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Guru Nanak's Life and Legacy

AN APPRAISAL *

Guru Nanak (1469–1539), the founder of the Sikh community, is a subject of perennial interest for the Sikhs and their scholars, and a quick look at any bibliography on the subject would reflect the range and the depth of writings available on various aspects of his life and teachings. Given his relatively recent dates, there is a wide variety of sources available about his life and mission (*Jagat nistaran*).[1] These comprise texts, including his poetic compositions and the writings of his immediate successors and early followers; sites such as Talwandi, the place of his birth, and Kartarpur (The Town of the Creator), the center he established; and two known artefacts associated with his life.[2] These sources provide primary information for a scholarly reconstruction of the Guru's life.

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Among the studies that have shaped the discussion on this issue in recent scholarship, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968) by W.H. McLeod (1932–2009) would be the first to come to mind. Since its publication, this book has served as a key source of information on the Guru and the founding of the Sikh tradition in the English language.[3] Its conclusions pertaining to the details of the Guru's life, the import of his teachings, and the nature of his legacy in the rise of the Sikh community have remained dominant in scholarship on Guru Nanak and early Sikh history created during the last quarter of the twentieth century.[4]

With the post-Partition generation's work in Sikh studies reaching a close, it seems reasonable to begin reflecting on the field's future expansion.[5] Beginning this process with a discussion on Guru Nanak and the origins of the Sikh community is logical, and making *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* the point of departure seems pragmatic. This creates the opportunity to review a scholarly icon of the past generation, assess the state of scholarship around one of the most significant themes in Sikh history, and simultaneously explore the possibilities for future research in the field. Working on this assumption, this essay deals with the issues pertaining to Guru Nanak's life, teachings, and activity at Kartarpur, which are addressed in three stages: how McLeod treats them in *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, my assessment of his positions, and the possible ways to expand this discussion.

My work in recent years with the early Sikh sources has convinced me that the interpretation of Guru Nanak's life and legacy, which resulted in the beginnings of the Sikh community, needs close scrutiny. This project involves a fresh look at the issues related to the life of the founder, interpretation of his beliefs, and a clearer sense of the sociocultural background of the early Sikh community. A greater understanding of this phase of the Sikh community's history would serve both as a foundation to interpret developments in subsequent Sikh history and a window into the medieval north Indian religious landscape.

Constructing Guru Nanak's Life

The opening part of *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* presents a discussion of the Guru's life (pp. 7–147). It begins with an introduction

to the sources: the Guru Granth (a largely pre-1604 text), the opening section of the *Vars* (ballads) of Bhai Gurdas (d. 1634), and a set of the *Janam Sakhi*s (life stories [of Guru Nanak]) written over a period of two centuries (1600–1800), and goes on to present summaries of the Guru's life in these texts.[6] From this extensive literary corpus, McLeod selects 124 stories from the Janam Sakhi literature, subjects each one of them to a close scrutiny, and places them under the categories of 'possible' (30), 'probable' (37), 'improbable' (18), and 'impossible' (39) (pp. 92–4). This discussion is followed by an examination of the details regarding the Guru's dates of birth and death (pp. 94–99), and closes with a page and a half summary of his life that is believed to be historically verifiable (pp. 146–7).

Reactions to McLeod's work on the Janam Sakhis as a source of early Sikh history range from denunciation to a sense of awe, but there cannot be any disagreement that he is correct in starting his discussion with early sources on the life and mission of the Guru.[7] In addition to his historical approach, McLeod's attempt to introduce Sikh sources in translation was also a major contribution to the field.[8] Despite these methodological strengths, however, the assumptions that McLeod brought to bear on these sources are problematic. For instance, right at the outset McLeod argues that the Janam Sakhis as a source for the Guru's life are 'highly unsatisfactory', and the challenge is 'to determine how much of their material can be accepted as historical' (p. 8). Instead of replacing these low-value texts with some more useful sources for the purpose of writing a biography of the Guru, McLeod subjects them to an elaborate analysis that ultimately confirms his basic point regarding their limited historical value (pp. 71–147).

Without making a distinction between an analysis of the literary form of the Janam Sakhis and making use of them as a source for reconstructing Guru Nanak's life, McLeod introduces selected episodes from these texts, offers critical assessment of their historical value, and adjudicates the nature of their contents. While following this method, McLeod does not pay the requisite attention to the chronology of the texts under discussion, with the result that his analysis turns out to be synthetic in nature. Selecting, swapping, and blending episodes created by individuals belonging to diverse

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groups with sectarian agendas, writing over two and half centuries after the death of Guru Nanak, has its own problems.[9] The resulting discussion remains centered on a formalist literary study of the Janam Sakhis and makes little advance toward delineating the Nanak of history.

McLeod's tendency to label the episodes of the Guru's life as possible, probable, improbable, or impossible, or to interpret them as hagiography has not been very productive. Let me illustrate the limitation of his approach with reference to a story involving Guru Nanak's journey to Mount Sumeru that McLeod refers to several times in his *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*.[10] He writes, 'This [Sakhi] indicates a very strong tradition and one which cannot be lightly set aside. When Bhai Gurdas and all of the janam-sakhis unite in testifying to a particular claim we shall need compelling arguments in order to dismiss it' (p. 119). As far as I understand, historians are expected to make sense of the information available to them, not find 'compelling arguments' to dismiss it, and McLeod's rejection of the story on the grounds that Mount Sumeru 'exists only in legend, not in fact' deserves further scrutiny.

In the Puratan Janam Sakhi manuscripts, the description of the Guru's journey to Sumeru is part of his return from Kashmir and is restricted to a short opening sentence of Sakhi 50. This reads: 'Having crossed the Savalakhu hills, [the Guru] climbed Sumeru and arrived at a place (*asthan*) associated with Mahadev.' The remaining story is built around the debate between the Guru and Mahadev and other Shaivite ascetics living at this location regarding the relevance of their spiritual practices and the need for social responsibility and productivity. The episode concludes on a seeming note of congeniality and an agreement between them that they all should meet again to continue this conversation at the annual fair of Shivratari to be held at Achal, which we are told was 'a three-day walk from there'. The location of Achal, a Shaivite site, is well known and is around 20 miles from Kartarpur.

How did the Sumeru apparently located in the Punjab hills become the 'legendary' Mount Sumeru? There are several interesting details that converge here. First, Vir Singh (1872–1957), the editor of the printed edition of the Puratan Janam Sakhi that McLeod uses,

interprets *Savalakhu parbat* as 125,000 hills (*sava* is ¼ of 100,000 = 25,000 and *lakhu* is 100,000) instead of Shivalik hills, and on the basis of this reading claims that Guru Nanak crossed this many hills to reach Sumeru.[11] Second, instead of looking toward the south from the Kashmir valley with Srinagar at its centre, Vir Singh takes the reverse direction and envisions Guru Nanak travelling north. Finally, building against the backdrop of Hindu-Puranic mythology and the accounts that appear in the later Janam Sakhis, he concludes Sumeru is in the vicinity of Lake Mansarovar.[12]

Not interested in making the distinction between the details of the Puratan account of Guru Nanak's visit to Sumeru and its elaboration in the later Janam Sakhis, including the speculative commentary of Vir Singh, and as a result unable to imagine that Sumeru could be a modest seat of the Shaivite ascetics that was 'a three-day walk from Achal', McLeod is quick to reject the possibility of 'Sumeru' being an actual mountain and the Guru having made this journey.[13] Rather than focus on this original episode for the information embedded within it—the prominence of Shaivite ascetics in both the Punjab and the bordering hills; Guru Nanak's debates with these figures; his unequivocal rejection of their way of life and the need for its replacement with a life based on personal, family, and social commitment; and a degree of amiability of the dialogue—McLeod's primary concern is on the physical location of Sumeru. His inability to grasp the details of this episode results in seeking its dismissal. Interestingly, McLeod's effort does not remain restricted to scholarly analysis of the Janam Sakhis but goes beyond to advise the Sikhs to discard them from their literary reservoir for the benefit of the coming generations, as 'seemingly harmless stories can be lethal to one's faith'.[14]

In my view, McLeod's analysis of the Janam Sakhis is less informed by the nature and use of these sources within Sikh literature than by an interpretive lens that views the Janam Sakhi literature as Sikh counterparts of the gospels.[15] As a result, he invested a great deal of time and energy to the study of this literary corpus, but was deeply saddened by the Sikh response to his 'best scholarly work'.[16] Unlike the gospels, however, the Janam Sakhis are not considered authoritative sources of belief, nor are their authors committed to the divine status of their subject. In their own unique ways, these texts attempt

to narrate what the Guru did and said, generate feelings of devotion among their listeners/readers as the followers of the path paved by him, and in the process preserve his remembrance.[17]

Rather than trying to overturn these accounts along the lines McLeod established, I believe that scholars need to study early Sikh sources such as the Janam Sakhis by developing a clearer understanding of their dates of origin and the context of their production.[18] The field is fortunate to have sufficient manuscript data and related historical evidence to address these issues, and the critical editions of these texts are slowly becoming available.[19] This seems to be the only way to flesh out significant information available there.

Let me explain what I mean with some details. On the basis of my work with the Janam Sakhi manuscripts, the evidence seems to point to the rise of the Janam Sakhis in the following sequence: Puratan (pre-1600), Miharban (pre-1620), and Bala (1648–58).[20] The dates of the Puratan are suggestive of an early period in the history of the community, when the people who had met the Guru and had the opportunity to hear his message from himself may still have been around (*Guru Nanaku jin suṇia pekhia se phiri garbhasi na parai re*, M5, GG, 612). The evidence indicates that this text was created by someone who was part of the group that later emerged as the mainstream Sikh community. The possibility that the author of this text and some of his listeners knew Guru Nanak as a real person—who bathed, ate food, worked in the fields, rested at night, and had to deal with sons who were not always obedient—makes this text an invaluable source of information on the Guru's life.

Unlike the Puratan, the importance of the Miharban and Bala Janam Sakhis falls in a different arena. Elaborating on the Puratan narrative, these two Janam Sakhis expand the scope of the Guru's travels and introduce a circle of people who would have made up the third and fourth generation of his followers.[21] Whereas the farthest limit of travels to the east in Puratan is Banaras, Miharban extends the travels to Assam and Puri. Also as sectarian documents, they both reflect the points of view of the groups that created them and mirror the divisions within the community and the polemics involved in presenting the founder in the middle decades of the seventeenth century.[22] Given the variations in time of their origin and context

of production, it is essential to study each of these texts separately to see what they have to offer on the Guru's life and the early Sikh community.

Let me present some details available in the Puratan Janam Sakhi to support its relevance for understanding the Guru's life, his primary concerns, and the contours of the early Sikh community. With regard to the founding of Kartarpur, the Puratan narrates that it was established after the first long journey (*udasi*) of the Guru, and not after the completion of his travels, as it is commonly presented in current scholarship.[23] As for the daily routine at Kartarpur, we are told that the Sikhs gathered at the Guru's place (*dargah*), recited his compositions as part of their daily prayers (*kirtan*), listened to his exposition of the ideas therein (*katha*), and shared a community meal (*parsad/rasoi/langar*).

Given this description, his residence would have been a sizeable establishment large enough to accommodate congregational prayers the year round rain or shine, provide facilities for the making and serving of the food, and put up visitors.[24] The Puratan refers to the recitation of Guru Nanak's *Alahaṇia* (songs of death) and *Sohila* (praise) at the time of his death (Sakhi 57).[25] There is also the firm belief that the Sikhs in their religious life did not follow what others around them practiced (Sakhi 41). In no uncertain terms, the Puratan reports that Kartarpur with the Guru's dargah at its centre represented the sacred site for the Sikhs.[26] The presence of the Guru sanctified it, his abode served as the meeting place, and there is an expectation that the Sikhs living in distant places should make a pilgrimage, have an audience with the Guru, and meet their fellow Sikhs living there.

These details align well with the ideas of Guru Nanak. His compositions represent wisdom (*Sabhi nad bed gurbaṇi,* M1, GG, 879); he is available to provide exegesis to help the Sikhs understand them (*Suṇi sikhvante Nanaku binavai*, M1, GG, 503); and the text refers to the role of holy places, festivals, and the chanting of sacred verses as an integral part of religious life (*Athsathi tirath devi thape purabi lagai baṇi*, M1, GG, 150). The Guru is the central figure in this vision, and there is nothing that could compare with his presence (*Guru saru sagaru bohithho guru tirathu dariau*, M1, GG, 17; *Nanak*

gur samani tirathi nahi koi sache gur gopala, M1, GG, 437; *Guru sagaru amritsaru jo ichhe so phalu pave*, M1, GG, 1011, and *Guru dariau sada jalu nirmalu*, 1328).

