraits and sketches, taken by a native of Lahore," which, because some of them are almost identical to some miniatures of General Court, certainly come from Imam Bakhsh Lahori's workshop. Two drawings dealing with medical activities are engraved in his *Memoirs*: "Hakim, or Hakeem (Mohamedan Doctor)…feeling the pulse of his patient," and "Attar, or Uttar (Druggist)…A medicine chest containing simply electuaries and pills (in wooden boxes) is beside him." The present miniature painting, which combines elements of the two engravings, is not from the known collection of Honigberger. The presence of the child, as well as the gentle attitude and smile of the doctor when he checks the worried child's pulse, give a remarkable human touch to this painting.

There is another book, *Gulgashat-i-Punjab* (date of compilation not known), which also represents the major monuments of the kingdom, essentially those of Lahore and Amritsar, and which reveals a relatively new consciousness of the architectural heritage of the country, in comparison with the available information on the subject in this part of India.[53] By comparison with Syed Muhammad Latif's book on *Lahore,* published in 1892,[54] the *Gulgashat-i-Punjab* makes it clear that many of the major Mughal monuments of Lahore, including some of them built by Dara Shikoh, were not destroyed by "the Sikhs," but by the Lahori entrepreneurs between 1849 and 1892.[55] The *Lahore* of Latif has the great advantage of describing the most remarkable buildings of his time, often dating from the reign of Ranjit Singh, as well as the Hindu and Sikh temples which flourished in this city which Hiuen Tsang had called "Brahmanical" in ca. A.D. 640. The paintings and frescoes that the European travellers like Jacquemont, Vigne, Hügel, Barr, and Von Orlich mentioned in their *Travels* and *Correspondence* had almost disappeared by then. In his book, Latif reported those which at his time still adorned the residences of the eminent families of Lahore, and which attest to the number of artists having worked under Ranjit Singh in the capital of the Punjab. Amritsar was as well served as Lahore in these fields, and most of the travellers tell us that even the small towns, for example Wazirabad or Chiniot, were decorated with rich and colourful wall paintings, most of them inspired by Hindu mythology. A special mention must also be made of the French officers' residences, of which we have rich descriptions by the European travellers of the period who described the gardens, but also the mural paintings and the interior decoration of the houses, the fountains (e.g., the *baradari* of General Allard in Lahore) as well as the gilding, the mirrors, the mouldings, the paintings, the furniture, and the carpets which adorned them.[56] What remain today of such old paintings still existing in Sikh religious buildings and their annexes show a strong influence of the *Janamsakhis*, of course, but also a constant and rich presence of Indian mythology.[57] More-profane paintings adorned the palaces of the various personalities of the kingdom, as well as the residences of ordinary individuals.

The richness and variety of this decoration reveal a completely forgotten fact: that the inhabitants of Punjab under "native" rule were much more educated and cultured than what English historiography has led us to believe. The thirty years of peace ensured by Ranjit Singh and his government led to a flowering of culture and education in the land of the Five Rivers. In a book barely more known than the *Char-Bagh-i-Punjab*, Leitner focuses on what remained of "Indigenous education" in the Punjab some thirty years after it had become "British."[58] In this major compilation, he gives the number of Hindu, Sikh, Persian, and Koranic schools which still existed thirty years after the beginning of English colonization, showing incidentally that under Ranjit Singh "Islamic" education had not been hampered, nor restricted. Going through the responses to his questionnaire distributed widely by the administrative authorities of Punjab, Leitner recorded the texts in the syllabus of these institutions, which included what we call the great classics of India, Hindu as well as Muslim. But he also pointed out the large number of texts relating to science and technology, manuscripts that were still to be found on so many shelves in 1882. On the basis of these statistics, he estimated that the number of pupils and students in these institutions was 330,000 before the Annexation (1849), but had fallen to 190,000 by 1882.

This education, widely disseminated throughout the Punjab in the "vernacular" languages of Sanskrit, Hindi, Punjabi, Persian, and Arabic,[59] explains the flowering of the workshops of copyists and miniature paintings in the kingdom, from 1799 to 1849.[60] The miniature paintings, as well as the illuminated manuscripts—at least those which survived[61]—are to be found today in Patiala,

Chandigarh, Amritsar, Karachi, and Lahore. Some of the most beautiful ones are in the collections of Calcutta, Patna, and Rampur, as well as in the National Museum in New Delhi. But many of them found their way to some of the world's largest collections of paintings and manuscripts.[62] As far as miniature paintings are concerned, I had reported in 1977 the rediscovery in France of two splendid collections of paintings made in Lahore between 1825 and 1845 by Imam Bakhsh Lahori for the French officers of Maharajah Ranjit Singh. I affirmed that these two collections enable us to identify a school of painting of Lahore, one that had not yet been mentioned by the art historians.

The first set, discovered in 1975, is a collection of miniature paintings done between 1827 and 1843 to illustrate the *Memoirs* of General Court.[63] They contain a whole series of portraits of the great figures of the kingdom, Maharajah Ranjit Singh of course,[64] but also Maharajahs Kharak Singh, Sher Singh, and Dalip Singh (Fig. 8.13). The three Dogra brothers are represented there, as are Raja Hira Singh (Fig. 8.14), Raja Jawahir Singh, and others.[65] A second series, of a different style, presents several miniature paintings concerning Afghanistan, with a particular set devoted to the people of the tribes of the Khyber Pass and the province of Peshawar. Very beautiful paintings represent the fortresses of Rohtas, Attock, and Jamrud, with a tiny painting showing the attack of the Khyber Pass by the *Fauj-i-Khas* and a few other units of Lahore in 1842.

The second set includes fifty-nine miniature paintings executed by Imam Bakhsh and his workshop between 1837 and 1843 to illustrate the *Fables* of La Fontaine (1668–1694) in a new edition dated 1827.[66] The frontispiece shows Maharajah Ranjit Singh sitting in a garden and surrounded by his courtiers.[67] The illustrations are a wonderful immersion in the Punjab at the height of its prosperity, showing life in cities and fields, in forests and riverbanks, in the

Fig. 8.13, *Prince Nao Nihal Singh and Maharajah Kharak Singh (Album 2, page 18),* Northern India or Pakistan, 19th century, Opaque watercolours on paper, 19.7 × 15.2 cm, Kapany Collection

Kharak Singh (1802–1840) was the only son acknowledged as legitimate by Maharajah Ranjit Singh, and was the father of Prince Nao Nihal Singh (1821–1840). There was an affectionate complicity between Ranjit Singh and Nao Nihal Singh. The happy grandfather was proud of his amicable, charming, and brilliant grandson, who received a sound military training at Peshawar under the care of Hari Singh Nalwa and the French generals. In 1834 Ranjit Singh proudly called him "*Sikandar-mishal*" (similar to Alexander the Great). Nao Nihal Singh's wedding in 1837 turned out to be a major event in the kingdom, with the travel to Punjab of Lord Fane, Commander in Chief of the British Indian army representing the Governor-General. Despite the advice of his best councillors to overpass Kharak Singh and appoint Nao Nihal Singh as his immediate successor, the ailing maharajah refused, out of respect for his late second wife, Kharak Singh's mother, and by sheer consideration for his eldest son. In 1840, while coming back from the cremation ground of his father, Kharak Singh, Nao Nihal Singh was crushed to death by the fall of a wall. Rani Chand Kaur, his aggrieved mother, claimed that one of his widows was pregnant, so that Prince Sher Singh could not claim the throne and be seated on the *gadi* before the delivery. A boy was born, but complete mystery surrounds his fate, and Sher Singh became maharajah in 1841. There is an indication that this baby, secretly removed from the Fort of Lahore, grew up in British India. He moved to La Réunion Island in the 1860s, and he settled there, dying in 1921. His descendants, some of them still called Darsanesing (Darshan Singh), live there today.

Fig. 8.14, *Raja Hira Singh and Raja Dhian Singh (Album 3, page 3)*,
Northern India or Pakistan, 19th century,
Opaque watercolours on paper, 24.7 × 19.7 cm,
Kapany Collection

Under Dhian Singh, an inscription was made in English: "Raja Dhian Singh, Ranjit's favorite for an unmentionable reason, and who thus raised himself and brothers Hira and Gulab to dignities." Besides the glaring mistake of connection between Dhian Singh, the father, and Hira Singh, the son, the mention of "an unmentionable reason" for Ranjit Singh's connection to Dhian Singh is part of British propaganda in the 1860s to cast aspersions on the great maharajah. As a matter of fact, Dhian Singh's mistrust of British policy and ambitions was even greater than Ranjit Singh's. The political agents felt his antipathy, and they reported accordingly to Calcutta and Shimla against the Prime Minister of the Punjab. As long as Ranjit Singh was alive, Dhian Singh worked closely with his colleagues in the Lahore *Darbar*. With the short exception of the last year of his reign, Ranjit Singh held the reins of the government strongly. And despite the elucubrations of Henry Lawrence in his *Adventures of an Officer…* (see Fig. 8.19), the Dogra brothers had excellent relations with the French generals: Court accepted to take charge of the military education of Gulab Singh's eldest son, Udham Singh, who was also a close friend of Prince Nau Nihal Singh. At Dhian Singh's request, Allard sent a full detachment of his Lancers to Jammu as escort and display of honour for the wedding of Raja Hira Singh in ca. 1830. In October 1835, the Duc de Broglie, the French Prime Minister, wrote an interesting letter to Raja Dhian Singh, Prime Minister of the Punjab. There were, of course, differences between the maharajah and his Prime Minister, Dhian Singh being strongly opposed to Ranjit Singh's collaboration with the British for their invasion of Afghanistan. That had been duly reported to the Governor-General. But Dhian Singh's attachment to Ranjit Singh was such that he had to be physically prevented from jumping into the maharajah's funeral pyre in June 1839. After the death of Ranjit Singh, and till the fateful events of 15 September 1843 (the murders of Maharajah Sher Singh, Prince Partab Singh, and Prime Minister Raja Dhian Singh), the situation evolved in such a way that the Dogra brothers and the Court of Lahore had increasing conflicts of interests, till the position adopted by Raja Gulab Singh during the first Anglo-Sikh war which culminated in his purchase of Kashmir from the East India Company with money he had taken from the Fort of Lahore in 1841.

Himalayan foothills dominated by snow-capped mountains, but also in the heart of the capital city of Lahore, and in the residences of so many people, from the bourgeoisie of the city to the homes of the French officers. There are paintings of the maharajah and of his Prime Minister, but also of urban dwellers with scenes of interiors, merchants and peasants, ploughmen resting at sunset or woodmen cutting trees in the forest, thieves in the city and highwaymen in the countryside. As can be expected, there are many animal scenes, since some of these French *Fables* are inspired by the *Pançatantra*.[68]

I had indicated, right from the beginning, that the artists of this workshop, undoubtedly the best of the School of Lahore, had also worked for friends of the French officers, both natives like Dina Nath and Ajudhya Prasad, and foreigners like Honigberger[69] (Figs. 8.15 and 8.16) and Josiah Harlan.[70] Work on this question has progressed considerably since then. In 2002 Barbara Schmitz and I published a synthesis of our research on the existing manuscripts coming from the workshop of Imam Bakhsh,[71] and in 2010 Schmitz published her remarkable study on the workshop of Muhammad Bakhsh in Lahore, with beautiful reproductions of paintings illustrating the manuscripts she had identified as originating from his office situated, at the time of Ranjit Singh, in the cultural complex of the Wazir Khan Mosque.[72] They included several *Ain-i-Akbari* and *Akbarnama*,[73] one of them being a copy of an original manuscript belonging to Raja Dina Nath. The elite of Lahore proudly kept the beautiful *Shahnamas* and *Sikandarnamas* in their personal libraries, either old manuscripts or recent copies richly illustrated with miniatures executed in the workshops of the capital,[74] and also the *Khamsa* of Nizami, which contains a history of Alexander the Great.[75] The French officers had European books in their libraries, of course, but also Indian manuscripts and albums of miniature paintings. General Allard had a copy of a famous *Tutinama*

(from the *karkhana* of Emperor Akbar) which he lent to Imam Bakhsh for the classical inspiration for his illustrations of the *Fables* of La Fontaine.[76] We have located traces of the "Oriental" library of General Court in France.[77]

Under the enlightened sovereignty of Ranjit Singh, Lahore became the largest centre of production of manuscripts in India, illuminated or not, and their diffusion up to Afghanistan, Central Asia, and Iran. We know that the supposedly illiterate Ranjit Singh had enormous curiosity and a prodigious memory, and also was a man of culture.[78] The already mentioned history of Alexander the Great was so familiar to him that one of his military dispatches addressed to General Tej Singh in 1834 made reference to his brilliant grandson, Nao Nihal Singh, as the *Sikandar-Mishal*, or the "Alexander-like Prince."[79] In his fine study devoted to "Ranjit Singh and the Image of the Past," A. S. Melikian-Chirvani has collected the allusions both to Alexander the Great and to Shah Jahan in several literary works in Persian written at the time of the maharajah.[80] The royal library, or *Kitabkhana*, was carefully maintained under his reign, most probably increased and much used, as evidenced by a few references in the contemporary documents of the time.[81] Ranjit Singh loved looking at his favourite miniature paintings. As we have seen, he honoured copyists and miniature painters, giving instructions to his artists to draw the portraits of the many visitors to his court. But he was reluctant to offer paintings to his European visitors, fearing that they did not fully appreciate their essence and their artistic qualities. In fact, there were important personal libraries in the great as well as in the more modest families of Punjab, with a considerable number of works devoted to the great classics of the Hindu, Persian, and Indo-Persian mythologies and epics, as well as to famous legends like *Hir Ranja*, *Laila u-Majnun*, *Khusraw,* and *Shirin,* among others. Hari Singh Nalwa often showed his albums of miniature paintings to

Fig. 8.15, *Men distilling spirits (Album 1, page 50),*
Lahore or Amritsar, 19th century, Opaque watercolours on paper, 21.6 × 17.8 cm, Kapany Collection

Dr. Honigberger (see caption of Fig. 8.12) worked as a physician in Lahore, where he was for a while in charge of the Public Hospital with Fakir Syed Nuruddin Bokhari. He commissioned a series of miniature paintings done by Imam Bakhsh in order to illustrate the medical profession in Lahore, thus initiating a long line of copies and imitations that lasted till the late nineteenth century. This plate is obviously inspired by Honigberger's "Karkhana Abkaree," vol. 1, plate XI, p. 157.

Fig. 8.16, *Poshti and opium (smoker) (Album 3, page 24),*
Lahore or Amritsar, 19th century, Opaque watercolours on paper, 24.5 × 19.7 cm, Kapany Collection

This miniature painting is also directly inspired from Honigberger's *Thirty-Five Years in the East*, plate X, which has three drawings: "B'hangee (Hemp-plat drinker)," not reproduced here; "Chursee Bhistee, or Mushkee (a Mohammedan water-carrier) smoking Churrus"; and "Fakeer Postee (Poppy-head drinker) smoking his hookah while rubbing poppy-heads with his hands in a vessel with water, which he afterwards strains through a cloth and drinks." Honigberger, in his "Illustrations of the plates," pp. 195–99, explains the details of the pictures.

his visitors. Khushal Singh, Dina Nath, Adjudhya Prasad, Lehna Singh Majithia and the most cultured members of the Majithia family, Abd al-Majid Khan Saddozai and his followers, the Fakir brothers and their children, and many other people also maintained personal libraries with their collections of manuscripts, albums, paintings, and drawings.

In these collections were portraits of major political figures of the kingdom. These series of portraits, catalogued as characteristic of the art of the Sikhs,[82] were continued after the end of the Sikh rule in the Punjab kingdom, by a series of oval paintings on ivory and woodcuts (Fig. 8.17). I must also note the drawings of the *Darbar* of Lahore, which began to flourish in the second half of Ranjit Singh's reign and which include one recently discovered in Philadelphia, which seems to have survived from the collection of Josiah Harlan.[83] General Court's collection as well as the one illustrating the *Fables* of La Fontaine done under the supervision of Generals Allard and Ventura, together with a few remaining paintings from the collection of General Allard,[84] are excellent illustrations of this Lahori school, and have the merit of a rigorous dating. It is interesting to compare the great painting of the *Court of Lahore* by August Schoefft[85] with that of the *Darbar of Lahore* made in a more reduced size by an anonymous Punjabi artist (Muhammed Bakhsh Lahori?) at a date which remains unknown, on which forty-eight eminent personalities of the kingdom are identified and assembled around and in front of the maharajah.[86] Each individual, including the French officers, has on each of the two paintings the characteristic physiognomy of their stylized portraits on miniature paintings that have come down to us.[87]

The last great architectural complex erected in Lahore before Annexation was the *samadh* of Maharajah Ranjit Singh, begun immediately after his death and his national

Dalhousie was appointed Governor-General of India in 1847, and he assumed his office in January 1848. That was after the disastrous event of the First Anglo-Afghan war, the Annexation of Sindh by Napier, and the first Anglo-Sikh war. When he retired in February 1856, he had annexed Punjab after a bloody Second Anglo-Sikh war, invaded and annexed Burma, annexed Satara, Nagpur, Tanjore, Jhansi, and ultimately Oudh (Awadh), which was one of the last sparks in the chain of events that led to the so-called "Mutiny" in 1857. While trying in 1904 to discharge him of any undue appetite for conquest and annexations, W. L. Warner, one of his best biographers, could not but recall Dalhousie's policy in developing in India the two strongest instruments of empire: railways and the telegraph. He concluded that "in the three words, conquest, consolidation and development, his work may be summed up." Dalhousie was the one who appointed Henry Lawrence as President of the Board of Administration in Punjab in 1849, and John Lawrence Chief Commissioner of the Punjab in 1853.

Fig. 8.17, *Lord Dalhousie,*
Northern India or Pakistan,
Mid-19th century,
Painting on ivory, 5.08 × 6.35 cm,
Kapany Collection

Fig. 8.18,
Tomb of Maharajah Ranjit Singh in Lahore (Album 2, page 10),
Northern India or Pakistan,
19th century,
Opaque watercolours on paper,
19.7 × 15.2 cm,
Kapany Collection

Fig. 8.19,
"Maharaja Runjeet Sing" on horseback, Frontispiece of vol. 1 of *Adventures of an Officer in the Punjaub*, by Major Henry M. Lawrence, 2d ed., London, 1846, Engraving, 23 × 14.5 × 3.5 cm,
Kapany Collection

Henry Lawrence (1806–1857) is one of the iconic figures of the British Raj. Posted at Peshawar in 1841 as Assistant Political Agent, he had to rely on the French officers commanding there, Court and Avitabile, for his security, up to the point of sleeping in General Court's personal tent for safety. Fascinated by the story of (recently deceased) General Allard and his wife Bannu Pan Deï, he published this book in 1846, Allard becoming "Bellasis" and Bannu Pan Deï of Chamba becoming "Mahtab Kaur of Kangra." Ganda Singh rightly says that this book is "full of information, though not always correct." Appointed President of the Board of Administration of the Punjab in April 1846, Lawrence settled in Generals Allard's and Ventura's residence in Anarkali, where he held a *Darbar* parallel to the *Darbar* of Lahore, and from where he issued the orders for the Punjab army to shift from the French to the English system of drill and warfare. From there also, and more ominously, he had to coerce the Punjab Government to ask for a continuation of the British military occupation of the land in December 1846: "It is very important the proposal should originate with them; and in any document proceeding from them this admission must be stated in clear and unqualified terms; our reluctance to undertake a heavy responsibility must be set forth" (Hardinge to Currie, 10 December 1846). And later: "This solicitation must clearly be their act." In this context, this book was published in London, after a first publication (anonymous) in the *Delhi Gazette* in 1842. The "Maharaja Ranjit Singh" riding Leili in the frontispiece is a copy of an original painting done by a Punjabi artist and belonging to General Ventura when he went on leave to France in 1837. Ventura presented it to Alfred de Dreux, a French artist, who made an oil painting which Ventura offered to the Louvre Museum in 1838. There are, of course, slight differences between the engraving for Lawrence's book and the oil painting for Ventura, especially on the left side of the painting, behind Maharajah Ranjit Singh. But the squadron of Allard's Lancers, on the right, is on both the paintings. On Dreux's painting they have the tricolour flag of the *Fauj-i-khas.*

funeral in June 1839 (Fig. 8.18). This monumental complex, both the building and its internal frescoes and decoration, was almost completed when the Annexation of the Punjab took place in 1849.[88] It was seriously damaged during the Partition in 1947, but was restored under the care of Anna Molka Ahmed and her students.[89] These frescoes are a monumental exhibition of Sikh and Hindu themes by the great artistic schools then flourishing in the kingdom—Lahori, Kashmiri, Pahari, and "Delhiite." A more complete restoration of this building is necessary, and Dr. Nadhra Naeem's recent study is an essential approach for those who are interested in the arts in the Punjab kingdom (Fig. 8.19).[90]

The British Raj and the Princely States of Punjab, 1849–1947

We can follow the evolution of the Sikh community since its first years in the Punjab under the guidance of Guru Nanak and his successors, and then in its desperate efforts to survive the attempts of eradication by the Muslim authorities from 1606 (the execution of Guru Arjun in Lahore) up to 1799 (the year that young Ranjit Singh captured Lahore). The contribution of the Sikh community to the culture of the Punjab as a whole, and in the fields of art in particular, appears to be more considerable in the Punjab Kingdom from 1799 to 1839 (Figs. 8.20 and 8.21). On the other hand, the Sikh States south of the Sutlej River, the Phulkian States, seem to have been practically eclipsed from 1809 to 1849 by the splendour of the Lahore kingdom, where the artists of the countries around flocked to find work to their measure. What became of these artists after the Annexation of Punjab by the British in 1849 remains a huge mystery. We are caught between the observation of John Login, according to whom the young Maharajah Dhalip Singh was enjoying himself in the Lahore Fort with many artists of high calibre in 1849,[91] and the declaration by Lieutenant Hornet in 1866 that he could not find an artist willing to work for him in Punjab.[92] In 1989, Dr. Mildred Archer, my wife, and I had the privilege to see a portrait of young Bonaparte in Shimla, as well as a set of drawings of horses for a veterinary treatise, in two volumes, with no date, all done by Imam Bakhsh Lahori.[93] The *Darbar of Ranjit Singh*, signed by Imam Bakhsh and published by Mulk Raj Anand in 1981, was painted after 1846, probably ca. 1850.[94] Another painting signed by Imam Bakhsh shows a maharajah of Gwalior bending an arc and dated A.H. 1281/A.D. 1864–65: the artist could be a younger namesake.[95] English authorities in the Punjab seemed to indicate that there was a total blank in the field of art when they took over the country.[96] This is why they created the Mayo College of Arts, built by John Lockwood Kipling, father of Rudyard Kipling, from 1875 onward.[97] It will come as no surprise to learn that the first "optional" course in miniature painting was added to the curriculum of the Mayo School of Arts in 1945 (two years before Independence) with the appointment of the aging *Ustad* Haji Muhammad Sharif, a court painter from the Punjab State of Patiala.[98] Kapurthala, under Fateh Singh (r. 1801–1837) and his successor Nihal Singh (r. 1837–1852), was part of the glory of Lahore, and beautiful buildings adorned with frescoes and located within extensive gardens[99] were already existing in the 1830s.[100] R. P. Srivastava intelligently observed the obvious anteriority of Kapurthala over Patiala concerning the development of artistic and cultural activities in the history of the Sikh States.[101] But Nihal Singh, the Raja of Kapurthala who fought the British forces in 1846, had seen his territories to the south of the Sutlej River confiscated by the English and his revenues considerably curtailed. The artists in his service, like those in the Lahore service, probably joined the Sikh States south of the Sutlej who had fought on the side of the East India Company against Punjab during the two Anglo-Sikh wars (1845–46 and 1849). Finally, all the *rajas* and *nawabs* of the Punjab flocked to the help of the English during the so-called Mutiny, and they then served the British Empire in its military operations on the Afghan border as well as in

Fig. 8.20, *Maharajah Sher Singh receiving Dost Muhammad Khan–Amir of Kabul in Lahore,* Punjab (Lahore or Amritsar), Ca. 1850, Opaque watercolours on paper, 84 × 49.8 cm , Kapany Collection

An interesting series of large miniature paintings of ca. 1850, depicting historical events and painted by the same artist or workshop using the same colours, is now dispersed between several collections. This one illustrates Maharajah Sher Singh receiving Dost Mohammed Khan in the Lahore Fort. The former Amir of Kabul, captured by the British after they invaded Afghanistan in 1839, and kept as a prisoner in British India during the short reign of Shah Shuja ul-Mulk, was in a somersault reinstated on the "throne" of Kabul after the Afghans annihilated the occupying British forces (16,500 fighting men) in 1842. The painting, showing Dost Mohammed Khan sitting on a chair while Maharajah Sher Singh is seated on the ground, clearly shows that it was not commissioned by a Sikh patron. The purpose might have been to show the Sikhs in an inferior position to the Muslim established powers, as can be seen from a painting from another private collection, "Maharaja Ranjit Singh with Akbar Shah II" (16" × 22"): a meeting which never took place, but which represents Ranjit Singh in Delhi meeting the Mughal Emperor in the Qudsia Bagh, with a branch of the Jamuna flowing between the Red Fort and the Purana Qila in the background.

Probably from the same set as the previous one, this painting shows the camp of a former military officer who turned into a holy man and settled at Naurangabad, on the Sutlej River. According to Khushwant Singh, he had a private army of 1,200 muskets and 3,000 horsemen, and he provided food to 1,500 pilgrims every day. In 1844 he was joined by General Attar Singh Sandhawalia, a close relative of Maharajah Ranjit Singh and a remarkable officer, but a man who was an accomplice in the murders of Maharajah Sher Singh and Prime Minister Dhyan Singh in 1843. After the murders, he took asylum in British India, and he returned to Punjab with the help of British Intelligence, following "an error of the British Agents," as Ellenborough nicely put it in a letter to Queen Victoria (10 June 1844). The Bhai is said to have received him with the words "The throne of the Punjab awaits you." Two reputed sons of Ranjit Singh, Peshaura Singh and Kashmira Singh, also joined him. By April 1844, his army had swollen to 7,000 men, and the Bhai declared that during the minority of a Sikh maharajah (read: Dalip Singh), the Prime Minister had to be a Sikh, not a Hindu (read: Hira Singh). Hira Singh sent against him the best units he had at hand—five regiments of cavalry and twelve regiments of infantry, including the Gurkhas of the *Fauj-i-khas* and the artillery of General Court. They were told they were marching against the English who had attacked on the Sutlej, but they found themselves facing the Bhai. During the negotiations, Attar Singh shot dead at close range General Gulab Singh Calcuttawala, chief negotiator for the *Darbar* and the army, and one of the oldest and most popular *Kumedan* of Ranjit Singh. Court's artillery immediately opened fire, blasting the camp of the Bhai and killing 600 people, among them Veer Singh, Attar Singh, and Kashmira Singh. With no enemy to be seen on either sides of the Sutlej, the army returned to Lahore, filled with remorse at what they had been forced to do. Court's artillery regiment got the surname of *Gurumar* ("Assassin of the Guru"). That was the last straw, which pitched the army (including the *Fauj-i-khas*) and the Sikhs against Prime Minister Hira Singh. Feeling threatened by the Dogra party, Maharani Jindan escaped from the Lahore Fort in December 1844 with young Maharajah Dalip Singh and took refuge in Anarkali, the headquarters of the *Fauj-i-khas*, where the Dragoons immediately ensured her security. On 21 December, Hira Singh and Pandit Jalla decided to run away from Lahore to Jammu. They were killed after a hot pursuit by the *Khalsa* cavalry.

Fig. 8.21, *The Camp of Bhai Veer Singh,*
Punjab, Ca. 1850, Opaque watercolour on paper,
54.9 × 37 cm,
Kapany Collection

Fig. 8.22, *"The Raja of Putteealla" from "Portraits of the Princes and People of India,"* Emily Eden, 1844, Chromolithograph, hand painted on paper with printed commentary text on the reverse, 55.9 × 44.4 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.63.6

Emily Eden, sister of Lord Auckland, accompanied her brother during his appointment as Governor-General in India. In December 1838 she went with him to Lahore. On their way back to Delhi, they made a short stopover at Patiala (15–16 January 1839), the time for her to make a few more drawings or sketches, some of which were later engraved in *The Princes and People of India* (1844). They included this imposing drawing of Maharajah Karam Singh on his State elephant, but also a "Guard of the Raja of Putteealla and two of his dwarfs" whom she described with amusement in *Up the Country* (ed. 1978, pp. 242). She briefly noted that "The Raja of Putteealla is chief of the largest of the Sikh Principalities on the South Bank of the Sutlej, which owe allegiance to the British Government, and are under its protection." They then moved to Nabha to meet "the old Rajah of Nabun, a Sikh chief, and a fine looking old creature." But whatever she could see in Patiala (where she particularly appreciated the orderly social functions) or in Nabha, she could never forget the amazing splendour and grandeur of the Court of Lahore.

its overseas operations, from Hong Kong to South Africa.[102] With guaranteed security at home and large incomes assured, each of these states developed a courtly life derived from that of Lahore, but inspired also from the protocol of the British Raj. Palaces, temples, public and private buildings rose in the capitals of these states and were adorned with frescoes and paintings while the maharajahs and the educated elite collected splendid collections of objects of art, miniatures, and manuscripts in their libraries, to which manuscripts from the old kingdom of Punjab, but also from the Imperial library of Delhi, found their way. Finally, an entire dynastic art developed with the cult of the portraits of the sovereigns, some of them executed in Europe but most of them by Indian artists in residence.

Patiala, with its fidelity first to Calcutta and then to London, supplanted Kapurthala as the first Sikh State of a unified Punjab, trans- and cis-Sutlej,[103] taking the lead in the fields of arts during the 1850s (Figs. 8.22 and 8.23). Maharajah Narinder Singh (r. 1845–1862) started building the Qila Mubarak complex, maintaining at its heart the first fort built by Ala Singh (called the Qila Androon). Most of the magnificent frescoes adorning these palaces, including those of the Sheesh Mahal, date from his reign and are the work of artists who came from Punjab, the Himalayan Foothills (Pahari), and Kashmir, but also Rajasthan (Jaipur), Delhi (after 1857), and even Awadh (Fig. 8.24).[104] Narinder Singh's successors followed his cultural and heritage policy, enriching their libraries with manuscripts and miniature paintings, creating their art galleries adorned with frescoes, and filling them with historical relics, documents, and objets d'art. They also formed some more specialized collections (e.g., the Gallery of military medals in Patiala), and they purchased an impressive number of precious stones, some of which had reputedly belonged to Empress Eugénie.[105] The Patiala Necklace, which was created by

Cartier in 1928 for Maharajah Bhupinder Singh, disappeared in 1948, only to resurface in 1998. It still remains a legend among the jewels of Princely India.[106]

Jind and Nabha followed Patiala's example as best as they could, in imitation also of the Punjab kingdom. We must remember that Bibi Raj Kaur, the sister of Raja Bagh Singh of Jind (r. 1789–1819), had married Sardar Mahan Singh Sukarchakia and had given birth to Ranjit Singh. Raja Raghbir Singh (r. 1864–1887) is remembered as an enlightened prince who had a large art collection. He gave a "great stimulus to local talent" in his state, taking inspiration from the city of Jaipur to reconstruct the city of Sangrur and implanting manufactures and art industries everywhere to the point that by 1900 Jind was "undoubtedly the first of the Phulkian States as regards artistic manufactures."[107] Moreover, Jind held the privilege of having many historical and archaeological sites of great value in its territory, including Kurukshetra, site of the battle of the *Mahabharata*.[108] As for Nabha (Figs. 8.25 and 8.26), the only one of the Phulkian States which did not support the English during the first Anglo-Sikh war (1845–1846), it paid dearly for that with the confiscation of a quarter of its territories and the removal of Raja Devindar Singh in 1846, to the benefit of his son, then seven years of age.

Nevertheless, whatever the greatness and riches of Patiala at the zenith of the British Raj, "Bhupinder Singh's great rival among the Sikhs was Jagatjit Singh of Kapurthala."[109] What an amazing figure was that maharajah of Kapurthala, "descendant" of Baba Jassa Singh[110] and of Raja Fateh Singh, and the ultimate inheritor of the Sikh kingdom of the Punjab after it was wiped off the map by British Annexation in 1849! His reign extended more than half of the English colonization of Punjab.[111] Having received a solid education in English, Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic, he added to that "a good knowledge of

Fig. 8.23, *Maharajah Karam Singh of Patiala and his son Narinder Singh with a holy man,* Northern India or Pakistan, 19th century, Opaque watercolours on paper, 36 × 42 cm, Kapany Collection

The Sikh communities that coalesced and evolved into *misls* in the eighteenth century were headed by Sirdars (etymologically "Captains"). The *misls* evolved into states headed by Rajas. Mentioned as "Sardar" in the Treaty of 1806 with the East India Company, Ranjit Singh appears with the title of "Maharaja Ranjit Singh Raja of Lahore" in the treaties of 1809. The Raja of Patiala was promoted maharajah under the British Raj (1810; see caption of Fig. 8.1c). Maharajahs and Rajas in the Phulkian States had their Wazirs heading their governments. They held their *Darbar*, and found themselves listed by ranks (with a fixed number of gun-firing for each of them) in the protocol of the British Government concerning the 600 or so Indian States, big and small, which acknowledged the authority of the Paramount power in India. The present painting shows a Sikh raja (in green dress and a halo) with his son (in orange dress) and his grandees (all Sikhs), sitting on the carpet and listening to a holy man, bare chested and depicted with a halo, sitting on a smaller, personal carpet. In front of him are two undecipherable inscriptions, one of them on a cloth with a golden rim. The large empty room in the back with its flowery carpet has the typically Lucknow/Faizabad/Murshidabad "European" perspective of the late eighteenth century, while the carpet under the holy man maintains the "inverse" perspective of traditional Indian painting.

French" which he developed during his stays in Paris in his residence at Bois de Boulogne.[112] He was one of the most travelled of the Indian princes, dining several times with Queen Victoria and being received by the crowned heads and the great presidents of the planet.[113] He greatly modernized Kapurthala, as testified by the beautiful album *Kapurthala 1900* which shows several carefully preserved "Old Palaces" as well as the "Palais de l'Elysée" with its gardens and avenue of the same name, the Villa *Buona Vista,*[114] the large *Darbar* Hall flanked by the Court of Justice, and several other views of Kapurthala as well as that of the Château de Kapurthala in Mussoree, summer residence of the maharajah and his family. Two major architectural ensembles were constructed later by Jagatjit Singh: the *Jaulakhana*, or Jagatjit Palace, immediately given the name of "The Versailles of the Punjab," a name by which it is still fondly called, and the great mosque erected from 1917 to 1930 on the model of the Marrakech Mosque, Morocco, where the maharajah made an official visit shortly after the imposition of the French protectorate in that country.[115]

Fig. 8.24, *Maharajah Narinder Singh of Patiala on an elephant proceeding up the ramparts of a palace*, Basharat Ullah of Lahore, Late 19th century, Opaque watercolours on paper, 36 × 27.5 cm, Kapany Collection

Kapurthala, part of the Lahore kingdom, suffered heavily from the two Sikh wars. After the Annexation of Punjab in 1849, it survived as a Princely State, but Patiala became the first Sikh state in size, population, and wealth. Maharajah Narinder Singh did a lot for the improvement of the city and the development of the state, and artists came from all over Northwest India to work in his court. This painting, signed "Basharat Allah the artist" (Persian inscription: "Bakalam (?) Basharat Allah musawar"), shows the maharajah not in the plains, but in a hilly surrounding which is not Patiala and might be part of the Patiala state in the Himalaya, in the *nizamat* of Pinjaur taken by Patiala in 1769. According to R. P. Srivastava, *Punjab Paintings*, p. 56, Sheikh Basharat Ullah was the son of Ustad Allah Ditta, who settled and worked in Patiala. Haji Muhammad Sharif, Basharat's son and an artist himself, migrated from Patiala to Lahore in 1947, where he got employment as a teacher of miniature painting at the Mayo School of Arts, soon to become the National College of Arts.

Maharajah Jagatjit Singh's immense culture and open-mindedness are also to be found in the collection of Persian manuscripts in the Kapurthala State Library in 1921.[116] It is worth browsing through the catalogue since we discover there the greatest Persian classics, including a *Shahnama* of Firdawsi adorned with 153 beautiful miniatures, and which had been exhibited in the Paris Exhibition,[117] and the *Khamsa* of Nizami,[118] whose *quintets*, the *Sikandarnama* for example,[119] or *Khusraw and Shirin,*[120] are also found in other manuscripts composed of selected pieces. There were the works of Rumi, *Masnawi,*[121] and *Diwan*[122]; those of Saadi, *Diwan,*[123] and various compositions[124] including the *Bustan*[125]; the works of Attar[126]; those of Amir Khushraw,[127] including a superb *Ishqiyya,*[128] with a volume of his correspondence[129] and a few other works by the great poet.[130] The poems of Hafiz[131] and those of Jami were also part of this collection.[132] I cannot mention all the *Diwans* kept in the State Library of Kapurthala, including the works of lesser-known poets who, often born in Persia, contributed to the culture of Punjab and Northern India.[133] Some of them, beautifully written, still carry information concerning their former owners, such as the *Muqatt'at-i Ibn*

Fig. 8.25, *Raja Bhagwan Singh of Nabha,* India, Punjab state, former kingdom of Nabha, 19th century, Opaque watercolours on paper, 25 × 35.5 cm, Kapany Collection

The royal family of Nabha claims descent from Phul, the ancestor of the Phulkian states, through Talukha, eldest son of Phul, while "from Rama, the second son, sprang the greatest of the Phulkian houses, that of Patiala." The royal family of Jind also claimed descent from Talukha, but from his second son, Sukhchen. Hence the family feuds concerning precedence among these three houses, Nabha claiming this precedence and eminence, as described at length by L. H. Griffin in his *Rajas of the Punjab*. Bhagwan Singh inherited the *gadi* of Nabha after his brother Raja Bharpur Singh's death in 1863. In his case, and for the first time, the rights granted to the three Phulkian Chiefs, following their *Paper of Requests* in 1858, functioned—that is, "the power of life and death, the right of adoption, and the promise of non-interference of the British Government in the domestic affairs of the family and the internal management of the State." Bhagwan Singh died issueless in 1871, and the same legislation concerning the succession to the *gadi* applied for the selection of Sardar Hira Singh as the new Raja of Nabha.

Yamin, by Amir Fakhr-ud-Din,[134] which bears the autograph signature of Abdus Rahim Khan-i-Khanan dated A.H. 993/A.D. 1585, and which then came into possession of Khan Alam. This manuscript also bears two signatures of Shah Jahan dated A.H. 1069/A.D. 1658. A few other manuscripts deserve to be remembered because of their local connections: Haji Muhammad Jan Qudsi, from Mashhad, wrote his *Diwan-i Qudsi* (no. 154) and died in Lahore in A.H. 1056/A.D. 1646. The *Haft Bahr* (no. 158) was written by "Chandar Bhan of Patiala…who was the Munshi of Shah Jahan and Dara Shikoh." From Patiala came Nur-ul 'Ayn, author of a *Diwan-i Waqif* (no. 173), "a beautiful collection of poems, chiefly ghazals."[135] The *Masnawi Rasikh* (no. 163) was written by Mir Muhammad Zaman of Sirhind,[136] and the *Diwan-i Nasir Ali* (no. 165) was composed by Shah Nasir Ali, also from Sirhind.[137] Shaikh Muhammad Akram, born in Kunja, near Gujrat in the Punjab, wrote his *Masnawi Ghanimat* (no. 166) in A.H. 1096/A.D. 1685. The *Masnawi Sahiba u Mirza* is the work of Khair'ullah of Lahore,[138] and the *Diwan-i Muqarrab* (no. 176) was written by Muqarrab Khan Afghan Lodi of Multan. A compendium of "Mixed Contents" (no. 188) contains a *Diwan-i Aram* written in A.H. 1174/A.D. 1760 by Sundar Das, alias Aram, Munshi of Sayyid Jamil-Uddin of Lahore, in A.H. 1171/A.D. 1757,[139] as well as a *Hir Ranja* by the same Aram, "work finished in A.H. 1171/A.D. 1757 at Hafizabad near Lahore in the Gujranwala district."[140] One of the last of this list is the *Insha-i Ghulami*, a collection of letters written by Maulavi Ghukokam Muhammad, Prime Minister of Kapurthala, a collection dated A.H. 1229/A.D. 1813–1814.[141]

The section "History" of the Kapurthala State Library is as rich and as attractive as the one relating to literature and poetry. We know the interest that Ranjit Singh and his entourage had shown to the period of Akbar, the personality of Abul Fazl, the *Akbarnama,* and the *Ain-i-Akbari*.[142]

Fig. 8.26, *A ruler of Punjab, probably Hira Singh, the maharajah of Nabha,* India, Punjab state, former kingdom of Nabha, 1850–1900, Opaque watercolours on paper, 13.3 × 19.7 cm (image), 20.9 × 27.9 cm (overall), Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.105

Raja Hira Singh had a long and successful reign, greatly developing Nabha with public buildings, schools, hospitals, and gardens (a tradition in Nabha: Lord Auckland had been received in a garden in December 1838). He also promoted Sikhism in its affirmation against Hinduism, protecting Bhai Kahan Singh (tutor of his only son and, according to Khushwant Singh, "Chief Minister of Nabha") and prompting him to write *Hum Hindu Nahin Hain* as a response to the Arya Samaj propaganda and the legal rulings that Sikhs were Hindus. He sponsored M. A. MacAuliffe for his monumental work, *The Sikh Religion*, published in six volumes in 1907 with the assistance of the same Kahan Singh ("One of the greatest scholars and most distinguished authors among the Sikhs, who by order of the Raja of Nabha accompanied me to Europe to assist in the publication of this work," *The Sikh Religion*, ed. OUP, 1963, I, XXIX–XXX). The maharajah supported the establishment of the Khalsa Printing Press in Lahore and the Khalsa College in Amritsar. He also built up a small but efficient army, which served with distinction with British troops not only in India, but in Afghanistan as well, and during the Tirah Expedition in 1897–1898. Because of all these improvements, Nabha was raised to a salute of 13 guns. The Raja received the Empress of India Gold Medal that same year. He was made a GCSI in 1879, got the title of *Raj-i-Rajagan* in 1898, and was granted a 15-gun personal salute. Appointed a GCIE in 1903, he was finally raised to the rank of maharajah of Nabha in 1911, a fortnight before his death.

