

What is Sikhism?
Series 8


ਦੇਗ ਤੇਗ ਫਤਹਿ

ੴ ਸੇਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ


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Sacraments of Sikhism

**Sikh Awareness Society of USA
Tampa—Florida**

Sacraments of Sikhism

The sacraments of Sikhism are:

- *Khanday Batay Dee Pahul (Amrit)*
- *Sarbloh (All steel)*
- *Langar*
- Punjabi Language
- Marriage
- *Karah Parshad*

Khanday Baatay Dee Pahul

Khanday Batay Dee Pahul or *Amrit* is sanctified elixir used for formal initiation (consecration) into Sikhism. Literally: *Mrit* means dead, whereas *A-mrit* means immortal. In the theosophy of Sikhism, *Amrit* means elixir of immortality. *Amrit* is that substance the intake of which is supposed to make a man immortal. Since the physical frame of the human body is mortal, there is nothing in the world which can make the mortal frame immortal. Immortality cannot, therefore, mean perpetuation of the physical body of the individual. By immortality is meant merging man's *Soul (Atma)* with the Supreme Soul (*Param-atma*), while being alive.

Amritpaan brings total transformation of man from a secular being to gradual progress and ultimate transformation into a divine man. There is spiritual, moral, social and cultural transformation of the whole being of the person who accepts this baptism and thereafter follows the Sikh religious code of conduct. An *Amritdhari* Sikh (Khalsa) is a saint-soldier (*Sant-Sipahi* i.e, scholarly in knowledge of Gurbani and martial in spirit), "*Mukh tay har chit mein yudh veecharay*"-ਮੁਖ ਤੇ ਹਰਿ ਚਿਤ ਮੇ ਜੁਪੁ ਬਿਚਾਰੈ॥ "(Guru Gobind Singh)". *Amrit* (*Khanday Batay Dee Pahul*) was introduced into Sikhism by Guru Gobind Singh, on the Vaisakhi day 1699 A.D.

Sword (Kirpan) in Sikhism ---Sarbloh (All Steel- Weapons of war in Sikhism)

In Sikhism weapons of war are a sacrament and God is symbolized in them. Guru Gobind Singh says weapons should be worshiped, because they represent both, the destructive power of God as well as His benevolence. They destroy evil. They fight oppression, exploitation and injustice. They uplift the oppressed people, bring justice and help sustain people.

The preamble to *ardas*, which is Guru Gobind Singh's composition, begins with words: "Having first remembered 'The Sword', meditate on Guru Nanak----". Guru Gobind Singh hailed sword as savior and protector of saints and oppressed. In fact he even described *Akaal Purkh* (God) as *Sarbloh* (All steel)--'Sword'. At the beginning of his autobiographical account, *Bachitra Natak*, he used the term sword for the Transcendent and said:

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*“Khag khand bihandam khala dala khandam
ati ran mandam bara bandam.*

Bhuja danda akhandam tej parchandam

joti amandam bhanu prabham.

Sukha santa karnam durmati darnam

kilbikh harnam asi sarnam.

Jai jai jag karan sristi ubaran

Mama pratiparan jai tegham”

ਖਗ ਖੰਡ ਬਿਹੰਡਮ ਖਲ ਦਲ ਖੰਡਮ। ਅਤਿ ਰਣ ਮੰਡਮ ਬਰ ਬੰਡਮ।।

ਭੁਜਾ ਦੰਡਾ ਅਖੰਡਮ ਤੇਜ ਪ੍ਰਚੰਡਮ। ਜੋਤੀ ਅਮੰਡਮ ਭਾਨੂ ਪ੍ਰਭਮ।।

ਸੁਖ ਸੰਤਾ ਕਰਨਮ ਦੁਰਮਤੀ ਦਰਨਮ। ਕਿਲ ਬਿਖ ਹਰਨਮ ਅਸੀ ਸਰਨਮ।।

ਜੈ ਜੈ ਜਗ ਕਰਨ ਸਿਸਟੀ ਉਭਾਰਨ। ਮਮ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਾਰਨ ਜੈ ਤੇਗਮ।।

