

Nikky Guninder-Kaur Singh, *Of Sacred and Secular Desire: An Anthology of Lyrical Writings from the Punjab*, (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012) xix + 252 pp. ISBN 978 1 84885 884 8 (pb), £17.99.

Within the world of Sikh Studies which is still so heavily dominated by men, Nikky Singh is particularly known for her pioneering articulation of the female voice. But besides her feminist studies of topics in Sikhism, she has over the years also demonstrated her keen aesthetic sensibilities in a number of publications which have significantly added to the rather under-represented field of Punjabi literary studies. In this regard, mention may particularly be made of *The Name of My Beloved: Verses of the Sikh Gurus* (1995), her deservedly well-received volume of translations from Sikh sacred literature, which are distinguished both by their freshness and by their then new alertness to issues of gender sensitivity. More recently, she has also published *Cosmic Symphony: The Early and Later Poems of Bhai Vir Singh* (2008), whose translations admirably capture the distinctive tone of the short Punjabi lyrics composed by the greatest Sikh literary artist of the early twentieth century from the fresh beginnings of his long creative career to the more discursive manner of his later years.

As its subtitle indicates, this new anthology is broader in scope, drawing from writers outside the Sikh tradition with the aim of giving English-speaking readers representative samples of different parts of the rich Punjabi lyrical tradition. Rather remarkably, perhaps, there is no comparable anthology of translations in existence, so the book is to be welcomed for its pioneering character as well as for the attractive and vivid style in which the poems have been rendered into English. The book admirably passes the basic test of any anthology of poetry, which is that it should be enjoyable to pick up and flip through, with each return to its pages producing items to strike the imagination and to stay in the memory. Nikky Singh's well-honed skills as a translator are once again evident on every page, where the decision to print the typical half-verses of most highly rhymed lyrical Punjabi metres as separate lines of rhythmic but unrhymed English generally succeeds very well in conveying a genuine feel of the original.

The volume comprises four categories of poetry. The first is drawn from the Guru Granth Sahib, and so it naturally overlaps with *The Name of My Beloved*, indeed the translation here of the greatest and longest poem in the entire collection, Guru Nanak's *Japuji*, is largely identical with that in the earlier volume. Besides other poems of Guru Nanak there are also a few by Guru Arjan, and more by Sheikh Farid, who amply deserves his place as the first genuine Punjabi poet, and by Namdev and Ravidas, whose less plausible claims for inclusion in a collection of lyrical writings from the Punjab are justified by the keenly argued if debatable definition of the Guru Granth Sahib as 'the quintessential Punjabi text'.

In a narrower sense, it is the writings of Muslim poets which might be more plausibly argued to constitute the quintessence of pre-modern Punjabi literature, and the next chapter is headed 'Beloved Sufi Poets'. Besides necessarily very

abbreviated passages from Waris Shah's *Hir*, which perhaps had to be included to represent the iconic Punjabi classic, the chapter also includes a generous and beautifully translated selection of *kafis* by Bullhe Shah, the author of so many peerlessly memorable lyrics of divine love. It is particularly good to see these alongside the poetry from the Sikh scriptural tradition, and their typical themes – especially the romance of Hir and Ranjha which is so central to the 'matter of Punjab' on which so many Punjabi writers draw – help set the context for the third chapter which is devoted to three poets of the early twentieth century.

These inevitably include Bhai Vir Singh, and many of his most famous lyrics, like *Banafshe da Phull*, *Kutab di Lath*, or *Avantipur de Khande*, which have been endlessly anthologized in Punjabi, may now be properly appreciated in English here. In keeping with the Nikky Singh's often stated goal of representing the cross-communal cultural unity which she regards as the ideal betrayed by imperialist policies and the human failings of sad social realities, the great Sikh poet is here teamed with two other enthusiasts for the Punjabi cause, the Hindu poet Dhani Ram Chatrik and the Pakistan writer Firoz Din Sharaf. Their lyrics will be less familiar to many readers, so it is good to see them translated here, where one cannot fail to remark on the notable similarity of their themes with those of their Punjabi contemporaries who chose to write in Urdu or Hindi. Similar observations might be made about the final chapter, entitled 'Postmodern Female Poet', which is devoted to the leading Punjabi poet of the next generation, Amrita Pritam, whose work is again well presented in representative translations of high quality.