After the establishment of Kartarpur, the Puratan reports four long missionary journeys—to the region of Sindh in the south, the Himalayan foothills in the north, Mecca in the west, and the present-day Peshawar area in the northwest.[27] During these travels, the Guru is reported to have initiated people into the Sikh fold through the use of the ceremony called the 'nectar of the feet' (*charanamrit*), organized Sikh congregations in distant places, and assigned *manjis* ('cots,' positions of authority) to local Sikhs, who were given authority to oversee the daily routine of their congregations. Whereas the narrator of the Puratan leaves no doubt that a full-fledged effort at the founding and maintenance of a community occurred at Kartarpur, and that the Guru continued his travels after its establishment, most older scholars are convinced that Kartarpur came at the end of the Guru's travels, and that he had no interest in building institutions.

Rather than attribute the institutional founding of a community to Guru Nanak, scholars of the past generation have highlighted the activities of later Gurus, especially Guru Amardas (b. 1509?, Guru 1552–74) and Guru Arjan (1563, Guru 1581–1606).[28] Working on the basis of his belief that Guru Nanak rejected the institution of scripture and that it started with Guru Arjan, McLeod and his generation missed the importance of the facts that Guru Nanak evolved a new script, Gurmukhi (the script of the Gurmukhs/Sikhs); committed to writing his compositions in the form of a *pothi* (book) bound in leather; and passed it on ceremonially to his successor, Guru Angad.[29]

The Puratan also informs us that the succession ceremony of Guru Nanak was performed in two stages. In the first stage, the Guru offered some coins to Angad, which in all likelihood indicated transference of the control of the daily affairs (*dunia*) of the Sikh community to him (Sakhi 56). In the second part, the Guru presented the pothi containing his compositions to Angad, which implies that from that point on Angad was in charge of the spiritual affairs (*din*), with the result that he was his formal successor and the leader of the Sikhs (Sakhi 57). The Guru is presented as having

conducted an open search for a successor, declaring the succession in a public ceremony, and making sure that all concerned accept the transmission of authority before his death.

Examining Guru Nanak's Beliefs

In the second half of *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, McLeod presents his interpretation of Guru Nanak's teachings (pp. 148–226). He begins by underlining the need to base this discussion on the Guru's compositions and interpret them by situating them in their historical context. He argues that Guru Nanak's writings can be understood within the paradigm of the 'Sant tradition', which he defines as a synthesis of elements from 'Vaishnava Bhakti', 'hatha-yoga', and 'a marginal contribution from Sufism'. He assumes Guru Nanak to be 'a mystic' seeking an 'ineffable union with God' (pp. 149–50). Working on this understanding, he then lays out the Guru's teachings under the headings of 'The Nature of God', 'The Nature of Unregenerate Man', 'The Divine Self-Expression', and 'The Discipline'.[30]

While supporting McLeod's use of Guru Nanak's compositions as the source materials and the need to situate the Guru within the context of his times, one cannot help but raise issues with how he accomplished this task.[31] Explaining his formulation of the 'Sant synthesis' as a reservoir from which the religious poets of the time, including Guru Nanak, drew their ideas, McLeod writes: 'Many of these concepts Guru Nanak shared with the earlier and contemporary religious figures, including Kabir. It is at once evident that his thought is closely related to that of the Sant tradition of Northern India and there can be no doubt that much of it was derived directly from this source' (p. 151).[32] There is no denying that Guru Nanak shared ideas, categories, and terminology with fellow poet saints, but McLeod pushes this position to a point that leaves little provision for any significant originality for any of these individuals' respective ideas.

It is interesting to examine how McLeod arrived at this conclusion to assess the legitimacy of this conceptualization.[33] Writing in 2004, McLeod reports that he started the research that resulted in *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* with the compositions of non-Sikh

saints recorded in the Guru Granth, but found that 'their thought was rather difficult to work into a coherent system.' He then 'turned to the works of Guru Nanak,' and seemingly reached his formulation that all of them drew their ideas from of the 'Sant synthesis.'

Within the context of the Guru Granth, it is fair to claim that there is a relative homogeneity of overall beliefs between the writings of the non-Sikh saints and those of Guru Nanak, and this is the reason why these people's compositions appear there in the first place. It is thus true that the compositions of these saints in the Guru Granth carry themes that align with those of Guru Nanak, and since these people came prior to the time of the Guru, it is reasonable to infer that he must have borrowed these ideas from them. But the initial difficulty that McLeod faced in reducing the writing of the non-Sikh saints into 'a coherent system' points to the complexity of their thinking and needs to be taken into consideration when arguing for their mutual influence upon one another.

We know that the compositions of the non-Sikh saints that appear in the Guru Granth represent an edited version of their literary production and thus reflect what largely suited the Sikh religious and social thinking. McLeod's discussion here, however, does not provide evidence that he had made any effort to study the writings of these figures that appear outside the Sikh canon.[34] Barring Kabir (292 *chaupadas* and 249 *shalok*s), Namdev (60 *chaupada*s), and Ravidas (41 *chaupada*s), the remaining ten 'Sants' have a total of nineteen *chaupada*s. As far as I can see, McLeod's building the argument of the 'Sant synthesis' involved reading Kabir and then extending his ideas to Namdev and Ravidas, on the one hand, and Guru Nanak, on the other. I believe that each of these figures has to be studied in depth before one could make a firm claim of the type McLeod made, and there was no way to do that, given the state of knowledge in the mid-1960s.[35]

In addition, McLeod assumed that since the Guru's ideas were available in the writings of Kabir, he must have borrowed them from his predecessor. This position served as a launching pad for his twofold analysis. It made the Guru a firm part of 'Sant synthesis,' and little basis was left for a belief in the originality found in his writings. There is, however, no evidence to support the assumption that

Guru Nanak knew or had access to the writings of Kabir or those of the other non-Sikh saints, and the manuscript evidence points toward the compositions of these poets entering the Sikh scriptural text during the period of Guru Amardas.[36]

Built on inadequate data, this problematic concept of the 'Sant synthesis' went on to provide the framework for McLeod's 'historical analysis' of the Guru's writings. It resulted in his overemphasizing the similarities between the ideas of the Guru and Kabir, and his dismissal of the links between the Guru's ideas and those of the Sufis such as Farid and Bhikhaṇ.[37] McLeod does not take any note of the presence of Farid's compositions in the Guru Granth, which constitutes the largest single unit (4 *chaupadas* and 130 *shaloks*) after Kabir, and thus takes no interest in explaining their significance. Rather than address the role of Islam in Guru Nanak's thinking, McLeod dismisses that role as 'marginal' at best.[38]

In addition to the difficulties inherent in McLeod's formulation of the 'Sant synthesis,' one cannot help but question McLeod's selection of what he thinks constitute the primary themes in Guru Nanak's compositions. For instance, while it is true that the nature of God is an important theme in Guru Nanak's poetry, it is important not to miss the specific aspects of the divine nature that fired the Guru's imagination. While singing about God, the Guru is focused on the creative aspect that brought the universe into being (*Ja tisu bhaṇa ta jagatu upia*, M1, GG, 1036), and is immanent in it (*Sabh teri qudrati tun qadiru karta paki nai paqu*, M1, GG, 464). Simultaneously, the Creator turned Sovereign (*Sahibu/Patshahi*) is understood to be deeply involved in the day-to-day making and dismantling of the world (*Bhani bhani ghaṛiai ghaṛi ghaṛhi bhanai bhaji usarai usare dhahai*, M1, GG, 935; *Vaikhe vigsai kari vicharu*, M1, GG 8), and initiating radical changes in the natural state of things when necessary (*Nadia vichi tibe dikhale thali kare asgah*, M1, GG, 144). Guru Nanak's interest in divine nature is thus geared toward describing how the Sovereign runs the universe and the implications of this belief for orienting human life.

Let me illustrate this with reference to the Guru's composition entitled *So Daru* ('That Abode'), which enjoys the distinction of appearing three times in the Guru Granth (M1, GG, 6, 8–9, and

347–348) and is part of Sikh prayers recited at both sunrise and sunset. It begins with a question: What is the nature of the abode where the Divine sits and takes care of the universe (*sarab samale*)? The answer to this appears in twenty-one verses, of which seventeen evoke various levels of creation and four underscore divine sovereignty.[39] This interest in the creation as divine manifestation is representative of the Guru's thinking in general and appears in many of his other compositions.[40]

It may be helpful for scholars to consider that Guru Nanak's reflection on the Divine is actually focused on the theocentric nature of the universe. As for more philosophical aspects of divine nature, the Guru seems perfectly at peace with the position that they cannot be expressed in human language and conceptual categories (*Tini samavai chauthai vasa*, M1, GG, 839). For him, the divine mystery has not been fathomed in human history (*Ast dasi chahu bhedu na paia*, M1, GG, 355; *Bed katabi bhedu na jata*, M1, GG, 1021), and what human beings are left with is to accept this limitation and make the best of the situation (*Tu dariao dana bina mai machhuli kaise antu laha, Jah jah dekha taha taha tu hai tujh te nikasi phuti mara*, M1, GG, 25).

Given this context of understanding, the primary responsibility of human beings is to grasp the values that underline the divine creation of (*rachna*) and caring for (*samal*) the world, apply them to use in their daily routine, and in the process become an active part of the universal harmony as well as contribute toward it (*Gagan mahi thal ravi chand dipak bane,* M1, GG, 13).[41] For Guru Nanak, there are two stages of spiritual development: acquiring the knowledge of truth, which seems to be easily accessible from Guru Nanak himself (*Bade bhag guru savahi apuna bhed nahi gurdev murar*, M1, GG, 504) and translating this acquisition into one's life (*Guri kahia so kar kamavahu*, M1, GG, 933; *Sachahu urai sabhu ko upar sachu achar*, M1, GG, 62) through labor and perseverance (*Jah karṇi tah puri mat, karni bajhahu ghate ghat,* M1, GG, 25). The goal of life is not to be reached in the possession of truth but in its application in one's day-to-day activities (*Jehe karam kamie teha hoisi*, M1, GG, 730; *Jete jia likhi siri kar, karaṇi upari hovagi sar*, M1, GG, 1169; *Sa jati sa pati hai jehe karam kamai*, M1, GG, 1330).

McLeod's elaborate exposition of Guru Nanak's teachings remained centred on his 'theology' and allows no room for ethics. There is no reference to the Guru's crucial stress on a life centred on core values such as personal purity (*ishnan*), social involvement with charity (*dan*), forgiveness (*khima*), honor (*pati*), humility (*halimi*), rightful share (*haq halal*), and service (*Vichi dunia sev kamiai ta dargahi basa,ni paiai*, M1, GG, 26; *Ghari rahu re man mughadh iane*, M1, GG, 1030; *Ghali khai kichhu hathahu de*, M1, GG, 1245). Nor is McLeod able to take note of the Guru's overarching belief that liberation is to be attained collectively (*Api tarai sangati kul tarahi*, M1, GG, 353, 662, 877, 944, and 1039), emphasizing the need for communal living and social productivity. Unlike other medieval poet saints, the Guru also spoke emphatically of collective liberation (*Api tarahi sangati kul tarahi tin safal janamu jagi aia*, M1, GG, 1039), and went beyond singing about human equality to actually challenging the Hindu caste hierarchy (*Sabhana jia ika chhau*, M1, GG, 83) by starting the langar (communal meal), which represented rejection of any social, age, or gender-related distinctions.

McLeod's categorization of Guru Nanak's teachings brings to the forefront issues pertaining to the most effective way to interpret Guru Nanak's beliefs. As for traditional Sikh scholarship, there have been two distinct ways to expound on his compositions.[42] The primary method has been to focus on Guru Nanak's compositions. The author would introduce the context in which the Guru is believed to have written the composition under discussion, would then quote its text, and explain its message in the medium of prose. These commentaries, as well as anthologies of the compositions used for the purpose of exegesis in devotional sessions, are extant beginning with the late sixteenth century.[43] This method of analysis of the Guru's compositions continues till the present day and can be seen working in the writings of scholars trained in the *taksal*s ('mints,' Sikh seminaries).[44]

The second type of analysis of Guru Nanak's and his successors' teachings begins with Bhai Gurdas, who selected a set of themes that he wanted to share with his audience, and then elaborated upon them by paraphrasing the Guru's writings in his own poetry. Beginning with the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the writers working

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along these lines began to use prose as their medium of expression, and from this point on these writings emerged as an important genre.[45] This approach achieved a high degree of expansion in the works of Jodh Singh (1930s), Sher Singh (1940s), and McLeod (1960s).[46]

Whereas the commentators of the former version aimed to contextualize the composition under discussion within Guru Nanak's life and deal with its total contents, the latter option involved an exercise in formal analysis, with the presentation of a particular theme without having to clarify its precise position in the larger context of Guru Nanak's beliefs, let alone situating it in the activity of his life. While the first had some sense of episodic completeness in its devotion to Guru Nanak's thinking, the second in all likelihood began as answers to questions from the audience by those who had an overall understanding of the message of the Gurus. As it developed, however, it involved the author's mechanical selection of themes, and the resulting imposition of a system on the Guru's ideas may have its strengths but also has the potential to become a problem, as in the case of McLeod.