Guru Gobind Singh had tried the experiment of persuasions and counsel, of passively sacrificing the lives of his predecessors, their followers and their families but to no visible success. ‘The Sword’ remained to be put to test. In his letter to Aurangzeb, written in Persian, Guru Says: ਚੂੰ ਕਾਰ ਅਜ ਹਮਾਂ ਹੀਲਤੇ ਦਰ ਗੁਜ਼ਸ਼ਤ। ਹਲਾਲ ਓਸਤ ਬੁਰਦਨ ਬਾ ਸ਼ਮਸ਼ੀਰ ਦਸਤ-“*Choon kar az haman heelte dar guzashat, halal ast burden ba shamsheer dast*” i.e, “When affairs are past other remedies, it is justifiable (righteous) to un-sheathe the sword”. Guru Gobind Singh equipped the Khalsa with sword (*Kirpan*), which became for them “an emblem of power and self-respect” for all times to come. Khalsa is a saint-soldier: ਮੁਖ ਤੇ ਹਰ ਚਿਤ ਮੈ ਜੁਪੁ ਵੀਚਾਰੈ[-“*Mukh tay har chit mein yudh veecharay*” (Guru Gobind Singh).

In the present world sword continues to be a symbol of power, as it has been in the past. On ceremonial occasions, practically all armies in the world wear it.

The *Kirpan* (sword) reminds the Sikhs that they are warriors. But they must also remember that *Kirpan* is not a weapon of attacking people or for perpetrating injustice, but for defending Sikh beliefs and protecting the weak and hap-less. It is the symbol of self-respect, to be used only in self-defense or in the cause of righteousness and even then only as a last resort. Therefore, it is right to say that the *Kirpan* holds a very important place in the history and philosophy of the Sikhs and is one of the articles of their faith. For an initiated Sikh wearing of a *Kirpan* is obligatory. An initiated Sikh not wearing *Kirpan* would be in breach of his faith.

In Sikhism *Kirpan* was granted the status of “article of faith” on the Vaisakhi day in 1699 A.D; at Anandpur Sahib (Punjab) by Guru Gobind Singh. The *Kirpan* has a chequered history. Although Sikhism required its followers to wear *Kirpan*, law of the country stood in their way after their country ‘Punjab’ was, annexed by the British in 1849 A.D. The Sikhs had to struggle for it. It was in June 1914 A.D; that the British government in the Punjab exempted *Kirpan* from within the purview of the Arms Act and possessing and wearing of *Kirpan* was allowed legally to the Sikhs in the Punjab. This was extended to cover other parts of British India in May 1917 and the Sikh soldiers in 1920 A.D. The Indian constitution adopted after independence, while granting fundamental rights to freedom of religion, explained that, “the wearing and carrying of *Kirpan*” shall be deemed to be included in the profession of Sikh religion”.

Langar

Before the birth of Sikhism the Brahmanical Hinduism had divided the entire Indian society into water-tight compartments of caste and clan, under which the Shudras were considered as polluted (*Bhitay hoay*-unclean) by birth and any thing they touched became polluted (*Bhittee*). In order to abolish caste, establish equality and teach people humility before each other Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism started *Langar*, where cooked food is served to people who sit together in a row (*Pangat*) and dine together as equals irrespective of their caste, creed, colour, gender, religion, nationality, social, political or economic status. It is thought meritorious to take meal in a *Langar*. The Sikhs regard the food in the *langar* as very sacred. They accept it in a very humble and respectful manner.

Every Gurdwara has an attached community kitchen (*Langar Khana*), where food is prepared and served to all the visitors in the Langar hall, free of cost, after the completion of service (bhog).