Hence, no doubt, comes the interest shown to Akbar and Abul Fazl in Kapurthala. Four manuscripts of the *Akbarnama* were in this library,[143] as well as two manuscripts of the *Ain-i-Akbari,*[144] a copy of the *Tawarikh-i Akbarnama* by Shaikh Ilahdad of Sirhind,[145] and a copy of the *Tabaqat-i Akbari* by Nizamuddin Ahmed.[146] The library also retained a copy of the *Insha-i Abul Fazl*, a compendium of the correspondence of this great minister and man of letters divided into three *Daftar;* the first contained the letters written by the minister on behalf of the Emperor Akbar, the second held the correspondence under his own name with high dignitaries of the Empire, and the third had introductions and conclusions written by Abul Fazl for many books.[147] To stick to Mughal history, Kapurthala also had two copies of the *Iqbalnama-i Jahangiri,*[148] a copy of the *Padishahnama* on Shah Jahan by the famous Abdul Hamid Lahori,[149] an *Intikhab-i Shah Jahan-nama* by Muhammad Bakhsh Khan,[150] and a manuscript entitled *Ahwal-i Subijat* "indicating the extent and revenue resources of the Mughal Empire during the reign of Shahjahan."[151] On Aurangzeb, there are the *Maasir-i Alamgiri* of Muhammad Saqi Mustaid Khan,[152] the *Waqiat-i Alamgiri* of Aqeel Khan Razi,[153] the *Iqbalnama-i Alamgiri* by Muhammad Baqa,[154] as well as the *Waqaiy Ni'mat Khan Ali* by Mirza Muhammad Danishmand Khan, a history of the siege of Golconda by Aurangzeb in 1686.[155] A *Razm-namah*, by the same author as the *Waqai*, recounts the war of succession in 1707 between two of Aurangzeb's son, Bahadur Shah and Azam Shah.[156] The *Tarikh-i Fahrat-a-Nazirin* is a history of Muhammad Shah (r. 1719–1748) by Muhammad Aslam, a work completed in A.H. 1184/A.D. 1770.[157] A rough Persian translation of an "English history" dates from that period.[158] It is one of the manuscripts retracing the history of a few major invaders of India,[159] such as the *Zafarnama* of Sharfuddin Ali Yazdi, which is the history of Tamburlaine/Tamerlane,[160] the *Tuzuk-i Timuri*, a Persian translation of the

Memoirs of the same Tamerlane,[161] as well as a *Rauzat-us-Safa,* which is about Tamerlane and his successors.[162] The *Qissa-i Baburi* was "a short account of Babur."[163] The *Tarikh-i Khan Jahani wa Makhzan'ul Afghani*, completed in A.H. 1021/A.D. 1613, is a history of the Afghans in India commissioned from the author by Khan Jahan Lodi, who rebelled against Shah Jahan.[164] The *Guli-Rahmat* of Muhammed Sa'ad Yar Khan is an abstract of the *Gulistan-i Rahmat*, written by his uncle Mohammad Mustajib Khan, which tells the history of the Rohilla leader Hafiz Rahmat Khan.[165] And finally, the *Tarikhi Jahan-kusha-i Nadiri* recounts the story of Nadir Shah, from the beginning of his career until his death in 1747, depicting the life of the man whose capture, looting, and massacre of Delhi in 1739 remains singularly alive in Indian memory.[166] Curiously enough, this library contained only one Persian manuscript dealing with the kingdom of Punjab: a *Shersinghnama*, written by Muhammed Naqi of Peshawar and copied in Sambat A.H. 1901/A.D. 1844 by the scribe Muhammed of Kapurthala (no. 39).

As one might expect of a Sikh State as strongly imbued with tolerance and humanism as was that of Kapurthala, several manuscripts attest to the fruitful exchange between Islam and Hinduism, such as an *Sirr-i-Akbar* which is the Persian translation of 42 *Upanishad*, done by Dara Shikoh with the help of Pandits in Benares when he was governor of that city in 1656.[167] This manuscript is dated Lahore, A. H. 1194/A. D 1780. There were also two copies of the Persian translation of the *Mahabharata*, done by Abul Fazl on the request of Akbar and completed in A.H. 995/A.D. 1587,[168] a *Ramayan*, being an abbreviated poem of the *Ramayana* by Shaikh Sadullah Masih of Kiram, near Panipat,[169] and four copies of a *Bhagwat*, being an abbreviated translation of the *Baghavat Puran.*[170] A *Shiv Puran*, translated into seventy-four chapters by Kishan Singh Nishat, is interesting both by its late date, Sambat 1929/A.D. 1872, and by its scribe, who was none other than Pandit Daya Tota of Lahore.[171] A manuscript of the *Baghavat Gita* in ninety-one folios is also particularly interesting in that it presents three texts on three columns: the first is the Hindi translation by Raja Jai Singh Sawai of Jaipur, while the second is the original text in Sanskrit language and Devanagari script. The third column is the Persian translation by Faizi.[172] A few other great Sanskrit works were also in the Kapurthala State Library, such as the *Singhasan Battisi*, being a Persian translation of thirty-two stories of King Vikramaditya,[173] a *Mufarrihul Qulub*, and a translation of the famous *Hitopadesha* done in Samvat 1840/A.D. 1783.[174] We will conclude the brief survey of this section of the library by the *Rag Darpan*, "The 'Mirror of Music,' a Persian translation of a Sanskrit work on Music called *Mankawtahala* made at the request of Raja Man Singh of Gwalior by Faqirullah, who began it in A.H. 1072 = 1665 A. D."[175]

Without pretending to exhaust the richness of the Persian section of the Kapurthala State Library in the 1920s, let us recall the considerable interest Ranjit Singh and his entourage had in the improvement of the plight of Kashmir and the Kashmiri people right from its annexation to the kingdom of Lahore.[176] The maharajah of Kapurthala and his entourage followed in their footsteps. Four copies of the *Tawarikh-i Kashmir* were kept in the State Library, based on the *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana and copied by a Narayan Kaul who finished the work in A.H. 1122/A.D. 1760.[177] This was done twenty-seven years before Colonel Polier discovered the first manuscript of the *Rajatarangini* and sent it to William Jones in Calcutta at his request.[178] And we must especially mention the extraordinary *Tarikh-i Kashmir* which K. M. Maitra describes thus: "A voluminous statistical history of Kashmir prepared in the time of Maharajah Ranjit Singh on the plan of the *Ain-i Akbari*. No other copy of this work seems to exist."[179] In 2001 we exhibited in the Maharajah Ranjit Singh Museum (Rambagh, Amritsar) this splendid manuscript of 858 pages, with maps painted on eighteen single-pages and fifteen double-pages, and we reproduced an illustration of

one of its double pages in our *Maharaja Ranjit Singh Lord of the Five Rivers*.[180]

Finally, I have been insisting for the last thirty years, in many of my publications and in several of my projects presented to the authorities of both East and West Punjab, on the need to study what I have called the school of mathematics and astronomy of Lahore in the seventeenth century. We know about the remarkable astrolabes manufactured in Lahore at that time, which are to be found today in the greatest public and private collections in the world.[181] One has to study how this mathematical research translated into the Mughal architecture of Northern India, from the architectural complex of the tomb of Jahangir, the Shalimar Gardens, and the tomb of Ali Mardan Khan in Lahore[182] to the Taj Mahal complex and the Red Fort in Agra.[183] Lehna Singh Majithia was probably the most brilliant scientific mind of the kingdom of Lahore, and he is shown on a miniature painting with his astronomical instruments.[184] As I have said, Leitner had noticed the impressive number of scientific manuscripts in vernacular languages which still existed in the libraries of Punjab in the 1880s. This fact is also found in the State Library of Kapurthala through the presence of a copy of the *Lilawati*, "the Persian translation of Phasbkaracharya's famous treatise on Arithmetic and Geometry made under the command of the Emperor Akbar in A.H. 995 = A.D. 1587."[185] Kapurthala also has a copy of the *Zij-i-Muhammad Shahi*, or *Astronomical Tables,* prepared by Raja Jai Singh Sawai of Jaipur from his old observatories as well as his new ones, the famous Jantar Mantar.[186] The *Risala-i-Asturlab*, kept in the library, "is in fact a collection of two treatises on the Astrolabe. The first is by the illustrious and learned Khwaja Nasiruddin Abusaeed Abudullah Tusi, the author of *Ilkhani Tables*."[187] Another *Risala-i-Asturlab* is the work of Qazi Nurullah Shustari, author of the *Majalisul Muminim*, who was put to death by Jahangir in 1610. This manuscript is dated A.H. 1223/A.D. 1808.[188]

This brief presentation of Indo-Persian manuscripts preserved in the State Library of Kapurthala in the 1920s allows us to better understand how a Sikh State surviving the British Annexation of the Punjab kingdom in 1849 was able to preserve its culture and integrate it in the modernizing process of its own institutions[189]: this is an aspect rarely addressed by contemporary historians studying the Princely States at the time of the British Raj.[190] The dates of accession of the manuscripts allow us to see how these texts

Fig. 8.27, *Seal ring of Maharajah Ranjit Singh,* 1812–1813, India, Amritsar, Punjab state; or Pakistan, Lahore, Emerald and gold, Kapany Collection

The *Gurmukhi* inscription on the emerald reads: "Akal sahai. Ranjit Singh 1869." The English inscription on brass adds that "With the help of the Eternal One Ranjit Singh 1809 this ring has sealed many death warrants." As a matter of fact, Ranjit Singh never condemned anyone to death, refusing the strong advice of Generals Allard and Ventura in 1822–1823 to introduce capital punishments in the *Fauj-i-khas*, especially in the case of high treason or desertion in front of the enemy.

were kept alive by successive patrons from the time of their *editio prinoceps* up to the seventeenth century, and then at the time of Maharajah Ranjit Singh, and ultimately at the time of the Sikh States under the British Raj. We should have similar studies as regards the Sanskrit and Punjabi manuscripts. But this first overview casts an interesting light on Indian culture as a constituent element of an "Indigenous" State evolving under the watchful eye of a colonial administration, which continuously sought to justify its presence and its maintenance in India as a definite improvement on the systems of indigenous governments gradually absorbed or subsumed in what had become the Indian Empire.[191] What happened to these Sovereign States after 1947, at the time of the Merger,[192] and then after 1971 at the time of the "Broken Promises,"[193] is no longer part of my study. Maharajah Jagatjit Singh's long life ended in 1949. The State of Kapurthala had been "merged" into the Indian Union in 1947. When the body of the maharajah was cremated on the funeral pyre in the Shalimar Gardens, Pandit Sri Ram, the State *Pandit* who had come to perform the last rites for his maharajah, came to sit with the royal family: "He broke down and wept and said, '*Maharaj badi hasti thi, Riyasat bana gaye aur sath le gaye*'—Here was a very great man and the strange thing is he built the state and he took it with him."[194]

Conclusion

It is not easy to modify the accepted pattern of a given field of knowledge (Fig. 8.27). Mildred Archer spent her lifetime resurrecting the "Company Paintings,"[195] after she considered naming them after their original Indian title: "Faringhi Paintings."[196] William Archer, F. S. Aijazuddin, B. N. Goswamy, Eberhard Fischer, and a few other scholars had to work assiduously in order to establish the concept of "Pahari Paintings,"[197] and Karuna Goswamy analysed in a brilliant essay the characteristics of "Kashmiri Paintings."[198] This task is much more difficult when, during one hundred years, a political will existed in an Imperial structure to forget, if not to erase, aspects of a local culture in a "Conquered Territory." It seems that it was the case with the Lahori School of Art during the ninety-eight years of the British Raj.[199] Since 1975 we have been studying the interest taken by the French in Indian art, history, and culture from the early seventeenth century,[200] and we tried to resurrect the "Lahori School of Art."[201] In her last great book on the *Company Paintings* published in 1992, Mildred Archer was gracious enough to acknowledge the "French Company Paintings,"[202] and in her section on "The Punjab" she mentioned La Fontaine's *Fables* and the unpublished *Mémoires* of General Court, all being the work of Imam Bakhsh Lahori and his atelier.[203] In 1999 an exhibition took place in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, entitled *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms* for commemorating the 300 years of the foundation of the *Khalsa* by Guru Govind Singh (1699). For the first time, a significant place was given to documents I had discovered in French collections and mentioned (some of them with illustrations) in my publications.[204] This exhibition was to be presented later in the National Museum at New Delhi, but some unexpected circumstances replaced it by another exhibition, *Piety and Splendour*, under the enlightened direction of B. N. Goswamy.[205] In 2001, I curated for the Punjab Government the exhibition *Times and Life of Maharaja Ranjit Singh* in the Rambagh Museum, Amritsar, for the bicentenary celebration of the "Coronation" of the maharajah (1801), making for the first time a full use of the collections we have in France on the Punjab kingdom. The accompanying book, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh Lord of the Five Rivers*, exposed the richness and diversity of art and culture which flourished in the Punjab of Ranjit Singh.[206] I continued this research, at times in collaboration with Dr. Barbara Schmitz.[207] But a wider quest needs to be undertaken, especially in the public libraries and private collections in Pakistan, in order to "bring back" Imam Bakhsh Lahori to Lahore as well as commemorate the Lahori School of

Painting in that former capital of the Punjab kingdom.

As for the Sikh community, it went through many a storm since 1947. It is today one of the most vibrant and dynamic, both in and outside India. In every country where Sikh communities have settled down, especially Europe, the United States, and Canada, the remarkable success of a number of their members, including in the fields of the highest scientific research, translates culturally into the creation of foundations. Some of these foundations are financing chairs of Sikh studies with international symposia, festivals, publications, and exhibitions. The fields of research are far from being exhausted. The older generation has the desire to give to the younger ones the possibilities to go further, to see larger, to learn more, and to do better. It is comforting indeed to see that this is done without anybody, young or old, ever forgetting what he or she owes to the Punjab, the ancestral land, and what he or she owes to the ideals and the examples of the great Founders of the Community.

Endnotes

[1] Phulkian, from their common ancestor Phul (died 1652).

[2] The "Minor States" were Malod, Badrukhan, Jiundan, Landgharia, Dialpura, Rampuria, and Kot Duna. For their history, see Lepel H. Griffin, *Principal States of the Punjab and their Political Relations with the British Government*, London, 1873 (Lahore, 1976), pp. 272–81. There is an interesting historical introduction, as seen from the British imperial point of view, of course, in the *Punjab State Gazetteers* of these states.

[3] These states were the successors of the "*misls*," the organisation of the Sikh community into fighting units constituting the *Dal Khalsa* (Army of the Khalsa) to fight the Mughals and the Afghans. This organization appeared in 1748. There were eleven "Misl," as Khushwant Singh observes, *A History of the Sikhs*, OUP, New Delhi, 1977, vol. I, p. 132–33. And he adds: "Phoolkia, under Ala Singh of Patiala, was the twelfth misl, but it was not part of the *Dal Khalsa* and sometimes acted against the interests of the community," ibid., p. 133.

[4] *Mémoire sur quelques affaires de l'empire mogol 1756–1761*, ed. by Alfred Martineau, Paris, 1913, p. 580, spelled "Secks ou Seyques." Concerning the French in the service of the Mughal Empire at that time, J.-M. Lafont, "Delhi under Shah Alam II and the French," in W. Dalrymple and Y. Sharma (ed.), *Princes and Painters in Mughal Delhi 1707–1857*, New York, Asia Society, 2012, pp. 24–31, 7 illustrations.

[5] *Voyage en Inde du comte de Modave, 1773–1776,* ed. by J. Deloche, PEFEO, Paris, p. 389. "Leurs affaires" means their own history, traditions, and beliefs.

[6] Ibid., p. 392.

[7] Ibid., p. 392. A beautiful sentence, which could apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the Americans of the Independence War. Modave, p. 389, described the Sikhs as "la plus singulière de toutes les nations qui se voient aujourd'hui dans l'empire mogol."

[8] *Les Mémoires de Wendel sur les Jat, les Pathan et les Sikh*, ed. by J. Deloche, PEFEO, Paris, 1979, pp. 145–68. The English got their first substantial information on the Sikhs from the manuscript *Mémoires* of Wendel and Polier. In his *Journey from Bengal to England*, London, 1798, G. A. Forster acknowledged his debt to Colonel Polier concerning the history of the Sikhs.

[9] Ibid., p. 164.

[10] This text comes from *Le Mahabarat et le Bhagavat du colonel de Polier*, ed. by G. Dumezil, Gallimard, Paris, 1986. This quotation is pp. 20–21.

[11] Long description of the texts he studied, which included the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the avatars of Vishnu, the stories of Krishna, and so on.

[12] Among the manuscripts brought by Polier to Europe in 1787 are eleven volumes containing the Sanskrit text of the four *Vedas*, which he had copied at his own expense from a manuscript in the Raja of Jaipur's library. I do not know whether the original manuscript still exists in the private library of the present Maharajah.

[13] A. Cabaton, *Catalogue sommaire des manuscrits indiens…,* Paris, 1912, no. 756 [Indien 111]: "Collection d'hymnes extraits de l'*Adi Granth,*" 970 pages, 170 × 170 mm (Fonds Polier).

[14] It was closely linked to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the Mughal Empire. During each war of succession, the candidate supported by the fundamentalists—those obsessed with the immediate implementation of the *Sharia* (including *Jizya* on non-Muslims)—won every time: Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan, and then Aurangzeb. The assassination in 1606 in Lahore of Guru Arjun, first compiler of the *Adi Granth*, on Jahangir's order, made the Sikh community aware of the dangers of being part of the *Dar ul-Islam*. Guru Hargovind decided the militarisation of the Sikh community. But this move, as it spread quickly among the indigenous people of the Punjab, was likely to cut off the road of the Jihadists from Central Asia, Iran, and the Middle East to fight the Marathas, whose growing resistance to the assaults of Aurangzeb threatened Delhi and the heart of the Moghul Empire. Hence the ferocious repression battering down on the Sikhs throughout the eighteenth century. The best book on this period is Hari Ram Gupta's *Later Mughal History of the Punjab, 1707–1793*, Lahore, 1943, revised as volume 1 of his *History of the Sikhs*, Delhi, 1984. One of the best testimonies is that of Tahmasp (Miskin Khan, one of the actors of this repression), in his poignant *Tazkira-i-Tahmasp* (abbreviated English translation by P. Setu Madhava Rao, Bombay, 1967, under the title *Tahmas Nama*).

[15] *Piety and Splendour: Sikh Heritage in Art*, National Museum, New Delhi, 2000, passim.

[16] BNF, Od 52, *Théogonie indienne. A la suite, quelques personnages à cheval*. Fonds Gentil 1785 (21.5 × 27.5 cm). Among these horsemen, "Cavalier Senk" [*sic*: Sikh/Singh] (dressed in blue, with a blue turban and tight trousers).

[17] BNF, Od 40c. *Costumes de l'Inde*, small folio 29.5 × 40.5 cm. A French manuscript purchased by an Englishman, purchased back by a Frenchman. Illustration no. 27, "Un Seik et sa femme: du nord de l'Indoustan, vers le pays des Marattes": excellent painting of the man dressed in dark blue clothes. Note that the woman is the same as the one on the painting no. 34, "Mogol Musulman avec sa femme."

[18] Susan Gole, *Maps of Mughal India Drawn by Colonel Jean-Baptiste Joseph Gentil, Agent for the French Government to the Court of Shuja-ud-daula at Faizabad, in 1770*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1988, pp. 50–51. On the bottom left is drawn a "Cavalier d'Abdalli" [Afghan], also on foot.

[19] A. Cabaton, *Catalogue sommaire des manuscrits indiens…,* Paris, 1912, no. 821 [Indien 182], *Histoire de Nanek, patriarche des Sikhs*, 310 × 195 mm, 352 pages [Fonds Gentil].

[20] Susan Gole, *A Series of Early Printed Maps of India in Facsimile*, Jayaprints, New Delhi, rev. ed., 1984, no 44a. The map appeared in his modern *Atlas* in 1771.

[21] Guillaume-Thomas Raynal, *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissement et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*, 1770, a European best-seller condemned by the Church and prohibited in France. This map is in the album of maps issued during the reprint of 1780. Reproduction of this map of Bonne in Seema Bharadia (ed.), *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms: The Canadian Collections*, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, 2000, p. 10 (Lally and Marlène Marwah Collection).

[22] Susan Gole, *A Series of Early Printed Maps…*, no. 42B. She reproduced the map of Jefferys from its new engraving by Robert Sayer in 1789. One can read the inscription "Dominions of the Seikhs."

[23] J.-M. Lafont, *Indika: Essays in Indo-French Relations, 1630–1976*, New Delhi, 2000, chap. 6, pp. 177–204, "Benoît de Boigne in Hindustan: His Impact on the Doab, 1784–1795" (first published in French in 1996). Also J.-M. and R. Lafont, *The French & Delhi, Agra, Aligarh and Sardhana*, India Research Press, New Delhi, 2010, pp. 79–93, with maps and illustrations.

[24] J.-M. and R. Lafont, *The French & Delhi…*, pp. 93–111, with illustrations.

[25] William Franklin (ed.), *Military Memoirs of Mr. George Thomas…*, Calcutta, 1803.

[26] On the Bourquien-Thomas affair, J.-M. Lafont, *La présence française…*, pp. 92–102, with bibliographical notes, and map 2. Thomas surrendered to Bourquien in December 1801. In Thomas's papers, Bourquien found plenty of evidence of the support that the British Services and authorities in India gave him in order to outflank the brigades of Hindustan. Also J.-M. and R. Lafont, *The French & Lahore…*, new edition (forthcoming), chap. 4, "Entre Pendjab et Hindoustan: La restructuration d'une frontière, 1790–1803." See in this forthcoming study, which makes extensive use of the Indian and French documents of the time, the

distortion of the facts and the rewriting of the Thomas affair by historians of the British Raj. It started right from the publication of the *Memoirs* of Smith (1805) and Skinner (1851, ed. by J. B. Fraser). The *Military Memoirs* of Thomas himself, published by Franklin in 1803, contain more truth, because they are more honest concerning Bourquien than the histories written by British imperial panegyrists, which were repeated by a number of Indian historians before and after 1947.

[27] Thomas had plans to seize the Punjab up to the Indus, up to Attock (specified by Skinner), and give it to the British authorities of Calcutta: Franklin, *Military Memoirs…*, pp. 246–48. Gray, in his *European Adventurers in Northern India*, Lahore, 1929, turned it as follows: "Had I [Thomas] been left alone [i.e., by Bourquien], I would have made all this red with this hand." That is what Thomas is supposed to have said to Lord Wellesley when the two met in 1802 at Benares, looking at a map of India where the British territories were marked in red.

[28] Read the brief, but excellent, study of S. N. Bannerjee, "Patiala and General Perron," *IHRC*, XVIII, 1942, pp. 341–48. And see our next edition of *The French & Lahore*, chap. 4, already quoted.

[29] Letter of Ranjit Singh to Collins dated 16 August 1802, quoted by Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, vol. 1, p. 210, note 2. Ranjit Singh made reference to "Raja Bhag Sing Bahadur, my maternal uncle…. As Raja Bhag Singh is under many obligations to General Perron…I must preserve appearances on this occasion in consideration of what is due by me to the will of my uncle."

[30] The forerunner, of course, of the Meeting of Rupur between Maharajah Ranjit Singh and Lord William Bentinck in 1831.

[31] The British Resident appointed to Sindhia affirmed to his government that if Perron remained two more years at the head of his brigades, he would succeed in making the rulers of Punjab pay a tribute to Daulat Rao Sindhia, just as the present rulers of Rajasthan were doing after De Boigne's military operations of 1790–95. Bannerjee, loc. cit.

[32] The few historians aware of this story accuse Perron of trying to emulate Thomas in carving out a kingdom in the Punjab. Even good Khushwant Singh ironized about the "Frenchman's dream of a Perronistan in Punjab," *A History of the Sikhs*, I, p. 210. Using the so-called "French threat," the English were able to justify the invasion of the Ganga-Jamuna Doab and the capture of Delhi by the British forces of Lake and Wellesley in 1803. It was also used to justify the British military operations between the Jamuna and the Sutlej Rivers in 1803–1809.

[33] As additional evidence of the English fear of a French intervention in India similar to that of Rochambeau and Lafayette in North America in 1778, see this quotation from a letter from Lord Wellesley written to Henry Dundas, President of the Board of Control, dated Cape of Good Hope, February 1798: "Scindia employs about 20,000 Sepoys disciplined by Europeans *or Americans* [emphasis mine]. The commander is named Perron, a Frenchman," in Herbert Compton, *European Military Adventurers of Hindustan from 1784 to 1803*, London, 1892 [OUP, Karachi, 1976], p. 291.

[34] Randolf G. S. Cooper, *The Anglo-Maratha Campaigns and the Contest for India*, CUP, 2003. Cooper pulled out from the British archives many a fact that his predecessors and contemporaries had preferred to leave hidden, for instance those concerning the defection of Anglo-Indians officers, including Skinner with his fine cavalry regiment, from the brigades of Hindustan to the British side well before the British declaration of war and the invasion of the Doab by Lake and his armies. This fact was carefully concealed by Skinner in his politically correct *Military Memoirs*.

[35] In the Punjab Record Office at Lahore, I found a copy in French of the secret articles of the Treaty of Tilsit concerning India: PRO vol. 99, no. 57.

[36] In fact in Peshawar, the winter capital of the emirs of Afghanistan.

[37] Ochterlony belonged to a "legitimist" family of Boston, who sought refuge in Canada after the Boston Tea Party. Appointed governor of Delhi by Lord Lake in 1804, he alone repulsed the troops of Holkar trying to recapture the Mogul capital. Lake, a colonel in the English army during the American War of Independence, commanded a shock regiment and was made a prisoner of war by the Americans and the French after the capitulation of Cornwallis at Yorktown in 1781. I have in my publications repeatedly insisted on this triangular relationship between Europe, America, and India, from *La Présence française…*, pp. 103–105, and our *The French & Delhi*, pp. 109–111 (with portraits of Lake and Ochterlony), to my *Piveron de Morlat. Mémoire sur l'Inde (1786): Les opérations diplomatiques et militaires françaises aux Indes pendant la guerre d'indépendance américaine*, Riveneuve Editions, Paris, 2012 (many colour and black-and-white illustrations).

[38] *La présence française…*, pp. 107–109. According to the stipulations of the *Declaration of protection against Lahore*, the English provided to the Sikh cis-Sutlej States "the exercise of the same rights and authority within their own possessions *which they enjoyed before* [emphasis mine]": a clear reference to the rights recognized by Ganga Ram, Bourquien, and Perron to these States in 1802–1803.

[39] *Treaty of Lahore, 1809, between the British Government and the Rajah of Lahore*. Note that Ranjit Singh, whose seal was affixed to the treaty, is mentioned as rajah, not as maharajah.

[40] He is mentioned as *Kumedan* in 1812: *Events at the Court of Ranjit Singh 1810–1817*, Lahore, 1935, pp. 39. He had participated in the campaign of Egypt against the French, and in Lahore he wore the medal of that campaign on his *Fauj-i-Khas* uniform.

[41] *Events at the Court of Ranjit Singh…,* p. 69 (his departure from Delhi at the invitation of Ranjit Singh). Cf. p. 72, when he informs Ranjit Singh of his departure from Amritsar to Lahore: "Ganga Ram, who was with Louis Sahib previously."

[42] The translators, H. L. O. Garrett and G. L. Chopra, caught in 1935 in the web of British historiography, identified him as General Lake (their note 48 in the text, which became 46 in the notes).

[43] This is where Garrett and Chopra should have identified Lake, Ochterlony, and eventually Metcalfe.

[44] *Events…*, p. 74. The utterance by Ganga Ram of the seizure of Hindustan "by the sword" of the English is poignant. Ranjit Singh could hardly have ignored British high-handedness in the conquered country. What we have here is a shared feeling by two "Natives" about these parts of India that had recently passed under the East India Company's domination, with the consciousness that the threat was now at Punjab's doorstep.

[45] Brief, but excellent, presentation of the various departments of the Punjab Government (*Daftar*) by G. L. Chopra, "Civil Administration," in *Maharaja Ranjit Singh: First Death Centenary Memorial*, Lahore, 1939, pp. 99–122. The *Daftar-i-Ganga Ram* is pp. 104–105. The small biographical note of Chopra on Ganga Ram mentions his activity under the Marathas and under Ochterlony without mentioning Perron or Bourquien (p. 104). The year is 1939, British Empire *oblige….*

[46] See the study of Maria Pia Balboni, *Ventura: Dal Ghetto del Finale Corte di Lahore*, Modena, 1993, for Ventura's legend of a brilliant military career under Napoleon and being a colonel in the Grande Armée during the Russian campaign,

[47] Officers as remarkable as Sheikh Basawan (brigadier-general of the *Fauj-i-Khas*), Adjudhya Prasad (*Bakhshi* of the *Fauj-i-Khas*), Colonel Chet Singh (commanding the cavalry of Allard at Phillaur and responsible for the security on the Anglo-Sikh border on the Sutlej River), and finally Ilahi Bakhsh, commanding the *Topkhana*, or heavy and field artillery, of the *Fauj-i-Khas*.

[48] Our book already quoted: *La présence française…* (1992). Also J.-M. Lafont, *Fauj-i-Khas: Maharaja Ranjit Singh and His French Generals*, Guru Nanak Dev University Press, Amritsar, 2002, 240 pages, 4 colour illustrations. Also available in Hindi: *Fauj-i-Khas: Maharaja Ranjit Singh ewn unke Francisi Afsar*, and in Punjabi: *Fauj-i-Khas. Maharaja Ranjit Singh atte edu Francisi Afsar.*

[49] The first general study was the seminal book of W. G. Archer, *Painting of the Sikhs*, London, 1966, followed by B. N. Goswamy, *Painters at the Sikh Court*, Weisbaden, 1975. See also Mulk Raj Anand (ed.), *Maharaja Ranjit Singh as Patron of the Arts*, Marg Publications, Bombay, 1981. We have devoted to this subject the chap. VII, "Vie familiale et activités personnelles," of our *Présence française…*, pp. 297–348. The synthesis of Susan Stronge (ed.), *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms*, V&A, London, 1999, is interesting. See also our *Maharaja Ranjit Singh Lord of the Five Rivers*, OUP, New Delhi, 2002.

[50] See in our book *The French & Lahore* the illustrations nos. 112 and 120–124, being the photographs I had taken of the last Sikh garden of Lahore, called Fatehgarh Bagh, destroyed in 2000.

[51] Patwant Singh, "The Golden Temple," in Susan Stronge (ed.), *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms*, pp. 47–57.

[52] Partially translated into English by J. S. Grewal and Indu Banga, *Early Nineteenth Century Punjab from Ganesh Das's "Char Bagh-i-Punjab,"* Amritsar, 1975.

[53] We widely used the *Gulgashat-i-Punjab* for our exhibition *Life and Times of Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, Rambagh, Amritsar, 2001, where we exhibited the original album. See our *Maharaja Ranjit Singh Lord of the Five Rivers*, passim.

[54] *Lahore, Its History, Architectural Remains and Antiquities,* Lahore (reprint 1981). This book owes a great deal, without saying so, to that of Kanaya Lal, *Tarikh-i-Lahore*, Lahore, 1885, as far as I know, not yet translated from Urdu into English.

[55] Prominent among them was Sultan Mohammed, a former wrestler who became a "contractor" after the

Annexation of Lahore by the British. Latif, *Lahore…*, p. 96 and passim.

[56] *La présence française…*, pp. 309–15 and footnotes. These residences were in Lahore, Amritsar, Wazirabad, Peshawar, and Adinanagar. The common residence of Allard and Ventura at Anarkali (Lahore) also served as headquarters for the *Fauj-i-Khas*. It was a residence built in the European style, with an oval lounge in the tradition established at the Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte, in France. It still exists: see our book *The French & Lahore*, pp. 92–100 and fig. 127 on a double page. General Court and Fezli Azam Joo's residence was on the contrary in a Punjabi style, and two remarkable paintings remain of it: a bird's-eye view of the house in the large garden by Imam Bakhsh Lahori, and an oil painting representing Fezli Azam Joo and her first two children, a painting signed by Auguste Schoefft and dated "1841 Lahor": J.-M. Lafont, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh Lord of the Five Rivers,* p. 99, ill. no. 197 (painting by Imam Bakhsh), and p. 107, ill. no. 209 (painting by Shoefft). In the *Umdat ut-Tawarikh* we have on record Maharajah Ranjit Singh's and Raja Dhyan Singh's observation (1838) concerning the beautiful mansions built by the European officers after they visited Avitabile's residence at Budhu-ka-Ava, in Lahore.

[57] B. N. Goswamy, in his *Piety and Splendour*, rightly insisted upon this symbiosis that surprises many people today.

[58] G. W. Leitner, *History of Indigenous Education in Punjab Since Annexation and in 1882*, Calcutta, 1883.

[59] But not Urdu, as Leitner rightly pointed out. The English introduced Urdu, which was the vernacular language of the soldiers, most of them from Awadh, in the service of the East India Company, because they were the ones who occupied the Punjab from 1846 onwards.

[60] Not only in the fields of literature, but also in the numerous scientific books as reported by Leitner on many occasions.

[61] Very little remains of the school handbooks mentioned by Leitner. From the large production by the numerous workshops of Lahore during this period, only a few rare collections of miniatures and some splendidly illuminated manuscripts have been saved.

[62] Some of these manuscripts were exhibited at the Universal Exhibition of Paris after the annexation of the Punjab in 1849. Several were exhibited in 2001 in the Maharajah Ranjit Singh Museum in Rambagh, Amritsar, for the great exhibition *Life and Times of Maharaja Ranjit Singh*: J.-M. Lafont, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh Lord of the Five Rivers*, passim.

[63] J.-M. Lafont, "Private Business and Cultural Activities of the French Officers of Maharaja Ranjit Singh," *Journal of Sikh studies*, X-1, 1983, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, p. 74–104. Idem., "Les Indes des Lumières: Regards français sur l'Inde de 1610 à 1849," in *Passeurs d'Orient : Encounters between India and France*, Paris, Ministère des affaires étrangères, 1991, pp. 12–33. Idem., ibid., "Les Français au service des Etats indiens indépendants," pp. 34–40 (especially pp. 30–31: "Imam Bakhsh, Lahori Painter," and 14 colour illustrations). All this information was analysed anew in *La présence française…*, pp. 319–25 and passim.

[64] Signed Imam Bakhsh Lahori and dated A.H. 1257/B.S. 1898/A.D. 1841.

[65] These portraits are usually in an oval frame.

[66] All the miniatures of the *Fables* were published in the prestigious book of "Année de France en Inde" under the title *Le Songe d'un habitant du Mogol et autres fables illustrées par Imam Bakhsh Lahori*, RMN and Imprimerie nationale, Paris, 1989 (reprint 1994). We widely used them for the exhibition *Life and Times of Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, Rambagh (Amritsar), 2001, as well as in our *Maharaja Ranjit Singh Lord of the Five Rivers*, passim. The original miniature paintings were exhibited twice in India, courtesy of Dr. Christiane Sinnig-Haas, Chief Curator of the Jean de La Fontaine Museum, Château-Thierry, France: in 2005 at the National Museum in New Delhi, and in 2006 in the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (ex–Prince of Wales Museum) in Mumbai. See *The Dream of an Inhabitant of Mogul*, Mumbai, 2006. Also Christiane Sinnig-Haas, "Les Mille et une fables de La Fontaine, ou le Baron Félix Feuillet de Conches au Pays du Mogol," in Vidya Vencatesan (ed.), *Synergies-Inde*, 1, 2006, Paris, pp. 128–44 with 11 illustrations, and J.-M. Lafont, "Les Fables de La Fontaine aux Indes: Imam Bakhsh Lahori et l'Ecole artistique de Lahore," ibid., pp. 145–71.

[67] Ranjit Singh is sitting cross-legged, on his famous golden throne made by Hafeez Muhammad Multani in the early 1820s. Sitting next to him on European chairs are Nao Nihal Singh and Hira Singh. Sitting on the carpet in front of him are Raja Dhyan Singh, Raja Gulab Singh, and Jamadar Kushal Singh or Tej Singh. In the background, the figure with a green turban could be Fakir Nur-ud-Din.

[68] The decoration of the book is typical of the workshops of Lahore, together with the various cartouches and the colophons.

[69] Concerning the relations between the illustrations of *Thirty-Five Years in the East* of Honigberger and the collection of miniatures of General Court, see J.-M. Lafont, *La présence française…*, pp. 321–23.

[70] J.-M. Lafont, "Josiah Harlan: An American in Punjab and Afghanistan, 1827–1839," in *SPAN Magazine*, American Embassy, New Delhi, July 2002, pp. 3–10 (cover story), 14 colour illustrations, including a *Darbar* of Maharajah Ranjit Singh, and 1 map. The unpublished *Memoirs* of Harlan resurfaced in Philadelphia a few years ago.

[71] "The Painter Imam Bakhsh of Lahore," in Barbara Schmitz (ed.), *After the Great Moghuls: Paintings in Delhi and in the Regional Courts in the 18th and 19th centuries*, Marg Publications, Mumbai, 2002, pp. 74–99, 18 illustrations, with the conclusion: "Some 85 manuscripts illustrated in the Imam Bakhsh style are known to the writers."

[72] "Muhammad Bakhsh *Sahhaf* and the illustrated Book in Ranjit Singh's Lahore," in B. Schmitz (ed.), *Lahore: Paintings, Murals, and Calligraphy*, Marg Publications, Mumbai, 2010, pp. 86–103, 12 illustrations. I do not know of any similar study dedicated to the production of manuscripts in Sanskrit, Hindi, and Punjabi.

[73] Cf. the *Ain-i-Akbari* exhibited in the Lahore Fort and showing in two parallel illustrations Akbar and his court as well as Ranjit Singh and his court. J.-M. Lafont, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh Lord of the Five Rivers*, p. 75, ill. no. 132.

[74] One of the topics of the *Shahnama* is the Persian story of Alexander the Great (Iskandar, Sikandar). The illustrations of the Punjab section usually focus on two major events: the battle of Jhelum against Poros, and Alexander with some Indian attendants near a river, which is sometimes identified as the Indus, but might be the Beas if it illustrates Alexander's army's refusal to cross the Hyphases and move further east into "unknown" India.

[75] This explains the immediate interest on the part of Ranjit Singh and the cultural elite in Punjab for the archaeological excavations undertaken by the French officers, at Manikyala first (1830–1834), and then in the region of Peshawar (1834–43). On this point, see J.-M. Lafont, "Collecting Coins in Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Punjab," proceedings of the International Seminar on *Coins as Political and Cultural Elements* published by Himanshu Ray under the title *Coins of India: Power and Communication*, Marg Publications, Bombay, 2006, pp. 98–107, 15 colour illustrations. See also my contribution to the commemorative volume in honour of Francine Tissot (forthcoming): "Manikyala: A la recherche des Indo-Grecs—L'oeuvre archéologique des officiers 'français' de l'Empire dans le royaume sikh du Pendjab, 1822–1849."

[76] The largest part of this manuscript is today at the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin.

[77] Francis Richard, while working at the Bibliothèque nationale (Paris), had identified a few Indo-Persian manuscripts coming from General Court's library (personal communication).

[78] As shown by his enthusiasm when Ventura informed him that he had started excavating the large stupa of Manikyala, near Rawalpindi (1830). Ventura wrote to him that the elderly people of the villages around believed this "*borj*" (Fort) contained the remains of Bucephalus, the horse of Alexander, *Sikandar Padisha*. In an emotive move, Ranjit Singh personally informed the British authorities south of the Sutlej River, who conveyed the message to the Asiatic Society of Bengal in Calcutta: see J.-M. Lafont, *La présence française…*, pp. 331–47. Other references supra, endnote 75.

[79] J. S. Grewal and Indu Banga, *Civil and Military Affairs of Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, GNDU, Amritsar, 1987, order no. 454, dated 8 December 1834: "*Sahibzada Sikandar Mishal Kanwar Nao Nihal Singh Ji.*" We must remember that in 1820 Raja Sansar Chand of Kangra showed a portrait of Alexander the Great to Moorcroft. During Ranjit Singh's time, some people in Lahore thought of the site of Lahore as being the former site of Alexander's city called Bukephala, and they took Aurangzeb's hydraulic works on the left bank of the Ravi to be "Alexander's Rampart" against Gog and Magog. See hereunder endnote 181, for an astrolabe made in Lahore in 1643–44 and having a date (1955) from the era of Alexander the Great. As we can see, the Alexander story was well known in Northern India till the first half of the nineteenth century.

[80] In Susan Stronge (ed.), *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms*, pp. 61–73. He particularly refers to the *Zafar-Nama* of Diwan Amar Nath, completed, claims the author, when he was thirteen years old, in 1835–36.

[81] In a communication at the V&A, London, on 22 May 1999, Susan Stronge asked the question: "Maharaja Ranjit Singh: connoisseur and collector?"

[82] Already observed by W. G. Archer in his *Paintings of the Sikhs*, resumed by F. S. Aijazuddin in his *Pahari Paintings and Sikh Portraits in the Lahore Museum*, Sotheby Parke Bernet, London and New York, 1977.

[83] See supra, endnote 70. This miniature, "The Court of Lahore," is reproduced on p. 10.

[84] Including the portrait of Héloïse Allard, dated 1831, for a long time identified as that of Marie-Charlotte (J.-M. Lafont, "The Painter Imam Bakhsh…," p. 83, fig. 7). Also the anonymous oil painting of the Allard family at Lahore, dated "Paris 1836," which is based on a miniature done by Imam Bakhsh in Lahore in 1834 (Lafont, *La présence française*…, pp. 317–19, and frontispiece), and the copy made in 1838 by Imam Bakhsh in Lahore of the sketch of this family painting which Allard had brought from Paris to Lahore. This copy of 1838 is today in the Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University Museums. Compare the two paintings in J.-M. Lafont and B. Schmitz, "The Painter Imam Bakhsh…," p. 84, fig. 8 (dated "Paris, 1836") and p. 85, fig. 9 (the one done in Lahore, 1838).

[85] *Der Hoft von Lahor, und andere Bilder aus dem Oriente, gemalt von August Shöfft*, Vienne, 1855. F. S. Aijazuddin, *Sikh Portraits by European Artists*, Sotheby Parke Bernet, London, 1979, part II, "The Sikh Court of Lahore," pp. 99–145, plates IX–XVII. J.-M. Lafont, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh…*, pp. 42–43. We must observe that when Schoefft resided at Lahore (1841–42), several of the characters represented on this large canvas, including Ranjit Singh and General Allard, were dead. Schoefft represented them from existing portraits in Lahore. In the *Catalogue* of his Vienne exhibition in 1855, he gave a grid identifying the main characters of this painting, which was perhaps a commission from King Louis-Philippe of France for the Château de Versailles, but completed after the king had resigned in 1848. The painting therefore found its way to the personal collection of Maharajah Dalip Singh.