In my view, the aforementioned approaches that analyze Guru Nanak's teaching by focusing on his compositions need to be refined as well as expanded to include the details of his life, the nature of his activity particularly at Kartarpur, and the information about the context in which these unfolded. The effort in the past years to take up a theme, catalogue its appearances in the writings of the Gurus, and essentially summarize these quotations remains limited. In other words, a computer search of, say, the term *seva* (service) in the verses of Guru Nanak can only provide the basic data, which needs to be situated within the larger context of his writings and those of his successors to arrive at its significance in the Sikh thinking.

The Founding of Kartarpur

When constructing Guru Nanak's life, McLeod focused on the early sources such as the Janam Sakhis, and for the exposition of his teaching he was content with a formal analysis of the Guru's compositions. The sections devoted to the Guru's life and his teachings in *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* remain mechanically juxtaposed, and

the two decades of the Guru's life at Kartarpur are covered in the concluding page and half.[47] There is no move toward linking the Guru's beliefs with what he did during the course of his life, especially the founding of Kartarpur, and the legacy that he left for posterity.

McLeod has little to say on the Kartarpur phase of the Guru's life, which resulted in the gathering of a community, the self-imposed responsibility of overseeing its welfare, and the creation of a blueprint to ensure its future stability. For him, 'the pattern evolved by Guru Nanak is a reworking of the Sant synthesis, one which does not depart far from Sant sources as far as its fundamental components are concerned. The categories employed by Guru Nanak are the categories of the Sants, the terminology he uses is their terminology, and the doctrine he affirms is their doctrine' (p. 161). McLeod believes that the term 'founder' implies that someone 'originated not merely a group of followers but also a school of thought, or set of teachings,' and it applies to Guru Nanak in 'a highly qualified sense'.[48] Having argued this with considerable vigor, McLeod shows no interest in addressing the issue of why he was the only one among his peers to think of founding a community.

Fully convinced of Guru Nanak's rejection of 'external authority', 'ceremonies', 'religious texts', 'pilgrimage', 'ritual bathing', and so on, McLeod is reluctant to explain why the Guru got into the enterprise of gathering a community with numerous institutional structures (p. 153). By emphasizing the 'religious' nature of Guru Nanak's life and legacy, he undercuts the importance of such institutional structures, on the one hand, and seems to point toward its being some sort of 'Hindu' group centered on meditation, on the other.[49] For him, the lives of the people at Kartarpur were oriented around three primary rhythms: meditation, search for liberation, and work in the fields. He misses the interwoven vision of liberation and landscape as reflected in Guru Nanak's poetry saturated with the images of the soil, plants, animals, migratory birds, rain, the Persian wheel, sacred centres, shops, bazaars, and so on. He misses Guru Nanak's recognition of the beauty of creation and his keenness to see the world before replicating it in Kartarpur (*Sabh dunia subhannu sachi samaiai*, M1, GG, 142; *Tat tirath ham nav khand dekhe hat patan bazara*, M1, GG, 156).[50]

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Guru Nanak's emphasis on radical monotheism, a life that follows a balance of religious and sociopolitical commitment, and a proactive belief in human equality and so on, which distinguish him from his fellow Shaivite or Vaishnava saints of the period, are not taken into consideration at all. The Guru's vision of social commitment was also deeply informed by his interest in and commentary on contemporary political developments. For example, the Guru's father, Kalu Bedi, and his father-in-law, Mula Cho,na, were both revenue collectors and were thus part of the political hierarchy of the time.[51] As a teenager, the Guru had to present himself in front of the village elders (*panch, chaudhari, muqadam, mahajan*) and offer defense against the accusations that his buffaloes had damaged the neighbour's wheat crop (Puratan, Sakhi 4).[52] He also worked for a decade or so in Sultanpur, a district headquarters for Daulat Khan, who later emerged as the most powerful political leader in Lahore and was instrumental in inviting the ruler of Kabul, Babur (d. 1529), to invade the region in the 1520s. The Guru's travels further exposed him to political realities, and it is significant to register that those who took up the Guru's path at Kartarpur comprised a revenue-paying farming community with close contact to the powers of the time who determined the terms of revenue and then ensured its collection.

Guru Nanak's compositions reflect his extensive interest in and knowledge of politics and his discomfort with the prevailing corruption around the key political institutions (*Raje sih muqadam kute, jai jagain baitthe sute*, M1, GG, 1288).[53] He took notice of the Mughal invasions, and was the only spiritual figure of his time to have written on the subject (which he did in the form of a set of four compositions: M1, GG, 360, 417–18, 722). He himself was no pacifist and accepted confrontation between opposing political powers and the ensuing bloodshed as a way of life, but he could not accept violence in which the innocent and the hapless bore the brunt of political conflict (*Je sakata sakate ko mare ta man rosu na hoi, Sakata sihu mare pai vagai khasmai sa pursai*, M1, GG, 360). In light of his belief in divine justice as the organizing principle in the world, Guru Nanak rejected any justification for a system based on

bribes and false witnesses (*Vaddhi lai ke haqu gavai*, M1, GG, 951; *Lai ki vaddhi deṇ ugahi*, M1, GG, 1032).

In other words, the Guru's early upbringing provided him the opportunity to know how the political authority functioned in the village (Sakhi 3, Puratan), the nature of its relationship with that of the local headquarters (*shiq*), and then through it to the center at Lahore (*suba*). His compositions underscore the need to be involved in life at all levels (*Jab lagu dunia reahie Nanaku kichhu suṇie kichhu kahie*, M1, GG, 661; *Ghali khai kichhu hathahu dehi Nanaku rahu pachhaṇahi sei*, M1, GG, 1245), and condemn any tendency that may lead toward an ascetic path (*Makhatu hoi ke kan paṛae phakar kare horu jat gavai*, M1, GG, 1245). It is reasonable to argue that these ideas played an important role in his decision first to gather a community at Kartarpur and then to prepare a blueprint for its future. Remaining fixated on the 'religious' nature of the community, scholars have totally missed the possibility that Guru Nanak's effort at Kartarpur may have been patterned on the model of Lahore, but at the same time, was creating a better version of it.

The *Puratan* (8 Names)

2 Khatris	Bhagirath and Lehi,na
3 Jats	Buddha Randhawa, Saido and Gheho
1 calico printer (*chimmba*)	Siho
	Hassu
1 blacksmith (*lohar*)	Mardana
1 Muslim singer (*mirasi*)	

The *Vars* (14 names + Buddha Randhawa already noted above)

9 Khatris	Taru Popat, Mula Kirh, Pirtha Soiri, Kheda Soiri, Pirthi Mal Saihgal, Rama Didi, Bhagta Ohri, Shihan, & Gaja,n Upal
3 Jats	Ajita, and Buddha Randhawa, Fira,na Khehra
1 blacksmith	Gujar
1 barber (*nai*)	Dhinga
1 Muslim singer	Mardana[59]

This position comes into focus in the light of the early Sikh community's understanding of Guru Nanak's life and activity. The first account of the founding of Kartarpur, which appears a decade or so after the Guru's death, explains it in terms of the establishment of a kingdom with a castle at its base (*Nanaki raju chalia sachu kotu sataṇi niv dai*, Rai Balwand and Satta Dum, GG, 966), and his nomination of a successor is described in metaphors of the transference of his royal throne to Guru Angad (b. 1504, Guru 1539–52, *Leheṇe dhareou chhatu siri kari sifati amritu pivade*, Rai Balwand and Satta Dum, GG, 966). The Goindval Pothis compiled in the early 1570s refer to Guru Nanak as the 'Bedi King,' who supports both the religious and the temporal dimensions of the world (*Baba Nanak Vedi Patisahu din dunia ki tek*, Pinjore, folio 215), and call him and his successors as the 'True Kings' (*Baba Nanaku, Angad, Amardas, Sache Patisah*, Jalandhar, folio 8).[54] The bards at the Sikh court of the subsequent decades categorized the activity of Guru Nanak in the areas of politics (*raj*) and spirituality (*jog*), and presented his line of successors as a divinely sanctioned royal dynasty (*Sri guru raj abichalu atalu ad purakhi furmaio*, the Bhatts, GG, 1390).[55] In his *vars*, Bhai Gurdas presented the establishment of the Kartarpur community in terms of the minting of a new coin (*Maria sika jagati vich, Nanak nirmal panthu chalia*, 1: 45).

As mentioned earlier, the Guru enjoyed the supreme authority at Kartarpur; the *manji*s represented this in distant congregations, and the *pothi* containing his compositions marked a symbolic version of it. In addition, the Guru's dargah (place) served as the Sikh *tirath* (sacred spot) and the destination of pilgrimage, and the *charanamrit* (initiation ceremony) brought new people into the community. The daily prayers based on the recitation of the compositions of the Guru, followed by the langar, which involved communal cooking and sharing food, served as agencies of internal solidarity as well as distinction from others such as Shaivites, Vaishanavites, Shaktas, Sufis, and Sunnis.

In addition to the institutional markers present at Kartarpur, scholars have not paid adequate attention to the geographical and demographic considerations that governed Guru Nanak's decision to settle there. Though the archeological remains of Kartarpur are not available, references to its establishment in the early texts and its geographical location offer interesting data. The Puratan reports

that Guru Nanak started some sort of communal activity at Talwandi (Sakhi 38), his native village, but soon decided to move on and establish Kartarpur (Sakhi 40). We know that Talwandi was founded by Rai Bhoa, a high-caste Hindu convert to Islam, and given this situation, the layout of the village would have a mosque at its center. The Puratan also mentions the presence of a temple there, which would be in proximity to the Hindu quarters, as we can guess from the layout of villages of the time.

It seems reasonable to assume that once Guru Nanak saw his communal experiment to be taking off in Talwandi, he thought of a more congenial location for its development, rather than having to function in an environment of competition with Hindu and Muslim neighbours on a daily basis (Sakhi 41). A host of reasons seem to be in place for his choice of the Kartarpur area. His father-in-law, Mulah Cho,na, worked for Ajita Randhawa, a Jat village chief in the area, and would have been of help in making this move possible. This situation would also imply that the Guru knew the area well, and was aware of the fertility of the soil with plenty of rain and subsoil water ensuring the economic viability of the new community. His compositions manifest a high degree of sensitivity to the beauty of the natural world, and the area around Kartarpur, with the river Ravi entering the Punjab plains and the Shivalik foothills in view, would have been attractive for the Guru. Its location on the pilgrimage routes marked a potential for access to a stream of spiritual seekers open to taking up a new way of life. Kartarpur was thus an ideal location for the founding of a community.[56]

With regards to the demographic composition of the community at Kartarpur, McLeod and scholars of his generation took for granted that the early Sikhs came from the Hindu fold, but new information sheds a different light on their socioreligious background.[57] The received wisdom states that the Khatris, an upper-caste (Vaishiya) group within the Hindu social hierarchy to which Guru Nanak's family belonged, constituted the original Sikh community. This understanding is, it is argued, based on the evidence that appears in the early sources. We are then told that the Khatris were 'the teachers of the Jats', and that this relationship resulted in the large-scale

entry of Jats into the Sikh community in the closing decades of the sixteenth century, during a period of growing hostility with the Mughals.[58]

However, a closer examination of evidence from the Puratan and the *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas regarding the prominent Sikhs of Guru Nanak's day does not seem to support this demographic portrait.

These statistics are clearly not substantial enough to provide a firm basis to judge the precise social composition of the early Sikh community. In my view, the simple fact these texts produced by the Sikhs of Khatri background recorded half of the early Sikh leadership (eleven out of twenty-two names mentioned above) to have come from the lower caste/outcaste/nomadic backgrounds does not point to the type of the Khatri hegemony argued for in current scholarship. It may also be useful to reiterate there is no reference to any large Khatri movement to Kartarpur from Talwandi, the Guru's village, or any other place, and that all five people who accompanied the Guru during his travels are presented to have come from an outcaste background.[60] .