It should be apparent that this anthology, which comes with a full and helpful bibliography, is admirably ambitious in aim and scope. Some aspects of the book are open to criticism, ranging from minor features like the failure to provide textual references with page-numbers for readers wanting to check the translations against their originals, to the sometimes questionable sweeping definitions of Punjabi cultural identity. But this is a book whose fine translations should do much to bring Punjabi poetry to a wider audience. As such, it fills a real gap on the shelves and its appearance is to be warmly welcomed.

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Singh, Pashaura (ed.) *Sikhism in a Global Context*, (Delhi: OUP India, 2011), 304 pp. ISBN-10: 0198075545 (hardback), £30.00.

Sikh studies can count amongst its writers an increasing number of specialist researchers who use ethnographical approaches to understand the global diaspora. Their works reflect the expanding borders of the field by moving away from the regional, scriptural, linguistic and theological study of Sikhs. This corpus tackles the more "...contentious and contemporary issues of Sikh identity,

culture and social relations” (p.2). In bringing together writings on Sikhism’s historiography, on present-day Sikh practices and the future of Sikh identity this book is a good reflection of the depth in the field - in much the same way as Knut Jacobsen and Kristina Myrvold’s *Sikhs in Europe: Migration, Identities and Representations*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2011.

The selected essays also provide a rejoinder to the criticism that Sikh studies can sometimes be aloof from the ‘lived reality’ of the *panth* and *qaum*. However, there are some areas missing that might have further assisted the editor with his intention to reflect the “widening of the area of Sikh studies” (p.2). For instance research on the newer Sikh diaspora in Italy / Spain / Scandinavia or the refugee Sikhs from Afghanistan would have added context when evaluating Himadri Bannerjee’s essay on the older Sikh settlement in East India. Sikh youth and women, though so topical and so demographically influential, are also not specifically addressed. In addition to the bold ideas offered here already, these research areas could have supplied further support for the editor’s call for “...a need to look at Sikhism from a global perspective” (p.5).

In amongst the twelve works the accelerating journey of Sikh studies is epitomised by two in particular. First, Doris Jakobsh, using her thirty years’ experience of teaching Sikhism, concludes that it is timely to now consider the concept of “Sikhisms” (pp.62-84). Reflecting that in 1976 Juergensmeyer argued that the “...study of Sikhism was either completely ignored or misrepresented...” (p.1), then Jakobsh’s essay may reflect the fast-paced development of ideas in the field. Second is Gerald Barrier’s posthumously published essay on the “the legacy of [Sikh] history and contemporary challenges” (pp.1-16). This essay not only adds to his substantial contributions to the field but also suggests subject areas that Barrier considers will challenge Sikh studies in the future. Similarly, many of the essays urge the reader to consider the Sikh individual nowadays as a composite person whom it would be incorrect to define simply on the basis of the history of the community.

Increasingly, this same Sikh individual is also attracting varying academic enquiry – some of which is seen here. Consider the California- based Toby Johnson. He writes that “The issue of what it means to be a Sikh gets more complicated as Sikhs move farther away from Punjab, in both distance and time” (p.249). Johnson is researching the formation of a *khalsa*-centric identity in Californian Sikh children and to do so he uses Indian-published children’s literature such as the *janamsakhis*. Similarly, many essays in this volume address the Sikh who is no longer in Punjab - increasingly by writers who themselves are not in Punjab. This broadening appeal of the field may engender what Pashaura Singh calls “...a new phenomenon in the academy” (p.2).

The variety of subjects here also embodies the multi-disciplinary approach to the study of Sikhism and Sikhs. Theology is used firstly to analyse the Guru Granth Sahib as a primary source of the global concept of “*ek hi sarup*” (Kaur-Singh pp.39) and secondly to tackle the controversial idea of a Sikh “limited age of the miracles” that Prill (pp.130-145) borrows from Calvinism. Verne

Dusenbery and Darshan Tatla improve our knowledge on the diaspora's religious and secular motivations behind philanthropic donations (*vand shakko*) to Sikhism's homeland (pp.146-164). The book also reflects the concentration of Sikh study Chairs in California and the state's broadening relationship with the diaspora. Charles Townsend's analysis of *kirtan* in Sikh identity formation (pp. 208-227) and Gurveen Khurana's ethnography on *nagar kirtan* (pp.228-248) are both based on Sikh communities in South and North California respectively. Both students are also supervised by Chairs in the state.