Langar in Sikhism is a place of charity and service, where everyone gives according to his capacity and takes according to his needs. The devotees may, bring provisions pay tithes, donate land to Langar or personally contribute their labour of love by cooking the food, fetching water, bringing fuel, serving food or cleaning the utensils etc. The Langar is open all day and night and volunteers are always ready to welcome and serve the needy with food.

In Sikhism maintenance of Langar is corporate obligation. All Sikhs make regular voluntary contributions to keep it running. Even the poorest of the poor Sikh will make his contribution. Contributions can be made in cash or kind or in the form of rendering help in the preparation of food, serving food, cleaning utensils, taking care of the shoes of the Sangat, cleaning the floors and removing trash etc. Only vegetarian food is served in *Guru Ka Langar*.

Marriage in Sikhism

Sikh marriage is a sacrament and not a contract. It is called: Anand Karaj (Blissful union). Marriage in Sikhism is described as an act of socio-spiritual union of two souls, "They are not said to be husband and wife, who sit together. Rather they alone are called husband and wife, who have one soul in two bodies"-ਧਨ ਪਿਰੁ ਏਹਿ ਨ ਆਖੀਅਨਿ ਬਹਨਿ ਇਕਠੇ ਹੋਇ।।ਏਕ ਜੋਤ ਦੋਇ ਮੂਰਤੀ ਬਹਿਣ ਇਕਠੇ ਹੋਏ।।-*Dhan pir ih na aakhian behan ikathay hoay, ek jot do-ay moortee behn ikathay hoay* (GGS, p.788), which is accorded religious sanction and is consciously embraced by the boy and the girl in the solemn presence of Guru Granth Sahib. The Guru is the witness to the marriage, no writing or document is necessary.

Karah Parshad

Karah Parshad is freshly prepared sanctified soft pudding, which is distributed amongst all attending persons at the conclusion (*Bhog*) of all Sikh ceremonies and congregations, happy or sad. It is sanctified by, placing it in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib throughout the service, offering *ardas* and presenting it to *Kirpan* towards the end of *ardas*. It is prepared from equal parts of wheat flour, sugar and desi ghee (clarified butter). The practice was introduced by Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith.

Punjabi

The Language of the Sikhs and Sikh homeland, Punjab

Punjabi has been the spoken language of all the natives of the Punjab, including those in the Pakistan, since prehistoric times. F.E Keay and Grierson, both well known Orientalists are of the opinion, “that Punjabi is of greater antiquity than any of the languages of the Indo-Gangetic plain”. Hence it is one of the oldest spoken languages in the world, although it was given different names at different times. Presently it is 10th popular spoken language in the world. It is sacred to the Sikhs, because their scriptures are in Punjabi.

Punjab, the Sikh homeland, lies in the north-west of the Indian subcontinent and connects the Middle East and Central Asia with the South Asia. Because of its geographical location, a series of invaders from the north and west have trampled over this land for centuries. Every invader tried to destroy the local culture especially its language and impose his culture and language on the people of this land. Its different dialects have been variously and contemptuously been called by the invading people as: Harrapan (The language spoken by the people in and around Harrapa and Mohenjodaro), Prakrit lit: the language of the people who work for others-ਪਰਾਈ ਕ੍ਰਿਤ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਲੇ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਦੀ ਬੋਲੀ, Apbhransh literally meaning corrupt, Taki or Takri (lit: The language of the malechh people), Sindh Sagri, Sauraseni, sahaskriti, Jatki (The language of the Jatts), Zabane Jattan, Hindvi, Sant Bhasha, Desi (lit:: local), Lahori (lit: The language spoken in and around Lahore) etc. During the Muslim rule here Emperor Akbar named this region of the Indus Valley as ‘Punjab’ in 1590 A.D, after which gradually the local vernacular came to be called ‘Punjabi’, the name which has persisted since then.