Given this context, I believe that an alternative scenario of the composition of the original Sikh community is worth considering. As for the history of the central Punjab during this period, the local traditions mention the region's devastation by the Mangols (1390s), its development under the Sultans (fifteenth century), and further consolidation under the Mughals (1526-1857).[61] The arrival of the Persian wheel (*harahat*) was the key instrument in the region's development. A survey of the names of the villages in the vicinity of Kartarpur also shows that the Jats and those who worked for them (*Kalals, Lohar, Nais, Tarkha,ns*, etc.) were its primary inhabitants, and that by the 1520s these people were sufficiently powerful to enter the memoirs of the ruler of Kabul, who was on his way to become Emperor Babur, the founder of the great Mughal dynasty.[62] He remembers them as troublesome and problematic, and their resistance to external interference also surfaces in the sources such as the *Chachnama* (eighth century with a Farsi version prepared in the thirteenth century), and Gardizi's *Zainul Akhbar* (eleventh century).[63]

As for the social history of the Jats, the textual sources record an interesting evolution of this group in the first half of the second millennium. The *Al Hind* (early eleventh century) labels these nomads as

the 'low Shudras'; Abul Fazal's *Ain-i-Akbari* (late sixteenth century) records some of them in the list of the large landholders (zamindars) on both sides of the river Ravi; and the *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* (mid-seventeenth century) elevates them a notch up to the lowest rung of the Vaishiyas.[64] It is not hard to explain the Jat elevation in the hierarchy from a low caste to the bottom of an upper-caste level. These centuries had seen the Jats take up settled agriculture and become primary producers of the food that the urban society consumed. No city-dwelling Hindu would have relished the idea of eating the stuff produced by supposedly low or outcaste people.

It is also important to register that we cannot take it for granted that the Jats perceived themselves as Shudras, Vaishiyas, or even part of this caste-based society at all. Once settled, however, they would be in search of ways to construct ties with the society around them. As part of this agenda, we can understand their large-scale entry into Islam in west Punjab, the Sikh path in the central areas, and the beginning of a tedious process of working out a relationship with the caste hierarchy within Hindu society in the areas now known as Harayana and western Uttar Pradesh.[65]

Guru Nanak's move to Kartarpur raises the possibility that he was aware of this sociodemographic situation, and that this might even be a factor in his decision to go there. The place offered fertile soil as well as a large constituency of rural people who were in search of a socioreligious identity. Given his own landowning, farming family setting—the only Sikh Guru to have come from this background—Guru Nanak would have had no problems in building ties with the Jat neighbours and invite them to join his path. His calling the Creator the Great Farmer, seeing the beginning of the universe in terms of sowing seed (*Api sujaṇu na bhulai sacha vad kirsaṇu, pahila dharti sadhi kai sachu namu de daṇu,* M1, GG, 19), and interpreting the key values in terms related to farming would have been of considerable fascination for these people (*Amalu kari dharati biju sabdo kari sachu ki ab nit dehi paṇi, Hoi kirsaṇu imanu jamai lai bhistu dozaku muṛai ev jaṇi*, M1, GG, 24; *Man hali kisraṇi karaṇi saramu paṇi tanu khetu, namu biju santokhu sauhaga rakhu gharibi vesu*, M1, GG, 595; M1, GG, 1171).[66] Guru Nanak's concerns with corruption associated with

political institutions and discomfort with injustice referred to earlier would have worked well with these people, given their own traditions of tribal justice and resistance to any outside infringement in their activity.

Kartarpur's location thus points toward the possibility of an interesting meeting between a substantive figure, who believed that he had been assigned a mission of creating a new dispensation (*Dhadhi sachai mahali khasami bulia sachi sifiti salah kapa,ra paia*, M1, GG, 150; *Hari kirati rahiras hamari Gurmukhi Panth atitang*, M1, GG, 360; *Api tarahi sangati kul tarahi tin safal janamu jagi aia*, M1, GG, 1039), and people who lived in its vicinity and were searching for a community that could help their transition from a nomadic to sedentary lifestyle. Joining a leader who affirmed human equality (*Sabhana jia ika chhau*, M1, GG, 83) and dreamed of building a society without corruption and oppression would have offered a more attractive alternative than becoming part of the Hindu social hierarchy or locate themselves within the class differentiations prevalent within Muslim society.[67]

The evidence at our disposal points to an impressive presence of the Jats at the time of Guru Nanak's death in 1539. For instance, the village of Guru Angad, Khadur, which served as the primary Sikh seat after the death of Guru Nanak, belonged to the tribe of the Khaira Jats; and the land for Dehra Baba Nanak, the village that Guru Nanak's son, Sri Chand, established after the flooding of Kartarpur came as a gift from Ajita, a Randhawa Jat. In other words, the two Sikh sites that rose to prominence after the disappearance of Kartarpur were directly associated with the Jats. Furthermore, following the authority of Guru Nanak' successor, Guru Angad, the two most prominent figures of the time, Buddha Randhawa, who was also a potential candidate for the guruship, and Ajita Randhawa, who helped rehabilitate the Guru's family at Dehra Baba Nanak, came from a Jat background.[68]

The location of Kartarpur seems to support the view that the Jats and their rural ancillaries constituted the core of the original Sikh community, and scholars in the field need to examine this issue in the days ahead. If found viable, this shift of stance in the social composition of the early Sikh community would call for a new set

of parameters to understand the origin as well as later developments in Sikh history. What was there in Guru Nanak's message that attracted these people? How did these erstwhile nomads adopt the contents of his message to their needs and aspirations? Was the early Jat experience of joining the Sikh community so successful that this prepared the ground for the other Jat tribes living around to follow suit in the subsequent decades? These questions would need to be addressed as scholarship develops.

Furthermore, little is known about the life and ethos of the Jats and their outcaste rural ancillaries but, as mentioned earlier, it seems reasonable to argue that being nomads they had no organic relationship with the Hindu caste hierarchy. Making this distinction would have huge implications for our understanding of the concerns and motivations of the early Sikh community. Emerging from McLeod's *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, the overarching perceptions that Sikh beliefs as well as social constituency essentially emerged from the larger Hindu context, and that their history is one of carving out of a distinct identity from that of the parent community, need to be reassessed.[69]

This discussion would also have a direct bearing on issues related to caste and gender within Sikh society. If the overwhelming majority of the original community was not part of the caste hierarchy, how appropriate is it to use caste-related categories to explain early Sikh society? If the Sikhs themselves now use these terms, then it would be helpful to locate the reasons and precise point of their entry into the Sikh discourse. In the same vein, the treatment of women in the nomadic society and customs such as widow marriage and the absence of *sati* (burning alive on the pyre of the dead husband), and so on, need to be brought into focus to help understand the happenings within the early Sikh community.[70]

In my view, a narrative of the origin of the Sikh community needs to incorporate an understanding of the life of the master (*khasam*) of Kartarpur (Nanak), the nature of the seed he sowed there (his beliefs), and the sociocultural background of the early caretakers (Sikhs). Having accomplished this task, scholars can attempt to assess how the original seedlings thrived in their subsequent transplantations in different locations, changed circumstances, and the variations among

different caretakers. Building on the evidence whose bulk, range, and depth expand with the passage of time, scholars can think through these issues and create a narrative that can provide a higher degree of historical accuracy than the one in current circulation. After all, the Sikhs may be the only major tradition where the origin of the community can be constructed strictly from contemporaneous sources.

Where do scholars in Sikh studies go from here? Three options seem to be available. First, there is a large constituency of scholars in the field who believe that *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* marked a 'paradigm-shift' in 'a historiographical revolution' in Sikh studies, and they would expect future research to build and expand on its conclusions.[71] This understanding implies that *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* is secure as the master narrative of the founding of the Sikh tradition, and as a corollary of this, McLeod's later writings and those of others that were crafted around its arguments deserve the currency they have enjoyed in the past decades.

The second option has appeared in J.S. Grewal's recent writings, where he points out the limitations of McLeod's research findings pertaining to different periods and themes of Sikh history.[72] While arguing that McLeod did not really grasp the details of Guru Nanak's life and his teachings, Grewal points out that McLeod's 'attitude, his approach and his method have often resulted in premature hypotheses', and 'his position as a historian … aligns him with the 'orientalists', with a certain degree of inbuilt Eurocentricism.[73]

On the basis of my reading of *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* presented here and my past years' immersion in the early documents, I believe that effort to build on the received wisdom or keep ourselves restricted to critiquing McLeod would be counterproductive for the field.[74] While fully agreeing with Grewal about the limitations of McLeod's work, my primary interest lies in how to move forward and develop a fresh narrative of Guru Nanak's life, beliefs, and legacy. Given the critical mass of scholars presently working in the field and the availability of the large corpus of published materials, this goal does not seem beyond reach.[75]

I suggest a three-stage process to execute this agenda. First, scholars need to return to the early textual sources, date them with some

degree of precision, situate them in their socioliterary contexts, and flesh out historical details from them. Second, they need to expand the pool of information by including art, artefacts, iconography, numismatics, sites, and so on, and then seek out information that these sources can provide. Finally, the information gathered around the landmarks in Sikh history should be presented in emic Sikh terminology.[76] As I have attempted to show that the terms such as the 'Sant synthesis', 'unregenerate man', and 'the discipline' popularized by *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* would not do, but more work needs to be done before we can cull out a set of terms that may present the frame of reference adequately.

Let me close this essay by underlining the need for precision in scholarly understanding of Guru Nanak and early Sikh history. Two events associated with Guru Nanak's fifth birth centennial that unfolded on the campuses of the universities in the Punjab serve as interesting pointers in this direction. The first relates to the name of Guru Nanak. The Akali Dal, a Sikh political party, which ruled the Punjab in the late 1960s, sponsored a set of public celebrations in 1969 to commemorate the Guru's birth, and the establishment of a new university in Amritsar was the jewel in this crown. The institution was named 'Guru Nanak University' and was inaugurated with great fanfare. After the graduation of the first batch of students, a public controversy erupted that resulted in the rise of a political campaign to expand its name. The people spearheading this move were emphatic that the institution named in honour of the Guru must carry his 'full name', which they argued was 'Guru Nanak Dev'. The state government, after protracted resistance, buckled under and granted their wish by expanding the name of the university by a legislative act in 1975. As far as I know, there is no reference to 'Dev' in the writings of Guru Nanak or those of his successors or early Sikhs. Is it part of the name or does it mark an honorific that was added later? No one seemed to be clear about these issues while changing the name in the 1970s, and the present generation does not even seem to remember that this controversy erupted in the early history of their university.[77]

The next instance concerns the date of birth of Guru Nanak and the debate that unfolded around it on the campus of Punjabi

University, Patiala. In the fall of 1969, this university organized an array of activities to celebrate the event, of which an international conference held in September was the prize item. On this occasion, a special issue of *The Panjab Past and Present*, a university-based journal of history, was released, entitled *Sources on the Life and Teachings of Guru Nanak*; it was edited by Ganda Singh (1900–87), a highly respected historian of the time, and was distributed to the participants. While the conference at the university campus was synchronized with the celebrations of the Guru's birth, believed to have been in late November (*Katak di Puranmashi*), the editorial appearing in the journal issue argued for 15 April 1469 (*Visakh*) as his date of birth. A generation of scholars has come and gone since the event, but no clarity seems to have emerged on this basic issue.

A final detail revolves around the reference to the early Sikh community as the 'Nanak Panth'.[78] Although scholars such as McLeod and many others of his generation use this label freely and without question, it must be underscored that this term does not appear in the writings of Guru Nanak, or those of his successors and their followers.[79] It first shows up in the Janam Sakhi attributed to Miharban (d. 1640), a first cousin of the sixth Sikh Guru, Guru Hargobind (b. 1595?, Guru 1606–44), and even more important for us, the leader of a major Sikh sectarian group of the time (Miṇas/Chhota Mel).[80] The *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, a mid-seventeenth-century Farsi text, is the first non-Sikh document to use the name the Nanak Panthi along with the Gursikh to refer to the community.[81] Furthermore, it is important to point out that a name such as the Nanak Panth, which evokes the idea of 'personal' following of a leader, is criticized in the writings of Bhai Gurdas and is categorically denounced in the poetry created during the period of Guru Gobind Singh (1675-1708).[82] In other words, the name assigned to the early Sikh community in current scholarship is not a self-designation, but a sectarian/external label the nature of which is criticized in the mainstream Sikh literature.