Adding to this study of *bani* is Pashaura Singh's ethnomusicological focus on the broadcasts from Harmandir Sahib that fill many Sikh homes twice a day with Guru Arjun's *chaunkis* (pp.102-29). Sikh identity politics are expanded by Paul Wallace's historical review of the less studied difference between "Sikh militancy, Sikh violence and Sikh non-violence protest" (pp.85-101). This author's subject choice crafts a data-driven riposte to the popularised notion of Sikhs as a 'martial race'. Banerjee's research in East India's Shillong region is a deft reminder that Sikhs exist as a diaspora within India also (pp. 185-207). Opinderjit Takhar alone represents research in Britain with her continued interest in the nodal caste and religious identity constructs within the country's Valmiki and Ravidasi community (pp.165-184).

Overall, this book's longer-lasting contribution may be the new research that unpacks the social and cultural identity negotiation of Sikhs worldwide. The text also shows that these experiential writings can build on pioneering historical works by Hew McLeod and Gerald Barrier. The result is 'subject-interactive' field work crowned with epistemologically rigorous writing. For this reviewer, this volume will assist "a community's relative lack of experience with analytic understanding of their tradition" (p.4) by providing findings obtained via engaging with the community itself. Pashaura Singh's book contains important new research on Sikhs that may characterise Sikh studies' appraisal of the *qaum's* local nuances with regards to the globalising *panth*.

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Knut A. Jacobsen and Kristina Myrvold (eds), *Sikhs Across Borders: Transnational Practices of European Sikhs*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2012 +266 pp. ISBN 978-1-4411-1387-0 (hb) £65.00.

This valuable edited volume is the second joint output from the network of scholars working on Sikhs in Europe, convened by Kristina Myrvold and promising more publications in future. The present volume now substantially deepens insights into the transnational practices and politics of European Sikhs. The early history of Sikhs in Europe is discussed in a fascinating chapter by David Omissi on the deployment of Sikh soldiers in France and Belgium during

the First World War. He presents excerpts from the letters Sikh soldiers wrote to their families in Punjab about their experiences on European soil – a fascinating window onto the subjectivity of soldiers deployed to fight another man's war, illustrating both the power of colonial discourses on the metropole as well as resistance to them. Omissi brings out the exploration and curiosity the men have about Europe, too. They write home about their observations of French houses, the wealth of its countryside, the high levels of literacy and the apparent freedom between men and women. 'To travel is to see home in a different light, and perhaps to reflect critically on home', he writes (p.47).

Of the contemporary Sikh presence in mainland Europe, explicated by Shinder Thandi largely in terms of irregular migration, asylum and student flows, an important insight is given in the chapter by Quincy Cloet, Sara Cosemans and Idesbald Goddeeris on Sikh migration in and out of Belgium. They capture the complexity of mobilities, with transit countries becoming countries of settlement and vice versa, and the intra-diaspora connections across Europe: 'Sikh migration does not only consist of immigration to a particular country, but shows a much more varied pattern, including transit migration, return migration to India, circular migration between India and Europe, intradiasporic migration within Europe and/or the Atlantic world, and so on' (p.51). Barbara Bertolani's chapter on Sikhs in Italy illustrates how this operates through the reconstitution of kinship via marriage, with transnational marriages conducted not only with India but also with other European countries, according to the preferences for the young people concerned – particularly young women, who worry that a husband from India will have difficulty adjusting to the western lifestyle and may place too much responsibility on their shoulders. Federica Ferraris's chapter on travel narratives will be of interest to Punjab scholars as it documents not only the master narratives of roots tourism and visits back to ancestral villages, but also pilgrimages to gurdwaras in Pakistan, 'a search for a collective "ancestral religious motherland", a pre-partition Punjab which still hosts significant sites of Sikh tradition and its imperial and colonial history' (p.99). Revealingly, the travel narratives blur the boundaries between transnational migration and travel.

There are several useful chapters on the internet as a medium for transnational practices. Doris A. Jakobsh argues that diasporic 'Sikh technocrats' have produced a digital public sphere enforcing the Amritdhari body as the *sine qua non* of Sikhism, whilst Satnam Singh argues for the diversity of Sikh politics enabled through the internet and Jasjit Singh's chapter on young British Sikhs gives the very important and often neglected perspective of reception – how young Sikhs actually use and interpret what they find in cyberspace.