It is universally agreed upon now that man evolved in Africa and gradually spread over the entire globe. According to Dr. H.D. Sankalia, the renowned anthropologist, “It is more or less established that at the end of the First Glacial Period and into the beginning of the Second Ice Age, Early Man entered the foot hills of the Northwest Punjab, into the area traversed by the Soan, Haro and other rivers within the Indus-Jhelum Doab. Early man spread into the area comprised by Rawalpindi and Attock districts of the Punjab, and the Jammu and Kashmir States”. Recent Genographic studies reveal that these people arrived in India from Central Asia by travelling south of the rugged and mountainous Pamir knot, some 30,000 years ago. Early humans lived here as gatherers and hunters, who gradually developed into a great civilization, now known as “The Indus Valley Civilization”, which is one of the oldest civilizations of the world. The natives of the Indus Valley lived by farming the lands and were called “Jatts”. ‘The Jat tribe’ is the oldest named tribe in India whose name is found even in Mahabharata. Because of its location and prosperity this region of the Indus valley has been target of repeated attacks from Middle-East, Central Asia and Eastern Europe. In-spite of all odds the ‘Jatt tribe’ never left this region, got concentrated on both sides of the river Ravi, between Satluj / Beas and Chenab / Jehlum rivers in the central Punjab around Lahore and faced every invader defiantly. After the region was named Punjab by Emperor Akbar, its natives came to be called Punjabis and their dialect (language), came to be called Punjabi. It is these people who embraced Sikhism en-mass in large numbers, after it was founded by Guru Nanak.

More than 4000 years ago (about 2000 B.C), people of a white tribe from Asia

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Minor who called themselves ‘Aryans’ entered into the hills of the Punjab as herds-men and graziers of the cattle, through the passes in the mountains and settled in the Kashmir region. It is a well known fact that the earliest spiritual traditions in the world began in the Punjab in the Indus Valley. People professing spirituality among the Punjabis called themselves Jogis / Siddhas (lit: knowledgeable). These Jogis believed in ‘One Supreme Eternal Power’, whom they called ‘*Brahma*’. They remembered their spiritual revelations orally and transmitted them from generation to generations verbally and did not produce any written scriptures, perhaps they feared loss of their sanctity by putting them into writing, although they had a script called, Brahmi / Siddhmatrica. The Aryans spoke an Indo-European language that originated on the steppes of Eurasia. The Aryans although tribal in nature, but apparently smart people very early realized the importance of education and knowledge. Some of them learnt spirituality from Jogis of the Punjab. They developed a slang dialect of Punjabi for worship purposes and cleverly called it, ‘*Brahm Bhasha*’ literally: the language of God, but later on named it ‘Sanskrit’. Around 1000 B.C; they produced scriptures in *Brahm Bhasha* (Sanskrit), which could only be understood and interpreted by them because it was neither spoken nor understood by the common mass of the native people. The scriptures were named, ‘Vedas’ literally meaning books of knowledge, which were memorized by them orally and continued to be transmitted verbally from one generation to the other for centuries. Romila Thapar in her book titled “The Penguin History of Early India” writes that Rishi Panini laid the rules for Sanskrit grammar in Taxilla (located in the foot hills of the Punjab) around 500 BC and wrote Sanskrit grammar, the *Ashtadhyayi*. As Sanskrit was devoid of any script, the Aryans created Sanskrit literature by using the local script, Brahmi / Siddhmatrica of the Punjabi Jogis in the Kashmir region of the Punjab. The persons among the Aryans having knowledge of Vedas became the priestly class and called themselves ‘Brahmins’ (having knowledge of Brahma). The first center of Aryan culture in the Indian subcontinent developed in the hills of the Punjab in the Kashmir region. After centuries of their stay, development and proliferation in the hills of the Punjab in the Kashmir region the Aryans descended into the plains of the Punjab. They tried to dominate the ‘Jatts’ through the Brahmin. The Jatt spirit of freedom and equality refused to submit to the Brahmanical dominance and pushed the Aryans out of the limits of the Punjab and in its turns drew the censure of the Brahmins who pronounced that “no Aryan should stay in the Punjab for even two days because the Punjabis refused to obey the priests”*. Henceforth the Aryan Brahmin developed an extremely hostile attitude towards the jatts of the Punjab.