Focusing on details such as these would help scholars work toward developing a more accurate and nuanced narrative of the happenings during this early phase of Sikh history. Once the details of the founding of the Sikh community and the terms required to name and explain them are in place, people in the field can then move on

to interpret the developments in subsequent history. I believe a clean start is necessary to delineate the origin of the Sikh Panth (the path of the Sikhs), and then one can map how it turned into the *gaddi rah* (big path) of Bhai Gurdas and the *param marag* (great path) of the late seventeenth-century anonymous author at the court of Guru Gobind Singh.[83]

Notes

1 A recent bibliography of writings in English records over 600 entries on Guru Nanak; see Rajwant Singh Chilana, *International Bibliography of Sikh Studies*, Dordrecht: Springer, 2005, pp. 30–60. The writings in Punjabi on the Guru are far more extensive and spread over a much longer period of time. The opening statement of the Puratan Janam Sakhi reads: 'The life story of Baba Nanak from the beginning to the end [who] came to liberate the world.' For its published edition, see Rattan Singh Jaggi (ed.), *Puratan Janam Sakhi*, Patiala: Pepsu Book Depot, 1977.

2 Scholars count Guru Nanak's compositions recorded in the Guru Granth (GG) in different ways. Charan Singh provides the figure of 974 poetic stanzas; see his *Ba,ni Biaura* [1902], Amritsar: Khalsa Tract Society, 1945, pp. 124–5; Kahn Singh Nabha presents the number as 947 in his *Mahan Kosh* [1930], Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag, 1981, p. 437; Sahib Singh counts them as 357 compositions and 3 *Vars* in his *Sri Guru Granth Darpan,* Jalandhr: Raj Publishers, 1961, 1: 17; and Piara Singh Padam supports the figure of 974; see his *Sri Guru Granth Prakash*[1977], Patiala: Kalam Mandir, 1990, p. 58.

   As for the artefacts, a *pothi* and a *chola* associated with the Guru are extant. For details, see 'The Guru Harsahai Pothi', in my *Making of Sikh Scripture*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 33–40; and entries on the *chola* in Tara Singh Narotam, *Sri Guru Tirath Sangraih*, Kankhal: Sri Nirmal Panchayati Akhara, 1884, 288–9; Giani Gyan Singh, *Tvarikh Gurdarian*, Amritsar: Buta Singh Pratap Singh, undated [1919?]), 36; Kahn Singh Nabha, *Mahan Kosh*, p. 477.

   For references to the Guru in the writings of his successors and early followers, see Ganda Singh (ed.), *Sources on the Life and Teachings of Guru Nanak*, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1969, pp. 26–44. For the details of his life, see Kirpal Singh and Parkash Singh (eds), *Puratan Janam Sakhi*; *Janam Sakhi Miharban*, 2 volumes, Amritsar: Khalsa College, 1962, 1969; Gurbachan Kaur (ed.), *Janam Sakhi Bhai Bala*, Patiala: Bhasha Vibahg, 1987; and Gursharan Kaur Jaggi (ed.), *Varan*

Bhai Gurdas, New Delhi, Arsi Publishers, 2010. For the latest research on Bhai Gurdas, see Rahuldeep Singh Gill, 'Growing the Banyan Tree: Early Sikh Tradition in the Works of Bhai Gurdas Bhalla', Ph. D. dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2009.

3 When discussing the impact of McLeod's book, one must be clear that the traditional Sikh scholars worked in Punjabi, and as a result had no access to the book. They receive eight to ten years of training in the *taksals*, which involves learning the recitation and interpretation of the Guru Granth, the study of Sikh historical writings, practice in *kirtan*, and extensive travels to Sikh pilgrimage centers. Their work prepares them to become *granthi*s. Unfortunately, there is very little scholarly literature available on the *taksal*s, and many scholars writing in English are not even aware of the presence of these institutions. From among the products of these taksals, Randhir Singh (1898–1972), Shamsher Singh Ashok (1903–1986), Piara Singh Padam (1923–2001), and Joginder Singh Vedanti (1940–) incomplete.. could be counted as the major figures of the past century. For information on the early history of the *taksals*, see G.W. Leitner, *History of Indigenous Education in the Punjab* [1883], Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag, 1971, pp. 28–37.

Among scholars who work in English, there were efforts to register differences with *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*. Fauja Singh Bajwa (1918–83), a historian based in Punjabi University, engaged with McLeod's argument with a high degree of seriousness; see his 'Guru Nanak and the Social Problem', in Harbans Singh, ed., *Perspectives on Guru Nanak*, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1975, pp.141–50. In this essay originally presented at a conference in 1969, he made a two-pronged argument: Guru Nanak was deeply concerned about the social issues of his times, and given this area of his interest, his message differed in fundamental ways from those of his contemporaries. Unfortunately, Fauja Singh got embroiled in a controversy of his own in 1975, when he was attacked by university-based scholars as well as those outside academia, pushing him out of any public role. For details, see his 'Execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur—A New Look' [1966], *Journal of Sikh Studies*, February 1974, pp. 79–89, and responses to it by Trilochan Singh's 'Letter to the Editor', August 1974, pp. 122–6; and J.S. Grewal's 'Freedom and Responsibility in Historical Scholarship', *Journal of Sikh Studies*, February 1975, pp. 124–33.

Simon Digby (1932–2010), an expert on Islamic literature of South Asia, was the only Western scholar to present a substantive review of McLeod's work, which he described as 'the latest and one of the most valuable additions to the corpus of Christian missionary writings on the religious sociology of India, whose type and pattern were established early in the century'. Having situated McLeod's work in this tradition, Digby

registers his discomfort with his 'ruthless approach' to unearth the 'Nanak of history', his use of 'Protestant theological terms' to explain Guru Nanak's ideas, and his 'weak grasp of Sufi literature'. For this review, see the *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 7 (2), 1970, pp. 301–13. Published in a Bombay-based journal, Digby's ideas seemingly did not reach the Punjab and as a result could not become part of the discussion of McLeod's work in any important way.

Some scholars attempted to engage with McLeod's approach and argued that there are different ways to understand the Guru's life, but none of these succeeded in challenging McLeod's argument in any significant way or emerge as a viable lternative to his presentation. For early efforts in this direction, see Harbans Singh (1923–95), *Guru Nanak and the Origin of the Sikh Faith*, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1969, and J.S. Grewal (1927–), incomplete.. *Guru Nanak in History*, Chandigarh: Panjab University, 1969.

It might also be useful to mention that McLeod's writings evoked a hostile response within some circles. He reports that he was not invited to the international conference arranged by Punjabi University in September 1969, and Kapur Singh denounced the book there; see his *Discovering the Sikh: Autobiography of a Historian*, New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004, pp. 63–4. Early responses to the book included Kirpal Singh's critique published in *The Sikh Review*, February-March 1970. Daljeet Singh (1911–94), whose interest in Sikh studies followed his retirement from Indian Administrative Services in 1969, spearheaded the second round of this attack. As McLeod's status rose on the North American academic scene in the 1980s, Daljeet Singh's opposition to his works became increasingly strident. With some degree of effort, he was able to bring together some supporters who were ready to help him save 'Sikh scholarship from the missionary onslaught'. This denunciation of McLeod's writings and, by extension, those of others who were thought to have been working with him largely unfolded in North America. This criticism barred the Sikh studies programs at Toronto University (1986–92) and Columbia University (1988–99) from attaining permanence, and stunted the growth of the programs at the University of British Columbia (1987–97) and the University of Michigan (1992–2004) during the nascent stages of its development. For details of these debates, see Gurdev Singh (ed.), *Perspectives on the Sikh Tradition*, Patiala: Siddharth, 1986; J.S. Grewal, *Contesting Interpretations of the Sikh Tradition*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1998, pp.2 15–37; and Hew McLeod, *Discovering the Sikh*, pp. 154–91.

In my view, Daljeet Singh and his associates could not distinguish between McLeod's training in biblical studies and what they perceived

as his 'missionary designs' to erode the foundation of the Sikh tradition; see Grewal, *Contesting Interpretations of the Sikh Tradition*, 128. As a result, they could not identify the precise nature of what irked them in McLeod's writings. McLeod's response to their criticism was no less enigmatic. He argued that he was an atheist and attack on his research was part of an effort to protect the Sikh traditions from historical scrutiny; see his 'Cries of Outrage: History versus Tradition in the Study of Sikh Community', *South Asia Research*, 14, 1994, pp. 121-35. Given the fact that the people McLeod refer to in his discussion were products of Western modes of education and wrote in English, I am not convinced that McLeod's characterization of them as 'traditional scholars' and their motivation as being centred on protecting 'traditions' had much justification.

4 The authority of *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* was established soon after its publication. McLeod himself and some other scholars built their interpretation of the events in later Sikh history on the research results of this book, thereby further strengthening its influence and authority in the field. See his *Evolution of the Sikh Community*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976; *Who Is a Sikh? The Problem of Sikh Identity*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989; and *Sikhism*, New York: Penguin, 1997. For those who built on McLeod's interpretation of early Sikh history, see Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994) pp. 47–91; for its critique, see J.S. Grewal, *Historical Perspectives on Sikh Identity*, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1997, pp. 33–47.

As for general acceptance of the conclusions of the book in the 1980s, see John S. Hawley and Mark Juergensmeyer, *Songs of the Saints of India*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988; and A.T. Embree (ed.), *The Sources of Indian Tradition*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1988 [1958], and many others that deal with the Sikh tradition in a limited way. The impression that McLeod had acquired a mastery of Punjabi provided a high degree of authenticity and authority to his writings in the eyes of many Western scholars who were happy to use them for basic information they needed about the Sikhs.

5 It may be useful to reiterate the landmarks of this period, which included the establishment of Punjabi University, Patiala (1962), and Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar (1969), as well as the celebrations of the centennials of the birth of Guru Gobind Singh (1966) and Guru Nanak (1969), the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur (1975) and Guru Arjan (2004), the inauguration of the Khalsa (1999), and the elevation of the Granth to the position of the Guru Granth (2008). This period has seen the production of more scholarly literature on the Sikhs than in their entire earlier history.

6 In addition to the texts mentioned in note 2, see Vir Singh (ed.), *Puratan Janam Sakhi*, [1926], Amritsar: Khalsa Samachar, 1986; Jasbir Singh Sabar (ed.), *The Gian Ratanavli*, Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1993; and Sarupdas Bhalla (ed.), *Mahima Parkash*, ed. Utam Singh Bhatia [1776] Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag, 1971.

7 For criticism of McLeod's use of the Janam Sakhis, see Ganda Singh, 'Editorial', *Panjab Past and Present* (October 1970), i–x. In my view, Ganda Singh's evaluation raises important questions regarding the issue of academic responsibility of a senior scholar toward new research. It seems clear that Ganda Singh had fundamental differences with McLeod's research results, but he did not want to bring them to the forefront lest they provide fuel to the fire already gathering around the book; see note 3. His argument that McLeod's work needs 'sympathy,' not 'carping criticism,' hurt the rise of a healthy debate so essential for a field at an early stage of growth. For positive assessment of his work on the Janam Sakhis, see Surjit Hans, *A Reconstruction of Sikh History from Sikh Literature,* Jalandhar: ABS Publications, 1988, pp. 198–9; and Nripinder Singh, *The Sikh Moral Tradition*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1990, p.79.

8 For McLeod's translations, see *The B–40 Janam Sakhi*, Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1980; *The Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism*, Totowa: Barnes and Nobel, 1984; *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*, University of Otago, 1987; *Sikhs of the Khalsa Rahit*, Oxford University Press, 2003; and *The Prem Sumarag*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006.

The legitimacy of McLeod's use of an historical approach has also come under attack from diverse quarters; see Noel Q. King's essay in Gurdev Singh (ed.), *Perspectives on the Sikh Tradition*; and Jasbir Singh Mann et al. (eds), *Advanced Studies in Sikhism*, Irvine: Sikh Community of North America, 1989. For a recent critique, see the relevant sections in Arvind-Pal S. Mandair, *Religion and the Specter of the West*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.