Most novel in the collection were the chapters by Knut A. Jacobsen, Kristina Myrvold and colleagues on religious institutions and practitioners. Jacobsen rightly advocates for there being a need for research on gurdwaras as hubs of transnationalism – of circulating copies of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib (whose arrival in Italy is documented by Barbara Bertolani and Iqbal Singh), artefacts, ragis, granthis and kathavacaks, discourses and aesthetic experiences - as

exemplified in the performance of kirtan detailed by Jacobsen in his chapter. He also suggests a take on gurdwaras as sites for cultural revitalization, as Sikhism functions ‘in order to assure a sacralisation of a Punjabi cultural and ethnic identity’ (p.105). Myrvold presents intriguing life histories of individual *kathavacaks* showing how they are drawn into preaching as a transnational livelihood, sometimes out of pragmatism and sometimes out of a sense of religious vocation. Particularly sensitive is her analysis of how they translate the problems of diasporic communities into a theological idiom. Jasjit Singh documents the entry of young British Sikhs as preachers on the European Sikh youth stage, whilst the influence of travelling preachers on theological debates is brought out in a chapter on the different forms taken by the Dasam Granth controversy across the Nordic countries.

In the first chapter, Shinder Thandi argues that there is not one Sikh diaspora but rather ‘Sikhs in fact have multiple diasporas – each with their own pattern of settlement and level of community development, each negotiating their own space within mainstream “host” community and in managing internal differentiation’ (p.18). This call for sensitivity to the specificities of Sikh diasporic experience is very important. Perhaps it could also be strengthened with recourse to Pnina Werbner’s (2002) notion of a ‘chaordic’ diaspora, encompassing intersecting and diverging axes of identity and connection, such as caste and the Punjabi ecumene, as well as religion – as other chapters in the volume amply illustrate.

Reference

Werbner, P. (2002) ‘The place which is diaspora: citizenship, religion, and gender in the making of chaordic transnationalism’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 28(1): 120-44.

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Gurinder Singh Mann, *Sikhism*, (Upper Saddle River [NJ]: Prentice Hall, 2004) (Religions of the World Series, series editor Ninian Smart), 128pp. ISBN 10: 0130409774 and 13: 9780130409775 (pb) \$19.

Doris K. Jakobsh, *Sikhism*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai`i Press, 2011) (Dimensions of Asian Spirituality Series, series editor Henry Rosemont, Jr.) xx1 + 134 pp. ISBN 9780824836010 (pb) no price given.

Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh, *Sikhism: An Introduction*, (London: I.B. Taurus, 2011) xv11 + 269 pp. ISBN 1848853211 (pb) \$25 and ISBN 9781848853218 (hb) \$73.

In spring 2012 I agreed to write a review comparing these three texts, partly because of my admiration for the Sikh community, and partly in the hope that one or more of the texts would be suitable for teaching my American students, most of whom know very little about the Sikhs. The tragedy and community response later that summer in Oak Creek, Wisconsin - less than 30 miles from my campus - have given both of these sentiments far greater intensity and urgency.

For the record, I don't consider myself an authority on the Sikhs, since my core research is on Hindu pilgrimage in north India. My graduate training gave me enough language proficiency to read Sikh sacred texts, albeit slowly and in *devanagari*, and my ongoing work has given me both an appreciation for the importance of sacred places, and for understanding people's behavior in and towards them. My present interest in the Sikhs sparked after I took students to Amritsar in 1999, and witnessed the community's lived religion there. Since then I've returned many times, and this growing interest led me to develop a full-semester class on the Sikhs in 2006, which I have taught twice since then. My perspective as a small-college teacher - in which faculty routinely teach courses outside their research specialties - will be the primary lens through which I will interpret and review these texts, and my primary criterion is their utility as a text for an introductory or higher-level course.

Mann's and Jakobsh's books share many similarities. Both were written as parts of a larger series - Prentice-Hall's "Religions of the World" and the University of Hawaii's "Dimensions of Asian Spirituality" respectively. Both are introductory texts for readers with little background on the Sikhs, and both do a fine job in dispelling that. Both texts are relatively short - each book's actual text is 117 pages - and I infer that these size constraints were imposed by the publisher. Mann's end materials (11 pp.) include a Glossary, Suggested Further Readings, and a brief index; Jakobsh's end materials (17 pp.) have a far more detailed Index and a List of Sources Cited and Recommended Readings, but do not include a Glossary, a surprising omission for an introductory text.