After their exit from the Punjab by the ‘Jatts’, the Aryans settled in the Ganga Jamna divide in the Malwa region of India, built their religio-cultural center there and named it ‘Ujjain’, which they affectionately called, ‘*Dev Nagri*’ (ਦੇਵ ਨਗਰੀ), a town inhabited by Brahmins who are gods (Devtas-ਦੇਵਤੇ) in human form. Here they used the local form of Siddhmatrica script for writing their Sanskrit literature but named it as ‘*Dev Naagri*’ (ਦੇਵ ਨਾਗਰੀ). After sometime they shifted their center of activity in the easternly direction into the fertile and mineral rich area and built here their religio-cultural center on the banks of Ganges and named it Kashi (Varanasi-Banaras). Here they wrote more religious books in Sanskrit and named them, ‘Shastras’. Because of the shastras the language spoken in and around Kashi (Varanasi-Benaras) came to be popularly called ‘*Shastri*’ (now Hindi).

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The Punjabi Jogis / Siddhas lived away from human habitations meditating for seeking personal salvation in the caves, jungles and snow clad mountains therefore acquisition of knowledge by the common man in the plains of the Punjab became impossible.

After the Aryans, foreign invasions of the Punjab started in the 5th century BC and continued until 1849 AD. A series of invaders from the north and west trampled over this land for centuries. They included the Persians (Iranians), Shakas (Scythians), the Parthians, the Greeks, the Bactrians, the Kushans, the Huns, the Turks, the Mongols (Mughals), the Afghans (Pathans) and the British etc.

Islamic invasions of the Punjab began in 711 AD. Its people resisted for centuries, but ultimately it fell to the invading Islamic forces in 1001 A.D. They named the area east of Indus River as 'Hindustan' in the beginning of the eighth century and called its inhabitants "Hindi," and later on Hindus. After the occupation of the Punjab they spread into the remaining India without any resistance. They made Persian as court language and Arabic as religious language of this region. They recorded the native language of the gangetic plain, in Persian script, which came to be called 'Urdu***' and became the Muslim language in Hindustan.

For centuries Punjab has witnessed numerous invasions in ever changing political upheavals. Every invader tried his best to kill the Punjabi language, Punjabi culture and civilization and replace it with his own. In spite of all odds the Punjabi language and the Punjabis have remained unvanquished and proud, protecting their land and their rich heritage and assimilating all new comers.

Guru Nanak (1469-1539) founded Sikhism in the Punjab at the fag end of 15th century. At that period of time with the exception of Muslim rulers and the Muslim elite, Punjabi was the spoken language of the Punjab and Persian was the official language, Arabic was the religious language of the Muslims and Sanskrit was the religious language of the Hindus. Neither Sanskrit, nor Persian nor Arabic was spoken or understood by common mass of the People of the Punjab, who conversed among themselves in Punjabi. Guru Nanak gave his '*Bani*' in local vernacular that is Punjabi, instead of Sanskrit, which till then was the traditional medium for religious poetry / philosophy among the Hindustanis. As mentioned earlier Punjabi has been the spoken language of the people of the Punjab since prehistoric times, but till the birth of Sikhism it was only a spoken language and did not have a script for its proper pronunciation and expressions, therefore it did not have any written literature. Guru Nanak developed the script for Punjabi language by selecting appropriate letters from other scripts (Brahmi / Siddhmatica / Sharda, Takri, Lande etc) then current in Punjab and creating some new ones Viz ਼, ਼, ਼. He purged the Siddhmatica and its offspring, Devnagri, of their irritating and unscientific characteristic of being an alphabet without pure consonants. He perfected the script with vowels and laid down the rules for its grammar. The alphabet has thirty five letters. He composed a hymn enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib in Rag Asa M1, on pages 432 to 434, as '*Patti Likhi*' in the form of an acrostic, making use of the 35-letter alphabet. Thus the Sikhs developed their dialect into written language. It gave the Sikhs a written language distinct from written language of Hindus-Sanskrit (Vedas) and Mussalmans-Arabic (Quran). The script for the Punjabi language was named