It seems to me that the historical approach synchronizes well with Sikh understanding of the past. For instance, the Sikh view of time is linear, and Sikhs believe their history to be an integral part of the divine design for human kind. For Guru Nanak, the universe rose as a result of the divine command (*hukam*/*bha,na*) and follows a course set in historical time (see his cosmology hymn GG, 1035–6). The Sikhs began to record their own history soon after the community's founding, and the Puratan Janam Sakhi registers a reasonably good consciousness of issues such as that of historical chronology. The daily *ardas* (Sikh supplication) is essentially a thanksgiving prayer

for the divine support through various phases of the community's sociopolitical and ideological development from the beginnings to the present day. References to historical events begin to appear in the writings that are included in the Guru Granth; see Balwand and Satta, GG, 966, for the developments during the sixteenth century; for a discussion of this issue in Guru Arjan's time, see Surjit Hans, *A Reconstruction of Sikh History*, pp. 137–77. The earliest manuscript of *Sakhi Babe Nanak ki Adi to Ant tak*, dated 1640, was extant until the 1970s; see Rattan Singh Jaggi (ed.), *The Puratan Janam Sakhi,* 1, pp. 36–137. For the text of the *ardas*, see the English version of *Sikh Rahit Maryada*, Amritsar: Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, 1997, pp. 9–11; for discussion of its history and contents, see Lal Singh Gyani, *Puratan Ardasa te Bhaugati Parbodh*, Amritsar: Panch Khalsa Press, 1920; and *Puratan Sikh Ardasa*, Amritsar: Gurmat Press, 1952, pp. 1–17; and Piara Singh Padam, '*Ardas*,' in his *Guru Ghar*, Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 1997, pp. 279–86.

9 For instance, unless the history of the sources employed in an account created in 1776, the year of completion of the *Mahima Parkash*, can be traced back to the times of Guru Nanak (d. 1539), I am not convinced that it could serve as a significant source of information for an 'historian.'

10 *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, pp. 11, 49, 59–60, 75, 119–22.

11 Given his emphasis on the need for skepticism, it is strange that McLeod seems satisfied to use an edition of the Puratan Janam prepared in 1926 by Vir Singh, the limitations of whose editorial capabilities were a subject of a doctoral research; see Harinder Singh, 'Bhai Vir Singh's Editing of *Panth Parkash* by Rattan Singh Bhangu', Ph.D. thesis, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 1990.

12 Vir Singh (ed.), *The Puratan Janam Sakhi*, pp. 175–6.

13 Instead of associating this with the Puranic mythology, it may be useful to think of other possibilities such as the name of the leading Jogi based at this place was named Sumer (There is an interesting portrait of 'Bava Sumerpuri' in the collection of Maharaja Nabha); the Jogis based there called it Sumeru; as part of the belief in their powers the people around began to call this place Sumeru; as part of the vernacularization process, the Punjabi *meru* simply means a 'hill' and *sumeru* thus becomes a 'holy hill.' I became aware of the last meaning while reading Giani Naurang Singh's commentary on the *Sarab Loh Granth*, see MS 766, Guru Nanak Dev University, folio 1930.

14 McLeod writes, 'Sikh children who receive a Western-style education will assuredly imbibe attitudes which encourage skepticism, and

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having done so they are most unlikely to view traditional janam-sakhi perceptions with approval. Given the emphasis which is typically laid on stories concerning Guru Nanak there is a risk about Sikhism as a whole may come to be associated with the kind of marvels and miracles which are the janam-sakhi stock-in-trade. For some the price may be worth paying, but at least they should be aware of the risks involved in adopting the traditional approach'. See his *Sikhs: History, Religion, and Society*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1989, pp. 21–2.

15 For commentaries on the Janam Sakhis, see *The Gian Ratanavli*, Sakhi 1; Ratan Singh Bhangu (d. 1847), Balwant Singh Dhillon (ed.), *Sri Guru Panth Parkash*, Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 2004, pp. 16, 178–83; Ernest Trumpp (1828–1885), *The Adi Granth* [1877], New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1978, pp. i–vii; Gurmukh Singh (1849–1898), M. Macauliffe (ed.), *The Janam Sakhi Babe Nanak Ji ki*, Rawalpindi: Gulshan Punjab Press, 1885, pp. 1–10; and Karam Singh (1884–1930), *Katak ke Visakh* [1912], Ludhiana: Lahore Book Shop, 1932. Two doctoral theses, Jagjit Singh's 'A Critical and Comparative Study of the Janam Sakhis of Guru Nanak upto the Middle of the Eighteenth Century' (1967); and Piar Singh's 'A Critical Survey of Punjabi Prose in the Seventeenth Century' (1968), were submitted at Panjab University, Chandigarh.

16 For McLeod's writings on the Janam Sakhis, see his *Early Sikh Tradition: A Study of the Janam Sakhis*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980; *The B–40 Janam-sakhi*, Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1980; and 'The Janam-sakhis', in his *Evolution of the Sikh Community*, pp. 20–36; 'The Hagiography of the Sikhs', in *Essays in Sikh History, Tradition, and Society* [1994], New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 35–53; and 'The Life of Guru Nanak', in Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (ed.), *Religions of India in Practice*, Princeton: Princeton University of Press, 1995, pp. 449-61. For the reception of these writings, see his *Discovering the Sikhs*, pp. 150–1.

17 Within his own writings, Guru Nanak describes himself as an ordinary human being who has been assigned the path of singing the praises of the Creator (*Maṇas murati Nanaku namu*, M1, GG, 350; *Nanaku bugoyad janu tura tere chakran pakhaq*, M1, GG, 721; *Koi akhe adami Nanaku vechara*, M1, GG, 991; *Kare karae sabh kichhu jane Nanaki sair ev kahie*, M1, GG, 434, and 660; *Hau dhadhi hari prabhu khasam ka hari kai dari aia*, M1, GG, 91, and 150, 468, and 1057).

18 For a creative way to address this issue, see J.S. Hawley, 'Mirabai in Manuscript', in *Three Bhakti Voices: Mirabai, Surdas, and Kabir in Their Times and Ours*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 89–98.

19 The two editions, Rattan Singh Jaggi (ed.), *The Puratan Janam Sakhi*; and Gurbachan Kaur (ed.), *Janam Sakhi Bhai Bala* represent excellent critical scholarship.

20 The earliest known manuscripts include the Puratan Janam Sakhi (1640); the Bala Janam Sakhi (1658); and the Miharban Janam Sakhi (1754). The text of the writing of the Gurus that appear in the early Puratan manuscripts is pre-Kartarpur Pothi (1604). We have on record the claim of Hariji (d. 1696) that his father, Miharban, had completed his Janam Sakhi by 1619; see Krishna Kumari Bansal (ed.), *Sodhi Hariji Krit Goshatan Miharban kian*, Sangrur: the editor, 1977, 234; for reference to a copy of Miharban Janam Sakhi prepared in 1651, see MS 427B, Khalsa College, *Samat 1708 Vaisakh Vadi ekam nu* [Miharban, Hariji, and], *Chatrbhuj pothi puran hoi*, folio 676. There is firm evidence that Bala Janam Sakhi was compiled after the death of Baba Handal (1648), and an elaborately illustrated manuscript dated 1658 was extant until recently, see *Janam Sakhi Bhai Bala*, pp. 149–50.

21 The echoing of the Puratan images in the literature of the Miharaban family leaves little doubt that this text was available to them, see the opening and sections of *Sodhi Hariji Krit Goshatan Miharban kian*.

22 The Miharaban and the Bala Janam Sakhis were productions of the sectarian groups led by Miharban and Baba Handal, respectively. For *Janam Sakhi of Miharban*, see MS 2306, Khalsa College, dated 1650 (*Sakhi Guru Hariji ke mukh ki likhi Samat 1707*, folio 164b); and *Sodhi Hariji Krit Goshatan Miharban kian*. For additional writings of this family, see Pritam Singh and Joginder Singh Ahluwalia, *Sikhan da Chhota Mel: Itihas te Sarvekhan,* San Leandro, California: Punjab Educational and Cultural Foundation, 2009, pp. 84–97. An undated manuscript entitled, *Janam Sakhi Baba Handal* (folios 1-602), is available with his descendents at Jandiala Guru, near Amritsar. For more on this text and family, see Varinder Kaur, "Parchi Baba Handal: Sampadan te Itihasik Visleshaṇ," M. Phil. Thesis, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 1989; and Rajinder Pal, *Sankhep Jivan Charitar Sri Guru Baba Handal Ji*, Jandiala: Gurudwara Sri Guru Baba Handal Ji, undated [1990s].

23 It may be useful to point out that this itinerary is not accepted in current scholarship; see Harbans Singh, *Guru Nanak and the Origin of the Sikh Faith*, p. 154.

24 A discussion of the relationship of the position of the Guru and the layout of his house with the model of a Sufi master and his hospices (*khanqah*), on the one hand, and the hillock (*tilla*s) of the Shaivite ascetics, on the other, would shed light on the nature of relationship of the early Sikhs to these groups. For general information about the

period, see J.S. Grewal (ed.), *Religious Movements and Institutions in Medieval India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006.

25 For the singing of the *Alahania*, see the Puratan Janam Sakhi manuscript dated 1690, folio 273b.

26 For an essay on this important theme, see J.S. Grewal, 'Sacred Space in Sikhism', in Joseph T. O'Connell (ed.), *Organizational and Institutional Aspects of Indian Religious Movements*, Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced S tudy, 1999.

27 It is important to reiterate that the Puratan's account of Guru Nanak's travels is much less elaborate than the ones available in the Miharban and the Bala Janam Sakhis.

28 For this interpretation of the rise of institutions such as the *langar*, the *manjis*, and the *Granth*, see Hew McLeod, *Sikhism*, pp. 23–4, and pp. 30–1. Working within this larger context, Pashaura Singh argues that the compositions of the early Gurus were preserved in both oral and written form (aides-memoire), and the institution of scripture formally started with Guru Arjan, see his *Life and Works of Guru Arjan*, New Delhi: Oxford University, Press, 2006, pp. 134–71; Christopher Shackle's recent statement also attributes the first 'canonical' version of Sikh scripture to Guru Arajn, see his 'Repackaging the ineffable' changing styles of Sikh scriptural commentary', *Bulletin of School of Oriental and African Studies* 71, vol. 2, 2008, p. 257.

Another example of McLeod's anachronistic discussion of Guru Nanak's theology based on evidence from the writings of other Gurus can be found in his discussion of the *mangal/mulmantar* ('invocation'/'the root formula')—a string of epithets that refer to different aspects of the Divine. He begins his exposition of Guru Nanak's ideas with an analysis of the mangal but fails to mention that it appears for the first time in the Kartarpur Pothi (1604), completed during the period of Guru Arjan. While explicating the 'Sikh conception' of the Divine, it is fine for Jodh Singh to start his discussion with the mangal—see his *Gurmat Nirṇay* [1932], Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag, 1979, 1—but not for McLeod, who is claiming to deal only with the ideas of Guru Nanak. For a discussion of the mangal, see my *Making of Sikh Scripture*, pp. 53–4. The terms *Satinamu*, *Akal Murati*, and *Ajuni* that appear in the mangal are not used in Guru Nanak's verses, and his favorite epithets for the Divine such as *Kartaru*, *Nirankaru*, and *Sahibu* are not available in this text.

For a discussion Guru Amardas' year of birth, see Raijasbir Singh (ed.), *Guru Amardas: Srot Pustak*, Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1986, pp. 227-9.

29 For a discussion of this *pothi*, see my *Making of Sikh Scripture*, pp. 33–40.

30 There was a general welcome accorded to this section of the book after its publication. Ganda Singh complemented McLeod for 'understanding, appreciating and presenting [the Guru's] teachings in a very lucid and convincing manner'; see *Panjab Past and Present* (October 1970), i–x. Needless to say, McLeod's use of Protestant terms such as 'theology,' 'divine self-expression', 'unregenerate man', and 'discipline' to label the Guru's ideas may not have sounded unreasonable to people in the late 1960s, but writing in 2010 we are better equipped to understand this problem.

Although I was vaguely aware of this issue of terminology earlier, it was crystallized for me with John S. Hawley's presentation entitled 'What Is Sikh Theology?' at Columbia University on 31 March 1990. In this unpublished paper, he laid out the issues involving the use of terms from one tradition to explain the ideas of the other and the problems inherent in this effort.

31 McLeod's discussion is built around the dichotomy between the supposed Sikh belief in 'divine revelation' and his need to analyse the Guru's beliefs by situating them in their historical context. For me, a historian is obligated to take into account Guru Nanak's belief that his compositions represent the divine voice (*Tabalbaz bichar sabadi sunia*, M1, GG, 142; *Jaisi mai avai khasam ki baṇi, taisra kari gian ve Lalo*, M1, GG, 722). This comes further into focus when we note that none of the Guru's illustrious contemporaries on the Indian side made claims for divine sanction, and these are an integral part of the prophetic tradition on the Judeo-Christian-Islamic side.