[86] J.-M. Lafont, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh Lord of the Five Rivers,* pp. 40–41, ill. 33. The names of the people represented on the painting are written in Persian.

[87] Generals Allard, Ventura, and Avitabile are represented in this *Darbar*, but not General Court. The portraits of Diwan Adjudhya Prasad and General Ilahi Bakhsh, both of the *Fauj-i-Khas*, are also represented, a rare painting of them.

[88] In his report of 3 July 1849, Major Napier specified the work that remained to be done without mentioning the frescoes and paintings, most probably completed at that date.

[89] Among them was young Colin David, who later became professor at the National College of Arts. Since the paintings had been damaged by miscreants in 1947, Professor (Mrs.) Ahmed and her group of students had to take an oath never to reveal the condition of the paintings before restoration. Colin David died in 2008 without telling us anything about the condition of the paintings in the *samadh* as he saw them.

[90] Nadhra Shahbaz Naeem, "Frescoes in Ranjit Singh's Samadh," in Barbara Schmitz (ed.), *Lahore Paintings, Murals and Calligraphy*, pp. 72–85, 12 illustrations.

[91] "He [Dalip Singh] is busy getting up a book on the subject [hawking] with drawings and paintings…. He has painters constantly employed near him at this work, which he watches with the deepest interest, and himself tries to draw and paint a little," in Lady Login, *Sir John Login and Duleep Singh*, London, 1890 [Patiala, 1970], p. 157, letter dated 10 April 1849, from the Citadel of Lahore. Id., ibid., p. 160: "The little Maharajah has been busy collecting for me drawings and paintings done by his best painters. Some are very curious and interesting indeed, representing domestic life in the Punjab, and various trades and professions. He has also selected authentic likenesses of the great chiefs and men of note" (letter dated 6 and 8 May 1849, from the Citadel of Lahore). And so on.

[92] "I have not succeeded in engaging a good painter. I can get nothing done for me while I move about the Country as natives distrust all the English," in Mildred Archer, *Company Drawings in the India Office Library*, HMSO, London, 1972, p. 225, 187 i, ii, p. 225, note.

[93] My wife and I had the honour to receive Mildred Archer at our house, in New Delhi, during her last stay in India, from 11 January to 4 February 1989. We travelled together to Chandigarh, Pinjore, Kalka, Shimla, and Kufri. On this occasion the director of the Himachal Pradesh State Museum, Shimla, received us very kindly and he showed us, among other fascinating paintings, these miniature paintings by Imam Bakhsh. We thank him here again for his warm welcome and generosity. In 1999, B. N. Goswamy mentioned these same paintings, "a fine series of horses, *now dispersed* [emphasis mine], which included one depicting Napoleon Bonaparte astride a horse." He pointed out that "His French patrons took some of his other works back with them to France." "Painting in the Punjab," in S. Stronge (ed.), *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms*, p. 243, note 17 of chap. 5.

[94] "Transformation of Folk Impulses into Awareness of Beauty in Art Expression," in Mulk Raj Anand (ed.), *Maharaja Ranjit Singh as Patron of the Arts*, Marg Publications, Bombay, 1981, pp. 9–25. This miniature, p. 20, fig. 11, is the first published painting bearing the signature of Imam Baksh Lahori, whom Anand supposed to be from the Pahari school. The fact that Gulab Singh is indicated as maharajah dates the painting after

1846. B. N. Goswamy reproduced it in his *Piety and Splendour*, p. 110, ill. no. 100, with caption p. 126.

[95] J.-M. Lafont and Barbara Schmitz, "The Painter Imam Bakhsh of Lahore," in *After the Great Mughals*, p. 94 and notes. In fact, two late paintings (dated) by Imam Bakhsh Lahori are associated with Gwalior.

[96] In the publications during the British Raj on the history of art in the Punjab kingdom, there is no name of the artists who lived at the Court of Lahore, no name of those that English visitors met in the Punjab of Ranjit Singh, no name either of those from whom they bought paintings and albums in Lahore and Amritsar from 1846 onwards, and finally no name of those whom Lord and Lady Login and many others saw working for little Maharajah Dalip Singh in the Lahore Fort in 1849.

[97] Latif, *Lahore…*, pp. 274 and 304–306.

[98] Dr. Rukhsana David, "Contemporary Miniature Painting in Lahore," in Barbara Schmitz (ed.), *Lahore: Paintings, Murals and Calligraphy*, pp. 130–39.

[99] Including a garden of Shalimar named after the Shalimar Gardens of Lahore.

[100] Thirty years ago, we saw the frescoes in some old buildings of Kapurthala, which have disappeared since.

[101] *Punjab Paintings: Study in Art and Culture*, New Delhi, 1983, p. 44: "The next centre of art and cultural activity, *after Kapurthala* [emphasis mine], is Patiala."

[102] The transfer of sovereignty from the East India Company to the crown of England was done in November 1858 by a proclamation of Queen Victoria.

[103] "The Maharaja of Patiala is entitled to a salute of 17 guns and takes precedence of all the Punjab Chiefs," *Punjab State Gazetteers,* vol. XVII. A. *Phulkian States: Patiala, Jind, and Nabha*, Lahore, 1904. Patiala pp. 1–210. This quotation p. 51. Also Lepel H. Griffin, *The History of the Principal States of the Punjab and Their Political Relations with the British Government*, 2d ed., London, 1873 [Lahore, 1976], "The History of the Patiala State," pp. 1–251.

[104] Some 1,090 paintings have been numbered in the Patiala Palace complex by Anne-Colombe Launois: see her groundbreaking study "Reflets du pouvoir féminin au coeur d'une royauté de l'Inde du nord. Les peintures murales du fort royal de Patiala (Panjab), XVIIIe–XIXe S.," *Journal Asiatique*, Paris, 303, 2, 2015, pp. 303–14, with references to her other articles on Patiala paintings, 2007 and 2015. This article contains interesting observations on the place of women and their freedom in the Sikh community (she mentions Sahib Kaur) till c. 1830.

[105] E. B. Eastwick, *Handbook of the Panjab, Western Rajputana, Kashmir, and Upper Sindh*, John Murray, London, 1883, p. 168: "The jewels of His Highness [the maharajah of Patiala] are remarkably fine. One diamond is said to be worth 40,000 pounds, and another pear-shaped one is also very big and brilliant. Others were, it is said, purchased from Empress Eugenie." Cf. Charles Allen et Sharada Dwivedi, *Lives of the Indian Princes*, London, 1984, with ill. p. 270, "Sita Devi, second wife of the last ruling Maharaja of Baroda, wearing a necklace said to have once belonged to Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, c. 1948."

[106] "The *Patiala Necklace…*is one of the most expensive pieces of jewellery ever made. With five rows of diamond incrusted platinum chains, it had 2,930 diamonds embedded in it, including the world's seventh largest DeBeers diamond," in *Discovery Channel Presents the Patiala Necklace*, Discovery Channel and the Embassy of France, 10 February 2004. See also *Cartier: Cartier and India—The Influence of Indian Culture on the Cartier Style* (documents belonging to the author).

[107] *Punjab State Gazetteers,* vol. XVII. A. *Phulkian States: Patiala, Jind, and Nabha*, Lahore, 1904, Jind covers pp. 211–338.

[108] See ibid., pp. 218–21, the list of "Antiquities," as well as pp. 333–38, the "Places of interest" in the State.

[109] Ch. Allen and Sh. Dwivedi, *Lives of the Indian Princes*, p. 272. The authors say that his "life-style was closer to that of the French monarchs whom he so greatly admired than that of any oriental princes of old."

[110] I put quotation marks because there were adoptions between Jassa Singh and Jagatjit Singh, in accordance with the Indian tradition that spiritual filiation has the same value as blood filiation. In India the British legislation recognized this right of adoption.

[111] Punjab was "British" from March 1849 to August 1947. Jagatjit Singh became maharajah in 1877. As he was five years old, a Regency Council was in charge of the state from 1877 to 1890. The maharajah died in 1949.

[112] *Punjab State Gazetteers,* vol. XIV A, *Kapurthala State*, 1904, Lahore, 1908, p. 8. His panegyrists added that he was fluent in Italian and Spanish.

[113] His first trip to Europe was in 1893. He also visited Egypt, America, Java, China, and Japan where he was received by the Mikado. See Allen and Dwivedi, *Lives of the Indian Princes*, ill. p. 299: "Maharaja Jagatjit

Singh of Kapurthala leaves the Elysée Palace after calling on the French President, 1934." He also represented India several times at the Society of Nations, and in 1927 he inaugurated, along with Marshal Foch, the Monument of Neuve-Chapelle devoted to the Indian soldiers who fell in France during World War I (1914–18).

[114] Actual Residence of H. H. Brigadier Sukhjit Singh (MVC), maharajah of Kapurthala.

[115] He was received by the Sultan under the careful eyes of the French authorities. We must emphasize the courage of Maharajah Jagadjit Singh in constructing this mosque at a time when communal tensions were on a dangerous rise in India in the perspective of independence. The Nawab of Bahawalpur was the only head sovereign present at the consecration ceremony. Mahatma Gandhi, one of the many VIPs invited, excused his absence with one mysterious line written on a postcard: "Ahimsa is the greatest force."

[116] K. M. Maitra, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts Preserved in the Kapurthala State Library*, Lahore, 1921, VIII, 176 pages, 287 entries. A small but outstanding book, written by a scholar to whom we wish to pay tribute in this essay. He was professor of Persian, Dyal Singh College, Lahore, and lecturer in Arabic and Persian, Punjab University. I am grateful to H. H. Maharajah Sukhjit Singh of Kapurthala for offering me this rare book in June 1983.

[117] Id., ibid., no. 54. The date has been erased. Nos. 55 and 56, without any date, are also manuscripts of the *Shahnama*.

[118] Id., ibid., no. 70 (A.H. 1097/A.D. 1685–1686) and 71 (A.H. 865/A.D. 1460–1461, with miniature paintings).

[119] Id., ibid., no. 72, *Sikandar Nama-Barri*, no date, with miniature paintings. Idem for no. 73 (A.H. 1250/A.D. 1834–1835), 74 (no date), 75 (A.H. 1056/A.D. 1646–1647), 76 (A.H. 1161/A.D. 1748), and 77 (A.H. 1248/A.D. 1832–1833). Add to this no. 78, *Shahri Sikandar Nama*, "an excellent commentary [by a certain Ali Sher] of Nizami's famous Epic," no date. No. 79 is another commentary on the same subject (A.H. 1246/A.D. 1830–1831). This helps us to better understand the interest shown by the Punjabis for the archaeological excavations carried out in Manikyala, near Rawalpindi (today in Pakistan), by Generals Ventura and Court in 1830–1834.

[120] No. 189, fol. 178a to 242b, manuscript dated A.H. 849/A.D. 1445–1446.

[121] No. 86, *Masnawi Maanwi*, dated A.H. 1040/A.D. 1630–1631; ibid. no. 87 (A.H. 1093/A.D. 1682), 88 (no date), 89 (A.H. 1115/A.D. 1703–1704), and 90 (no date). Many commentaries: no. 91 (*Mukashifati-Rizawi*, dated A.H. 1109/A.D. 1697–1698), 92 (*Al-mughni*, no date), 93 (*Khulasa-i Masnawi*, no date) and 94 (*Lataiful Lughat*, glossary of the *Masnawi*, no date). Also *Ghazaliyat-i Maulana Rumi*, in no. 189, fol. 1a à 66b, a manuscript dated A.H. 849/A.D. 1445–1446.

[122] Two copies of the *Diwan*, no. 95 (*Diwan Jalal-ud-Din Rumi*, no date) and 96, no date, but with a note saying: "This Ms. was purchased by Maulvi Ghulam Muhammad Khan the Prime Minister in A.H. 1264 (A.D. 1847) for seventeen rupees."

[123] Two copies, no. 97 (*Diwan Saadi*), no date, and 98, no date.

[124] No. 99 (*Intikhab-i Diwan Saadi*), dated A.H. 1246/A.D. 1830–1831; 100 (*Kulliyati Saadi*), "a very fine copy of the complete poetical work of Saadi," also dated A.H. 1246/A.D. 1830–1831; and 101, "an incomplete copy," the manuscript of which is dated A.H. 1172/A.D. 1758–1759.

[125] No. 102, no date, and one of its commentaries no. 103 (*Anhar'ul Asrar*) by Shaikh Hydayatullah of Jalandhar, dated A.D. 1838.

[126] Id., ibid., no. 83 (not dated, probably seventeenth century), *Kulliyati Attar*; no. 84 *Mantiqut-Tair* (miniature paintings), dated A.H. 881/A.D. 1476–1477, "edited and translated into French by Garcin de Tassy"; no. 85, *Pand-nama* (A.H. 1230/A.D. 1814–1815), "a poem of moral counsels. It was translated into French by de Sacy in 1819"; the *Asrarnama-i Attar*, in no. 189, fol. 67a to 122b (A.H. 849/A.D. 1445–1446).

[127] No. 105 (*Diwan-i Khusrau*), manuscript dated A.D. 1840. Also the *Matla'-ull-Anwar* (no. 106, no date, and 107 dated A.H. 1242/A.D. 1826–1827), The *Qiran'us Sa'adain* (no. 108, no date, with its commentary, *Sharhi Qiran'us-Sa'adain*, no. 109, no date).

[128] No. 111, also entitled *Duval Rani u Khizar Khan*. This manuscript, copied in A.H. 976/A.D. 1568–1569, belonged to the Imperial Library in Delhi. It bears the seal of Shah Jahan with the date corresponding to 25 March 1659. No. 110 (no date) and 112 (A.H. 1056/A.D. 1646–1647) are copies of the same text.

[129] *'Ijaz-i Khusrawi*, no. 213. No date.

[130] Let us mention his *Hasht Bihisht* (no. 113 dated A.H. 1058/A.D. 1648–1649, and 114, dated A.H. 1256/A.D. 1840–1841), his *Aina-i Sikandari* (Alexander the Great once more) followed by *Yusaf u Zulaykha* (no. 115, A.H.

1215/A.D. 1800–1801).

[131] The *Diwan-i Hafiz* (no. 118, no date, with other undated manuscripts nos. 119, 120, 121, and 122, the last one illuminated with "exquisitely executed miniature paintings, but the faces have been intentionally disfigured." Let us also mention here the *Bahru'l Firasat* (no. 123), a commentary of poems of Hafiz by Abdullah al-Khweshagi al-Chisti from Kasur, near Lahore, and the *Shahr-i Diwan-i Hafiz* (no. 124), another commentary of the Master's poetical work.

[132] *Diwan-i Jami* (no. 130, no date, and another copy no. 131, no date either). The *Yusuf u Zulaykha* by Jami (no. 131, no date, "written in fine Nasta'liq embellished with beautiful miniatures") was copied by Muhammad Salih Kambu, author of the famous *Shahjahan-nama*. Also the *Sharh-i Yusuf u Zulaykha* (no. 134, A.H. 1246/A.D. 1830–1831), a commentary of Jami's *Masnawi* written by Shaikh Abdul Wasi of Hansi. The *Tuhfat-ul-Ahrar* by Jami (no. 135, A.H. 1098/A.D. 1686–1687) is a rare manuscript copied by a scribe, Hidayat'ullah, who says in the colophon that the work was commanded by Aurengzeb, who gave him 500 rupees as reward.

[133] *Diwan-i Hasan Dahlawi* (no. 116, dated A.H. 948/A.D. 1541–1542), the author being a friend of Amir Khusraw and a disciple of Nizam ud-Din Awlia. *Diwan-i Badr Chach* (no. 117), whose manuscript was copied in A.H. 1257/A.D. 1841–1842 by Muhammad Ghaus of Sultanpour, near Kapurthala. *Diwan-i Kamal Khujandi* (no. 125, A.H. 1011/A.D. 1602–1603) by a poet close to Hafiz. *The Masnawi Shah Ni'matullah Wali* (no. 126, no date), by this mystical poet who died in A.H. 827/A.D. 1423. *Diwan-i Qasim Anwar* (no. 127, no date, with another copy no. 128, no date). The *Kulliyat-i Katibi* (no. 129, no date). The *Diwan-i Asafi* (no. 136, "not dated, probably seventeenth century"), by a disciple of Jami. The *Diwan-i Ahli* (no. 141), dated A.H. 942/A.D. 1536–1537). The *Diwan-i Bahlul* (no. 142, "not dated, probably seventeenth century"). The *Diwan-i Nawidi* (no. 143, no date). The *Diwan-i Marvi* (no. 144, no date), "an extremely fine copy of the poems of Marvi. His work is rather rare…. This fine Ms. was purchased for Rs. 125 by the Maharaja Nihal Singh of Kapurthala." The *Diwan-i Sanai* (no. 145, A.H. 1034/A.D. 1624–1625), by Khwaja Sani who died in Lahore in A.H. 1000/A.D. 1591. The *Kullayyat-i Faizi* (no. 146, no date), "one of very few complete copies of Faizi's poems that are known to exist." Let us end this list with the mention of the *Diwan-i Mir Dard* (no. 192) of Khwaja Muhammad Mir of Delhi, who died in A.H. 1199/A.D. 1785, which "contain the Persian Diwan of the poet [fol. 1 to 10) while the rest [fol. 11 to 763] consists of his Urdu Diwan."

[134] Full name: Fakhr-ud-Din Mahmud bin Amir Yamin-ud-Din, who died in A.H. 745/A.D. 1344.

[135] "His *nom de plume* was Wakif. He was originally a native of Patiala of which place his father was the Qazi (Chief Judge), but he is generally known as Wakif of Lahore. He died in A.H. 1190=A.D. 1775."

[136] Died in A.H. 1107/A.D. 1695.

[137] Died in Delhi in A.H. 1108/A.D. 1696.

[138] No. 175. The author lived from A.H. 1137/A.D. 1724 to A.H. 1200/A.D. 1788. No date for the manuscript.

[139] Fol. 1 to 79.

[140] Fol. 80 to 250. The same volume has, by the same writer, Sundar Das, a *Masnawi* (fol. 251–61) "in Punjabi language finished in 1174/1760," and another "finished in 1162/1748 at Ibrahimabad on the banks of Chenab."

[141] No. 211.

[142] J.-M. Lafont, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh…*, p. 75, ill. 132, *Ain-i-Akbari* copied in Lahore under Maharajah Ranjit Singh, kept in the Lahore Fort Library, Lahore. As we already said, the manuscript has two opening illustrations, one showing Akbar in court, the other Ranjit Singh in court.

[143] Nos. 6 and 7, dated A.H. 1264/A.D. 1847, no. 8 dated A.H. 1265/A.D. 1848, and no. 9, no date.

[144] Nos. 10 and 11, no date.

[145] No. 12, no date.

[146] No. 15, no date. The author died in 1594.

[147] No. 199. The date for the manuscript is not given. The State Library had another copy of the same, no. 200, dated A.H. 1229/A.D. 1813.

[148] Nos. 24, dated A.H. 1251/A.D. 1835–1836, and 25, no date.

[149] No. 26, no date. Only vol. 1 of this work, dealing with the first ten years of Shahjahan's reign (1627–1637).

[150] No. 34, dated A.H. 1244/A.D. 1828–1829. This work is a shortened version by Muhammad Bakhsh (died in A.H. 1199/A.D. 1785) of the major book of Muhammad Saleh Kambu on Shahjahan's reign. This manuscript is a copy dated A.H. 1244/A.D. 1829.

[151] No. 52, copy dated A.D. 1841 only.

[152] No. 21. The author died in A.H. 1136/A.D. 1724. The date of the manuscript is A.H. 1156/A.D. 1743.

[153] No. 33, no date. The author died in 1108/1696.

[154] No. 45, colophon erased, date illegible.

[155] No. 43, no date. The author was also known as Nimat Khani Ali.

[156] No. 44. This book is also entitled *Jangnama*. The manuscript is dated Sambat 1895 = A.D. 1838. It is adorned with a few miniature paintings.

[157] No. 35, no date.

[158] *Tarikh-i Angrezi*, no. 47, dated A.H. 1198/A.D. 1783–84. English author, Indian translator, and scribe unknown.

[159] Erik Stokes. In his *Peasant and the Raj*, CUP, 1978, p. 45, Stokes described the British settlers as leaders of modernism and at the same time as the last predators in Asia.

[160] No. 2, no date.

[161] No. 41. The translator was Abu Talib al-Husayni. No date, "illustrated with miniatures."

[162] No. 5, no date.

[163] No. 40, no date.

[164] No. 36. The author was Khawaja N'imatullah bin Khawaja Habibullah al-Harawi, and "this manuscript seems to be the autograph copy of the author." The Library had a second copy (no. 37, dated A.H. 1068/A.D. 1657), as well as an abstract entitled *Makhzan'ul Afghani*, no date (no. 38).

[165] No. 27. The Rohilla were among the most ferocious Afghans to come and wage the *jihad* in India during the eighteenth century, carving for themselves large principalities (e.g. the Rohilkund). They came with full tribes which they settled in the conquered territories. This text was completed in A.H. 1249/A.D. 1833.

[166] No. 13, with a misprint of the printer (*Traikhi* for *Tarikh-i*). The author was Mirza Muhammad Mehdi of Astarabad, who died in A.H. 1171/A.D. 1747. This book, as reported by K. M. Maitra in 1921, "has been printed at Bombay, Tehran and Tabriz, and translated into French and English by Sir William Jones."

[167] No. 225. K. M. Maitra gives the title of each *Upanishad* in Persian, and he adds the title in Sanskrit for clarification purposes.

[168] No. 226, a carefully produced manuscript of 588 fol., contains the preface of Abul Fazl himself. Not dated, it is from the seventeenth century, according to K. M. Maitra. No. 227, with 425 fol., does not contain this preface, but is dated Samvat 1903/A.D. 1846, and it is "written in rough Nastaliq with clumsy pictures."

[169] No. 228. The author lived under Jahangir. The manuscript is curiously dated by K. M. Maitra as 1938 A.D., certainly a misprint of the publisher.

[170] Nos. 229, 230, 231 (in verse), and 232 (in prose). None of these manuscripts is dated.

[171] No. 233. No. 234 is a translation of the abbreviated *Shiv-Purana*, without name of author or scribe, and without a date.

[172] No. 235. The manuscript is dated A.H. 1287/A.D. 1870–1871.

[173] No. 236, manuscript dated A.H. 1229/A.D. 1813–1814.

[174] No. 237. "To this Ms. is appended a collection of letters extending over 75 pages by some inhabitant of Nakodar."

[175] No. 241, no date. This is the predecessor of the Festival of Music of Kapurthala animated by Mrs. Anita Singh, director, The Indian Music Society.

[176] J.-M. Lafont, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh…*, pp. 88–90. Id., *La présence française*, p. 289, where I correct V. S. Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, III, pp. 162–63, who transposed the Persian *Meffrid* into *Meours* in order to identify the man with Colonel Mouton. It was in fact Meifredy, the chargé d'affaires of General Allard. Ranjit Singh put Meifredy in charge of the district of Shaldag (6 February 1833) with the special mission to prepare for the maharajah a report on the condition of Kashmir. I pointed out this error in my article published in the *Journal of Sikh Studies*, GNDU, Amritsar, IX, 2, 1982, pp. 124–25.

[177] Nos. 16 (no date, "profusely illustrated"), 17 (dated A.H. 1235/A.D. 1819–1820), 18 (no date), and 19 (dated A.D. 1870).

[178] G. Cannon, *The Letters of Sir William Jones*, OUP, 1970, 2 vols. with continuous pagination. The request of Jones is contained in his letter to Polier no. 453, pp. 731–32. It is dated Court House, 9 January 1787.

[179] No. 20, no date.

[180] J.-M. Lafont, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh…*, p. 88, ill. 156, with caption.

[181] The most curious is the astrolabe manufactured in A.H. 1053/A.D. 1643–1644 and bearing the inscription "Work of the weakest of servants Qāᵓim Muḥammad ibn ᶜĪsā ibn Allāhdād (or: Ilāhdād), the imperial (humāyūnī) astrolabist of Lahore." The astrolabe has also two other dates by different hands: that of 1221 (if it is A.H., = 1806–1807), and also the inscription "فی سنه سکندری ١٩٥٥ غظنه" (in the year of Alexander 1955 [in Arabic numerals] 1955 [in Abdjad])." [Caption from the Museum of the History of Science, Oxford, Inventory no. 43704.] I do not know until when the era of Alexander the Great was in use in Lahore.

[182] On this tomb, read the article by Masooma Abbas, "The Tomb of Ali Mardan Khan at Mughalpura: A Reconstruction of Its Lost Decoration," in Barbara Schmitz (ed.), *Jamal: A Journal of Aesthetics*, College of Art and Design, University of the Punjab, Lahore, vol. 1, 2012, pp. 12–31, 20 illustrations.

[183] Abdullah Chaghtai, *Le Tadj Mahal d'Agra (Inde): Histoire et Description—Thèse pour le Doctorat d'Université présenté à la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Paris*, Bruxelles, 1938. In this thesis, the proofs of which with the mention in pencil "Bon à tirer" by Abdullah Chaghtai are kept in the Library of the Directorate of Archaeology, Lahore Fort, Lahore, Chaghtai presented for the first time the documents showing that *Ustad* Ahmed was one of the architects of the Taj Mahal.

[184] "Lehna Singh Majithia," page from the *Crest-jewel of the Essence of All Systems of Astrology*, by Durgashankar, Benares, ca. 1833–39, in S. Stronge, *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms*, London, 1999, p. 90 ill. 100. As we know, Lehna Singh worked with General Court for recasting the artillery of the kingdom.

[185] No. 238. The author of the translation was Faizi. The manuscript is dated A.H. 1144/A.D. 1731. A second copy, no. 239, is dated Samvat 1847 = A.D. 1790.

[186] No. 282. See J.-M. and R. Lafont, *The French & Delhi…*, New Delhi, 2010, pp. 36–39 for the relations between Raja Jai Singh in Delhi and Amber/Jaipur, Volton in Delhi, Dupleix in Chandernagor, and the mission of the French Jesuits Boudier and Pons who, at the request of Jai Singh, came from Chandernagor up to Delhi and Jaipur to make astronomical observations in these new observatories.

[187] No. 283. The manuscript has no date. A second *Risala-i-Asturlab*, no. 284, is the work of Mohammed Bahauddin Amuli, no date.

[188] No. 285.

[189] In 1836 the Institut de France drafted a series of *Instructions* for General Allard. They mainly concerned an archaeological survey of Punjab, Peshawar, and Afghanistan. But a full section dealt with manuscripts and libraries in the kingdom. The French generals were advised to have the libraries surveyed and catalogues prepared of all the manuscripts written in Sanskrit and in the various dialects of Punjab and Kashmir: "These lists should give the titles of the book in the script of the languages in which they are written, accompanied by a transcription in Latin characters to represent the pronunciation of the original terms": J.-M. Lafont, *Indika. Essays in Indo-French Relations, 1630–1976*, chap. 10, "The Numismatic Collection of General Court and Instructions of the French Academy for an Archaeological Survey of Punjab, 1836," pp. 287–342. The preceding quotation comes from p. 321, para. 17.

[190] I think of Khushwant Singh, *History of the Sikhs*, vol. 2, 1839–1974 ; J. S. Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, CUP, 1990; or Barbara N. Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and Their States*, CUP, 2004 [2008].

[191] A similar study in the various libraries at Patiala, on those (surviving?) of Jind, Nabha, Sangrur, and other Phulkian States (and also Bahawalpur in Pakistan) would allow us to refine this approach, to correct or modify these initial conclusions.

[192] In 1947 the British granted independence to "British India," comprising all the "Ceded and Conquered Territories" of the great colonial era. But in 1900 the British crown also exerted its authority over 693 Princely States, reduced to 562 in 1929, to which by the terms of the treaties and *Sanad* the Imperial State guaranteed their independence to the exclusion of certain regal responsibilities such as foreign affairs, military affairs, and, for most of them, the right to strike coins. When the English left India, these 562 States again became *de facto* and *de jure* independent, without any link with the new Indian authorities installed in New Delhi. Nehru, Patel, and Menon frantically tried to induce these states to join ("Merger") the Indian Union, by negotiation for most of them and the grant of a *Privy Purse* to the former reigning sovereigns, by force in the case of Hyderabad and Junagadh or for the not yet solved question of the composite state called "Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh," itself an heir of the kingdom of Lahore: B. N. Ramusack, *The Indian Princes*, chap. 8, pp. 245–74, "Federation or Integration?"

[193] In January 1971 Indira Gandhi unilaterally abolished the *Privy Purse* that her father, Jawaharlal Nehru, had granted the Princes to convince them to sign the accession of their States to the Indian Union. See Ch. Allen

and Sh. Dwivedi, *Lives of the Indian Princes*, pp. 327–41, "Broken Promises." Read especially the testimony of Brigadier Sukhjit Singh (MVC), maharajah of Kapurthala, pp. 335–36, when he learnt the news from the radio while he was going to engage the enemy with his armoured brigade in the actions of the Bangladesh war.

[194] Told by his grandson, Brigadier Sukhjit Singh (MVC), in Allen and Dwivedi, *Lives of the Indian Princes*, p. 300. These words, *mutatis mutandis*, recall the utterance of the old soldiers of Ranjit Singh surrendering their weapons and their flags to the English forces in Rawalpindi on 14 March 1849: "'*Aj Ranjit Singh mar gaya*'–'*Today Ranjit Singh has died*'": Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, vol. 2, 1839–1974, pp. 79–80.

[195] Starting with her *Patna Painting*, London, Royal India Society, 1947, to her *Company Drawings in the India Office Library*, London, HMSO, 1972, in which, resuming the conclusions of William Archer in his *Paintings of the Sikhs*, 1966, she observed that "the Punjab Plains had no great artistic traditions and the Sikhs…took little interest in painting," pp. 208–209.

[196] The information that the Indians called these paintings either "Company Art" or "Firangi Art" came from R. K. Das, *Bharat-ki-Chitrakala*, Kachi, 1940, pp. 70–71. Mildred Archer quoted it in her *Patna Paintings*, p. VII. In the British libraries and collections she found a lot of *Indian Paintings for the British*, and having no knowledge at that time of the paintings kept in the French Collections, she dropped the name "Firanghi Paintings" and adopted "Company Paintings" for the title of her and William Archer's book of 1955. We had very enriching discussions on this topic during her stay at our residence in New Delhi (endnote 93), and then during our stay at her residence in Dedham, UK. I ultimately discussed this appellation in "Company Paintings ou Farenghi Paintings? Contribution française à l'émergence d'une école de peinture indienne au XVIIIème siècle" in *Cahiers de la Compagnie des Indes*, 1-1996, Lorient, France, pp. 7–30, 11 illustrations (English translation in J.-M. Lafont, *INDIKA: Essays in Indo-French Relations 1630–1976*, pp. 119–49).

[197] W. G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London and New York, Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1973, 2 vols. F. S. Aijazuddin, *Pahari Paintings and Sikh Portraits in the Lahore Museum*, London and New York, Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1977. B. N. Goswamy, *Painters at the Sikh Court*, Wiesbaden, 1975, and with E. Fisher, *Pahari Masters: Court Painters of Northern India*, Zurich, 1992. Let's not forget Karl Khandalavala, *Pahari Miniature Paintings in the N. C. Mehta Collection*, Gujarat Museum Society, Ahmedabad, no date.

[198] *Kashmiri Painting: Assimilation and Diffusion, Production and Patronage*, Shimla and Delhi, 1998.

[199] It is surprising indeed that no name of Indian artists working in the Punjab kingdom under Ranjit Singh was mentioned in British exhibitions and publications concerning Punjab during the Raj. In a foreword for a small publication of 1988 dealing with Sikh shawls exhibited in the Paris Exposition of 1867, Toby Falk came close to the truth when he wrote: "The British, who elsewhere patronised Indian artists to a considerable extent, maintained very guarded relations with the Sikhs…. For a commission of this importance however [eight large paintings showing a Sikh workshop of shawls in 1866], the most reputable artists of Lahore would have been employed": *Kashmir Shawls: Kyburg Limited*, London, 1988, p. 3. But we do not find the names of these artists in the contemporary British publications. As we have seen above (endnote 98), Rukhsana David reminded us that "an optional course in miniature painting was added to the curriculum of the Mayo School of Arts [now the National College of Arts] in 1945" only.

[200] For example, J.-M. Lafont, "Les Indes des Lumières/India and the Enlightenment 1610–1840," in *Passeurs d'Orient: Encounters between India and France*, Paris, Ministère des Affaires étrangères, 1991, pp. 13–33; "India and the Orient in Fabri de Peiresc: Mémoire pour les Indes," in *INDIKA: Essays in Indo-French Relations*, pp. 51–89 (published in French in 1997), and "The Quest of Indian Manuscripts by the French," ibid., pp. 90–118 (published in French in 1991).

[201] Starting with our article "Private Business and Cultural Activities of the French Officers of Maharaja Ranjit Singh," *Journal of Sikh Studies*, GNDU, Amritsar, X-1, 1983, pp. 74–104, to *La Présence française dans le royaume sikh du Penjab*, Paris, EFEO, 1992, chap. VII, "Vie familiale et activités personnelles," pp. 297–348. Also *Maharaja Ranjit Singh Lord of the Five Rivers*, New Delhi, 2002, passim, and, last but not least, *The French & Lahore*, Lahore, 2007, pp. 70–124 (new edition forthcoming).

[202] *Company Paintings: Indian Paintings of the British Period*, London, V&A, 1992, "Acknowledgements."

[203] Ibid., pp. 169–74. She also mentioned that "a set, probably by this painter [Imam Bakhsh Lahori], is in the India Office Library (Add. Or. 1347–96)," p. 169. We observe that another album kept in the IOLR, Add. Or. 1397–1451, also has strong connections both with the Court's collection of paintings in the Guimet Museum in Paris and with the Kapany albums.

[204] Curiously enough, in this book several miniature paintings are mentioned as "Unpublished" while we had published them either in *Passeurs d'Orient: Encounters between India and France* in 1991 (with a double page, 30–31, on Imam Bakhsh Lahori) or in *Reminiscences: The French in India*, New Delhi, INTACH, 1997: for example plate 7, "Jamrud, the fort built by the Sikhs. Unpublished" [cf. *Passeurs d'Orient*, p. 40]; plate 13, "Kabul Infantryman: Unpublished" [cf. *Passeurs d'Orient*, p. 95]; pl. 164, "Rohtas Fort; Unpublished" [cf. *Passeurs d'Orient,* p. 94]; pl. 165, "Mohammadan Artilleryman; Unpublished" [cf. *Reminiscences*, p. 81]; pl. 166, "Sikh Soldiers: Unpublished" [cf. *Reminiscences*, p. 81; note that in caption no. 144, p. 228, the translation of "Soldat Pourpié" by "Mercenary" is a mistake: "Pourpié" is the French writing and spelling of *Purbiah*, and the soldier is a Gurkha of the 2nd Company of the Gurkha regiment of the *Fauj-i-khas*]. See also S. Stronge, *Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms*, pl. 205, "Attok Fortress on the Indus: Unpublished" [cf. *Reminiscences*, p. 49]; pl. 206, "The Attack on the Khyber: Unpublished" [cf. *Passeurs d'Orient*, p. 40; in Musée Guimet, this very small watercolour was originally kept in the same support as the Jamrud Fortress, as can be seen in the illustration of my *Maharaja Ranjit Singh Lord of the Five Rivers*, p. 63, ill. 106].

[205] "Certain circumstances, leading to the abandon of the project" are alluded to by B. N. Goswamy in the catalogue of the exhibition, *Piety and Splendour: Sikh Heritage in Art*, National Museum, New Delhi, 2000, "Introductory." Note that the author, p. 169, rightly says that the manuscript of the *Qissa-i Chahar Darvesh* kept in the Punjab University Library, Chandigarh, was illustrated by Imam Bakhsh. Copied (and probably illustrated) in 1838–39 in Lahore, it belonged to Ajudhya Prasad, of the *Fauj-i-khas*.

[206] Including in the field of archaeology (see above, endnote 189): J.-M. Lafont, "Conducting Excavations and Collecting Coins: Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Kingdom," in H. P. Ray (ed.), *Coins in India: Power and Communication*, Marg Publications, Mumbai, 2006, pp. 98–107, and "Manikyala: A la recherche des Indo-Grecs—L'oeuvre archéologique des officiers 'français' de l'Empire dans le royaume sikh du Pendjab, 1822–1849," *Actes en l'honneur de Francine Tissot* (forthcoming). Concerning the trade of Kashmiri shawls between France and Punjab, see the excellent book of Frank Ames, *Woven Masterpieces of Sikh Heritage: The Stylistic Development of the Kashmiri Shawl under Maharaja Ranjit Singh 1780–1839*, Antique Collectors' Club, 2010, and J.-M. and R. Lafont, *The French & Lahore*, 2d ed. (forthcoming).

[207] "The Painter Imam Bakhsh of Lahore," in Barbara Schmitz (ed.), *After the Great Mughals: Painting in Delhi and the Regional Courts in the 18th and 19th Centuries*, Marg Publications, June 2002 [with Barbara Schmitz], pp. 74–99, 15 colour illustrations, already quoted. Also "Cultural Life under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, with Emphasis on the French Influence" in R. Grewal and Sh. Pall (ed.), *Precolonial and Colonial Punjab: Society, Economy, Politics and Culture—Essays for Indu Banga*, Manohar, Delhi, 2005, pp. 195–214. "Les Fables de La Fontaine aux Indes: Imam Bakhsh Lahori et l'Ecole artistique de Lahore," *Synergies-Inde*, 1, 2006, Paris, pp. 145–71. We already quoted Barbara Schmitz, "Muhammad Bakhsh *Sahhaf* and the Illustrated Book in Ranjit Singh's Lahore," in B. Schmitz (ed.), *Lahore: Paintings, Murals and Calligraphy*.

Fig. 8.28, *A Sikh ruler shoots wild boar from a platform*, Punjab Province, approx. 1820–1830, Opaque watercolor on paper, 37 × 28 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.68

This painting shows men hunting wild beasts, boars, deer, does and fawns with spears or shooting with local guns. Three attendants hold falcons on their fists protected by gloves, one of the falcons flying to catch a running hare. Susan Stronge has correctly observed that "the figures... are predominantly Sikhs but include a number of Hindus, wearing the same style of turban but with clearly depicted cut hair." The hunt takes place in the hills, with two groups of Sikh soldiers and one drummer at the top corners, one of them (right corner) in a mango grove.

Fig. 8.29, *Ranjit Singh's favorite horse and some of his finest jewels, Portraits of the Princes and People of India,* Emily Eden (British, 1797–1869), Printer: L. Dickenson, Publisher: J. Dickenson and Son (British), 1844, Hand-painted chromolithograph on paper, 21.6 × 17.8 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.63.14

Fig. 8.30, *Raja Heera Singh, Portraits of the Princes and People of India,*
Emily Eden (British, 1797–1869), Printer: L. Dickenson, Publisher: J. Dickenson and Son (British), 1844, Hand-painted chromolithograph on paper, 58.4 × 44.4 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.63.7

9

The Maharajah and His Faith

Peter Bance

Whenever the name of Maharajah Duleep Singh is mentioned, three thoughts come generally to mind: the priceless diamond known as the "Koh-i-noor," the magnificent full-length portrait by Franz Winterhalter (Fig. 9.1), and the maharajah's conversion to Christianity. From these, it is that so-called act of abandonment of his Sikh faith which is most frowned upon and for which he is seen in a most negative way. The Golden Temple Museum at Amritsar does not display even a single image of the maharajah.

There seems to be little mention of his reconversion into Sikhism. Was this a myth, or do we just not want to accept him for his betrayal of faith? Although one can ask what made him convert to another faith, the greater question is what made him return to the religion of his forefathers. But the simple fact is that he did return. The old Punjabi proverb *"Saveher da bhulia shaam noo kar ah jave, oh phulia nahi akhvaunda"* (one who has strayed in the morning and who returns by the evening was never strayed) best describes the sovereign and his faith.

It was late summer 1838 when the seventh prince of the Punjab was born into the splendour and epitome of the Sikh Kingdom. It had been a busy summer. The court of Ranjit Singh had witnessed the visit of Lord Auckland, Governor-General of India, accompanied by two would-be writers whose works would become masterpieces in the eyes of historians. The first was Lord Auckland's sister, Lady Emily Eden, an amateur artist who would write a humoured and Bronte-esque account of her visit to Lahore, published under the title *Up the Country*,[1] whilst her artistic skills would be expressed in a richly produced, large folio of portraits titled *People and Princes of India* (Fig. 9.2), showing each nobleman of the Lahore Court in his finery. Her pencil sketches and watercolours of May 1838 were four months too early to capture Duleep Singh, otherwise undoubtedly Lady Eden would have immortalised the charismatic Rani Jindan

Left: Detail of Fig. 9.4b, *Maharani Jind Kaur and Prince Duleep Singh,* Lahore or Amritsar 19th century, Opaque watercolours on paper, 19.7 × 24.5 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 9.1, *Maharajah Duleep Singh,* Reproduction by Sukhpreet Singh of original painting by Franz Winterhalter, Punjab, India, 2005, Oil on canvas, 94 × 182 cm, Kapany Collection

had she not been heavily pregnant and kept out of sight from the visiting European *firangi* party.

The second visitor was William Osborne,[2] military secretary to Lord Auckland, who compiled and wrote the illustrious *Court and Camp of Runjeet Sing* (Fig. 9.3), collecting portraits and sketches of the *durbar*, and capturing the scenes of Lahore in a way that no other visitor to the Punjab had done before him.

The first European depiction of Maharajah Duleep Singh was in 1841 by the Hungarian artist August Schoefft,[3] who visited Lahore as a guest of the court physician, Dr. Ernest Honigberger, during the reign of Maharajah Sher Singh. Schoefft's painting of the three-year-old Duleep sitting on a branch of a tree with the distant view of Lahore behind him was the first realistic portrayal of the prince. Previously, paintings produced in gouache Mughal-style miniatures showed the maharajah as a young boy in *durbar*. Even as an infant beside his father, Ranjit Singh, such depictions were of course mythical and false, as Duleep would barely have been nine months old when his father died (Figs. 9.4a and 9.4b).

Fig. 9.3, *Cover of "The Court and Camp of Runjeet Singh,"* William Osborne, 1844
Printed book with engraved illustrations, 15.2 × 22.9 cm, Kapany Collection

Art by Europeans flourished at this time in the Punjab. The visiting Russian Prince Alexis Soltykoff also arrived in this period, visiting India twice, between 1841–43 and 1844–46. His memoirs of his voyages revealed life in Lahore, whilst his drawings published in large, tinted lithographs showed splendid Punjab hunting scenes and Maharajah Sher Singh with his entourage on an elephant flanked by *akalis* (Fig. 9.5).