The texts choose different points of entry, as their initial chapter titles clearly show. Mann ("The Sikhs") gives a short overview on the Sikh community, on their overarching religious worldview, and on the regional context of the Punjab, whereas Jakobsh ("The Sources of the Sikh Tradition") focuses on sacred texts, particularly the *Guru Granth Sahib*. After this their structure is largely parallel - a large section (or sections) on the community's history and development, a section on religious beliefs and practices, and a section (or sections) on contemporary Sikh society - but there are clear internal differences. Mann devotes far greater attention to the community's historical development from Ranjit Singh to the present (20 pages to Jakobsh's 8 pages). This is partly because Jakobsh includes some of the material in Mann's chapter (e.g., the Sikh diaspora) in a stand-alone chapter at the end of her work, but these different emphases probably reflect the authors' differing experiences. Mann is a Sikh,

and lived in the Punjab well into his adult life; he was thus formed in a context in which Punjabi identity was central to Sikh identity. Jakobsh is neither Punjabi nor (as far as I know) a Sikh, and teaches in Canada, where the Sikhs are an immigrant group in the process of assimilating to another culture. Hence one can understand a perspective focusing first on Sikh religious identity.

Both texts are more than adequate for a general reader, but an intractable problem stemming from their brevity is lack of nuance - which after all, comes when one can address complexity, particularly with historical events and community attitudes. For the most part, the texts relate a rather linear narrative, though in fairness they do attempt to convey some of this complexity. One example can be seen in their accounts of the Khalsa's founding in 1699. Mann first quotes Teja Singh's traditional account, in which Guru Gobind Singh demanded the heads of five Sikhs, and then baptized these men as the Khalsa's first members. Mann highlights this story's symbolic elements - that the Five Beloved Ones came from different regions of India and different castes, and were thus a material symbol for the community's unification from its disparate parts - before describing the poet Sainapati's much sparer eyewitness account. Jakobsh describes the Guru calling for the heads of five Sikhs, and then gives several different accounts of what happened next - beginning with the tradition that Guru Gobind Singh actually killed them, and then brought them back to life - before discussing the larger importance of the Khalsa's founding to the Sikh community. She includes these traditional accounts in recognition that many Sikhs accept them as authentic, and that whether or not they can be supported by conventional historical investigation, they "...offer important insights into deeply held convictions in the community in terms of its identity, beliefs, and history (Jakobsh, p. 11)."

Another example of an attempt to grapple with complexity is the treatment of the *Dasam Granth*, an enormous and highly disparate anthology attributed to Guru Gobind Singh. On one hand, it contains material clearly connected with Sikh piety and history - among them Guru Gobind Singh's autobiography (*Bachitar Natak*), the *Zafarnama* (a letter of protest to the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb), and several liturgical works (*Jaap*, *Savayye*, and *Chaupai*) that are regularly used in the worship. Yet other large sections contain stories of the Hindu gods drawn from Hindu mythology - which seem incompatible with the Sikh stress on a Single Divine Being - as well as a collection of often bawdy stories (*Pakhyan Charitar*) illustrating the wiles of women, which seems incongruous in a "religious" work. Historically the Sikh community seems to have given these differing elements selective attention (ignoring the problematic parts), but Mann notes that some of these elements have been "a source of tension in the tradition (76)." Both texts give brief and certainly accurate descriptions of the *Dasam Granth*, but the texts' relative brevity means that there is room for only one primary story. Still, either text will do a fine job providing a general reader with an overview of the Sikh tradition.

Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh's book is something else altogether. Her text is

substantially longer: 233 pages of text, with another 36 pages of end materials (Glossary, List of Illustration and Picture Credits, Notes, Bibliography, and Index); this allows her to address the tradition with greater depth. Her book has a thematic rather than a chronological focus, in which each of the nine chapters focus on a different topic, “..to give the reader an in-depth understanding of an aspect of Sikhism, and .. at the same time to raise questions and concerns central to contemporary humanities and social sciences (xii).”

Her first three chapters examine pivotal historical moments: “Guru Nanak and the Origins of Sikhism,” “Guru Arjan and the Crystallization of the Sikh Faith,” and “Guru Gobind Singh and the Cultivation of Sikh Identity”. No one can doubt that these three Gurus are central to Sikh history, but the focus on particular figures rather than the larger narrative means that the parts of the story in between are often elided, losing the sense of a community’s organic, stage-by-stage development. For example, when Guru Arjan compiled the *Guru Granth Sahib*, significant portions of his Kartarpur *pothi* (book) were based on earlier texts, such as Guru Amar Das’s *Goindval Pothis*, and a book ascribed to Guru Nanak himself. As but one more example, there is only passing reference to Guru Tegh Bahadur, whose martyrdom by the Mughals has been generally interpreted as an act of moral courage and self-sacrifice. Yet this event was not only incredibly traumatic for the community - it was the second time in 70 years that the Mughal authorities had executed a Sikh Guru - but also surely influenced Guru Gobind Singh, his only son. This thematic focus on pivotal figures is intended to highlight their importance to the community rather than to provide a historical overview, but the loss here is precisely that sense of the community’s gradual development.