32 There is no evidence to support McLeod's category of a Sant; see Nirvikar Singh, 'Guru Nanak and the 'Sants': A Reappraisal', *International Journal of Punjab Studies*, 8 (1), 2001, pp. 1–34; for McLeod's response to this article and Singh's rebuttal to that, see *International Journal of Punjab Studies*, 9 (1), 2002, pp. 137–42.

33 For more on this theme, see Karine Schomer and W.H. McLeod (eds), *The Sants: Studies in Devotional Traditions of India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987), pp. 1–6; John S. Hawley and Mark Juergensmeyer, *Songs of the Saints of India*, pp. 3–7; Nirvikar Singh, 'Guru Nanak and the 'Sants': A Reappraisal', pp. 1–34; and J.S. Grewal, *The Sikhs: Ideology, Institutions, and Identity*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 3–21.

34 The bibliography in the book does not indicate that McLeod paid much attention to the writings of these saints that appear outside the Sikh canon. Nor does he take any note of the effort that went into the selection of these compositions for the Sikh scriptural text. From our knowledge of the early Sikh manuscripts, the writings of the non-Sikh

saints were vetted in two stages. In the first, those who believed in iconic worship were labeled as unbaked stuff (*kachi bani*) and discarded. In the second, the available compositions of those who believed in the formless God were subjected to close scrutiny and the ones that conformed to the Sikh beliefs in family and social life were selected. For these details, see my *Making of Sikh Scripture*, pp. 111–17; Pashaura Singh, *The Bhagats of the Guru Granth Sahib*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003; Vinay Dharwardkar, *Kabir: The Weaver's Song*, New Delhi: Penguin, 2003, pp. 25–58; and J.S. Hawley, 'The Received Kabir: Beginnings to Bly', in *Three Bhakti Voices: Mirabai, Surdas, and Kabir in Their Times and Ours*, pp. 267–78.

35 The secondary literature referred to in this discussion include Ahmad Shah, *The Bijak of Kabir*, Hamirpur, 1917, pp. 1–28; Charlotte Vaudeville, *Kabir Granthavali*, Pondichery, 1957, iv–v; Vaudeville, *Au Cabaret de l'Amour: Paroles de Kabir*, Paris,1959), pp. 7–11, Vaudeville, 'Kabīr and Interior Religion', *History of Religions,* 3, 1964, pp. 221–2; Bhagirath Misra and Rajnarayn Mauraya, *Sant Namdev ki Padavali* (Poona, 1964), pp.9–31; and Parasuram Chaturvedi, *Uttari Bharat ki Sant-paramapara*, Prayag, 1951, pp. 709–33. The names of the publishers are not mentioned in the bibliography provided in the book.

36 In my view, the supposed similarities between the two compositions of Kabir and Guru Nanak quoted to make the point that Guru Nanak had access to the writings of his predecessor are too vague to support this argument; see Piara Singh Padam, *Sri Guru Granth Prakash*, 47–8. For the entry of the *bhagat bani* into the Sikh scriptural corpus during the times of Guru Amardas, see my *Goindval Pothis: The Earliest Extant Source of the Sikh Canon*, Cambridge: Harvard Oriental Series, 1996.

37 There is not a single reference to Baba Farid in the second section of the book; see entries under his name in the index, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, p. 254.

38 See his 'Influence of Islam upon the Thought of Guru Nanak', in his *Sikhism and Indian Society*, Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, 1967, pp. 292–308. Let me present one instance to challenge this situation. McLeod and many others of his generation use *Akal Purakh* (Being beyond time) as the core epithet for God in Guru Nanak's writings. It comes from Indic roots and brings in a set of philosophical connotation to explain the Guru's conception of the divine. The problem with this usage becomes apparent when one presents the simple fact that this epithet appears only once in the Guru's compositions (*Tu akal purakhu nahi siri kala*, M1, GG, 1038). Simultaneously, it might also be intriguing to note that the Guru uses *Sahib*, which

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comes from Arabic and means 'Sovereign', more than one hundred times in his compositions.

39 The categories that represent the creation include the musical modes (*rags*), elements (air, water, fire), the deities (Brahma, Shiv, and so on), holy people (Siddh, Jati, Sati, and so on), learned people (such as writers), beautiful women, warriors, rich people, sacred spots, and others. The same type of structure unfolds in his cosmology hymn (M1, GG, 1036), the opening thirteen verses catalogue the absence of what Guru Nanak associates with the world—natural objects (sun, moon, light, sky, rivers, and so on), gods (such as Brahama, Bishanu, Mahesu), humans (men and women), religious personas (jogis, gopis, khans, shaikhs, hajis, mullahs, qazis), sacred texts (Veds, Shashatars, Katebs), sacred spots (*tirath*, Mecca/haj), social hierarchy (Varan)—and the final three declare that the Creator brought all these into being and one can only make sense of this with the help of the Guru.

40 See his fifty-four-verses composition entitled *Onkar* (M1, GG, 929–38), which though entitled 'One God,' is about the universe and how the human beings should function in it.

41 This idea runs though the writings of all the Sikh Gurus, *Sabh srisati seve dini rati jiu, de kanu suṇahu ardas jiu*, M5, GG, 74.

42 For traditional Sikh scholarship, see Taran Singh, *Gurbani dian Viakhia Parnalian*, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1980; a summary of his argument appears in Pashaura Singh, *The Guru Granth: Canon, Meaning and Authority*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 241–57. For another statement on this theme, see my '500 years of Sikh Educational Heritage', in Reeta Grewal and Sheena Pall. (eds), *Five Centuries of Sikh Tradition*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2005, pp. 335–68.

43 For the commentaries on Guru Nanak's compositions, see the relevant sections in the early Janam Sakhis. The earliest manuscript of this type that has come to my notice contains a collection of the *var*s in the Guru Granth. Although undated, its orthography belongs to the late sixteenth century, and the texts such as these came to be known as the *Panj Granthis* and *Das Granthis*, which contained the core compositions used for daily recitations.

44 Piara Singh Padam, *Guru Nanak Sagar*, Patiala: Kalam Mandir, 1993, pp. 73–178.

45 See Tara Singh Narotam, *Sri Gurmat Nirnay Sagar* [1876], Kankhal: Sri Nirmala Panchaiti Akhara, 1898; Kahn Singh Nabha, *Gurmat Prabhakar* [1898], Amritsar: Chatar Singh Jiivan Singh, 2005, and *Gurmat Sudhakar* [1899], Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag, 1979; Jodh Singh, *Gurmat Nirṇay*; and Sher Singh, *Philosophy of Sikhism* [1944], Amritsar:

Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, 1986. Bhagwan Singh's *Rahit Darpaṇ* (pre-1877), which still is in manuscript form with very few scholars aware of its existence, also falls in this category.

46 See previous note. McLeod's discussion does not create the impression that he had the opportunity to immerse himself in the writings of the Guru, think through the nature of the issues related to his life and teachings, and propose a narrative of this crucial period of Sikh history that can be supported with firm evidence. Instead, I see here a young scholar coming to the Guru's compositions with preconceived notions about the medieval religious landscape of north India, and a set of Protestant categories and terms that he thought was adequate to unlock the ideas of any thinker irrespective of his or her linguistic or cultural context.

47 The portrait of the Guru that emerged in *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* coordinates closely with in his image of half-closed eyes looking toward the heavens available in the calendar art of the 1960s; see McLeod's *Popular Sikh Art*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991, Preface. A serious discussion of the iconography of the Guru has yet to appear, but the data at our disposal indicate a shift between the portraits that predated the mid-nineteenth century and the iconography that became popular afterward. For discussion of these issues, see Susan Stronge (ed.), *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms*, London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1999; and B.N. Goswamy, *Piety and Splendour*, New Delhi: National Museum, 2000.

48 W.H. McLeod, The Evolution of the Sikh Community, 5.

49 See his 'On the Word Panth: A Problem of Terminology and Definition', *Contributions in Sociology*, 12 (2), 1979, pp. #.

50 For an interesting discussion, see Manmohan Singh, 'Bird Images in Guru Nanak's Hymns', *Panjab Past and Present* (April 1979), pp. 227–31.

51 Kabir refers to the authority and attitudes of the revenue collectors in his verse *Hari ke loga mo kou niti dasai patwari*, GG, 793.

52 Reference to the village elders appears in the Puratan Janam Sakhi manuscript dated 1758, folio 15.

53 The Puratan presents Guru Nanak's critique of the politics of the time in some detail. The Guru is presented as being deeply upset with the prevailing corruption around the political institutions, and its author expresses this forthrightly. It is, however, interesting to reflect on why the Guru's discomfort with the politics of the time is absent in the Miharban Janam Sakhi and the *Gian Ratnavali* (post-1760s). Could it be that by elaborating on this, Miharban did not want to risk annoying the Mughal authorities with whom his family worked closely, and

the author of the *Gian Ratnavali* did not need to bring it into the discussion, as the Sikhs themselves were the rulers by the time of his writing?

54 The sounds 'b' and 'v' are interchangeable in Punjabi, and the *Vedi Patisahu* here refers to Guru Nanak's family caste, Bedi. For an interesting comment on the concept of the king being responsible for the concerns of both *din* and *dunia*, see Abul Fazal, *Ain-i-Akbari*, tr. H. Blochmann [1927] (Delhi: Low Price Publications, 2001), pp.170–172.

55 For more on the Bhatts, see Rattan Singh Jaggi, *Sikh Panth Vishavkosh*, Patiala: Gur Ratan Publishers, 2005, 2, pp. 1334–7.

56 As for the location of Kartarpur, Sialkot was in its north (20 miles), Kalanaur, the town where the Mughal emperor Akbar was coroneted in the 1550s, in the southeast, (5 miles), Batala in the south (15 miles), and Lahore in the west (20 miles).

57 For a discussion of the Kartarpur period, see my *Sikhism*, Englewood, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2004, pp. 22–8.

58 McLeod, *Sikhism*, pp. 14–15, and pp. 36–7.

59 In addition, we have six names that do not carry any reference to the social station of these people (Malo, Manga, Kalu, Japuvansi, Bhagirath, Jodh, Jivai); see Bhai Gurdas' *Varan*, 11, pp. 13–14.

60 The Bala Janam Sakhi opens with the claim that Bala, who was supposedly a childhood friend of Guru Nanak, lived in Talwandi, and so did the descendants of Lalu, Guru Nanak's father's elder brother.

61 Sujan Rai Bhandari, *Khulasat-ut-Tavarikh* [1696], tr. Ranjit Singh Gill, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1972, pp.78-9.

62 *The Baburnama*, tr. Annete Susannah Beveridge [1921], Delhi: Low Price Publications, 2003, p. 454; Wheeler M. Thackston (ed.), *The Baburnama*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 315. The villages around Kartarpur were inhabited by the tribes of Bajwas, Chahals, Gills, Kahlons, Khairas, Manns, and Randhawas. It might also be useful to mention that the Jats and their rural ancillaries constituted over 90 per cent of the Sikh community when the numbers begin to become available; see Surinderjit Kaur, 'Changes in the Distributional Pattern of the Sikhs in India, 1881–1971: A Geographical Appraisal', Ph.D. thesis, Panjab University, Chandigarh, 1979, 34.

63 Cited in Irfan Habib, 'The Jats of Punjab and Sind', in Harbans Singh and N.G. Barrier (eds), *Essays in Honor of Ganda Singh*, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1976, pp. 94–5. Vladimir Minorsky, 'Gardizi in India,' *Iranica*, 137, 1948, pp. 200–15, does not seem to include this reference.

64 Ainslie Embree (ed.), *Alberuni's India,* New York: Norton Library, 1971, p. 401. It is interesting that this position is tangentially evoked

in Bhai Gurdas's *Var* 8, devoted to the society around him. Its ninth stanza deals with the Brahmins, tenth with the Kshatriyas, whom he equates with the Khatris, eleventh with the Vaishayas, and twelfth with the Jains, Jats, Lohars, Chhimbas, Oil makers, Barbers, and so on. The placement of the Jats and the Jains with all other outcastes is interesting. For the reference to the Jats in *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, see Ganda Singh, 'Nanak Panthis', *Panjab Past and Present,* 1, 1967, pp. 54, 57; and for their appearance in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, see Table 1 in Irfan Habib, 'The Jats of Punjab and Sind'.