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Gurmukhi (The script used to write the language spoken from the mouth of the Guru) by his successor, Guru Angad, who greatly propagated the use of Gurmukhi letters in his drive for literacy among his followers, 'the Sikhs'. He gave form and finish to the alphabet, prepared primers (*Baalupdesh*) of Gurmukhi (Punjabi) alphabet and made copies of Guru Nanak's hymns and distributed them among the people leading to the increase in the number of literates in the Punjab. He broke the monopoly of the Brahmin over learning. Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru compiled, Granth Sahib (Guru Granth Sahib), the holy Sikh scripture in Gurmukhi script, in 1604 AD. Guru Gobind Singh established the first Sikh seat of learning in 1706AD, at Talwandi Sabo, now called Dam Dama Sahib in Bathinda district and named it *Guru Ki Kanshi* as counter part to the Hindu seat of learning in Varanasi (Banaras--Kanshi). After Guru Gobind Singh Sikhs were busy in their struggle for existence and were unable to pay any attention for the development of their mother tongue. At one time the teaching of Punjabi was forbidden in schools, which retarded the development of Punjabi literature. During the Sikh rule in Punjab Persian remained the official court language, no efforts were made for the promotion of Punjabi by them, because they remained busy in expanding and securing the borders of their young kingdom. Although Punjabi was not the official language of the Sikh court, but being the language of the rulers it flourished immensely during the Sikh rule in the Punjab, copies of Guru Granth Sahib were produced and Sikh literature written in Punjabi.

The British annexed the Sikh Kingdom, Punjab in 1849 A.D. Punjabis unlike the Bengalis and Sindhis were not allowed by them to use their mother tongue as an official language because they feared the development of Punjabi-Sikh nationalism. They made Urdu along with English as the official court language in the British Punjab. The Muslims were made to believe that Urdu was their mother tongue. None of the alien languages i.e., Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Greek, Urdu or English etc, was spoken by the common mass of people of the Punjab, who continued to communicate among themselves in Punjabi, irrespective of their religious affiliations. After its annexation by the British, Christian missionaries came to Punjab and started seeking conversions of the Sikhs into Christianity in the Sikh homeland. Also a Gujrati Brahmin named Dyanand Saraswati, came to the Punjab in and founded his Hindu sect, Arya Samaj in Lahore. He started propagating the teachings of the Vedas and claimed that the Sikhs were a sect of Hindus and that Sikhism was not a separate religion. He started attacking the Punjabi language, Sikh scriptures (Guru Granth Sahib), the Sikh Gurus and other Sikh institutions. This awakened the Sikh intelligentsia, who founded Singh Sabha (society of the practicing Sikhs) in 1873 AD, in Amritsar, for the propagation of the Sikh religion, Punjabi language and Punjabi culture.

Development of the Punjabi language and Gurmukhi script started after the birth of Singh Sabha. Singh Sabha started first Punjabi printing press in the Punjab with Gurmukhi script in Lahore in 1876 A.D, and published first Punjabi paper in Gurmukhi-Khalsa Akhbar. Under Singh Sabha movement Punjabi gained admittance into the university curriculum; in spite of severe opposition by the Hindu members of the Punjab University Lahore, who viewed it as no more than a rude dialect without any literary tradition and hence not worth teaching. Teaching of Punjabi in Gurmukhi script started in Oriental College Lahore in 1877. This gave Punjabi a communal label as language of the Sikhs, just as Shastri (now Hindi) was of the Hindus and Urdu of the Muslims. As a result, although Punjabi remained, as before, the spoken language of all Punjabis, whether Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian, its literary output came to