Two years later, Duleep Singh would find himself on the golden throne of the Punjab after the assassination of his half brother Maharajah Sher Singh by the Sandhawalia Sardars.[4] At the age of five years, Duleep Singh was proclaimed the maharajah of Lahore, with his plotting uncle Jawahar Singh installed as the new Prime Minister and his ambitious mother, Jind Kaur, overlooking proceedings as regent.

The actions of the uncle, in removing the other reputed sons of Ranjit Singh from the line of ascendancy, brought about his premature death at the hands of the Khalsa Army. Duleep Singh as well as his mother were witness to this horrific execution.

Fig. 9.2, *"The Late Maha Raja Runjeet Singh," Portraits of The Princes and People of India,* Emily Eden, 1844, Hand-colored lithograph on paper
61 × 44.4 cm
Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.63.13

In an act of retribution toward the Sikh army for killing her brother Jawahar Singh, the Queen Regent sent the Sikh Army to the southern border of the Sikh Empire to face the British army stationed there. As a result, war between the Sikhs and the British was provoked, or rather provocation was "invited," as the historian Joseph Davey Cunningham would lead us to believe.[5] The outcome was the First Anglo Sikh War, which lasted from 1845 to 1846. The campaign was illustriously covered at the time by artists sitting in their London studios, including the military specialist Rudolph Ackermann, who produced a complete set of coloured lithographs for each battle. One

Fig. 9.4a, *Maharajah Ranjit Singh and Prince Duleep Singh,* Lahore or Amritsar, 19th century, Opaque watercolours on paper, 19.7 × 15.2 cm, Kapany Collection

of these lithographs showed a British soldier bayoneting a fallen Sikh whose hair had come undone at the Battle of Moodkee (Fig. 9.6), whilst another featured the British Army attacking a Sikh entrenched camp at the Battle of Ferozeshah (Fig. 9.7). Both depicted the British in ascendancy and the Sikh Army at its mercy. The lithographs, published by Henry Martens, showing victories for the East India Company fighting abroad for the Empire, were popular with the British public.

After the first Anglo Sikh war, more Europeans arrived in Lahore, as it was safer at that time than during the immediate post–Ranjit Singh years. Travellers, writers, and journalists flocked to the Punjab. The English newspapers gave more coverage of what was happening in this newly trampled territory. Sketches of its culture, its people, and its scenery littered the pages of the pictorial newspapers in London. Illustrations of the Punjab forts, the *akalis,* and Punjab nobles (including those defeated and those who conspired with the British) peppered the front pages, satisfying the huge public interest in the affairs of this part of the world (Figs. 9.8, 9.9, 9.10, and 9.11). April 1848 saw the outbreak of a revolt by a section of the Sikh Army at Multan, the events spiraling into the Second Anglo Sikh war of 1848–49, resulting in the deposing of the eleven-year-old maharajah and the annexation of his kingdom to British India.

Amongst the first European ladies to sketch the maharajah was Lady Helen Mackenzie, whose husband was stationed in Lahore at the time when Maharani Jind Kaur had been separated from her son and imprisoned by the British. Dr. John Login had been placed as the maharajah's new guardian.

Fig. 9.4b, *Maharani Jind Kaur and Prince Duleep Singh,* Lahore or Amritsar
19th century, Opaque watercolours on paper, 24.5 × 19.7 cm, Kapany Collection

Login was a Scotsman, a staunch Christian, and an able army surgeon, but the Governor-General of India, Lord Dalhousie, felt he could serve his nation better as a father figure to the newly deposed sovereign of the Punjab. With his own family secured in the confines of London's Lancaster Gate, Login called upon his wife to come to the Punjab and assist him in nurturing the young Sikh maharajah into a Europeanized native.

After the annexation of the Punjab in 1849, Login's next duty, beyond acculturating the maharajah and ransacking the Lahore *Toshakhanna* of its treasures for the East India Company, was to take the maharajah away from his homeland to the remote European settlement at Fatehgarh Camp in Uttar Pradesh. It was here that Duleep Singh's life took a whole new turn. Christianity was introduced to his already fragile and delicate mind, and he began showing a genuine interest in it.

It was no major feat to convert the young boy. One could take any young English boy of ten years of age to a remote part in the Punjab, cut him off from his countrymen, his language, and his faith, and without much difficulty turn him into a Punjabi-speaking Sikh. One should not be so harsh on the young Duleep.

Duleep Singh was barely eleven years of age when a Hindu Brahmin placed a copy of the Bible in the palm of his hand. A few months earlier when departing Lahore, not one of the maharajah's countrymen or Sikh priests volunteered to accompany their deposed sovereign to Fatehgarh. According to the maharajah's newly appointed guardian, when leaving for Fatehgarh, the maharajah himself was asked to select those who cared to

Fig. 9.5
Maharajah Sher Singh
Alexis Soltykoff
1842, Lithograph
83.2 × 68.6 cm
(with frame)
Kapany Collection

Fig. 9.6, *Battle of Moodkee,* Engraved by J. Harris, painted by H. Martens, from a sketch by Major J. F. White H. M. 31st Regt., published by Rudolph Ackermann June 14, 1849, Print, 63.5 × 48.3 cm, Kapany Collection

join him, but not a single Sikh came forward. Many of the Sikh priests and Brahmins, whose duty it was to remain near him, declined to accompany the maharajah, although facilities and accommodations were offered to them to make the trip to Fatehgarh.[6]

Login noted in a memorandum published in *Sir John Login and Duleep Singh* (Fig. 9.12) that the maharajah left Lahore "without taking with him a copy of the Grunt'h [sic] (their holy book) or a single reader of it, and with only one Brahmin…as I was particularly careful to explain to the Sikh priests (whose allowances were all secured to them by jageers) that one of the copies of the Grunt'h in use at the palace was at their disposal and ample accommodation provided for them in camp (at Fatehgarh) in the event of accompanying the Maharajah, but that I, being of a different religion from them, would give no orders on the subject, no blame could be attached to us for their indifference to the Maharajah's instruction in the tenets of their faith."[7]

Hence the maharajah departed from his country without a single Sikh priest or copy of the *Guru Granth Sahib* with him to connect him to his faith and religion. Had a single learned Sikh stood up and been prepared to follow his vulnerable maharajah, the future faith of the young prince may have been shaped in a different light. However, he was again let down dramatically, this time not by a *dogra* or a European but by his own Sikh countrymen.

Within three years at the Fatehgarh Camp, in 1853 the maharajah expressed a wish to adopt the Christian faith. He was not hard to persuade. As a Sikh, he felt the odd one out in Fatehgarh Park. His aides and his school friends were now all British, and by this time preparations were already under way for the maharajah to visit the country of his new

Fig. 9.7, *Battle of Ferozeshah*, Engraved by J. Harris, painted by H. Martens, from a sketch by Major J. F. White H. M. 31st Regt., published by Rudolph Ackermann, April 5, 1849, Print, 63.5 × 48.3 cm, Kapany Collection

masters and friends. He was baptised quietly in the confines of Login's Fatehgarh residence on 8 March 1853.

A year later, in the summer of 1854, the newly converted maharajah found himself as a humble guest of Queen Victoria in London, posing in all his finery for the portrait artist Franz Xavier Winterhalter at Buckingham Palace.

According to *Lady Login's Recollections*, published in 1916 (Fig. 9.13), the maharajah had already shorn his long hair before arriving on the shores of England, against the wishes of Dalhousie, who had told Sir John Login that the maharajah's turban and hair must be kept intact before he went to England.[8]

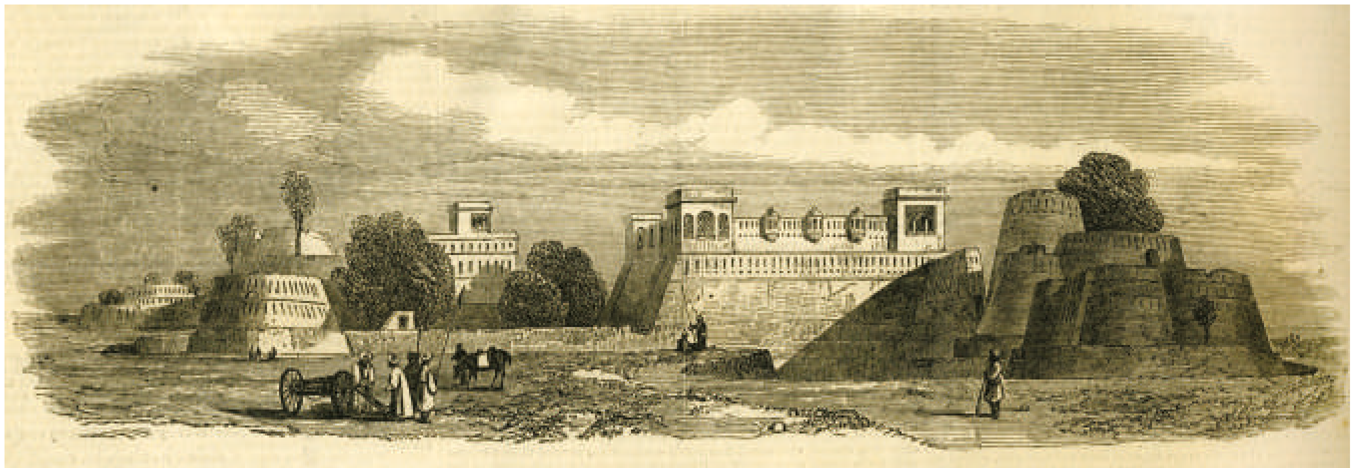
The short educational trip to England became a lifelong exile, smothered with fancy sport, grand stately homes, seductively fair-skinned women, and a condiment of royal affection. The maharajah drifted deeper into the clutches of his conquerors.

Years passed as the maharajah moved from castle to castle. He was kept occupied by his aristocratic circle in his young bachelor life by indulging in vices and sojourns to Europe, although the thoughts of the whereabouts of his beloved mother were never too far away.

It would be a long thirteen and a half years until he would meet his mother again. After opening communication with her and receiving permission from the British Government, who felt that the frail Maharani Jind Kaur (who had escaped from Punjab to Nepal) was no danger to them anymore,[9] the maharajah was given permission to travel to Calcutta to meet his mother in January 1861. The half-blind "*Messalina of the Punjab*,"[10] as described by Lady Login in her memoirs, wept as she placed her hand on the head of her son's shorn head. It just so happened that Sikh soldiers, now part of the British Indian Army, were

Fig. 9.8, *Akalees of the Sikh Army—from Von Orlich's Travels, The Illustrated News,* London, February 7, 1846, Illustration, 41 × 29 cm (book), Kapany Collection

Fig. 9.9, *Sikh Lancers, The Illustrated News,* London April 4, 1846, Illustration, 41 × 29 cm (book), Kapany Collection



Above: Fig. 9.10
The Fort Govindghur from the City of Amritzir
The Illustrated News, London
April 7, 1849
Illustration
41 × 29 cm (book)
Kapany Collection

Left: Fig. 9.11
Sher Singh, bodyguard, and Sikh troops
The Illustrated News, London
January 27, 1849
Illustration
41 × 29 cm (book)
Kapany Collection

returning from the China War when they heard that their former monarch was in Calcutta. Suddenly crowds of Sikhs began gathering outside his hotel and the authorities became alarmed, informing the maharajah that he must return to England. They were so desperate for him to do so that they even permitted him to take his mother, as India was seen as a danger, not for the maharajah but for the security of the Empire, or so he was told.

Maharani Jind Kaur was to be become the Logins's new neighbour at Lancaster Gate, overlooking Hyde Park's Serpentine River. Here the Victorian portrait artist George Richmond was commissioned to paint the "first Sikh woman in Britain" in delightful oils wearing a rich blue and gold brocade Indian dress and draped in fanciful Lahore jewels, which had been recently restored by the British on the occasion of her coming out of her self-imposed exile in Nepal (Fig. 9.14).

Tragically, the maharani died a year after being immortalised by Richmond on canvas, but the seeds of discontent she had ingrained in the mind of her easily influenced son would stay with him for the rest of his life. He had already begun questioning himself and the circumstances which had led him to be in England.

He had to first fulfil the duties of a son. The excuse of taking his mother's remains to India for their last rites gave the maharajah a perfect opportunity to visit the missionary schools at Cairo in search of a Christian wife. It was here that he met his wife-to-be, Bamba Muller, a petite German-Abyssinian student-cum-preacher. He married Bamba on the return journey from India after carrying out his mother's funeral rites. Jind Kaur was cremated on the banks of the Godavari and the new maharani was brought back to England, to Duleep Singh's recently acquired Suffolk estate at Elveden. The Maharani Bamba bore him six children.

The next twenty years were spent indulging in more lavish sport and debauchery, whilst writing volumes of disgruntled correspondence to the government became a habit. His constant letters and documents intensified as the years went on and as his finances became strained with bringing up a large family. He firstly demanded an increase to his pension to the amount stipulated in the treaty of annexation, and secondly for compensation for personal property lost at Fatehgarh in 1857 when the mutineers had burned down his residence together with all his belongings.

Login's vast correspondence with the establishment attempted to soften the blow, explaining the maharajah's former Sikh religion and its origins, and how harshly he had been treated financially, and backing his case for a trial for his financial settlement.

Fig. 9.12, *Sir John Login from "Sir John Login and Duleep Singh,"* Lady Login, 1890, Print, 16.5 × 22.9 × 5.1 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 9.13, *Lady Login from "Lady Login's Recollections: Court Life and Camp Life, 1820–1904,"* From a painting by Fisher (1850); E. Dalhousie Login, 1916, Print, 14 × 23 cm, Kapany Collection

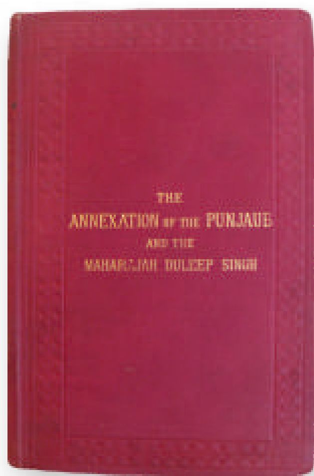
Fig. 9.14, *Maharani Jind Kaur,* George Richmond, 1863, Oil on canvas, 58 × 75.5 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 9.15, *Jawahar Singh,* William Carpenter, 1858, Watercolour on paper
32.4 × 21.6 cm, Kapany Collection

The estranged maharajah began spending more of his time in London, away from his unamused wife and six children, burying his head between the dusty old Punjab "blue books" in the British Library. There were many publications and news coverage reports of the maharajah's early years in Lahore, all of which he would never have seen before and which had been probably purposely been kept away from him as a young boy. Now that it was all there for him to see, he gazed at etchings of him in Lahore published in the *Illustrated London News* of when he had witnessed his uncle the Prime Minister Jawahar Singh (Fig. 9.15) being hacked to death, the disturbing event which had scarred him all those years ago amongst engravings of himself as a little boy signing treaties with the Governors-General of which he had little knowledge.

The maharajah commissioned the professional agitator Major Evans Bell in 1882 to write his complaint in a book to be distributed amongst the gentry. *The Annexation of the Punjab and Maharajah Duleep Singh* (Fig. 9.16) was a publication met with much bitterness and was seen as a direct attack on the government for suggesting that Dalhousie had purposely allowed the revolt at Multan to escalate in 1848 so that a full-scale annexation could take place. The book was followed by a gentler autobiography, titled *The Maharajah Duleep Singh and the Government* (Fig. 9.17), an intimate account with personal anecdotes of his life in Punjab and his conversion in Fatehgarh. He further gave a twelve-page history of the Sikh Gurus with extracts from the *Guru Granth Sahib*, showing he certainly was not unaware of his Sikh roots as some may suggest. The printed matter at his disposal

Fig. 9.16, *Cover of "The Annexation of the Punjaub and the Maharajah Duleep Singh,"* by Major Evans Bell, London, 1882
Printed book
17.8 × 23.5 × 1.9 cm
Kapany Collection



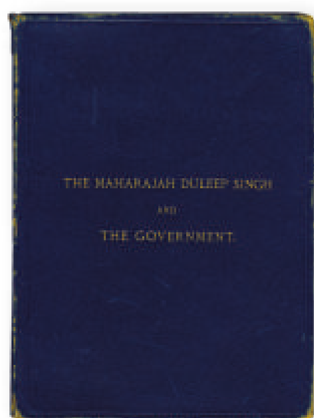


Fig. 9.17, *Cover of "The Maharajah Duleep Singh and the Government,"* Maharajah Duleep Singh, 1884,
Printed book,
17.8 × 23.5 × 1.9 cm
Kapany Collection

greatly influenced his mind and would certainly have swayed his opinion, if ever there was any, of what was required of him as the son of the mighty Ranjit Singh.

Around this time, the maharajah made contact with his cousin Thakur Singh Sandhawalia from the Punjab. Thakur Singh informed the maharajah that his private estates in the Punjab were illegally confiscated from him, along with state property, at the time of the annexation in 1849. These private estates had belonged to Ranjit Singh before he became maharajah in 1801, hence these were his personal possessions.

In 1884, Thakur Singh visited the maharajah in London with his two sons, accompanied by a Sikh priest from the Golden Temple, Giani Pratap Singh. As Thakur Singh would go through researched maps and Punjab private estate plans during the day, the evenings would be spent with the maharajah learning *Gurmukhi* and *bani* recitations from Pratap Singh. Now, in addition to his pension and his Fatehgarh compensation claim, there was this larger private estate claim for the government to resolve. Furthermore, the maharajah was announcing his desire to go to the sacred *gurdwara* at Hazur Sahib at Nanded to be initiated back into the Sikh faith. The relationship between the British government and the maharajah became intolerable and seemingly irreparable. There would be no compensation and certainly no "Great Trial," as Duleep Singh had imagined.[11] In defiance, the maharajah left with his family for India in 1886, but was arrested at the midpoint of his journey when the ship docked at the port of Aden. He and his young family were told that they could not proceed to India and that if they did very harsh steps would be taken against them. The maharajah composed himself, and in the coming days made the tough decision to send his family back to England so they at least could be spared as victims of his rebellion. He himself remained in Aden to make one last stand against the administration.

His first snipe at them was to renounce Christianity and rejoin the religion of his forefathers by taking *amrit da pahul.* The maharajah wrote to the viceroy, informing him of his intentions of abandoning the Christian faith. The authorities were powerless. The British Resident at Aden, Brigadier General Hogg, who had been informed by the Lieutenant Governor of India that "refusal would be misunderstood and might cause irritation as interference with freedom of religious conviction!," could do nothing. The maharajah called for another of his cousins from the Punjab to administer the baptism ceremony. His cousin Thakur Singh of Vagha,[12] the son of Maharani Jind Kaur's sister, arrived in Aden with two accomplices, Jowand Singh and Attar Singh. On the morning of 25 May 1886 the maharajah took *pahul* with a Sikh seaman who volunteered from a local steamship alongside his valet, Aroor Singh, to make up the five Sikhs required for the ceremony.[13]

By the summer, the maharajah fell ill in the sweltering Aden heat and the resident British doctor felt that he should be moved to a cooler climate. The government encouraged the maharajah to relocate, as it would have been catastrophic if he had died whilst under British detention. Europe was the obvious choice, as India was now out of the

question and he would dare not give the administration the satisfaction of returning to England as a failed man.

France became the desired destination, which was fitting as it had become the playground of revolutionaries. Leaving Aden on a French steamer, the maharajah had a secret agenda of his own. As news spread of his defiance and abandonment of all he had possessed, disgruntled factions in the Parisian heartland made their contact, each for their own gain. Again the maharajah was being used as a mere puppet. The Parisian underworld, the Fenian Brotherhood, a Russian agent, and even the Germans were keeping a steady eye on him. Irish revolutionaries would innocently recommend Colonel Charles Carroll-Tevis, an Irish-American, to become the maharajah's new secretary, not knowing that in reality he was a double agent initially recruited by London to infiltrate the Fenians in Paris. With the maharajah converging on the French capital, the British felt that Duleep Singh was the strategic priority for Carroll-Tevis to investigate. It was believed that the maharajah could potentially be more dangerous, especially as he was now in contact with one Katkov, a Russian agent who was to plan a meeting for him with Tzar Alexander III. From now on every meeting, conversation, and article of correspondence would be copied in the informer Carroll-Tevis's hand and sent to the Foreign Office at Whitehall, allowing the British to easily surveil the maharajah's activities.

At Paris he was joined by Ada Wethrill, his mistress from London, and announced his far-fetched plan: "Let Russia give me only 10,000 men to appear on the North West Frontier of India and the thing is done. For there are some 45,000 of the Punjabis, my former subjects in the British Army, at this moment who would come over to me at once, and when other British troops would be sent to oppose me then the whole of the Punjab would rise in their rear."[14] If there was any doubt whether the maharajah had become a Sikh, it was confirmed in a long letter to his childhood friend Tommy Scott from his Fatehgarh days and now an officer in the British Army, announcing, "I am a Sikh now, my dear boy, and should we meet on the battlefield I promise you the first shot."[15]

The maharajah set off with his party, consisting of Ada and his trusted Sikh valet, Aroor Singh, arriving in Moscow in the spring of 1887. He was housed for three months in a hotel awaiting further instructions, after which time he learned of the mysterious death of Katkov, who had been his only hope of an audience with the Tzar. The fatal blow was followed by news that his cousin Thakur Singh Sandhawalia was also killed in the Punjab and that his wife, Maharani Bamba, had died following an illness. The maharajah was a broken man and returned to Paris. His mission here had ended unsuccessfully.

Ada was expecting their second child, and the maharajah was suffering from ill health and financial difficulties. With Maharani Bamba's death it only seemed right that this relationship should be made legal by way of marriage. Carroll-Tevis wrote to the Foreign Office in Whitehall some months later that "Duleep Singh was married to this woman according to the forms of the Sikh religion some time ago…this marriage has been coming on some time,"[16] further confirming his faith.

On the morning of 13 July 1890 the maharajah suffered a stroke. Carroll-Tevis noted how the maharajah's young wife had become distant. She was young, pretty, and obviously desirous of more from life. Duleep Singh, however, was old, ill, and broke. It was clear that Ada was getting bored, tired, and rightly frustrated with the aging maharajah. His left side was paralysed and he could barely speak or pick up a pen. On 18 July 1890, conceding defeat, he asked his son Prince Victor to write to Queen Victoria for a royal pardon. The Queen still had affection for her favourite prince.

Duleep Singh remained at the Hotel de la Tremouille[17] in Paris with his infant daughters, Irene and Pauline, who were the only ones to

keep him company whilst Ada was gallivanting around Europe. On the night of 21 October 1893 the maharajah suffered an apoplectic fit and lingered unconscious until the following evening. He was found dead on Sunday, 22 October 1893.

According to his last will, it had been the maharajah's wish[18] to be buried at the place of his death, even though he knew the importance of a Sikh being cremated, as he was the one who had taken his mother's remains to Bombay for her last rites in 1864 after a year-long wait. However, his Christian family decided to bring his remains to his beloved Elveden and bury them beside the graves of his first wife and his son Prince Edward (Fig. 9.18). It was a Christian burial for a man who had very publicly become a Sikh once again.

One can argue about what were the driving forces behind the maharajah's becoming a Sikh once more. The awakening had certainly came from his reunion with his mother. As Lady Login had put it some years earlier in her memoirs, describing the immense work it took to transform the young Sikh infant into a Christian man, she referred to the effects of Maharani Jind Kaur around her son as "undoing much of the benefit of his English upbringing and tempting him to lapse into negligent native habit."

However, only weeks before his own death, he met his critically ill son, Prince Edward, who was on his deathbed in Folkestone. The Sikh maharajah placed a piece of paper in the palm of his son's hand that read, "The Lord is my Shepherd," opting in this moment for a verse from the Bible instead of the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Obviously, the Christianity within him was not as easily eradicated as he would want others to believe.

One can speculate on many factors relating to whether Maharajah Duleep Singh's becoming a Sikh was a genuine embracing of the Guru's teachings, or was done instead to content himself for reverting to the faith of his forefathers, or was done to please his Punjabi subjects, or perhaps even as an act of defiance against his colonial masters and the imperial values which they had spent so many years carefully engraining in him. No doubt he would have known that his "rebellion" would gain momentum if he became a Sikh. It would have pleased the Indian masses, who would have seen this as the final piece of the jigsaw, with the prodigal son returning as a Sikh to his homeland as a fairytale ending.

Most likely all of these forces influenced Duleep Singh's decision to return to his Sikh faith. Only Duleep Singh knew what his reasons were for returning to Sikhism, but one thing is for sure: that the influence of his Christian upbringing clearly stayed with him until the end of his life.

Fig. 9.18, Grave of Maharajah Duleep Singh at Elveden Estate in Suffolk, England

Endnotes

[1] Emily Eden, *Up the Country: Letter Written to Her Sister* (London, 1866, 2 vols.).

[2] William Osborne published *Court and Camp of Runjeet Sing* (Richard Bentley, 1840).

[3] August Theodor Schoefft (1809–88) was born in Pest in 1809. He went to India, landing in Bombay, in 1838. He is known to have reached Madras in September 1839 and from there proceeded to Lahore, where he is best known for the marvellous paintings of the Court of Lahore.

[4] The Sandhawalia family were the cousins of the royal family. They were the descendants of Maharajah Ranjit Singh's grandfather's (Naudh Singh) brother Sardar Chanda Singh.

[5] J. D. Cunningham, *The History of the Sikhs—From the Origin of the Nation to the Battle of the Sutlej* (1849).

[6] Memo by Sir John Login, dated 14 February 1850, published in *Sir John Login and Duleep Singh* 232.

[7] Memo by Sir John Login, dated 14 February 1850 (Lady Login, *Sir John Login and Duleep Singh*, W. H. Allen, 1890, 232).

[8] Login, *Sir John Login and Duleep Singh* 278.

[9] Login, *Sir John Login and Duleep Singh* 450.

[10] Login, *Lady Login's Recollection* (London, 1916) 211.

[11] *The Lahore Tribune*, 1 May 1887.

[12] Not to be confused with Thakur Singh Sandhawalia.

[13] Christy Campbell, *The Maharajah's Box* (London, 1997).

[14] Singh, *Maharajah Duleep Singh's Correspondence* 404.

[15] Letters from Duleep Singh to Tommy Scott, courtesy of P. Ashpitel.

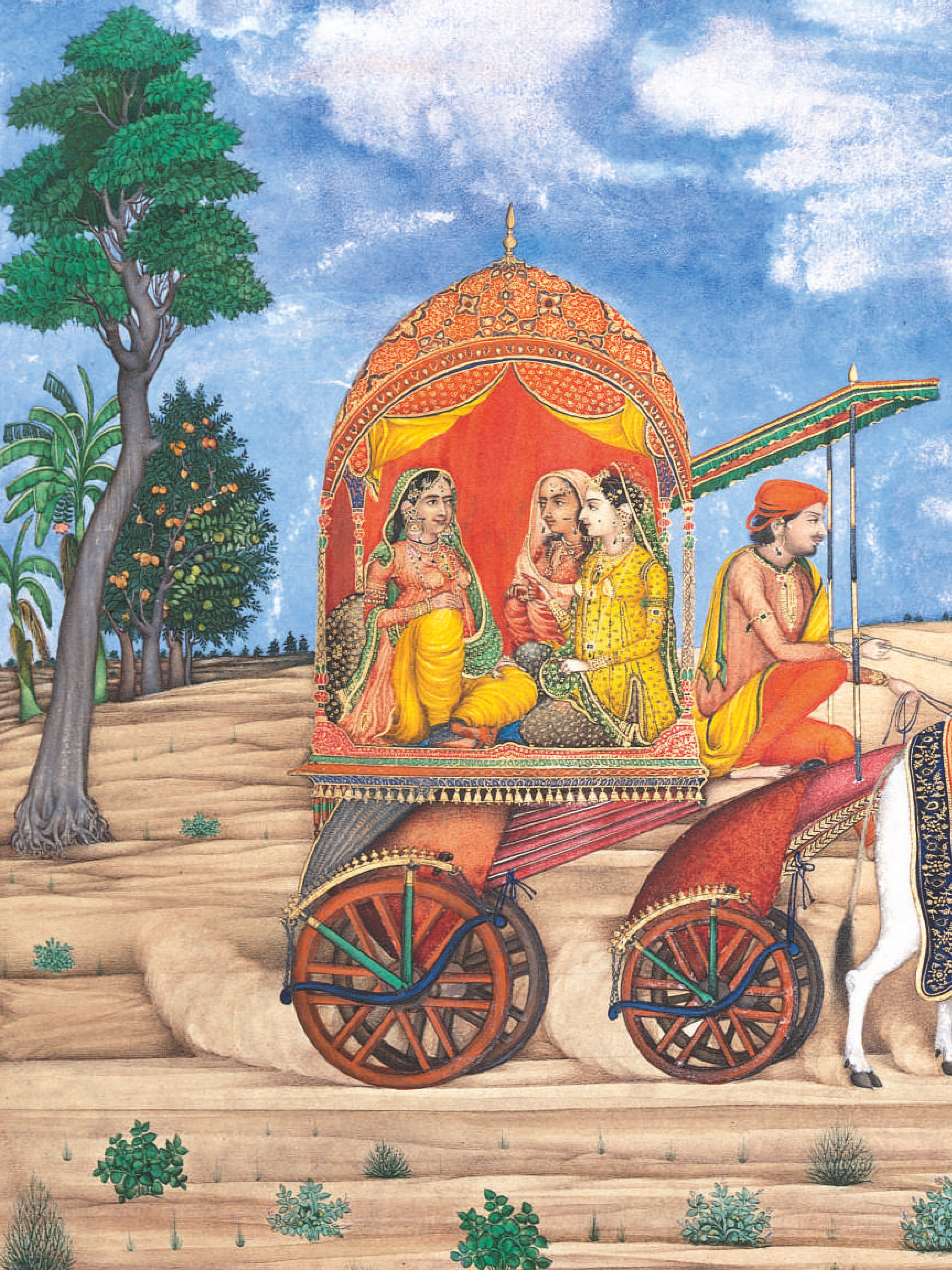
[16] PRO, *OC to Foreign Office*, dated 2 May 1889, f. 26/3.

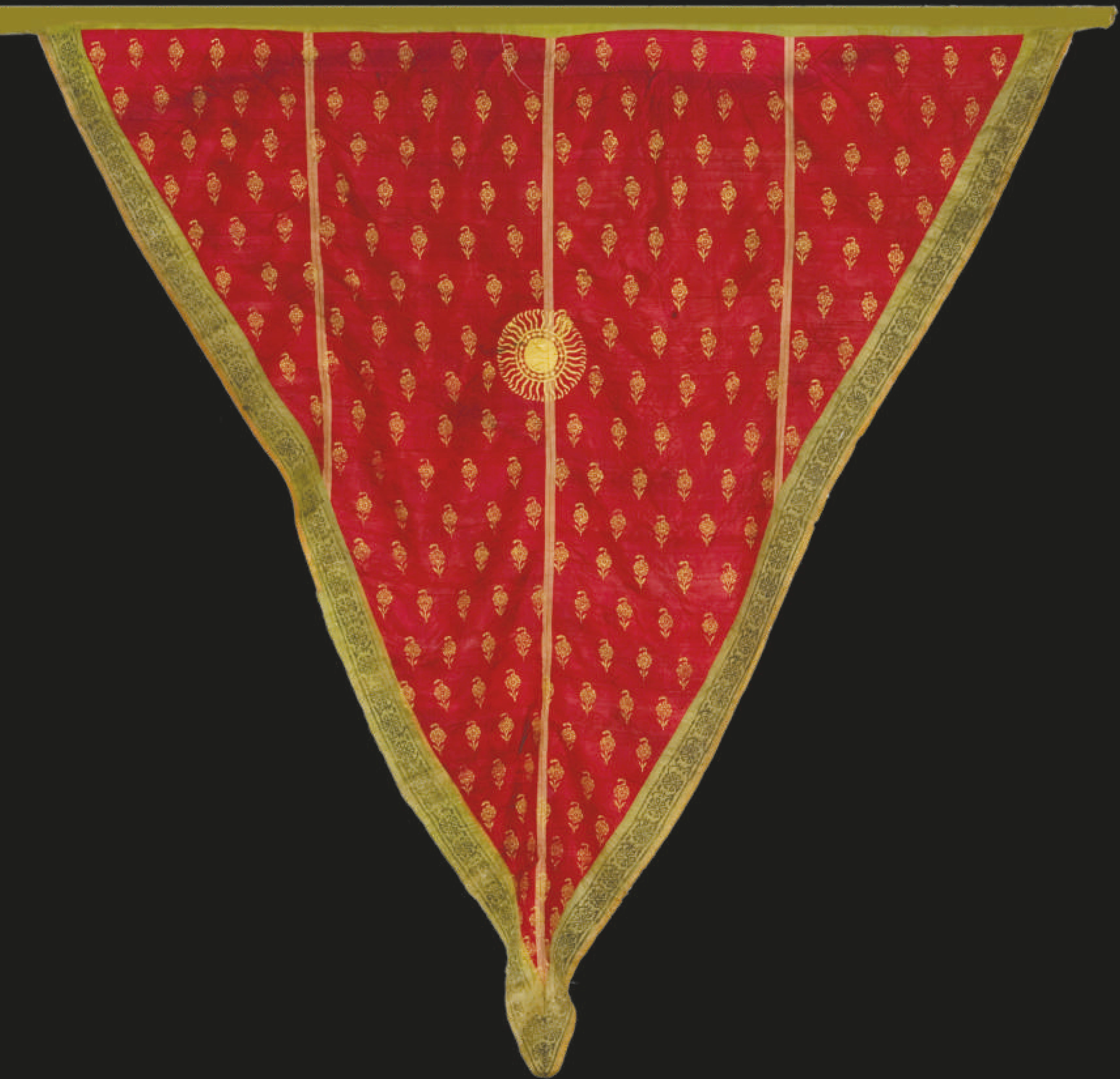
[17] The hotel is located at rue de la Tremouille.

[18] According to the maharajah's last will, he stated, "I wish to be buried wherever I may die."

Fig. 9.19,
Gulab Singh riding an elephant, Kishan Singh or Kapur Singh, Ca. 1874, Watercolors and gold on paper, 47 × 41 cm, Kapany Collection

Overleaf: Fig. 9.20,
Ladies riding a cart, Kishan Singh or Kapur Singh, Ca. 1874, Watercolors and gold on paper, 47 × 41 cm, Kapany Collection





10

The Sikh Martial tradition

Navtej Sarna

When all has been tried, yet
Justice is not in sight,
It is then right to pick up the sword,
It is then right to fight.

These evocative lines are part of the *Zafarnama*, Guru Gobind Singh's epistle of victory to Aurangzeb, the last of the great Mughal emperors of India, sometime in 1705. By that time, the Sikhs had already been steeped in the philosophy of fearless defiance and bearing of arms for the righteous cause; the fledgling Sikh faith had responded to the need of the hour. Guru Nanak's simple yet profound message, built upon by his successors, formed the basis of the Sikh way of life: God was one and supreme, fearless, all-pervading, and self-existent. All men were equal; discrimination on the basis of caste and creed, as well as the suppression of women, was to be denounced; the oppression and tyranny of the ruling classes was to be resisted; freedom of conscience was to be protected. This message, expressed in verses of spiritual depth and literary beauty, pointed to a way of life free of ritualism and superstition. It was a protest against suffocating priesthood as well as against the discriminating local governors of the Mughal emperors.

It was only a matter of time until the Sikhs became targets of imperial anger. Emperor Jahangir ordered the arrest of the fifth Sikh Guru, Arjan Dev, who had compiled the holy book of the Sikhs and overseen the construction of the Golden Temple in Amritsar. The Guru was subjected to cruel torture in Lahore and ultimately achieved martyrdom when he drowned in the river Ravi. But the martyred Guru had a premonition of what was to come. Before he left for Lahore, he had told his eleven-year-old son, Hargobind: "Real hard times are about to follow. You shall wield weapons and keep the struggle going till tyrannous rule is finished." Arjan Dev's pacific martyrdom revealed the steel of the soul and showed that a fearless moral courage could defeat oppression without the use of force.

Left: Fig. 10.1, *Battle standard*
Punjab region, Ca. 1820–1840
Silk with block-printed gilded motifs,
340.4 × 256.5 cm (with pole)
Asian Art Museum of San Francisco,
Gift of the Kapany Collection,
1998.109.a-.c

Pacific martyrdom was not enough to wake the comatose conscience of the oppressor. So the sixth Sikh Guru, Hargobind, introduced the martial spirit into the pacific faith. The Sikhs would henceforth take up arms, but only in self-defence and for the righteous cause. He wore two swords around his waist: the sword of spirituality (*peeri*) and the sword of temporal power (*meeri*). The *meeri* would be unsheathed only for the protection of the meek and redress of injustice, while the *peeri* would slay the demons of the mind and fight for moral discipline.

Hargobind's fledgling army clashed with the Mughals on several occasions and emerged victorious, showing that the Mughal writ could be challenged successfully. A new spirit of defiance and self-pride had entered the consciousness of the Sikhs, and this was celebrated by the singing of heroic ballads, accompanied by the blood-stirring strains of the *sarangi* at the *Akal Takht*, the new temporal seat of the faith built right across from the Golden Temple, which had already become the spiritual centre.

Physical courage, however, did not mean any weakening of the moral fibre. Another major martyrdom was soon to follow. The ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur, was beheaded by Emperor Aurangzeb when he championed the cause of religious freedom on behalf of the pundits of Kashmir. The spirit had notched up another victory against the despot. In the years that followed, this moral steel would be infused into the prepared soul of an entire community by the sacrament of the double-edged dagger.

When Gobind, the nine-year-old son of Tegh Bahadur, held his father's severed head in his hands, he became only too aware of his unique heritage: fearless martyrdom to defend the essential rights to life and belief. He was also convinced that injustice and cruelty had to be given an appropriate response. Political emancipation was necessary to pave the path to spiritual salvation and socioeconomic reconstruction. He turned Anandpur, his seat in the Siwalik foothills, into the birthplace of a new nation. Here his followers participated in martial exercises, horse riding, musket shooting, archery, and swordsmanship. A huge war drum, the *Ranjit Nagara*, was installed and its boom would announce a hunt or a meal ready in the communal kitchen. At the same time the Guru, with his amazing talents, concentrated on literary and spiritual creation. Learning several languages, he studied the ancient texts, and his poetic genius resulted in an efflorescence of highly accomplished works. One of the abiding elements of his poetry and philosophy was the metaphor of the sword, the symbol of the Divine Creator and of His glory, power, and justice. The sword, or *kirpan,* was not a weapon of aggression but of righteous action to preserve truth and virtue; in truth, it was more a shield than a sword. This was the sacrament of steel that would weld a new and fearless nation from a passive and demoralized mass. Even today the Sikh prayer, or *ardas*, begins with an invocation to *Bhagauti*, or the Divine Sword, the source and sustainer of all creation.

The spiritual regeneration that the Guru envisaged came to its apogee in 1699 at the festival of Baisakhi in Anandpur. In an unexpected action, the Guru appeared before the congregation of about eighty thousand people and, drawing his sword, asked if anyone would sacrifice his head for the faith. The five persons who came forward one by one would forever be known as the five beloved ones. They were the first to be baptised by the Guru. The *amrit*, or ambrosia, with which they were baptised was made by the Guru by pouring clean water into an iron bowl along with some sugar and then stirring it with a double-edged dagger, or *khanda*, while reciting sacred verses. The *khanda* is an ancient two-edged sword used not only for thrusting but also as a hacking weapon. It has a thin, flat, and broad steel blade with the blade reinforced to some length by narrow fretted strips of steel. The *khanda* has a basket hilt and finger guard as well as a long pommel which could be gripped by the left hand for a

Fig. 10.2, *Helmet with chain mail neckguard, Helmet of iron overlaid with gold; mail neckguard of iron and brass,* Lahore, Punjab, Ca. 1820–1840, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.69

powerful two-handed stroke. With the advent of horse cavalry, the *kirpan*, with its curved metal blade, became the primary sword and a weapon of attack while the *khanda* remained a weapon of last resort. When a warrior lost his horse he would pull out the *khanda* and fight to the end, swinging the blade with both hands.

The baptism with the *amrit* was a rebirth of the five men into a new family, a casteless brotherhood of inspired belief, the *Khalsa* or the pure ones. It was the end of the debilitating boundaries of their caste, their creed, and their rituals. They would henceforth carry the surname Singh, or lion, for they had conquered the fear of death and would also carry the five emblems of the brotherhood—the five Ks of Sikhism: *kesh*, or unshorn hair and beard; a *kanga*, or comb to keep the hair tidy; *kara*, a steel bracelet; *kachh*, short breeches in keeping with the demands of soldiering; and *kirpan*, a sword. Thus the sword acquired an even deeper significance, becoming not just an inspiration or an emblem of the Divine Power but also an article of faith. The *Khalsa* would emerge as an inspired community of saint-soldiers, who carried a sword for righteous action in one hand and a rosary in the other; the martial element was tempered by the strong spiritual context (Taylor and Pontsioen 2014, pp. 43–49).

The *Khalsa* soldiers fought many battles against heavy odds during Guru Gobind Singh's lifetime, most notably the battles at Anandpur and Chamkaur. In the latter battle the Guru, his two elder sons, and forty followers were besieged in a mud fortress by a huge Mughal force. The Sikhs came out in batches of five to meet the enormous army, and each man fought his way in close hand-to-hand combat to a brave death, including the two sons of the Guru.

In a later conversation with Emperor Bahadur Shah, whom Guru Gobind Singh had helped in the battle of succession for the Mughal throne, the emperor is said to have presented the Guru with a ceremonial robe and asked him to show some miracle. The Guru pulled out his sword and said: "This is my miracle. With its help I got you the throne. If I wish, I can also decapitate you with it. But there is a difference between my *kirpan* [sword] and your *talwar* [sword]. Behind your *talwar* lurks anger, behind my *kirpan* only compassion. Yours only doles out death, mine rejuvenates life. Yours deprives people of their dignity, while mine saves their honour."