65 For references to the Jats in later writings, see Joseph Davey Cunnigham, *A History of the Sikhs* [1848], New Delhi: S. Chand, 1985, pp. 299–300; K.R. Qanungo, *History of the Jats* [1925], Delhi: Delhi Originals, 2003; M.C. Pradhan, *The Political System of the the Jats of Northern India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1966; and Nonika Datta, *Forming an Identity: A Social History of the Jats*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999. From the press on this issue in 2010:

'Amritsar: The All-India Jat Reservation Sangharsh Committee launched its rath yatra from the Golden Temple here today. They are protesting against the government's failure to grant OBC (Other Backward Class) status to the Jat community of Punjab, Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir. The yatra will pass through various districts of three states before culminating on September 13, [2010] at Sonepat (Haryana), which will be observed as "Jat Chetavani Divas." On the day, the district units of various states would hold rallies across the country, said Yashpal Malik, national president of the committee, which had already declared to disrupt the Commonwealth Games. He said the community had been fighting for getting the OBC status for the past 19 years. He alleged that the community was feeling dejected over the continuous indifferent attitude of the governments at the Centre and three states which had adopted double standards by granting the status to other similar caste and communities like Yadav, Ahir, Saini, Kamboj, Gurjar etc.' *The Tribune* (Chandigarh, 29 August 2010).

66 It may also be interesting to point out that the author of the *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* considers Guru Nanak compositions to be in Jataki, 'the language of the Jats', who have 'no regard for Sanskrit language'. See Ganda Singh, 'Nanak Panthis', *Panjab Past and Present,* vol. 1, 1967, p. 54.

67 I have seen this type of process unfolding in my lifetime. Beginning with the early 1960s, I remember the Gujjar pastoralists coming down from the hills and attempting to spend winters or settle down temporarily in the Punjab. While the farmers were happy to offer their fallow

fields for free cattle manure in return, and urban society was happy to buy cheaper milk, the Gujjars were invariably seen as petty criminals who carried arms and were always ready to steal. With the agriculture having become more intensive in the Punjab in the past decades, their plight has worsened, and one often sees them squeezed with their cattle onto the open areas along the roads.

68 This was the only point of transition of leadership in Sikh history when a Jat candidate was in the running for the office of Guruship, see *Janam Sakhi Bhai Bala*, p. 460; and Kulwinder Singh Bajwa (ed.), *Mahima Prakash Vartak*, Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 2004 [1770?]),incomplete.. pp. 51–2. For general references to his life and activity in the eighteenth century writings, see relevant sections in *Gurbilas Patshahi Chhevin,* Amritsar; Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, 1998[1718?]);incomplete … and Dharm Singh (ed.), *Kavi Saundha,* Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1981[1790?].incomplete.. For recent writings on him, see Jasbir Singh Bhalla, *Baba Buddha Jivani*, Amritsar: Navin Prakashan, 1981; Amarjit Kaur, 'Punjabi Sahit Vich Babe Buddhe da Sarup', Ph.D. thesis, Guru Nanak Dev University, 2002; Sabinderjit Singh Sagar, *Baba Buddha Ji*, Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 2005; and Harnek Singh, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib: Viakhia te Sandesh*, Patiala: Gurmat Prakashan, 2008, pp. 42–62. Little is written about Ajita Randhawa, but his name appears prominently in the writings of Bhai Gurdas, and an important late seventeenth-century text entitled *Goshati Ajite Randhawe nal hoi* is also available.

69 For the details of McLeod's argument, see his *Evolution of the Sikh Community* (1975), pp. 1–19 and pp. 83–104; *Sikhism* (1997), pp. 3–61 and pp. 228–50; *Essays in Sikh History, Tradition, and Society* (2007), pp. 171–96. For those who built on McLeod's work, see Harjot Oberoi, 'Ritual and Counter Ritual', in J.T. O'Connell, Milton Israel, Willard G. Oxtoby,. (eds), *Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century*, visiting editors W. H. McLeod, J.S. Grewal, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988.

70 This would also provide the appropriate context to interpret the code of conduct and belief (*rahit*) statements pertaining to the ritual details of the remarriage ceremony of widows, produced around 1700. See *Prem Sumarag*, ed. Randhir Singh [1953] (Jalandhar: New Book Company, 2000, pp. 30–5.

71 Tony Ballantyne (ed.), *Textures of the Sikh Past*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007, 3.

72 Grewal's early position was that 'with mild disagreement here' and 'a minor difference there', one could work with McLeod's overall interpretation of Sikh history, see his 'Legacies of the Sikh Past for the Twentieth Century', in J.T. O'Connell et al. (eds), *Sikh History*

and Religion in the Twentieth Century, 18. More recently, he has registered McLeod's limitations as to how he was not able to achieve the goals he had set up for himself in his study of the Janam Sakhis; he also contends that McLeod's argument that Guru Nanak's life story has to remain brief carries little significance in the light of the fact that we have far more detailed information about him than any other figure of his period. See J.S. Grewal, *Lectures on History, Society and Culture of the Punjab*, Patiala: Punjabi University, 2007, pp. 160–4. Writing in 2009, he expanded on Karine Schomer's argument regarding the nature of medieval Indian poetry to question McLeod's joining of Guru Nanak and Kabir as parts of the 'Sant synthesis', as well as his resulting interpretation of the circumstances of the rise of the early Sikh community; see his *Sikhs: Ideology, Institutions, and Identity*, 3–4.

73 J.S. Grewal, 'W.H. McLeod and Sikh Studies', *Journal of Punjab Studies*, 17 (1-2), 2010, p. 142.

74 I divide McLeod's scholarship into two broad areas: interpretations of various phases of Sikh history and translations of the early Sikh texts (see note 8). I have already registered my differences with his research results regarding the founding of the Sikh community. As for the latter category, my differences with his work are centered on the dating of the translated documents. In my view, McLeod did not have the opportunity or the time to study the early manuscripts of these texts, and in the absence of any empirical evidence he dated these texts where he thought they fitted best in the trajectory of Sikh history he himself had created. In the light of the data available to us, there is no basis to support McLeod's dating of, say, the *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas before 1604; the Puratan Janam Sakhi after 1604; The *Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama* in the mid-eighteenth century; *The Prem Sumarag* in the early nineteenth/late eighteenth century; and *Sri Guru Panth Prakash* in 1841, for references to these dates, see his *Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism*, pp. 17-18.

It has been a deeply agonizing experience to critique McLeod's scholarship, with which I started my own journey into the wonderland of Sikh studies in the early 1980s, but I feel obliged to present these thoughts for the consideration of younger scholars. For the beginning of my differences with McLeod's interpretations, see my 'Teaching the Sikh Tradition', in John Stratton Hawley et al. (eds), *Studying the Sikhs: Issues for North America*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993, pp. 142–3.

75 This is as important facet of the previous generation's legacy, which began with the pioneering efforts of Ganda Singh in the 1930s and manifested in the selfless service of many others like Randhir Singh, Shamsher Singh Ashok, and Piara Singh Padam. These scholars were involved in preserving

manuscripts, developing their repositories, preparing their catalogues, and making them available in print. For Ganda Singh's biography, see Rattan Singh Jaggi, *Sikh Panth Vishavkosh*, 1, 714–16. For Randhir Singh, see notes 3, 68, and 81. For Shamsher Singh Ashok's monumental works, see his *Punjabi Hath Likhatan di Suchi*, 2 vols, Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag, 1961 and 1963; and *Sikh Reference Library Amritsar dian Hath Likhat Pustakan di Suchi*, Amritsar: Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, 1968. For Padam's contribution, see his *Rahitname*, Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 1995, and notes 2, 3, 8, 36, 44, and 82.

76 It may be useful to mention another position on this issue. In *Sikh Formations*, 1 (1), June 2005, Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair writes: 'The study of Sikhs and Sikhism today is at a major turning point. The conventional frameworks that have dominated the efforts to carve out a distinct subject area of Sikh Studies over the last four decades appears increasingly unhelpful, if not irrelevant, against the backdrop of globalization and the emergence of new theoretical interventions in the human and social sciences. At the same time as we all, in some measure, come to terms with a 'New Age' in the twenty-first century, when the old certainties are being reassessed or giving way to new modes of thought, there is a serious intellectual challenge for those of us engaged with the study of Sikhs and Sikhism. This challenge is all the more pressing for it has also come at a juncture when there is generational change talking place in the academic leadership of the subject, with the towering 'greats' of the 1960s and 1970s gradually giving way to a new generation who now neither share their mindset nor are any longer comfortable with methodologies that have so long dominated the field'.

Mandair's claim that 'Sikh Studies' need to outgrow the supposedly 'conventional framework' seems perfectly reasonable, but how this goal is to be achieved is the key question. Replacing the model of biblical studies that McLeod brought to Sikh studies in the 1960s with a new one based on the thinking of the 'towering 'greats' like Hegel and Derrida, as Mandair seems to do in his recently released *Religion and the Specter of the West* (2010), may not be much of an answer to this problem.

77 No reference regarding the change of the name appears in *Guru Nanak Dev University: A Profile* (1994), a publication produced at the time of the university's silver jubilee celebration. It would be interesting to examine this episode and find out the basis on which the present name was argued for by its supporters, the nature of their religious affiliation, and the contribution of the large history and other related departments on the campus in this discussion. The fact stands, however, that there were differences on what name should be used to build an institution honouring the founder of the tradition.

78 See McLeod's 'The Nanak Panth', in *Who Is a Sikh?*, pp. 7–22; 'The Early Nanak Panth', *Sikhism,* pp. 9–15; and Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*, p. 477 (entries under Nanak-panth and panthis).

79 Guru Nanak calls the people at Kartarpur as the Sikhs (*Suni Sikhvante Nanaku binavai*, M1, GG, 503), and considers them to constitute the Gurmukh Panth (the community of the Gurmukhs, *Hari kirati rahirasi hamari Gurmukhi Panth atitang*, M1, GG, 360); Guru Arjan assigns them the name of Sach da Panth (the path of truth, *Kal jal jam johi na sakai Sach ka Pantha thatio*, M5, GG, 714); the Bhatts describe them as the Utam Panth (the best path/the community of the best, *Ik Utam Panth sunio gur sangat*, GG, 1406) and Dharm Panth (the path of morality, *Lahnai Panth Dharam ka kia*, GG, 1401; *Dharam Panth dhariou*, GG 1406); and Bhai Gurdas uses the epithets of the Nirmal Panth (the pure path/ the community of the pure, *Maria sika jagat vichi Nanak Nirmal Panth chalia*, *Var*, 1: 45), and the Nirala Panth (the unique path, *Sabadi jiti sidhi mandali kitosu apana Panth Nirala*, *Var*, 1:37). It is interesting to note that the term Nanak Panthi does not appear even in Sujan Rai Bhandari, *Khulasat-ut-Tavarikh* [1696], pp. 80–1.

80 The Miharban Janam Sakhi, 1:8; and *Guru Amardas: Srot Pustak*, 52 and 56. For a discussion on Guru Hargobind's year of birth, see Piara Singh Padam, *Khashtam Guru de Khat Darshan*, Patiala: Kalam Mandir, 1994.

81 For this section in the *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, see Ganda Singh, 'Nanak Panthis', *Panjab Past and Present* 1, 1967, pp. 47-71.

82 *Bishnai das avatar nav gania* (*Var* 14:4); and *Das avatar akar kari purkharath kari nav ga,nae* (*Var* 16:10). For a denunciation of personal following, see 'Apani Katha', in Bhai Randhir Singh (ed.), *Shabadarth Dasam Granth,* Patiala: Punjabi University, 1972, 1, pp. 71–2; Sainapati, *Sri Gursobha*, ed. Ganda Singh, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1967, p. 65.

83 *Satigur sacha patisahu gurmukhi gaddi rah chalia* (*Var* 5:13); *Satigur sacha patisahu gurmukhi gaddi rah chalande* (*Var* 5:20); *Barah panth sadhie ke gurmukhi gaddi rah chalia* (*Var* 7:12); *Liha andar chaliai jiau gaddi rah, Hukami razai chalana sadh sanghi nibahu* (*Var* 9:14); *Hukami razai chalana gurmukhi gaddi rahu chalia* (*Var* 12:17); *Barah panth ikatar kar gurmukhi gaddi rahu chalia* (*Var* 18:14); *Gurmukhi gaddi rahu sachu nibihiai* (19:19); *Sachu saman sach vich gaddi rah sadh dang vahina* (*Var* 24:6); *Babanai ghari chal hai gurmukhi gaddi rahu nibhai* (*Var* 26:31); and *Sachui vanaji khep lai chale gurmukhi gaddi rahu nisani* (29:12). The name *Param Marag* is an alternative title in the early manuscripts of the text that is known as the *Prem Sumarag* in current scholarship, see notes 8, 7, and 76.