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be largely confined to the Sikh writers. Till the advent of print media and the modern broadcasting system, different dialects of Punjabi were spoken in different parts of the Punjab viz: *Majhi*, *Malwai* and *Doabi* were spoken in the central Punjab. *Poadi*, *Haryanvi*, *Sarhandi*, *Raathi*, *Bhatiani* and *Kangri* dialects were spoken beyond Ghaggar river, whereas *Dogri*, *Kangar*, *Himachali* were spoken in the hill tracts of the Punjab. *Multani*, *Jhangi*, *Pothohari* and *Dhani* dialects were spoken beyond Chenab River. After the advent of print and modern broadcasting media, the writers and broadcasters have evolved a standard form of Punjabi based on the dialect spoken in and around Lahore i.e, central Punjab called '*Majha*' giving it its present global form.

Development of Punjabi suffered a severe set back, when Punjab, the Sikh homeland was partitioned by the British in 1947 and Lahore, the capital of the Sikh Democratic Republic of Punjab, the nerve center of Punjabi culture and headquarter of Punjabi press was denied to Sikhs and transferred to Pakistan by the British at the time of the decolonization of the Indian subcontinent.

After gaining independence, the congress government of India dominated by radical Hindus, officially recognized *Shastri* i.e, the vernacular spoken in and around the cities of Delhi and Lucknow, as the official language of India and named it 'Hindi'. Thereafter Hindi came to be symbolized as the language of all Hindus irrespective of the region they lived in. The Punjabi Hindu fundamentalists disowned Punjabi language and propagated that Punjabi was the language of the Sikh Nation only as it was the language of their scriptures (Guru Granth Sahib); the mother tongue of the Punjabi Hindu was Hindi. The Punjabi Hindu spoke Punjabi, but when it came to writing he felt more at home with English or Urdu and refused to accept Punjabi as his mother tongue, which was an absolute lie and when the Sikhs said their language was Punjabi, the Hindus sometimes accused them of motives beneath one's dignity to accept. Not only had the Sikh to defend his language but with that his honour as a patriot as well. When the Punjabi Hindus finally were reconciled to the inescapable fact that Punjabi was to be their mother tongue, they trotted out a lame excuse that Gurmukhi was not a proper script for Punjabi. They wanted it to be written in '*Dev Naagri*' (*देव नागरी*) script and not in Gurmukhi script.

Secondly, shortly after independence the government of India announced that boundaries of all the Indian States would be redrawn along linguistic lines and consequently, this was done for all the 14 major languages spoken in India except Punjabi. The Sikhs, therefore, raised the demand for the creation of a "Punjabi speaking state of the Punjab" through a campaign of non-violence in-order to defend the Sikh traditions and identity in addition to their cultural, linguistic, religious, economic and other interests. The Hindu organizations reacted by appealing to members of their community to formally disown Punjabi language. The Hindus in Punjab registered their language as Hindi in the census of 1951. Hindu organizations like Arya Samaj, Hindu Maha Sabha and Jan Sangh opposed the Sikh demand vehemently. The Hindus of Punjab and the Press dominated by Arya Samajist Hindus dubbed the Sikh demand as a stepping-stone towards the creation of an "independent Sikh State". Hindu Sikh riots broke out in many towns. The Hindu congress government with Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru as Prime Minister and Sardar Partap Singh Kairon as Chief Minister of Punjab opposed, each and every Sikh demand. Both in India and abroad the government-controlled media projected that the Sikhs demand an independent Sikh State. The Sikhs cajoled, threatened, pleaded, marched and

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suffered to win a “Punjabi speaking state,” but India resisted.