The spirit of martyrdom, courage, and unbound valour which had come into its full flower by the time of the passing of Guru Gobind Singh would be further strengthened by the periods of adversity and conflict that awaited the Sikhs. Banda Bahadur and his small band of warriors were to demonstrate this spirit amply in the immediate aftermath of the Guru's passing. This ascetic-turned-general was sent by the Guru, even as he was himself fatally wounded by assassins, back north to fight oppression and injustice with five arrows from his own quiver, a *nagara* (or war drum), and a flag at the head of twenty-five devoted Sikhs. He set about shaking the foundations of the Mughal empire in the Punjab. Yet Banda's campaign against the Mughals was not just a narrow-minded battle to exact revenge against Wazir Khan of Sirhind for bricking alive the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh. Rather, it was a campaign for justice against oppression, and for that reason he got support not only from the local Sikhs but even from Hindus and Muslims who saw him as a saviour against the cruel rule of local governors, *nawabs,* and *faujdars*. With the Emperor Bahadur Shah busy in the Deccan and then in countering insurgencies in Rajasthan, Banda Bahadur quickly and systematically chose town after town in Punjab and soon became ruler of the huge tract between the rivers Jhelum and the Jumna. He established a new capital at Mukhlispur with an impregnable fort called Lohgarh. By the time he was finally defeated, paraded in a cage on an elephant in Delhi, subjected to unimaginable torture, and finally torn limb from limb in Mehrauli, Banda Bahadur had laid the foundations of a Sikh state.

Fig. 10.3, *Sword*
Inscribed gold-damascened, Punjab, Ca. 1850, Kapany Collection

Fig. 10.4, *Quoit*
Steel with gold and silver inlay, Sialkot, Ca. 1850, 28.6 cm diameter, Kapany Collection

Fig. 10.5, *Kirpan*
Steel with gold inlay and ivory handle, Punjab, Ca. 1850, Kapany Collection

Fig. 10.6, *Shield*
Steel with gold leaf, Ca. 1835,
Punjab, 42 cm diameter,
Kapany Collection

Yet many years of battle still lay ahead as an increasingly desperate Mughal emperor sought to vanquish the Sikhs. Simultaneously, the marauding armies from Persia and Afghanistan swept through the Khyber Pass and onto the plains of Punjab. Hardened Sikh guerrilla horsemen picked on the departing armies of first Nadir Shah in 1738 and then the Afghan Ahmed Shah Abdalli, who raided India nine times between 1748 and 1767. Avoiding pitched battles, the Sikhs harried and demoralized the loot-laden armies, often relieving them of their booty and freeing the abducted women. Sikh bravery and tactics drew the praise of various contemporary observers. Prominent among these historians is Qazi Nur Mohammed, author of the *Jang Namah* ("Battle Chronicles"), who said: "If you cherish the desire to learn the art of war, face them on the battlefield. When they hold the mighty sword, they gallop from Hind to Sind. Nobody, however strong and wealthy, dare oppose them. If their swords strike a coat of mail, the coat itself becomes the enemy's shroud. Each one of them is built like a rock. In grandeur, each one of them excels fifty men." When Nadir Shah's army was relieved of much of his loot by the Sikh horsemen, he is said to have predicted that the day was not far when these rebels would take possession of the country. Under generals like Kapur Singh and Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, the Sikhs became excellent swordsmen, bowmen, and matchlock men, adeptly handling muskets while on horseback. They also adapted the quoit, or *chakkar*, as part of their gear. This knife-edged steel ring could be spun on a finger and released as a deadly missile toward the oncoming enemy. In later years, the quoit became largely ceremonial, being worn in varying diameters on the turbans of the *Akalis*.

The Sikh bands gradually evolved into twelve *misls*, or confederacies. The forces became strong enough to occupy Lahore and even make successful forays into Delhi's Red Fort. These competing and factious *misls* were finally consolidated by the young chief of the Sukerchekia *misl*, Ranjit Singh. Entering Lahore in 1799, he began to set up a huge empire which was to rule supreme for the next forty years. By fashioning a highly trained and disciplined *Khalsa* army, he ruled from the Khyber to the borders of Tibet, holding British ambition at bay on the Sutlej River by signing a treaty with them in 1809. Ranjit Singh was determined to get himself a disciplined infantry, and he achieved this with the help of Napoleonic generals, as well as European mercenary officers: Allard and Ventura, Court and Avitable. These generals found excellent fighting men as their material whom they drilled into discipline and training. The *Khalsa* army, at the height of its glory, was an interesting combination of the traditional and the modern. With a total strength of about 150,000, it was composed of some 54,000 infantrymen, 6,000 regular cavalry, and 11,000 artillerymen. Along with these were the irregular cavalry, the favoured *ghorcharhas,* expert riders and swordsmen, even if not amenable to traditional discipline, who formed the cutting edge in any campaign. Added to these were the *Akalis*, or immortals (also known as *nihangs*), dressed in blue and wearing tall *bunga* turbans, often festooned with quoits of varying diameters. After Ranjit Singh's death, his empire quickly disintegrated, weakened by internecine rivalry and intrigue. But the end did not come before two Anglo-Sikh wars had been fought, in 1846 and 1849. Betrayed again and again by their own treacherous generals, the Sikh soldiers fought valiantly, inflicting heavy losses on the British, particularly in the famous battle at Chillianwala.

After the annexation of Punjab in 1849, the British began to recruit Sikhs into newly formed regiments, making it essential that they wear their beards and hair unshorn in accordance with their faith and also take the *pahul*, or baptism. Though they were fighting now for the British Raj and the weapons of battle had changed, the Sikhs displayed their legendary valour and courage in battle after battle—in quelling the Boxer Uprising in China, in the defence of Chitral in 1895, and in

Fig. 10.7, *"Akalees," "from Portraits of the Princes and People of India,"* Emily Eden, 1844, Chromolithograph, hand painted on paper with printed commentary text on the reverse, 55.9 × 44.4 cm,
Asian Art Museum of San Francisco,Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.63.5

the famed Battle of Saragarhi in 1897. They formed the mainstay of the Indian armies that fought for the British in the First World War. In the miserable cold trenches in Flanders and Ypres, in the deserts of Mesopotamia, in Gallipoli, and on a dozen other battlefields, the flower of Punjab's youth sacrificed itself fighting an enemy that was not their enemy for a master who was suppressing them at home. In the Second World War again, 300,000 Sikhs served in the army, earning glory in the jungles of Burma, in Cyprus, Libya, Japan, and so on, winning as many as five Victoria Crosses. Even as they fought for the British in the world wars, the Sikhs had joined the battle for independence at home, led by men such as the valiant revolutionaries Kartar Singh Sarabha and Bhagat Singh. When the Indian National Army was raised by Subash Chandra Bose to fight British rule, sixty percent of its recruits were Sikhs.

The martial spirit of the Sikhs continued to fire up Indian armies even when independence had been achieved. Whether it was the first defence of Kashmir in 1948, or the liberation of Goa in 1961, or indeed the wars against China (1962) or Pakistan (1965 and 1971), Sikh soldiers have led from the front, and stories of Sikh soldiers going into battle with the war cry "*Bole so Nihal*" on their lips are legend. Truly they have been blessed with the inspiration contained in Guru Gobind Singh's words:

ਦੇਹ ਸਿਵਾ ਬਰੁ ਮੋਹਿ ਇਹੈ ਸੁਭ ਕਰਮਨ ਤੇ ਕਬਹੂੰ ਨ ਟਰੋਂ ॥
ਨ ਡਰੋਂ ਅਰਿ ਸੋ ਜਬ ਜਾਇ ਲਰੋਂ ਨਿਸਚੈ ਕਰਿ ਅਪੁਨੀ ਜੀਤ ਕਰੋਂ ॥
ਅਰੁ ਸਿਖ ਹੋਂ ਆਪਨੇ ਹੀ ਮਨ ਕੌ ਇਹ ਲਾਲਚ ਹਉ ਗੁਨ ਤਉ ਉਚਰੋਂ ॥
ਜਬ ਆਵ ਕੀ ਅਉਧ ਨਿਦਾਨ ਬਨੈ ਅਤਿ ਹੀ ਰਨ ਮੈ ਤਬ ਜੂਝ ਮਰੋਂ

O Lord grant me this boon, that I may
never flinch from a righteous act.
That I may fearlessly fight life's
combat and claim determined victory,
Thy glory be ingrained in my mind,
my highest greed be to sing thy praise,
And when it is time to die, may I die
fighting in the battlefield.

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11

The *Nanakshahi* — The Divine Sikh Coinage

Jyoti M. Rai

When you hold a *Nanakshahi* rupee in your hand, you know you are holding onto a valuable and authentic piece of Sikh heritage. Many vital segments of Sikh history can only be traced through their coinage. The first silver rupees were minted in the early 18th century for a specific purpose. That was a time of great upheaval and bloodshed for the Sikhs, when the *Nanakshahis* (money that comes from or belongs to Guru Nanak) carried a message of hope to inspire all those who valiantly fought for their faith and lives. Moreover, the striking of a Sikh coin in an empire ruled by Mughals sent a defiant message to the emperor; even though thousands of Sikhs had lost their lives by refusing to convert to Islam, they remained as committed as ever and had not wavered in their faith. The unique inscription of divinity and valor on these coins set them apart from any other currency of the time. They bring home to us the struggle and sacrifices endured by the Gurus, by Baba Banda Bahadur, and later on by the *misls* and Maharajah Ranjit Singh, so that Sikhism could be practiced without persecution.

Unfortunately, not many *Nanakshahis* survive today. During Banda Bahadur's time (1708–1716) it was considered treasonable to possess these coins; those caught were put to death by the mughals. Nearly a century and a half later, after the British East India Company annexed the Punjab in 1849, the *Nanakshahis* of the Sikhs met with an ignoble end. The British had them collected by the cartloads from all over Punjab, then transported by steamer to Bombay where they were melted down and turned into Company currency. Luckily, many *Nanakshahis* survived this horrible fate and were preserved through the years in museums or in private collections. We are fortunate enough to have in the Kapany Collection a selection not only of a large number of silver rupees and copper *paisas* from different Sikh mints but also of coins from different periods of Sikh rule. They tell their own story, as coins tend to; some of them are in what we call in numismatic terms "extra fine condition," but others, especially the early *misl* period coins, show a lot of wear and tear and have weak strikes. Looking at them, one can see they have been

Left: Fig. 11.30
Copper paisas
Amritsar Mint
19th century
Kapany Collection
Copper two-paisa coin from
Jyoti M. Rai Collection

through tumultuous times and witnessed a lot of warfare.

The tradition worldwide for centuries was that when a new monarch ascended the throne, he would immediately issue new coinage bearing his name, title, or effigy. Considered an important part of governance, this was done to show his subjects, enemies, and neighbours that there was a new ruler. Sikh coins were historically unique as they turned away from the norm of deifying their rulers by instead glorifying their Gurus and faith. This practice was started by Baba Banda Bahadur when he minted the first Sikh coin in 1710, most likely in Lohgarh. It is important to note another exclusive feature of *Nanakshahi* coinage; all the coins of the Sikhs period were truly multicultural, a remarkable quality which has not been replicated anywhere in numismatic history. While the script was in Persian, the date was taken from the Hindu Vikrama Samvat calendar (V.S. 57=A.D. 1) and the inscription on the coin itself was a tribute to the Sikh Gurus. This embodied the very essence of Sikhism itself: that everyone was considered equal, no matter what his or her beliefs or religion. The Sikhs firmly believed that victory and power could not be gained without the support, blessings, and guidance from the True Lord. The verse on the obverse of each of these coins reflects the sentiments and deep regard that they had for their Gurus:

Sikka Zad Bar Har Do Alam Fazal Sachcha
Sahib Ast Fath-i-Gur Gobind Singh
Shah-I-Shahan Tegh-i-Nanak Wahib Ast

Coin struck in both the worlds
[spiritual and secular]
by the grace of the true Lord,
Nanak, the provider of the
sword [power] by which
Guru Gobind Singh,
King of Kings,
is victorious

The Sikh clans, or *misls*, were leaderless after Banda's death, but they banded together to achieve a common goal: annexing as many cities as they could in the Punjab from the Moghuls and Afghans. There were in all twelve *misls,* each with its own cavalry, infantry units, and complete control over their territories. During war they pooled their resources to fight a common enemy, but during peace they often battled each other over territorial rights and power. However, when victorious after taking control of Lahore in 1765, they straightaway struck their coins as a mark of their sovereignty. We have a good example of the first Misl coin minted at Lahore in V.S. 1822–A.D. 1765 (Fig. 11.1). After Lahore, there was no stopping the Sikhs. They took control of Multan in 1772 and then the sacred city of Amritsar in 1775. Triumphant, they immediately issued coins in each of these cities to celebrate their success and continued to keep the mints busy during their period of occupation. Coinage from this period is attributed to the Bhangi and Kanahiya *misls,* who decided to use a couplet taken from the seal of Guru Gobind Singh. The tenth and last Guru had used this seal on *hukamnamas* and *farmans,* edicts and orders. The legend on the obverse was inscribed in Persian:

Deg Teg O Fateh Nusrat Be-dirang
Yaft Az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh

Abundance, the sword, victory, and
help without delay
Guru Gobind Singh obtained
from Nanak

The Kapany Collection has three varieties of coins, which originate from the Amritsar Mint. A silver rupee has a Vikrama Samvat date of V.S. 1841–A.D. 1784 (Fig. 11.2) on the reverse but bears the Guru Nanak Era (G.N.E.) date on the obverse. Often the G.N.E. date would appear on certain types of *Nanakshahis*, but often only two digits were seen, the last one being off the flan, as this one is. Therefore, we see only "31," when the true G.N.E. date was 315. The formula to arrive at this date is taken from the year of

Fig. 11.1 Obv. & Rev.
First misl Nanakshahi
Lahore Mint
A.D. 1765
Jyoti M. Rai Collection

Left: Fig. 11.2. Obv. & Rev.
Guru Nanak era rupee with "31"
Amritsar Mint
A.D. 1784
Kapany Collection

Right: Fig. 11.4. Obv. & Rev.
Katar or dagger
Amritsar Mint
A.D. 1797
Kapany Collection

Fig. 11.3. Rev.
Misl period coin showing spongy leaf
Amritsar Mint, A.D. 1791,
Kapany Collection

Fig. 11.5 Rev.
A bearded face,
Amritsar Mint, A.D. 1808,
Jyoti Rai Collection

Fig. 11.6 Obv.
A punja or hand symbolising power,
Amritsar Mint, A.D. 1802,
Kapany Collection

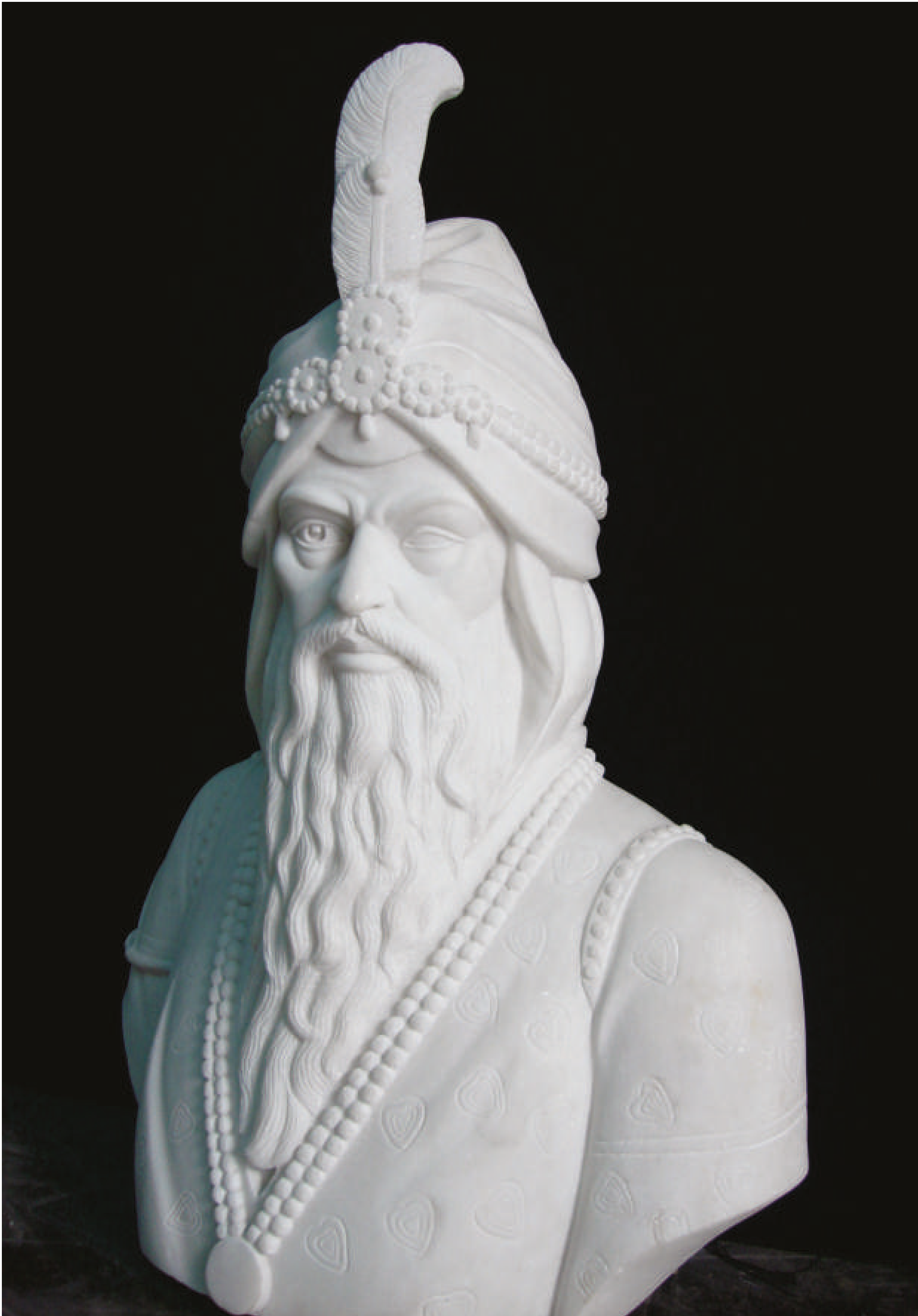

Fig. 11.7, *Maharajah Ranjit Singh,* Jaipur, India, 2009, Marble, 53 × 91 × 33 cm, Kapany Collection

Guru Nanak's birth, V.S. 1526, plus 315, to arrive at V.S. 1841. These coins are fairly rare yet they show that the Sikhs were keen to have their own calendar.

The V.S. 1848–A.D. 1791 (Fig. 11.3) has a leaf on the reverse which is referred to as a "spongy" leaf to differentiate it from other varieties. Another is V.S. 1854–A.D. 1797 (Fig. 11.4) with a dagger on the reverse. It is interesting to note here that most rupees existing from this particular series were struck with a weak reverse die. This is due to a technicality in striking of the coin and the worn dies not being replaced promptly. A rupee of V.S. 1865–A.D. 1808 (Fig. 11.5) has what looks like a bearded face on the reverse.

A hand or *punja* that appears on the obverse of V.S. 1859–A.D. 1802 (Fig. 11.6) is placed just between Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. A hand has always been a symbol of considerable significance in Sikhism. The Punja Sahib Gurdwara at Hasan Abdal, Wah, was built on the spot where Guru Nanak with his bare hand stopped a large rock from crashing down, leaving his hand impression on it. Centuries later, it still can be seen, as clear as on the day it was made. Maharajah Ranjit Singh sometimes used his hand (dipped in saffron) as a seal to validate his *farmans.* There could be a few reasons for why this image appeared at this date. Maharajah Ranjit Singh had taken over Lahore in 1799 and was proclaimed maharajah of Punjab in 1801; he had not taken Amritsar as yet but it was next on his agenda. As they slowly lost control of their territories, the Bhangis, occupying only Amritsar now, became apprehensive and may have put this mark on coins to show that they were still in power or that they had the blessings of the Gurus.

The city of Amritsar was revered by the Sikhs after Guru Arjun Dev started building the *Darbar Sahib*, or Golden Temple, complex in Amritsar in 1589. It is here that thousands of worshipers come to pay homage at the *Harmandir Sahib* and the *Akal Takht*, the seats of spiritual and temporal power for the Sikhs. The *Adi Granth* and the first *Guru Granth Sahib*, or the Sikh Holy Book, were installed here, giving Amritsar the distinction of being the most hallowed city in Punjab. Knowing with what reverence the Sikhs held the Golden Temple, Muslim invaders like Ahmed Shah Abdali, who attacked Amritsar in 1762 and 1763, did their best to destroy and defile the temple's sanctity. Time and again the various *misls* banded together to free and rebuild the *Darbar Sahib* to its former glory. Since the first *Nanakshahi* minted from Amritsar in 1775 until the last in 1849, the following verse was engraved on the reverse:

Sri Ambratsarjio zarb [V.S. year]
Maimanat Julus Bakht Akal Takht

Struck at revered [city of] Amritsar
During the tranquil reign
of the Akal Takht

Born in Gujranwala in 1780, Ranjit Singh became the leader of the Sukerchakia *misl* upon the death of his father; he was nine years old. These were unstable times in the Punjab; survival was only for the fittest. Taught the art of warfare from experts from a very young age, Ranjit Singh excelled in martial arts, riding, wrestling, and hunting, but his formal education was neglected. Aided by his very capable and wily mother-in-law, Sada Kaur of the Kanhayia *misl*, he seized Lahore in 1799. He then set about subduing the other *misls* and consolidating his position in the Punjab. In 1801, he accepted the saffron *tilak*, or mark on his forehead, as he was anointed the Sikh *Sarkar* of the Punjab. Though he was addressed as "Maharajah" by foreigners, he preferred to be addressed simply as *Sarkar* by his people and his ministers, as well as at the Lahore Durbar (Fig. 11.7). All through his life he believed he was but a servant of the Gurus. He put his name on nothing—no town, no building, no fort or palace; he felt very strongly that everything belonged to the Divine.[1]

Maharajah Ranjit Singh, being a fine administrator, knew the importance of a good

Fig. 11.12 Rev.
A dagger
Amritsar Mint
A.D. 1837
Kapany Collection

Fig. 11.8 Rev.
Stylised sunburst flower
Amritsar Mint
A.D. 1809
Kapany Collection

Fig. 11.13 Obv.
A Nanakshahi
Lahore Mint
A.D. 1816
Kapany Collection

Fig. 11.9 Rev.
Persian numerical "4"
Amritsar Mint
A.D. 1816
Kapany Collection

Fig. 11.14 Rev.
Morashahi rupee
Amritsar Mint
A.D. 1805
Kapany Collection

Fig. 11.10 Obv.
A bearded face
Amritsar Mint
A.D. 1821
Kapany Collection

Fig. 11.15 Rev.
Morashahi rupee
Amritsar Mint
A.D. 1805
Kapany Collection

Fig. 11.11 Rev.
Chand-Sitara, or moon and stars symbol
Amritsar Mint
A.D. 1822, Kapany Collection

monetary system. Revenues, taxes, soldiers' salaries, barter, and trade had to be collected or paid in the coin of the reigning monarch. Now, for the first time, the Sikhs had a complete and comprehensive currency system consisting of silver rupees and copper *paisas* of various denominations. The Amritsar Mint was more prolific than any other Sikh mint; producing coins in huge quantities to meet demand, the annual input from here was over a million rupees. Between 1830 and 1840, during Maharajah Ranjit Singh's reign, it was recorded that one *Nanakshahi* rupee could buy 37.5 kg of wheat, 7.7 kg of rice, or 3.7 kg of cotton, while two rupees bought you a sheep, 40 rupees to 50 rupees a cow, and 100 rupees a milk buffalo.[2] The rupee, weighing 10.7 to 11.1 grams, contained the highest purity of silver and was much in demand for its intrinsic value, as opposed to the other local currencies of the time produced by the Mughals, the Durranis, and the East India Company. Hand struck, the *Nanakshahis* from the Maharajah Ranjit Singh period reflect the excellent taste and elegance of the Lahore Durbar. Symbols, including fish, the moon and stars, buds and flowers, tiny faces, chevrons, and beaded borders, embellish and adorn these coins. The leaf, a symbol of fertility, is seen on the reverse of most Sikh coinage, letting the common, uneducated person identify it as being a coin of the Sikh realm.

The Kapany Collection contains numerous coins from the times of Maharajah Ranjit Singh that are from the Amritsar Mint. Some of these have a special mark, which stands out from among the backdrop of floral decorations. On the reverse of a rupee dated to V.S. 1866–A.D. 1809 (Fig. 11.8) we see a stylised sunburst flower, while on a rupee dated to V.S. 1873–A.D. 1816 (Fig. 11.9) there is a numeral 4 on the reverse. A bearded face can be seen on the reverse of a rupee dated to V.S. 1878–A.D. 1821 (Fig. 11.10), while on one from V.S. 1879–A.D. 1822 (Fig. 11.11) the reverse has the popular Islamic *chand-sitara*, "moon and stars" symbol. These two latter marks appear on several other coins with different dates. A dagger appears on the reverse of the coin dated to V.S. 1885/94 (Fig. 11.12), though the actual date here is the latter, which is A.D. [18]37. In this year the formidable General Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa, who had won so many battles for the Sikhs, lost his life in the Battle of Jamrud. Fixed dates like V.S. 1885 appear on a certain series of coins and have to do with keeping the rate of exchange under control. The *Nanakshahi* rupees from the city of Lahore, the capital of the Sikh Empire, are patterned and decorated in a way totally different from the rupees of the Amritsar Mint. An example from this mint can be seen in the rupee dated to V.S. 1873–A.D. 1816 (Fig. 11.13).

The collection contains two charming coins also from the Amritsar Mint, dated V.S. 1862–A.D. 1805 (Figs. 11.14 and 11.15) known as *Morashahis*. Maharajah Ranjit Singh was well known for his love of women and dancing girls, and he is especially known for his romance with Bibi Moran, whom he later married. Many anecdotes are told about the two of them. One is when he would be seen on many a balmy evening after sunset, on top of his bejewelled elephant, merrily drinking with Bibi Moran on the way to the Shalimar gardens for an evening of pleasure. Having heard how the Empress Nur Jehan had persuaded her husband, the Emperor Jahangir, to put her name on the coins of the realm, Moran too wanted her name to be thus immortalised. The maharajah, wanting to indulge her but not desiring to offend his subjects, cleverly devised a way to make this possible. He put a symbol on the coin's reverse, replacing the leaf. In the Punjabi language, Moran means "peacock" as well as a "long, dry branch with twigs," and it's the latter that he put on the coin. These unique coins are exquisitely designed and ornamented, and their delicately fashioned branches with berries look as graceful and willowy as the lady they represent. To this day these coins go by the name of *Morashahi*, reminding us of the great love Maharajah Ranjit Singh had for his Moran.

Fig. 11.18, *Maharajah Kharak Singh,* Northern India or Pakistan, Ca. 1840, Watercolour and gold on paper, 18.5 × 23 cm, Kapany Collection

The next three *Nanakshahis* discussed in this essay come from the Kashmir Mint. The two dated V.S. 1895–A.D. 1838 (Fig. 11.16) and V.S. 1897–A.D. 1840 (Fig. 11.17) were styled in an entirely different way. They belonged to two distinct Sikh rulers, the former to Maharajah Ranjit Singh and the latter to the short reign of his only natural son, Maharajah Kharak Singh (Fig. 11.18). They were minted under the rule of the Sikh governor of Kashmir, Mihan Singh, and have a dotted outline of a leaf on the reverse, while a curved sword going through a quoit, both weapons of Sikh choice, can be seen on the obverse. The third coin is quite unique as it was minted during the two-year period of Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa's governorship of Kashmir. The obverse of the coin dated to V.S. 1878–A.D. 1821 (Fig. 11.19) clearly shows "*Har*" written in Gurumukhi script. There has been a lot of speculation about the *Har* being written in the middle of the coin. Some feel that Hari Singh put it in as an abbreviation of his name, claiming rulership. Others felt that it stood for God (in Punjabi *Har* is God). Without doubt, Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa was a devout Sikh, so it is improbable that he would have ever put his own name on a *Nanakshahi* and inconceivable that Maharajah Ranjit Singh would have authorised him to do so (Fig. 11.20).

Through the next section of coins discussed we can trace the anguish and chaos of the Sikh Empire as it struggled to sustain itself amidst treachery, greed, and ambition. The following coins are from the Amritsar Mint and have a fixed date of V.S. 1885. The next coin shown here, dated to V.S. [18]96–A.D. 1839 (Fig. 11.21), was minted in the year Maharajah Ranjit Singh, the Lion of Punjab, passed away. His death was a huge loss not only for the Sikh Empire but also for India, for now the British had no power strong enough to prevent them from taking over the whole of the Indian subcontinent. What followed were brief, tumultuous reigns of the successors of the Lahore Durbar. Indicative of the political climate during this period, a trident, a weapon of protection, was stamped on the obverse of coins. The coin, dated V.S. [18]98–A.D. 1841 (Fig. 11.22), was minted in the year Kanwar Sher Singh managed to get himself declared maharajah amidst treachery and treason.

An extremely elaborate royal umbrella appears on the rupees of two different rulers. The first is from Maharajah Sher Singh's reign, which is dated

Fig. 11.16 Obv.
Mihan Singh's governorship,
Kashmir Mint,
A.D. 1838,
Kapany Collection

Fig. 11.17 Rev.
Maharajah Kharak Singh
Kashmir Mint,
A.D. 1840
Kapany Collection

Fig. 11.19 Obv.
Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa's governorship, with HAR in Gurmukhi script,
Kashmir Mint,
A.D. 1821,
Jyoti M. Rai Collection

Fig. 11.19 Rev.
Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa's governorship,
Kashmir Mint,
A.D. 1821,
Jyoti M. Rai Collection

Fig. 11. 21 Obv.
The year of Maharajah Ranjit Singh's death,
Amritsar Mint,
A.D. 1839,
Kapany Collection

Fig. 11.20
Maharajah Ranjit Singh
Northern India or Pakistan
Ca. 1850
Painting on ivory
8 × 11 cm
Kapany Collection

to V.S. [18]99–A.D. 1842 (Figs. 11.23, 11.24, and 11.25), who was unfortunately assassinated along with his young son the following year. Succeeded by Maharajah Dalip Singh, who assumed the throne in his youth, the following coin marks the first year of his reign and is dated to V.S. 1900–A.D. 1843 (Figs. 11.26 and 11.27). The next coin shows us the capitulation, or acceptance by the Sikhs of their fate, as they insert a flag on the obverse. The year is 1846 (Fig. 11.28) and the Lahore Durbar have just lost the First Anglo Sikh War with the British—a sad time not only for the valiant warriors from Maharajah Ranjit Singh's well-trained armies, but also for the *Khalsa*. They lost the war not due to their skill on the battlefield, but because they were betrayed by their own ministers and generals. The British established a Resident at Lahore and the Sikhs had to pay huge fines, reduce their army, and lose important territories like Kashmir. The last coin in this collection from this series gives us a glimpse into the Sikh psyche at this time, as the Lahore Durbar puts "*Sat*," or "truth," written in *Gurumukhi* script under a royal umbrella of their *Nanakshahis.* The year of the coin is V.S. 1904–A.D. 1847 (Fig. 11.29). A year and a half later, at the beginning of 1849, the glorious Sikh Empire that Maharajah Ranjit Singh had built ceased to exist as it was annexed and made a part of the British dominions.

The copper coinage was produced mainly at Amritsar, unlike the silver coinage, given out to several contractors, so one sees an assortment of different *paisas*, in both the Persian and *Gurumukhi* scripts (Fig. 11.30). This collection contains numerous copper coins of various denominations and types that come mostly from this mint. Though the fabric is dumpy, the one-*paisa* coins are decorated with floral motifs and dots. Some display a flag or a trident, others a dagger or a flower on a stem with leaves; however, all display a leaf on the reverse, as with the silver rupees. The few *paisas* which are in Persian have dates like V.S. 1880–A.D. 1823 and bear the same legends as the *Nanakshahis*. Some *paisas* have *Devaki* (Lord Krishna's mother) written in both languages on the

Fig. 11.24, *"The Maharajah Shere Singh," Portraits of the Princes and People of India,* Emily Eden, A.D. 1844, Chromolithograph, hand painted on paper with printed commentary text on the reverse, 55.9 × 44.4 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.63.2

Fig. 11.22 Obv.
Maharajah Sher Singh,
trident symbol,
Amritsar Mint
A.D. 1841
Kapany Collection

Fig. 11.25, *"Purtaub Singh," Portraits of the Princes and People of India, Partap Singh, son of Maharajah Sher Singh,* Emily Eden, 1844, Chromolithograph, hand painted on paper with printed commentary text on the reverse, 55.9 × 44.4 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.63.19

Fig. 11.23 Obv.
Maharajah Sher Singh, royal umbrella, Amritsar Mint, A.D. 1842
Kapany Collection

obverse. The larger two-*paisa* coins in the collection are ornamented with dots, and the calligraphy is beautifully executed. The majority of *paisas* feature a stylised form of *Gurumukhi* lettering, which all acclaim Guru Nanak, the first Guru:

Obverse: *Akal Sahai Guru Nanakji*……. May God help the illustrious Guru Nanak
Reverse: *Zarb Sri Ambratsar jio*……. Struck at illustrious Ambratsar

No Sikh coin collection would ever be complete without a few examples of Temple Tokens. They were not currency but rather religious medallions that owed their existence to the Mughal Emperor Akbar, in whose reign a variety of tokens from different religions were made for the much-travelled pilgrim. Made from different metals, of gold, silver, or brass, the Sikh Temple Tokens have a high intrinsic value because of their beautiful portraits of the Gurus. A silver token (Fig. 11.31) has, on the obverse, Guru Nanak seated under a tree with his disciples or companions on either side—Bala playing the *rebab*, a musical instrument, and Mardana, holding a fly-whisk. This particular depiction was popular and can be seen elsewhere in many murals, *Janam Sakhis,* and at the entrance of *Har Mandir Sahib* in Amritsar. The reverse portrays Guru Gobind Singh *nimbate*, wearing his *Kalgi* or aigrette and seated with his sword and holding his falcon. The words in the Nagari script *"[Om] Sat Kartar,"* or "God is truth," are written above him while the numbers [V.S.] 1804 (A.D. 1747) are engraved below his feet. It is a year that holds great significance for the Sikhs, for it was during this time that Jassa Singh Ahluwalia declared the *Dal Khalsa*. This token, in all probability, commemorates this event, as this same date appears on many varieties of the Sikh Temple Tokens.

Temple Tokens were always revered, no matter the religion; one often comes across

Fig. 11.27
Maharajah Dalip Singh (Album 1, page 2)
Lahore or Amritsar, 19th century, Opaque watercolours on paper
25.5 × 19.7 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 11.29 Obv.
Maharajah Dalip Singh, Sat (Truth) in Gurmukhi script under royal umbrella,
Amritsar Mint, A.D. 1847
Kapany Collection

Fig. 11.26 Obv.
Maharajah Dalip Singh, royal umbrella,
Amritsar Mint, A.D. 1843
Kapany Collection

Fig. 11.28 Obv.
Maharajah Dalip Singh, a flag
Amritsar Mint, A.D. 1846
Kapany Collection

Fig. 11.31 Obv.
Guru Nanak seated under a tree
with his disciples
Jyoti M. Rai Collection

Fig. 11.31 Rev.
Guru Gobind Singh seated
holding his falcon and an arrow,
Jyoti M. Rai Collection

Fig. 11.32 Obv.
Guru Nanak seated under a tree
Temple Token
Gold, Kapany Collection

Fig. 11.32 Rev.
The Moolmantra, a Sikh prayer
Temple Token
Gold, Kapany Collection

them with loops attached to the rim so that people could wear them as religious medallions. An exquisite example (Fig. 11.32) of an intricately executed 24-karat gold temple token with a loop is fortunately part of this collection. On the obverse we have Guru Nanak depicted sitting under a tree that has beautifully stylised leaves and branches. He is seen along with his companions, Bala and Mardana. The reverse, reverently inscribed in *Gurumukhi* script, is one of the most expressive and meaningful prayers one can find. It is the first verse from the *Japji Sahib*, "the Mool Mantra":

THE MOOL MANTRA

IK OANKAR	*There is only one God*
SAT NAAM	*True is His Name*
KARTAA PURAKH	*He is the Creator*
NIRBHAO	*He is without fear*
NIRVAIR	*He is without enmity*
AKAL MOORAT	*He is Immortal*
AJOONEE	*He is beyond birth and death*
SAIBHANG	*He is Self-Existant*
GUR PRASHAD	*He is attained by the Grace of the True Guru*

Whether it be a *Nanakshahi* or a Temple Token, both were held in great reverence by Sikhs of yesteryear as they are by Sikhs living today, paying homage to their Gurus and to the tenets of Sikhism.

Endnotes

[1] Patwant Singh and Jyoti M. Rai, *Empire of the Sikhs: Life and Times of Maharajah Ranjit Singh,* New Delhi, 2008.
[2] Bikrama Jit Hazrat, *The Punjab Papers* (1836 to 1839), Hoshiarpur, 1970.

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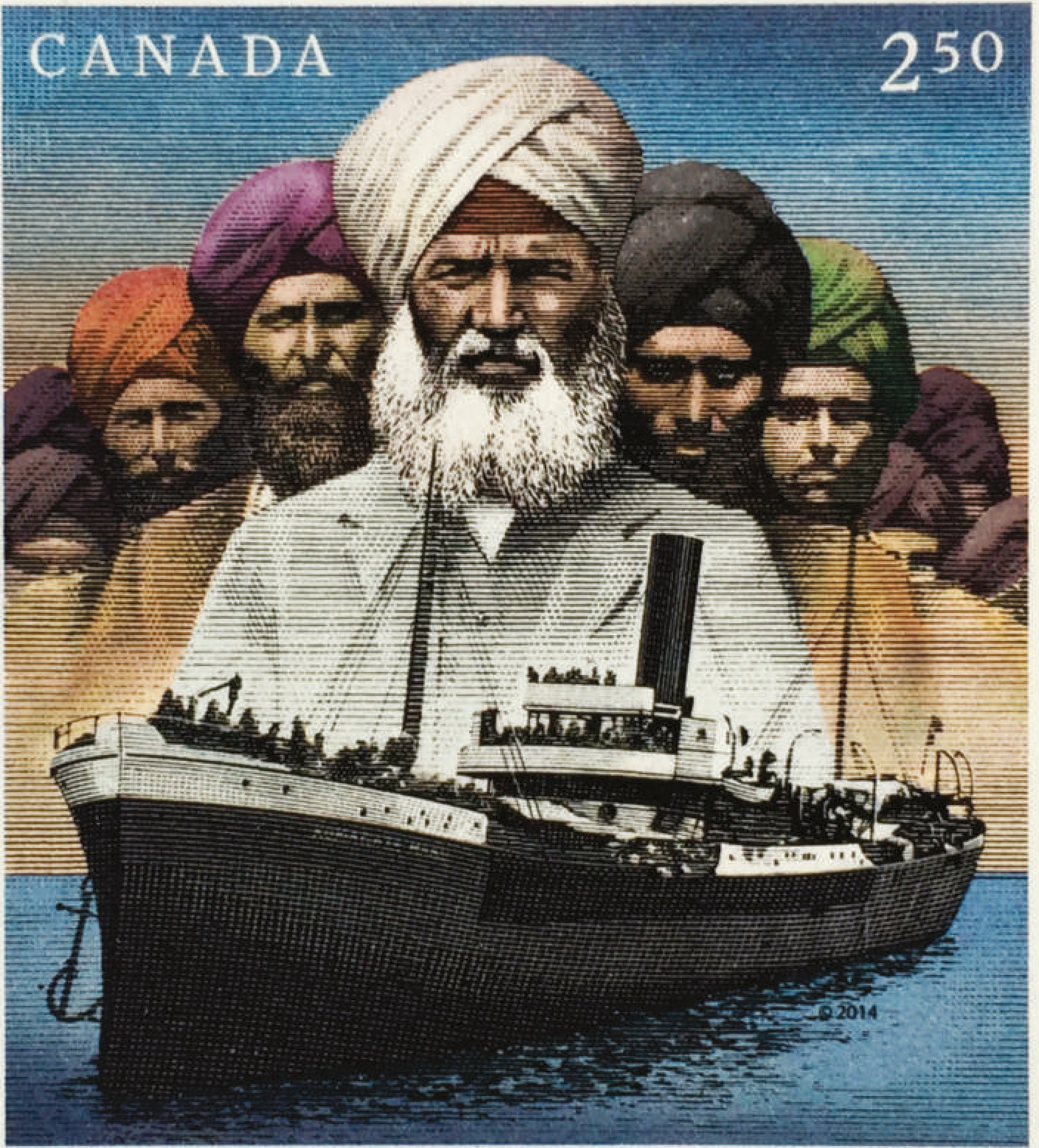


INCIDENT DU KOMAGATA MARU INCIDENT

1914 – 2014

12

The Kapany Stamp Collection

Henry J. Walker

The first postage stamp in the world was the famous "Penny Black" stamp that appeared in Britain in 1840. It was a small black stamp with a side-view of Queen Victoria's head (Fig. 12.1). Since Britain was the only country that produced stamps, it was not necessary to include the name of the country, and to this day British stamps always feature a portrait of the monarch and never the name of the country. The first stamp to appear in India was, in effect, a British stamp with the addition of the word "INDIA." It appeared in 1854, and it had a side-view of the queen with the word "INDIA" above and the price below (Fig. 12.2).

Fig. 12.1
Queen Victoria,
Great Britain
1840

In theory, the first Sikh stamps would be the ones issued by Sikh maharajahs under the British Raj, but most of these were simply British Indian stamps with the name of the state (such as "PATIALA" or "FARIDKOT") overprinted on the stamp. In other words, they were a Punjabi place-name overprinted on a British stamp that was pretending to be an Indian stamp. No Sikh appears on any stamp until India becomes independent, though the Golden Temple did appear on a British Indian stamp in 1935 (Fig. 12.3). This stamp, however, commemorated the anniversary of King George the Fifth's coronation. The Kapany Collection naturally focuses, therefore, on the period after 1947. The first Sikh stamp after independence was one that showed the Golden Temple in 1949, and the first Sikh to appear on an Indian stamp was Maharajah Ranjit Singh who was honored on a stamp that came out in 1966.