Later chapters cover many of the same topics as the other volumes, though in greater depth: there are chapters on Religious Beliefs, Worship and Rites of Passage, Colonial Encounters, Sikh Art, and the Diaspora. The 40-page chapter on Sikh art is particularly well done, and introduces Sikh art’s varying genres (*Janamsakhi* paintings, portraits of the Gurus, scriptural manuscripts, visual and material arts of the Sikh kingdoms, and modern painting) from the earliest days to the twentieth century. Given this chapter’s depth of focus, I was a little surprised to find no mention of lithographic poster art. Although these posters are commercially produced and could never be characterized as “fine” art, their ubiquity in the Indian religious landscape means that they have been central in forming Sikhs’ images of themselves and their community.

Another important chapter is “Sikh Metaphysics, Ethics, and Esthetics”, in which the author supports her points with frequent citations from the *Guru Granth Sahib*, accompanied by a transliteration of the original text. These citations show her clear command of the Sikh scriptures, and in fact one of her earlier publications, *The Name of My Beloved*, is a selection of translations from the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Yet the back-and-forth movement between authorial voice and scriptural citation in this chapter sometimes makes the presentation feel a little jumpy, and the practice of citing single lines raises the question

whether any particular line is being presented in context. Since the average American reader cannot understand the original (transliterated) text, it seems reasonable to infer that this is not meant for them, but rather for readers within the Sikh community - as evidence that her text's ideas and assertions are firmly grounded in scriptural authority.

The book's pivotal sixth chapter, "Feminist Text in a Patriarchal Context", shows why such grounding is necessary. The author's goals are clearly stated in the book's introduction, and third among these is

...to recharge the Sikh community to live the liberating mode of existence intended by their Gurus. Beginning with the founder, the ten Sikh gurus created a window of opportunity to break out of the imprisonment of age-old customs and taboos, but somehow their radical egalitarianism and broadmindedness has not been fully implemented. Patriarchal values dominate the interpretation of their message, and ancient feudal norms govern social behavior. (xv-xvi).

At some primal level, this book is an exorcism - to banish attitudes and practices that have left women religiously marginalized, and to counteract a religious tradition/community/theology that has been hijacked by a "hyper-masculine culture" (102). She honestly and openly states that "female lenses are my key interpretive mechanism (xvi-xvii)", and admits that the book bears her subjective imprint; her avowedly feminist readings mean that this book and its interpretations are addressed as much to other members of the Sikh community as to the general public.

Given her identity as a woman from a Sikh family living in the United States, and given how deeply patriarchy and its values are embedded in Sikh society, I understand why she chooses this particular lens. Yet relying on only one lens - even if it is consciously chosen - is both illuminating and limiting. For example, though she notes that the Guru Granth Sahib describes The Supreme Reality (which she calls *Ik Oan Kar*) as transcending all limitations, and thus as both male AND female (*ape purakh ape hi nar* p. 104), the subsequent text focuses primarily on images of Mother, nurturer and bride. The text says nothing about parallel male images as father, king, and lord, except for warnings against conceiving *Ik Oan Kar* as a hierarchical, patriarchal male God. Yet if *Ik Oan Kar* genuinely transcends human experience and comprehension, *Ik Oan Kar* is also beyond gender, and thus both sets of metaphors need to be consciously deployed. Presenting only one side - even if it is the side that has been ignored or suppressed for much of Sikh history - gives an incomplete picture, at least to an ordinary reader unaware of that history.

All of these texts have their merits. Mann and Jakobsh give simple and easy-to-follow narratives and explanations. Singh gives significantly greater nuance to the elements on which she focuses, but in some sense this work is really two books - one directed to the general public, and another directed toward the Sikh

community. At the moment, none of these texts give the final word, and as an instructor I'm still waiting for the next step - a 300-page introductory text that gives a clear narrative, a more nuanced treatment of problematic points, and has addenda or appendices containing translations of primary source materials (e.g., hymns from the Guru Granth Sahib, the Janam Sakhis, the Rehat Maryada, etc.) An introductory text containing these sorts of substantial resources will let readers experience the text themselves (albeit in translation), and come to their own decisions.

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