Both, Pt Nehru and Kairon, the arch opponents of the Sikh demand, died in 1964. Lal Bahadur Shastri became the next Prime Minister of India. Sant Fateh Singh, the then president of Sharomani Akali Dal, threatened to launch *morcha* (agitation) for the creation of Punjabi speaking state. Clouds of war between India and Pakistan were looming large at that time. Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri gave an understanding to the Sikh leadership to concede their demand provided they co-operated with the government in case of war between India and Pakistan. War broke out between India and Pakistan. The Sikhs played a remarkable role for defending the Indian borders. Ultimately on the conclusion of the Indo-Pakistan war in September 1965 in which the Sikh peasantry played a notable role helping Indian troops on the front line, a commission was appointed to demarcate Punjabi speaking areas from the Hindi speaking. In 1966, the already truncated Punjab was split into four states: Haryana, Himachal, Union Territory of Chandigarh and ‘Punjabi speaking Punjab’. The division of the state was done by the congress government dominated by radical Hindus on communal lines and not on linguistic basis leaving large tracts of Punjabi speaking population out of the ‘Punjabi Speaking Punjab’.

The Punjab Legislative Assembly under the Chief Ministership of Sardar Lashman Singh Gill in 1967, legislated and made Punjabi in Gurmukhi script as the official language of the Punjab and thereafter, the development of Punjabi language and production of Punjabi literature began in the right earnest.

Punjabi language has its own expressions and manifestations amongst the languages of the world. It is not in any way inferior to any other language. Unlike English Punjabi has a specific-name for each and every relationship, which indicates its cultural strength. Hierarchy in Punjabi families is very important and at a very young age children learn the appropriate kinship terms. One particular example of precise meaning of kinship names in Punjabi might be given as a demonstration, for instance an aunt might be called:

Masee if she is mother's sister

Mamee if she is mother's brother's wife

Bhooa if she is father's sister

Chachee if he is father's younger brother's wife

Tae if she is father's elder brother's wife

The richness of the Punjabi language can be further gauged from many other examples for instance human excreta is called *goonh* (ਗੂੰਹ), in case of buffalo and cow it is called *Phos* (ਫੋਸ), camel passes *laidnay* (ਲੈਡਣੇ), goat passes *maingna* (ਮੇਙਣਾ), a horse passes *liddh* (ਲਿੱਦ) and so on. Similarly a buffalo / cow in heat is called *boli hoee*, a bitch in heat is called *mushkee hoee*, a mare in heat is called *vaigee hoee*, a she camel in heat is called *Bahaar vich* and so on.

Today Punjabi is the world's tenth popular language and second popular language in the Indian capital, Delhi. It is second most popular spoken language in Pakistan and fourth popular spoken language in Canada. Punjabi with Gurmukhi script is used only by

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the Sikhs because it is connected with their religion and is the vehicle for its propagation. It is, and it will remain, the language of the Sikhs and Sikh religion. Its neglect cuts them off from their cultural and spiritual heritage in the form of worship in *sangat* and ability to understand the Guru Granth Sahib.

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* Mahabharata, viii, verses 2063-2068 (*Karna Parva*).

** After the Muslims occupied Delhi in the 11th century they used Persian script to record the local dialect in-order to communicate with the common people. The Hindustani dialect of the Ganga Jamna divide around Delhi and Lukhnow called *Shastri* now Hindi recorded in Persian script came to be called Urdu. As Urdu in Persian language means camp and *Urdugah* means camping ground, the Muslim camp language in and around Delhi came to be called Urdu, which became the Muslim language in Hindustan (Indian subcontinent). Later Muslims added more words of Persian to Urdu and the Hindus added more words of Sanskrit to *Shastri* now Hindi.

NB: Gokal Chand Narang in his book 'Transformation of Sikhism' writes on page 48, "The post partition Hindu-Sikh estrangement which has now gradually crystallized around the question of Gumukhi script, which the Hindus in the Punjab repudiate with such vociferous passion, becomes more comprehensible in the light of this assessment of the implications of the use of Gurmukhi script by the Sikhs in the past; Gurmukhi script is the badge and guarantee of a distinct and separate Sikh entity and, thus, its prevalence and continuity is a hindrance to the much-desired final liquidation of Sikh identity".