Fig. 12.2
Queen Victoria,
British India
1854

Left: Fig. 12.53
100 years of the Komagata Maru Incident,
Canada
2014

The Golden Temple appeared as part of a stamp series that celebrated the second anniversary of India's independence in 1949 (Fig. 12.4). It is depicted in a very idyllic etching, quiet and peaceful, with no people anywhere, surrounded by sky, trees, and water. On this stamp, the Golden Temple is presented as one of the wonders of India, perfect and timeless. This etching is in fact identical with the one that appeared on the stamp celebrating the Silver Jubilee of King George V in 1935 (Fig. 12.3). India had not yet completely broken the links with its British past in 1949. The Golden Temple

Fig. 12.5
Sri Harmandir Sahib, first-day cover and stamp
India, 1987
Kapany Collection

Top: Fig. 12.3
Silver Jubilee Commemoration
Amritsar, India, 1935
Bottom: Fig. 12.4
Golden Temple Amritsar
India, 1949, Kapany Collection

appears again on an Indian stamp in 1987, but this time it is called the *Sri Harmandir Sahib*, and it is being honored for itself alone (Fig. 12.5). This stamp commemorates the beginning of its construction in 1585, four hundred years earlier. The image is a modern color photograph and, in contrast to the 1949 stamp, it presents the *Harmandir Sahib* as a very vibrant sacred space, with lots of people going to and fro along the Guru's Bridge, and its urban setting is clear from the background. The Kapany Collection has a first-day cover as well (Fig. 12.5). A first-day cover is a special envelope produced by the post office and used only on the first day that the stamp is issued. The left half of the envelope bears an illustration, the new stamp is placed in its usual position, and the postmark on that day alone is also a special illustrated one. On the first-day cover honoring the 300th anniversary of the *Harmandir Sahib*, there is a painting of the temple, quietly reflected in the water, and the special first-day postmark depicts a closeup of the top of the *Harmandir Sahib*.

Over the years since the first appearance of the *Harmandir Sahib* on the 1949 issue, the history of the Sikhs can be traced through Indian stamps celebrating their achievements. The beginnings of Sikh history were celebrated on the anniversaries of the Gurus, but they were discreetly represented by Gurudwaras associated with their lives rather than portraits of the Gurus. The 500th birth anniversaries of Guru Nanak (1469–1539) and Guru Amar Das (1479–1574) (Fig. 12.6) were commemorated in 1969 and 1979, as were the 300th anniversaries of Guru Tegh Bahadur's death (1621–1675) (Fig. 12.7) and Guru Gobind Singh's birth (1666–1708) in 1975 and 1967.

In 1969, India celebrated the 500th anniversary of the birth of Guru Nanak, who was born in 1469. The stamp shows the Gurudwara at Nankana Sahib, his birthplace in West Punjab, Pakistan, and the first-day cover shows *Gurudwara Ber Sahib* in Sultanpur Lodhi, a city of Kapurthala, the Sikh kingdom later established by Baba Jassa Singh Ahluwalia (Fig. 12.8). This Gurudwara was built near the Ber tree where Guru Nanak

Above: Fig. 12.8
Guru Nanak Dev, first-day cover and stamp
India, 1969
Kapany Collection

Above: Fig. 12.9
Guru Gobind Singh, first-day cover and stamp
India, 1967
Kapany Collection

Right: Fig. 12.6
Guru Amar Das
India, 1979
Kapany Collection

Left: Fig. 12.7
Guru Tegh Bahadur
India, 1975
Kapany Collection

experienced his revelation and proclaimed the Mul Mantra. The stamp and first-day cover celebrate Guru Nanak's physical birth and spiritual rebirth without actually depicting either of these events through a pictorial representation.

In 1967, the third centenary of the birth of Guru Gobind Singh, in 1666, was celebrated with a stamp and first-day cover, both of which depicted the *Takht Sri Patna Sahib*, built at his birthplace in Patna in the present-day state of Bihar (Fig. 12.9). Once again, a Guru's birth is sensitively commemorated without any physical depiction of the Guru himself. The Gurus and their sacred writings are remembered in a Gurudwara, so a stamp with a Gurudwara is a respectful way of remembering the birth of a Guru.

Among Guru Gobind Singh's achievements was the formation of the Sikh *Khalsa* in 1699, which is when the Sikhs adopted the five K's, including their distinctive turbans. The tercentenary was commemorated in 1999 with a photograph on a stamp showing Gurudwara Keshgarh Sabih at Anandpur Sahib, the birthplace of the *Khalsa* (Fig. 12.10). A contemporary of Guru Gobind Singh, Bhai Kanhaiya (1648–1714), is portrayed on a wonderful stamp from 1998 that shows him pouring out water from a goatskin, but it does not show the recipient (Fig. 12.11). In this way, the stamp cleverly recalls his generosity at the Battle of Anandpur Sahib in 1704, when he refused to notice whether the people drinking the water were Sikh friends or their Mughal opponents. The water is being poured out for anyone and everyone who needs it, so it would go against the principles of Bhai Kanhaiya if the person receiving the water were depicted on the stamp as a Sikh or a Muslim or any specific type of person.

One of the great Sikhs from the period of the Sikh confederation in the later eighteenth century was Baba Jassa Singh Ahluwalia (1718–1783). He united the Sikhs into a single army, the *Dal Khalsa*, and spent his life fighting against the Afghan king, Ahmad Shah Duranni. In spite of setbacks, including the destruction of the *Harmandir Sahib* by the Shah, Jassa Singh managed to expel the

Afghans from the Punjab and win recognition for the Sikhs as a separate power, independent of the Afghans and the Mughals. He also established the Sikh kingdom of Kapurthala in 1772, which was ruled by his heirs from then on. He was commemorated with a stamp issued in 1985 (Fig. 12.12).

Maharajah Ranjit Singh (1780–1839) was only a baby when Baba Jassa Singh Ahluwalia passed away, but he grew up into an ever-greater leader of the Sikhs. In 1801, he united the entire Punjab under his power and established the Sikh empire. In that year he was proclaimed maharajah of the Punjab at his capital in Lahore. He expanded his empire to Afghanistan and Kashmir, and treated all his subjects with respect—Sikh, Muslim, and Hindu alike. Universally admired as the "Lion of the Punjab," Maharajah Ranjit Singh was the first Sikh to be commemorated on a stamp. The 1966 issue has a portrait of the Sikh maharajah sitting on his throne, with a sword tucked under his right arm and an arrow held in his left hand. The first-day cover for this issue is adorned with an equestrian portrait of Ranjit Singh (Fig. 12.13). He appears again on a stamp of 2001, which commemorates the foundation of his empire in 1801. This realm maintained its independence until 1849. This stamp has a different portrait of the maharajah, sitting on his throne with an arrow in his hands. The first-day cover has a multicolored, traditional Sikh painting of the maharajah sitting in his court, surrounded by his Sikhs (Fig. 12.14). The first-day postmark is an exact reproduction of the portrait of Maharajah Ranjit Singh from the stamp issued in 1966.

In 2013 a stamp was issued to honor Hari Singh Nalwa (1791–1837), the great general of Maharajah Ranjit Singh, who also served as his governor of Kashmir (Fig. 12.15). His portrait shows him in armor, ready for battle, holding a sword in his right hand and clutching a shield with his left arm. He is being celebrated as the warrior and general who led the Sikhs to so many victories on the battlefield. The Punjab was the last independent region of India, but after two Anglo-Sikh Wars, the last maharajah of the Punjab, Dalip Singh (1838–1893), was deprived of his kingdom in 1849, and the Punjab was annexed by the British.

In the twentieth century, the Sikhs played a major role in the Indian independence movement.

Fig. 12.11
Bhai Kanhaiya
India, 1998,
Kapany Collection

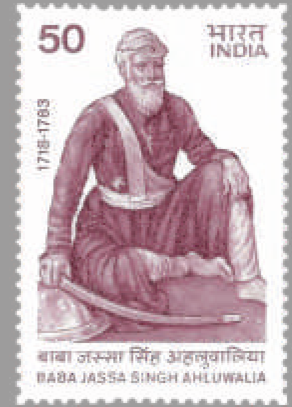


Fig. 12.12
Baba Jassa Singh Ahluwalia
India, 1985
Kapany Collection

Fig. 12.10, *300th anniversary of the Khalsa*
India, 1999, Kapany Collection

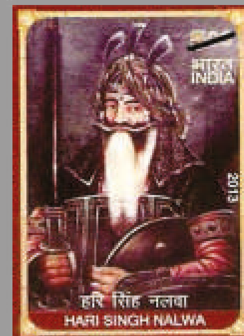


Fig. 12.15
Hari Singh Nalwa
India
2013

Fig. 12.13, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh, first-day cover and stamp*
India, 1966, Kapany Collection

Fig. 12.16 *Jallianawala Bagh Massacre,* India, 1969, Kapany Collection

Fig. 12.17, *Jallianawala Bagh Massacre* India, 1994, Kapany Collection

Fig. 12.18 *Rajkumari Amrit Kaur* India 1989 Kapany Collection

Fig. 12.19 *Udham Singh* India 1992 Kapany Collection

Fig. 12.14, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh, first-day cover and stamp,* India, 2001, Kapany Collection

Their achievements from this historical period are naturally commemorated on Indian stamps. For most Sikhs, the Jallianwala Bhag Massacre was a turning point, and from then on they were at the forefront of the freedom struggle. On 13 April 1919, troops under the command of Colonel Dyer massacred a large crowd of peaceful protesters gathered in the Jalianwalla Bagh of the Sikh holy city, Amritsar. This atrocity was recalled with a very peaceful and sad stamp on its 50th anniversary in 1969. The hands of a woman gently scatter petals on the site of the massacre, which is depicted only by the bullet holes in the wall behind her (Fig. 12.16). The 75th anniversary in 1994 is commemorated with a more militant image of four men from different faiths defiantly stretching out their arms with clenched fists, while four distraught and wounded doves fly overhead (Fig. 12.17).

The Jalianwalla Bhag massacre impelled Rajkumari Amrit Kaur (1889–1964) to join the freedom movement. This princess of Kapurthala was a direct descendant of Baba Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and she appears on a stamp from 1989 commemorating the centenary of her birth (Fig. 12.18). She became a remarkable role model for the women of the world. In 1947, she was the first woman to be appointed to the cabinet of India (she served as Minister of Health), and in 1950 she became the first woman president of the World Health Organization.

One of the people who had witnessed the massacre was a young boy called Udham Singh (1899–1940), who somehow had miraculously escaped the killings. He became a follower of the great radical Sikh Bhagat Singh, and he later avenged the victims of the massacre in 1940 by killing Sir Michael O'Dwyer, who had been the British Governor of the Punjab in 1919. Udham Singh was honored in 1992 with a portrait that shows him wearing his turban (Fig. 12.19).

His inspiration, Bhagat Singh (1907–1931), was a founder of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association. The Jalianwalla Bagh Massacre and similar atrocities made the Socialist Republicans disillusioned with Gandhi's policy of nonviolence, and in 1928 they decided to avenge the killing of a peaceful protester. Their attack on police headquarters in Lahore resulted in the death of two police-

men, and Bhagat Singh was hanged with two of his Socialist Republican comrades by the British in 1931. He was well-read in socialist theory, and though not religious himself, he was generally admired as a martyr (*Shahid*). Bhagat Singh was commemorated with a portrait stamp in 1969, while in the background a crowd of people inspired by his ideals march onward toward freedom (Fig. 12.20).

During the Second World War, some Sikhs had joined the Indian National Army of Chandra Bose (1897–1945). These soldiers tried to take advantage of the war by working with Germany and Japan, in the hope of winning independence by military means. One of these Sikh soldiers, Fouja Singh, is commemorated on a stamp from 1998 along with his Hindu and Muslim comrades who were hanged by the British in 1943 (Fig. 12.21). The more fortunate Gurubaksh Singh Dhillon (1914–2006) and his colleagues were charged with "waging war against His Majesty the King Emperor" in 1945, but by this time the Raj did not dare to put them to death. On the 50th anniversary of India's independence in 1997, the three of them were honored for waging their war against the king emperor on a stamp that also shows the Red Fort, which is where their court-martial took place (Fig. 12.22).

In addition to fighting for India's freedom, the Sikhs also had to look after their own religion and state. Baba Kharak Singh (1868–1963) was a freedom fighter who continued to protest even while in jail (1921–1927), and during his imprisonment he was elected as the first president of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee in 1925. He was honored on a stamp in 1988 (Fig. 12.23). Master Tara Singh (1885–1967) led the SGPC and the Shiromani Akali Dal party from 1930, and like Kharak Singh he was strongly opposed to the partition of India. After independence he campaigned for a separate Punjabi-speaking state and achieved this goal in 1966, shortly before he passed away. The centenary of his birth was celebrated with a stamp in 1985 (Fig. 12.24).

One of the great Chief Ministers of the Punjab was Pratap Singh Kairon (1901–1965), who was educated in the United States and administered the Punjab state from 1952 to 1965, when he was assassinated. Before becoming Chief Minister, he had helped to settle millions of refugees from Pakistan, and now he wanted to transform the Punjab into a new, progressive state. Kairon's leadership is commemorated on a stamp from 2005 (Fig. 12.25). He modernized agriculture, and he created the new capital city of Chandigarh with the renowned Swiss architect Le Corbusier (1887–1965). For Le Corbusier, Chandigarh was the ultramodern, planned city he had always dreamed of. One of the great beauties of Chandigarh was the man-made Sukhna Lake, and a stamp issued in 1990 thanks the volunteers who spontaneously clean up the lake at the annual *Sukhna Shramdan* (Fig. 12.26).

Giani Gurmukh Singh Musafir (1899–1976) was a freedom fighter and a Sikh activist. He became the Chief Minister of the new Punjabi-speaking state that Master Tara Singh had fought for, and he is depicted on a stamp from 2001 (Fig. 12.27). A later Chief Minister of the new state was the renowned Giani Zail Singh (1916–1994), who led the Punjab from 1972 to 1977. He went on to become President of India (1982–1987) and Leader of the Non-Aligned Countries (1983–1986). He was honored with a stamp in 1995, a year after he passed away (Fig. 12.28). Another Sikh leader appears on a stamp from 1987, Sant Harchand Singh Longowal (1932–1985). He led the Shiromani Akali Dal during the dreadful decade of the 1980s, and he tried to stand up for the Sikhs through civil disobedience and political negotiation. After the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi (1917–1984), he signed an agreement with her son and successor Rajiv Gandhi (1944–1991), and Longowal was himself assassinated in 1985 (Fig. 12.29).

The Sikhs were not just involved in religious, linguistic, and political struggles. They also produced writers and artists who

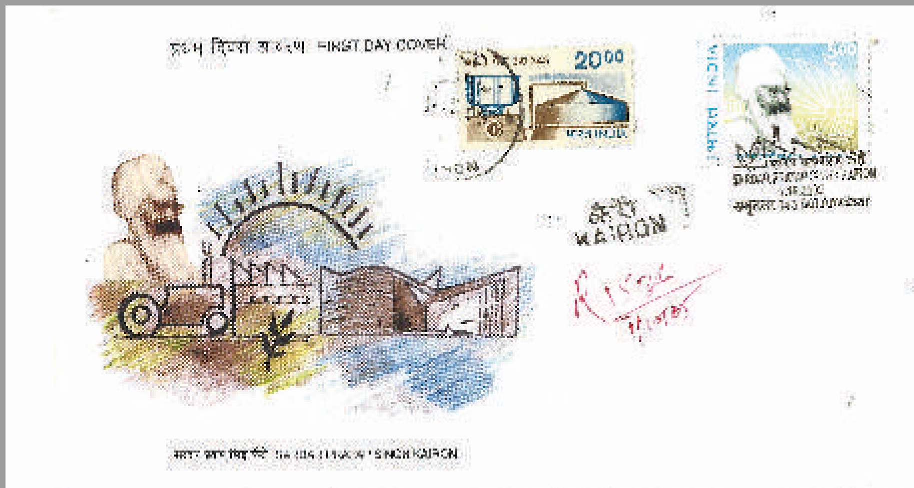
Top left: Fig. 12.20, *Bhagat Singh*, India, 1969
Kapany Collection

Top middle: Fig. 12.21, *Fouja Singh*, India, 1998
Kapany Collection

Top right: Fig. 12.22, *Gurubaksh Singh Dhillon*, India, 1997
Kapany Collection

Left: Fig. 12.23, *Baba Kharak Singh*, India, 1988
Kapany Collection

Right: Fig. 12.24, *Master Tara Singh*, India, 1985
Kapany Collection



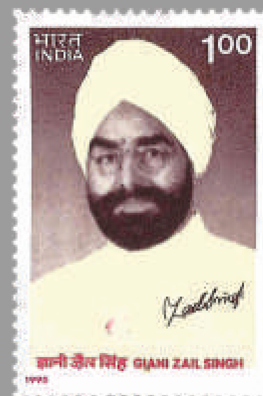
Left: Fig. 12.25, *Sardar Pratap Singh*, Kairon, first-day cover and stamp, India, 2005, Kapany Collection

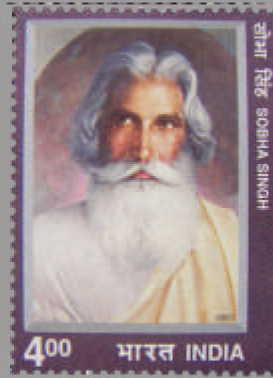
Above: Fig. 12.26, *Cleanup of Sukhna Lake*, India, 1990
Kapany Collection

Right: Fig. 12.27
Gurmukh Singh Musafir
India, 2001, Kapany Collection

Middle: Fig. 12.28
Giani Zail Singh, India, 1995
Kapany Collection

Extreme right: Fig. 12.29
Sant Harchand Singh Longowal
India, 1987, Kapany Collection





(clockwise from top left)

Fig. 12.30
Bhai Vir Singh, India, 1972

Fig. 12.31, *Nanak Singh*
India, 1998, Kapany Collection

Fig. 12.32, *Sobha Singh*
India, 2001, Kapany Collection

Fig. 12.33, *Amrita Sher-Gil*
India, 1978, Kapany Collection

Right: Fig. 12.34
Bhagat Puran Singh
first-day cover and stamp
India, 2004, Kapany Collection

Fig. 12.37
27th Olympics, first-day cover and stamp
India
2000
Kapany Collection

Left: Fig. 12.35
5th Asian Games
India
1966
Kapany Collection

Right: Fig. 12.36
11th Asian Games
India
1990
Kapany Collection

deserved to be celebrated. The novelist and poet Bhai Vir Singh (1872–1957), the father of modern Punjabi literature, was remembered on the centenary of his birth in 1972 (Fig. 12.30). Another popular Sikh writer, Nanak Singh (1897–1971), appeared on a stamp in 1998, issued 101 years after his birth (Fig. 12.31).

The artist Sobha Singh (1901–1986), famous for his portraits of the Sikh Gurus, was commemorated in 2001. His classical style was inspired by his devotion to Sikhism and by the ancient stories of India and the Punjab. Many of his works have been reproduced as posters and are found in homes throughout India and the diaspora. The stamp shows a self-portrait, which honors Sobha Singh as a man and also gives a good sense of his style as an artist (Fig. 12.32). A very different artist, Amrita Sher-Gil (1913–1941), was honored in 1978 along with other modernist artists from India (Fig. 12.33). She was born in Hungary, went to art school in Paris, and returned to India where she was inspired by scenes of everyday life. She died very young, at the age of 28, but her work had a lasting influence on modern Indian art. The painting chosen to represent her artistic achievements is *Hill Women* from 1935, produced when she was living in Shimla. It represents the poor women from the Himalayas in a realistic way and rejects both the classical academic style and sentimental portrayals of a romanticized India. The beauty of these hill women lies in the silent dignity of their poverty.

The achievements of these Sikh intellectuals is only outshone by the philanthropy of the saintly Bhagat Puran Singh (1904–1992), who set up a homeless shelter called Pingalwara at Amritsar. He devoted his entire life to helping the destitute and was deservedly honored on a stamp issued in 2004. The stamp and first-day postmark have a portrait of Bhagat Puran Singh, while the first-day cover is decorated with a photograph of his charity hospital and a vignette of Puran Singh carrying a poor child on his back, demonstrating his wonderful lifework before our eyes (Fig. 12.34).

The Sikhs are also celebrated for their sporting achievements. One stamp issued in 1966 for the 5th Asian Games shows the victorious Sikh hockey players on the field (Fig. 12.35). On a stamp honoring the 11th Asian Games in 1990 we see a Sikh cyclist gaining on his rival (Fig. 12.36). When the 27th Olympic Games took place in Sydney, Australia, in 2000 they were celebrated with a series of stamps depicting various sports, and on one of these stamps we see a Sikh hockey player on the playing-field. His silhouette appears again on the first-day cover (as shown in Fig. 12.37).

The Kapany collection also includes the 1965 stamp celebrating the Indian expedition that reached the top of Mount Everest in that year. Although it is impossible to tell from his heavy snow gear, the leader of the expedition on that stamp is in fact a Sikh, Captain Manmohan Singh Kohli (born in 1931). The first-day cover includes a map of his ascent (Fig. 12.38).

The Sikhs are famous throughout the world as great soldiers, and I have left until last, but by no means least, the celebration of their achievements on the battlefield. The Punjab and Sikh Regiments are naturally predominantly Sikh, and so is the elite President's Body Guard. Like most Indian regiments, these forces were initially raised by the British. Two of the Punjab Battalions, however, were raised by the first maharajah of Patiala, Baba Ala Singh, long before the British came anywhere near the Punjab. The 15th Battalion (1st Patiala) of the Punjab Regiment goes all the way back to 1705, and its tercentenary was commemorated in 2005. The stamp issued for this event shows the uniform of the battalion throughout the centuries and the first-day postmark has its insignia, while the first-day cover shows the battalion marching through the Himalayas (Fig. 12.39).

The 16th Battalion of the Punjab Regiment (2nd Patiala Battalion) was also created by Maharajah Baba Ala Singh in 1710 and its tercentenary was commemorated in 2010. Because of its readiness to serve overseas, the Punjab Regiment has a ship on its insignia

(unique for an infantry regiment), while the stamp issued in honor of the 16th Punjab Battalion shows a nineteenth century ship to record this old connection with the navy (Fig. 12.40). The present-day Punjab Regiment is associated with the very modern guided missile destroyer, INS *Ranjit*. The regiment as a whole was created by the East India Company in 1761, initially as a South Indian unit with the name of the Coastal Sepoys. The entire regiment (more than 250 years old at the time) is honored on a stamp from 1979 that shows its famous warship insignia and its changing uniforms under the East India Company, the British Raj, and the Republic of India (Fig. 12.41).

The equally famous but not quite so senior Sikh Regiment goes back to the Ferozepur and Ludhiana Sikh Regiments, which were established by the British in 1846. Its 150 years of service were honored in 1996 with a stamp showing a soldier from the regiment saluting the Sikh Khanda (Fig. 12.42). The slightly more recent 3rd Battalion of the Sikh Regiment was raised by Captain Rattray in 1856 and was known as "Rattray's Sikhs" under the British Raj. The battalion's 150 years of service were honored in 2006 on a stamp that shows a Sikh in uniform, and in the background the battalion marching through the Himalayas (Fig. 12.43).

The President's Body Guard dates back to 1773, when it was known as the Governor General's Body Guard (GGBG), and was popularly called "God's Gift to Beautiful Girls!" This cavalry regiment is the most elite unit in the Indian army, and its members must be at least six feet tall. Since the nineteenth century, it has always included a large Sikh contingent. This regiment has been commemorated twice on Indian stamps. A trumpeter on a horse that is standing to attention celebrates the 225th anniversary of the President's Body Guard in 1998 (Fig. 12.44).

A moving stamp from 1999 shows a Sikh soldier kneeling down to take care of a little girl. He holds his machine gun behind his back and out of her view. The stamp celebrates the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the honorable code of Sikh soldiers. The stamp reminds us that "even wars have limits," and that there is a time when even a soldier must put his gun aside (Fig. 12.45). In the year 2000, the Republic of India celebrated its 50th anniversary by honoring the men who had done so much to defend it. Sikh soldiers feature prominently among the men who earned awards for gallantry on the battlefield. Karam Singh (1915–1993) of the Sikh Regiment earned the Param Vir Chakra for extraordinary courage in holding onto an impossible position in the 1948 Indo-Pakistani War (Fig. 12.46); and Nirmal Jit Singh (1945–1971) of the Indian Air Force was awarded the Param Vir Chakra posthumously, when he lost his life after shooting down two of the six enemy fighter jets that attacked his base during the 1971 Indo-Pakistani war.

The Sikhs are, of course, an international community, and the Kapany Collection also includes some recent stamps from around the world that celebrate Sikhism and the immigrant Sikh communities in their countries. A very early example is a stamp from Kenya that dates back to the tragic year of 1984. It celebrates the World Conference on Religion and Peace, which was held in Nairobi that year. The stamp shows the Sikh Khanda surrounded by doves, and a Kenyan flag below (Fig. 12.47). A Christmas issue from Hungary in 2004 includes a photograph of the *Harmandir Sahib* on an attachment to the stamp (Fig. 12.48).

In 2006, Pakistan, which has not always had an amiable relationship with the Sikhs, honored Guru Arjun, who was martyred by the Mughal Emperor Jahangir in 1606. The Pakistani stamp follows the Indian practice of respecting Sikh Gurus with a picture of a Gurudwara rather than a portrait of the Guru. In this case, the stamp, first-day postmark, and first-day cover all show Gurudwara Dera Sahib in Lahore, built at the place where Guru Arjun was tortured to death (Fig. 12.49).

Other countries have celebrated the

Fig. 12.38, *Captain Manmohan Singh Kohli climbs Mount Everest, first-day cover and stamp* India, 1965, Kapany Collection

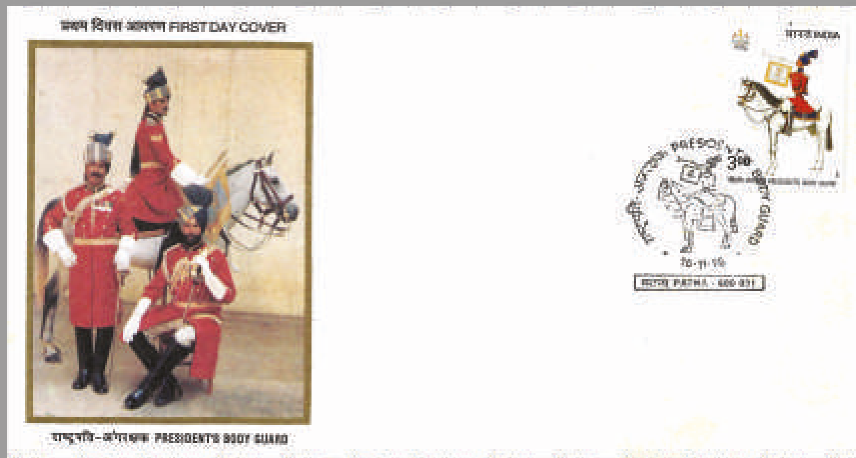
Top right: Fig. 12.40 *16th Battalion, Punjab Regiment (1710),* India, 2010, Kapany Collection

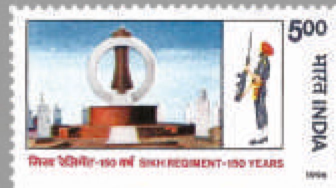
Above: Fig. 12.41, *Punjab Regiment (1761),* India 1979, Kapany Collection

Fig. 12.46 *Karam Singh,* India, 2000, Kapany Collection

Top: Fig. 12.45, *Geneva Conventions,* India, 1999, Kapany Collection

Above: Fig. 12.39, *15 Punjab 1st Patiala (1705), first-day cover and stamp,* India, 2005, Kapany Collection





Above: Fig. 12.44 *President's Body Guard (1773)* India, 1998, Kapany Collection

Bottom right: Fig. 12.43 *3rd Battalion, Sikh (1856)* India, 2006, Kapany Collection

Top right: Fig. 12.42 *Sikh Regiment (1846),* India, 1996, Kapany Collection

Fig. 12.47
Sikh Khanda, Kenya, Kenya, 1984, Kapany Collection

Fig. 12.48
Sri Harmandir Sahib, Hungary
Hungary, 2004
Kapany Collection

Fig. 12.51, *Sikhs, Netherlands*
Netherlands, 2001,
Kapany Collection

Fig. 12.50
Sikh Khanda, Canada
Canada, 1999
Kapany Collection

Fig. 12.49
Guru Arjun martyrdom, first-day cover and stamp
Pakistan, 2006, Kapany Collection

Fig. 12.52
Manmohan Singh, Bhutan
2008, Kapany Collection

contributions made by the Sikh immigrant community to their own cultures. Canada was the first in 1999, with a stamp that shows the Sikh Khanda and the words "Sikh Canadians, les Sikhs du Canada" (Fig. 12.50). The Netherlands followed in 2001 with a photo by "Ulay" (Frank UweLaysiepen) of two Sikhs (Fig. 12.51); this stamp was part of a series celebrating the coming together of different cultures.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, probably the best-known Sikh in the world, is depicted on a set of stamps that commemorates his visit to Bhutan and his meeting with its newly elected Prime Minister Jigme Yoser Thinley in 2008. Manmohan Singh's appearance on these Bhutanese stamps emphasizes that Sikhs are now familiar and leading actors on the global stage (Fig. 12.52).

To people unacquainted with the world of stamp collecting, it might seem highly improbable and unlikely that an entire stamp collection could be devoted to Sikh themes alone. The Kapany Collection proves that it is indeed possible to build up a very fine stamp collection that is dedicated to the success story of the Sikhs. The sample presented in this chapter illustrates the wide range of achievements by the Sikhs in art, literature, and sports, as well as in political progress, religious idealism, and military valor. These Sikh accomplishments have been represented and celebrated throughout the twentieth century on the stamps of the Indian Republic. And now that we have entered the twenty-first century, their achievements are beginning to attract the attention of the world.

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Note

Philatelia in Kolkata publishes a new *Phila India* guide book every year. Stanley Gibbons produces a new Indian catalog at irregular intervals (the last two editions date from 2009 and 2013).

13

Faith and Identity in Silk, Cotton, and Wool: Textiles from the Kapany Collection

Cristin McKnight Sethi

In 2007, the Rubin Museum of Art in New York launched an exhibition of Sikh art, *I See No Stranger: Early Sikh Art and Devotion*, with the aim of introducing to a wide American audience the rich cultural and artistic contributions of the Sikh religion. The curators of the exhibition, B. N. Goswamy and Caron Smith, acknowledged the urgent need for understanding the beliefs of Sikhism following the attacks of September 11, 2001, and a growing desire within academic circles to counter the xenophobia and misinformation about Sikhs and Sikhism that circulated in the United States thereafter. *I See No Stranger* showcased art that represented Sikh beliefs, focusing primarily on paintings that conveyed messages of Sikhism: equality, humility, service, and universal access to God.

It seems we are still in need of such discussions. The tragedy at the Oak Creek Gurudwara, just outside of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in early August 2012 and other recent events of discrimination against Sikh Americans reveal a critical need for continued dialogue on Sikh identity and cultural contributions, both in the public sphere and within academia. The discipline of art history is in many ways still contending with the category of "Sikh art," and the debate continues about how, when, and where to place this very diverse group of objects and cultural practices within the art historical canon of South Asia. Some scholars pinpoint the origins of Sikh art to portraits of the ten Gurus that began appearing during the first half of the eighteenth century (Goswamy and Smith 2006: 29–31; Kapany and Brown 1999: 11), likely produced by artists that left dissolving Mughal ateliers looking for new forms of patronage. Others cite the immense artistic patronage by the Sikh ruler Maharajah Ranjit Singh as a key moment within Sikh art, allowing for the production and celebration of everything from textiles and paintings to architecture and brassware (Anand 1982).

And yet there is an overall sentiment that Sikh art is not easily

Left: Detail of Fig. 13.7, *Bagh phulkari with inverted diamond form,* Punjab, 20th century, Colored silk thread on cotton, 241.3 × 129.5 cm, Kapany Collection

defined or contained. Susan Stronge points out that artwork produced for Sikh patrons or with specific Sikh themes was sometimes made by Muslim or Hindu artists (Stronge 2001: 10). Similarly, Goswamy and Smith discuss the shared themes found within objects associated with Sikhism and Hinduism, and attest to the widespread reverence for Sikh Gurus and Sikh shrines by Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs alike, calling into question what exactly we mean by "Sikh art" and hinting that the origins of the genre could very well predate early eighteenth-century portraits of the Gurus (Goswamy and Smith 2006: 32–33). In *New Insights into Sikh Art,* Kavita Singh outlines some of the art historical biases that have plagued Sikh arts—long considered a "backwater in the fluid course of Indian art"—and instead calls for an opening up of the field (Singh 2003: 11–14). Singh urges scholars to expand the range of materials deemed "Sikh art" to include both secular and religious objects; to consider equally both older and newer examples of artistic practice, particularly fitting for a relatively young religion; and to embrace various levels of patronage instead of privileging courtly arts over folk arts.

Within the art history of South Asia, textiles have become increasingly significant in scholarly discussions on the great artistic traditions of the subcontinent, and debates continue about their aesthetic merits and relevance within art collections.[1] Reassessing how we define "Sikh art" presents an opportunity to allow textiles—which have historically been overshadowed by art historical preference for monumental sculpture and miniature painting—to occupy an important place within our understanding of artistic practice from the region.[2] Regardless of whether scholars define these objects as "art" or as "commodities," textiles make a regular appearance in the religious practices of Sikhism. For example, cloth is worn over the heads of men and women who enter a *gurdwara*, and decorative fabric is used to cover the *Guru Granth Sahib* and very often is incorporated as a canopy over both the holy book and the reader. During ritual occasions, such as weddings, a *chaddar,* or cloth veil, is held above a bride as she enters the marriage hall, and is later used to link the bride and groom as they circumambulate the *Guru Granth Sahib* during the singing of *shabads,* or hymns.

The value of textiles within Sikh art history and cultural practice was not lost on Mrs. Satinder Kaur and Dr. Narinder Singh Kapany, who began collecting textiles in 2004. Amongst the textile treasures of their Kapany Collection are several embroidered textiles known as *phulkaris* (loosely translated as "flower work" or "floral craft"), an art form prized for its folk origins and elaborate use of counted darning stitches.[3] These textiles are closely linked to the Punjab region, and in more recent years have been intimately tied to Sikh identity.[4] It is not surprising that many scholars have traced the landscape of Punjab within the abstracted floral forms of *phulkaris*.[5] Examining these designs, one can imagine an artist drawing inspiration from the fields of wheat, corn, and barley found in the landscape around her, and using the counted darning stitch as a way to render these forms into geometric patterns.

Take, for example, two *phulkaris* in the collection (Figs. 13.1 and 13.2), each with a rhythmic repeating pattern of wheat-like vegetal forms that appear throughout the central portion of the cloth. The embroiderer has artfully arranged these motifs across the textile to produce an asymmetrical pattern, which, when connected by the repetition of magenta-, light green-, white-, and golden-colored silk thread known as *pat,* evokes a densely planted field. In the borders of these cloths the artist depicted four-petaled floral forms (sometimes known as *char kalias*), stylized earrings, and tight floral bud forms (considered by some to recall *mirchi,* or chili pepper motifs), which were particularly popular in *phulkaris* from the Malwa region of Punjab.

Another textile (Figure 13.3) in the

Fig. 13.1, *Phulkari with vegetal, floral, and jewelry motifs,* Punjab, Ca. 1900
Colored silk thread on cotton, 218.1 × 138.4 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 13.2, *Phulkari with vegetal, floral, and jewelry motifs,* Punjab, Ca. 1900
Colored silk thread on cotton, 252.7 × 127 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 13.3, *Phulkari with floral and bird motifs,* Punjab, Ca. 1900,
Colored silk thread on cotton, 127 × 249 cm, Kapany Collection

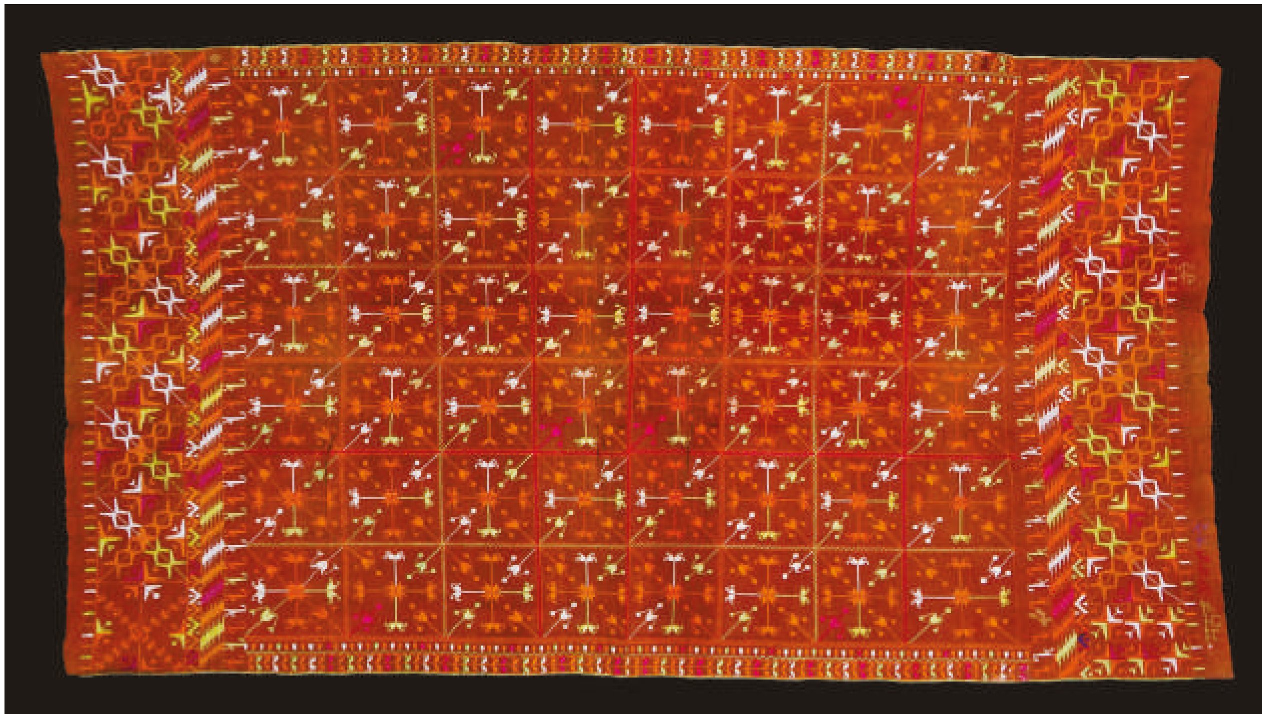

Fig. 13.4, *Phulkari with floral and bird forms and embroidered inscription,* Punjab, Ca. 1900,
Colored silk thread on cotton, 132.1 × 219.7 cm, Kapany Collection

collection exemplifies one of the most striking visual features of *phulkaris*: the juxtaposition of a handspun, handwoven cotton base cloth known as *khaddar* or *khadi* with shiny silk *pat* used as the embroidery thread. The combination of rough and smooth, dull and satiny, makes the silk *pat*, here dyed in vibrant shades of gold, orange, magenta, and white, appear even more lustrous against the comparably muted *khaddar*, which has a characteristically deep-red hue from being dyed with the roots of a locally sourced plant known as madder (*rubia cordifolia*).

Phulkaris are well-known as the textile work of women, particularly those from Jat communities living in rural locations throughout Punjab, who historically embroidered these elaborate cloths for their personal or family use during breaks from agricultural labor and domestic chores. Very often *phulkaris* were worn as *odhinis* (oversized shawls or veils), with simpler styles used for daily wear and more intricate designs reserved for wedding rituals or special social functions. In some cases *phulkaris* were used as *bistre* or bedding, draped over dowry chests and furnishings, and carried by a bride to her new home after marriage. Despite the personal connection many women had with *phulkaris*, rarely did an embroiderer mark a *phulkari* with her name or a textual inscription, often rendering the artist anonymous.[6]

One *phulkari* in the Kapany Collection (Fig. 13.4) is particularly unusual in that it includes an embroidered inscription on one edge of the cloth. It reads: ਸਨਤੀਂ ਠਾਕਰੀ ਨੰਦੋ ਭਾਗ ਦਾ ਚੰਦੋ ਦਾਨੀ ਕਟਾਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਚੰਦੋ (*Sunteen Thhakree Nundo bhag da Chundo Dani Katar Singh Chundo*).[7] It is possible that this inscription makes reference to four different women (Sunteen, Thhakree, Nundo, and Chundo) who may have worked collectively on this *phulkari*, a practice that was not unusual. It may also be that a single embroiderer created this *phulkari* and chose to inscribe the names of her friends or relatives in the cloth as a kind of homage to their relationships. That the artist embroidered these four names using four colors of thread suggests intentionality as well as a desire to highlight these individuals. This inscription is a kind of signature, marking the presence of the embroiderer(s), and revealing something of the maker(s) behind the cloth.

Another textile from the collection (Fig. 13.5) shows the great diversity of motifs and patterns that exist within *phulkaris,* as well as the ways in which artists juxtaposed forms and embroidery stitches to create unique compositions. Leaf-like motifs (which recall traditional *pankhas,* or fans) radiate from multicolored squares and appear in a precise grid embroidered across the body of the cloth. Notably, the artist has incorporated several embroidery stitches in making this *phulkari,* including herringbone, running, and chain, as well as surface darning stitches—the presence of which illustrates the variety of stitches used in this rich art form. The density of embroidered stitches that appear in the border of this *phulkari* are akin to the style of embroidery on so-called *bagh,* or garden, *phulkaris*, which were made throughout Punjab and most famously in the western region of Hazara, now in Pakistan. However, this particular border more closely resembles *phulkaris* from eastern Punjab in which artists embroider consecutive rows of darning stitches into geometric patterns and bands of color.

Similar bands of color also appear in two other *phulkaris* from the Kapany Collection (Figs. 13.6 and 13.7), particularly in the border patterns, and take on the form of a popular *phulkari* motif known by some artists as *kaudi,* or cowrie shells. Charming depictions of animal figures appear in neat rows flanking the body of the large embroidered lozenge that characterize Figure 13.6. Deep golden yellow silk *pat* rendered in an inverted diamond pattern dominates the body of Figure 13.7. Both cloths are examples of *baghs*, which typically took over one year to embroider and were made to be worn during festive occasions. As with many *phulkaris,* the Kapany Collection's *baghs* similarly reveal a degree of abstraction, so much so that any reference to actual flowers from nature is lost amongst the

bold color blocking of stripes and lozenge motifs. These exquisitely embroidered textiles are the most labor-intensive style of *phulkaris*; the rough *khaddar* base cloth is barely detectable beneath a dense "garden" of embroidered forms, and each stitch reveals the artist's mastery of embroidery.

Figurative *phulkaris,* such as the *sainchi* (Fig. 13.8) and *darshan dwar* (Fig. 13.9) *phulkaris* from the Kapany Collection, offer yet another example of the diversity of this art form.[8] Many scholars believe that *sainchi phulkaris,* found primarily in the eastern regions of Punjab, particularly in and around Bhatinda, depict scenes from everyday life. As textile collector S. S. Hitkari has argued, "the embroiderer puts on the cloth what she sees all around her in the village. In fact these *phulkaris* encompass the whole life of the village. Domestic scenes of playing the *charkha* or churning the curd or making a cone from the yarn or a woman grinding corn in a *chakki*; kitchen accessories like *brinjal*, pumpkin, chillies; toys like children's rattles and things of everyday use like combs are embroidered" (Hitkari 1980: 30).

The *sainchi phulkari* from the Kapany Collection at first glance seems to represent such everyday objects. The artist has depicted chickens and peahens as well as small cassia flowers in red and yellow silk *pat*, all scattered across the body of the cloth. A small *chaupa*—a local game similar to *pachisi*—appears in one section of the *phulkari* not far from a depiction of a train and a few pieces of jewelry. Dominating the center of the cloth are three stylized floral forms, while the four corners of the *phulkari* depict fantastical peacocks. Near the center of the cloth is a beautifully articulated depiction of a horse made from yellow silk and white cotton threads. Its multicolored bridle, delicate yellow reins and braided mane, and red legs, which bend to indicate movement, all suggest that the artist spent time trying to render the animal with a degree of naturalism—perhaps an indication that the artist worked "from life," embroidering this depiction of a horse based on observations of actual horses near her home. The appearance of the jewelry on the *phulkari,* however, suggest that what we see are not merely reflections of everyday life, but also perhaps dreams and desires: the fantasy of having or wearing elaborate gold necklaces and nose rings different from the adornments of everyday life. It is also possible that such depictions of jewelry are meant to be wish-fulfilling—embroidering elaborate wedding jewelry as a way to hope for a good marital match or a happy union.

While most *phulkaris* incorporate secular themes, such as the "everyday" scenes of a *sainchi* or the abstracted floral forms of a *bagh*, there are some *phulkaris* that make reference to mythology or religious practice. For example, the so-called *darshan dwar phulkari* from the Kapany Collection depicts the gateways or entrances (*dwar* or *dwara*) of a religious space such as a temple or *gurudwara*. These embroidered gateways may even metaphorically refer to the doorway to the divine itself. Oral tradition suggests that many of these *phulkaris* were given by women to temples and *gurudwaras* in the form of *chaddars* to cover trays of offerings and also as symbolic prayers.

Furthermore, many sources assert that women would recite prayers before beginning embroidery or sing folk songs while stitching. In some cases, women would begin embroidering after the distribution of sweets and *prasad* (blessed food or divine leftovers), suggesting that the very act of creating a *phulkari* is religious in nature or marked as sacred (Singh 1991: 42; Hitkari 1980: 15; Dhamija 2007).

Another regional form of embroidery represented within the Kapany Collection are *rumals*, originally from the Pahari or Punjab hills and particularly connected with princely states of the Himachal region. As with *phulkaris*, *rumals* use darning stitches to depict figurative compositions of religious subjects and court scenes such as royal assemblies, hunts, and battles—in many ways akin to the rich Pahari painting tradition. The *rumal* (Fig.

Fig. 13.5, *Phulkari with vegetal and geometric forms,* Punjab, Ca. 1900,
Colored silk thread on cotton, 150 × 259.1 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 13.6, *Bagh phulkari with central lozenge,* Eastern Punjab, Ca. 1900
Colored silk thread on cotton, 242.6 × 137.2 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 13.7, *Bagh phulkari with inverted diamond form,* Punjab, 20th century,
Colored silk thread on cotton, 241.3 × 129.5 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 13.8, *Sainchi phulkari,* Eastern Punjab, Ca. 1900, Colored silk thread on cotton, 129.5 × 215.9 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 13.9, *Darshan dwar phulkari*, Punjab, Ca. 1900, Colored silk thread on cotton, 218.4 × 119.4 cm, Kapany Collection

13.10) in the Kapany Collection, however, is atypical of most Pahari *rumals* in that it uses a satin silk base cloth and a significant amount of metallic-wrapped thread couched onto the surface, suggesting its high value for the maker or user of the cloth.[9] Despite these differences, it is likely that the *rumal* connects to a larger tradition of embroidered coverlets for trays of gifts or food for weddings or other ceremonies (Stronge 2001: 130). Given the depiction on the cloth of Guru Nanak seated alongside his Hindu attendant Bala, who holds a peacock feather fan, and his Muslim minstrel Mardana, who carries a rebec, the religious reference of the *rumal* is clear. It may be possible that this cloth was once used as a covering for the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

The artist of this *rumal* depicts the three figures barefoot and seated beneath a tree. A birdcage holding a small green parrot hangs from one of the tree's branches. Bala and Mardana appear in profile and face Guru Nanak, whom the artist has rendered from a frontal perspective, with his eyes open and engaged with the viewer. Guru Nanak leans against a bolster pillow and holds a strand of prayer beads in his right hand. His left hand reaches down to touch a piece of fabric below where he sits, which, along with the nimbus that surrounds his head, suggests that Guru Nanak is an important—almost sacred—figure in the scene. Bala's feather fan (*merchaul)*, presumably directed toward Guru Nanak to keep him cool and free of insects, reinforces the guru's high status. The embroiderer has depicted in needle and thread a peaceful and intimate scene of devotion. Similar silk *rumals* appear in other collections, including one made in Shanghai in ca. 1910 that depicts the ten Sikh Gurus and is currently in the Suresh Balla Collection, Ontario, Canada (Bharadia 2000: 26) as well as a similar piece in the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco (1998.108).

Another unusual figurative textile (Fig. 13.11) in the Kapany Collection is a wool pile carpet, originally from Iran, which depicts Sher Singh, son of Maharajah Ranjit Singh and

ruler of Punjab until 1843, seated in an outdoor courtyard alongside other male figures, likely noblemen or royal dignitaries. Seven of the men appear holding falcons, perhaps suggesting participation in the elite practice of falconry, which was a popular sport in South Asian royal courts. Mughal rulers also used falcons for hunting purposes, and were often depicted in paintings alongside these majestic birds. Sher Singh, who is identifiable by the bejeweled crown and feather ornament that adorns his turban, sits on a chair in front of an attendant who fans him with a fly-whisk, another symbol of royalty. Particularly striking in the carpet is the ingenious combination of perspectives that the weaver has presented to the viewer: we see in the foreground what appear to be a garden and fountain depicted from an overhead vantage point, while Sher Singh and the other dignitaries appear in profile as if viewed on the same plane. The falcons held by many of the men depicted in the carpet may be a reference to *Baaz*, the white falcon associated with the Sikh Guru Gobind Singh.

The textiles in the Kapany Collection are diverse not only for their materials, styles, and processes of making, but also for their connections to Sikhism. The wool carpet and silk *rumals* most directly reference key historical figures to the faith. *Phulkaris*, by contrast, were made by Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh women alike, and rather than suggesting a connection to one specific religion, perhaps their most significant cultural connection is to place and region—that is, to Punjab. As these textiles circulated outside Punjab, their meanings have shifted and changed. The presence of *phulkaris* in the Kapany Collection signals a reaffirmation of the value of *phulkaris* within Sikh culture and their strong connection to the land of the five rivers.

Fig. 13.10, *Textile wrap with Guru Nanak, Bhai Bala, and Mardana,* Punjab or Shanghai, Ca. 1900, Silk, cotton, and metallic-wrapped thread on silk, 43 × 43 cm, Kapany Collection

Overleaf: Fig. 13.11, *A Kirman pictorial rug,* Southeast Persia, Ca. 1900, Wool, 218 × 145 cm, Kapany Collection

Endnotes

[1] Of particular note is the recent exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum, *The Fabric of India* (October 2, 2015, to January 10, 2016), which focused on the diverse history of handmade textiles from India; the American Council for Southern Asian Art panel on textiles (*Masterpiece or Craft, Courtly or Popular? Situating Textiles in Southern Asian Visual Culture,* organized by Rebecca Brown) at the College Art Association conference in Chicago in 2010, which highlighted textiles as important artistic objects, not just interesting ethnographic artifacts; and the *Kantha* exhibition organized by the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 2010, which placed textiles at the forefront of public discussions of South Asian art and highlighted major collectors of textiles from the region.

[2] Existing scholarship that connects textiles to Sikhism includes Rosemary Crill's chapter "Textiles in the Punjab" from Stronge, *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms*, 115–33, as well as Frank Ames's book *Woven Masterpieces of Sikh Heritage* (Suffolk, 2010). What is surprising is that the majority of books that focus on Sikh art do not include textiles amongst the objects discussed. See, for example, Anand 1982; Singh 1986; Kapany and Brown 1999; and Singh 2003.

[3] A rich variety of embroidery stitches are used on *phulkaris* beyond the dominant darning stitch. Such stitches include herringbone, cretan, running, stem, and buttonhole stitches.

[4] Goswamy and Smith close their catalogue with several color plates of *phulkari* embroidery, while Goswamy's catalogue for the exhibition *Piety and Splendour* at the National Museum in New Delhi similarly highlights *phulkaris* as important objects of Sikh cultural practice (Goswamy and Smith 2007; Goswamy 2000). Additionally, Kushwant Singh includes *phulkaris* as the only form of textile art in his exhibition catalogue *Warm and Rich and Fearless*, and highlights the fact that they were made by Sikh artists or for Sikh patrons (Singh 1991). Outside of academia, popular exhibitions organized by the 1469 Workshop in New Delhi feature *phulkaris* as icons for Sikh identity and the Punjabi products sold in its stores.

[5] S. S. Hitkari, in particular, connects specific *phulkari* motifs to vegetables, fruits, flowers, and animal forms, and explains that the figurative *sainchi phulkari* of the eastern regions of Punjab reference scenes of daily life in Punjabi villages (Hitkari 1980 and 2003).

[6] Some *phulkari* include names inscribed in pen on either the front or the reverse of the cloth, though these names more likely refer to the weaver of the cloth, the dyer, or in some cases an outside patron, and *not* the embroiderer.

[7] I am grateful to all who contributed their thoughts on the translation and interpretation of this inscription. In particular, thanks go to Professor Upkar Ubhi, Mr. Gurdip Singh, Dr. Kusum Chopra, and Dr. Joginder Ahluwalia.

[8] While the term *darshan dwar* is easily translated from Hindi, Urdu, and Punjabi as "gateway of the divine," the term *sainchi* has proved more difficult to render into English. It is possible that *sainchi* has its roots in the word *sucha,* meaning original, pure, or uncontaminated. However, some scholars argue that *sainchi phulkaris* are connected to *sanjhi*, a form of the Hindu goddess worshipped throughout North India (Dhamija 2013).

[9] Indeed, one wonders about the precise provenance of this cloth. The comparable piece in the Suresh Bhalla Collection opens up for further study the history of cloths of this nature made outside of South Asia.

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Fig. 13.12, *A Sikh wedding procession,* India, Punjab state, Ca. 1850–1900, Opaque watercolors on paper, 31.8 × 54.6 cm, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.70

Singh
2007

14

Devotion, Work, and Play in Contemporary Sikh Art

Mary-Ann Milford-Lutzker

The Sikh community has always embraced life to its fullest. Its history is filled with the extraordinary achievements of the devout, the warriors, the agriculturalists, and the artisans, as they have exulted in the joy of sports and play. Myths have evolved around the near-magical feats of heroes and heroines of the past who have served to inspire successive generations up to the present. Many of the legends are deeply embedded in the Sikh ethos, however most have universal appeal. Guru Nanak, the first great teacher of Sikhism, through his teachings and spiritual life recalls the lives of the Buddha and Jesus Christ; the great achievements of Ranjit Singh draw parallels with Alexander the Great, who crossed the Indus Valley into the Punjab area that is home to the Sikhs, with Ashoka, the first emperor of India who embraced Buddhism, and with Akbar, the greatest of the Mughal emperors. Their delight in play and romance, so necessary for a balanced life, resonates with the world of Krishna. Sikh artists celebrate all of life in their paintings while revealing great pride in their heritage.

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, outstanding internationally recognized Sikh artists have been inspired to paint and include in their oeuvre the epic myths, tales, and accomplishments of Sikh culture. Perhaps the most significant Indian artist of the twentieth century who led the Indian art scene into international modernism was Amrita Sher-Gil (1913–1941), the daughter of Umrao Singh Sher-Gil (1870–1954), a Sikh scholar and an early pioneer of photography in India.[1] Amrita Sher-Gil lived between three worlds: Budapest, Shimla, and Paris. In 1934 she returned to India, where she saw the great Ajanta cave murals that were painted in the fifth century depicting *Jataka Tales* of the former lives of the Buddha; these inspired her to paint what she felt was truly hers—that is, the people of India, the peasants, villagers, and holy men and women. Amrita

Left: Fig. 14.20, *Milkha Singh*, Sukhpreet Singh, 2007, Oil on canvas, 73.7 × 96.5 cm, Kapany Collection

Figs. 14.1a and 14.1b *(opposite page)*, *Immersion/Emergence,* Arpana Caur, 2001
Oil on canvas, 113.66 × 173.99 cm, Kapany Collection

has had a lasting effect on the development of art in India and especially with regard to the inspiration she has provided to women artists, one of the more important of whom is Arpana Caur (b. 1954), who is unquestionably the most accomplished and well-known Sikh artist today.[2]

Sikh artists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries include Manjit Bawa (1941–2008), who was born in Dhuri, Punjab, in 1941, the year of Amrita Sher-Gil's untimely death.[3] He was one of India's leading contemporary painters who was brought up on the teachings of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, as well as stories from the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, and the *Puranas.* Throughout his distinctive career Manjit Bawa infused his subjects with ethereal color and a sense of mystical spirituality that he described as the emanations of memories replete with images of Krishna, Shiva, and Kali. Arpita Singh (b. 1937) is acknowledged as one of India's foremost women artists; she paints with great insight the quotidian world of human existence; her women are old and bear the scars of life on their shoulders, while her men are encumbered by unspoken burdens. In 1991, departing from her known themes, Arpita illustrated Khushwant Singh's translation of *The Hymns of Guru Nanak;* her deeply sensitive renderings of the Guru's songs add to the beauty of the emotions expressed.[4] Perhaps the most distinctive Sikh artists today are Amrit and Rabindra Kaur Singh, identical twins, who were born in London and live near Manchester in England.[5] The Singh Twins, as they are known, collaborate on most of their paintings, often working simultaneously on the same piece. Their style has evolved from Mughal and Rajput manuscript styles to address their perceptive and often highly critical views of the political, social, and cultural scene in the Indian diaspora in England, which are often laced with a touch of humor and wit.

Fig. 14.2
Guru Nanak,
Arpana Caur, 2004,
Oil on canvas,
137.16 × 154.94 cm,
Rajinder S. Kapany
Collection

Devotion

Guru Nanak (1469–1539), the spiritual father of Sikhism, led by example. In the *Janamsakhis* (life stories), tales unfold of his remarkable birth and his prescient ability to resolve complex philosophical ques-

tions from an early age. In 1499 when he was thirty he had a vision that recalls the Enlightenment of the Buddha some one thousand years earlier, in which God offered him *amrita,* the nectar of immortality, and Nanak vowed to spread the teachings of God in the name of Sikhism.

Arpana Caur's paintings of *Guru Nanak* investigate the moment of his vision, when he entered the waters of the Kali Bein and was submerged for three days, after which he emerged filled with the glory of God. When he came out of the waters he uttered some of the more profound verses ever uttered on the oneness of all beings. As with many myths and legends, heroes must undergo ritual exile that entails separation, isolation, and initiation in order to become inspiring and mature leaders. Nanak's immersion provides the occasion for his revelation and insight that he expressed as *Ikk Oan Kar* ("The One Divine Being"), in which he proclaimed that there are neither Hindus nor Muslims, only humans. His profound insight provides the humanistic keystone for Sikh culture.

Fig. 14.3
Endless Journey,
Arpana Caur, 2002
Oil on canvas,
111.76 × 175.26 cm,
Kapany Collection

Guru Nanak has been depicted in drawings and paintings throughout the ages, usually as a wandering ascetic or as a teacher. In Arpana Caur's powerful paintings she reveals deeper perceptions into the mysteries of the visionary experience that Guru Nanak underwent. In her painting she shows Nanak submerged in the watery depths (Fig. 14.1a); his body is outlined in blue, the same blue as the waves that wash over him as he sits quietly in a yogic posture with his eyes downcast appearing to be in deep meditation and even deeper in the water than the fish swimming above him. Blue symbolizes eternity and contrasts with the intense red background, the color of life, passion, power, and blood; these are the colors that become the transformative force that enter into Nanak's being after which he is enveloped in the golden glow of joy and enlightenment, as he rises above the waters (Fig. 14.1b). In this second painting Guru Nanak appears to levitate, his arms thrust forward as if supporting himself, as he gazes upward to the source of his enlightenment.

Fig. 14.4, *Sohni Mahiwal,*
Arpana Caur, 2000
Oil on canvas,
91.4 × 61 cm,
Kapany Collection

In a third painting of Guru Nanak (Fig. 14.2), he has become part of the deep green firmament and one with God. Luminous bright yellow contours outline his body, emanating a spiritual energy that encloses the moon, stars and oceans, mountains and forests. To convey that Guru Nanak embraces the living world, men are shown shooting at each other with rifles as disoriented animals flee the onslaught. As he fingers his *mala* beads with his left hand, a blue-leafed tree of life appears on his right arm. Guru Nanak stares directly out, meeting the gaze of devotees.

Arpana Caur was born in Delhi in 1954, seven years after the Partition of India. Her family, like millions of others, had been uprooted from their home in what is now Pakistan, and fled to India. She grew up in a world that was torn apart by communal dissension. Her grandfather, a physician, tended to the sick, injured, poor, and homeless, and as a young girl Arpana Caur went with her mother to distribute rice, food, and blankets to the destitute. She grew up in an atmosphere of devout selflessness that would provide the background for her creative energy. Stories of the great religious teachers of the past who spent their lives traveling from one area to another, spreading their vision of humanity, have inspired the artist Arpana Caur.

Endless Journey (Fig. 14.3) is a painting of a large footprint placed diagonally across the canvas against a fiery red and orange background. Within the footprint a radiant image of Guru Nanak, clothed in gold, walks above a blue flowering tree of life with his pilgrim's staff in his right hand, reminding devotees of the long journeys he undertook by foot throughout the Punjab, and of his visits to Hindu and Muslim sacred places, spreading the message of *Ikk Oan Kar,* his message of One God, the equality of all people, the rejection of the caste system, and the futility of physical existence. There is also metaphorical allusion to the recent memory of the great exodus of Sikhs from Pakistan in 1947. Sacred footprints are revered in India; they represent both the hallowed ground upon which the Buddha

Fig. 14.5, *Mata Khivi,*
Devender Singh, 2011
Oil on canvas, 91.4 × 63 cm,
Kapany Collection

traveled, and the cosmic stance of Vishnu, the great god who maintains harmony throughout the universe. India, despite all the turmoil, provided a haven for wanderers and fleeing refugees in the twentieth century, whether Sikh or Tibetan.

In Sufi thought *ishq majazi* ("human love") is the route to *ishq haqiqi* ("love for God"). In the Hindu *bhakti* movement, human love transcends earthly love for the love of God, which is exemplified by the intense and passionate love of Krishna and Radha. The legend of Sohni and Mahiwal epitomizes the great longings of two young lovers. Arpana Caur has painted several versions of this well-known Punjabi legend in which Sohni, the beautiful young daughter of a potter, swims across the Chenab River each night to meet with Mahiwal, a rich trader who, smitten with love for Sohni, became a buffalo herder to be closer to her.[6]

Sohni, however, had been married to another potter when her transgressive love was discovered. Undeterred, Sohni would set out each night and swim across the Chenab River, keeping herself afloat on one of the ceramic pots that she had made and decorated. One day her jealous sister-in-law decided to replace her pot with an unbaked clay pot, which dissolved as Sohni swam across the river, and she drowned. Mahiwal, seeing Sohni drowning, leapt into the water to save her but drowned as well, and the two lovers, true to their devotion to each other, met their deaths together and were transported spiritually to the One God. In the painting owned by Dr. Narinder Kapany (Fig. 14.4) Arpana Caur has divided the canvas into three narrative rectangles.

In the lower-left corner, Sohni, encircled by luscious soft pink, yellow, and green crystal-like fingers of rocks, gazes up at Mahiwal in the upper-right corner. They are separated by the flowing Chenab River and rows of clay pots, one of which is broken. Further dividing the lovers is a yellow electrical cord that is filled with symbolic meaning, as it could provide the connection between the two, but, dangling as it does above the swift-flowing water, it sends an ominous warning

Fig. 14.6, *Bibi Bhani*
Devender Singh
2011, Oil on canvas
91.4 × 63 cm Kapany Collection

that is reinforced by the dark outlines of pots that float along the water. The crystalline fingers that reach toward Mahiwal intensify the earthbound Sohni's great yearnings for the divine. The sensitivity and inspiration with which Arpana Caur has made this painting reflects her own deep devotion.

Fig. 14.7
Maharani Jind Kaur
Devender Singh
2011, Oil on canvas
91.4 × 63 cm
Kapany Collection

Work

A leading tenet of Sikh life is the selfless provision of food for all. Mata Khivi (1506–1582) was the wife of Guru Angad Dev, the second Sikh Guru. She established free, communal kitchens known as *langars*. After Guru Angad Dev's death Mata Khivi continued to work with successive Gurus and helped to establish the concept of *langar* as a permanent institution in Sikhism. To this day a visit to a *gurudhwara,* or Sikh temple, would not be complete without partaking of communal food that has been cooked in the temple's kitchens. Devender Singh (b. 1947), an artist born in Amritsar, the most holy city of the Sikhs, has made a series of paintings of great Sikh women, including one of Mata Khivi (Fig. 14.5).[7]

In this painting Mata Khivi is depicted in the center of the canvas dressed in Punjabi style *salwar-chemiz.* She is stirring an enormous pot that is suspended over flames that lick up its sides. Behind her to the upper left a group of women are seated around a large pan making *chapatis,* while to the right men are seated in rows eating. The colors of Mata Khivi's garments and the cooking implements are formed from sharp angular patterns that recall panes of stained glass as they overlap each other with translucent luminescence.

Bibi Bhani (1535–1598), another devoted sixteenth-century Sikh woman, was the wife of Guru Ram Das, the mother of Guru Arjan Dev, the grandmother of Guru Hargobind, and the great-grandmother of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Bibi Bhani was considered the embodiment of

Fig. 14.8a, *Nabha Sikhs at their laundry,* H. J. Stowitts, Ca. 1929–1930, Oil on canvas, 124.5 × 96.5 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 14.8b, *Sikh Enamel Worker,* H. J. Stowitts, Ca. 1929–1930
Oil on canvas, 124.5 × 96.5 cm, Kapany Collection

order, service, and humility, and an inspiration to all Sikh women who follow the guiding principles of Sikhism. In a brilliantly colored painting of Bibi Bhani (Fig. 14.6), Devender Singh shows her caring for her elderly father, Guru Amar Das, as she presents him with a meal.

Her responsibilities as a dutiful daughter and caring mother are portrayed as her young son, the future Guru Arjan Dev, is shown playfully pulling at the *charpoi* sheet on which his grandfather sits. As in his painting of Mata Khivi, Devender Singh has applied colors in his distinctive style, encircling the figures in shards of stained-glass-like translucent light that centers with a halo-like effect around the head of Guru Amar Das.

In another painting by Devender Singh, he portrays Maharani Jind Kaur (1817–1863), the youngest wife of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and the mother of Maharaja Duleep Singh, the last Sikh sovereign of the Punjab. In 1843 Duleep Singh, still a child, was proclaimed ruler of the Punjab by the *Khalsa* Army, and Maharani Jind Kaur was appointed his regent. She managed state affairs, held court, and reviewed the *Khalsa* troops.

In this painting (Fig. 14.7) Maharani Jind Kaur, dressed in flowing gold and pink Punjabi robes, addresses the *Khalsa* Supreme Council and Panchayat members who stand facing her. The cool blue of the somber ministers' clothes and turbans forms a striking contrast to the warmth and glow that emanates from the dynamic figure of the maharani.

Portraits

Besides the great leadership shown by the leaders of the Sikh community, another tenet of Sikhism is the commitment to physical work in all its aspects, whether as craftspeople, agriculturalists, carpenters, builders, or weavers. The artist H. J. Stowitts's painting

Fig. 14.9, *Narinder Singh Kapany,* Sukhpreet Singh, 2010, Oil on canvas
60.96 × 83.82 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 14.10, *Gulli Danda,* Sukhpreet Singh, 2006, Oil on canvas, 40.64 × 50.8 cm, Kapany Collection

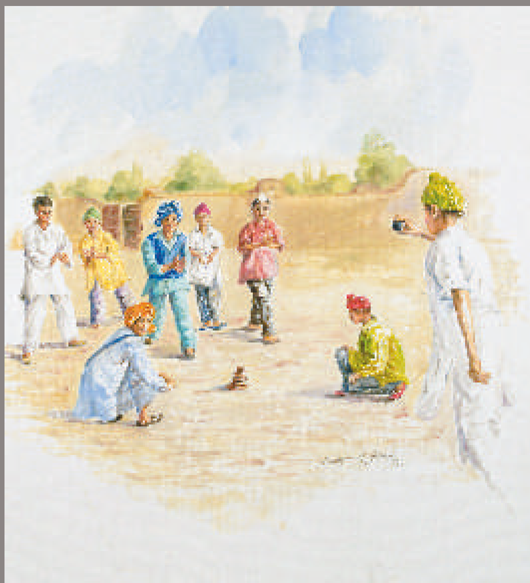

Fig. 14.11, *Pitho,* Sukhpreet Singh, 2006, Oil on canvas, 40.64 × 50.8 cm, Kapany Collection

of an enamelist applying colors to the stopper of a tall turquoise-colored bottle (Fig. 14.8b) captures the concentration of this craftsman who sits in the time-honored position in which so many artists from the Mughal period onward are shown.

He wears his orange turban tied in the Sikh fashion, and a loose white robe that imparts an almost spiritual quality to the work that he is engaged in.

Sukhpreet Singh (b. 1969 in Ludhiana, Punjab), a portraitist whose interests lie in depicting the personalities of his sitters, has captured the essence of Dr. Narinder Kapany (Fig. 14.9).[8]

Dr. Kapany epitomizes the qualities that are so important to all Sikhs. Through dedication, vision, hard work, and a great generosity of spirit he has become one of the leading physicists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Known as the "Father of Fiber Optics," he discovered the impossible, a way of bending light through filaments of glass. His curious mind and inventiveness, as well as his incredible determination, have contributed to the discovery of unimagined communications and medical procedures. In this portrait Sukhpreet Singh shows the rugged features of a man who has achieved so much in his life; like the heroic figures painted by Devender Singh, Dr. Kapany is a leader, a mentor, and an inspiration to all who know him.

Play

Sukhpreet Singh is interested in painting people. He has captured the magic of children engrossed in games, and the extraordinary achievements of sportsmen and sportswomen. Play, and by extension sports, is important in the Sikh community. Embedded in play are the seeds of teamwork and good citizenship that are valued characteristics in human relationships. Sukhpreet Singh, through close observation, illustrates both the seriousness and the fun that children experience during play. In his painting of *gulli danda* (Fig. 14.10) three young boys are playing with a stick, or *danda,* and a peg, or *gulli.*

In an illustration of *pitho* (Fig. 14.11), two

Fig. 14.12, *Chhatappu,* Sukhpreet Singh, 2006, Oil on canvas,
50.8 × 40.64 cm, Kapany Collection

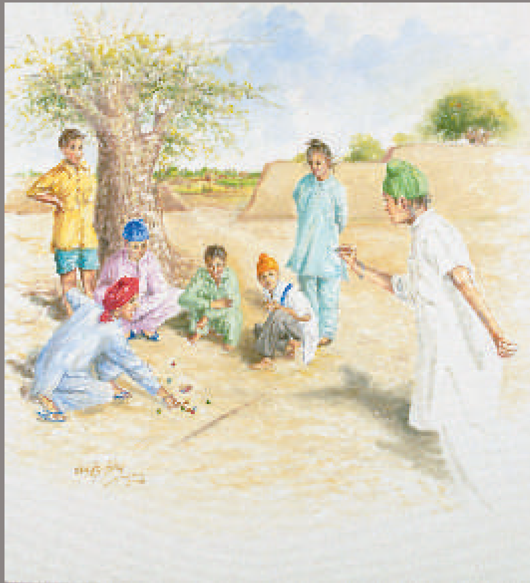

Fig. 14.13, *Bante,* Sukhpreet Singh, 2006, Oil on canvas, 40.64 × 50.8 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 14.14, *Geetay,* Sukhpreet Singh, 2006, Oil on canvas, 40.64 × 50.8 cm, Kapany Collection

teams of young boys surround a stack of stones and vie to see which team can knock down the stack from the furthest distance. Observers from each team are carefully monitoring the game.

One of the oldest universal games is *bante,* or marbles. In this illustration (Fig. 14.13) a group of teenagers take turns in aiming their marbles at the hole in the ground. This is a game in which the winner not only gains points but also "takes home the marbles," thus the game is excellent for developing motor skills, and it also sows the seeds of economic gain rather like the popular game of Monopoly.

Girls also play numerous games in the Punjab. *Geetay* (Fig. 14.14) is a popular version of "jacks" in which the players strive to pick up five stones with one hand. In Sukhpreet Singh's painting six young girls watch intensely the girl dressed in pink as she deftly tries to scoop up the stones while the girl on the far right dressed in green grimaces, perhaps anticipating that her own score will be outdone! Children love to play *chhatappu,* the Punjabi version of hopscotch (Fig. 14.12). In this painting all eyes are watching the young girl dressed in pink balance on one leg as she deftly kicks the stone into the next square. All these childhood games teach life skills, from physical coordination to individual awareness and confidence, to competitiveness and the importance of teamwork.

Play leads to sports and the achievements of a few who excel in their chosen area. Most people enjoy sports, whether they are actively engaged or are avid spectators, and Sikhs have produced some extraordinary athletes.

Avneet Sidhu (Fig. 14.15) is a world-class athlete who won the gold medal at the 2006 Commonwealth Games, in the Ten-Meter Air Rifle (pairs) event. She also represented India at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, China. In the painting by Sukhpreet Singh, Aveneet Sidhu holds her rifle steady at her shoulder while she gazes directly at her target—the viewer. Wearing a red sports shirt and encircled by a halo of gold rays, she emanates the power of *sakti,* the female principle of the universe.

Captain M. S. Kohli (Fig. 14.16) is an internationally renowned Indian mountaineer

Fig. 14.15, *Avneet Sidhu*, Sukhpreet Singh, 2007, Oil on canvas, 73.66 × 92.71 cm, Kapany Collection

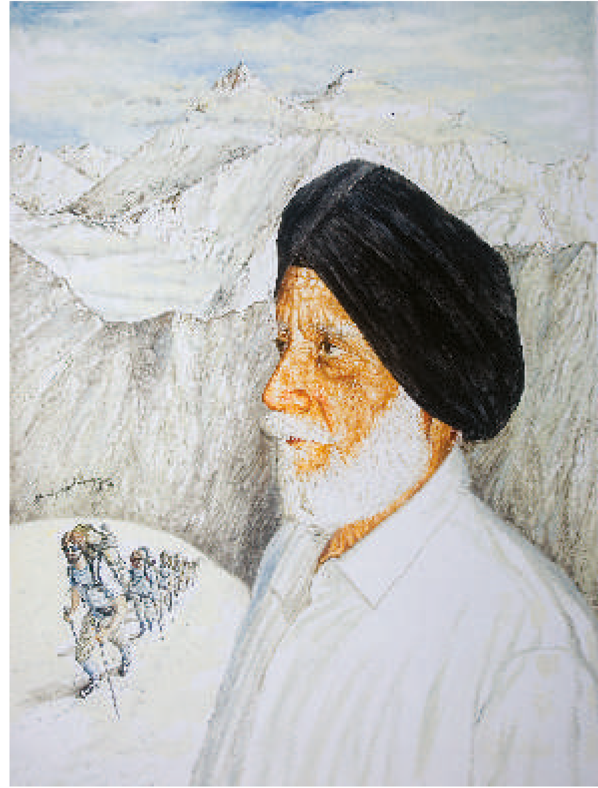

Fig. 14.16, *Captain M. S. Kohli*, Sukhpreet Singh, 2008, Oil on canvas, 73.7 × 96.5 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 14.17, *Tara Singh Bariana*, Sukhpreet Singh, 2008, Oil on canvas, 73.7 × 96.5 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 14.18, *Manjit Kaur*, Sukhpreet Singh, 2007, Oil on canvas, 73.7 × 96.5 cm, Kapany Collection

Fig. 14.19, *Surjit Singh Randhawa*, Sukhpreet Singh, 2007, Oil on canvas, 73.7 × 96.5 cm, Kapany Collection

who led the historic Indian Everest Expedition in 1965 that put nine men on the summit of Mount Everest, a world record that India held for seventeen years.

He has led fourteen major expeditions and was president of the Indian Mountaineering Federation for ten years, from 1983 to 1993. Sukhpreet Singh has captured the resoluteness of Captain Kohli, who rises like a monolith, his bust portrait filling half the canvas. His weatherworn profile face is etched like the granite cliffs that surround him; his white shirt echoes the snow. It is the face of a courageous man who, undeterred, has endured phenomenal obstacles to reach his goals.

In the same vein as Captain Kohli is Tara Singh Bariana (Fig. 14.17). In 1996 Tara Singh Bariana walked from his home in the English Midlands to the *Darbar Sahib* in Amritsar, Punjab. The journey of 16,000 kilometers took him just over a year and a half, 581 days to be exact. He walked through England, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan, to arrive finally in India. His aim was to raise awareness of sports and leisure activities among the Sikh community. Along the way Tara Singh Bariana met innumerable people from various cultures, nationalities, and backgrounds, many of whom offered him food and places to rest. Sukhpreet Singh has painted a bust portrait of him wearing his navy-blue Sikh turban with a hiker depicted on the pocket of his white shirt. Behind him is a map that shows the route he walked from England through the Middle East to India, a daunting undertaking.

Satinder and Narinder Kapany's art collection reflects the richness of Sikh life as portrayed in the telling work of contemporary artists who take pride in their history and culture and through their art share their visions with the world. As can be seen from just a few of the many paintings in their collection, while modern Sikh artists depict their observed world, they also make art from their hearts. The deep personal devotion of Arpana Caur radiates throughout her art, Devender Singh's portraits reveal his interest in portraying the inner strength of great Sikh women, and Sukhpreet Singh has captured the inner essence of Sikhs in his highly personalized portraits of renowned Sikhs and his paintings of *Harmandir Sahib,* the Golden Temple.

Endnotes

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[2] Suneet Chopra and Brig. D. J. Singh, *The Art of Arpana Caur* (New Delhi: Roli Books PVt., Ltd., 2001); Yashodhara Dalmia, ed., *Arpana Caur: Abstract Figuration* (Delhi: Academy of Fine Arts and Literature and the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, 2011); Mala Dayal, *Nanak: The Guru* (New Delhi: Rupa, 2005); Rajesh Kumar Shukla, *Contemporizing Buddha: Paintings by Arpana Caur* (New Delhi: Winsome Books India, 2006).

[3] Ranjit Hoskote, *Manjit Bawa: Modern Miniatures, Recent Paintings* (New York: BosePaciaModern, 2000); Ina Puri, *In Black and White: The Authorized Biography of Manjit Bawa* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 2006).

[4] Khushwant Singh, trans., Arpita Singh, illus., *Hymns of Guru Nanak* (Mumbai: Orient Longman, 1991).

[5] Julian Spalding, ed., *Twin Perspectives: Paintings by Amrit and Rabindra KD Kaur Singh* (Liverpool: The Blue Coat Press, 1999); Ella Datta and Geoff Quilley, *Past Modern: Paintings by the Singh Twins* (New Delhi: National Gallery of Modern Art, 2002); Amrit and Rabindra KD Kaur Singh, *Images of Freedom* (New Delhi: Indialog Publications, 2003).

[6] Arpana Caur, *The Legend of Sohni* (New Delhi: Academy of Fine Arts and Literature, 2001).

[7] References for Devender Singh may be found at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devender_Singh.

[8] The Sikh Foundation, Palo Alto, CA.

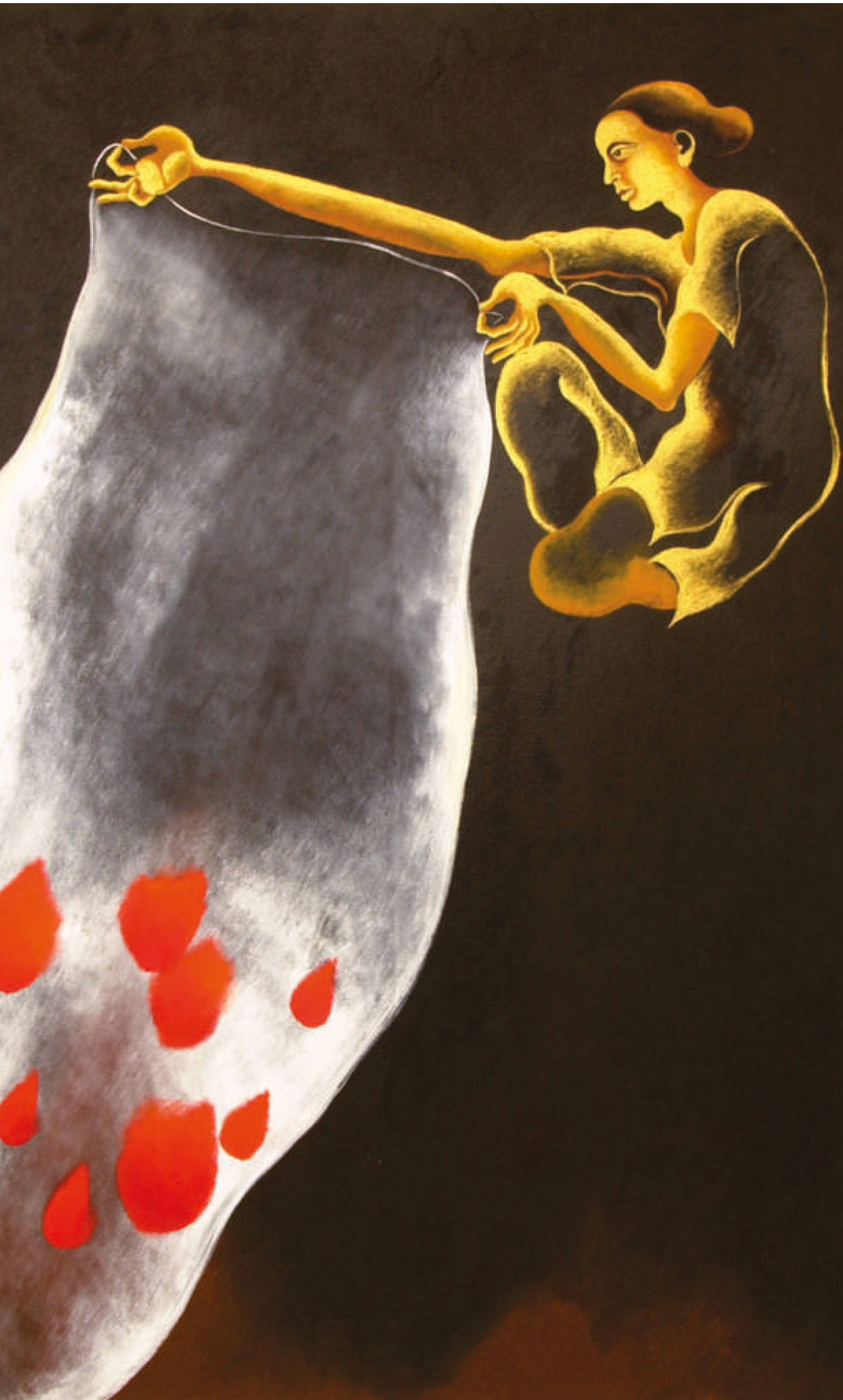

Fig. 14.20,
Wounds of 1984, Arpana Caur, Oil on canvas, 39.3 × 27.5 cm (diptych), Kapany Collection

Sikhs
Legacy of the Punjab

15

Exhibiting the Kapany Collection: Transformations of Sikh Art in Museums

Paul Michael Taylor

With contributing messages from Forrest McGill, Asian Art Museum, and Susan Stronge, Victoria and Albert Museum

Dr. Narinder Singh Kapany's collecting, as evidenced by the range of subject matter within this book, finds aesthetic inspiration sometimes in everyday objects and sometimes in rare ones. Some of his collected works are secular, others spiritual; some historical, others contemporary. All meet Narinder Kapany's (Fig. 15.2) well-known definition of Sikh art (used to identify the scope of the 1992 conference on Sikh art and literature hosted by San Francisco's Asian Art Museum) as art produced "by, for, and/or about the Sikhs" (Kapany and Brown, 1999, p. 17). For many years now, portions of this collection have been displayed at prominent Sikh and South Asian art exhibits in North America and elsewhere.[1] Alongside promoting Sikh art through his collecting, his contributions to long-term or permanent exhibitions (such as his creation of permanent academic positions) has expanded the study and appreciation of Sikh heritage among scholars as well as a broad public. His contribution is more than that of most art patrons; these are lifelong and steady efforts of a cultural ambassador.

From my perspective as a museum curator, and the curator of the Smithsonian Institution's broader Sikh Heritage Project, I can say that the collector provided, for me and for other curators, inspiration and encouragement for our modest efforts as "outsiders" to accurately and compellingly convey a vibrant Sikh heritage. In addition, the scale and quality of Dr. Kapany's assembled collection effectively made it possible to envision very major publications or exhibitions, once the collector agreed to allow use of his collection. For example, in 2000 the Smithsonian initiated, with support from

Left: Fig. 15.1, South entrance of the exhibition *Sikhs: Legacy of the Punjab* at the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (July 2004)

Fig. 15.2, *Dr. Narinder S. Kapany,* Sukhpreet Singh, 2010, Oil on canvas, 83.8 × 61.0 cm

Sikh community leaders, its Sikh Heritage Project, which soon developed a lecture series, performances, and other activities. Yet as described in Taylor (2004), the production of a major exhibition only became a possibility after the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History reached an agreement with Dr. Kapany for the loan of his collection, as the Smithsonian lacked any major Sikh collections of its own.

Thus, it is a little-known fact that the development and growth of the exhibition *Sikhs: Legacy of the Punjab* (Fig. 15.3) was realized only after Dr. Kapany's agreement to lend. (As noted further below, the number of objects needed for long-term exhibition is high, partly due to the inherent fragility of most materials from which Sikh art is traditionally made, requiring regular rotations so that no one object is on display for long.) Soon after that agreement was reached, the Smithsonian and many leaders of Sikh organizations from around the United States held a dinner in honor of Dr. Kapany in Menlo Park, California (April 20, 2002), to thank him for making a new exhibition possible. The resulting exhibition, *Sikhs: Legacy of the Punjab*, opened in July 2004 in Washington, D.C., then later traveled to other venues through 2016, growing in size and in the number of objects exhibited. Since its inception, this exhibition included loans from many other collectors, yet the Kapany artworks formed the initial basis that made the exhibition's development conceivable.

This chapter, which follows the preceding chapters' many detailed examinations of the Kapany Collection as both art and history, has a rather different purpose. It aims to illustrate how significantly works in the

Kapany Collection have enabled exhibitions to change our understanding of Sikhism and Sikh arts, and also to illustrate how the collection itself changed as a result of its use in and modification for exhibition. The treatment of the objects displayed in an exhibition context is quite different from traditional Sikh modes of handling and displaying materials. In many cases, Sikh arts (such as illuminated manuscripts) were not expected to endure, and over time as they wore out they could be replaced or even sometimes carefully and ritually destroyed. Museum preservation methods, by contrast, with their framing, rehousing, and mounting of objects, enhance long-term preservation. In addition, the museum setting itself is quite different from the "natural" setting of many objects, especially of sacred objects such as the *Guru Granth Sahib*, which should be opened, visible, and displayed only in settings far removed from those in standard museums. In all these areas, bringing the Kapany Collection to a broad public may transform the objects themselves while also transforming the public's understanding of them. For this I draw many examples from the Smithsonian exhibition *Sikhs: Legacy of the Punjab*.[2]

First among issues in the museum display of Sikh heritage, let us consider some differences between conceptualizations of "heritage" considered worthy of museum exhibition for Sikh community members, museum staff, and the broader museum public. Using the example of the Smithsonian's long-term traveling exhibition *Sikhs: Legacy of the Punjab*, we can summarize the type of discussion among museum staff and Sikh communities about how Sikh "heritage" should be represented. Integral to this understanding of how heritage functions within the contemporary museum space is this involvement of communities, whose proactive contributions helped shape the significance of art and material culture displayed. Sikhs in the United States, as elsewhere, bear a rich cultural capital that allows them to recognize the meaningfulness of Sikh artworks and material objects, which needed to be decoded for non-Sikh museum visitors to attain an appreciation of Sikh culture—the goal of the Smithsonian exhibition. Dr. Kapany's contributions of both artworks and insight were indispensable in this effort.

Murphy's (2012) excellent study of Sikh materiality of the past was unavailable when the Sikh Heritage Project began attempting to develop an exhibition about the Sikhs, yet its description of the importance of "relics" or materials associated with the original ten Sikh Gurus was quite well foreseen from the earliest attempts to develop the idea of a Smithsonian exhibition. Our community advisory group placed particular emphasis on objects associated with the Sikh Gurus, which it was believed might be available for loan through the help of appropriate government officials in India—who did, in due course, offer to lend several historic Sikh weapons to form the core of a display in Washington. There was little community interest, initially, in exhibiting everyday objects or even contemporary artworks by Sikh artists, none of which seemed to have the high iconic value of objects associated with the Gurus that, by early 2001, were being offered on short-term loan from India.

Yet by early 2002 it was clear that the potential Indian loan of Sikh weapons, if used to introduce Sikhism to a broad American public, would by itself be inappropriate in the difficult post–September 11th, 2001, environment. No matter how this might be softened with explanatory text, and with photographs of images of the Gurus and of courtly scenes in the Punjab, this still potentially could give an audience unfamiliar with the subject an overall impression associating Sikhs with religiously motivated violence (by means of weapons). No amount of label text could undo this impact, especially for those who would like to view the impressive weapons but not even read the text. Obviously, Sikh heritage included a martial tradition, but there needed to be more context, necessitating access to additional objects for display. So it was in this

situation, with strong community support for a Sikh exhibition, that Dr. Kapany's offer, in early 2002, to lend from his own collection had a tremendous impact.

Over time, the Museum's needs for a more contemporaneous presentation of "Sikh heritage," easily communicable to a large non-Sikh public, led to a much broader sense of what constituted museum-worthy subject matter. The broad range of materials in the Kapany Collection was especially rich for this purpose. Sikh community members and which was very well received by visitors, Sikh and non-Sikh—though perhaps the furthest idea from any set out at initial community meetings regarding which kinds of Sikh "heritage" should be included in a display. The exhibition text associated with these photo panels bears the title "The Sikhs: A People of Today and Tomorrow." The label asks and answers a question: "Who are the modern Sikhs? Once, it was easy to describe Sikhs as a people primarily from the Punjab region. As Sikhs emigrated around the world

Fig. 15.3, North entrance to the exhibition *Sikhs: Legacy of the Punjab*, at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, 2004, with a photo montage of life-size images of local Sikhs

advisors no longer emphasized finding relics associated with the Gurus, and borrowed from India, to present their heritage. The relevance of contemporary Sikh life in America was even emphasized by using (in the Washington venue) a composite photo montage at the entrance showing photos of local Sikhs (taken at a nearby *Gurdwara*), and Sikhism continued to attract new followers, Sikhs became an increasingly diverse group." This idea of using images of local Sikhs in the exhibition was adapted at each venue. For example, community members and museum staff at the Fresno Art Museum, in California, developed and placed at the museum's main entrance a comparable panel

(Fig. 15.4) featuring portraits of Sikhs from the Fresno area, with a simple welcoming message encouraging visitors to view this exhibition about their Sikh friends and neighbors. It is in this context that the broad scope of the Kapany Collection could become such a rich resource for explaining the history and heritage of the Sikhs.

The *Sikhs: Legacy of the Punjab* Exhibition and Museums as Ritual Space

Within the Asian Cultural History Program at the Smithsonian, and specifically within its "Heritage" projects, every exhibition is considered the "flagship of a fleet" of related activities. These include behind-the-scenes research and publication efforts, collection improvement, conservation or preservation of historic artworks or artifacts, and public programs such as lectures, films, and performances. All such efforts, in fact, are subsumed within the goals of the Sikh Heritage Project, according to its founding document.[3]

Fig. 15.4, Panel at the entrance to the Fresno Art Museum, with images of local Sikhs and a welcoming message for visitors

The resulting exhibition aimed to build into its design synergies for these other areas. The emphasis on conservation and preservation of endangered Sikh material heritage began from our first advisory group meetings, and from our first Sikh Heritage Lectures. Extensive conservation or restoration work was carried out on several of the objects placed on exhibition. Consequently, by designing a built-in rotation of objects through the use of "mini-gallery" spaces within the gallery, we allowed for future research and conservation projects to be depicted, while also accounting for the fact that many Sikh artworks are inherently fragile or light-sensitive and thus not able to withstand being exhibited for long periods.

In short, the exhibition *Sikhs: Legacy of the Punjab* (Fig. 15.5) was designed to be a regularly changing, flagship public presence that would continue to inspire other related initiatives (research, lectures, preservation projects, and annual conferences) with the ability to respond to and be shaped by input from the community. One of the continuing challenges of the Sikh Heritage Project and its supporters will be finding ways to balance the various poten-

tial goals and activities within its scope, including preservation of threatened heritage in the Punjab, recognition of Sikh American achievements, and support for contemporary artists and performers.

Amid this growing community involvement in the conceptualization and production of a major exhibition, however, we must look back and remember that in early 2000 this outcome would have seemed highly unlikely: the Museum had no Sikh collections, no such exhibition had even been proposed let alone approved within the normal Museum system, and no objects were available with which to construct such a proposal (even if funding had been available, which it was not at that time). So the agreed-on availability of the Kapany Collection became, alongside the support of community members for an exhibition, the project's greatest asset.

The resulting exhibition was initially on long-term display at the National Museum of Natural History from 2004 to 2007, and since that time it has evolved and expanded as it travelled to other venues (Santa Barbara, California, in 2009; Fresno in 2012; San Antonio, Texas, in 2015–2016), largely through the continued efforts of many members of the Sikh community (Taylor and Pontsioen, 2014). Even though, as noted below, this project has produced many other positive outcomes besides that exhibition, *Sikhs: Legacy of the Punjab* is surely the most visible of them all. The mode in which this exhibition was developed, within a larger framework of community involvement, reflects a changing view of the nature of museum curatorship as a social practice. Building on Christina Kreps' (2003) understanding of curatorship as a social practice, the Sikh Heritage Project is overall a

Fig. 15.5, Overhead view of the main lobby of the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, during the opening of the exhibition *Sikhs: Legacy of the Punjab*

powerful example of how heritage projects can be carried out as museum–community partnerships to provide a space for communities to debate and celebrate their shared heritage. At the same time, these projects provide museum professionals with the opportunity to draw on research and collaboration with source communities to more accurately interpret and present objects in exhibitions and in other media.

In general, museums have emerged as one space within which heritage and identity are not only reified and exhibited, but also explored and contested. The model of co-curatorship adopted during the earliest stages of this project enabled Sikh Americans to participate in developing the exhibition in ways that departed significantly from traditional museum development practices. This view places museum exhibitions within a more holistic, integrated, and culturally relative approach to curatorial work that explores and includes the relationships among museum objects, people, and society in social and cultural contexts beyond the museum collection or exhibition. In this case, the Smithsonian Museum's institutional goals came, over time, to coincide in part with community goals, and in part with the research interests of scholars based at the Museum and elsewhere. Fortunately, current trends in producing cultural exhibitions have increasingly welcomed real community involvement (not merely financial support) in accurately, critically, and respectfully depicting the cultural heritage of those whose art or artifacts are represented in exhibitions.

Nevertheless, the issues of cultural representation arising during a project of this kind do not easily fit traditional frameworks

Fig. 15.6, A turban-tying demonstration at the Institute of Texan Cultures in San Antonio, one of many ways in which local Sikh community volunteers engaged with museum visitors

of analysis. For example, if one considers the project through relations among parts of the triad consisting of (1) a museum (collecting/display institution), (2) a people whose culture is the subject of the museum's representation (cultural tradition exhibited), and (3) an expected or targeted audience ("viewership"), one finds considerable overlap.[4] The Museum had virtually no Sikh collections, and in the end relied heavily on loaned materials (largely from a few prominent Sikh collectors such as Dr. Kapany) while planning to build collections later in this area. In addition, the Smithsonian's Sikh Heritage Project, which came to include this exhibition among its goals, was from the beginning a team effort in which a growing community of supporters not only provided financial backing for the exhibition but also helped to organize regular community-building meetings and events that turned the effort into a shared community project.

The nature of this Project's intended audience, however, always included both a broad (non-Sikh) American and international public (which, Sikhs involved in the project felt, did not understand Sikhs or their traditions), as well as Sikhs themselves, who could take pride in seeing their tradition among those represented at America's "national museum." Museum staff members found themselves "translating" Sikh self-representations for a wider audience and, like all translators, modifying the content in the process. Sikh meta-narratives of Sikh history became incorporated into the exhibition, but so did other aspects of Sikh "heritage," including everyday secular music and contemporary celebrations. For Sikh Americans participating in the process (Fig. 15.6), this led to a transformation or expansion of the range of objects thought to represent Sikh "heritage"—as it became clear that even family albums, mementos, and everyday household objects might be included.

The Sikh Heritage Project and the exhibition described here have attempted to seek and integrate community involvement in ways well beyond the norm in contemporary museum work; in fact, an active group of community members was involved even in the early decision of whether to focus our collective effort toward exhibition or toward other potential goals of the Project. And when one considers the wide range of curatorial tasks and responsibilities, including the didactic or educational functions of curatorial work, theme and object selection, and mode of interpretation, this project encompasses many examples of co-curatorship with a large community that arrived at and presented decisions in a process quite separate from a traditional, museum-based development process.

This involvement of a large community has, somewhat inadvertently, helped to turn a museum space into a public, multigenerational gathering space for a broad and diverse Sikh American or Punjabi American community—a place of inspiring regular events and, in the post–September 11th period in the United States, a place of national public recognition for Sikhs at a time of perceived threats and hardship resulting from public misunderstanding. Congressional statements issued on the occasion of the exhibition's opening by the cochairs of the India Caucus (U.S. Representatives Joseph Crowley of New York and Joe Wilson of South Carolina) congratulated "the Sikh Community and the Smithsonian Institution for coming together to establish a Sikh Gallery and a Sikh Heritage Project at the National Museum of Natural History" and commended all involved "for having made this honorable endeavor possible."[5]

Museum Practices Modified to Suit Sikh Values and Cultural Practices

From the perspective of museum practice, it is interesting to note the extent to which Sikh community values affected normal museum practices. For example, the idea of organizing anything like a "VIP reception" in conjunction with the Washington opening for this exhibition seems to have clashed with the

Fig. 15.7, *Guru Granth Sahib* display from the exhibition *Sikhs: Legacy of the Punjab,* at the Institute of Texan Cultures in San Antonio (February 2015); label explains that a prop is used, instead of the actual book, for the exhibition

strong Sikh ethos of egalitarianism. In addition, though there were individual Sikh donors who may have been financially able to support the entire exhibition, or its catalog, or perhaps other entire components of the Sikh Heritage Project's activities, this was never the preferred method of funding any such activity. Such tasks were always best accomplished through bringing together a larger number of people who would function like a community, all willingly and jointly contributing to the same cause, in a way consistent with each person's abilities.

Thus, through the numerous gatherings and meetings for the development of this exhibition and all its associated lectures, events, or performances, we have observed the Sikh community's frequently expressed attempts to make sure that everyone who wished to do so could find a way to contribute something. As museum or exhibition curators, we also observed that many of the best ideas for potential exhibit themes, or for the objects and images that could illustrate such themes, came from these meetings. In this way the story that this exhibition told to introduce the Sikhs emerged out of the collaborative effort of many narrators working together.

Many examples arose of museum practice that accommodated Sikh traditions. The section describing the sacred book of Sikhism, the *Guru Granth Sahib* (Fig. 15.7), provides one example. It was important for visitors to understand the book's importance in Sikh life, and there are many beautifully illustrated examples of this book that might

Fig. 15.8, Conservator Hanna Szczepanowska stabilizing a fragile gouache on paper painting, 2004

have been put on exhibition. However, in accordance with Sikh practice, visitors would have had to take off their shoes and cover their heads, as a sign of respect for the sacred book, if they were in the same room. After much discussion, a prop was used in place of the sacred book, completely covered with a *rumala* (the cloth that covers this book when not in use), with the same cushions, *chouri* (fly-whisk), and tables that would normally be near it, and under a canopy as would have graced the actual book. A disclaimer label at that part of the exhibition reads: "Sikh tradition requires covering the head and removing shoes when in the company of the holy book. Because it is not possible to comply with these practices in a Museum environment, this display substitutes a prop for the holy book."

Another example is that while for non-Sikhs it may well have made sense to create a section of the exhibition about "music," Sikhs themselves felt it completely inappropriate to mix secular and sacred sound forms, so what is considered sacred "music" could be heard with a speaker system having a restricted projection, in the section of the exhibition about how Sikhs practice their faith; meanwhile, in another part of the exhibition, a large graphic panel with push-button options allowed visitors to play various kinds of secular music in a different space. This separation of sacred and secular music took place in other examples of public outreach, including the music performances at opening events, and the detailed treatment of topics in Sikh and Punjabi music within the annual Sikh Heritage Lectures, such as presentations by Alka Pande, discussing her research on musical instruments in the Punjab (Pande, 1999).

Conserving and Preserving the Kapany Collection

One area of "museum culture" often seemed directly at variance with Sikh social practice. The Sikh Heritage Project fundamentally represents a case in which the Sikh community has sought out museum expertise in changing certain aspects of Sikh practice, frequently requesting that museum staff provide lectures on museum conservation and

"proper" care of objects at *Gurdwaras* and Sikh community events. Each of the annual Sikh Heritage Lectures included this topic, from the founding of the project to the exhibition's opening events. In 2006, largely with the support of Sikh community members (along with major support from the Indo-US Science and Technology Forum), the Smithsonian co-organized, with the Andandpur Sahib Foundation (Chandigarh, Punjab), an international conference on applications of new technologies for preservation and documentation of museums and historic sites. Overall, this is an area in which museum practice has directly confronted Sikh social practice in many areas (Fig. 15.8), just as traditional European and American methods of storing and handling and displaying objects often caused some deterioration. These include traditional methods of displaying portraits on ivory, which were glued to velvet though that practice causes long-term damage (examples in the exhibition were treated to remove adhesive; see Taylor and Pontsioen, 2014, pp. 52–53), as well as old methods of drilling into armor to hang it on walls for display (as opposed to today's museum mounts) and other practices that have simply needed updating as a result of new information leading to today's much better methods for the physical care and preservation of these objects.

A rather different kind of example is the treatment of old manuscripts, especially pages (often beautifully illuminated) of the sacred book the *Guru Granth Sahib*, which, as Myrvold (2010) notes, are sometimes burned as a form of devotion, once they are no longer used for reading and religious worship. Sikh practice essentially treats the book "Guru" as if it were a human Guru (though of course not alive in any biological sense, but treated as if it were an exalted person). Polishing the throne on which the Guru (book) "sits," organizing the processions that carry it, and performing other types of "service to the Guru" can be "transformed into religious acts by means of the actor's subjective experience of devotion and surrender" (Myrvold, 2010, p. 131). Unlike the examples above, this is not an arena into which one can simply introduce a method of handling objects that will preserve

Fig. 15.9, *Illustrated Janamsakhi,* Carbon ink on paper with gouache, gold paint, and leather binding, Ca. mid-19th century, 19.1 × 13 × 6.4 cm

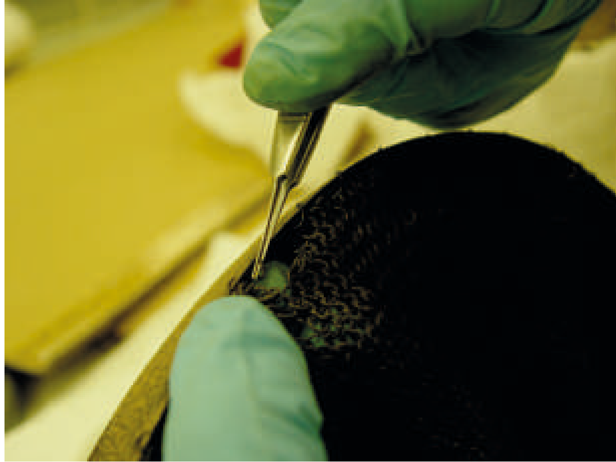

Fig 15.10, A Smithsonian conservator meticulously repairs the chainmail adorning a ceremonial Sikh helmet (see Fig. 15.10)

Fig. 15.11, Ceremonial Sikh helmet after repairs to the chainmail, Gilded steel, 18th century, 16.5 × 24.1 cm, Collection of Dr. Satjiv S. Chahil

them longer, but in fact the Sikh Heritage Project has had the effect of increasingly offering conservation as a new and alternative mode of "service."

We have witnessed much Sikh community support for our museum conservation lectures, including paper conservation, both at various *Gurdwaras* and in India. One reason for this is that contemporary Sikhs, aware of the potential for paper conservation and preservation, have sought out Smithsonian and other museum professionals to raise awareness of this alternative means of service to the book "Guru" (for instance, conservation of the old and worn pages, rather than their cremation), as well as other texts on religious topics, such as the *Janamsakhi,* or stories of the life of the first Guru, often having old painted illustrations. They essentially hope to revise the conceptualization of service to the Guru such that paper conservation is an alternative to the "cremation" of old manuscripts.

For example, Figure 15.9 shows a beautiful illustrated *Janamsakhi,* or book that describes the life of the first Sikh Guru, from the Kapany Collection. It probably dates from the mid-nineteenth century. The painters chose verdigris to produce a bright green color, without realizing that the pigment chosen would progressively damage the substrate paper, causing the old gap seen in the painting, which required stabilization to preserve it. Museum-quality object conservation (Figs. 15.10 and 15.11) is increasingly supported as a form of *sewa*, or "service to community," or even *Gursewa*, or "service to the Guru," thus increasingly being an alternative to more traditional forms of Sikh social practice toward objects.

Yet ultimately, collectors of important artworks like those depicted in this book are very much aware of the fact that the storage, movement, or display of their priceless collections all entail risk. When *Sikhs: Legacy of the Punjab* closed in Washington, D.C. (in 2007), the magnificent set of Maharani Jind Kaur's jewelry seen in Fig. 15.12, after it had been conserved and photographed for display

Fig. 15.12, Maharani Jind Kaur's necklace, of diamonds, pearls, rubies, and emeralds, Ca. early 19th century, Kapany Collection

Early Colonial Encounters with the Sikhs

The arrival of the British and other colonial powers in the late 1700s changed Sikh cultural, military, and aesthetic traditions. Maharaja Ranjit Singh hired European experts to train his armies, and many local artisans adopted Western styles of painting and perspective.

Although the Sikhs allied initially with the British, the early agreements dissolved with the death of Ranjit Singh. The British waged two wars against the Sikhs, ultimately gaining control of the Punjab. The British forced out the Maharaja's surviving heir, Dalip Singh, and his mother, Maharani Jindan.

Fig. 15.13, A vitrine display recounting aspects of Sikh political history in the Punjab, within the exhibition *Sikhs: Legacy of the Punjab*, including the original portrait and necklace of Maharani Jind Kaur, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution (July 2004)

in that exhibition (see Fig. 15.13), was returned to the Kapany Collection. The central gem of the necklace is an uncut emerald polished in the Indian style. Eleven double-sided clusters are set with rubies and emeralds on the outside and diamonds and enamel on the reverse. (Maharani Jind Kaur can be seen wearing a comparable necklace in the 1863 oil painting by George Richmond, Fig. 9.14.) In early 2015, a different museum arranged to borrow this same set again for exhibition. Tragically, the professional art-moving company handling the shipment reported that it disappeared sometime after being picked up at the Kapany household in California, before it could be delivered to that museum. Its current whereabouts are unknown. Even in such an unfortunate and uniquely rare case of loss or theft, the careful study and documentation of objects that take place as part of collections-based research, publication, and display do produce a visual and analytical record that, we all hope, will be preserved, and will ultimately help to definitively identify and retrieve the lost artwork.

To summarize the importance of both community involvement and the Kapany Collection, we must remember that in early 2000 a successful long-term exhibition would have seemed highly unlikely: the Museum had no Sikh collections, no such exhibition had even been proposed let alone approved within the normal Museum system, and no objects were available with which to construct such a proposal (even if funding had been available then). Through active and growing community involvement over four years, with annual lectures and performances and public outreach activities, and through access to essential collections of Sikh art and artifacts, the Sikh Heritage Project (which was never anyone's full-time job) acquired the shared purposefulness that brought people together to build a meaningful exhibition based largely on the Kapany Collection, which became a source of pride to many Sikhs involved.

In conclusion, the Sikh Heritage Project and its flagship exhibition, *Sikhs: Legacy of the Punjab*, presented an opportunity for museum–community partnership that is well beyond the norm in museum work. Community members were even involved in the initial decision as to whether the project should include an exhibition as part of its activities, though doing so in this case only became possible once the Kapany Collection was made available for study and display. For this effort, museums modified their practices to accommodate Sikh values and cultural traditions. Sikh community members actively sought out museum assistance in making their community better understood by a broad public, and in introducing alternatives (such as paper conservation) to some widespread Sikh practices toward objects (including burning of old manuscripts). Partnerships with museums have encouraged a reconceptualization of Sikh art collecting, updated museum conservation methods to preserve Sikh heritage, and the development of Sikh exhibitions, as new forms or examples of traditional Sikh *sewa*—service to community.

Editors' note: The photographs and examples in the chapter above are largely taken from the exhibition best known to this author, who had the good fortune to serve as curator (or co-curator with a broad and active community) for one long-running exhibition, and to work with the Kapany Collection in that capacity. To this, the editors gratefully add here letters with observations on the importance of the Kapany Collection from Dr. Forrest McGill of the Asian Art Museum (San Francisco), and Dr. Susan Stronge of the Victoria and Albert Museum (London).

Contributing Message from Forrest McGill
Wattis Senior Curator of South and Southeast Asian Art
Asian Art Museum of San Francisco

“We at the Asian Art Museum are very proud of our long association with the Sikh Foundation. In 1992 (before I joined the staff) the museum hosted the exhibition “Splendors of the Punjab: Art of the Sikhs,” cosponsored with the Sikh Foundation and the Center for South Asian Studies at University of California–Berkeley. In conjunction with that exhibition was held a two-day conference on “Sikh Art and Literature.”

Since then, because of the enthusiasm of the Sikh Foundation and the generosity of its distinguished chair, Dr. Narinder S. Kapany, the museum has been able to become a center for the appreciation of Sikh arts and culture. In 1999 the museum, with the encouragement of Dr. Kapany and the Sikh Foundation, served as the only U.S. venue for the major exhibition “The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms,” organized by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

A truly significant step forward took place during the preparations for the museum’s move to its current location in San Francisco’s Civic Center. Dr. and Mrs. Kapany donated both a splendid collection of Sikh art and the funds to establish a dedicated space in the new facility. Thus, when the museum reopened in 2003, the public could visit the Satinder Kaur Kapany Gallery to admire and learn from the art objects, ranging from paintings and textiles to armor and ivory work, on view there.

Many of the works on display are changed approximately twice a year, providing visitors with new experiences and learning opportunities.

We are honored to have the opportunity now to join the celebrations of the Foundation’s fiftieth anniversary by showcasing, in a special exhibition, highlights of our collection of Sikh-related artworks largely donated by Dr. and Mrs. Kapany.

To end on a personal note: when I began working at the Asian Art Museum I knew very little of Sikh art and culture. In the succeeding years, the Kapanys and the Sikh Foundation have helped me learn much more, opening up a new field of appreciation for me. The personal kindness shown to me by Narinder as well as Satinder (of cherished memory) have had those qualities of warmth, sincerity, open-heartedness, and good cheer that I’ve learned to associate with my Sikh friends and their cultural traditions.”

THE ARTS OF THE
SIKH KINGDOMS
THE SIKH FOUNDATION

Contributing Message from Susan Stronge
Senior Curator, Asian Department
Victoria and Albert Museum

"Dr Kapany first contacted me at the [Victoria and Albert] museum in early 1992. On our second meeting, going straight to the point, he indicated that he would like to put on an exhibition in San Francisco to mark the 25th anniversary of the Sikh Foundation. Might the V&A send all its paintings published in W G Archer's landmark catalogue, *Paintings of the Sikhs*? The short notice meant this wasn't feasible. In the months that followed, the proposal evolved into something larger, and much more ambitious. Narinder looked ahead to 1999 and the 300th anniversary of the Khalsa. Perhaps we could do an exhibition to mark this instead?

Five years later, *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms* was opened at the V&A by HRH the Prince of Wales with Narinder and Satinder among the VIP guests. Feverish activity had taken place in between—I'd consulted widely and eventually formulated the themes and content for a multimedia exhibition focussed on the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The eminent art historian B N Goswamy gave us a title that reflected Punjab's hybrid culture. Narinder spearheaded fundraising initiatives, introduced us to leading Sikh personalities in the arts, and at a crucial point used his famous powers of persuasion to ensure the exhibition stayed in the V&A's exhibition programme. V&A authors, and distinguished specialists—B N Goswamy, Khushwant Singh, Patwant Singh, A S Melikian-Chirvani, Nikki-Guninder Kaur Singh and F S Aijazuddin—wrote chapters for the exhibition book. The museum's own collections provided nearly one third of the works of art, all newly conserved and photographed for the show. We borrowed from leading institutions including the British Royal Collection, the National Museum of India, the Lahore Museum, and others in Europe and North America. Generous loans came from private collections, notably those of Gursharan and Elvira Sidhu, the Shirvan Foundation (European Union), and the Kapanys.

Narinder had realised from an early stage the profound importance of preserving and presenting works of art from the Punjab as a way of demonstrating the complexities of the Sikh religion, and Sikh history and culture. Once possessed by the urge to collect, he extended his acquisitions beyond the realm of art, as this volume makes clear. Two of the most significant paintings from the 1999 V&A exhibition that would travel to the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco are still in the Kapany Collection.

The first one depicts the Harmandir at Amritsar, with the white marble walls and golden domes created during Ranjit Singh's restoration very early in his reign [Fig. 7.3]. The silvery-grey pool of water is enclosed on four sides by steps, all shown by the anonymous artist in plan form, while the structure itself is in elevation. The format, the restrained colour palette, and the colours themselves all derive from earlier traditions of painting in the Punjab Hills.

In the second painting, Ranjit Singh is seated on a Western-style chair, his gaze fixed on the young man sitting before him [Fig. 8.3]. His appearance is uncharacteristically opulent: the painting shimmers with the gold of their chairs, the embroidery of his clothing, and the unusual profusion of jewellery worn by a man renowned for his dislike of ostentation. The young man wears jewels in his turban, the traditional emblem of royalty, which draws attention to his cut hair, indicating that he is not a Sikh son of the maharaja. In fact, he is Hira Singh, who belonged to the Hindu Dogra family, and of whom Ranjit Singh was extremely fond. The ruler called him his *Farzand-e Khass*, or Special Son. The artistic influence in the painting is from Moghul tradition: the white pavilion with its interior wall niches replicates Moghul models and its position within the composition may be traced back to the late 16th century in imperial book painting.

Careful examination of both works thus reveals the cultural complexity of their time. In their completely different styles, they also evoke tranquility in the midst of an often turbulent age that reflects a fundamental aspect of Ranjit Singh's reign over undivided Punjab."

Page 304: Fig. 15.14: Entrance to the exhibit *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms* at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (1999)

Fig. 15.15, Panoramic view of the main hall of the exhibition
Sikhs: Legacy of the Punjab, Fresno Art Museum (January, 2012)

Endnotes

[1] These have included the long-term traveling exhibition *Sikh: Legacy of the Punjab* shown in Washington, D.C., Santa Barbara and Fresno (California), and San Antonio (Texas) (Taylor and Pontsioen, 2014). Works from the Kapany Collection were also prominent in the exhibition *I See No Stranger: Early Sikh Art and Devotion* at the Rubin Museum of Art (Goswamy and Smith, 2006). The letter from Dr. Forrest McGill, above, expresses the tremendous significance of Kapany Collection artworks within the permanent Satinder Kaur Kapany Gallery of Sikh Art at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco (open from 1999 to the present), while another letter from Dr. Susan Stronge, also above, indicates the importance of Kapany Collection objects for the exhibition she organized at London's Victoria and Albert Museum, *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms* (Stronge, 1999), for which a "Family Guide" was produced by its San Francisco venue (Asian Art Museum, 1999), while Bharadia (2000) produced a catalog of Canadian collections added to this exhibition at its venue at the Royal Ontario Museum.

[2] Some components of this chapter's description of the exhibition at its various venues draw, in part, on previously published works (Taylor, 2004, 2012, 2016; Taylor and Pontsioen, 2014) that did not so directly focus on the Kapany Collection, nor on its transformative effects.

[3] A project of this kind is established by a "gift fund" for the project, specifying that the funds may be used only for this project, in this case "to support acquisition, conservation/restoration, and exhibition of Sikh collections, to support research on the heritage of the Sikhs, and to support other Sikh cultural activities at the Smithsonian Institution" (Taylor, 2004, pp. 222–23).

[4] I have elsewhere used this triad to consider the changing ways in which Indonesian material culture has been represented in museums and their predecessors, from the Renaissance to contemporary museums in the Republic of Indonesia; see Taylor (1993, 1995, 2001, 2002).

[5] News Release by Rep. Joseph Crowley (dated July 25, 2004), "Congressman Joseph Crowley Commends Opening of First Ever Sikh Gallery at Smithsonian Institution," and Statement for Immediate Release by Rep. Joe Wilson (dated July 24, 2004), "Wilson Applauds Opening of Sikh Exhibit at Smithsonian," distributed.

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Fig. 15.16, *Sazza (punishment)*, Sukhpreet Singh, 2005, oil on canvas, 40.64 × 50.8 cm, Kapany Collection

Glossary

Adi Granth–See *Guru Granth Sahib*

Akal Takhat–"Throne of the Timeless One," the highest seat of religious authority for Sikhs; the building is on the west side of the pool of the *Darbar Sahib* at Amritsar

Akalis–Devotees of *Akal, the Timeless One*; also known as *nihangs*

amrit–Lit. ambrosia: holy water

amrit da pahul–Rite of Sikh initiation into the*"Khalsa Order,"* also called *Khande ki pahul*

Amritsar–Lit. "pool of ambrosia," founded by Guru Ram Das in 1577

anand–Everlasting bliss

ardas–Petition to a superior; also, the name of the congregational prayer, which begins or ends almost every Sikh ritual

Asaarh–Summer month of June–July

bagh–Garden

bakhshi–Clerk or office helper

Bandichhor Diwas—Lit. prisoner release day; on the day of the Hindu festival of Diwali, Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru, was released from the Gwalior Fort, where he had been imprisoned on the orders of the Mughal Emperor Jahangir

bangla–Bungalow

bani–Compositions of the Gurus and saints as incorporated in the *Guru Granth Sahib*

baradari–Usually a garden pavilion or building with 12 doors designed to allow free flow of air

barat–Wedding party

beiman–Dishonest

ber, lachiber–Jujube tree under which the Guru sat at the Golden Temple

bhagat–True devotee

Bhagauti–The Divine Sword, source and sustainer of all creation

Bhakti–A spiritual movement within Hinduism

bhandari–Storekeeper

bhangra–Dance of Punjab traditionally done by men

bhatt–Eulogist

bistre–Bedding

Bole so Nihal–A war cry

bunga–Tower or towering

chaddar–Sheet of cloth

chakkar, chakar–Quoit, a knife-edged throwing steel ring

chand-sitare–Moon and stars symbol

char kalia–Four-petaled floral form

chardi kalaa, charhdi kala–Positive nature or ever-uprising spirit

charpoi–String cot

chaupar–Local game similar to *pachisi* (Parchisi)

chavar, chauri–Fly-whisk

chhatappu–Game of hopscotch

chhatri–Umbrella

Daftar–Persian for "office," "register"

darbar–A court

Darbar Sahib–See *Harimandir Sahib*

darshan dwar–Gateway of the divine

devata–God

dharam–Religion, duty

dharamsala–Lit. an inn; also, original form of the Sikh place of worship

dholak–Type of drum

dhoti–Garment worn by Hindu men, consisting of a piece of cloth tied around the waist and extending to cover most of the legs

diwan–An official of the treasury; also, a solid wooden platform like a bed but used for sitting purposes

doab–Area between two rivers

dogra–An ethnolinguistic group of India

durbar, durbar–Court

dwar, dwara–Gateway or entrance

farman–Order

faujdar–Local governor

Fauj-i-khas–A section of the army of Maharajah Ranjit Singh

Firangi–A West European foreigner

gadi–Lit. cushion; also, seat of power

geetay–Game of jacks

ghorcharha–Expert rider or swordsman

ghorian–Lyrical wedding song

granthi–Ceremonial reader of the sacred scripture, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*

gulli danda–A game

gurbani–Utterances of the Gurus

gurdwara, *gurudhwara*–Sikh temple

Gurkha–Nepalese soldier

gurmatta–The Guru's wisdom

gurmukh–One oriented toward the Guru

Gurmukhi–Script (language) introduced by Guru Angad Dev, the second Sikh Guru

gurseva–Service to the Guru

gursikh–A true or loyal Sikh

Guru Granth Sahib, Guru Granth Sahib Bir–The Sikh scripture

Gurumar–Assassin of the Guru

Gutka–Prayer book

hakim–Physician

halemi raj–Rule of justice and humility

haq halal–Rightful share

Har–God

Harimandir Sahib–Lit. "Temple of God"; also, *Harmandir, Darbar Sahib,* Golden Temple, *Swaran Mandir:* a holy shrine of the Sikhs built by Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru, which is surrounded by a "pool of nectar" and has doors on all four sides, symbolizing the Sikhs' openness to all faiths and people

hattha yoga–Psychophysical practices

haumai–Self-centered pride

haveli–Large residential building

hukam–Obedience to divine will

hukamnama–Written order by the Guru to the congregations

ishnan–Bath

ishq haqiqi–Love for God

ishq majazi–Human love

jaghir jagir–Endowment of land

jalao–Show of splendor

janam-sakhi–Life narrative

jaratkari–Glass-working techniques

jathedar–Religious leader

jhrokha–Throne window

jihad–War for righteousness

jizya–Tax

kachh–Short breeches

kanga–Comb to keep the hair tidy

kantha–Type of embroidery from West Bengal, Odisha, and Bangladesh

kara–Steel bracelet

karkhana–Workshop

karma–Hindu and Buddhist philosophy, implying the sum of a person's actions in this and past lives

kar-seva–Voluntary service for a religious cause, such as building a temple

katar–Dagger

kaudi–Cowrie shell

Kaur–Princess (a personal name)

kesh–Unshorn hair and beard

khaddar, khadi–Handwoven cotton base cloth

Khalsa–The pure ones; casteless brotherhood of inspired belief

khanda–Double-edged dagger

Khande di Pahul–See *Amrit da pahul*

khanqah–Hospice for Sufis

khatri–Merchant

kikar–Tree

kirpan–A curved dagger

kirtan–Singing of the holy hymns set to music

Kitabkhana–Library

Kumedan–From the French for "Commandant"

lande/mahajani–Script used for business shorthand

langar–Community kitchen

linga–A symbol of divine generative energy, especially a phallus or object worshipped as a symbol of Shiva

madad-i-ma'ash–Revenue-free land

mahadudu, *mahdud*–Official document setting a limit to revenue assessment

mahant–Caretaker

mala–Beads

manji–Seat of authority, lit. "string beds or cots"

masand, massand–Local community leader

merchaul–Feather fan

mina–Dissembling rogue

mirchi–Chili pepper

miri, meeri–Sword of temporal sovereignty

misl–Sikh confederacy or clan

modikhana–Office of local official

Morashahi–Coin with "Moran" symbol

Musalman–Muslim

nagara–War drum

nam–Relation with the divine

nam-dan-ishnan–The Divine Name, charity, and purity

nam simaran–Divine Name; meditation on the Divine Name

Nanakshahi–Money that belongs to Guru Nanak

nawab–Local governor

nihang–Akali, immortal

nindak–Slanderer

nizamat–Land under a *Nizam* (provincial title)

odhini–Garment for covering

pahul–Baptism

paisa–Lowest monetary denomination in Indian currency

palki–Palanquin

pandit–Scholar, Brahmin

pangat–Status-free lines at community kitchens

panj piara–"Beloved Five": the first five initiates into the order of the *Khalsa,* chosen by Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru, in 1699 at the ceremony *amrit da pahul* at *Anandpur Sahib*

pankha–Fan

panth–Community, path

pat–Silk thread

Patna Sahib Takhat–One of five seats of religious authority in Sikhism, at Patna in the state of Bihar, India; also, the birthplace of the Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru

peeri, piri–Sword of spirituality

phere–Circumambulations, usually around the *Guru Granth Sahib* during a Sikh wedding ceremony

phulkaris–Traditional embroidery from the Punjab region

pothis–Collections of the compositions of the first three Gurus and some of the medieval poet-saints

Prasad–Blessed food

puja–Worship

punja–Hand

purdah–Veil for women

qanat–Tent panel

rabab–Plucked rebec, a musical instrument

Rahit Maryada–Code of conduct

raja–Chieftain

Ranjit Nagara–War drum

rasoiya–Chef

rumal–Square cloth used for covering dishes or as a handkerchief

rumala–Covering for the Holy Granth

sach achar–Truthful living

sach nam–Divine Name

sadhu–Mendicant

sainchi phulkari–Type of *phulkari*

sakhi–Mythic narrative

sakti–Female principle of the universe

salwar-chemiz–Attire of loose pants and long shirt

samadh–Tomb or monument commemorating the death of a person

sangat–Sikh congregation, holy fellowship

sant–Saint

sarangi–A stringed instrument

sarbat da bhala–Concern for humanity as a whole

sarbrah–Manager

Sarishta-i-Bhawani Das–Department of Finance

Sarkar–Lit. government; also used as a form of addressing Maharajah Ranjit Singh

sarovar–Sacred pool

sati–Self-immolation of wives on the funeral pyres of their dead husbands

Sat–Truth

satyug–Golden Age of Truth

savayye–Panegyrics

sehra–Wedding headdress

seva, sewa–Service to the community

shabad–Hymn

Shahnama–Persian epic poem

Sharia–Muslim law

Sheikh–Honorable title

Shivala–Temple to Lord Shiva

shlok, shalok–Verse

Sikandar-mishal–Similar to Alexander the Great

Sikandarnama–Book of Sikander

Singh–Lion; all Sikh men have “Singh” in their names, as given to them by Guru Gobind Singh

sunn–Void in one’s body

Swaran Mandir–See *Harimandir Sahib*

talwar–Sword

tilak–Anointing by applying saffron or sandalwood paste on forehead

toshakhana–Treasury

Udasis–Followers of Sri Chand, son of Guru Nanak

’ulema–Orthodox Islamic scholars

ustad–Master, professor

vak–Reading of the Holy *Granth*

vismad–Aesthetic principle of wonder

wilayat–Foreign country

Fig. 15.17, *Crown,* Sukhpreet Singh, 2005, Oil on canvas, 40.64 × 50.8 cm, Kapany Collection

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Gurnam Singh Sidhu Brard was born and raised in the village of Mehraj in Punjab. His early education was quite irregular, inadequate, and by happenstance. He attended Khalsa College, Amritsar, in 1946 for a short time but then returned to do farm work in his village for some years. Much later, after joining the Punjab University College in Hoshiarpur and getting the M.Sc. degree in 1956, he taught physics briefly at Government College, Gurdaspur, and then at Khalsa College. In 1957, he was admitted to the graduate school in physics at the University of Washington, Seattle, and after obtaining his doctorate he worked at the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, which was run then by the University of California for the U.S.A.E.C. Most of his research work there involved the transport of radiation from nuclear sources, and the study of fission and other nuclear reactions. Some of that work could be published in unclassified physics and nuclear engineering journals. In the mid-1960s he, along with Dr. Meji Singh and others, associated closely with Dr. N. S. Kapany as the Sikh Foundation was established.

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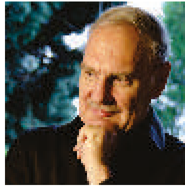

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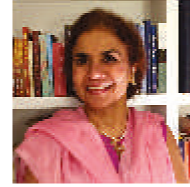

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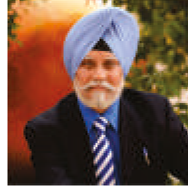

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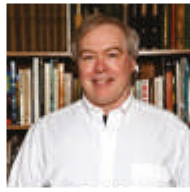

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